

# Institute for Judaism, Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

## Jewish Denominational Perspectives on Marriage

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Denomination or Movement	Religious Marriage	Civil Marriage
<p><b>Conservative</b></p>	<p>In December 2006, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) adopted three distinct and contradictory teshuvot (laws) that paved the way for significant changes in the Conservative movement's policies regarding homosexuality. The adoption of multiple laws permits Conservative rabbis &amp; congregations to select which opinion to follow and to individually choose whether or not to support the admission of gay &amp; lesbian candidates to seminary and blessing same-sex unions. The Biblical prohibition on anal sex was upheld in all three teshuvot.</p> <p>Each teshuvah addresses several topics, but this document only summarized the stance on marriage. The Dorff, Nevins &amp; Reisner teshuvah substantially liberalized Conservative Judaism's approach to blessing homosexual unions but set aside the questions of whether such unions reached the level of <i>kiddushin</i>. (<a href="http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/teshuvot/docs/20052010/dorff_nevins_reisner_dignity.pdf">http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/teshuvot/docs/20052010/dorff_nevins_reisner_dignity.pdf</a>)</p> <p>Both the Roth and Levy teshuvot maintained prohibitions against same-sex ceremonies. (<a href="http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/teshuvot/docs/20052010/roth_revisited.pdf">http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/teshuvot/docs/20052010/roth_revisited.pdf</a>) (<a href="http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/teshuvot/docs/20052010/levy_ssa.pdf">http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/teshuvot/docs/20052010/levy_ssa.pdf</a>)</p> <p>In 2012, the CJLS unanimously approved two model same-sex marriage ceremonies and a ceremony of dissolution (divorce) created by Rabbis Dorff, Nevins, and Reisner. One ceremony follows the traditional Jewish wedding liturgy while the other uses a new model. Both ceremonies reflect the kedushah or holiness in the covenant between the two parties but neither uses the mechanism of kiddushin due to the non-egalitarian nature of kiddushin marriage, the requirement of a get for divorce, and the gender-specific language used in kiddushin ceremonies and rituals. (<a href="http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/2011-2020/same-sex-marriage-and-divorce-appendix.pdf">http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/2011-2020/same-sex-marriage-and-divorce-appendix.pdf</a>)</p>	<p>In 2003, the United Synagogue for Conservative Judaism (USCJ) issued a statement for Equal Opportunity in the United States (<a href="http://www.uscj.org/Equal_Opportunity_In6670.html">http://www.uscj.org/Equal_Opportunity_In6670.html</a>),</p> <p>In 2006, this position was clarified in a Statement on the Marriage Amendment (<a href="http://www.uscj.org/Statement_on_Marriag7019.html">http://www.uscj.org/Statement_on_Marriag7019.html</a>) and stated that the USCJ opposed any governmental action to define marriage and discriminate against gay and lesbians in regards to civil marriage.</p>
<p><b>Humanistic</b></p>	<p>In 2003, the Association of Humanistic Rabbis adopted a resolution that allowed and encouraged members to perform weddings and commitment ceremonies for same-gender couples. (<a href="http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc/upload/AHR%20Diverse%20Sexualities.pdf">http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc/upload/AHR%20Diverse%20Sexualities.pdf</a>)</p>	<p>In 2003, the Association of Humanistic Rabbis adopted a resolution to allow and encourage members to sign marriage licenses and civil union registrations for same-gender couples. In 2004, the Society of Humanistic Judaism passed a resolution supporting Marriage Equality (<a href="http://www.shj.org/MarriageEquality.htm">http://www.shj.org/MarriageEquality.htm</a>).</p>
<p><b>Orthodox</b></p>	<p>The Orthodox Movement has multiple branches within it but all consider homosexual behavior to be halachicly (by law) prohibited. Thus, same-gender religious marriage is not permitted. (<a href="http://www.ou.org/public_affairs/article/ou_resp_same_sex_marriage">http://www.ou.org/public_affairs/article/ou_resp_same_sex_marriage</a>)</p>	<p>As homosexuality is halachicly prohibited, othodoxy does not support same-gender civil marriage and the Orthodox Union officially supports the federal marriage amendment that defines marriage as between a man and a woman. (<a href="http://www.ou.org/public_affairs/article/ou_resp_same_sex_marriage">http://www.ou.org/public_affairs/article/ou_resp_same_sex_marriage</a>)</p>

