

Wedding Ceremonies

Information, Samples, Vows & Readings

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The Four Principles of Humanistic Jewish Weddings

Dignity

Humanistic Jewish weddings affirm the dignity and love of the couple. Everything that is done and said reinforces the bond of hope, loyalty, and happiness between the marrying couple.

Intermarriage

Humanistic Jewish weddings affirm the bond of marriage between people from the same and from different religious backgrounds. In the spirit of openness and hospitality, we seek to make everyone present feel welcome and included.

Ritual

Humanistic Jewish weddings draw from the best from Jewish tradition to deepen and enrich the wedding ceremony. Drinking from the wine goblet, standing beneath the chuppah, reading the ketubah, and breaking the glass all blend together to create a ceremony that is rich in beautiful heritage.

Liturgy

Humanistic Jewish weddings affirm the outlook on life of the Humanistic Jew. We say only that which we believe and strive to have integrity in all that we do. We celebrate Hebrew as the cultural language of the Jews and in our wedding ceremonies we include literature from the Jewish past and present that affirms the light, hope, and strength present in people.

L'Chayim! To Life!

Outline for a Jewish Wedding Ceremony

<u>Officiated</u>	<u>Co-Officiated</u>
Song of Welcome	Song of Welcome <i>Rabbi Kolton</i>
Greeting	Greeting <i>Co-Officiant</i>
	Reading <i>Co-Officiant</i>
Seven Blessings (optional)	Unity Candle <i>Co-Officiant</i>
Personal Remarks to Couple	Explanation of Chuppah & Reading of the Ketubah- <i>Rabbi Kolton</i>
Explanation of Chuppah & Reading of the Ketubah	Vows <i>Co-Officiant</i>
Vows	Rings <i>Rabbi Kolton</i>
Rings	Kiddush <i>Rabbi Kolton</i>
Kiddush (Blessing over the Wine)	Closing Blessing <i>Co-Officiant</i>
Closing Blessing	Closing Blessing <i>Rabbi Kolton</i>
Pronouncement	Pronouncement <i>Co-Officiant</i>
Breaking of the Glass	Breaking of the Glass <i>Rabbi Kolton</i>

Sample Wedding Program

Processional

Canon in D Major Johann Pachebel

Air from The Water Music George Frederic Handel

Lighting of Candles -

Mothers of the Bride & Groom

Clair de Lune Debussy

Song of Welcome - Rabbi Kolton

Erev Shel Shoshaneem Moshe Dor

(Night of the Roses)

Greetings and Welcome - Co-officiant

Readings *Song of Songs 2:8-10, 14, 16a; 8:6-7a*

I Corinthians 12:31 - 13:8a

Lighting of the Unity Candle - Co-officiant

Arioso in A Johann Sebastian Bach

Explanation of the Chuppah - Rabbi Kolton

Reading of the Ketubah - Rabbi Kolton

Exchange of Vows - Co-officiant

Exchange of Rings - Rabbi Kolton

Blessing over the Wine - Rabbi Kolton

Seven Wedding Blessings - Rabbi Kolton, Co-officiant

Closing Prayers- Rabbi Kolton, Co-officiant

Pronouncement - Co-officiant

Breaking of the Glass - Rabbi Kolton

Recessional

Trumpet Voluntary Jeremiah Clarke

Sample Wedding Ceremony #1

Processional

Welcome and Opening Song: Erev Shel Shoshaneem

We are gathered here this afternoon to celebrate the place of love that Sandy and Jack have found together. We are gathered here this afternoon to affirm their love and to join them in celebrating their unity. We are gathered here this afternoon to support their decision to enter into legal union with each other. We come together on the day of your wedding, Jack and Sandy, with great hope in our hearts that you may together create a future of grace and beauty, that you may feel only the warm pulse of love in their home, that your lives may be filled with simcha and ahava - in Hebrew, joy and love.

Greetings to Couple and Vows

Sandy and Jack, it is such a pleasure to stand here with you today. Your love for each other - your trust in each other, and your respect for one another was so apparent to me when we met earlier.

You met on a golf course - Jack, you said that you knew right away - that Sandy captivated your heart immediately - and Sandy you said that from that day on Jack has been your best friend and life partner.

Sandy, you expressed to me how lucky you feel to have found Jack - how you feel like your life has just begun - Jack has brought to your life so many gifts. You emphasized to me how much you appreciate Jack's kindness. He allows you to feel treasured - to feel loved and cherished. You told me very simply that with Jack - you feel at home. Jack brings to your life the gift of his loving heart.

