21 Things Rabbis Wish Wedding Coordinators and Couples Knew About Planning a Jewish Wedding

INCLUDING ADVICE FOR INTERFAITH COUPLES PLANNING WEDDINGS

We asked a group of rabbis who are highly-sought-after wedding officiants to tell us what they wish wedding planners and couples knew about planning a Jewish wedding. Their wedding planning wisdom combines the practical and logistic with the ritual and spiritual.

I Wish Wedding Planners...

Would always remember to be sure the wine under the huppah is kosher.

- Rabbi Hyim Shafner

Would have a list of Jewish holidays and dates when couples came to see them, and made sure they didn't set a date during a Jewish holiday, when Jewish rabbis are almost certainly not going to be able to officiate.

- Rabbi Leila Gal Berner

Would encourage couples to relax and enjoy each other, and give each other the attention they deserve instead of directing so much of their attention outwards.

- Rabbi David Kuperman

Would not plan outdoor weddings in July and August. It's often thought of as romantic,

but everyone withers.

- Rabbi Leila Gal Berner

Knew about InterfaithFamily.com's wedding resource guide and clergy referral service to support interfaith couples and their families find Jewish clergy for their ceremonies and information on creating weddings and wedding programs that include Jewish ritual and blessings. - Rabbi Lev Ba'esh

Would do just a bit more to shield couples from the demands of other contractors (such as photographers). -Rabbi David Kuperman

Would do this automatically: It's nice to have a small table in the back of the huppah where the rabbi can have the two wine glasses, the glass the groom will stomp on, and any notes. - Rabbi Jason Miller

Would discourage the hotel, if that's where the wedding is being held, to place the table for the wine, glass to be broken, etc., directly in the middle of the space under the huppah so that it crowds out the wedding couple and the rabbi. - Rabbi David Kuperman

Told the bride and groom what I tell them before their wedding to try to keep them from getting overly stressed out: "Remember, the wedding is only one day of your lives. While it is important, try to focus on the bigger picture — your marriage."

- Rabbi Jason Miller

THE RABBIS:



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Interfaith weddings with some criteria
Does not co-officiate

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I WISH COUPLES PLANNING WEDDINGS...

Made a flow chart of who is doing what so the rabbi knows he is calling up the right people and covering all of the couple's desires.—Rabbi Hyim Shafner

Would not set the date and place until they've secured their rabbi. Too often couples wait to approach the rabbi they like until after they've plunked down the deposit on the venue and the caterer. The rabbi opens up the datebook and sees they are already committed to something else. It's sad, because then the person who performs the ceremony is not the person the couple really wanted. If the ceremony is really important to you —more important than the party—

secure the rabbi before you go to the caterer.

- Rabbi Leila Gal Berner

Would remember to be themselves when they come under the huppah rather than "bride" and "groom."

- Rabbi David Kuperman

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I WISH COUPLES PLANNING WEDDINGS

(...cont'd from previous page)

Would not plan to hold a summer wedding on a Saturday night. Ninety-nine percent of rabbis won't officiate on Shabbat, so a Saturday wedding has to start in the evening after Shabbat is over. During a lot of the year, Saturday night is fine, but for summer, six o'clock is too early in the evening to start a Saturday wedding. - Rabbi Leila Gal Berner

Would spend a little less time agonizing about planning. (My observations suggest that planning is like gas: it expands to fit the space available.)

- Rabbi David Kuperman

Recognized that while there are many ways in which to do a wedding, there's probably only one way in which not to do it: a way that's not their way.

- Rabbi David Kuperman

Would coordinate this into the ceremony: There's a beautiful midrash that God left Mt. Sinai to meet the Israelites who were on their way there. Together, they walked to the mountain to receive the Torah. The bride and groom recreate this scene when the groom goes up the aisle to meet his bride and then together they walk to the chuppah, their Mt. Sinai. - Rabbi Jason Miller

THE RABBIS (Cont'd from previous page)



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Rabbi Jason Miller Detroit, Michigan www.rabbijason.com 248-535-7090 Conservative rabbi



No interfaith weddings





Rabbi Hyim Shafner Author, The Everything Jewish Wedding Book Bais Abraham Congregation St. Louis, Missouri rabbi@baisabe.com

I WISH INTERFAITH COUPLES PLANNING WEDDINGS...

Knew that there are rabbis and cantors who will support them in their weddings and their marriage including officiation and co -officiation. - Rabbi Lev Ba'esh

Knew that Judaism has universal messages that speak to people from many traditions and religious affiliations. - Rabbi Lev Ba'esh

Knew that there are interfaith ketubot (wedding contracts). -Rabbi Lev Ba'esh

Would plan way ahead in picking their rabbi. First, there are only a few rabbis in the Washington, DC area who officiate at interfaith weddings. Second, preparing for an interfaith wedding involves extra counseling, as well as additional thought and planning. The wedding has to be different. More time is involved. And you want a rabbi who will officiate with thoughtful consideration; a rabbi who will do it nicely and authentically.

- Rabbi Leila Gal Berner

rabbi or cantor they spoke with so they had a choice in finding the right match with clergy for their wedding. While this is not vet possible for interfaith couples who research rabbis and cantors on their own, InterfaithFamily.com's referral list ensures that the Jewish clergy they contact are welcoming and inclusive of interfaith couples choosing officiation or co-officiation for their weddings." - Rabbi Lev

Could get a "yes" from every



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