

Chupah

Jewish wedding ceremonies have taken place with the bride and groom standing under a canopy supported by four poles for many centuries. Originating with the rabbis in the Middle Ages, the canopy became known as the *Chupah*. Traditionally, the wedding ceremony took place outdoors in the hope that the marriage should be blessed with as many children as "the stars of the heavens." The *Chupah* was used to provide a more modest setting, separating the ceremony from the marketplace. This setting creates a private space; marriage is a home, an island of sanity and serenity amidst the chaos of a busy world. The *Chupah* is open on all sides, signifying the hope that the couple's home will always be open to family, guests, and friends.

This *Chupah* is fabricated of various silks, French ribbons, lace and hand worked braids, designed by Reeva Shaffer to coordinate with the Torah covers being used in the main sanctuary. The circular Hebrew writing in the center is from the Seven Blessings, which are recited during the wedding ceremony. They translate into "The sound of joy and the sound of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride." The section of Hebrew closer to the outside is from the Song of Songs. It repeats four times and is translated as "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine."

The braids signify the melding of two lives. The tassels are formed from the braids and are reminiscent of the tzitzit of a tallit. When the tassels hang down, they seem to surround the bride and groom. The hand-painted flowers and vines signify the happiness and flourishing of the marriage.

*This Chupah was lovingly donated in memory of
Helen Balser Rotenstreich.
It is representative of her love of family as well as
the importance of Judaism in her life.*