

Dovetail

A Journal by and for Jewish-Christian Families



Enjoying Christmas and Hanukkah: Shining Through the Season of Stars

H ave you looked at your December calendar yet? If so, you've discovered that in 1997, Hanukkah begins on the evening of December 23. This means, of course, that on the next day dual-faith families all over the country will be lighting the second candle in their menorahs, then setting off for Christmas Eve services, perhaps to light the final candle in the Advent wreath. Maybe they will put dreidels and gelt (miniature tops and chocolate "coins") in the stockings hung by the chimney with care. They'll probably be giving an extraordinary number of gifts on Christmas Day, and maybe even including latkes (potato pancakes) as part of their Christmas dinner. Children will eagerly devour two different stories, one of Maccabees and miracles, and the other of the birth of a special infant whose life would profoundly affect the world.

When, as this year, the two winter holidays overlap, families can see their December calendar as either a formidable chore to be survived, or a wonderful opportunity for growth and understanding. We would be naive if we failed to acknowledge the stress felt by all families, interfaith or same-faith, during the hustle and bustle of December. The combination of family get-togethers, gift-giving, special meals, extra religious services, school programs, and office parties is enough to fill to overflowing the calendar of any family. Interfaith families in particular can lessen the holiday pressure by realizing that not all of their

"December dilemmas" come from trying to balance two traditions.

Yet in spite of the busyness, something magical can happen in December if you let it. Look for the deepest meaning in each holiday, and see how both Christmas and Hanukkah hold a special message for all humanity. Watch for the times when symbols coincide: the light that radiates from both the candles in the menorah and the lights on the Christmas tree, the freedom signified by both the victory of the Maccabees and the birth of Jesus. These are two different holidays, yes, but as interfaith families, we are uniquely blessed with the opportunity to experience and share the vitality of both important messages.

In the words of Judy Petsonk and Jim Remsen, authors of *The Inter-marriage Handbook* (New York:

In This Issue

Holiday Questions Kids Ask ...	3
A Star of David on Our Christmas Tree	5
Weaving a Household During the Winter Holidays	7
Winter Holiday Resources ..	9
Holidays and Happenings	11
Kids' Page	12
Bulletin Board	13
Special Holiday Resource Ad Section	15

William Morrow, 1988, out of print), "Holidays can be the jewels of family life—an opportunity to rise out of your workday routine and celebrate together, pass on values to your children, reaffirm connections with extended family, get a sense of precious memories. But instead, holidays are often the crucible, the most difficult test, for all your good resolutions about how you will live as an interfaith family. Because holidays are potentially so enriching to families, it's worth working through the heavy emotional issues to arrive at a holiday pattern that your family can really enjoy."

No matter how you decide to celebrate Hanukkah and Christmas with your partner and children, keep these four key elements in mind: fun, food, festive decorations, and family togetherness. Make sure that you include all four of these elements in your celebrations.

Thanks to those of you who sent ideas for our Winter Holiday slogan contest. Some of our favorites are: Holidays of Peace, Candles in the Darkness (menorah and Advent lightings), Freedom Festivities (freedom of the Jews, freedom from sin symbolized by Jesus' birth), Don't Light the Menorah too Close to the Christmas Tree, and Miracle Month. The winner, sent in by Gail and Lauren Gremse of New York, NY, is the Season of Stars (a reference to the Star of Bethlehem and the Star of David). We hope that all of our readers enjoy a sparkling, starry holiday season. ▀

Joan C Hawhurst

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Mary Hélène Rosenbaum
Associate Editor

Alison Siragusa
Marketing Director

Dovetail's mission is to provide a channel of communication for interfaith couples, their parents and their children. No matter what their specific choices regarding faith in their home and children, the more interfaith families can share their ideas, experiences, resources, and support, the more they can make peace in their homes and communities. Jewish and Christian perspectives can dovetail.

Believing that there are no definitive answers to the questions facing interfaith families, **Dovetail** strives to be open to all ideas and opinions. Editorial content attempts to balance and respect the perspectives of both Jewish and Christian partners in interfaith marriages, as well as the diverse perspectives of parents and children of interfaith couples. Inclusion in **Dovetail** does not imply endorsement. **Dovetail** accepts a thoughtful and constructive discussion of all related issues in the Letters to the Editor section, and reserves the right to reply.

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Dovetail welcomes article submissions (query or completed manuscript), letters to the editor, and comments or suggestions. Send to Joan C. Hawhurst, Editor, at the above address. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Questions Kids Ask About the Holidays

compiled by Joan C. Hawhurst

How can we as parents in interfaith families prepare for the holidays? One obvious way is to think through how we explain Christmas and Hanukkah to our children, and how our actions and observations complement our explanations. Following are the questions asked by a number of interfaith families. These questions have been drawn from a number of sources. Last fall, the Outreach program of Jewish Family Service in New Orleans, Louisiana, offered a program called "Questions Kids Ask," where interfaith parents who had made the decision to raise their children as Jews could share and discuss the difficult questions posed by their children. Here are some of the questions these parents, and others who have made different decisions about raising children, have struggled with on the topic of the December holidays. All of the names have been changed.

