

# Modern Ketubah by fine art photographer Daniel Sroka

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## 3 tips for creating a memorable interfaith wedding ceremony

by Daniel Sroka

Interfaith weddings represent a beautiful moment: the joining of two families with different traditions into one. This gives interfaith couples the opportunity to create a wedding ceremony that not only appeals to them artistically, but also symbolizes how their marriage brings together their religions and backgrounds.

When my customers ask me for advice on how to create an interfaith ceremony, I usually give them a few pieces of advice:

- (1) make no assumptions about what should be in the ceremony
- (2) be ready to compromise, discuss, and learn
- (3) remember that while you are trying to honor your families and religions, be sure to create a ceremony that is meaningful to you personally.

Make no assumptions: We all grow up with ideas of what a wedding should look like, grounded partly in our religion and the weddings we attended as children, and partly in the glamorous depictions of Hollywood. But when you create your own ceremony, be ready to set these ideas aside and start from scratch. Don't assume that your partner shares your same romanticized vision. What you consider essential to a wedding might be something that he or she can't stand. So while these ideas can influence you, and help guide you, don't assume that your wedding must follow those patterns.

Be ready to compromise and learn: I always recommend that a couple write down their ideas of what should be in a wedding, and then go through them step by step and explain to each other the meaning and importance of each. This is especially important for religious traditions that your partner may have no understanding of. Be patient, and be open-minded. When my wife and I did this, we began to realize that some traditions we originally considered essential really had no meaning once we tried to explain them. And other traditions we never paid attention to suddenly became very meaningful and important. So be ready to compromise, and be ready to learn how to balance each others needs,

concerns and ideas. Creating this wedding is one of your first big challenges as an interfaith couple.

Remember that the ceremony is about you: Families can exert a lot of pressure on a couple, especially when they are interfaith. Consciously or not, your family will try to influence what is in your wedding. This can be a good thing, especially when they help you understand and explain your traditions. But it can also become an unnecessary burden. Grandma won't come to a wedding that doesn't have a huppah. Your father won't be happy unless he walks you down the aisle. Aunt Sally insists that a valid wedding must be held in a church. Subtle demands and suggestions can start to overwhelm you! But don't let these family pressures dictate what your wedding should be like. Remember that this is your ceremony, the start of your marriage. Your family is important, but they are there for you, not the other way around. Listen to their concerns, be don't feel obligated to them.

While an interfaith wedding can often feel like a diplomatic mission between warring factions, it doesn't need to be. It can really be a way to introduce both sides of your family to the traditions and religion of their new in-laws. When my wife and I got married, we created a ceremony that combined both her Jewish and my Catholic traditions, while also introducing some new traditions and ideas of our own. This combined ceremony worked to bring our two families together in a beautiful and special way. Each side could relate to part of the ceremony, and also share the experience of something new. We explained the traditions throughout the ceremony, in simple terms, so that everyone could appreciate the parts they weren't familiar with. We worked carefully with our rabbi and priest to make sure the ceremony came together as a whole, and that no one felt left out, or confused. And in the end, our families loved it as much as we did. It was as much a celebration of our new marriage, as it was of our families and traditions that helped make us who we are. It let us honor our religions and families while defining our own newly combined values, and began to establish what it would mean to live together as an interfaith couple.

Daniel Sroka is the artist and owner of Modern Ketubah at [www.modernketubah.com](http://www.modernketubah.com). He creates modern fine art wedding ketubahs from his abstract photographs of flowers and leaves for interfaith, Jewish, and multi-cultural couples. All articles are copyright by Daniel Sroka ©2012. All rights reserved. These articles can only be reprinted with permission of the author.