

The Marriage of Eleanor and Jonathan

Presentation

Who gives their blessings on this union between Eleanor and Jonathan?

We do.

Opening Reading

From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven. And when two souls that are destined to be together find each other, their streams of light flow together, and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being.

- Translator Unknown, from "Baal Shem Tov"

Convocation

Family and friends, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to this joyous celebration of the marriage between Eleanor and Jonathan. When two souls seeking each other in the throng of strangers have finally found each other, when they have seen that they are matched, when they realize that they are in sympathy and compatible, that they are, in a word --- alike --- there is then established between them a union which begins on earth and continues forever in heaven. This union is love, true love, such as few of us can conceive of, and for which the greatest sacrifices become the sweetest delights. Eleanor and Jonathan stand before us and before Spirit today to be married. With this in mind, let us pray.

Invocation

All Knowing Spirit, in whose presence all spirits bend to their becoming, we invite you to join us in this ceremony binding the lives and the destinies of Eleanor and Jonathan. As they speak and we hear the words that shall join them, allow the intentions being uttered in their hallowed dialogue to stand true in time and run deep as a singing river through the landscape of their lives. Amen.

Explanation of the Chuppah

Long after tents vanished from the Jewish landscape, wedding ceremonies were held beneath the sky in the hope that the marriage would be blessed by as many children as "the stars of the heavens." A canopy was used to create a sacred space for the wedding. This bridal canopy, or chuppah, symbolizes many things for a bride and groom --- among them: the safety of the home and modesty in the presence of God. The chuppah does not promise that love or the vows of marriage shall ward off weather or even catastrophe. The canopy's simple lines are a sketch for what might be --- the home Eleanor and Jonathan begin to build today. The flimsiness of the chuppah is a reminder that the only thing permanent about a home are those who dwell within its walls, loving each other and choosing to be together . . . choosing to be a family. The chuppah is the house of promises. It is the home of hope.

Rituals

Sharing of Wine --- Kiddush/The Red Thread

As Eleanor and Jonathan share this wine from two cups tied together with red thread, the ritual represents both Eleanor's Jewish heritage and Jonathan's Buddhist beliefs. The legend of the Red Thread states that from birth, a couple is bound by an invisible red thread --- and that thread continuously shrinks over the years until the couple is united in marriage. Nothing in this world can sever the thread --- not distance or time or changing circumstances; from birth, marriage is the destiny of the couple between whom the red thread runs. As Eleanor and Jonathan drink from these cups, the wine symbolizes the cup of life. It will be bitter, and it will be sweet. As you share this wine today, you pledge to share both the bitter and the sweet moments that life shall bring you . . . for in this marriage, you shall never be without a reservoir of support, strength and love from which to draw. May you find life's joys abundant, its bitterness sweetened, and all things blessed by true companionship and love. From the time you have shared together, love has grown, the red thread has shortened, and you have been brought beautifully to this day of vows and new beginnings. *Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of this wine.*

Honoring of Children

Alex, with the marriage of your mom, and Gregory, with the marriage of your dad, today, you enter into a new family. I shall now ask you both to affirm your blessings: will you give to this new family your trust, your joy, your love, and your laughter? If so, please answer "I will."

Alex: I will.
 Gregory: I will.

Jonathan and Eleanor, today, with this wedding, you create a new family. Will you promise to give Gregory and Alex your understanding, your support, your laughter, your patience and your warmth, being faithful and loving parents to them both? If so, please answer "we will."
 We will

Reading

You and I
 Have so much love
 That it
 Burns like a fire,
 In which we bake a lump of clay
 Molded into a figure of you
 And a figure of me.
 Then we take both of them,
 And break them into pieces,
 And mix the pieces with water,
 And mold again a figure of you,
 And a figure of me.
 I am in your clay.
 You are in my clay.
 In life we share a single quilt.
 In death we will share one bed.

