

# Temple Beth Rishon Life Cycle Events

## Divorce

### **Where is divorce mentioned in the Torah?**

There is only one verse concerning divorce: "When a man takes a woman, and marries her, then it shall come to pass, if she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found something 'unseemly' in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement and give it into her hand" (Deuteronomy 24:1).

### **Where in Jewish law is the procedure of divorce more fully developed?**

The *Mishna* records a debate on the significance of the word "unseemly" that occurred during the first century C.E. between the two leading rabbinical schools: *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*. *Beit Shammai* believed that the word referred to adultery; therefore, sexual impropriety was the sole grounds for divorce. *Beit Hillel* ruled that "unseemly" meant any act that caused displeasure for a husband. Finally, Jewish law ruled according to *Beit Hillel's* argument and allowed a divorce to be permitted for any reason which entailed a rupture to domestic harmony. However, the *ketubah* protects a woman from being treated unfairly by providing her with a considerable alimony if divorced by her husband. To further protect women, Rabbenu Gershom, in the tenth century C.E., legislated that a woman could not be divorced against her will.

### **What is the formal document of divorce called?**

The bill of divorcement is called a *get*. In traditional Judaism, certain rabbis who have expertise in the laws of *gittin* (a tractate in the Talmud dealing with the laws of divorce) are empowered to issue a *get*. The *get* is presented by a husband to his wife in a traditional ceremony.

### **Does the Reform movement have a specific document and/or ceremony concerning divorce?**

The Reform movement recognizes a civil divorce as a valid release from marriage. A bill of divorcement is not required in order to remarry. However, with increasing requests for a finalizing ceremony and a document for release and closure, the Reform movement formalized a ceremony and document called the Ritual of Release.

### **Can a person remarry if he or she only has a civil divorce?**

In the Reform movement, most rabbis will remarry an individual without a traditional *get*. In the Conservative and Orthodox movements, a *get* is necessary for remarriage.

### **How does one obtain a *get*?**

Rabbi Emert can advise you on obtaining a *get*.