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Combined Lifecycle Final: Mock Wedding Sectional

*All readings and blessings will be amended to be appropriate for a same sex, female couple

Emma and Rebecca (Jane's daughters) are holding up the poles to the chuppah

1. Ketubah Signing

- a. Introductory music/song – “Zeh Dodi” by Schiller 🎵
- b. Explanation of ketubah:

Jane and Miriam are about to sign the ketubah--a symbolic Jewish marriage contract. In it, they have outlined specific goals and expectations for their life together; namely, their commitment to love, honor, and respect one another. Today, each ketubah can be individualized to contain criteria specific to the couple. In this contract, Jane and Miriam chose to include a section about the fusion of their two families into one and their mutual commitment to love, support, and care for their daughters equally. For the honor of signing the ketubah as witness of this sacred union, Jane and Miriam have each chosen a dear friend.

2. Processional – “Erev Shel Shoshanim” 🎵

- a. Jane will be escorted by her two daughters, Emma and Rebecca
- b. Miriam will be escorted by her parents

3. Circling (and continuation of music) – 3 each and 1 by their daughters

4. Introductory Blessings/Songs

- a. B'ruchim Habaim (*b'ruchot habaot)/Mi Adir – Avery 🎵

5. Iyyun describing circling and Birkat Eirusin:

Hello, everyone and welcome to this wedding ceremony that celebrates the joyous, sacred union of Jane and Miriam. Just moments ago, you witnessed the ceremony of hakafot: Jane circled Miriam 3 times, Miriam circled Jane 3 times, and then Jane's daughters, Emma and Rebecca, circled the wedding couple. This circling sets up a metaphorical fence around

each partner. This invisible barrier represents Jane and Miriam's mutual commitment to prioritize, protect, and support one another in their shared marital future. To personalize this ritual, we found it pertinent to include Emma and Rebecca as well. Their circling of Jane and Miriam symbolizes their support of this union and welcomes Miriam as a member of the family.

In just a moment we will proceed with Birkat Erusin, the ritual of reciting blessings over the wine and the acknowledgment of G-d and the commandments or mitzvot as central elements of this union. After reciting these blessings, Jane and Miriam will complete the ceremony of shutafut, the exchange rings. These rings hold special significance for you both, since they have been in your respective families for generations and are carried in a pouch made from Jane's grandmother's wedding veil. By presenting your partner with such a cherished heirloom, you are physically representing the giving of yourself and your families to one another.

6. Birkat Erusin/Kiddushim read in Hebrew by Emma and English by Rebecca followed by the singing of the **Steinberg** 🎵

then rings are exchanged*
(text amended for two women):

Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li
I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine

7. Ketubah is read aloud in English

8. Barash Sheva Brachot (text amended for two women) 🎵

9. Wedding charge

Jane, Miriam, at our first meeting I asked each of you to describe your feelings towards one another. Without skipping a beat, you uniformly expressed that neither one of you has

ever felt as comfortable or secure as you do in this relationship. Jane, you told me that once Miriam entered your life, you felt as though you had truly come alive...this relationship helped you to fully realize who you are and what you most desire from life. Miriam, you told me that when you first spotted Jane sitting across the conference room from you you thought first, "who is that woman with the angelic smile?" and second, "why is that woman smiling when we have been sitting in a conference room for the past eight hours?!" You were immediately intrigued by Jane's positive attitude and joyous demeanor.

Jane, in the beginning, you were a bit apprehensive about officially entering into a relationship, despite your deep love for Miriam. As someone who has always put others' needs before your own, you were concerned about how this new relationship might impact your two daughters who are the light of your life. Once Emma and Rebecca met Miriam, however, they fell in love with her just as much as you had. Miriam, you have always wanted a family and feared that you had waited too long in life. In reality, as today demonstrates, you waited just the right amount of time. Today, you stand here under the wedding canopy made of your daughters' tallitot as Emma and Rebecca stand here holding the poles of this chuppah, showing their unequivocal support of your marriage and welcoming Miriam to the family.

You two are not only bound by your love, but also by your shared values of equality, mutual responsibility, commitment to facing life's challenges together, and your devotion to leading a Jewish life. This family that the four of you have created is a rock that grounds you, keeps you safe, loved, nourished, and supported. I have no doubt that you will remain true to the vows you made to one another and to g-d in your ketubah and that your mutual interests, aligned values, and devotion to one other has set the foundation for a long and

beautiful life together. As we stand here in the backyard of this home you have shared for the past 5 years, on this 12th day of the Hebrew month of Elul, my wish for you is that your lives be filled with an abundance of love, respect, angelic smiles, and endless happy experiences in this home! Mazel tov and l'chaim!

10. Breaking the Glasses (both partners will have their own glass)

11. Recessional – “Siman Tov U’mazel Tov” 🎵

12. Yichud/Alone Time

13. Meal and Celebration!

Explanation of Wedding Particularities:

There were four primary issues that were unique to this wedding were:

1. Dealing with Jane’s parents’ decision not to attend the wedding
2. The creation of their own shutfut ceremony for the exchange of rings
3. The active participatory role that their daughters would play in the wedding ceremony
4. The use of gender-appropriate language for all Hebrew/Jewish texts being utilized.

The first issue was the most challenging. Jane was immensely saddened by her parents’ refusal to attend her wedding and their rejection of her relationship with another woman.

Though she realized that her parents were not as accepting as she would have liked, she still felt relatively secure in her belief that her parents would ultimately love and support her.

We scheduled more counseling sessions than usual in order to address this disappointment.

While this, of course, had the most emotional and psychological impact on Jane, Miriam too was very distressed. She felt saddened for the woman she loves and guilt for having a family

who, contrarily, was supportive and present in their lives. Miriam's parents made an incredible effort to try to make Jane feel as though she was their daughter as well. In our sessions, I tried to reframe the situation so that Jane could focus on elements of the wedding that she was excited about, such as the wonderful, loving family she was about to acquire and the unequivocal support that she received from her daughters.

An aspect of the wedding that Jane and Miriam were very excited about was the creation of their own ring exchange ceremony. While, traditionally, this part of the ceremony is rooted in patriarchal society and reflects this in the language "with this ring you are consecrated to me as my wife", Jane and Miriam revised this ceremony to instead be a *shutafut*—a partnership. Instead of one partner "acquiring" the other by placing a ring on her finger, Jane and Miriam do this act reciprocally. Each gives the other a ring, so they are equally bound in fidelity to one another and they opted to use different language altogether. Instead of the tradition "*harei at mekudeshet li*" saying, they recited "*ani l'dodi v'dodi li*"—I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.

Along these same lines, the couple wanted to ensure that while they honored Jewish traditions by including most aspects of a traditional wedding ceremony, that the language would be appropriately adapted to reflect that they were in a same sex relationship. As such, I changed the language in all Hebrew texts, prayers, blessings, and songs, including in *Baruch Haba* which I changed to *B'ruchot Habaot* and within the *Sheva B'rachot*, which was demonstrated in my oral presentation.

Lastly, as a deeply devoted mother, Jane wanted to ensure that her daughters played an active role in the ceremony and felt that they were included in this decision to have Miriam as an addition to their family. Therefore, they suggested the use of their *B'not*

Mitzvah tallitot for the chuppah canopy and that they stand alongside the wedding couple throughout the ceremony, physically holding up the poles of the chuppah. This symbolized them being the foundation of this new family that now welcomed Miriam as one of their parent figures.