

74% of Israeli public want egalitarian marriage



By ARIANE MANDELL

08/18/2016 Hiddush Rabbi Uri Regev: "We must not accept a continuation of the situation in which Israel is the lone western democracy that denies its citizens the right to marry as they wish." A new study released Thursday morning reveals that 74 percent of Israel's Jewish public is interested in having an egalitarian wedding ceremony, with an exchange of rings that carries mutual and equal obligations between spouses. Just 26% are in opposition.

The survey, conducted by the Smith institute for the NGO Hiddush: For Religious Freedom and Equality, interviewed a sample of 700 people by telephone. The report specifies that the survey questions were regarding personal preferences and not theoretical support regarding egalitarian marriage.

Ninety-two percent of secular respondents and 81% of traditional expressed interest in an [egalitarian ceremony](#). Though 69% of religious respondents were against such a ceremony, that means 31% were in favor. More surprising is the fact that 51% of Bayit Yehudi voters, a far-right nationalist party, would like an egalitarian ceremony, likely due to the party's high percentage of non-religious voters. Overall, 100% of the left responded that they would like an egalitarian ceremony, 95% of the center, and 58% of voters on the right.

In response to the findings, Hiddush's Rabbi Uri Regev said, "The survey shows how the Jewish community, including a growing percentage of religious people, are moving away from the Rabbinate's rigid institution. The public is clearly saying that we no longer want ceremonies that are irrelevant and anti-egalitarian. Many want a Jewish ceremony, but one that matches their values and their way of life; namely an updated, egalitarian ceremony. The Chief Rabbinate and the religious politicians who back it are the number one enemies of Judaism, and they breed hatred against the Jewish public."

Regev decried the way that traditional Jewish ceremonies confine men to active roles and women to passive (mostly silent) ones. In traditional ceremonies, he said, a man is a temple to the woman, he buys her and takes her as his property. Regev noted that it is on Tu Be'av, the Jewish equivalent of Valentine's day, that Hiddush chose to examine the demand for ceremony options sans discrimination.

According to Regev, "The obvious solution is to demand that our civic bodies pass civil marriage and divorce laws. Unfortunately, right now we have a government which sets new records in submitting to Ultra-Orthodox

blackmail, and the opposition is making great efforts to win the favor of religious parties. We must not accept a continuation of the situation in which Israel is the lone western democracy that denies its citizens the right to marry as they wish. As long as the Rabbinate's monopoly on marriage and divorce is not ended, we should take matters into our own hands and get married in equal ceremonies, even if such ceremonies in Israel are not yet recognized by the State.

