# Elizabeth and Lee’s Wedding

## June 18, 2016 - Rockhaven Farm, Elgin, South Africa

We are honoured and grateful to all of you for making the journey to be part of the day when we join our lives together.

We are excited to have Rabbi Linda Goldberg, a close friend of the Goulds who has known Elizabeth since before birth, officiate the wedding. Linda and Michael met Elizabeth’s parents, Jane and Ken, in birthing class - quite the journey.

It’s Linda’s first wedding as an ordained Rabbi which makes this a double celebration!

Like many of us, we come from different backgrounds and have spent time talking to friends, family, and elders about how best to celebrate our traditions and honour those that came before us. Today we’re taking elements from Elizabeth’s Jewish heritage and weaving in aspects from Lee’s Sangoma tradition.

Here is your guide to our ceremony. We’ve used modern, secular wordings because it reflects our philosophy, tone, and meets the challenge of honouring the past while keeping it real.

## The Chuppah

At the front of the room is the chuppah, the canopy under which the ceremony takes place. It’s symbolic of the home we are creating together. It’s open on all sides so that family and friends (that’s you lot), will always feel welcome in our home. We could also say that our community forms the walls of our home.

The covering of the chuppah is made of a prayer shawl (tallit) from Elizabeth’s late grandfather, Herb Bilus, which recognises that we are supported by our ancestors.

## The Blessings of Betrothal (Kiddushin)

In many traditions alcohol is a symbol of joy. In the Jewish tradition wine is used (in Africa we use beer – don’t worry, we have our special brew for you later.)

Today we are using wine as the carrier of blessing, this process is called ‘Kiddushin’.

Blessing + wine = happy us and less nerves. Great tradition!

We are using old cups from both of our families to ensure equal blessing from both lines.

## The Giving of Rings

As the great Beyoncé said, ‘If you like it then you better put a ring on it.’

The exchanging of rings is a binding process, symbolising union and commitment. It’s not an accident for us that a circle of precious metal is used. We know that a good relationship is contained, cyclical, reciprocal, and often means hammering out the hard stuff into something beautiful.

In placing rings on each other’s fingers, we also recognise that communion comes with obligation.

In Jewish law this is the moment that the wedding becomes legal.

Before making their way onto our fingers, our rings spent a week being blessed by a traditional doctor, as is the custom for Sangomas, setting the stage for a healthy union.

## The Ketubah

The legal recognition of any relationship comes with a contract. In the Jewish tradition this is called the Ketubah.

Before the ceremony today, the Ketubah at the front of the room was signed in front of witnesses. You’re not allowed to use family as witnesses, which gave us a great excuse to use two of our dearest friends. Jeanette Anderson and Julie Hassman both watched us like hawks, and then gifted us with their signatures to complete our contract.

The nice thing about a ketubah is that you can choose your own design – we’ve continued the theme of wholeness and unity through the circular design. Blue is also the colour that best encapsulates communication in many traditional belief systems – not to mention it looks stunning.

## Blessings of Marriage (Nissuin)

Because the best things tend to come in pairs - we have a second blessing over wine. Actually, seven of them — called Sheva Brachot.

Having so many of you here gives us an amazing pool of people to pull from. We’ve chosen the following: our aunts who represent family elders; the family that is joined in marriage, our brothers-in-law; longtime friends who help to hold us to who we are; and finally the seventh is chosen at random from all of you - to represent the community that stands with us when needed.

So if you have lucky number ‘7’ taped underneath your chair then you will find the seventh blessing written on it. We will call you out when the time comes. It’s not too late to try and pay someone to read it for you…

When the seven blessings have been read we drink wine and make our vows to each other.

## The Rabbi’s Blessing

Linda has the last word of the ceremony as we are wrapped in a cloth and blessed.

We are doing this in one of Lee’s Hias - these are the working cloths that Sangomas use.

## Breaking the Glass

The best (and most nerve-wracking bit), breaking the glass.

There are lots of interpretations about why a glass is broken in a Jewish wedding. You can choose from: being fruitful and multiplying; scaring away bad spirits with the noise; signifying the fragility of human relationships; breaking away from the past, etc. All of these interpretations agree that many shards of glass is better. It’s also a reminder that even in times of great joy we can acknowledge that there is brokenness in the world and our part in repairing it.

We think it’s f\*\*\*ing cool!

Feel free to shout “Mazel Tov!” or any celebration noise when the glass is trashed.

## Yichud

After we have all done amazing things with confetti we will disappear for a time. This is called Yichud and Elizabeth says this means ‘time together’, Lee says this is called ‘quickie time.’ It’s a great tradition and these precious moments of seclusion signify our new status of living together as husband and wife.