Dawn (Christian married to a Jewish man): My preschooler daughter is figuring out "who goes where." She goes through whole lists of people, from the other kids in nursery school to the members of our extended families, asking questions until she figures out that Grandma has Christmas, Aunt Rhonda has Hanukkah, Uncle Mark has Hanukkah, Cousin Josie has Christmas. And Mommy, Daddy, and I get to have both! She asks why everybody doesn't have both Christmas and Hanukkah. I explain that some people are Jewish, and some people are Christian. Since in our family, Mommy is Christian and Daddy is Jewish, we celebrate both Mommy's and Daddy's holidays. So far, that answer has been enough. It helps, I know, that both my husband and

I have learned enough about each other's traditions that we can each answer her questions about both holidays. He can tell her about the birth of baby Jesus, and I can describe the bravery of the Maccabees. Someday, I'm sure, she'll decide she likes one holiday more than the other, or she'll push us harder about how we can have both. Then I guess we'll have the more difficult conversations about her religious identity as the child of an interfaith family. But my husband and I are committed to having her learn about and understand both of our holiday traditions. We know that someday she may choose to identify with only one religion, but at least she'll be comfortable with both. And that comfort is really helpful already—she loves lighting the menorah and decorating the tree! And she tells her simple version of the Hanukkah and Christmas stories to all her friends and relatives, Jews and Christians alike.

Julie (convert to Judaism, married to a Jewish man): My daughter gets to have Christmas with my family, but we don't have it in our house. She has always said she wants to have decorations and a tree. The more difficult part is my husband, who is born Jewish, grew up with a Christmas tree, and he said, "Why can't we have a tree?" I said, "Because we're not talking about two Jewish parents." I mean, for born Jews who just choose to have a tree with no religious connection, it's just a pretty ornament, just a decoration. But it's not going to mean that to my daughter. She's not going to be able to differentiate. She's going to say, "I celebrate Christmas," and while my husband doesn't have a problem

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with that, I do. I hate it when people say I'm not really Jewish. Even my own daughter has said, "You were a Christian." But I converted, and that means that I am Jewish, whether it's by choice or by birth. I am actively seeking anything I can find to connect me to the religion. So I can't have a Christmas tree. This has been a major debate in our family, so last year we got a fake, four-foot white tree. It has white lights and we decorate it with Hanukkah things. My daughter calls it a Hanukkah bush. We've compromised, but it's not necessarily the compromise I wanted to make. I would have liked to keep the holidays totally separate, but again, I back up and I say, well, I don't see Santa as being religious, so I tell my daughter that Santa visits you because Santa visits all good children. Then she says, "Does he visit Melissa?" and I realize, oops! It really is an issue.

Linda (a Jewish woman married to a Catholic man, raising Jewish children): I grew up in a fairly religious family, even though there weren't that many Jews. We would go to our friends' homes to decorate trees, and they would come to our house for holidays. I remember carolling, just because it was fun. Our parents didn't have a problem with it. But my son can't handle Christmas songs. At school last year, they sang a song about Jesus being King, and my son got really upset and told the music teacher, "I'm Jewish and I don't think we should sing this song, because I don't believe that Jesus is King." She sort of blew him off. It's a public school, and they probably really shouldn't sing the song. But he was really upset. I know I used to say, well, it's just a Christmas song (and

that's what my daughter would have done), but he's more conscious of being Jewish and different. He might be that way whether or not he had parents of different religions.

Also Linda: My kids have asked things like, "Doesn't Dad feel bad that we don't celebrate Christmas?" or "Shouldn't we be celebrating Christmas for Dad?" I think that came with, "Why can't we celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah?" We explained that Dad and I decided to raise our kids Jewish, and we didn't want there to be any confusion. We just wanted to celebrate our holidays as a Jewish family, and Dad still celebrates his holidays in his own way. He goes to Mass on Christmas and Easter, since those are his two big holidays, and he feels good about doing it that way.

Dan (a Jewish man married to a Christian woman): Our kids get asked questions about who they are at elementary school all the time, but especially around the holidays. Some kids try to tell them they can be either Jewish or Christian, but they can't be both. But both of our kids have been able to answer their friends with, "In our family, we celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah. We are respecting and practicing the religions of both of our parents, just like you practice the religion of both your parents at your house." They have also learned to tell their friends about the similarities between the two holidays, things like peace and brotherhood, lighting candles, gift-giving, and remembering the importance of events in history. We're really proud of how comfortable they are with their dual-faith heritage. ▀

A Star of David on Our Christmas Tree

by Isabel Bearman Bucher

Where should we put the Christmas tree?" I asked my husband the December after our marriage.

