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Outreach, 1995-1996.

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RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

C. Outreach

May 8, 1996
19 Iyar 5756

Mr. Jack Alexander
108 Studio Road
Stamford, CT 06903

Dear Jack:

I am in substantial agreement with you and I only have two demurrers:

I do not agree that the officiation of a rabbi is "the first outreach" to interfaith couples. It is an important occasion, but only the middle point of family and community reactions that precede the marriage and the responses which follow it.

I do not believe that the UAHC, or the HUC for that matter, ought to compel the conscience of rabbis. Charlatans aside, most rabbis agonize over this question and once their decision is made, they have to be true to the dictates of their minds and hearts.

My own experience has taught me that it is the manner in which the rabbi's decision is conveyed to the interfaith couple that determines whether the two feel rejected or embraced. The rabbi ought to spend a good deal of time with them explaining just why he reached his decision, and even if it is negative, there is no reason at all why he cannot bless this couple in synagogue before the ceremony itself and why he cannot attend the wedding and participate in some manner other than pronouncing the couple man and wife.

Mr. Jack Alexander

page 2

May 8, 1996

I wish we had an opportunity to discuss this matter face to face. The written word on cold paper is not so adequate for exploring heart rending issues of this kind.

Perhaps we will have a chance to encounter each other one of these days. After all, we are neighbors - - would only that I had a chance to be in Westport more often.

With every good wish I am,

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



#4
Jack Alexander

108 Studio Road Stamford, CT 06903
home 203 322-6047, office 203 322-0126
CompuServe 71573,1702

April 26, 1996

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
6 River Lane
Westport CT 06880

Dear Alex:

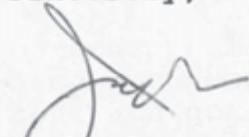
I couldn't agree more with your column in the *Jewish Ledger*, "Outreach critics are wrong." However, I would add that the first outreach is to marry the interfaith couple with a rabbi officiating.

If the Jewish community is fortunate enough to have the engaged couple come to a Rabbi, and the couple has the intention of having a Jewish home with the children being raised Jewish, they should not be turned away. This is the first outreach.

Obviously, of the 40 to 60 percent that intermarry, not all, maybe not even half, will come with this intention and many will not come at all. But for those that do, the rabbis must not turn them away, and I mean all rabbis, not only Reform. Reject them and the wonderful outreach programs that you developed and pushed over the years may not have second chance to reach out. At best it will make the outreach immensely more difficult. A rabbi that is known not to welcome a couple by not performing the marriage ceremony, gives the subliminal message of reluctant acceptance in any outreach to all couples.

It is time that the lay leaders and members push the UAHC, HUC, and the CCAR to embrace the first outreach and not let our current Ephraims and Manassehs slip away from Judaism. All rabbis should perform intermarriages for couples that plan to have a Jewish home.

Sincerely,



Jack Alexander, past president
Temple Sinai, Stamford

Outreach

December 27, 1995
4 Tevet 5756

Ms. Hallie Friedman
712 Kent Street
Richmond, CA 94805

Dear Ms. Friedman:

Thank you for sharing with me your concern regarding the resolution on religious school enrollment passed by the UAHC Biennial. I can feel your anguish and the hurt you express and want to assure you the resolution was not designed to hurt or exclude.

Since newspaper articles are not always correct, I enclose herewith a copy of the full resolution for your perusal. I call your particular attention to paragraph 1-C of the resolution and the UAHC'S commitment to provide expanded and strengthened programs for interfaith families.

UAHC resolutions serve as guidelines for our member-congregations which are autonomous and determine their own policies in every area of synagogue life. However, even if a congregation plans to implement this resolution, it is our hope it will be the subject of open and frank discussion by the membership.

Taking a child to church and synagogue is not the subject of our resolution; we are dealing with formal registration in schools of different faiths. We feel that interfaith couples have a right and even a duty to teach their children about both religions but that is not quite the same as providing a formal education in both a synagogue school and a church school. Religious education of any faith is not objective and dispassionate but seeks to reach the soul beyond the mind of the student. When two conflicting theologies are thus transmitted, considerable psychological pain is too often the consequence.

