

# Rabbi Noam Raucher

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Dear NAME OF THE COUPLE

Thank you for asking me to perform your upcoming wedding. I am honored to be included in this special moment in your lives. In this short letter, I want to make clear our mutual expectations, so that we avoid any misunderstandings and bad feelings.

I will help you prepare both for your wedding ceremony and for your married life afterwards. I hope that, following your wedding, we will maintain a relationship, and you will feel comfortable calling upon me as your rabbi or spiritual guide.

I will make every effort to present a meaningful, spiritual, and dignified wedding ceremony. I deeply respect the magic and sanctity of the wedding ceremony, and I will, to the best of my abilities, offer a ceremony that you and your guests will remember with warmth and joy. I try hard to make every wedding personal. I don't do "canned" weddings. For this reason, I ask you to share your time and your thoughts with me, so that we can come to know one another and create the wedding that best suits you.

Please be prepared to meet with me three to four times in advance of your wedding. The first time is a brief getting-acquainted meeting. The remaining meetings should take about an hour each. At one of these meetings, we'll discuss your wedding ceremony -- each of its symbols and their meanings. I want you to have the wedding you've always dreamed about...but that takes some preparation. At the other meeting, we'll spend some time talking about married life and its challenges.

In addition to our meetings, I strongly recommend that you do some personal preparation for marriage. Here are two suggestions:

- Look for a "Making Marriage Work" class, or something similar, offered by your local synagogue, Jewish Federation, or another Jewish institution.
- In your local area find a trained counselor or "marriage mentor" to talk through issues that are central to marriage – communication, expectations, family, finances, intimacy, etc.

Under the best of circumstances, it would be difficult to come to know each other well in a short time, and this difficulty is compounded by the pressure of planning a wedding. You can help me know you better, and help me prepare a wedding that reflects your personalities, by "completing" an informal assignment for me:

Please write me a letter - each of you - about why you've chosen to marry this person. What attracted you to this person? What told you this was "the one"? What qualities, values, personality traits, commitments, have cemented your love for this person? Tell me anything that will help me understand your love for one another. Address this letter to your fiancé. ***But don't show it to your fiancé.*** Seal it in an envelope, and bring it or e-mail it to me approximately 2-3 weeks before the

wedding. I promise you I will never mention or use anything in these letters that might embarrass you. (Anything your grandmother shouldn't hear will remain our secret!) But I'm sure that your letters will tell me much about you and your relationship, and that will be helpful in planning my remarks at the wedding. I will return the letters to you after your wedding. I suggest you take a romantic moment on your honeymoon, or your first anniversary to share them.

Many people get nervous about what they're expected to pay the rabbi...so let's get that out of the way: My normal fee for marriage and wedding facilitation is \$2000 which includes the ceremony, planning for it, and the meetings we have together in advance. A 20% charge is added for any weddings requested on a holiday weekend, and/or within a 30 day period of the wedding date.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, please know that if your wedding takes place outside the Greater Los Angeles area (eg: requires more than an hour of travel) we will need to discuss travel expenses and accommodations.

You can save us both a lot of embarrassment by bringing your check to our final meeting or sending it to me prior to the wedding. That way I don't have to ask, and you don't have to go fishing for your checkbook during the wedding.

I realize that arranging a wedding is never easy. If there is a way I can make my part of your celebration easier, please let me know. I am available to you by phone, 310-614-2125 or email, NoamRaucher@Gmail.com.

I look forward to celebrating with you.

Yours,

*Rabbi Noam Raucher*

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<sup>1</sup> I reserve the right to cancel these fees at any time.

## **PREPARING FOR YOUR WEDDING**

In the months PRECEDING the wedding, you'll need to arrange for the following, and bring them to the wedding ceremony....

1. State Marriage License. For information, call the County Clerk's/Magistrate's office, (916) 558-1784 or look up:  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHSI/Pages/Marriage-License-Information.aspx>

*After the ceremony, it is your responsibility to take this document and file it with the county.*

2. Ketubah\* (If you need help filling it in, you should bring it in at least three weeks before your wedding date) For lovely, personalized *ketubot* (plural) I recommend: Ketuba Art, by Ginny Reel: <http://ketubah-arts.com>. Another website, [www.ketubah.com](http://www.ketubah.com) has a large selection.

