

Jewish & Interfaith Weddings: **Frequently Asked Questions**

Do you perform interfaith weddings?

I am active in the interfaith community and regularly perform life-cycle ceremonies for interfaith families and individuals. While I recognize the fact that interfaith marriage is inevitability in a pluralistic society I counsel couples to give serious thought to the issues that it presents.

Do you perform out of town/country ceremonies?

Schedule permitting, I do perform ceremonies throughout the country and on some occasions abroad. Recent weddings have been in England, Scotland, Nevis (Caribbean), and in several U.S. cities.

Do we need a rabbi and cantor to marry us?

No. According to Jewish law a rabbi or cantor can perform your wedding.

When are the Ketubah and state license signed? Who witnesses these signings?

The Ketubah and state license are signed prior to the choopah ceremony. I usually schedule the signing for a half hour prior to the processional. This allows time for the brief signing as well as a few moments of peace and focus before the ceremony.

Who can sign the Ketubah?

Traditionally the Ketubah is signed by the bride and groom along with two witnesses of Jewish faith. Jewish law requires that the witnesses be unrelated (by blood) to the bride and groom.

How long does the ceremony last?

The wedding ceremony lasts approximately twenty minutes. As each wedding is different, times do vary slightly.

Should we provide guests with a written explanation of the symbols of the Jewish wedding?

I explain the symbols of the wedding in the course of the ceremony. That said, many couples prepare written programs that include explanations as well as a list of participants and in some cases, personal words to their guests.

What is the translation of the Seven Blessings (Sheva Brachot)?

The Shevah Brachot, or seven nuptial blessings, are recited in Hebrew. (See Transliterated & Translated Sheva Brachot). Here are rough translations of the seven benedictions that will be read:

Blessed are You, Lord, our God, Ruler of the Universe:

-Who created wine.

-Who created everything for God's glory.

-Who fashioned humanity.

- Who fashioned humanity in God's own image and likeness.
- Who brings joy to Israel through children.
- Who helps make the new beginning for the couple as joyous as the Garden of Eden.
- Who gives us joy and happiness through the unity of bride and groom, and giving us the power to express our joy.

Can we include personal vows in the ceremony?

Absolutely. You are welcome to prepare personal vows. If nerves or emotions make it impossible for you to say them, I will be happy to recite them on your behalf.

Do we need to rehearse the ceremony at the rehearsal dinner?

No. The Jewish (or interfaith) wedding ceremony is quite simple and, in my opinion, should not be rehearsed. The purpose of the rehearsal dinner is two-fold: to gather the families together prior to the wedding and to rehearse the processional and recessional so that participants can feel comfortable with their entrances and exits.

Should our wedding bands be solid or can they contain gemstones?

Jewish custom states that the wedding band(s) should be both precious and simple. Therefore, bands containing stones are not customary. Some couples use simple bands for the ceremony and wear bejeweled ones thereafter. While I make this recommendation, I leave the final choice to the couple.

Can tribute be paid to deceased family members without the ceremony becoming maudlin?

It is certainly up to you, but it would be appropriate to make mention of departed loved ones, particularly if the loss was recent or the relationship close.

Can you include a song in the ceremony?

Absolutely. I am happy to include any appropriate secular or religious music.

Do we need instrumental accompaniment for the ceremony?

No. That said, if songs are being sung either during the processional, ceremony or recessional, accompaniment can be a beautiful addition.

Should we provide kippot (yarmulkes) for all of the male guests?

Male Jews wear kippot to acknowledge God's presence above them, and as symbolic of their obligations to God. It is customary for one to wear kippot during all Jewish life-cycle events (including baby namings, bar mitzvahs and funerals). It is therefore appropriate to make some kippot available for both Jewish and non-Jewish male guests.

Can our parents or other family members participate in the wedding ceremony?

Yes. There is a number of ways in which you can honor family and friends. They can witness Ketubah or state license signing. They can be called upon to recite the Seven Blessings or to read the Ketubah during the ceremony or they can be invited to lead the Kiddush (wine blessing) or Motzi (bread blessing) at the reception. In addition, you may want a family member or friend to sing, read or speak at your wedding.

Should we provide kosher meals for any conservative or orthodox guests?

The question is based on the assumption that your catering is not strictly kosher. It would therefore be appropriate to provide kosher meals for guests. I suggest that you confer with your guests regarding their specific dietary requirements.

[If you have any questions which are not addressed in this document, please contact me for clarification.](#)