

SPILLING OUT WINE: A NEW WEDDING BLESSING

BY DEBORAH EISENBACH-BUDNER

In the course of planning our wedding, my husband Steven and I looked closely at Jewish wedding prayers and blessings. We came face to face with a painful contradiction between our love for our gay and lesbian friends and relatives, and our attachment to Jewish wedding liturgy—which is blatantly heterosexist.

In an attempt to reconcile our feelings of emotional (and ethical) conflict, we wrote the following text for our wedding. We felt that it was important to both affirm and challenge Judaism:

The traditional Seven Blessings—recited at all Jewish weddings—compare the joy of every bride and groom to the primordial wholeness of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. These blessings express the idea that each union between a man and a woman brings us closer to the time of Redemption. The blessings

conclude with the drinking of a full cup of wine to symbolize the joy of union.

We feel that we can only drink a full cup of joy when the union of all lovers is celebrated. We will only feel a sense of wholeness when same-sex couples are also able to enjoy the legal, social and religious privileges that are being extended to us on this holy day.

We have therefore added an eighth blessing to the traditional Seven Blessings. Akin to taking ten drops of wine out of our glasses during the Passover seder when we recite the Ten Plagues (acknowledging that all losses require our empathy), we diminish our full cup of joy in recognition that the world is not yet complete. The added eighth blessing reminds us that as partners in Creation we must strive toward a garden in which there is a place for all loving relationships.

[The following blessing is sung after the traditional Seven Blessings. At its conclusion, bride or groom pours out some wine on the ground. Then both drink from the cup, as is traditional.]

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מקור החיים שהגייצנו
לאהבת נפש של יונתו ודוד. לחסד של רות
ונצמי ולאחוד של יעקב ורחל. מהרה יי
אלהינו ישמע ויחגג בשערי ערינו קולות כל
האהובים ושירי כל הרעות. מהרה יי אלהינו
נשתה בלנו מלוא הכוס רנה. ברוכה את יי
מקור אהבה.

You are blessed, Adonai our God, Source of Life,
who enables us to strive toward the devotion of Jonathan and David,
the life-sharing of Ruth and Naomi,
and the commitment of Jacob and Rachel.

May the time come soon when the voices of all lovers,
the music of all friendships, will rise up to be heard and
celebrated in the gates of our cities.

May the time come soon when we can all drink a full cup of joy.
Blessed are You, Source of Love.

Deborah Eisenbach-Budner works as a Jewish educator in the Boston area. She especially enjoys studying and teaching about Jewish women's history, Judaism and sexuality, and bisexual, gay and lesbian perspectives. If you want to know more about the eighth blessing contact Deborah Eisenbach-Budner at: Temple Shir Tikva, POB 265, Wayland, MA, 01778; 508-358-5312, ext. 12.