- Translated by Kenneth Rexroth and Ling Chung, "Kuan Tao-Sheng"

Address

Eleanor and Jonathan, you come from two religious traditions, neither contradictory or antagonistic, because all religions, at their foundation, incorporate the same ideals --- compassion, kindness, respect and love of family, life, and Creator. However, marriage need not be an assimilation in which your beautiful differences cease to exist. As you embark upon this journey of marriage, you unite these two pasts, differing only in custom and sharing the values that brought you together in love. And today, there is more to weave into the beautiful tapestry of your relationship --- your united pasts --- for with this marriage, a new family is born. In joining your lives, you join the destinies of more than just two --- today, there are four. Alex and Gregory: you also contribute to the nurturing and mutual love pledged here today in the marriage of your parents. Their respect and love for you will never be diminished by their commitment to each other because you are and will always be the most cherished blessings of their lives. Eleanor and Jonathan, the foundation upon which you build this marriage and this family today is strong, for the strength of any people lies in their spirituality, however this is defined. And this holds true for all of you: always remember to honor your individual selves, to keep hold of the vision of your own destinies. This is what you have labored to create; your selves are your greatest treasure, what, in fact, you are each here to share with one another. Nothing can stand in the place of what you as individuals are here to accomplish. Always remember that your relationships have a destiny and are living things. Treat them with respect and nourish them with whatever they need to remain young and alive. And finally, remember to remember to love, for it is love that has brought you to this place. Love is the inspiration and magic of any marriage, the catalyst for the creation of family. Love is what brought you together, Eleanor and Jonathan, and love is what keeps you whole. Love will bring you joy, and it will give meaning to the pursuit of your destinies. For love is life's highest destiny, its greatest purpose, and its finest work.

Expression of Intent

Eleanor and Jonathan, having heard these words of love and the sanctity of marriage and having invited us to witness the happiness that you have found in each other, I now ask: are you ready to make the pledges that shall commit you to one another in love? If so, please answer "we are."
 We are.

And, are you, the family and friends here gathered in witness to these pledges, prepared to do all in your power to support, love and nurture these people in their marriage? If so, please answer "we are."
 We are.

Consecration

May every desire you have for your love and your marriage be fulfilled. May you be blessed with the vision to clearly behold one another, the hearing with which to know one another more deeply, and the endless generosity of spirit with which to nourish one another and sweetly keep the promises you make here today.

Vows

Eleanor, I take you to be my beloved wife. To stand with you in the grand love that binds us, to honor you, to change with you, to behold the highest meaning of our being, to learn compassion with you, to suffer with you, to be kind. This I promise you with my heart and with my soul till death parts us.

Jonathan, I take you to be my beloved husband. To stand with you in the grand love that binds us, to honor you, to change with you, to behold the highest meaning of our being, to learn compassion with you, to suffer with you, to be kind. This I promise you with my heart and with my soul till death parts us.

Ring Blessing

And as a visible symbol of this sacred union, you shall wear wedding rings. Rings are made precious by our wearing. They carry our meaning, saying who we are, where we have been, and where we are headed. They reflect us in their gleam, and they symbolize our purest, truest selves. Your wedding rings are most special because in wearing them, they state that you have chosen, freely, to be bonded. Just as your rings bear the imprint of your self, your past, and your future, so do you each bear the imprint of this wondrous day.

Ring Exchange

Eleanor, with this ring, I take you to be my wife, pledging to love you, to cherish you, and to honor you all the days of my life.

Jonathan, with this ring, I take you to be my husband, pledging to love you, to cherish you, and to honor you all the days of my life.

Pronouncement

Because you, Eleanor and Jonathan, have consented together in marriage, declaring your love and devotion to one another before Spirit and this company of loving friends and family, by the power vested in me by the State of Maryland, I now pronounce you husband and wife.

Benediction

May you rest in the comfort of knowing that you have chosen one another to serve the highest purposes of love and of growth. Depart here in peace, knowing that what you undertake this day will bring you immeasurable joy and blessings, and that the love you share can truly change the world. Go forth from this place with jubilation in your hearts, a smile upon your lips, and gladness in your feet.

Breaking the Glass

In the Jewish tradition, the breaking of the glass symbolizes the fragility of marriage. The broken glass cannot be mended; likewise, marriage is irrevocable. It is a transforming experience that will leave you both forever altered. It is a covenant between a couple and a covenant with Spirit. As you break the glass on this day and step forth into the future you are creating, remember that a marriage, too, may be broken with a single gesture or a series of small neglects. Treat your covenant and yourselves with infinite care, and you will know a lifetime of sweet joy.

Kiss

You may now kiss!

Presentation of the Newlyweds

Family and friends, I present to you Jonathan and Eleanor as husband and wife . . . parents to Alex and Gregory.