"The tree?" he exclaimed incredulously. "That is *your* responsibility. There are two things that we'd better agree on: I will not buy hams or Christmas trees!"

"Now listen, LeRoy," I replied, my Italian blood boiling. "If I can make latkes and clean up drippy candles at Hanukkah, then you can suffer through a Christmas tree!" Our noses almost touched as we exchanged mole-eyed squints.

The tree I purchased was huge. Its branches took up half of our tiny living room. When Jewish friends commented on the mammoth pine, LeRoy was prepared. "That's not a Christmas tree," he informed them. "It's a green matzo ball with colored lights."

On Christmas morning, however, I found that the pile of gifts beneath the branches had doubled, and the tags on many had been written in LeRoy's hand.

A Star for the Tree

By the time our daughter Erica was born, we had faced enough problems of an interfaith marriage to realize we could not raise a family in a combat zone. We agreed to combine our heritages in an effort to provide the best of both for our children. By the time Shauna arrived three years later, we had settled into a way of life that was comfortable for us both—or almost.

"Isabel... is that holly around the menorah?"

"Chicken soup, matzo balls and latkes for Christmas dinner?"

"Merry Hanukkah. Fa-la-la-la-la."

"Happy Christmas. Shalom."

At holiday time, our home was decorated with a concoction of menorah lights, a creche, Advent calendars, a glass mobile of Stars of David, and a tree groaning with ornaments.

The girls helped us as we celebrated with traditional foods, songs, and parties. I became very good at reciting Hebrew prayers. LeRoy learned to warble off-key versions of the better-known carols. He bought me a guitar one Christmas, and I taught myself to play and sing a Jewish folk song. I made him a blue velvet Israeli shirt and matching skull cap for the season's festivities.

One year LeRoy came home with a little blue Star of David. "This is for your tree," he stated crisply, his eyes twinkling. "I want it to be the first ornament hung every year."

"I'll see to it personally," I assured him.

Some who visited our home during the holidays found the situation disconcerting. "Don't you feel hypocritical placing a Star of David on the top of your Christmas tree?" one Christian friend asked.

"No," I told her. "Jesus was Jewish."

Freedom and Light

By this time, Hanukkah had become almost as much of a symbol of freedom and light to me as Christmas. And Christmas had become increasingly meaningful as the

Isabel Bearman Bucher is a writer and retired fifth-grade schoolteacher living in Albuquerque, NM. Since writing this article, she has been married for 18 years and raised her two daughters. The little blue Star of David is still the first ornament the family places upon their Christmas tree.

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birthday of One so special that He gave freedom and light to everyone. People of all races and religions gathered in our home, and we found that their differences enriched our lives.

The holidays seemed to become more joyous every year. But not long after we celebrated our eleventh wedding anniversary, LeRoy suffered three heart attacks. On December 18, the first night of Hanukkah, he lay in bed with his rabbi at his side. At sundown LeRoy whispered, "Shalom, shalom," and, at age 42, his life ebbed away. Sadly, I was not beside him. At the moment of his death, our daughters and I were lighting the first Hanukkah candle at the home of some close friends.

The following evening, friends and relatives arrived to sit shiva (Jewish period of mourning). Jewish men in yarmulkes and prayer shawls bowed their heads, opened worn prayer books, and began their ancient mourners' chant. Above them, the Stars-of-David mobile rotated slowly, making twinkling sounds. Then the doorbell rang. Erica's fourth-grade class stood in our yard.

As I stood there immobilized, they began to sing "Silent Night."

My daughters rushed to stand beside me in the doorway, and I gathered them into my arms. Behind us, we could hear the comforting Hebrew words chanted by men LeRoy had loved. Out front the clear voices of the children sang the ancient carol. The beauty radiating from those two opposite places gave sudden, special meaning to LeRoy's and my marriage. In that one incredible moment,

my grief fell away. I felt LeRoy's presence and thought I could almost hear him chuckle.

"Shalom, love," I whispered.

"Sleep in heavenly peace!" the children sang in sweet triumph.

"Daddy's with God now, isn't he?" Shauna asked.

"Yes," I told her with certainty. "Whatever route he took to get there, that's exactly where Daddy is."

Shining Star

Many Hanukkahs and Christmases have come and gone since that night. The girls have grown. I remarried. My second husband is Christian, but our family ties with the Jewish community remain strong. Every December the prayers and the songs of Hanukkah echo throughout our home—and holly still encircles the silver menorah.

The blue Star of David continues to be the first ornament placed on our Christmas tree. The traditions of love have become so melded in my mind and heart that sometimes I find myself wondering if this might be the same sweet star that shown one night above a stable in Bethlehem. ▀

Weaving a Household During the Winter Holidays

by Adina Davidson & Joel Nitzberg

I don't feel comfortable in my own home."

