



Israel
Religious
Action
Center



Israel Movement for Reform
and Progressive Judaism
התנועה הרפורמית והתנועה מתקדמת בישראל

Religious Freedom in Action

Advancing

Freedom of Choice in Marriage

Marriage and divorce in Israel are officiated based on the Ottoman Empire's practice of having religious communities oversee their own constituents' personal status. To this day, there are no interfaith or civil marriages performed in Israel which are recognized as valid.

The Orthodox Chief Rabbinate has sole jurisdiction over marriage and divorce for Jewish citizens, and only certified Orthodox rabbis may preside over both events. Rather than being emotional and tailored to the desires of the couples involved, these ceremonies are neither personal, modern, nor egalitarian.

Same-sex Jewish couples, Jews of patrilineal descent, Reform and Conservative Jews in Israel, and those who converted under Reform and Conservative rabbis are not entitled to have their marriage confirmed by the State unless they obtain a civil marriage abroad. In addition, women are particularly vulnerable in divorce proceedings, as a husband refusing to divorce his wife under Jewish law makes her unable to remarry.

IRAC is leading the campaign in making Israeli and Diaspora Jews aware of these practices by advocating for an end to the Rabbinate's monopoly over marriage and divorce, and to establish civil marriage in Israel for those interested. We have hosted two Three Weddings and a Statement events to raise awareness of the lack of freedom of choice in marriage at Temple Emanu-El in New York and Washington Hebrew Congregation in Washington, DC.

Contact us at pluralist@irac.org if you are interested in hosting an event to advocate for freedom of choice in marriage in Israel.

