

Intermarriage in History: How Our Minds Have Changed

My mother once presented me a book she'd received at her confirmation called *A Catholic Girl's Guide*. Published in the early years of this century, it was written by a "Father LaSance." The author warns against marrying out (to a Protestant—the notion that a Catholic might marry a non-Christian evidently never entered his darkest nightmare).

As a horrible example, he cites the case of a young Catholic bride who came home to find her husband had relegated to the attic all her crucifixes, holy water fonts, holy pictures, sacred hearts, madonnas... the list went on. I could only sympathize with the poor husband, so surrounded by constant reminders of their religious difference.

Another horror story involved a woman who married a Protestant and soon began showing up with bruises and black eyes. The daughter of a Lutheran myself, I gasped at the notion that Protestants were somehow inevitably abusers. Dovetail adviser Rabbi Arthur Blecher points out that historic competition between the denominations ensured that traditionally, "where Catholics were in the majority, Protestants railed against intermarriage... where Protestants were in the majority, Catholics railed against intermarriage."

The bigotry surprised me even though I'd had the experience, unfortunately common before the Second Vatican Council, of hearing sermons excoriating Luther. I'd also been upset at hearing in catechism

that only Catholics would be admitted to heaven. My mother's response: "Can you imagine Gramma [Dad's mother] not being let into heaven?" Fallible logic, perhaps, but sufficiently reassuring to a seven-year-old.

A year or so later, someone set a fire in a confessional in our church. "Sister" said, "Probably some Jew." This time Mom's reaction was more aggressive. She called the offending teacher and fumed, "You know very well it was some poor Catholic you people have twisted."

These experiences taught me two valuable lessons: prejudice is unacceptable; and the institutional Church is not always right, indeed laypeople have the responsibility of speaking out against errors committed by the clergy. Still, clergy often reflect the concerns of their communities, while lay leaders can be more doctrinaire and alarmist than clergy.

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For Your Information

Joan Hawxhurst is currently taking maternity leave from her editing responsibilities for **Dovetail**.

Associate editor and columnist Mary Heléne Rosenbaum is filling in for her.



Baby Isaac

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Joan C. Hawxhurst
Editor

Mary Heléne Rosenbaum
Associate Editor

Alison Siragusa
Marketing Director

When my Jewish husband and I were married in the Catholic Church in 1963, we didn't expect a nuptial mass. But thanks to an exceptionally tolerant priest, the ceremony did not in any other way make my husband or his family feel excluded or even patronized. (My fire-eating mother had something to do with that, too.)

When my Jewish daughter's fiancé converted to Judaism in 1986—out of conviction, not just for the sake of the marriage—it was his uncle, a prominent Dominican priest, who reassured his devout Catholic family that they should be proud he was making such a firm religious commitment.

This issue of **Dovetail** will explore how attitudes toward Christian/Jewish marriage have changed over time. Judaic Studies Professor S. Ned Rosenbaum (my husband) analyzes the biblical view in the article beginning on page 3.

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.

Next, Jennifer Patton brings us into the modern world with an excursion through intermarriage in popular culture (page 5). Nancy Nutting Cohen's piece moves from a personal story of her family's intermarriage saga to an overview of Christian attitudes (page 7). Finally, selections from **A Bintel Brief** give a series of snapshots of an influential Jewish voice at various points in this century.

In this issue, too, you will find related columns on Holidays and Happenings (page 10) and the Kids Page (page 11), plus a delightful, tongue-in-cheek drawing from Jane Bynum (page 4).

If you're having difficulty with social or familial attitudes toward your interfaith relationship, reflect as you read this issue that things could be worse... and have been. 



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

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The Biblical View of Marriage and Related Matters

by S. Ned Rosenbaum

Oy," Mama said. "If Jake marries a shiksa* like his brother did, it'll be the death of me." Sound familiar? Well, perhaps. Jewish mothers have been saying this for a very long time. In this case, the speaker is Jacob's mother Rebecca. (Genesis 26:34f and 27:46, my own rather loose translation).

The Patriarchs/Matriarchs are, of course, shadowy figures for whom we have no extra-biblical evidence, and the texts that tell their stories may come from hundreds of years after the alleged events, but it's safe to say that Hebrew Scriptures are uniformly against intermarriage—and not just to Hittites, Esau's choice.