Jack, you shared with me how above all - you respect Sandy. You respect her strength of body - mind - and character. You talked about how Sandy has brought vitality to your life - she keeps you young and active. You told me that you were attracted to her from the very first moment that you saw her. Sandy brings to your life the gift of vital.

Together you have traveled a journey of love that has brought you to this, your wedding day. My hope for you on this day is that you will always remember the love you feel for one another here at this moment. I hope that in times of struggle, because there will be struggle, you will use the memory of your wedding day to renew your love for one another. It is my hope for you on this day that you will continue to see light in each other's eyes, that you will continue to learn life lessons from one another, and that your friendship will fill your lives with peace and happiness.

Seven Blessings

(Personal blessings are given by seven loved ones.)

Vows

You stand now, ready to take your vows underneath a Chupa. (Explain significance of Chupa)

Because of the love that you share, at this time, I invite you to share your vows with one another. And as you do, I invite all married couples to hold hands, and in the silence of your own hearts, to renew your wedding vows.

I, Sandy, take you, Jack, as my loving husband and vow:

To embrace you as my best friend and partner

To live with you and laugh with you

To respect and support your interests, hopes, and dreams

To love and cherish you

For the rest of my life.

I, Jack, take you, Sandy, as my loving wife and vow:

To embrace you as my best friend and partner

To live with you and laugh with you

To respect and support your interests, hopes, and dreams

To love and cherish you

For the rest of my life.

Ring Exchange

The circle is a symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe. It is a symbol of wholeness and perfection and of peace. In the two rings you are about to exchange, it is the symbol of your union. May these two rings be ever symbolic of the unbroken circle of your love. Just as these rings have no ending, so may your happiness and love be endless.

Jack, place the ring on Sandy's finger and repeat after me: I give you this ring/ as a sign of the love I hold for you/ and the faith that we share in our marriage. Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li. I am to my beloved and my beloved is mine.

Sandy, place the ring on Jack's finger and repeat after me: I give you this ring/ as a sign of the love I hold for you/ and the faith that we share in our marriage. Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li. I am to my beloved and my beloved is mine.



Kiddush

HA-YA YEEN HA-ZE ME-KOO-DASH L'SIMCHAT HA-KALA V'HA-CHATHAN OO
L'SHLOM HA-CHAT V'HA-KALA L'CHAY-AY-HEM B'KI-DOO-SHEEM
L'CHAY-AY-HEM B'YA-CHAD B'EMOONA OO B'AHAVA

This wine is dedicated to the joy of the bride and groom and to their life together in trust, love, and marriage.

Song

SHEEM'OO

“SHEEM'OO SHEEM'OO OHAYAY AHAVA
KEER'OO KEER'OO MOSHAY Y'SHOUA
KEE AYN Y'SHOUA BLEE AHAVA
O-AHAVA AHAVA KEN T'HEE.”

“Listen now you lovers of love
hear this you seekers of happiness
there is no happiness without love.”



Wedding Ceremony Sample #2

Opening Song

Greeting to Guests and Couple (paraphrase)

Today we honor Sara's and Robert's love by weaving together their individual heritages. We pay respect to both Judaism and Christianity. We hold in our hearts these basic truths: That spirituality is about seeking compassion. That wisdom is about respect. And that love thrives in a climate of universal understanding and commitment to all humanity.

Explanation of the Chuppah

Unity Candle

Before you, there are three candles. The two smaller candles symbolize the lives of the bride and groom. Until today, both have let their light shines apart from each other. Now they proclaim their love in this new union of marriage. They will light the center candle from the flame of life that will be kindled by both their mothers Cindy and Sherry.

Music Selection

Make our Lives, One Life

Mothers, Sara and Robert light candles

To Symbolize their new life together, Sara and Robert will now join their flames as a symbol of unity, as they light the unity candle.

Rabbi Kolton: "From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven. And when two souls are destined to find one another, their streams of light flow together and a single light goes forth from their united being." Rabbi Baal Shertov.

Rabbi Kolton: Kiddush:

(They are using Robert's Bar Mitzvah Kiddush Cup)

Explanation and Blessing over the wine.

Rabbi Kolton: Robert's and Sara's Love Story

Ketubah Reading and Signing Exchange of Vows

I Sara, take you Robert to be my loving husband
I promise to be the companion of your heart
To have and to hold you
To love and respect you
To be faithful to you
To love you in sickness and in health
I will go where you go
And stay where you stay
For the rest of my life
This is my solemn vow

Reverse Vows for Robert

Ring Exchange

Rabbi Kolton: Actual Ring Exchange

Ring is put on the index finger, because it contains the artery that goes straight to the heart, and a ring is a fitting symbol of love because it is a never ending circle, so may your love for each other never end.

