

FIRST READING

Corinthians 1.13. Read by Charles Bigland

THE DECLARATIONS

Will you, the families and friends of Afsonah and Philip, support and uphold them in their marriage now and in the years to come?

All: **We will**

THE MARRIAGE

KALEH GHAND

CONSENT

THE VOWS

THE GIVING OF THE RINGS

THE ADDRESS

Mr CS Mitchell

SECOND READING

This Marriage by Rumi a 13th Century Persian poet.

Read by Roxane Behzadi

HYMN

Jerusalem by William Blake

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear: o clouds unfold!
Bring me my chariots of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight;
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land

FINAL BLESSING

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever.**

Amen

*May God make you strong in faith and love,
defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.*

All: Amen

THE DEPARTURE OF THE BRIDE AND GROOM

Fusing British and Persian Cultures on Our Big Day

Blending the best of our cultures to bring an enchanting and culturally rich experience filled with symbolism, tradition and celebration.

The Sofreh Aghd

Symbolism and significance. The Sofreh Aghd is an ornate table filled with items that hold symbolic meaning, representing blessings for the couple's new life together. Each item has a specific purpose:

candles

for energy & clarity in a future together

mirror

to bring light into the future

esfand

to warn away the 'evil eye'

fruit

for a joyous life

nuts

for financial abundance

honey & sugar

to symbolise sweetness and happiness

coins

represent wealth & prosperity

The Brides Arrival

Esfand (incense) is burned before the bride walks down the aisle to keep away negative energy. Burning esfand is an important part of the Persian culture that's meant to deter the 'evil eye' from causing any harm, particularly as one is about to embark on a new journey or milestone.

The bride walks down the aisle to her parents who are waiting in the middle of the aisle. The groom walk back down the aisle to meet the bride and her parents in the centre of the aisle. The father of the bride proceeds to place the bride's hand into the groom's hand—this symbolises the father giving away his daughter.

Key rituals during the Aghd (Ceremony)

The Aghd begins with the couple seated in front of the Sofreh. The officiant, a respected elder, conducts the ceremony.

Kaleh Ghand or sugar rubbing is a ceremony where a few special women in the couple's life spread more sweetness into their marriage. The ritual involves rubbing sugar onto a cloth held above the bride and groom's heads.

At this point, the officiant asks for the consent of the bride and groom.

*First, he asks the groom if he consents to marry the bride. The groom immediately says *balé* (yes).*

Next, he asks the bride who traditionally does not answer immediately and is encouraged by friends and family to say "Yes" with playful chants. This represents the importance of her decision. It is customary for the bride to be asked for her consent three times before she answers. The crowd gets involved by yelling reasons why the bride can't consent yet, such as "aroos rafteh gol behchineh!" or "the bride has gone to pick flowers. The consent tradition creates excitement and anticipation until the final moment the bride finally agrees.

*Once the bride does consent, the wedding guests will start joyfully yelling (or cheering with a *lee-lee-lee* sound) and clapping.*