No tradition I know favors intermarriage unless the spouse converts. In Judaism, widowed Ruth is the spiritual godmother of converts because she does so not for her late husband but to remain with her mother-in-law. Non-biblical Jewish tradition reports that the wives of the patriarchs all—to a woman—converted, as did Joseph's and Moses' foreign wives.

The Religious Issue

As unlikely as this is actually to have happened, it gives some clue to the strength of Jewish belief on the subject. The question is: why is Judaism so insistent? A traditional answer would point out that the Canaanites, whom Israel displaced, were expelled from the land because of grievous infractions of what Jews hold to be universal human rights; for example, they sacrificed their own children and practiced oppressive sexual activities. Deuteronomy

*A derogatory term for non-Jewish women.

7:3 warns: "Don't give your daughters to their sons in marriage, or take their daughters for your sons, for they will lead them astray."

The Hebrew here is sufficiently ambiguous that Rashi (R. Solomon ben Isaac, France, 11th century) was able to read the verse as proposing that religion follows the mother. This is the basis for the continuing non-Reform Jewish judgment that the mother's religion determines the child's identity. But religion is not the only issue.

The Socioeconomic Issue

When Ezra and Nehemiah returned to Israel from Babylonian Exile, they found that many Judeans, including high-ranking ones, had intermarried with Ammonite (trans-Jordanian) and Samaritan (the discredited Northern Kingdom) families. Because of this, political control of Jerusalem was very much up for grabs. Apparently, Ezra had the power to persuade most of the men in these unions to "put away your foreign wives." Note the absence of the conversion option here. Even today, Israeli Jews cannot marry Samaritans (of whom some 5,000 survive) without the latter's conversion, although the Samaritans consider themselves fully Jewish.

Today's Applications

It would be wrong, I think, to follow Bible teachings as though no social attitudes had evolved since the time for which they were crafted, else we should still be allowing slavery and practicing public floggings. But biblical strictures on intermarriage still carry weight because the modern Jewish community in the West has

*Stanley Ned Rosenbaum, PhD, is a professor of religion and classics and director of Judaic Studies at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The author of numerous articles on both scholarly and popular religious topics and of the book **Amos of Israel: A New Interpretation**, as well as co-author with his wife Mary Heléne Rosenbaum of **Celebrating Our Differences: Living Two Faiths in One Marriage**, he serves on the advisory board of **Dovetail**.*

Suggested further reading from
Dovetail advisory board member
 Cantor Oscar Rosenbloom:

Jewish Literacy by Rabbi Joseph
 Telushkin (1991: William Morrow
 and Company, New York, NY)

The Sacred Books of the Jews by
 Harry Gersh (1968: Stein and Day,
 New York, NY)

Voices from Jerusalem, "Jews
 and Christians Reflect on the Holy
 Land" (1992: Paulist Press, Mahwah,
 NJ; David Burrell and Heyhezekel
 Landau, eds.)

been greatly reduced by persecution
 and what is left is in some danger
 of being killed by the kindness
 of assimilation.

Experts estimate that without the
 last 2,000 years of organized violence
 there would be sixty million Jews
 in the world instead of the present
 fifteen million. Jews who intermarry,
 if they are at all sensitive, may get
 a sense of "letting down the side,"
 especially if they see children and
 grandchildren growing up outside
 the faith.

This does not imply any Jewish
 sense of superiority. The Talmud
 says, "Better a righteous Gentile than
 an unrighteous High Priest" (the
 same point made by Jesus in his
 parable of the good Samaritan, by
 the way). Rather, it reflects Isaiah's
 charge (42:6) that Jews must become
 a "light to the nations," something
 that will be difficult to do if they
 no longer carry Jewish lamps.

"The situation," as Abe Lincoln said,
 "is piled high with difficulty." Ruth
 is extolled not just as the first self-
 convert, but also recognized as King
 David's great-grandmother. In other
 words, without this Righteous
 Moabite, the history of Israel would
 likely have been quite different. And
 Ruth is one of a number of foreign
 women, such as Rahab and Pharaoh's
 daughter, who have played major
 roles in preserving the lives of
 some important Israelites and thus
 forwarded the history. Of course,
 the names of Delilah and Jezebel
 come to mind as well....

It is a paradox of Jewish history that,
 although biblical Israel was built
 from a confederation of different
 tribes and people, once it had knit
 itself into a nation it tended to forget
 that diversity had often been a source
 of strength.