"I feel like an insect under a microscope when our parents come to visit."

"Most of the time we get along great, but during the holidays things become explosive."

"I never expected my partner would feel so strongly."

"It's great to create something we can both celebrate."

Some of the statements we hear from couples who are struggling with the challenges of being in an interfaith, intercultural relationship suggest that holidays bring the issue of difference hotly to the surface.

What makes the holidays so hard? As we know, interfaith difficulties or dilemmas can oddly disappear at off-holiday times. The "December dilemma" gives couples a view into what's unresolved and what needs to be faced. Many of us when we intermarry are not fully in touch with the potential losses or dilemmas we will face in the future. We may be unformed in our faith identity or we might just be emotionally unprepared. Often, it is when we are actually faced with "otherness" in our own home that we realize what most connects us to our own traditions.

When we work as facilitators with people in interfaith groups, they are often in a state of urgency. Such a group can offer a collective sigh of relief as people see their worries and perspectives reflected in the stories of others. Unfortunately, the time for figuring out how to deal with the holidays is put off until the season is on the doorstep. We see over and

over again how couples who seem to be coping with the challenges of creating their households suddenly find themselves at a loss. We don't wish to imply that by merely coming together with other couples, their challenges will disappear. As we all are charting a new course, connecting with others who are navigating similar waters can be supportive. It is isolation that many people feel in the process of becoming bicultural individuals and couples, creating futures which do not resemble their pasts. What we have witnessed is that dealing with the December dilemma can be a transformative experience. The crisis can shift from being a threat to the relationship to being a normal and predictable challenge that can be faced.

Here are a few suggestions that might help (during the holidays and beyond):

1. Be honest. Push yourself to say what is true for you. Fear is often the biggest inhibitor of straight talk, but holding back makes it impossible for real needs to get met and keeps the relationship fragile rather than allowing it to strengthen.

2. Let go. Face the reality that you or your partner may never truly "understand" each other's position. Ironically, connection may be more possible when couples stop expecting to change one another's point of view.

3. Empathize, empathize, empathize. You may not be able to agree with your partner, but you can still feel for him or her. Being empathic is at the core of a couple's ability to weather the storm of interfaith differences and other differences as well.

Adina Davidson and Joel Nitzberg are partners in an interfaith marriage, raising two school-age children. They facilitate groups for interfaith and intercultural couples in the Boston area, and are organizing a networking gathering for the late fall. If you are interested, call them at (617) 776-3235.

4. **Expect conflict.** Disagreements, anger and hurt are all part of the normal resolution of these issues. How to fight while not blaming or being vindictive is something that all couples need to learn.
 5. **Honor the losses.** Don't gloss over loss, or put it behind you prematurely. For couples to feel positive about their future, they need to be able to tolerate sadness related to interfaith compromises, without having to "fix it."
 6. **"Think and act outside of the box."** Experiment. The important issues will keep emerging, giving you many opportunities to experiment and practice different ways of structuring a household. It's by trying different things actively that you will figure out what you can live with, and what can be built. Moving forward, however clumsily, will allow you to bump up against what feels right and what doesn't. You can take current holidays and look at how to reshape them based on the needs and associations of both of you. Imagine ways to alter some of the tangible aspects of the holidays, as long as you don't lose the essence of the feelings they evoke.
- This is a lifelong process and time is a very important teacher. The issues will keep surfacing differently as we grow up. It's predictable that some of our choices will remain unresolved for now. Eventually our triggers will become more familiar and we will develop "equipment" and history that will help give us perspective. Learning to live with what's real and to be forgiving of ourselves will enrich us and make for loving and strong partnerships.

As we continue to evolve in our work, the term "interfaith" does not feel relevant for many couples. Some people come to the groups with limited religious associations, not identifying with a "faith." They may feel that their impasses are related to cultural or stylistic differences. The imagery of "woven couples" or "woven households" may be more apt. As with woven fabric, a household offers an image which at first appears to be whole. Looking closer, one sees it is made up of individual strands. Those strands never lose their identity, but when woven together, they become part of the whole. The woven household is one where individuals' backgrounds do not disappear, but the weaving that takes place creates the tapestry which is called "family."

Whether during the holidays or throughout the year, we need to continue to create households where both partners can feel at home. Further, we need to create a community that will give us support and encouragement to confront our dilemmas and celebrate who we are. 

Looking for Help with Holiday Resources?

Have you been searching for unique and appropriate Christmas and Hanukkah resources to share with your interfaith family? So have we! You'll note that many of the items listed below are available directly from Dovetail Publishing—we hope that our efforts to collect resources that we can recommend will make your holiday shopping a little easier!

A Hanukkah Haggadah, by Sheila Rickman. Wheaton, MD: Jandalen Publishers, 1995.