### **\*Some information about alternative wedding documents like the ketubah:**

#### ***1. Ketubah –***

Most common wedding document. Most Ketubah websites have many options for texts and also the opportunity to write your own. They range in artistic style, text, and price. Here are a few websites that have sample texts available to view. Some websites like [www.ketubah.com](http://www.ketubah.com) allow you to buy a plain ketubah with just the text if you want to have another artist decorate it. Before your order is complete, Rabbi Noam can help you complete the information form on Ketubah Wizard with your Hebrew names or Hebrew transliteration of your names, the Hebrew date, and location of the wedding. Here are other Ketubah sites I like: Etsy and <https://ketubahgraphia.com>

Read Gallery Judaica's article on choosing a Ketubah text and other FAQ's like picking your witnesses. Most sites and artists will either have many options of texts to choose from or allow you to write your text. After you have completed ordering/checking out, you will be prompted to enter your information (names, location, etc..) to personalize your Ketubah. This may be a form or an online platform that you can give me access to so I can assist you if needed.

Please send your digital proof to Rabbi Noam before you have your Ketubah printed to confirm all of the information is correct.

#### ***2. Brit Ahuvim – Egalitarian Lovers Covenant / Partnership Document***

Brit Ahuvim is an ancient egalitarian Jewish partnership ritual which has seen a modern comeback thanks to Rachel Adler, a professor at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. This ritual involves placing significant objects in a bag (which you describe) and then both lifting the bag to show you are acquiring the relationship (rather than the

other person, as you do in a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony). There is also a Brit Ahuvim document that serves as a wedding contract (similar to the Ketubah). This can be used for same-gender couples or any couple.

### **3. *Te' naim*** – Conditions/Intentions for the marriage

A separate document from the Ketubah, the *Te' naim* document states the intentions and values for the union, often including quotes and verses. It is read and signed before the wedding, and the ceremony included the breaking of the plate by the mothers of the wedding couple. The *Te' naim* document allows couples more creativity and personalization not always included in traditional ketubot. Nowadays there are many more options for the Ketubah texts, including alternative texts that contain the *Te' naim* sentiments, eliminating a need for the second document. If you're interested in having a *Te' naim* document or ceremony as an engagement ritual before the wedding in addition to a ketubah signing, please let Rabbi Noam know.

## **FOR YOUR CEREMONY UNDER THE HUPPAH YOU WILL NEED:**

- 4. Two kiddush cups or wine goblets.**
- 5. A bottle of Kosher wine (I suggest white so it doesn't stain if it spills.)**
- 6. A glass or light bulb wrapped in a napkin, or in a satin bag, to break.**
- 7. *Huppah* (Wedding Canopy)**
- 8. *Kippot* (Head coverings)**
- 9. Small table for all this stuff.**

## The Jewish Wedding

### I. PRELIMINARY RITUALS

#### A. *Kinyan* ("contracts") **Signing Documents:**

1. State Marriage License
2. *Ketuba* ("marriage agreement") -- witnesses, Jewish, non-relatives

#### B. *Bedeken* **Veiling & Blessing**

### II. THE WEDDING CEREMONY

#### A. **The Procession**

#### B. **Opening Blessings**

C. *Erusin* -- **Betrothal Blessings** -- recited over a full cup of wine.

D. **Exchanging Rings** -- ring is placed on right forefinger. Ring is whole, unbroken, and has no stones.

E. **The *Ketuba* is read aloud and presented to the bride [and groom].**

F. *Sheva Brachot* -- **Seven Wedding Blessing** -- recited over a second full cup of wine. These can be adapted to more progressive versions if necessary.

G. **Rabbi speaks to the couple.**

H. **Benediction (Blessing)**

I. **Groom breaks a glass.**

### III. AFTER THE CEREMONY

A. ***Yichood* ("Intimacy")** -- Bride and groom are given some moments of privacy.

B. **The Wedding Feast** -- It is an obligation of guest to entertain the bride and groom.

## Essential Information

Please take a moment to fill out this document and return it to  
Rabbi Raucher at [NoamRaucher@gmail.com](mailto:NoamRaucher@gmail.com)

DATE OF YOUR WEDDING: \_\_\_\_\_

STARTING TIME FOR CEREMONY: \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE WILL CEREMONY BE HELD? \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS OF LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

OTHERS PARTICIPING IN CEREMONY: Rabbi(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Cantor \_\_\_\_\_

Others \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR MAILING ADDRESS AFTER THE WEDDING:

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Anything else about your wedding that you want the rabbi to know?