I don't think we can fault the Bible
 for its uncompromising stand against
 intermarriage. To build and sustain
 a nation and its culture a certain
 amount of unity is required. Allow-
 ing Jews to choose their own mates
 regardless of religion would put the
 future very much in jeopardy.
 Besides, it's very much a modern
 conceit that individuals, not their
 families, should choose suitable
 partners.

But that's another story....

(This essay is affectionately
 dedicated to Mary Heléne
 Rosenbaum, Righteous Gentile
 and my wife of thirty-four years.
 I told you it was a paradox.)



Interfaith Relationships in the Popular Culture

by Jennifer C. Patterson

I can clearly remember the first person who explained to me how difficult it is to have an interfaith relationship: it was Judy Blume. Long after I had forgotten about agonizing over my first kiss or about becoming a woman, I could still remember the bleak picture that Blume painted of a Jewish-Christian marriage. Neither could I forget Margaret Simon, from *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, who experienced the isolation of being separated from one set of disapproving grandparents and the confusion of not being taught about either tradition into which she was born. Still worse were the whispered conversations overheard by Sally Friedman in the 1940s—era novel *Starring Sally J. Friedman As Herself*. Sally listened in horror to conversations about a young Jewish girl who had become pregnant outside of wedlock by her non-Jewish boyfriend. The family was sitting *shiva* (the traditional Jewish mourning ritual), and it was clear that they were reacting to more than the embarrassment of an unplanned pregnancy.

Of course, these books were written in the 1970s, when society was just beginning to become more accepting of romantic pairings that deviated from the expected norm. My mother informs me that, as late as the 1960s when she was dating and choosing a spouse, an interfaith marriage could be a union of two people from traditions as closely related as Catholic and Protestant. There were the same questions that we have come to expect to arise in most interfaith marriages: How would the children be raised? How would the family choose to worship? How would the holidays be celebrated?

Would one faith overshadow the other? In this context, Margaret Simon and her parents were pioneers. While society was still considering the possible ramifications of a marriage between two people of different Christian denominations, the Simons were reflecting the challenge of being an interfaith family in a culture that expected a family to choose one or the other tradition.

Seeds of Change

Fortunately, popular culture eventually began to reflect the slow changes in societal attitudes toward interfaith marriage. Ironically, one of the first television programs that I can remember seriously examining interfaith marriage was set in the 1800s: *Little House on the Prairie*. The series dedicated several episodes to the growing romance between Nellie Oleson and Percival Dalton. This story arc culminated in the episode "Come Let Us Reason Together," which showed the two families debating the faith in which Nellie and Percival's child would be raised, even as Nellie gave birth. When twins were the happy result, an agreement was reached to give the girl a Christian upbringing and to raise the boy Jewish. While I have never quite understood how this was supposed to work within the family, I think it was important to see such a prime-time acknowledgment that two religious heritages could coexist in one family.

My generation has been lucky. The 1980s and 1990s have brought a few more positive images of interfaith relationships in the popular culture. *Mad About You*, one of the most popular television shows throughout

Jennifer C. Patterson is registrar at the University of Dayton School of Law.

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opinions expressed herein.

its entire run, carries a very strong implication that the Buchmans are an interfaith couple. Certainly, the implication has been strong enough to spark many debates on Usenet discussion groups, but a well-placed comment here and there by the main characters seems to remove all doubt. Even the ever-popular *Seinfeld* has flirted with the topic of interfaith attraction in its own typically irreverent manner.

Looking Ahead

So what is to be learned from a brief look at interfaith relationships in the popular culture? Like many others, I would argue that popular culture as expressed in books, movies, and television is both a mirror reflecting current conditions and a mold that helps shape the future. Just as the interfaith relationships portrayed by Judy Blume reflected times when a Jewish/Christian union was daring and often taboo, the reflections of interfaith relationships today are more hopeful.

Current portrayals of interfaith relationships are also much less

obvious than they were in the 1970s. I am thankful that the shock value that at one time made this topic such a natural for books or television has worn off, but our society has not quite moved to the point where popular culture can freely portray an interfaith family sharing holidays and celebrations, debating decisions and beliefs, and meeting the challenges that come from uniting two faiths in one household. For the time being, we must be content with story lines that make the interfaith relationship a background story, something that exists but is not confronted.

