

A Personal Message
on an
Important Theme



Dear Friends:

Drawn together by your love and affection for each other, you have come to consecrate your lives to each other through the rites of Jewish marriage. Your wedding day is and should be the high point of happiness in your life. To raise serious and even tragic considerations at a time like this may seem uncalled for. Yet precisely because of our concern for your abiding happiness, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that in these critical times grave perils threaten the life and happiness of everyone. The least we can do is to make provision to eliminate any unnecessary suffering.

You doubtless realize the extraordinary hazards that face young men in an age of total war. We must always reckon with the possibility, which fortunately will never become actual in most cases, that a husband may be reported missing, be lost or disappear, leaving his young wife not only to bear the burden of bereavement, but also the dreadful experience of never knowing whether he is alive or dead. In that event, Jewish law regards the marriage as undissolved and the wife is not free to rebuild her happiness, since a marriage may be terminated only by the death of one of the parties attested by witnesses or by a bill of divorce which must be granted by the husband.

There is, however, a simple procedure in Jewish law by which a husband can avoid exposing his wife to this uncertain status. As an instance of your love and consideration for each other, we strongly urge you to adopt the following procedure:

The Rabbinical Assembly of America, in strict conformity with traditional Jewish law and with the guidance and approval of the foremost Talmudic authority of our day,

Professor Louis Ginzberg, has prepared a special form to be executed after the marriage, preferably immediately after the ceremony, under the direction of your Rabbi, who is an honored member of the Rabbinical Assembly.

This document provides that the Beth Din of the Rabbinical Assembly be empowered to execute a Get (Religious Divorce) and order it to be delivered to the wife, in the absence of the husband, three years after the general demobilization of the armed forces of the United States, if there are clear indications then that there is no longer any hope that the husband will ever return to his wife. This divorce would take effect only after the civil courts would have ruled that the marriage is legally dissolved or declared the husband legally dead. By this simple expedient, a source of needless suffering can be eliminated. It is actually a form of insurance against a tragedy we fervently hope will never occur.

It is obvious that this additional provision does not in any way impugn or weaken the sacred and binding character of the marriage relationship. It is merely one more evidence of that love and mutual consideration which is the touchstone of true marriage. God grant the peril of these times prove the prelude to a happier day, when all men and women will taste to the full the blessings of joy and gladness, pleasure and delight, love, brotherhood, peace and fellowship which is God's portion for his children.

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Signature of Rabbi

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Address