

A Secular Jewish Wedding Ceremony and Ketubah Signing

Knot Note: Some names and information have been redacted for the couple's privacy.

The Ketubah Signing Ceremony

Celebrant:

Please gather around for this “ceremony before the ceremony”... signing of the Ketubah and the New York marriage license.

Bride and Groom, in this quiet moment before your public wedding ceremony begins, those closest to you are here to witness the signing of the important documents that make this day a once-in-a-lifetime moment for you both.

As you become legally husband and wife, we delight in your happiness, and we wish you only good things to come as you face life together.

This beautiful Ketubah has these words for you today... words that you will see every day after you hang it in your home.

I ask Groom's father to read the words.

Groom's father reads the Ketubah

Celebrant:

I ask you both to sign the Ketubah as the first ceremonial act of your wedding day celebration.

You two sign.

Now I ask your parents to sign the Ketubah.

Your parents sign.

And I sign it as well.

I sign.

The legal document issued by the City of New York makes your marriage legal in the eyes of government and society at large. With the legal status of marriage come many rights and responsibilities which will enhance your life and also contribute to the stability and richness of the world around you.

This document calls for the bride and groom's signature.

You two sign.

And the signatures of two of witnesses, Andy Bock and Stacey Grippa.

Your witnesses sign.

And lastly, my signature.

Now the documents are signed. Bride and Groom, please join hands. As you look at these two documents, know you are now joined legally just as you will be joined by intent, hope, and love in your wedding ceremony in a few minutes.

The wedding ceremony that follows will be a public declaration of what now exists in a very private way. May your wedding ceremony be a continuation of your celebration and an equally happy and joyful moment.

Congratulations! This calls for your first ceremonial kiss of the day.

The Wedding Ceremony

Introduction

Celebrant:

Please be seated.

Family and friends of Bride and Groom: Welcome to their wedding ceremony this beautiful summer evening here overlooking the Hudson River at The Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers.

This is the day that Groom and Bride marry the person they love the most in the world...the one they will laugh with, live for, and love for the rest of their lives.

So it is fitting that you are here...the ones that are closest to them. Your presence at this wedding celebration reminds Bride and Groom how lucky they are to share this important day in their lives with people who are important to them. It means so much to them that family and friends from California, Massachusetts, Florida, Colorado, Texas, Philadelphia, New Jersey and New York have come to their wedding.

The chuppah under which Groom and Bride stand is the traditional structure used in a Jewish wedding ceremony. You will also see the traditional Persian Sofreh Aghd display under the chuppah.

These two visible symbols of two different cultures are not usually seen together. But what you see in the setting for this ceremony tells you so much about the path that brings

Bride and Groom to be married. Their traditions are melded today, their families are joined together, and the combined richness of their two heritages will be the foundation for their life together.

As the open sides of a chuppah symbolize hospitality, the chuppah in this ceremony invites you all to feel welcome today...for this is the day of all days that Bride and Groom want to share with you.

To Groom and Bride's parents: They are happy you are close to them during this ceremony. They want you to know how much they appreciate your love and support over the years, and they return that love to you with gratitude.

They also hope their marriage will be like yours. They see you balance each other, take care of each other, and value each other. They are privileged to have you as role models for their marriage.

So we begin his ceremony with anticipation and excitement for Groom and Bride as they take a significant step in their lives.

Love Story

Celebrant:

Bride and Groom are indeed ready to take this significant step because of the way their love has grown since they first met.

The year was 2008. The day was Halloween. Groom had watched the Phillies win the World Series, and he was tempted to remain in Philadelphia for the celebrations, but a good friend was having a Halloween party in New York. He counts it among the good decisions he's made in life to choose the Halloween party over the World Series celebration...because he met Bride at that party.

Their first "official" date was at Spitzer's Corner. It was a casual, flirty, and fun date. There were other dates to follow, many more actually.

As Groom and Bride came to know each other more, they were falling in love. Groom was struck at what a unique and thoughtful person Bride was. Bride was impressed with Groom's ability to live in the moment and enjoy life as it came to him. And they both appreciated each other's sense of humor.

After being a couple for some time, including a wonderful trip to Jamaica, it became clear they were not just "in love"...they really loved each other. They had respect for each other's true being, and they knew they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together.

Very early in their relationship, Bride had mentioned once to Groom that the tree covered walkway in Central Park's Mall reminded her of being hugged by nature, and she told

Groom it was one of her favorite spots in NYC. So that is where Groom planned to propose to Bride.