Ms. Hallie Friedman
December 27, 1995
Page -2-

Please note the final paragraph of the background to the resolution which deals with our movement's thoughts on placing the burden of choice upon the children. While we can appreciate your determination to allow your children choice when they are ready to make a commitment, we do have concerns about the psychological ramifications of such a path.

I trust you can understand our desire to steer our congregations on a proper course as to what they can and cannot honestly offer in their religious schools. As a Reform movement, our responsibility is to motivate our young people to choose Judaism as a way a life, a living and loving faith.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Hallie Friedman
712 Kern Street
Richmond, CA 94805
(510) 232-0636

December 11, 1995

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
UAHC
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10021

Dear Rabbi Schindler,

Imagine my disappointment when I recently read in the Jewish Bulletin of Northern California that the UAHC has passed a resolution urging congregations to not enroll children being educated in another religion.

I am Jewish, my husband is not. Both of us had not been involved in formal religion when we met, fell in love and married. We hadn't even decided on children, let alone their religion when we married. When our son was 2, my husband returned to his religious roots in full, and became a member of a local Baptist church. I was surprised and angry. He had changed the rules and after counseling and attendance in two interfaith counseling programs, we remained unable to "choose" one religious course for our children that was acceptable to both. My husband wanted to take our son to church and I could not stop him. I began taking my son to the local synagogue. We are still unresolved in our "choice" for our children and they continue to go both to church and the temple.

If my temple and the others in our area followed the UAHC resolution, a Jewish family would be lost. If the local temples followed this resolution, my children would have no Jewish education, only the education provided by the church and what I could provide in the home. My children love both their parents, and they love their involvement in the temple. On the Sundays they do not have religious school at the Temple, my husband takes them to church. On those Sundays, I am not happy, but they are his children as well.

It is sometimes confusing for the children, but we have been able to explain both sides to them and we have shown by example that we still remain a family in love, yet with differing viewpoints. This is not the life I had predicted for my family, nor is it one that I like. Of the many interfaith families that belong to our temple, we are one of only two families where the non-Jewish spouse actively practices their religion. The difference is that in that family, they had decided to raise their children Jewish. We are the only family where the children also go to church. It is very disheartening to think my children would be unwanted and unwelcome in my faith. They will always be welcome at any church, without benefit of any formal relationship. If our temple followed this resolution my children would never have the opportunity to choose. They would be Christian. The church is a powerful entity that I am unable to counter alone.

You need to know that unlike the examples cited in the Jewish Bulletin article, it is not my choice that my children attend church. You need to understand that this resolution would in fact do great harm to the many children who share my children's dilemma. You are denying them their birthright, a birthright it is my sincere wish they choose to follow and commit to. Without the education they receive at our temple, my children would only hear the message that their mother, her family and her heritage are wrong, and doomed to eternal hell. I sincerely believe the UAHC congregants could not have considered all sides.

I do agree that children should not participate in lifecycle events that show commitment to a religion without actually making that commitment. I will not allow my children to be bat mitzvah or baptized without a commitment one way or the other. They will not participate in both. The one thing my husband and I do agree on is to accept our children's choice. Again, I can only hope that the positive example of acceptance taught at our temple will counter the more negative "acceptance" at the church. I am fortunate to belong to a temple that is more forward in its thinking, and would not turn away a Jewish child.

Sincerely,



Hallie Friedman

Outreach



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

October 18, 1995
24 Tishri 5756

Mr. William M. Daniel
P.O. Box 3130
Santa Barbara, CA 93130

Dear Bill:

I just heard from Dru that Lottie is under the weather. Needless to say, I am saddened to hear that. I will get in touch with you by phone during the day - right now it is too early Pacific time. Hopefully, I will reach you, but if I don't, then know that you are in our minds and in our hearts.

I have your letter of October 12th. Even though I am certain that your mind is on countless other things, I don't want your "cry of the heart" to go unanswered. Let me therefore make several comments.

1. You know, of course, that I was the one who conceived of the Outreach Program. It is a program of which I am exceedingly proud and for which I would like to be remembered. I, of all people, would not suffer its diminution.

2. The budgetary allocations to Outreach have increased dramatically over the past decade. In the early '80's, the budget for Outreach was roughly \$110,000 annually. In the current fiscal year, it exceeds \$500,000 and together with the work of the Unaffiliated, it is nearly \$600,000 annually. No other department of the Union has enjoyed such a high rate of growth.