I am looking forward to the day that television, movies, and popular novels bring the joys and challenges of an interfaith relationship to the forefront of the plot line. It would be wonderful to see the Buchman family debate the "December dilemma" or choose a religious school for their child. Perhaps, one day, we could even revisit Margaret Simon, as she explains her rich religious and cultural background to her own children. ■

Job Announcement: Part Time Sunday School Director

The Interfaith Families Project of Greater Washington, DC (IFFP) seeks creative energetic individual to direct Sunday School Program for elementary and middle school students. Position requires curriculum planning and development, hiring and supervising teachers, and overall program administration. Classes meet approximately every two weeks between September and May. This is a part-time position with salary based on qualifications and experience. Our choice of "being both" is innovative and challenging. If you can wholeheartedly embrace these principles, call for more information or send resumé to:

Mary Joel Hollin
7025 Eastern Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912
e-mail: LMS2day@aol.com
phone: 301-585-4949; fax: 301-434-4857

Crossing the Intermarriage Divide

by Nancy Nutting Cohen

Having been in an interfaith (that is, Jewish/Christian) marriage for the last seventeen years, I find myself chuckling inside whenever I hear someone refer to an "interfaith" marriage and realize that they're talking about a Catholic/Protestant situation. I can't help but think how much broader and more complicated the term is when referring to those who have stepped over the boundaries between the major religions, rather than just between the sects within a major tradition. And yet, those Catholic/Protestant boundaries have been, and in some places still are, a highly loaded issue as well.

When my Irish Catholic mother married my Protestant father back in 1937, this "mixed marriage" was such a taboo that they weren't even allowed to get married in the church building. The priest witnessed their exchange of vows in the rectory (priest's house) and only the immediate family could be present. When my sisters married non-Catholic men in the early 60s, the attitudes had softened enough that they were allowed to be married in the church building, but the priest wouldn't let them light any candles.

I remember in my youth that there was a clear message that we Catholics were not to even condone, much less support "mixed marriages." This message was so strong that my aunt didn't even go to her daughter's wedding, although I don't know whether this was because her fiancé was Protestant, because he was divorced (two incredibly serious strikes against him, at least in the eyes of most Catholics at the time), or because they were being married

by a Justice of the Peace (I guess it's "three strikes and you're out"). The consolation there, one relative was quick to remind the parents, was that if the marriage didn't work out and they got divorced, the daughter wouldn't need to go through the bother of an annulment, because they were never really married in the eyes of the Church anyway.*

Sources of Division

Where do these attitudes come from? They were right there in our Baltimore Catechism, the summary and commentary on all of Catholic belief and practice presented in question-and-answer form for children, with which any Catholic who was educated in the 50s or earlier is very familiar.**

A Catholic who is married by a justice of the peace or a Protestant minister is really not married at all, but simply living in sin [elsewhere it's identified as a mortal sin].

If a Catholic is "married" in this way, it is hypocrisy and a mockery of God. God puts no bond of marriage around such a couple, as He does around couples who are married by a priest. When a Catholic is married in a civil or non-Catholic ceremony, other Catholics are not allowed to be present, or even to send gifts or show any approval, since this is not a real marriage, but simply a terrible agreement to live together in sin. If the "marriage" takes place

*Nancy Nutting Cohen, a founding member of the Twin Cities (MN) Interfaith Couples Support Group, holds a B.A. in theology and an M.Ed. in religious education. She has worked as an educator and youth minister in Catholic schools and parishes for ten years. For the past seven years, she has been involved in facilitating spiritual growth programs for adults, both in groups and through one-on-one spiritual counseling. She also works part-time as a pastoral associate at St. Henry Church in Monticello, MN, and is on **Dovetail's** editorial advisory board.*

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at a religious ceremony, the Catholic party is excommunicated. To have this sin forgiven, the couple must be married by a priest, or separate from each other. (Commentary on question #298)

These taboos against mixing with other religions didn't stop with marriage, however. One woman told me recently that because she was in a mixed marriage in the 50s, she and her husband weren't allowed to adopt.

The missal (prayer book) from my childhood even warned about association with non-Catholic religions. In an Examination of Conscience to prepare one for Confession, listed under the First Commandment [Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me], is the following: "Have you participated in non-Catholic services, Sunday schools, choirs, organizations (the two Y's)? Have you listened to non-Catholic sermons?..."