One evening, with the rouse of meeting friends for dinner at The Boathouse restaurant n Central Park, they ended up walking on The Mall. Groom got down on one knee and asked Bride to marry him. And of course, she said “Yes.”

Discreetly hidden behind a statue, his brother caught the moment with his camera...and you have seen the picture he took. It was used on the stamps that were on Bride and Groom’ wedding invitation.

So the engaged couple began to plan their wedding. As they provided input to the design of this ceremony, they reflected on what it is that they love about each other.

Groom, Bride loves that you are kind, generous, reliable, responsible, and honest. She loves that you have a big heart and that you are always a loyal friend. She appreciates that your personalities complement each other. Bride knows you are always there for her; she knows you have her back. You are her rock...her everything.

Bride, Groom loves your kind-hearted nature, the affection you show to him, and your generosity. He says everything you do has some way of letting him know that he is loved by you...even a touch or a look. You comfort him, and you motivate him. To him, you are truly beautiful both inside and out.

A hallmark of your relationship is how you accept and relish the differences between you. You both know that your differences open up ways for you to enjoy life together and to become more fulfilled individuals.

Groom, you’ve encouraged Bride to try new things and not be afraid...like learning to ski. You’ve also taken her to things she might not have selected to do...Phish shows and football games. Bride, you’ve taught Groom to open his mind to new experiences and cultures...like visiting Istanbul and trying yoga and body scrubs.

Your differences work for you...you balance each other; you complement each other. While your differences make your love story unique and touching, but it is your shared values and morals along with your abiding affection, respect, and devotion to each other that makes your love story one that doesn’t end today.

Today begins a new chapter, that of being married. There are many chapters to come...raising a family, sharing many happy times together, supporting each other’s careers, and caring for each other as you age gracefully...still being delightfully different from each other, but always loving each other.

Reading

Celebrant:

The reading Bride and Groom have selected for their ceremony comes from the work of e. e. cummings, a pre-eminent voice of 20th century American poetry. Titled, "i carry your heart with me," this poem speaks to the tender and loving connection between two hearts ...something Groom and Bride feel describes their love for one another.

i carry your heart with me
i carry it in my heart
i am never without it
anywhere i go
you go, my dear;
and whatever is done by only me
is your doing, my darling
i fear no fate
for you are my fate, my sweet
i want no world for beautiful
you are my world, my true
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;
which grows higher than the soul can hope or mind can
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart
i carry it in my heart

Vows

Celebrant:

Now we come to the words that make this ceremony legal and binding.

Marriage, as most of us understand it, is a voluntary and full commitment. It is made in the deepest sense to the exclusion of all others, and it is entered into with the desire, the hope, and the firm intention that it will last for life.

Before you declare your vows to one another, I ask you to confirm that it is indeed your intention to be married today.

Bride and Groom: Do you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage? If so, answer together "We do."

Groom and Bride:

We do.

Celebrant:

As husband and wife, will you honor and respect each other, care for each other in good times and bad, in sickness and in health, and be faithful to each other for as long as you shall live? If so, answer together "We will."

Bride and Groom:

We will.

Celebrant:

Having understood that it is your intention to be married to each other, I now ask you to declare your marriage vows.

Celebrant cues the bride to hand her bouquet to the Maid of Honor and ask the couple to hold each others hands and look at one another.

Celebrant:

Bride, please repeat after me...

I, Bride,
Take you, Groom
to be my husband.
I vow to stand with you
in the days to come,
to honor you,
to change with you,
to hold our love dear,
to be passionate with you,
to share the struggles that come to us,
to rejoice in the happiness that comes to us,
to be kind and caring to you
I promise you this
from my heart,
with my soul,
'til death do us part.

Celebrant:

Groom, please repeat after me...

I, Groom Adam Bock,
Choose you, Bride Mortezaei,
To be my wife.
I will always love you,
Be a comfort and safe haven to you,
Listen deeply and respect you,
Uphold you with my strength,
Never take you for granted,
And give thanks for all you are to me.
I promise to be faithful,
To tell the truth,
To share the good and the difficult times,
To care for you when you need me.
This I pledge with certainty,
'til death do us part.

WEDDING RING EXCHANGE

Celebrant:

Your wedding rings are the outward and visible signs of the inward and invisible bond which already unites your two hearts in love.
Like your wedding rings, your love is unending.

Andrew, please give Groom's ring to Bride. This ring has a special provenance as it belonged to Groom's great-grandfather who received it on his wedding day in August of 1919.

Bride, as you place Groom's ring on his finger and repeat after me...

I give you this ring.
Wear it with love and joy.
As this ring has no end,
Neither will my love for you.