3. The Outreach Department is the only programmatic division of the Union that has either part time or full time directors in each of our Regional Councils. No other Department has that - not Education, not Social Action, not Religious Living.

William Daniel
October 18, 1995
Page 2

4. The work of Outreach and the Commission on the Unaffiliated are to be seen as one. They are totally integrated programmatically since many of the programs if not most of the programs serving one Commission are used for the other Commission. (As a case in point, our most recent and exciting program, "A Taste of Judaism" draws attendees from all sectors of the community including the intermarried, unaffiliated Jews, and even non-preferenced men and women who belong to no other faith and who are seekers after truth). In similar fashion, these two departments are integrated from a professional/staff point of view. Dru directs both and sees the two as one. The assistants of both departments report to her and their work is fully coordinated.

5. Last year, in projecting this year's budget, we were faced with a serious problem. As you know, there was a "tax revolt" in our ranks and in projecting our budget, we had to cut out approximately one million dollars. Salary increases were reduced to a minimum and several staff positions were eliminated in their entirety. Just one example, Eric, who was the National Director of the Social Action Commission is now the President-elect of the Union and we are not projecting a National Director of the Social Action Commission to replace him. Outreach, however, remains untouched. In fact, when the two budgets of Outreach and Unaffiliated are combined, you will find that there has actually been a modest increase. Yes, a full time person was added to the Commission on the Unaffiliated increasing its budget and only a part timer became the Assistant in Outreach. But both of them, as indicated above, report to Dru and it was Dru's choice that the full time person serve on the Commission on the Unaffiliated rather than on the Outreach Commission, both of which as I noted above, are part and parcel of Dru's work.

William Daniel
October 18, 1995
Page 3

6. When David Belin served on the Commission of Outreach as Chairman, he once turned to me and said, "Outreach is your child, why don't you give your child more food?" I told him all of the departments of the Union are my children and they all have to be fed. By that I meant and still mean that Outreach cannot stand by itself, that the other aspects of the Union's program are equally important. Indeed, what purpose Outreach if there is nothing within? The children of the intermarried couples who join the synagogue have to have camps and they have to have a meaningful education program. As far as Social Action is concerned, reread, if you will, the recent Reform Judaism issue which was devoted to Outreach and in which several of the Jews by Choice indicated that they were attracted to Judaism and to Reform principally because of our involvement in the realm of social action and our determination to heed the prophetic mandate which bids us to pursue justice.

7. Finally, as I told you, Bill, while I am determined to stay out of the way of my successor as much as I possibly can, I made but one request and that is that I be appointed to the Commission on Outreach because I am going to devote the rest of my strength and days to strengthening this particular aspect of our work because I am absolutely convinced that this endeavor is not only the proper response to the problem of intermarriage, which will not vanish from bodily sight in the years and decades ahead, but that we also have it in our grasp to change the course of Jewish history.

These then are some of my comments, Bill. Put this letter away and devote yourself to your Lottie. That is the most important thing you can do.

With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Keep
This copy

William Daniel
October 18, 1995
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BCC BOTH LETTERS TO:

RABBI YOFFIE
MELVIN MERIANS
Roger Tuler
Dru

Outreach



COPY

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PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

October 18, 1995
24 Tishri 5756

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P.O. Box 3130
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With warm good wishes, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

WILLIAM M. DANIEL

October 12, 1995

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Dear Alex:

It is with a heavy heart that I write this letter and I'm sure you will understand why.

When you and I at first discussed my commitment for Outreach, it was with the view that this would be a growing and essential part which needed nourishing and continued support to cope with the ever-increasing amount of intermarriage.

Since I expressed to you my dismay about the budget and then found that the questionnaire which was submitted to the Board and forwarded to an agency for total evaluation, again showed the result that after worship, Outreach would be second choice of the Board.

Up to this moment, nothing has been done to add personnel to the Outreach office. While there has been a rabbi retained for the Unaffiliated, so far the total burden rests with Dru Greenwood.

I had the assurance from you as well as from Eric Joffie that Outreach would receive the necessary support in personnel, but this has not been the case.

There is needed at least a minimum of two additional top people for the Outreach Department and I would appreciate it if serious consideration would be given to this promptly, because everyday is a loss to the Jewish people.

