

A Wedding in the Shtetl

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Not everything that a person lives through in life remains in their consciousness and brings forth memories. But single moments and events-- and they are not many -- do not become erased over time, but live on in one's memory forever. One occurrence like that will forever remain in my memories was the wedding of my sister Freyde and her intended, Hershl Vaisman.

A couple of weeks before the wedding, the preparations were well underway. We baked and we cooked. Khane the "invitress" and Fievel the *shamash* (sexton, rabbi's personal assistant) went from town to town and invited the guests on behalf of Reb Sholem Karsh and HaRav Peysekh Aaron Vaisman.

Khane was already an elderly woman and it was difficult for her to walk the remote country roads. She came to my mother and said: "Rivke, can you give me a pair of lighter shoes; my heavy ones are tearing off my feet?"

"What," said my mother, "lighter shoes, -- why didn't you say so?" In a minute, Chane had traded her shoes and with joy continued on her mission. Besides the two special emissaries, many invitations were also sent through the post.

Nisl the tailor sewed for the groom and in-laws, Zushe the tailor sewed for my uncle Shloyme, Tsaytl the seamstress -- for the bride.

The tumult was great and it was joyous. And my uncle did not forget the (talmud-torah) school-children. He made them all new suits and brought them to the wedding.

The house was covered in flowers. Klezmers were brought in from Ratne as for all the weddings in Kamin, because Kamin had no klezmers. Itzl Klezmer was the band-leader and played violin..The others, clarinet and *DOYAZ*¹. [Alternate translation offered by Jeffrey Wollock: Itzl Klezmer was the

¹ Personal Communication from Jeffrey Wollock: I think the correct reading may very well be "dziaz," by which the writer meant "jazz."

The word for jazz in Ukrainian is джаз, similar in Belarusian. (Kamin Kashirsky is in the NE corner of Ukraine, near Belarus.) In Lithuanian, it is džiazas.

The phoneme [j] is supposed to be written in standard Yiddish orthography as daled + zion + shin, but it is rare, found only in words borrowed from other languages, and many people wrote Yiddish anyway with "unstandard" spellings, so such a spelling of an uncommon sound wouldn't surprise me at all. It is certainly logical -- the yod would indicate a palatalization of the zayin, to something like "zh". -ctd below

leader and played violin, the rest [of them] [played] clarinet and jazz.]

Thursday, with the welcoming of the honored guests, the great celebration began. And Friday, to the accompaniment of music, the bride and groom were led to the wedding canopy. It was a joyous celebration.

There, with my own eyes I beheld the happy wedding. Children, with freshly shorn little heads and clean white shirts. People ate and drank and calls of "*mazl-tov*" rang in the air. My father doled out goodies to the school-children and led them in a circle-dance. A Jewish wedding --undertaken with celebration and joy.

The Trisker khasidim and the house of study Jews all participated in the merriment. The cantor Yosel also contributed his share; after eating his fill and drinking a glass to (the) health (of the bride and groom), he forgot about his day-to-day troubles and worries. He became ecstatic and sang out mightily with his great voice, which he knew how to do at such occasions.

And in this way, image follows image, as if nothing had happened . . . Suddenly I had a thought: had there really been a wedding, or was it only a dream? It turns out I once had a sister Freydl and a brother-in-law Hershl Vaisman, whose picture I look at often with tears in my eyes. They did have a wedding that lasted from Thursday until Tuesday, after *shabes*; the entire Jewish community of the *shtetl*, young and old were there.

Basically what I think the author meant is that Itzl led in the traditional music and the clarinetist led in the "jazz". The rest of the musicians would have accompanied everything, but were perhaps more "noticeable" in the jazz, which is why she emphasized that "the others" played it. Indeed, in some traditional Jewish numbers, and especially the "*bazetsn di kale*" and "*bazingen dem khusn*" the violin would have done almost everything, with only the lightest accompaniment. By "jazz" she probably meant nothing more than the popular dance music of the time, and obviously the rest of the band would have had to know how to play in that style as well; hence the emphasis.