

The Importance of Marrying Jewish

The purpose of this guide is to explain to Jews all over the world, regardless of their denomination and level of affiliation, why it is essential for them to marry a Jew.

Often times, especially in our modern society, people will say that intermarriage can work out fine. They claim that times have changed and that people are more accepting of different cultures; that you can create foundational values and still be spiritual and find common ground, that you don't have to abandon your religion and/or your spirituality. They also claim that intermarriage isn't the actual issue that's harming Jewish life. It doesn't need to be avoided – you can still have a Jewish family life. These claims are almost entirely incorrect, however. There are countless problems that often arise in interfaith marriages and our goal in this pamphlet is to spell out several of the main issues for you.

Children, a happy marriage, community, family and friends are the main issues with intermarriage.

Children:

The people who intermarry think they're living happy lives. Really they're destroying Judaism by confusing their kids. They don't have the proper understanding. Parents may agree that they want to raise their children Jewish, but they're still crushing Judaism with their "bare hands".

Their children are going to feel free about intermarrying when they grow up, because they were never raised with a solid concept of religion.

Family life is something important that needs to be planned ahead.

Happy marriage:

If someone's serious about their religion, it's very difficult to stick to it when it's not being kept by both sides. It causes a division within the family that isn't as "minor" as they think.

There's no room for mutual spiritual growth.

Even with a commitment, the entire situation is shaky. Things will change along the way. You can't make that kind of commitment for your entire lifetime, or even several years. It's hard enough for any sort of commitment to be kept (regular marriage, for example, what with how often people get divorced or cheat on their spouse).

Community:

You never know what will happen down the line. One cannot take total responsibility for something he commits to ten years down the line. As you grow older, the need for a community grows stronger. What community do you choose to belong to? Families need to be a part of something bigger. It complicates things when you can't be affiliated with one religious community.

You won't have a community to fit into – because you belong neither in the Jewish world nor the world of the other's faith. You'll become misplaced.

It doesn't work to have two religions because they have different values, customs and holidays.

Family and friends:

What about your parents' feelings? And your siblings? At what stage in your life will you realize that you actually miss your family?

You also won't fit in with your significant other's family – they may begin to use their religion or your religion against you ("Oh, it's because you're *Jewish*.")

People on both sides of the relationship will likely not approve – Judaism isn't the only religion that values marriage within the faith.

It's pretty likely that your grandchildren won't be Jewish. It affects the family – it's as if you don't care that you're causing the faith in your family to die out.

Q&A:

Q: Some could say that these interfaith couples actually bring more Judaism into their lives than other fully-Jewish families. How do you deal with that?

A: You have to tell interfaith couples that it's an entirely different issue. Following Jewish tradition in an interfaith family isn't what's holding Judaism as a whole, afloat. How strong will Judaism be in your family several generations down the line when your children and grandchildren also inter-marry?

Q: What if someone has dated many Jews and it never worked out, but then they meet a non-Jew that they love?

A: This question shouldn't be an issue at all. You should restrict yourself and not date non-Jews at all. If you make the decision not to date non-Jews from the get-go then you won't have to deal with the issue of falling in love with one of them.

It's important to remember that *every pot has a lid*. It is simply a matter of patience. There are plenty of Jewish fish in the sea- you shouldn't count them all out just because of a few bad experiences.

Q: At what stage in a relationship should you confront a friend about marrying the non-Jew they're dating? (Thus jeopardizing your friendship?)

A: ASAP. Remember, the longer you wait the more serious the relationship gets and the problem becomes.

Q: Rabbi Bramson taught us that you shouldn't attend the wedding of a Jewish friend who is intermarrying. Is it worth ruining your relationship with the Jewish friend getting married?

A: This is a very complex question. It is very important to think intently about the consequences of skipping the wedding and decide whether or not it would completely destroy your friend's ties to Judaism.

Q: What about being friends with non-Jews of the opposite gender?

A: Being "friends" with someone is a complex issue. One should be aware of the different motives of the opposite sex and boundaries that should be upheld.

Links: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_ez-QeYuxk

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_IQFIDXY7g

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TptkFd6HXhE>

<http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/intermarriage-an-insiders-perspective-hspeed/>

<http://www.simpletoremember.com/articles/a/IntermarriageWhyNot/>

<http://www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?ID=46372>