Based on the concept of the Passover haggadah (book of prayers, rituals, and stories for the seder), this 20-page booklet offers families a way to add historical information and explanations of holiday traditions to their Hanukkah celebration. While written for Jewish families, the text is simple and open enough to be appropriate for most interfaith families. For example, the leader describes Hanukkah as "a festival of lights, symbolic of the courage of a people to assert themselves when threatened." Then the entire assembly responds, "Just as we are free to be singular within our families, let us remember the importance of freedom for *all* families and groups of families to be distinctive within the wider world."

You can order *A Hanukkah Haggadah* directly from the publisher. Send \$3.50 per book to: Jandalen Publishers, P.O. Box 1461, Wheaton, MD 20915; or, to order with a credit card, call (301) 251-8771.

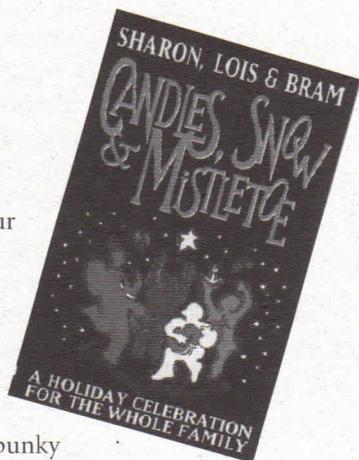
Christmas Crafts: Merry Things to Make, edited by Colleen Van Blaricom, and **Hanukkah Fun: Crafts and Games**, edited by Andrea R. Weiss. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 1992, 1993.

These colorful, large-format softcover books are ideal for interfaith parents looking for fun ways to create their own holiday decorations and traditions with their children. Each book focuses on one winter holiday and contains 32 pages of great ideas for holiday items made with simple materials and easy-to-follow directions. You'll learn how to make your own menorahs, holiday cards, ornaments, mobiles, gifts, and much more.

These two books are available as a set from Dovetail Publishing. Send \$8.90 plus \$4.50 shipping and handling to: Dovetail Publishing, P.O. Box 19945, Kalamazoo, MI 49019; or, to order with a credit card, call toll-free (888) R-FAITHS (888-732-4847).

Candles, Snow & Mistletoe, by Sharon, Lois and Bram. CD or audio cassette, 1993.

A delightful mix of songs for Hanukkah, Christmas, and all your winter celebrations, this cheery recording will have your whole family singing along. The *Chicago Sun Times* has this to say: "The popular Canadian vocal trio has assembled a holiday album crackling with freshly roasted chestnuts and some spunky new material. The group is careful



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to include songs that celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah, as well as to give an international flavor to standards such as The Twelve Days of Christmas."

Candles, Snow & Mistletoe is available directly from Dovetail Publishing. Send \$11.98 for the cassette, or \$17.98 for the CD, plus \$4.50 shipping and handling to: Dovetail Publishing, P.O. Box 19945, Kalamazoo, MI 49019; or, to order with a credit card, call toll-free (888) R-FAITHS (888-732-4847).

While we have reviewed the following holiday resources in previous years, it seems worthwhile to mention them briefly again:

Hanukkah and Christmas at My House, written and illustrated by Susan Enid Gertz. Middletown, OH: Willow & Laurel Press, 1992.

The message of this quiet, thoughtful story about family love and holiday joys is that families of all religions love their children and their traditions, and the joy of the holidays comes from that love. *Child* magazine calls it "a sensitive account of how to observe both holidays while preserving the integrity of each."

This 32-page, softcover children's book is available from Dovetail Publishing, for \$6.95 plus \$4.50 shipping and handling. (See above for ordering information.)

A Season for Giving, by Susan Heyboer O'Keefe. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990.

This softcover children's book is about two very different fifth-graders with a common problem. When they are paired up to do a winter holiday class project, Catholic Aloysius and Jewish Ezekiel realize they both are teased about their names. Guided by Zeke's understanding grandfather, Allie and Zeke learn that Hanukkah bushes and gifts and Christmas trees and gifts may look alike, but they are really quite different. Learning about their similarities and differences helps the boys become friends and even extend their friendship to other "different" kids as well.

Elijah's Angel, by Michael J. Rosen. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

"Last year, when I was nine, Christmas Even and the first night of Chanukah fell on the same day. And that day my friend Elijah gave me an angel." So begins a beautiful tale of friendship between Jewish Michael and an elderly African-American woodcarver. When Michael is given a hand-carved guardian angel by Elijah as a Hanukkah present, he responds by giving Elijah a homemade menorah for Christmas. ▀

Peace on Earth... and in the Family

Nobody I've ever met, Christian, Jewish, or secular humanist, has had a problem with celebrating Hanukkah. That's odd, in a way: many people today would be uncomfortable with the Maccabees' rough enforcement of religious observance; it celebrates a miracle preserved only in folk tradition, not scripture; and the scripture it does depend on is apocryphal (not recognized as part of the Bible by some Christians and some Jews).

