

By JUDITH BERNE

Although visitors to Israel are often surprised to find many Israelis less religious than their American contemporaries, in the matter of marriage the old traditions still rule as dictated by Israeli law.

Adina Tzeel, who married her husband Josef 20 years ago in Tel Aviv, and who has lived in Southfield for the past five years, suggests that "marriages in Israel are more orthodox than most of the Jewish weddings in the United States.

"There is no civil marriage in Israel," Mrs. Tzeel, a teacher at a Jewish day school, related. "If you do not have a religious ceremony, then you cannot be married there -- you must go to another country.

"BEFORE THEY ARE MARRIED, the bride and groom must go the rabbinical -- a small hall where weddings are performed -- and show papers which prove they are single. Each needs two witnesses -- they must be men -- who will vouch for them."

For the more religious Jews in Israel, as for the ultra religious in the United States, before she is married the bride must go to the "mikvah" --

the public ritual bath, in order to become acceptably pure for her husband-to-be.

"And if the groom adheres strictly to the traditions, on the Saturday before his wedding he will go to the synagogue and publicly read a portion from the torah. When he is finished, candy and nuts are thrown from the audience, sweet things to wish him well."

Mrs. Tzeel reported that, "In Israel no one gets married in a synagogue.

"They either go to the rabbinical -- if they will have a small wedding -- or rent a larger hall. We do not have large synagogues and temples the way you do here. Our synagogues are only for praying."

"MOST ACTUAL MARRIAGES IN ISRAEL must be performed out-of-doors," Mrs. Tzeel continued. The theory is that the couple's children should be as numerous as the stars in the sky. The couple goes outside to the "chuppa" for the ceremony, then returns to the hall for the reception.

In the United States, Orthodox Jews also follow this tradition. But, according to Marcia Seligson in her book "The Eternal Bliss Machine," "an acceptable approximation for



THE GROOM must sign "a marriage contract" witnessed by the rabbi and fathers of the couple prior to an Israeli wedding.

Orthodox Jews has been provided ... in the room where ceremonies are held, a small hole has been cut out through the ceiling and the roof above, so that at least eleven stars peer through."

Mrs. Tzeel noted that before the wedding, the bride sits with her mother and prospective mother-in-law in a special seat generally adorned with flowers. "Everybody comes up to wish her well.

"In the meantime, the groom is seated in another place with the rabbis and both fathers for the purpose of signing 'the marriage contract'. He will support her -- in everything -- he pledges. In case he ever wants to let her go he must pay a symbolic sum of money.

"When this is accomplished, he comes toward the bride accompanied by their fathers, and covers her face with a veil. The fathers then escort him outside to the chuppa.

"The chuppa," according to author Seligson, "is one of those nuptial traditions that has interesting multiple symbolic meaning, depending on whom you talk to. Some historians claim it derives from the groom's tent, where the marriage was consummated, then became the mark of the new home to be created by the couple." Others believe "it was a symbol for the protection of the couple from evil forces from above. It used to be a piece of velvet held up on four sides by four men..."

In Israel, the chuppa is usually

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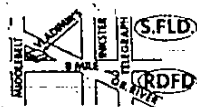
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