And from the Baltimore Catechism, Question #205: "How does a Catholic sin against faith?" Answer: "[B]y taking part in non-Catholic worship."

Toward Tolerance

Most of these attitudes have changed drastically, thanks in good measure to the renewal that resulted from the Vatican II Council of the 60s. We now welcome dialogue with other religions, often share worship services, and, we hope, choose compassion over legalism when dealing with individuals. I suspect that the Church felt it was standing up for the integrity of its beliefs back

in those days.

Yet, as a Catholic and as a person trained in theology and working for Church institutions for the past 25 years, I'm embarrassed by our past arrogance and saddened by our lack of compassion. I can't believe this is how Jesus would have wanted us to deal with people. The Gospels show us time and time again that it's not how he dealt with people. I hope we'll continue to move forward with renewed openness and reap the blessings that can come from "stepping over boundaries."

As my husband and I said in a prayer that we composed for our wedding ceremony:

May our life together
be a sign to others
that people can live together
in peace,
in spite of differences. 

*Theological distinctions between "valid" and "licit" marriages in Roman Catholic canon law, as well as definitions of what constitutes "sacramental" marriage as argued by scholars, are complicated and have developed over time. As the quote from the Baltimore Catechism shows, however, before the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s it was common teaching that while there could be a true marriage between two baptized Protestants, a Catholic marrying under Protestant auspices was not sacramentally joined in the eyes of God. It has been, and remains, the case that marriage between a Catholic and a non-baptized person (a situation designated in church law as "disparity of cult") requires an express dispensation from the bishop in order to be valid. [Ed.]

**The catechism, first commissioned in 1884 by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, was part of an ongoing pursuit of uniformity of practice and teaching among the many ethnicities and nationalities that comprised Catholic communities in the United States. [Ed.]

A Bintel Brief

20th Century Snapshots

Dear Editor (1906): For a long time I worked in a shop with a Gentile girl, and we... fell in love. We agreed that I would remain a Jew and she a Christian. But after we had been married for a year, I realized that it would not work....

[W]henver one of my Jewish friends comes to the house, she is displeased. ... when she sees me reading a Jewish newspaper her face changes color....

She used to be quite liberal, but lately she is being drawn back to the Christian religion. She gets up early Sunday morning, runs to church, and comes home with eyes swollen from crying. When we pass a church now and then, she trembles.... What can we do now?

Answer: Unfortunately, we often hear of such tragedies, which stem from marriages between people of different worlds. It's possible that if this couple were to move to a Jewish neighborhood, the young man might have more influence on his wife.

Worthy Editor (1908): I have been in America almost three years.... [M]y heart drew me toward a Gentile girl.... [She said,] "[This] should not bother us. We are both, first of all, human beings and we will live as such."... [B]ut... I think of my parents and am torn by doubt.

Answer: We can only say that some mixed marriages are happy, others unhappy.... Therefore we cannot take it upon ourselves to advise the young man....

Worthy Editor (1928): I consider myself a progressive woman who thinks there should be no difference between Jews and Christians. ... Now,

however, when my daughter has fallen in love with a Gentile, I have become one of those mothers who interferes.... I don't know how to explain it.... I feel—a mother's heart feels—that my daughter could never get used to these people.

Answer: [O]ur opinion is the same as yours.... but she is infatuated with the young man. And when one is in love, then all the sensible arguments are worthless.

Dear Editor (1935): [My mother-in-law] insinuates that I have ruined her son because, if not for me, he would have married a ... Jewish girl.... [M]y mother... tells me I must treat my mother-in-law with respect and in time everything will turn out for the best....

Answer: The writer... must ... follow the logical advice of her mother.

Worthy Mr. Editor (1953): I expected that my religious parents would oppose my marrying a non-Jewish girl, but ... they warned me that if I married her they would commit suicide.... This girl is as dear to me as life itself....

Answer: [B]reak off the match ... you are from two different worlds.... Love alone cannot fill a life.

Comment by Harry Golden (1972):

[Intermarriage] occurs eight times oftener with a Jewish male and a Gentile female.... But... [t]he girl must justify her marriage to a Jew: "[H]e's ... a journalist, a physicist, a college professor."... For while the parents of the Gentile girl may accept the Jewish son-in-law ... the girl loses many of her friends, former classmates and relatives....

