



U.S. Embassy in Israel

Marriage

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This information has been prepared for use only as a general guide by American citizens contemplating marriage in Israel. It is not meant to be an exhaustive study and there may be situations not covered here. Therefore, in order to avoid possible inconvenience or embarrassment, you are advised to contact the appropriate marriage officer of your religious community and to be guided by his instructions.

Civil Marriage:

Israeli law does not permit civil marriages. According to Israeli law, only religious leaders may perform marriage ceremonies. Domestic partnerships based on spousal agreements may be afforded some rights associated with a legal marriage in Israel, but are not valid for U.S. immigration purposes.

Mixed Marriages:

With very few exceptions, Israeli civil law does not permit marriages between Jews and non-Jews within the state of Israel. The Israeli government will recognize marriages performed between Israeli Jewish citizens and non-Jews that are performed outside of Israel. Israeli law does permit marriages in Israel between converts.

Marriage between Jews:

Couples must apply to the Office of the Chief Rabbi of the district where they plan to be married. The bride and groom must present certificates of bachelorhood from a local rabbi in Israel, issued by the rabbis of their home synagogues.

A male may obtain the Certificate of Bachelorhood from a local rabbi in Israel, provided he presents two persons from his home religious community who are able to declare that he is single. If he was once married, he must show proof of a religious divorce.

A female whose husband died childless must present proof of "chalitza" or "release" from her brother-in-law, if living. If she was once married, she must also show proof of a religious divorce. A member of the House of Cohen may not marry a divorced woman in Israel.

A marriage may only take place fourteen days after the date of application to the Chief Rabbinate.

The married couple should present a marriage certificate, completed by the rabbi performing the marriage, to the Office of the District Commissioner, Ministry of Interior.

Marriage between Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Gregorian Armenians, Armenian Catholics, Syrian Catholics, Chaldean Uniates, Greek Catholics, Maronites, and Syrian Orthodox:

Members of these communities must apply to their pastor and follow the laws and regulations of the particular community involved.

The married couple must present the marriage certificate completed by the priest performing the marriage to the Office of the District Commissioner, Ministry of Interior.

Marriage between Protestants:

Only the religious communities mentioned above have de jure status in Israel. Other groups, including Protestant churches, have only de facto recognition; and in the absence of specific legislation on the subject, marriage between Protestants is arranged on ad hoc and individual basis.

The minister who plans to perform the ceremony writes to the Ministry for Religious Affairs, setting forth the names of the persons to be married, their nationality, and their religious affiliation. He requests the Ministry's permission to perform the marriage and to issue a marriage certificate. Protestants planning to be married in Israel should allow from two to four weeks to complete the formalities required before the marriage can take place.

Divorce:

When one of the parties is not Jewish and the marriage took place abroad, the procedure for ending mixed marriages is via a civil process, with the initial application now being made to the vice president of the family court. Since 1969, the Jurisdiction in Dissolution of Marriage Act, which was streamlined in 2005, covers civil divorce in Israel.

The only ground for civil divorce is mutual consent, but in certain situations the laws of the country where the marriage was performed will apply, and the divorce case can be decided in Israel, based on the laws of that country.

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