Andrew, please give Bride's ring to Groom.

Groom, now place this ring on Bride's finger and repeat after me...

With this ring,
I marry you.
Wear this ring always
As a sign of my love.

Sofreh Agahd

Celebrant:

To celebrate the rich traditional backgrounds that Groom and Bride bring to their marriage, their wedding ceremony includes rituals from Groom's Jewish heritage...the chuppah and the pre-ceremony ketubah signing. Now we honor Bride's heritage with a traditional Persian wedding ritual, the *sofreh aghd*.

I ask Bride and Groom to take their seats for this ritual.

On the table in front of Groom and Bride is the traditional Persian wedding spread, with many items and objects that are meant to symbolize good wishes for the bride and groom.

The objects on the table represent all of the hopes and dreams that Bride and Groom will hold dear in their marriage. I call attention to the list in your program of the items on this table and their meaning.

One of the items is an embroidered cloth which Bride's mother had made just for this occasion. It is the wish of Bride's parents that this keepsake cloth will be used in the weddings of their sons and then their grandchildren. This cloth bears the names of Bride and Groom and today's date. It is hoped that many other names will join theirs in the years and generations to come.

The large mirror reflects light to show a bright future for Bride and Groom.

The two candelabra symbolize fire and energy.

The other items are for good health, prosperity, joy, sweetness and happiness...all good things for Groom and Bride.

I ask Bridesmaids to come and stand around Bride and Groom, and hold a ceremonial white cloth over their heads. And I ask Maid of Honor to pick up the ceremonial sugar cone.

They come forward with the cloth and hold it over the Groom and Bride's heads.

Celebrant:

To symbolize the sweet life and happiness that Bride and Groom will have in their marriage, these close friends will now shower our bride and groom with sugar!

The four friends will hold the cloth as Maid of Honor crumbles the sugar onto the suspended cloth.

Officiant:

Groom and Bride will now share a taste of honey. I ask Bride's mother to bring the honey to them.

Bride's mother will bring the vessel with honey to them.

Celebrant:

Groom and Bride will each dip their pinky finger into the honey and then share it with each other.

Groom and Bride dip their pinky fingers into the honey and offer the honey to each other simultaneously.

Celebrant:

The taste of honey is the first taste Bride and Groom experience in their new life together. This first taste is sweet, and it is presented with love. Life is indeed good!

Bride's mother places the honey back on the table and returns to where she was standing.

Celebrant:

Bride and Groom, take a moment to savor all you see, taste, and hear in this room. This is a moment to imbed in your senses and memory for a life-time...the symbols of your now entwined roots are all around you.

May the spirit of happiness and abundance in this ritual carry on throughout the rest of your wedding celebration...and into your future together.

Seven Blessings

Celebrant:

Bride and Groom, having witnessed you declare your vows and exchange rings, your family and friends are excited to congratulate you and give you their good wishes. I speak on their behalf as I convey blessings, the traditional seven in number, to you on your wedding day.

- May your life together be blessed with "health, love, and laughter."
- May you always share open and honest communication between each other.

- May you respect each other's individuality and give each other room to grow and fulfill your dreams.
- May you both enjoy and cherish the home and family you will create together.
- May you find ways to experience new adventures with each other throughout your lives...travel, new ideas, and shared interests.
- May you always be best friends, better together than either of you is apart.
- May you give each other the gifts of tenderness, joy, harmony, fidelity, and enduring love.

Declaration

Celebrant:

By the power vested in me by the City of New York, I declare that you are husband and wife. Groom, you may now kiss your bride.

Couple kisses.

Bride: I will cue you to get your bouquet back. Place it in your right hand. You both face your guests.

I will ask Andrew to come and stand by me...so he is at the ready with the glass.

Celebrant:

In a Jewish wedding, it is a joyful end to the ceremony when the groom breaks the glass. As Groom breaks the glass, this is the wish we have for you both: May your love sustain you and keep you together for as long as it takes the pieces of the glass to come back together. In other words...may you stay together forever.

As the glass is broken, we know your marriage vows are as permanent and final as the breaking of this glass will be unchangeable.

I ask Groom's brother to give the glass to Groom.

Groom's Brother retrieves the glass from under the sofreh aghd table and gives the glass to Groom.

Groom, please break the glass.

Groom breaks the glass.

Everyone:

Mazel Tov!

Couple faces their guests.

Celebrant:

It is my honor and delight to introduce the newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Groom Bock.

The ceremony is over; may your celebration be filled with love and joy.

By Julie Laudicina, Celebrant Foundation and Institute