The Forward, a Yiddish daily newspaper in America which celebrated its seventieth anniversary in 1967, played an important role in helping the Eastern European Jewish immigrants transplant and adjust themselves to American life.... [T]he daily feature, "A Bintel Brief," was established in 1906.... Whole sacks of mail began to pour in.

[From the Foreword to the book A Bintel Brief by Isaac Metzker]

*A Bintel Brief, Isaac Metzker, ed.
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of Isaac Metzker.*

Remembering History

Two of this season's holidays derive from recent history, and have resonance for dual-faith couples. They are often referred to in Hebrew: Yom ha-Shoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and Yom ha-Atzmaut (Israel Independence Day).

Yom ha-Shoah [yome ha-SHOW-ah], falls on the 27th day of Nisan in Israel, April 22/23 this year, but outside of Israel is often observed on April 19, the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. It comes, as Blu Greenberg puts it, "between Pesach and Shavuot, in the spring-time of a Jew's heart."

This observance is still developing and does not yet have a formal liturgy. Many communities, Jewish and Christian, gather for a mourning service, perhaps with reminiscences of survivors. If yours doesn't, you could start one. My husband's college sometimes does a lunchtime remembrance at which the menu is a cup of potato soup, an unbuttered whole wheat roll, an apple, and a glass of water. This supposedly spartan fare is luxurious compared to what concentration camp inmates actually had to eat: food for thought indeed.

For interfaith couples, remembering this hideous phenomenon typically requires insight and sensitivity on the part of the Christian partner: the Jewish partner, or his or her family, may have strong feelings on the subject. A Christian woman engaged to a Jewish man whose parents, she felt, "harped on" the Holocaust, said to me, "It's a long time ago. Can't they just forget it?" No, they can't. Don't expect them to.

Israel's Independence is celebrated on the 5th of Iyyar—or on the

previous Thursday if the 5th conflicts with Shabbat, as it does this year, so the solar date is April 30/31. The original solar date of Yom ha-Atzmaut [yome ha-ahts-ma-OOT] was May 14, 1948—the day the State of Israel was established and its Declaration of Independence proclaimed, some six months after the UN resolution partitioning Palestine.

This is another still-evolving holiday. Special psalms of praise are sung at the evening and morning services, while penitential prayers are omitted. The shofar may be blown.

The customary food is Israeli: hummous (chickpea and sesame paste) or felafel (fried chickpea balls with pita bread and diced cucumbers and tomatoes); baba ganoush (eggplant salad—tastes better than it sounds); tabouleh (bulghur wheat salad); stuffed vegetables.

Naturally, the celebration is more elaborate in Israel than here—speeches, parades, fireworks, and so forth. In America, Jewish community centers are often hung with Israeli flags and educational books or films about Israel are made available.

The dual-faith couple can use the day to discuss what the existence of a Jewish state means to them and their children. If, like me and my husband, you disagree with some of Israel's policies and practices, you should certainly explore those issues. But you might focus on what its existence has meant to Jews in the diaspora—and, following from that, on what America has achieved and not yet achieved in fostering religious freedom. 

Holidays and Happenings
by Mary Heléne Rosenbaum

Mary Heléne Pottker Rosenbaum is 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**.

Venn ... and Where

Our children are at the edge of ever-growing societal multicultural change. Modern observers ponder, "Are we a Melting Pot or a Salad Bowl?" with neither metaphor quite adequate. Yet for so many generations of Christians and Jews, the focus has often been on what separates our religions and cultures. In this modern age of pluralism, our collective consciousness gets redirected toward answering: "How do we celebrate our commonalities, while honoring what keeps us distinct?"

Your interfaith family is a microcosm of this larger societal trend. How can we begin to explore these distinctions with our children? Here is an activity for the whole family to share.

Step One: Use what resources are available to you (writing, drawing, photos, clip art, etc.). Put these items on plain or adhesive-backed paper and cut out each individually: *Ark of the Covenant, Bible, breaking bread, candles, caritas (charity), Christmas star, church, communion, cross, dove of peace, dreidel, Easter, follow the commandments, Friday night, Hanukkah, human service, Jerusalem, Jesus, love God, love my neighbor, love myself, manger, Mary, matzo, menorah, Moses, Noah's ark, Passover, prayer, priest, rabbi, Sabbath, Sarah, Shabbat, star of David, Sunday morning, synagogue, Torah, tzedakah, wine, yarmulke.* Add any other item that you find important! (I can even e-mail some of these graphics to you using Microsoft Word.)

