

Romancing the Stone

By Ashley Zeldin, Contributing Writer | PUBLISHED Jan 19, 2011 | Lifestyle

Apryl Levine (nee Carson) had thought of everything the morning before her wedding. Every decision was made, from food to flowers, right down to the exact glass that her husband-to-be, Joshua Levine, would break.

Or so she thought.

During the rehearsal at Piru's Rancho Camulos, among the roses and lavender, the Levines realized there was a hitch.

Under the shade of a billowing maple tree, the couple found they were on uneven ground.

"I said, kiddingly, 'I hope the glass breaks,'" Apryl Levine recalled. "We thought we had everything planned to the last detail, but we'd never given a thought to the glass not breaking."

Her wedding planner, who wasn't Jewish, "didn't fully understand the significance, that breaking the glass seals the deal," Levine said. "She asked, 'Can't we just get a light bulb? You know it'll break.'"

That wouldn't do for the couple.

The groom's cousin, Robb Dunlap, had an idea. A stonemason for more than 25 years, he happened to have a sample of Jerusalem Gold limestone in his car.

Fitting, since one telling has it that the breaking of the glass symbolizes the remembrance of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

“The traditions and the history that Judaism has is really special,” Dunlap said. “The fact that the stone comes from the same quarries that virtually all of ancient Jerusalem was made from is pretty cool.”

And when it came time for the wedding on June 6, 2010, Levine broke the glass with no problem.

“What’s nice is they got to start their marriage on a piece of Israel,” noted Lisa Dunlap, Robb’s wife and one of Levine’s bridesmaids.

After the ceremony, the Dunlaps presented the newlyweds with the slab of Jerusalem Gold limestone engraved with their names and wedding date as a keepsake.

“It’s beautiful to have something to commemorate such a special day,” Levine said.

The Dunlaps knew they were on to something and have since dubbed their creation the Mazel Tov Stone.

“We did some research, and there was nothing like it,” Lisa Dunlap said. “I was surprised how many stories there were about mishaps with the glass.”

“Hopefully this will take a little pressure off the groom,” Robb Dunlap added.

A popular satiric explanation is that stepping on the glass is the last time the groom gets to put his foot down. A more metaphysical interpretation is that the tradition represents the tenuousness of joy and the importance of nurturing marriage. Yet another version states that the marriage will last as long as glass is broken.

The custom’s origin is unknown but is often sourced to the Talmud. In two different accounts, the father of the groom smashes a cup to quiet down a group

of boisterous rabbis. The interpretation is that joy must be tempered.

Mazel Tov Stones, priced from \$299, are available cut in various shapes, including rectangles, ovals and hearts, and can be engraved in several monogram and border styles and with optional icons, such as a Star of David or entwined rings, among others. Custom designs are also available. Lisa Dunlap recently designed a stone based on her own wedding invitation to commemorate their 18th anniversary in October 2010.

Delivery of the stone takes about four weeks after final approval of the design, but stones can be prepared faster if necessary. The Dunlaps also ship stones directly to venues for destination weddings. Mazel Tov Stones arrive in white velvet bags, which can be used to encase the glass to be broken during the ceremony.

Looking back on her wedding, Levine considers the stone's presence a tribute to her deceased grandparents, who had been active in the Jewish community.

“It was special because [the stone] came from the motherland, if you will,” she said. “I think having this extra little bit of history really helped enrich the day.”