

ISRAEL TO ALLOW HOMOSEXUAL COUPLES TO BE REGISTERED AS MARRIED

Gay marriages can now be registered

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Less than two weeks after the violent protests that turned the planned Jerusalem Gay Pride Parade into a smaller, closed event at the Hebrew University stadium died down, the High Court of Justice ruled on Tuesday that couples married in same-sex ceremonies abroad could be registered as married couples in Israel's Population Registry.

In a vote of 6-1, with Justice Elyakim Rubenstein being the sole dissenting vote, the court decreed that homosexual couples who marry abroad will enjoy the same status in the Interior Ministry as heterosexual couples who marry in civil ceremonies outside of Israel.

Nov. 8 op-ed: It isn't the gay parade that's the problem
Moshe Negbi, a legal expert, said the court's decision was mostly symbolic because gay couples in Israel already had many of the rights of heterosexual partnerships. The significant changes were that they would now get the same tax breaks as a married couple and be able to adopt children, Negbi said.

Israeli law stipulates a couple must be married to adopt a child.

"The marriages of same-sex couples who marry in places like Canada, where the law recognizes such marriages, will also be recognized in Israel, and they will be registered as married here," Negbi said.

Civil marriages cannot be performed in Israel because of the rabbinate's monopoly on family law. But couples married in civil ceremonies abroad have all the rights of a married couple, and their marriages are registered here. The court used the term "register" instead of "recognition" to ward off religious criticism of the ruling, Negbi said.

With Tuesday's ruling, "the court says that now, not only heterosexuals, but homosexuals, too, can have civil marriages," Negbi added.

Yossi Ben-Ari and Laurent Schuman were married in Canada after that country legalized same-sex marriage in 2003. Determined, after a 21-year partnership, to enjoy all the privileges of a married couple in Israel, they were among five couples who petitioned the Supreme Court court to have their marriage registered here, too.

"We're delighted, but the struggle is not over," Ben-Ari said. MK Haim Oron (Meretz) also welcomed the decision, while his party colleague Zehava Gal-On called for Interior Minister Roni Bar-On to implement the change immediately.

In contrast, religious MKs raged over the ruling. "I think every thinking person in Israel and the Jewish world is horrified [at the decision]," MK Moshe Gafni (UTJ) said in response to the ruling.

"In addition to all the troubles we all have, this is added - the family unit is being completely destroyed," Gafni continued. "Some will object, and some will let it pass quietly. Barak is leaving us a parting gift that signifies the destruction of the family. There were also courts in Sodom and Gemorrah."

"Why is the court interfering in all aspects of our lives?" Gafni continued.

MK Zevulun Orlev (NU-NRP) denigrated the decision as "paganism," and said that it "tore the last mezuzah off the door."

In 2005, the Housing and Construction Ministry decided to grant same-sex couples with at least one child housing benefits, but same-sex marriage - and its legal benefits - remained a non-starter.

Sheera Claire Frenkel and Hilary Leila Krieger contributed to this report.

RESPONSE FROM ISRAELI CRITICS **OF COURT DECISION**

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/790724.html>

The minister in charge over religious affairs, Yitzhak Cohen (Shas) said "the High Court has sunken in the gates of defilement and has torn out the

last mezuzah [little box attached on observant Jew's door thresholds which contain rolled up scriptures from the Old Testament] from its doors. Marriage can only be held by the faith of Moses and Yisrael [the traditional Jewish marriage vows].

"The dam that protected the Jewish state has been burst open under the auspices of the High Court, asking for an anti-Jewish deluge clad in black capes," he said.

"We don't have a Jewish state here. We have Sodom and Gomorrah here," said Moshe Gafni, an ultra-Orthodox lawmaker, referring to two cities the Bible said was destroyed because their citizens were so sinful.

"I assume that every sane person in the State of Israel, possibly the entire Jewish world, is shocked, because the significance is... the destruction of the family unit in the State of Israel," Gafni told Army Radio.

Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: And it is likely that the judgment of God will come against His chosen people in the form of the severe hardships associated with the prophesied future wars of [Isaiah 17](#) and [Psalm 83](#). But a remnant will be spared in order to fulfill the ultimate destiny of the Jewish people who must survive until the return of Jesus, when they will finally embrace Him as their true Messiah.