I have been travelling, phoning and spending at least 1/3 of my time for the various commissions of the UAHC of which I serve, sometimes very late at night, but this can not go on unless we have the proper support.

I would appreciate hearing from you and with every good wish and warm regards,

As ever,



WMD:ms

Outreach

1981-82 \$108,717

1986-87 \$426,731

1995-96

Outreach

447,242

Unaffiliated

144,832

592,074



	ACTUAL 1979-80	BUDGET	PROBABLE 1980-81	REQUIRED 1981-82	OVER (Under) PROBABLE 1980-81	
<hr/>						
SOCIAL ACTION:						(1)
Salaries, Pensions & Taxes	\$ 71,717	\$ 82,315	\$ 81,715	\$ 91,020	\$ 9,305	(6)
Direct Expenses:						
Office Expenses	4,779	5,700	5,700	6,000	300	(7)
Printing & Lettershop	7,980	4,500	4,500	5,000	500	(7)
Travel & Meetings	6,208	6,000	5,000	6,500	1,500	(7)
Soviet Jewry	- 0 -	- 0 -	- 0 -	2,500	2,500	(7)
Shared Services	<u>22,243</u>	<u>23,901</u>	<u>23,901</u>	<u>26,184</u>	<u>2,283</u>	(8)
Totals	<u>\$112,927</u>	<u>\$122,416</u>	<u>\$120,816</u>	<u>\$137,204</u>	<u>\$16,388</u>	
<hr/>						
INTERRELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES:						(2)
Salaries, Pensions & Taxes	\$ 58,216	\$ 65,900	\$ 29,200	\$ 14,719	\$(14,481)	(6)
Direct Expenses:						
Office Expenses	3,247	4,500	1,100	1,100		
Travel & Meetings	5,546	5,000	3,000	1,000	(2,000)	(7)
Printing & Lettershop	5,192	4,000	2,500	500	(2,000)	(7)
Shared Services	<u>18,104</u>	<u>24,868</u>	<u>24,868</u>	<u>7,440</u>	<u>(17,428)</u>	(8)
Totals	<u>\$ 90,305</u>	<u>\$104,268</u>	<u>\$ 60,668</u>	<u>\$24,759</u>	<u>\$(35,909)</u>	
<hr/>						
OUTREACH:						(3)
Salaries, Pensions & Taxes				\$ 91,125	\$ 91,125	(6)
Direct Expenses:						
Office Expenses				2,050	2,050	(7)
Intermarriage Project				8,000	8,000	(7)
Travel				2,500	2,500	(7)
Shared Services				<u>5,042</u>	<u>5,042</u>	(8)
Totals	<u>\$ - 0 -</u>	<u>\$ - 0 -</u>	<u>\$ - 0 -</u>	<u>\$108,717</u>	<u>\$108,717</u>	

	ACTUAL 1984-85	BUDGET 1985-86	PROBABLE 1985-86	REQUIRED 1986-87	OVER (Under) PROBABLE 1985-86	% Chge.	
OUTREACH:							
Salaries, Pensions & Taxes	\$158,211	\$208,858	\$188,858	\$249,395	\$ 60,537	32.05	(5)
Regional Outreach Coordinators	41,905	74,500	74,500	78,500	4,000	5.37	
Direct Expenses:							
Office Expenses	24,098	12,250	22,000	21,000	(1,000)	-4.55	
Office Maintenance	0	4,000	4,300	5,000	700	16.28	
Travel & Meetings	15,142	13,000	16,000	15,000	(1,000)	-6.25	
Counseling & Conversion Center	12,516	15,000	15,000	17,000	2,000	13.33	
Special Program—A Jewish							
Perspective	3,972	19,750	20,000	20,000	0	0.00	
National Coordinators Conference	2,907	6,000	4,000	6,000	2,000	50.00	
Shared Services	12,134	10,974	10,974	14,836	3,862	35.19	
Totals	<u>\$270,885</u>	<u>\$364,332</u>	<u>\$355,632</u>	<u>\$426,731</u>	<u>\$71,099</u>	<u>19.99</u>	
PUBLIC RELATIONS:							
Consultant	\$37,494	\$39,194	\$39,194	\$ 39,194	\$ 0	0.00	
Direct Expenses:							
Office Expenses	2,708	2,500	2,500	2,500	0	0.00	
Publicity & Public Relations	26,551	17,806	30,800	33,800	3,000	9.74	
Shared Services	12,481	12,081	12,081	13,586	1,505	12.46	
Subtotals	\$79,234	\$71,581	\$84,575	\$89,080	4,505	5.33	
Less: Allocation to MUM	0	0	0	13,362	13,362	n/a	
Totals	<u>\$79,234</u>	<u>\$71,581</u>	<u>\$84,575</u>	<u>\$75,718</u>	<u>\$(8,857)</u>	<u>-10.47</u>	