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<b>Reconstructionist</b>	<p>"Same -gender partnerships have the same potential for embodying these qualities as do heterosexual marriages. As we support the long-term commitment of heterosexual couples and acknowledge the kedushah of their marriages, so do we support long-term partnerships between gays or lesbians and affirm that kedushah resides in committed relationships between same-gender Jewish couples." (p. 37) 1993 Report of the Reconstructionist Commission on Homosexuality (<a href="http://jrf.org/node/1742">http://jrf.org/node/1742</a>)</p> <p>The Reconstructionist Rabbinic Association (RRA) encourages their members to officiate at same-gender ceremonies, but does not mandate that they do so.</p>	<p>In 2004, the Reconstructionist movement passed the Resolution in Support of Civil Marriage for Same-Sex Couples, which endorsed the right of same-sex couples to marry in civil ceremonies and supported legislation and legal action to that end. (<a href="http://www.therra.org/resolution-Mar2004.htm">http://www.therra.org/resolution-Mar2004.htm</a>)</p>
<b>Reform</b>	<p>In 2000, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) issued a resolution on Same Gender Officiation (<a href="http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/resodisp.pl?file=gender&amp;year=2000">http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/resodisp.pl?file=gender&amp;year=2000</a>) that permitted rabbis to choose whether or not they will officiate religious same-sex unions and respects the choices that individuals make on this issue. However, the resolution also states that a relationship between two people of the same gender can serve as the foundation of stable Jewish families and is worthy of affirmation through appropriate Jewish ritual. As part of the resolution, the CCAR subsequently developed a kiddushin (marriage) ceremony and an affirmation ceremony for same sex couples. (<a href="http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc/upload/CCAR%20Union%20Services%20for%20Same%20Gender%20Couples.pdf">http://elearning.huc.edu/jhvrc/upload/CCAR%20Union%20Services%20for%20Same%20Gender%20Couples.pdf</a>)</p>	<p>In 1996, the CCAR issued a resolution in support of civil marriage for gay and lesbian couples and against a governmental ban on gay and lesbian marriages (<a href="http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/resodisp.pl?file=gl&amp;year=1996">http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/resodisp.pl?file=gl&amp;year=1996</a>). This issue was distinct from the question of rabbinic officiation, which was not decided upon until 2000.</p> <p>In 1997, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC, now the Union for Reform Judaism, URJ) issued a resolution in support of civil marriage (<a href="http://urj.org/about/union/governance/reso//?syspage=article&amp;item_id=2000">http://urj.org/about/union/governance/reso//?syspage=article&amp;item_id=2000</a>).</p>
<b>Renewal</b>	<p>Jewish Renewal has long been known for their inclusion of LGBT people and families. Aleph, the Renewal Movement's denominational body responsible for creating resources, supporting communities, and developing leaders, affirms this commitment in its Statement of Principles (below) and as a result, religious marriages in the Jewish Renewal Movement have long been part of its practices.</p> <p>"We welcome and recognize the sanctity of every individual regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We recognize respectful and mutual expressions of adult human sexuality as potentially sacred expressions of love and therefore we strive to welcome a variety of constellations of intimate relationships and family forms including gay, lesbian, and heterosexual relationships as well as people choosing to be single." (<a href="http://www.aleph.org/documents/AffirmationsFinal4-08.pdf">http://www.aleph.org/documents/AffirmationsFinal4-08.pdf</a>)</p>	<p>In 2008, Ohalah, the Jewish Renewal Rabbinic Association, passed a right to marry resolution (<a href="http://www.ohalah.org/Ohalah-new/tikkunolam.html">http://www.ohalah.org/Ohalah-new/tikkunolam.html</a>) urging Californians to legalize same-gender marriage, thus opposing Proposition 8, and calling on residents of other states to educate themselves and vote against ballot measures that define marriage as between a man and a woman.</p>