But that same biblical story, horrendously gory as it is (don't read it to young children), tells a tale of devotion to God even in the face of hideous martyrdom. It can strike a chord in the hearts of Christians concerned about reports of growing oppression of their co-religionists in countries such as Iran and China, and in the hearts of Jews mindful of the repeated and escalating persecution over the centuries that makes what was done to the Maccabee family pale by comparison.

Christmas itself is a different kettle of fish. Often the difficulty interfaith couples encounter really has to do with defining what parts of the celebrations are actually religious and which are cultural and nostalgic. Here are some possibilities:

1. Both Jew and Christian are comfortable with a secular celebration. This is an easy one. All you have to do is define what is unacceptably religious to either of you. You probably won't display a creche. You may feel that elaborate outdoor decorations are out of place. If you play seasonal music, you'll stick to "Jingle Bells" and "White Christmas" while leaving "O Holy Night" alone.

2. The Christian wants a religious Christmas, while the Jew sees it as a pleasant nonreligious observance. You'll have to tread a little lightly here. The Christian will have to remember that the essence of Christmas takes place in the heart, not in the decor or even in church. The Jew should be sensitive to the offensiveness of much modern secularization to the religious Christian and not blithely assume that an electrified Rudolph on the roof says it all.

3. The Christian, or rather gentile, is the secularist, while the Jew is uncomfortable with any sort of celebration. The Christian should keep in mind that even that patron saint of conspicuous consumption, Santa Claus, was originally a medieval bishop and saint, so that electric Rudolph is actually a sort of twice-removed reminder of religious content. The Jew must recognize that practices with their roots in memories of happy family occasions can't be cavalierly dismissed without causing resentment.

4. Both Christian and Jew have strong religious commitments. This, surprisingly, can be easier to deal with than the last two. What you do here is take all the above advice, combine it with a sense of humor and lots of good will, and work out the practical aspects step by step. Complicated, isn't it? Still, this should bring out another positive aspect to mixed marriage—in addition to finding out about someone else's religion, you're likely to spend a lot more time reexamining and learning about your own. With diligence, and a bit of luck, both of you will acquire real appreciation for both faiths. ▀

**Holidays
and
Happenings**
by Mary Heléne Rosenbaum

Mary Heléne Pottker Rosenbaum is the award-winning co-author of **Celebrating Our Differences: Living Two Faiths in One Marriage**. She has been published in a number of religious and secular magazines and newspapers. An active member of St. Patrick Catholic Church in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where she has been a lector for twenty-five years, she has also served as Executive Director for Congregation Beth Tikvah. She is the associate editor of **Dovetail**.

Kids' Page

by Debi Tenner

Debi Tenner is the mother of two and teaches the Sunday School class for older children in the New Haven, Connecticut, interfaith group. She currently works in the local public school system and has been a summer camp educator for the Congregational Churches of Connecticut.

When Holidays Collide: A Stop-Light Model

RED LIGHT: Table Talk and Learning

Talk with your children about whether you are celebrating each holiday on a religious basis or as a cultural/secular holiday (or both). Give them "clues" to look for: lighting Hanukkah, Shabbat, or Advent candles might be signs of the religious meaning of the holidays. Other clues might be reciting prayers, counting blessings, or making a donation to charity. The cultural and secular holiday celebrations clues include decorating, parties, school performances, and gift giving.

Why do the holidays happen so close this year? Older children might study the lunar cycle/calendar or the names of all the months in Hebrew and compare them to the American solar calendar.

Map and Story Placemats: Read the two stories of the December holidays to younger children and have them look up or create maps of the places where the stories take place (feel free to consult an atlas!). Make your maps into placemats by covering with clear contact paper. Or have kids draw scenes from both holidays to make "story placemats" for each holiday.

YELLOW LIGHT: Think and Prepare Ahead

My Interfaith House: Have the younger children cut out the shape of a house with a roof on an 11x14 piece of colored construction paper. Use crayons or chalk to draw doors, windows, and roof to look like your own house. In the windows, draw the signs of the December holidays you can see from the outside. These

might include a menorah, a Christmas tree, outdoor decorations, etc.

Interfaith December Calendar:
Take a December calendar and cut out each "day square." Glue them (not necessarily in order!) on 11x14 paper, leaving enough room for each number to become a flip-open door. Cut a small flap around each number. Then glue the entire paper to another one of the same size, and let the kids hide things behind each door.

GREEN LIGHT FOR GO: Add in the Fun

Latke Pancake Flip game: Glue a popsicle stick to a small paper plate (for a frying pan). Cut a circle the size of a latke out of heavier cardboard. Punch a hole in each and tie with approx. 2 feet of yarn. Now toss the latke and see how many times you can land it on the frying pan.