(1) Provides for Director (shared with Religious Action Center) Assistant and Secretary.

(2) Provides for Director, Secretary and Intern.

(3) Provides for full time Director, part time Director (shared with Social Action), Assistant and Secretary.

(4) Provides for full time funding of the intern program.

(5) Provides for Director, Assistant, part time Directors, Regional Coordinators and Secretary.

(6) Reallocation of salaries.

*In addition to the total expenditures, there is a total of \$15,600 in individual regional travel lines for Outreach purposes.

	ACTUAL 1993-94	BUDGET PROBABLE 1994-95	BUDGET 1995-96	OVER (UNDER) PROBABLE 1994-95	% CHANGE
OUTREACH DEPARTMENT					
COMMISSION ON REFORM JEWISH OUTREACH					
Salaries & Benefits	\$121,725	\$189,700	\$188,000	\$131,000	(\$57,000) -30.32% (2)
Rent/Utilities/Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0 N/A
Office Expense	27,567	14,500	14,500	15,400	900 6.21%
Printing & Production	8,721	10,800	11,000	11,100	100 0.91%
Travel & Meetings	24,964	33,900	33,000	34,900	1,900 5.76%
Other	0	0	0	0	0 N/A
SUBTOTAL	\$182,977	\$248,900	\$246,500	\$192,400	(\$54,100) -21.95%
Shared Services	38,446	42,407	41,707	39,842	(1,865) -4.47%
Total National Outreach Department	\$221,423	\$291,307	\$288,207	\$232,242	(\$55,965) -19.42%
Plus: Regional Coordinators (1)	209,000	215,000	215,000	215,000	0 0.00%
Total Outreach Program	430,423	506,307	503,207	447,242	(55,965) -11.12%

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

COMMISSION ON THE UNAFFILIATED

Salaries & Benefits	\$78,822	\$87,000	\$30,000	\$85,000	\$55,000 183.33% (3)
Rent/Utilities/Maintenance	0	0	0	0	0 N/A
Office Expense	7,222	6,800	6,000	7,300	1,300 21.67%
Printing & Production	5,514	9,300	6,500	9,600	3,100 47.69%
Travel & Meetings	12,204	14,400	5,000	14,800	9,800 196.00% (3)
Other	0	0	0	0	0 N/A
SUBTOTAL	\$103,762	\$117,500	\$47,500	\$116,700	\$69,200 145.68%
Shared Services	34,704	30,184	30,032	28,132	(1,900) -6.33%
TOTAL	\$138,466	\$147,684	\$77,532	\$144,832	\$67,300 86.80%

447,242
592,044

(1) The costs of the Outreach Regional Coordinators are in their appropriate regional budgets.

(2) Restructuring staff.

(3) Reflects director position which was budgeted but not filled in 1994-95.

Belin

COPY

July 26, 1995
28 Tammuz 5755

Mr. David Belin
Belin Harris Lamson McCormick
2000 Financial Center
Des Moines, IA 50309

Dear David:

Thank you for sending me a copy of the several articles which appeared in the Washington Post. They were both very instructive but not at all surprising.

The Jewish commitments of the Jewish partner in an intermarriage are crucial in determining whether the children will be reared as Jews and whether he will encourage his non-Jewish life mate to be Jewish. Lukewarm Jews make bad missionaries.

Thank you for keeping me abreast of these matters.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

**BELIN HARRIS
LAMSON McCORMICK**

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July 18, 1995

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021-7064

Dear Alex:

Enclosed is a photocopy of an article in the June 12-18 issue of the weekly edition of the Washington Post captioned "There Are No Atheists in the Family." The article states that about one person in 11 in America says that they have "no religion" and a woman by the name of Alexandra Roth is quoted in the following paragraph: "If I could ever believe the dogma, I would be a very happy Catholic," says Roth, who was of mixed Christian and Jewish heritage. "I like the stained glass and the bells and the smells, and I love the stories. But it's those little niggling points-like the divinity of Christ-that get in the way. I just don't believe."

Robert Schwartz, a 53-year-old architect who was born Jewish, says he was brought up by parents "not at all proud" of their Jewish heritage and reluctant to appear too Jewish in their predominantly Catholic neighborhood. Schwartz admits: "Judaism is no more emotional for me than other religions, so it's virtually impossible for me to make it an emotional thing for them [his daughters]. It's an intellectual thing ..."

Best regards,


David W. Belin

DWB/rhm
d:\uahc\lschndl.doc

cc: Mel Merians
Eric Yoffie
Dru Greenwood

Enclosure

There Are No Atheists in the Family

Secular parents learn to cope with their children's demands for spirituality

By Laurie Goodstein

Washington Post Staff Writer

When her 3-year-old son Graham came to her recently and asked, "Where is God?" Alexandra Roth took a deep breath.

Like many Americans, Roth has never found a home in any church or faith. A 38-year-old social worker who runs a home day-care program in Falls Church, Va., she considers herself an athe-

RELIGION

ist, but she wants her son to have a sense of reverence and gratitude "and the idea of God is one pathway to that," she says.

So she told Graham that God is everywhere, but that only piqued his curiosity. "Is God in my body?" he asked. "Is God mixed in with my lunch?"

"They're hard questions to answer," Roth said later, "especially if you don't have a catechism to refer to."

For nonbelievers and for those struggling to determine their faith, having children often becomes a painful moment of truth and discov-

ery. It challenges them to define their beliefs about religion and God and a whole universe of existential questions they could feel comfortably ambivalent about before.

In an age of anxiety over a perceived lack of values, many look to religion to shore up crumbling moral bulwarks. Secular parents say they are also concerned about instilling values, but they improvise as they go, drawing on a myriad of sources—literary, spiritual and above all, perhaps, their own experiences—to teach virtue to their children.

And while they often hear that this is a "sec-

ular nation," some nonreligious parents say they feel a strong social stigma for their lack of belief. "People think you're an atheist, or even a Communist, and nobody wants to be known that way in a mostly Christian society," says Connie Greer, 26, a legal secretary in Springfield, Va., and mother of one son.

But nonbelievers are far from alone. In their generation of baby boomers, two-thirds of those who grew up with a religious affiliation left it behind, usually in their late teens or early twenties. Of those, only 25 percent return, according to a 1988 study by religion scholar

June 12-18, 1995

THE WASHINGTON POST NATIONAL WEEKLY EDITION

Page 35

Wade Clark Roof at the University of California-Santa Barbara. The largest segment of baby boomers—42 percent—are those Roof classifies as "dropouts."

Among Americans of all ages, about one in 11 say they have "no religion," according to the National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI) conducted by scholars at the City University of New York, which polled 113,000 Americans in 1990. Even more have uncertain or unconventional beliefs and are unaffiliated with any organized religion. One-third of all Americans do not belong to a church or a synagogue, according to a Gallup Poll last December. Of those who do belong, 31 percent told Gallup they seldom attend, and 11 percent said they never do.

Interviews with more than two dozen families in the Washington region found those who are not religious grappling with colossal questions: Will lack of religion deprive my children of culture, tradition or a sense of security? How do I answer their questions about good and evil, life and death, when no religion has offered satisfactory answers for me? Can I provide them with a sense of community without belonging to a religious congregation?

Few of these secular families are totally without religion and,

For nonbelievers and for those struggling to determine their faith, having children often becomes a painful moment of truth and discovery.

as Roof notes, many think more about spiritual matters than some loyal churchgoers. Like Alexandra Roth, many say they believe in God or some form of higher power and express a deep interest in or familiarity with religion.

The difference between secular people and others is that secular people do not accept the tenets of any one faith. They either believe that all religions have some validity, and therefore no single one can be divine truth; or that religions are basically arbitrary human constructs. Many pious people also live with doubts about their own faith's teachings. But for those who are not religious, the doubts are a chasm they cannot cross.

"If I could ever believe the dogma, I would be a very happy Catholic," says Roth, who is of mixed Christian and Jewish heritage. "I like the stained glass and the bells and the smells, and I love the stories. But it's those little nagging points—like the divinity of Christ—that get in the way. I just don't believe."

IN THE YARD OF ROBERT AND CAROL SCHWARTZ'S home in Northwest Washington is a dogwood tree planted on the spot where the ashes of their children's grandfather were buried eight years ago. When he died, Joanna was 5 and Sarah was 8, and the Schwartzes were suddenly forced to explain what had happened. They did not mention heaven.

"When someone dies," Joanna recalls her father told her, "they go into the ground and they fertilize the plants, and animals eat the plants, and people eat the plants and people eat the animals. That way people's spirits get transmitted," says Joanna, now 13 and an eighth-grader. "It makes sense to me."

Joanna's father was only passing on what his own mother had told him. Robert Schwartz, a 53-year-old architect, says he was brought up by parents "not at all proud" of their Jewish heritage and reluctant to appear too Jewish in their predominantly Catholic neighborhood. He married Carol, 52, a homemaker and part-time school administrator, whose parents had largely rejected Catholicism.

Psychologist of religion Bernard Spilka says religious faith helps children "make sense of the world," especially during crises like the death of someone close. Strong faith can also enhance their self-esteem and sense of control in life, says Spilka, a professor at the University of Denver. Children, like adults, have a natural desire to know, to drive away ambiguity.

People can tolerate uncertainty, he says, "but it takes a pretty strong individual to say there isn't any kind of a master explanation that pulls it all together."

Robert and Carol Schwartz say that above all they want to raise their daughters to be tolerant and appreciative of many religions. At bedtime when they were small, their father read to Joanna and Sarah about Taoism, Confucianism and Zoroastrianism. Twice during the Jewish High Holidays he took them to services to help them understand their Jewish heritage.

But Robert Schwartz admits: "Judaism is no more emotional for me than other religions, so it's virtually impossible for me to make it an emotional thing for them. It's an intellectual thing. . . .



Robert Schwartz with, from left, Dolores Dunholter; wife, Carol; and daughters, Sarah and Joanna. The parents had to confront religious issues in explaining the children's grandfather's death eight years ago.

All these religions are interesting and valid. You happen to be born into one of them."

The parents told their daughters they were free to choose any religion or none at all. Joanna says the result was that "everything runs together, all the religions, so I can't tell which one I want to be."

About five years ago, the family tried attending a Unitarian church, seeking a sense of community. "I was thinking it would be good for the [children] to belong to a Sunday school group, to give them some sort of outlet socially," Carol Schwartz recalls. But the class for Sarah's age group was full, and Joanna showed no interest in the Bible study class geared for her grade. The family didn't pursue it and has not returned since.

Yet when Carol Schwartz was diagnosed with cancer two years ago, the Schwartzes discovered they already had the kind of supportive community that many people find only through religious affiliation. Friends and neighbors brought hot meals for the family every night for three months.

The daughters say their family had always been close, but their mother's illness bound them together even more tightly. If they were believers, they might have taken comfort that God was watching over their family, or that if their mother died, heaven awaited her. Instead they had the comfort of a father who was always there to cry with them.

"Stuff like that taught me values," Sarah says, "and that doesn't have anything to do with religion."

Carol Schwartz pulled through. Her experience in her support group for cancer survivors has left her acutely aware that other people "were really sustained by [belief in heaven] in a way I wasn't. But that belief just doesn't come from nowhere."

Her daughters have very different feelings about growing up without a faith. Joanna, now 13, says she hasn't missed anything because her life is full with saxophone lessons and soccer games. When she grows up she doubts that she will be religiously observant because "I want to be freer and do what I want."

But Sarah, now 16, says "I feel like I missed something." She envies her friends who go on retreats with their Catholic church, who have "another part of life and people to support you" outside of school.

"When I get married," Sarah says, "if my husband is Jewish or if he's Christian, I'll convert to that religion. Because I do want my kids to have religion."

CHILDREN ARE "NATURAL MYSTICS" AND VERY responsive to religious ritual—even simple ones like lighting candles, says Linda Kavelin Popov, a psychiatric social worker and author of "The Virtues Project," a values education program used in schools and religious centers of many faiths.