Robert: Ani L Dodi V'Dodi Li. I am my beloveds and my beloved is mines. With this ring, be consecrated to me, as my wife.

Sara: Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li. I am my beloveds and my beloved is mines. With this ring, be consecrated unto me, as my husband.

Rabbi Kolton: Explanation, reading, and signing of the Ketubah Will be witnessed by both fathers.

Song Selection

Sheem'oo

"SHEEM'OO SHEEM'OO OHAYAY AHAVA
KEER'OO KEER'OO MOSHAY Y'SHOUA
KEE AYN Y'SHOUA BLEE AHAVA
O-AHAVA AHAVA KEN T'HEE."

"Listen now you lovers of love
hear this you seekers of happiness
there is no happiness without love."

Kiddush: Seven Blessings **-Written by Rabbi Miriam Jerris**

Part of Traditional Jewish wedding liturgy

Rabbi: Shehekheyanu, v'kiy'manu, V'higiyanu, lazmau haze

Reverend: Wondrous is the eternal unfolding of the seasons which has brought us to this joyous occasion.

B'rukhot n'kudot hatsiyun b'hiyim

Gratifying are the passages of life that bring both joy and sorrow and offer challenge and opportunity

Barukh haor baadam

Radiant is the spirit of humankind that illuminates our world more than the stars in the heavens

B'rukha hay'kkholet baadam

Empowering is the potential in human beings to combine love, wisdom, and courage and to forge a better life for themselves and their loved ones

B'rukha t'mikhat hamispakha hahaverim v'hak'hila

Precious is the love of family, friends and community

B'rukha simhat hatan v'kala, gila v'rina, ditsa v'hevda, ahava v'ahava, sholom v'rayut
Blessed is the happiness of the bride and groom, joy and gladness, pleasure and exaltation, love and harmony, peace and friendship

B'rukhim hahatan v'kala

We rejoice with this bridegroom and bride

Breaking of the Glass

Mazel Tov



Sample Wedding Vows

*I, Barbara take you James as my husband.
To have and to hold from this day forward
For better or for worse
For richer or for poorer
In sickness and in health
I promise
To honor and respect
To love and cherish you
All the days of my life.*

*I, Kelly, take you Ezekiel, as my husband; and promise:
To accept you as my best friend and partner,
To grow with you and be open and honest with you,
To respect and support your interests, hopes, and dreams,
To be faithful to you and attentive to your needs,
To honor your religious and cultural traditions,
To comfort you and your family in times of illness, and
To love, honor, and cherish you for the rest of my life.*

*Do you, Michael promise
To love Jennifer
To Cherish her
To respect her and her ideas
To be Saraient with her
To comfort her in times of illness
And to love her for the rest of your life?*

*I, Matthew, take you, Amanda as my loving wife.
I promise: To be the companion of your heart
To have you and to hold you
To love and respect you.
To be faithful to you*

*To love you in sickness and in health
I will go where you go
And stay where you stay
For the rest of my life.
This is my solemn vow.*

*I, Melissa, take you, David, to be my husband; and promise:
To accept you as my best friend and partner
To grow with you and be faithful to you
To respect and support your interests, hopes and dreams
To honor your religious and cultural traditions
To comfort you and your family in times of need and
To love, honor, and cherish you for the rest of my life.*

*I, David, love and cherish you, Melissa,
For being all that you are,
All that you are not,
And all that you can be.
Know that I am here for you,
And that your pain will be mine,
And your joy mine as well.
All I ask is you -
Your love - your trust - your caring,
And I promise you mine in return.
I choose you to be my husband
Till death do us part.*

Groom:

*I commit my life to our partnership in marriage.
I promise:
To comfort you
To communicate with you
To respect you and your ideas
To be with you in joy and in sorrow.*

*You are my closest friend.
Will you share my life with me?*

Bride: I will.

*Bride:
I commit my life to our partnership in marriage.*

I promise:

To comfort you

To communicate with you

To respect you and your ideas

To be with you in joy and in sorrow.

You are my closest friend.

Will you share my life with me?

Groom: I will.

I, Amy, take you, Joshua, to be my husband; and promise:

To accept you as my best friend and partner,

To grow with you and be open and honest with you,

To respect and support your interests, hopes, and dreams,

To be faithful to you and attentive to your needs,

To honor your religious and cultural traditions,

To comfort you and your family in times of illness, and

To love, honor, and cherish you for the rest of my life.



I, John, take you, Stephanie

*To be my Husband, to have and to hold from this day forward,
For better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in
health.*

*I promise to honor and respect, to love and cherish you all the
days of my life.*

*With this ring, I wed you and pledge you my love now and
forever.*



Suggested Readings

From I Corinthians 13.