Christmas Wreath Bagels: Use bagel halves covered with cream cheese; decorate with M&Ms and spearmint leaves to look like a wreath. String licorice makes great bows.

Handprinted Menorah or Wreath:
Paint and print both hands on a paper with the thumbs overlapping for the center shamos (helper candle). Each night dip one finger in yellow to print a flame on the proper candle (OR cut a yellow flame out of paper). Make a wreath by pressing green handprints in a circle with fingers facing outwards. Then dab bright finger prints to add "lights" and a ribbon (OR trace hands on green paper, cut, and glue in a circle with fingers facing outwards). Add small pictures of all your family members and pets. ▀

Bulletin Board

Interfaith Support Around the Nation

To be listed as a contact person for a new or existing group or to indicate that you are looking to join or form a group, please send your information to:

Dan Josephs
1175 S. Euclid Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois 60304
Home phone: (708) 660-9503
Fax: (630) 574-8089
E-Mail: JosephsDA@aol.com

Dan is one of the founders and coordinators of the Chicago Jewish-Catholic Couples' Group. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please note: **Dovetail** does not interview or endorse any entry listed here.

Arizona, Phoenix area*
Interested in joining an interfaith group.
Contact: Warren Nechtman, (602) 980-4484

California, San Francisco Bay area*
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Alicia Torre, (415) 591-9434

California, San Francisco Bay area
Interfaith Connection
Groups for interfaith couples.
Contact: Rosanne Levitt, Director
(415) 292-1252

Colorado, Denver*
Interested in forming an interfaith group.
Contact: Karen McCarthy and Dan Kowal
(303) 439-7750

Connecticut, New Haven*
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Christina Giebisch-Mohrer
(203) 287-9110

District of Columbia, Greater Washington area*
Interfaith Families Project
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Laura Steinberg, (301) 589-9280

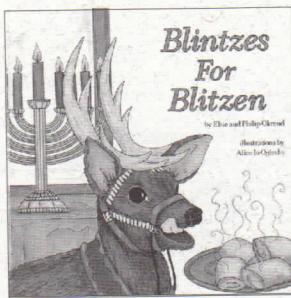
District of Columbia, Greater Washington area
Bethesda Jewish Congregation
Jewish congregation welcomes interfaith families.
Contact: Maran Beth Gluckstein, Exec. Director
(301) 469-8636

Illinois, Chicago Metropolitan area*
Jewish-Catholic Couples' Dialogue Group
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Dan and Abbe Josephs
(708) 660-9503,
or Patty and David Kovacs, (773) 275-5689

* denotes a group not sponsored by a religious institution.

- Kentucky, Louisville***
Interested in forming an interfaith group.
Contact: Carolyn Humphrey & Fred Gross
(502) 423-8583
- Louisiana, New Orleans area**
Outreach programs on interfaith issues.
Contact: Courtney Nathan, Jewish Family Service
(504) 831-8475
- Maryland, Baltimore**
Jewish Outreach Network Programs
Groups, workshops, and counseling for interfaith families, parents, and converts, including interfaith discussion support group.
Contact: Beth Land Hecht, Director
(410) 466-9200, ext. 381
- Maryland, Rockville**
Interfaith Outreach Program,
JCC of Greater Washington, DC
Introduces interfaith families to Jewish life and offers workshops, classes, and programs dealing with interfaith issues.
Contact: Lisa Shapero, Director
(301) 881-0100, ext. 6782
- Massachusetts, Amherst***
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Janet Lehan Bloom
(413) 253-3685
- Massachusetts, Boston***
Developing a network of interfaith families.
Contact: Adina Davidson and Joel Nitzberg
(617) 776-3235
- Michigan, Huntington Woods**
Group called "Celebrating Differences"
Contact: Miriam S. Jerris, Jewish Humanist Leader
(800) 696-0380
- Minnesota, Minneapolis***
Twin Cities Support Group
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Joan Cleary and Jerry Helfand
(612) 698-7987
- New Jersey, Hasbrouck Heights**
Temple Beth Elohim
Congregation welcomes Jews and non-Jews.
Contact: Rabbi Fredric S. Dworkin
(201) 744-3304
- New Jersey, South Jersey/Philadelphia area***
Bifaithful Families & Children Network
Group currently not active.
Contact: Miriam Gilbert
(609) 753-1173
- New Jersey, Whippany**
United Jewish Federation, interfaith families education program and support/discussion groups.
Contact: Lynne Wolfe
(973) 884-4800, ext. 192
- New York, Long Island**
Long Island Havurah (Fellowship) for Humanistic Judaism
Existing group stresses intercultural strengths.
Contact: Leonard Cherlin, (516) 889-8337
- New York, New York**
Temple of Universal Judaism
Participation is open to all.
Contact: Rabbi Charles Lippman
(212) 535-0187
- New York, Rochester**
Interfaith Connection, Jewish Family Service
Contact: Michele Ruda Leve, C.S.W.
(716) 461-2000, ext. 825
- New York, Rockland County***
Interested in forming an interfaith group.
Contact: Eric and Elizabeth Kohlmeier
(914) 639-9380
- Ohio, Cincinnati***
Interested in joining an interfaith group.
Contact: Christine M. Segal, (513) 793-2866
- Ohio, Columbus**
Gateways: The Jewish Interfaith Connection
Groups and programs for grandparents, parents, interfaith couples, and families.
Contact: Nancy Heiden, Project Director
(614) 231-2731
- Ohio, Dayton**
Jewish Interfaith Network
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Tonda Learner, (937) 439-4313
- Pennsylvania, Philadelphia**
Jewish Converts & Interfaith Network
Support groups for grandparents, parents, interfaith couples, converts, and children.
Contact: Lena Romanoff, Director
(610) 664-8112
- Tennessee, Memphis***
Existing interfaith group, currently not active.
Contact: Jan and David Kaplan, (901) 767-4267
- Wisconsin, Milwaukee**
Interfaith Connection, JCC of Milwaukee
Existing interfaith group.
Contact: Joyce Gutzke, Interfaith Coordinator
(414) 967-8218