Step Two: On a larger poster board draw two circles that intersect with a large common area in the middle (Remember those Venn Diagrams

from grade school?) Mark the left and right sides "Jewish" and "Christian." In the center write "Both."

Step Three: Sit down together as a family, letting the children lead the way. Decide which term or object goes into which sphere. This will start the conversation moving! When you have all decided, glue them down and discuss what the children observe about our religions' distinctions and our similarities.

Step Four: Discuss that each religion shares God. Share how you as parents see God. (For family reading and discussion, I recommend highly Etan Boritzer's *What is God?*)

Step Five: Begin your children's search for God—and perhaps inscribe their comments in a composition book. "Religion" and "God" are both intertwined and distinct. I have used the metaphor of religion as a lens to search for God with young children. Buy some cheap plastic sunglasses and poke out the lenses. Share this original poem, and let their amazing journey commence!

Religion is the lens

With which we search for God.
With some you might see clearly,
While some might be quite odd.
My Dad sees God with one lens,
My Mom has yet another.
But both see oh so clearly
We are sister, we are brother.

For me my Eyes have yet to grow,
But in my heart I'm sure I know
God lives around, throughout, above,
But mostly in my heart, for
GOD IS LOVE. ♡

Kids' Page
by Patty Kovacs

Patty Kovacs is currently a candidate for a Master's degree in counseling at Northeastern Illinois University. She recently received a Catechetical Ministries Recognition Award from Chicago's Archdiocesan Office of Religious Education. She and her husband David are involved in Chicago's Jewish-Catholic Dialogue Group and its Family Religious School.

Announcing a New Title from Dovetail Publishing:

The Interfaith Family Guidebook:

Practical Advice for Jewish and Christian Partners

by Joan C. Hawxhurst

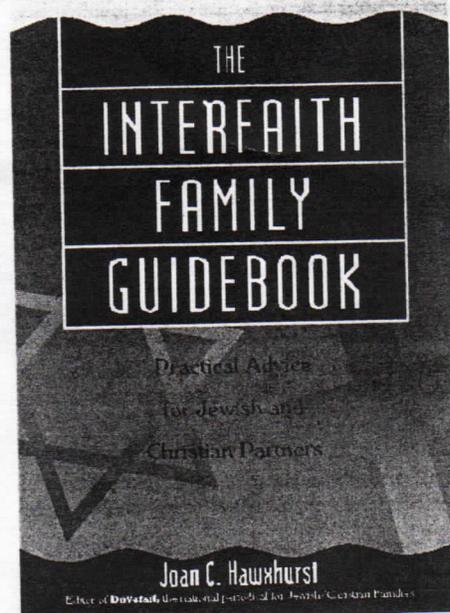
Over one million Jewish/Christian families in the United States face the challenges and opportunities inherent in their decision to marry. Many thousands of these families are struggling to define their households' faith choices and traditions. The only comprehensive guide in print for families living 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:

- Respect and appreciate both of their religious heritages
- Discuss with candor the struggles they will face
- Celebrate all the holidays that are meaningful to them
- Nurture positive relationships with their extended families
- Create a mutually satisfactory plan for celebrating in their home
- Decide how to raise their children
- Plan meaningful ceremonies to mark their marriage, the birth of a child, coming-of-age, and other life-cycle events

The recent national conference, "Interfaith Families in the 1990s: New Trends, New Voices," held April 3-5, 1998, at Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA, was a resounding success. Watch for details in upcoming issues of *Dovetail*.

For immediate information, call the Dovetail Institute for Interfaith Family Resources ("Differ") at 1-800-530-1596.



- Learn from the experiences of other interfaith families
- Find helpful local and national resources and support groups

This book is for interfaith families who are committed to understanding both religious traditions and to communicating about their unique perspectives as Christians and Jews who have chosen to marry. Full of nonjudgmental information and resources, this book is a valuable tool that will be turned to again and again by Jewish/Christian families, their parents and children, and the professionals who serve them.

Available May 1998; 192 pages, softcover, \$16.95.
Call 800-222-0070 to reserve your copy today.

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A Journal by and for Jewish/Christian Families

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In the Next Issue of *Dovetail*: *New Trends, New Voices—The Conference*

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