If I speak with the eloquence of men and of angels, but have no love, I become no more than blaring brass or crashing cymbal. If I have the gift of foretelling the future and hold in my mind... all human knowledge... and if I also have the absolute faith which can move mountains, but have no love, I amount to nothing...

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience – it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impose nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad... when truth prevails.

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no dashing of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.

Love – Leo Buscaglia

One cannot give what one does not possess.

To give love, one must possess love.

One cannot teach what one does not understand.

To teach love, one must comprehend love.

One cannot know what one does not study.

To study love, one must live in love.

One cannot appreciate what one does not recognize.

To recognize love, one must be receptive to love.

One cannot have doubt about that which one wishes to trust.

To trust love, one must be convinced of love.

One cannot admit what one does not yield to.

To yield to love, one must be vulnerable to love.

One cannot live what one does not dedicate oneself to.

To dedicate oneself to love, one must be forever growing in love.

Poem - by Dorie Runyon

I will love you
not just for today
or a year from now
but within the heart of my feelings
where time can draw no boundaries,
I will love you
not just as a memory of
a moment shared
but in every glimpse of beauty
that stirs my senses and captures
my pleasure to live.
When I walk alone
you will be the sun at my back
and the smile on my lips.
In my dreams
you will appear as the visions
I've yet to see.
Whether real or imagined
each part of my life is measured
with you at the center of love.



From The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran

You were born together, and together
you shall be for evermore.

You shall be together when the white
wings of death scatter your days.

But let there be spaces in your togetherness,
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love;

Let it rather be a moving sea between
the shores of your souls.

Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.

Give one another of your bread but eat
not from the same loaf.

Sing and dance together and be joyous,
but let each one of you be alone,

Even as the strings of a lute are alone
though they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.

For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.

And stand together yet not too near together;

For the pillars of the temple stand apart,

And the oak tree and the cypress grow
not in each other's shadow.



Explanations of Jewish Rituals and Symbols

The Processional

The Jewish custom places a strong emphasis on the role of both parents leading their children down the aisle to marriage. A traditional Jewish processional is beautiful in its simplicity. The Goom is escorted to the Chuppah by his parents and the Bride by her parents. Once the Bride arrives, it is customary for the Groom to come out, meet her, and lead her into the Chuppah.

Chuppah (hoo-PAH)

A symbol of the home the bride and groom will build together. It represents a shelter to protect the couple, while remaining open on all sides to signify hospitality. It is said that the space beneath the Chuppah is spiritually charged and, according to tradition, the bride is considered married from the moment she steps under the chuppah.

Unity Candle

Two candles are at the front of the room, to be lit by the mothers of the bride and groom at the beginning of the ceremony. The bride and groom each take one of the lit candles, and together, light the central, unlit candle, symbolizing unity as a couple. The individual candles remain lit to signify that each retains their individuality.

Ketubah (k'tooBAH)

A marriage contract document that describes the rights and obligations of the bride and groom. Traditionally, the document was signed by the groom and then given to the bride for safekeeping. In modern weddings the bride also signs the contract. This document is often framed and displayed in the newlywed's home.

Together, the Bride and Groom chose a Ketubah that reflects their relationship and their future life together as Husband and Wife. It is an expression of the spiritual gifts they will exchange as a married couple.



Drinking of the Wine

Wine is associated with celebrations of joy. The bride and groom share a cup of wine, signifying that married life has bitterness and double sweetness.

Breaking the Glass

The breaking of the glass concludes the ceremony. It is an ancient practice that is entirely customary and non-religious. Breaking the glass has many meanings. We say that it is a symbol of the strength inherent in the bride and groom to overcome any adversity that lies ahead and remain in love. The glass is shattered to remind us that love is fragile and must be protected. After the glass is broken, it is customary for all who have witnessed the marriage to say "Mazel Tov," wishing the bride and groom a life of good luck, good fortune, and love.

Yichud

After the ceremony, the Bride and Groom adjourn to a room for a few tender moments of privacy. The bride and groom take a moment for their togetherness and unity as a married couple before they greet their guests and continue their celebration.



Ceremony Checklist

- Confirm time & date with Rabbi Kolton
- Marriage License
- Wedding Rings
- Vows
- Ketubah
- Black pen for signing Ketubah
- Chuppah
- Kiddush cup (Wine goblet)
- White wine
- Unity candle and holder with matches
- Reader and readings
- Seven Blessings
- Glass to break (light bulb or wine glass)
- Napkin or cloth to wrap glass
- Microphone
- Please set up Ritual items on small table for Ceremony



