

VOW OF MARRIAGE

Welcome, everyone. We have come together today for the marriage of Danny and Wendy.

This wedding should come as a surprise to no one; their seven – almost eight – years together have already spanned the transition from high school to college, from college to graduate school and the professional world; from adolescence to early adulthood.

They were warned so many times that each life change would bring new challenges – going to college and meeting new people, living in different cities during those years, and then living together for the first time after spending those important years living apart. All of those warnings were correct: Wendy and Danny *have* faced a host of obstacles; and their relationship has always endured, made stronger by every challenge.

Many of you are already familiar with their special brand of domestic bliss: their deep regard and respect for one another; their little jokes; their shared joy in some of life's tiniest details; their heated arguments over even tinier ones.

Now the two of them have chosen to call their relationship by a name they think is fitting for this type of bond: marriage. In the presence of their loved ones, they have chosen to proclaim their love and everlasting commitment to one another. When we're done here today, the state of New York will recognize Danny and Wendy as husband and wife. I ask all of you to do the same.

You have all been invited here to witness, and to celebrate this wedding, but also to participate. You represent all the people in the world who will be touched by the life of this couple: their friends and family, now and forever. By vowing always to love and honor one another, Wendy and Danny vow also to give one another the support needed to contribute whatever they can to the world. They will not exclude the world but include it in their love. Wendy and Danny ask you to honor and support this marriage, as they vow to honor and support you in their lives together.

Danny and Wendy wouldn't be here today if it weren't for the care and generosity of their families. Many are here; some of you have traveled great distances to show your support; some, unfortunately, couldn't be here today; many more have already passed on. Danny and Wendy like to believe that the spirit of their whole family is present for this ceremony. They believe and hope that the family's legacy is honored and strengthened by their bond.

I said, "Family." Singular. With this marriage, the two families are joined. Many of you know that Danny's parents – Lesley and Myla – have already received Wendy into their family and cared for her as they would care for their own daughter; that Sam and Evelyn share a warmth and regard for Wendy as though she were their own sister. And Wendy's parents – Sue, and Dov and Sarah – care for Danny as for a son; and Wendy's sister Dahlia has a special friendship and camaraderie with Danny as though he were a brother to her. In this way, as in so many ways, these vows today only make official what Danny and Wendy have had in their lives for so long.

Wendy and Danny have signed a Jewish marriage contract, called a *ketubah*. I will now read to you some of the words from their *ketubah*.

We pledge to support, provide for, cherish and honor each other... to recognize and respect our differences and to nurture each other's growth ... to share with each other our thoughts, feelings, and experiences, through life's joys and sorrows.

We will strive to bring up our children in a home full of love, joy, generosity, and reverence for learning ... a home open to our family and friends and joined with our community.

The *ketubah* is signed by the bride and groom, and also by two witnesses: Yael Teplow, and James Forrest.

Now, I would like to ask Dahlia – the sister of the bride – and Sam – the brother of the groom – to give Danny and Wendy the rings they will wear as a symbol of their sacred agreement.

[Danny and Wendy receive the rings. Wendy puts one ring on Danny's finger, and Danny puts the other on Wendy's finger.]

Wendy, do you take Danny as your husband, to have and to hold, to love, honor, and cherish, in sickness and in health, for as long as you both shall live?

[Wendy says, "I do."]

Danny, do you take Wendy as your wife, to have and to hold, to love, honor, and cherish, in sickness and in health, for as long as you both shall live?

[Danny says, "I do."]

Now, by the power vested in me by the state of New York, I recognize what you have long known in your hearts: I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss.