

Dovetail

A Journal by and for Jewish/Christian Families



“But What Am I?” Children and Interfaith Families

Statements and position papers issued by religious institutions often make the claim that people who marry outside their faiths are not interested in religion, will not transmit their (or any) faith tradition to their children, and are doomed to a life of meaningless secularism. The very existence of Dovetail—both the Institute and the Journal—demonstrates the fallacy of this assertion. You who read and support us know that there is a growing community of intermarried couples striving to find a place on the religious continuum that makes sense for them, and that will transmit to their children the standards and traditions they value.

Still, the tired canard was made again at the conference called the National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations, which was held in Houston this past October. I attended a session at which members of the Texas religious community presented a statement on intermarriage they’ve evidently been working on for several years, with input from Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish clergy—but not from interfaith couples themselves. Quoted in full on the next page of this issue of *Dovetail*, it makes for discouraging reading indeed.

DI-IFR’s national group liaison, Dan Josephs, was beside me as the statement was read. By the end of it we were, so to speak, beside ourselves. The unfounded assertions, sweeping generalizations, and evident lack of any input from interfaith couples themselves the statement contains left us breathless—momentarily. We soon recovered and were able to contribute some perspective, and infuse some solid facts, into the discussion.

However, I was brought up short at the beginning of the response period, when

the rabbi who was co-leading the session said, as he handed me the microphone, “I’ve read your writings, Mary, so I know where you’re coming from.” I hope I got across to him and to the others there that where I am “coming from” does not necessarily reflect the positions of DI-IFR and *Dovetail*, which do not in fact promote any one attitude or solution to any of the challenges of intermarriage, especially in the area of childrearing.

For Ned and me, raising our children by educating and encouraging them to practice both our faiths was an approach that suited our needs. Other people, including some of those you’ll read in the pages of this issue, have found other paths that made more sense for them. We are committed to providing resources for couples and helping them to choose their own best answers.

The good news about the Houston workshop: afterwards a number of people—priests, ministers, a rabbi, and a couple of Jewish social service workers—sought Dan and me out to thank us for our input and indicate that we had shown them some aspects of intermarriage in a new light, and made them aware of facts they hadn’t known before. Their good will and obvious desire to learn can give us all hope. ■

Mary Helen Leach

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Texas Conference of Churches Study Document on Jewish-Christian Marriages
Prepared by the Jewish-Christian Forum, November 21, 1996

The number of marriages between Christians and Jews has risen meteorically in recent years. This steep increase has created a crisis in religious continuity both for Christians and Jews. Jews, being a small minority in America, are being threatened with extinction.

Judaism is a home-based religion, unlike Christianity, in which the church is essential. It is imperative, in Judaism, for many rituals to be performed in the home. In fact, it is almost impossible for Judaism to perpetuate itself unless the home is Jewish in all respects. If the home lacks Jewish sacred ceremonies, it is very likely that children raised in such a home will not continue to identify themselves as Jews.

Christians who enter an interfaith marriage also face the danger that they will not be able to inculcate their Christian beliefs into their children. The compromise which usually evolves is that no religion or a very diluted form of religion will be pursued. As a result, the children will be raised as neither Christians nor Jews.

This religious vacuum will distress both the Jewish and the Christian partner by not allowing them to raise their children in the belief system each espouses. Many times Christian-Jewish marriages flounder [*sic*] on just this issue: how to raise children religiously. The beliefs and practices which make Christians and Jews distinctive are threatened by interfaith marriages.

These marriages usually cause the spouses, in order to stay together, to desist from practicing their respective religions fully or to fashion a home life devoid of religion altogether.

Recommendations

Committed to the perpetuation of our individual religious legacies, we of the Texas Conference of Churches recommend the following to all Texas clergy, both Christian and Jewish:

1. Meet with each other long before such intermarriage situations arise and come to an agreement that, while they must be sensitive and sympathetic to the needs of the couples involved, marriages between Jews and Christians are problematic. They may threaten the continuity of their respective traditions. Clergypersons should explore with these couples the value of marriage as a conveyer of religious heritage.

2. Set up a counseling situation to acquaint the couple with questions they will face, particularly after children arrive. Obviously clergy face a dilemma when they confront eager young couples longing to marry across faith boundaries. In such situations, there is hardly time for constructive conversation. Yet, there are myriad issues, such as the religion of potential offspring of that marriage, that should be resolved before the marriage takes place.

3. Urge among all Texas Conference of Churches member judicatories an emphasis for clergy and lay educators to include concerns regarding the issues related to interfaith marriages when teaching young people and adults about marriage and marriage preparations.

4. Both in seminary and continuing education settings, advocate teaching about the issues related to interfaith marriages.

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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 for 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 M. H. Rosenbaum, Editor, at the above address.

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Mezuzot for Children of Interfaith Parents

by Tirzah Firestone

Recently, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan leader, called for a host of spiritual music extravaganzas to be performed around the world. His assistants organized concerts from the Hollywood Bowl to Hiroshima to demonstrate in the universal language of music the many different faces of faith. Programs include Gospel Choirs, Tibetan monks, African chants, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and a special focus on the music of indigenous cultures. As one of HH Dalai Lama's spokespeople said, "They are not going to be here for too long, so it's a good time to listen to their message."

I am thinking of my kids now, and the world in which they are growing up. The Dalai Lama's project reminds me that this Christmas/Hanukkah season is different, not simply our annual balancing act of Christmas tree and Hanukkah gelt, but an opportunity of much larger proportions. Although it may be an arbitrary dateline, we are quickly approaching a new century this winter season, and yes, a new millennium.

Millennium Mezuzot

The Jewish tradition teaches that every threshold and doorpost needs a sacred marker, called a mezuzah, to remind us of where we are coming from and where we are going to. The mezuzah is usually nailed on the doorposts of our houses as a call to mindfulness and God-presence as we pass into the unknown. This year, like none other, we all have a poignant threshold-crossing to make. It is a threshold in time that will take us into the next century, and it sorely needs a mezuzah to help us stay mindful of our passage.

This pertains especially to us, families who span more than one culture in our homes. We who have the awesome

mission of passing down more than one lineage to our children need to take our children by the hand and cross the new year threshold with extra special care. We need to help them to open their hearts to hear the jubilant voices of faith from all corners of our planet, to listen with all the respect they can muster to the sometimes dissonant sounds of diversity. For it is diversity that will be the hallmark of their world.

We interfaith parents know about diversity. And at this passage into the next century we have the challenging job of explaining to our children that in their lives the world will be changing so rapidly that not only the purple-winged butterfly of the rain forest, but the religions and folkways of whole peoples (perhaps even of their own ancestors) will be fast departing from our world.

I used to wonder what it would be like for my child in an interfaith home. Now I realize it's the whole world that's going interfaith (only without the values of respect and tolerance that we try so hard to inculcate). After the Columbine High School shooting, which took place not far from where I live, it came home to me with a devastating thud just what kind of broken world our kids are really growing up in. I realized that the more fragmented the world is, the more our children need to know who they are.

I could launch into a talk here about the importance of giving your child a well-defined religious identity, but I've come to believe that far more fundamental to the child's well-being (and the world's) is their spiritual identity. I hope to speak about these

Rabbi Tirzah Firestone, MA, author of *With Roots in Heaven: One Woman's Passionate Journey Into the Heart of Her Faith*, is a psychotherapist and founding rabbi of the Jewish Renewal Congregation of Boulder, Col. Raised in an Orthodox home, Firestone embarked upon a spiritual journey that included exploration of a variety of eastern and New-Age philosophies and marriage to a Protestant minister. Though that marriage ended in divorce, she retains a deep understanding of the challenges that face interfaith couples and of the riches of a multiplicity of traditions.

Tirzah Firestone will be keynote speaker at DI-IFR's upcoming conference, "But What Am I? Children and Interfaith Families," June 23-26, 2000 at the Center for Congregations and Family Ministries, Louisville Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Register before January 1, 2000 for low Early Bird rate: \$155, or \$300 per couple (after Jan. 1, \$185 or \$350 per couple).

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things in much more depth at the DI-IFR conference in June.

In the meanwhile, here, for the urgent need of the moment, are a few *mezuzot* (plural for *mezuzah*, sacred doorpost markers, used here in the figurative sense), that you might use with your children as you make your transition into the new century. It is only the beginning of a list and I hope you will add to it.

Family Mezuzot

- Praying for the world and all of its people

Learning to respect both (or all) the religions in our own home sets up a pattern of respect for all people. Many of us work to give our children the knowledge that each religion and each people carries a unique message, a different way of perceiving God and reality. This season, take this teaching one step farther: Cut out pictures, light a candle, play music from different world cultures, and pray as a family for the good of all religions of the world.

- Grace

Many of us say a grace, a *bracha* (blessing), a word of gratitude before or after meals. During the holyday season, discuss as a family one graphic way you can show your gratitude in an act of kindness to someone not necessarily related to you. Go as a family to the homeless shelter or the community food-share program in your community, donate some money or food to an organization outside of your normal circle, or create a relationship with a child or family from another country. All of these actions are ways of extending grace to others.

- *B'tzelem*

In Genesis we read that each member of humankind is created *b'tzelem Elohim*, in the Divine image, that is, with a special purpose and potential. As you celebrate the holidays, entertain the possibility that this is truly so. Have discussions with your children about various people (including yourselves) to help them discover the light and holy potential within each individual. This is a wonderful way to help youngsters feel connected to their own divine potential and to develop compassion rather than judgment for themselves and others.

A Final Blessing

There is a wonderful Jewish custom of pausing in a doorway before entering a house and raising up our children to help them touch and kiss the *mezuzah* that leads into the new space. As we stand in the doorway of the next century, may we, the interfaith community, stand tall and raise our children high. May we remember where we are coming from and where we are going to. And as we practice our religious traditions this winter, may we be infused with our own native spirituality, grateful for and attentive to this amazing world that is filled with so many faces of the truth.

Happy Holidays to all of you! 

Talking to Interfaith Kids About Jesus

by Lance Flitter

When it comes to Jewish-Christian relations, Jesus tends to be the main stumbling block. This is true in a marriage between a Jew and a Christian as well. Like many Jews, I had, and still have to some degree, uncomfortable feelings when it comes to Jesus. However, over time, I have found ways to make Jesus more accessible to me.

Why would I want to do this at all? I think it benefits my marriage and, most important, will help in raising my children. My wife and I plan to expose our children to both Judaism and Christianity. Part of our philosophy is that we want to be a parenting team, both involved in all aspects of raising our children, including giving them a grounding in religion. (See Rabbi Dr. Arthur Blecher's article in issue 7:5 for more information on his methodology, which influenced our approach.) When my child asks me about Jesus, I don't feel it's adequate to say simply, "This is what Christians believe," or "Go ask your mother, I can't answer that." I'm sure he'll want to know what I think as well. I need to have some thoughts of my own about how I relate to this central figure of Christianity.

Discomfort with the Topic

Many Jews feel uncomfortable having their kids learn about Jesus, despite the fact that they have married Christians. Why is this? In our open society, we feel it is OK for others to believe what they want, especially when it comes to abstract, personal things like religious beliefs. I had to ask myself, if I feel it is OK for my wife to believe what works for her, why wouldn't I feel the same way about my kids? If I am accepting of my wife's beliefs, how could I be unaccepting of her sharing those beliefs with my child?

Like many Jews I had some visceral, emotional reactions. But they weren't

very rational. So, I thought about the issues and worked through the emotions. Part of being interfaith parents is figuring out what are and are not acceptable doctrines from your respective traditions. The idea that Jesus is the only way to God, for example, is an article of faith for many Christians, but it seems reasonable to agree that this is one doctrine you won't teach in your household.

If you are Jewish, like me you probably feel some cultural guilt if you have virtually anything to do with Christians or Christianity. It's a sad fact that Judaism has become defined for many Jews largely by what it's not rather than by what it is: Judaism is not Christianity. And, from persecution and prejudice through the centuries, some anti-Christian sentiment has crept into Jewish culture. Ask a typical Jew whether he'd mind teaching his kid about Buddha and he probably would say no. But Jesus? That's a different story. Christianity has become the bogeyman of Judaism on an emotional/cultural level, not just a theological one. If you're married to a Christian you have to come to terms with feelings that may have been ingrained in you as part of the culture.

Positive Approaches

Aside from the anti-Christian sentiment it can generate, focusing on what Judaism is not rather than on what it is just isn't useful. I try to think about what is important about Judaism and being Jewish to me, and I'll try to pass that on to my kids. I will define my Jewishness positively rather than negatively as much as possible.

But that's another article. the question here is: how can you, as a Jew, take a positive approach to Jesus? One thing to keep in mind is that there are many

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aspects to religion aside from theology. When I study the Bible I look at it from a religious point of view but also from historical, social, cultural, spiritual (not the same as religious to me), and even literary perspectives. I got very interested in reading about some of the modern research on the historical Jesus. Looking at Jesus from perspectives other than the theological might help you deal with the Jesus problem.

Also, there is your perspective on religion. My wife and I will take the same approach to teaching religion to our kids as our interfaith group takes. That is, teach don't preach. I generally don't think of religion in terms of cosmic truth, but rather in terms of what it does for you. Traditional reason and logic don't work very well when dealing with something as abstract and mind-boggling as the nature of God. Different people are bound to view this subject in different ways.

While I don't share my wife's beliefs on this topic, I don't necessarily think she is wrong. If my kids were being taught that Jesus is God in a literal sense, then I would have a problem since I don't believe that. But that's not what they will be taught. They will be taught several different viewpoints on the nature of God. They will learn about the commonalities and the differences in these viewpoints and be encouraged to think about the subject for themselves. Given that approach, I have no problem with my kids learning about Jesus, even from a theological point of view.

There are also quite a few liberal Christian theologians such as Bishop John Spong. His views are controversial in traditional Christian circles, but they are more accessible to non-Christians than many more conventional views. Reading perspectives from non-

traditional Christians such as Spong, John Crossan, Marcus Borg, and others, may give you a way to think about Jesus that is acceptable to you as a non-Christian.

Keep in mind that the reason you are doing this is to gain personal perspectives on Jesus. You should not be trying to figure out what your spouse believes by reading this kind of book. If you want to know what your spouse believes, ask your spouse. You should also be careful not to develop the attitude that your understanding is what the Christian understanding should be. You must respect your spouse's and other Christians' beliefs and not try to convince them that some other version of Christianity is better. The purpose of pursuing alternative lines of thought about Jesus and Christianity is to give you a personal perspective, not to help you figure out what you think others' perspectives should be. You should also familiarize yourself with traditional Christian viewpoints. [Ed. note: *Mere Christianity* by C. S. Lewis is an accessible, unbigoted presentation of traditional Christian belief.]

These are some avenues of exploration that have worked well for me. Having spent several years thinking about and exploring the issues related to interfaith marriage and raising interfaith children, I don't have nearly as much discomfort as I did. Rather, I've become enthusiastic about raising the kids in both. I think it will be a great opportunity for learning and growth for our kids. You can't change ingrained attitudes overnight. But if you take the time to think about these issues, over time you will probably become more comfortable with them. 

Choosing a Jewish Naming Ritual

by Amy Jo Scott Frischling

Congratulations! It's a boy!" said the sonogram technician.

My husband, Billy, and I looked at each other, smiled, laughed, and said, "Of course it is. A girl would be too easy!"

For weeks Billy and I had asked ourselves what we were going to do if we had a baby boy. Would we have a bris? Would we circumcise him in the hospital? Would we have a welcoming party that was non-religious? Now, 16 weeks into our pregnancy, we found ourselves still undecided and in need of a decision.

From the moment we found out we were expecting, my Jewish in-laws assumed that we were going to have a *bris*—the ritual circumcision of a male child eight days after birth. My mother-in-law's first words were, "I have the name of a great *mohel* [ritual circumciser]." My father-in-law's first words were, "I'll start making the deviled eggs!" (his bris specialty dish). Needless to say, my husband and I knew that a decision—a well-thought-out decision—was urgent.

Before we were engaged, Billy and I took an interfaith couples' class: eight couples and a moderator who talked through the many issues facing Jewish/Christian couples. We knew it would be important to make certain decisions before we could take our relationship further. As a Christian and a devoted United Methodist, it was difficult for me to imagine having children who had a different religious belief from mine. The Church plays an important role in my life and I couldn't imagine worshipping alone on Sunday mornings while my children were at home or in Hebrew school. Billy had similar concerns. How could he, a Jew, have children who believed that Jesus was the Christ? This was so foreign a thought to him that it was unacceptable.

· Making Decisions

· Back then (three years ago), we agreed, "No bris, no baptism." But as our relationship matured, our beliefs became more defined, and our decisions grew more refined, we realized that this simplistic decision did not suit our needs or the needs of our families. After much reflection, introspection, and prayer, I realized that, for me, it was most important for my children to have a strong belief, a faith, that could carry them through times of adversity and help them live their lives as good, loving, caring people. Can only Christians do this? The resounding answer I received over and over again was "No!"

· We agreed to raise our children in the Jewish faith with full understanding and appreciation of their dual Judeo-Christian heritage. So now, three years later, as my husband and I approached the birth of our first child—a son—we faced the question of the bris. Again, I sought answers through reflection, introspection, and prayer. Although it was very difficult for me to agree to have a bris—a ritual very foreign to me and my family—I came to the conclusion that if we were going to raise our son as a Jew, it was crucial for me to allow the major life events to take place. The way we saw to best celebrate this event was to have a traditional bris.

· It was not an easy decision. I cried for many hours, feeling in many ways that my son, just eight days after being born, would be taken from me. My husband wanted a bris, but not at the price of my happiness. How could we get beyond my feeling betrayed, feeling that my son was being ripped from my arms? I'm not sure that we did. I cried for days before the birth of our son at the prospect of the bris. I cried for days after his birth at the anticipation of it.

· Amy Jo Scott Frischling is a speech-language pathologist, a member of The Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew United Methodist and, with husband William (Billy) Frischling, of Temple Shaaray Tefila (Reform). She is also an active contributor to the DI-IFR on-line discussion group, which can be found at www.egroups.com/interfaith.

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I cried the day of the bris because of my feeling of helplessness and aloneness. And I cried for many days afterwards, filled with the sadness of knowing that my son would never experience the same influences in childhood that I had. Yet, I felt that if we were going to raise our son as a Jew, we needed to go through with this first major life event.

Facing the Reality

Therefore, we had the ceremony, the Covenant of Berit Milah. My son's family, both Christian and Jewish, surrounded him. My parents surprised me with their understanding and acceptance of our decision. My husband and I wrote the ceremony together. The mohel was a woman and a convert from Catholicism whom my mother-in-law found. My Southern Methodist mother and I prepared most of the food. My father-in-law prepared his deviled eggs. My father gave our son

wine and sugar water during the procedure. His *kvater* and *kvaterin* (godparents) were Catholic. And everyone, friends and family, celebrated the birth of Robert. It was a truly ecumenical affair!

Now the question has been asked of me, "Would you do it again?" We are not sure. Now that we have had a "traditional" bris, we feel that with a second son it may be possible to find an even better way to celebrate his birth, a way that would not make me feel quite so alienated from the experience yet would also be meaningful for my husband. One idea we have is to circumcise any future sons in the hospital and have a birth ceremony and celebration at home. But, as we learned with the birth of Robert, a final decision on the celebration of the birth of any future children cannot be made until the time comes. And when it does, I am sure we will once again look inside of ourselves to find what is best for us, for our child, and for our family as a whole. ▀

Baby-Naming Booklet

DI-IFR is compiling a pamphlet of sample baby-naming ceremonies, which will include the one used by Amy and Bill. We will charge only the costs of printing and posting it, so it's impossible to be definite about the price till we see how many pages it runs to. If you are have a ceremony you would like to share, either for attribution or anonymously, please send the text to Mary Rosenbaum, 775 Simon Greenwell Ln., Boston, KY 40107 or, better yet, send it in the body of an Email message, as unformatted text, to DI-IFR@Bardstown.com.

Watch for notice of price and availability in a future issue of *Dovetail*.

The Spiritual Odyssey of an Interfaith Child

by Anna Rosenfeld

As I was putting our new baby to sleep for her afternoon nap, I looked at her sleeping, wondering if she would go through some of the same religious soul-searching I did when I was a teenager. I wonder this about all three of our children; when you have grown up interfaith, it is something you will always wonder when you have children of your own.

I often like to tell people who ask that I grew up "sort of" interfaith. The "sort of" is included because I grew up in what is now termed a "conversionary" household, in which both partners are Jewish, but one is Jewish by conversion.

I say "interfaith" because although my mother converted to Orthodox Judaism, her family of course remained strongly Italian Roman Catholic, and I came to be influenced to a degree by my exposure to them and their heritage.

I was raised in the Jewish religion alone; however, perhaps to have *shalom bayit* (peace in the family) and also to be fair and expose me to the other side of my heritage, my parents often took us to spend Christmas with my grandmother and the rest of my mother's family. I thoroughly enjoyed the Christmases we spent with my grandmother. When I think of Christmas, just as when I think of the Jewish holydays, I have the feeling of warmth that comes with happy family memories. I am grateful that I was able to have both worlds in a sense, and I feel luckier than children exposed to only one half of their heritage.

My parents tried to be very liberal and open-minded: my father used to explain to me that Jesus, the founder of Christianity, was a Jewish rabbi, or teacher; he told me that Jesus was an observant Orthodox Jew and that the two religions are much closer than most people realize. As a

result, I grew up without the typical Jewish antipathy toward Jesus and Christianity. I am grateful also for this, in that I feel I have been able to experience both facets of my heritage, lacking nothing.

However, I was not taught anything about the Catholic religion. My exposure to it was limited to celebrating holidays with my grandmother and her family.

My Search

When I was in my teens, I began a search to uncover all aspects of my heritage. For a period, I delved deeper into my Jewish heritage and religion, for a time being involved with the Lubavitcher movement and even the Jewish Defense League. I was disillusioned on a few occasions however, when some misguided Jews cast doubt upon my Jewishness because they felt that my mother, as a convert, was not a "real" Jew. I encountered this kind of reaction several times over the years, to my great dismay. In discussions with my mother, I learned that she too had encountered born Jews who felt she was "not really Jewish" because she was a convert. Worse yet, one man I dated and almost married had a mother who did not want him to marry me because my mother was a convert. As much as I felt disillusioned by this kind of narrowness, I was determined to remain Jewish by religion.

However, as the years passed, my life changed, and I began going through a crisis unconnected to my interfaith background. I began feeling the need for a personal spirituality, something I had not found in Judaism.

I encountered someone who told me about Jesus, and who convinced me that

"Anna Rosenfeld" is a pseudonym.

Jesus was the Messiah. I came to believe, but kept my new belief secret for the time being. I then began visiting various evangelical Protestant churches, but did not find the spirituality I sought there, either. I now think that perhaps this part of my journey was my way of trying to seek out a "third way," outside of either Judaism or Catholicism. I met my future husband in one of these churches, and he turned out to be a seeker like me. He wound up casting off the Baptist church he had grown up in, and going on a spiritual journey with me.

My Answer

I finally ended up in the Catholic Church; in many ways, this faith spoke to my heart and gave me what I was searching for. However, I continued to be fiercely proud of my Jewish roots. We are raising our three children as Byzantine Rite Catholics, yet they are fully conscious of their Jewish heritage and are taught about it regularly.

We chose to homeschool our children, for many reasons. But one benefit to homeschooling, I have found, is that it enables me to give them a customized religious curriculum that encompasses their unique spiritual heritage, with a mother who is a Jewish-Catholic, and a father who is a non-practicing Baptist. One might say our children are not being raised truly interfaith, since they are being raised in my (admittedly unorthodox!) faith alone; nevertheless, my husband did not want our children exposed to his former childhood faith because of bad experiences he'd had with it.

Are we doing the right thing? Frankly, I don't know. I think about it a lot, and have the same doubts, fears, and worries that other interfaith spouses

do. I worry that my children may go on a religious search, as I did, and as my sister did. But I am hoping that in this day and age, with more and more interfaith marriages (and more children from backgrounds similar to mine), they won't feel as alone as I did, and maybe won't feel the need to search as much. On the other hand, learning and growing comes with truly heartfelt religious searching. I don't think I would have learned as much as I have about the world's religions if I had not been raised as I was. I often wonder what it would have been like to grow up in a family where both parents, and all their relatives, were born Jews. And sometimes when I think about that possibility, I think I wouldn't have liked it!

At times, in my anguish over my dual heritage, trying to find ways to reconcile them, I have cried out in my soul, "Mom, Dad, why did you do this to me!? What AM I?"

And yet at other, more peaceful times, I have internally thanked them for giving me the gift of being a bridge-builder, of having the possibility of being the peacemaker between the two historic faiths.

I have learned so much, about both of my heritages. Two historic religious faiths, combined in one person! How many other people can claim such a gift? 

Bulletin Board

Interfaith Support Around the Nation

To be listed as a contact person for a group, or if you are seeking to join or form a group, please send information to:

Dan Josephs

1175 S. Euclid Avenue, Oak Park IL 60304

Home tel. (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.

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, Hamden

Congregation Mishkan Israel: "Stepping Stones to a Jewish Me" Classes and Workshops for Unaffiliated Interfaith Families. Contact: Rabbi Sonya Starr, (203) 288-3877

Connecticut, New Haven*

Existing interfaith group. Contact: Christina Giebisch-Mohrer (203) 287-9110

District of Columbia, Greater Washington *

Interfaith Families Project: Existing interfaith group. Contact: Julia Jarvis (301) 270-0514

District of Columbia, Greater Washington

Bethesda Jewish Congregation: Jewish congregation welcomes interfaith families. Contact: Maran Beth Gluckstein, Exec. Dir. (301) 469-8636

Illinois, Chicago metropolitan area*

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

Kentucky, Louisville*

Interested in forming an interfaith group. Contact: Carolyn Humphrey & Fred Gross (502) 423-8583

Louisiana, New Orleans

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, (651) 698-7987

Missouri, St. Louis area*

Starting an interfaith group. Contact: Joanne and Larry Eisenman, (314) 918-7992

New Jersey, Northern New Jersey area

Interfaith Families of Northern New Jersey Contact: Emily Lachman, (201) 385-1836

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 educational program and support/discussion groups. Contact: Lynne Wolfe, (973) 884-4800 ext. 192

New Mexico, Albuquerque

Archdiocese of Santa Fe Ecumenical Office. Contact: Father Ernest Falardeau or Heddy Long, Family Life Office.

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: Interfaith group. Contact: Tonda Learner, (937) 439-4313

Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Area

Jewish Converts & Interfaith Network: Support groups for grandparents, parents, interfaith couples, converts, and children. Contact: Lena Romanoff, Director (610) 664-8112

Tennessee, Memphis*

Interfaith group. Contact: Jan and David Kaplan, (901) 767-4267

Virginia, Northern Virginia area

Congregation Beth Emeth: Existing interfaith group. Contact: Judi Cloutier, Outreach Coordinator, (703) 860-4515, Ext. 142

Wisconsin, Milwaukee

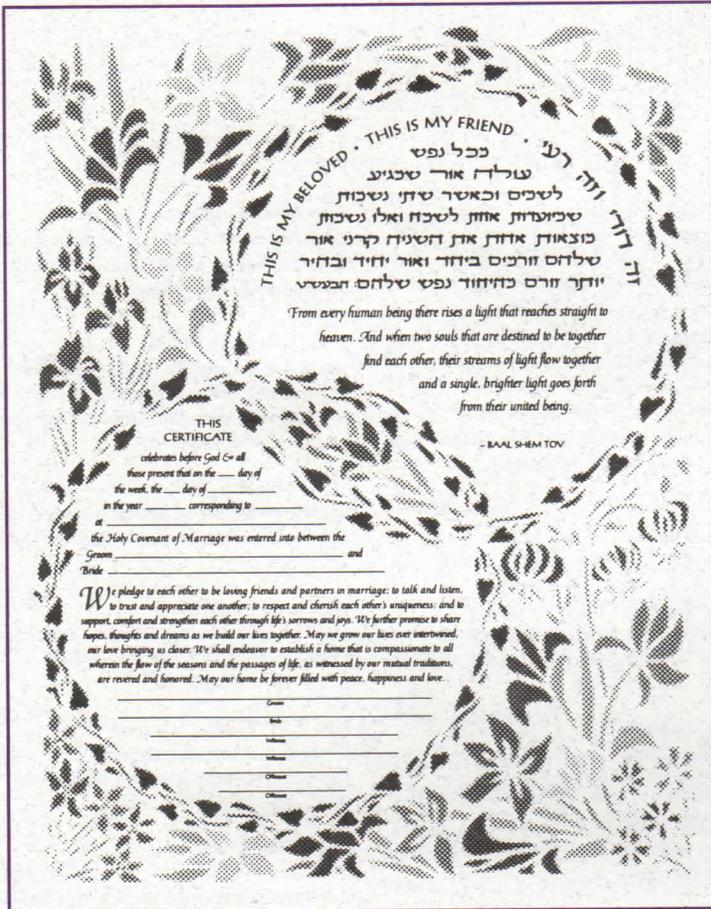
Interfaith Connection, JCC of Milwaukee: Existing interfaith group. Contact: Joyce Gutzke, Interfaith Coordinator (414) 967-8218

* group not sponsored by a religious institution.

The Perfect Keepsake for Interfaith Couples

The Ketubah, or Hebrew marriage contract, has been a tradition since ancient times. The intent of this tradition is powerful and its meaning universal. A ceremonial and artistic document, a Ketubah witnesses a bride and groom's promise and commitment to love and honor one another.

Now, for the first time, a Ketubah is available in language especially suited to interfaith couples. A rabbi adapted the text and collaborated with an artist and a specialist in typography and fine printing to create this unique piece. The poetic and egalitarian style clearly expresses an interfaith couple's commitment to respect each other's heritage. It is a beautiful art piece, a keepsake and an ideal gift to reflect your love and support.



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