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Over one million Jewish/Christian families in the United States face the challenges and opportunities inherent in their decision to marry. The only comprehensive guide in print for families living with two faiths in one household, *The Interfaith Family Guidebook* offers these families a look at the many questions they will face and the resources available to help them find their own answers.

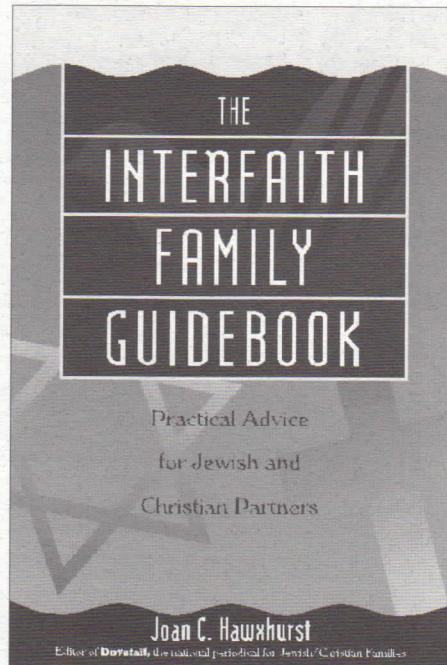
This concise and practical guidebook will help interfaith couples to:

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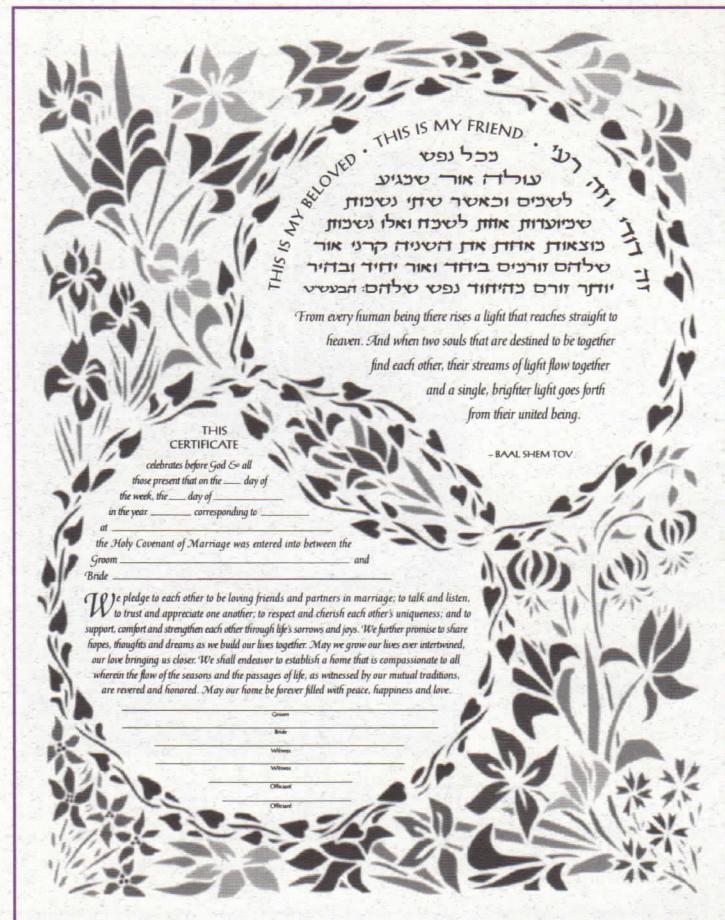


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