

WHY MARRIAGE MATTERS

SEVEN SCIENTIFIC REASONS

In Jewish tradition, the joining of a man and woman in marriage is known as *kiddushin*, from the root *kadosh*, or holy. It is through this holy union that a husband and wife emulate the biblical description of Adam and Eve: “*v’hayu l’vasar echad* – and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). And, in partnership with God, through marriage, they fulfill His first commandment to mankind: “*pru u’r’vu* – be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 9:1).

Today, the Jewish community grapples with the widening demographic crisis wrought by declining birth rates, intermarriage, and assimilation. The place to start is at home, with faithful marriages and stable families. As the family is the building-block of society, so marriage is the cornerstone of a continued Jewish heritage. It is in an atmosphere of love, trust, and commitment – to each other and to their children – that parents most successfully raise happy and healthy children. By affirming the value of traditional marriage for all people, we can strengthen the foundation upon which we hope to build Jewish continuity.

Indeed, a growing body of social science research now confirms what our tradition has long known about the importance of marriage. For example:



Marriage reduces the risk of poverty for children and communities. The majority of children whose parents don’t get or stay married, experience at least a year of poverty.

Fatherless households increase crime. Boys whose parents divorced or never married, for example, are two to three times more likely to end up in jail.

Marriage protects children’s physical and mental health. Children whose parents get and stay married are physically healthier, have lower rates of infant mortality, and also much less likely to suffer mental illness, including depression and teen suicide.

Both men and women who marry live longer, healthier and happier lives. On virtually every measure of health and well-being, married people are better-off than otherwise similar singles, on average.

Just living together is not the same as marriage. Married couples who cohabit first are thirty to fifty percent more likely to divorce. People who just live together do not get the same boost to health, welfare and happiness, on average, as spouses. Neither do their children. Children whose parents cohabit are at increased risk for domestic violence and child abuse and neglect. Children born to parents who were just living together are also three times more likely to experience their parents’ breakup by age 5.

Parents who don’t get or stay married put children’s education at risk. Children whose parents are divorced or never married have lower grade point averages, are more likely to be held back a grade, and to drop out of school. They are also less likely to graduate from college.

When marriages fail, ties between parents and children typically weaken too. Adult children whose parents divorced are only half as likely to have warm, close ties to both their mothers and their fathers. For example, in one large national survey, 65 percent of adult children of divorce reported they were not close to their fathers (compared to 29 percent of adults from intact marriages). [Source; W. Bradford Wilcox et al. 2005. *Why Marriage Matters: 26 Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (NY: Institute for American Values) www.americanvalues.org]

"WHY NOT GAY MARRIAGE?"

Spin a globe and pick virtually any place on earth at any previous time in human history; you will find that they do marriage one way — *between men and women*. There may be other differences, but marriage has *always required a husband and a wife*. Why? Marriage teaches that men and women need each other and that children need mothers and fathers. A loving and compassionate society comes to the aid of motherless and fatherless children, but no compassionate society *intentionally* deprives children of their own mom or dad. *But this is what every same-sex home does — and for no other reason but to satisfy adult desire.*

The battle for marriage takes place at the water cooler, the kitchen table, and in the church pews. Here are answers to five questions that will help you defend the family.

"How will my same-sex marriage hurt your marriage?" Same-sex marriage advocates want to force *everyone* to dramatically and permanently alter our definition of marriage and family. The great, historic, cross-cultural understanding of marriage as the union of husband and wife will be called bigotry in the public square. *The law* will teach your children and grandchildren that there is nothing special about mothers and fathers raising children together, and anyone who thinks otherwise is a bigot.

"Is same-sex marriage like interracial marriage?" Laws against interracial marriage were about keeping two races apart, so that one race could oppress the other, and that is *wrong*. Marriage is about bringing male and female together, so that children have mothers and fathers, and so that women aren't stuck with the enormous, unfair burdens of parenting alone--- and that is *good*.

"Is polygamy next?" Jonathan Yarbrough, part of the *first* couple to get a same-sex marriage in Provincetown, Mass, said, "I think it's possible to love more than one person and have more than one partner. . . . In our case, it is. We have an open marriage." Once you rip a ship off its mooring who knows where it will drift next?

"What will happen to our religious organizations?" After same-sex marriage is created, will the statement, "Children need a mother and a father" be deemed hate speech? In Massachusetts, the *Boston Globe* said so: "Governor Romney is denigrating gay families, practicing divisive, mean-spirited politics . . . by insisting that every child 'has a right to a mother and a father.'" Right now, for example, the Catholic Church is being challenged in Canada because a local parish refused to rent out their church reception hall when they learned the reception was for a lesbian couple. Legal scholars warn that the tax exempt status and accreditation of religious organizations could be at risk.

"What will public school teach?" Consider a recent National Public Radio story from Boston. An eighth-grade teacher there teaches about gay sex "thoroughly and explicitly." When asked if parents complained about their children learning such explicit material, this teacher said, "Give me a break. It's legal now." Heather and her two Mommies will become standard kindergarten fare. Our children need to hear a positive message about marriage.

"...will the statement, 'Children need a mother and a father' be deemed hate speech?"

Gays and lesbians have a legal right to live as they choose, they don't have a right to redefine marriage for all of us. For more information on what you can do to protect marriage please contact the National Organization for Marriage at (609) 688-0450 or on the web at www.nationformarriage.org.