"I think they have less of a foundation to stand on if they don't believe there is some power that's beyond them to help them," Popov says. "When they don't have something that is transcendent or spiritual, they replace it with what some religions call a 'false God'—having power over people, or being first."

More important than faith is for parents to clarify their own values and beliefs and communicate them to their children, Popov says. "If the parent believes in anything strongly—it could be civil rights—you have the same impact on the child. I think that children crave idealism. So if the parents are idealistic or spiritual in a really living way, that has a great effect on a child's need for a sense of purpose."

Mixed messages from parents about religion can undermine belief. Connie Greer's parents were Jehovah's Witnesses, and so were supposed to shun smoking, drinking, and celebrating birthdays and many holidays. But Greer remembers the frantic moments before Bible study meetings when they sprayed the house with air freshener to mask the stench of cigarettes. When her parents dropped out of the faith, it left Greer, then 12, "a little jaded about religion," she says.

Today she believes religion is fine, but best not forced on people. In choosing a day-care center for her son Kenny, 2, she rejected one where children said the Lord's Prayer every day. She wants him to know that professing religion does not guarantee virtue. "I do see a lot of hypocritical people . . . who go to church every Sunday and have affairs with their secretaries," she says.

LIKE MANY OF THE SECULAR PARENTS INTERVIEWED for this report, Alexandra Roth wants most to cultivate in her son Graham an ability to think independently. Her perspective—which many religious people would reject—is that most religions demand absolute belief in an absolute truth. And she cannot accept that.

"The idea that you would be going around for example as a Christian and thinking all the Hindus will burn in hell, that a gazillion Muslims on their prayer rugs are accomplishing nothing—that is disgusting to me," Roth says.

Graham came to her at lunchtime one day recently and asked her to compare God and Superman. "Is God invisible?" the 3-year-old asked. "Is Superman invisible?"

In the interfaith household that Roth grew up in, religion was never talked about. She wants her home to be different, even though she finds more for her soul in Jung than in Jesus. And even though she doesn't know how to answer Graham's questions about God, she finds his inquisitiveness a healthy start on a journey they will have to make together.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

December 27, 1995
4 Tevet 5756

Susan Parsons
1034 East Chestnut Street
Hazleton, PA 18201

Dear Susan:

I received the handwritten note you wrote to me in Atlanta. Please forgive me for not responding sooner. Unfortunately, I did not return from Atlanta at once, I had several engagements in other communities and since then have been drowned under a mountain of mail. I hope you understand and in understanding, forgive.

I certainly can understand your concern regarding the resolution on religious enrollment passed by the UAHC Biennial. I can feel your anguish and the hurt you expressed and I want to assure you that the resolution was not designed to hurt or to exclude.

What we had here was a conflict of equally valid principles.

On the one hand, we want to be an open community, to include everyone - this indeed has been my clarion call throughout the years of my leadership of the Union.

On the other hand, we recognize that the endeavor to raise children in two faiths and to have them make a choice once they become adult is fraught with untold difficulties. Interfaith couples who cannot make up their minds about what their children should be have the right and even the duty to teach their children about both religions, but that is not quite the same as providing a formal education in both a synagogue school and a church school. Religious education of any faith is not objective and dispassionate, but seeks to reach

Susan Parsons
December 27, 1995
Page two

the soul beyond the mind of the student. When two conflicting theologies are thus transmitted, considerable psychological pain is too often the consequence.

This then was the ambivalence which underscored so much of the discussion, both within the various committees and on the floor of the Biennial itself. If you noted very carefully, I, myself, was so torn about this conflict of two valid principles that I voted against the resolution, but only because I was afraid of the perception which we created, not because of the substance which it assumed.

For your perusal, I enclose the text of the resolution itself. Note particularly paragraph C on page 2 which probably should have been item number A and might have softened some of the pain.

Please give my fond good wishes to Buz and of course I hope that these words help to ease some of your pain and bring this matter into its proper perspective.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

Alexander

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Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Dec. 2, 1995

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

You are an inspiration every time I hear you. Everything you articulate is what I believe. If only it represented our movement!

Because you called me "family" today, I am writing to you for guidance -- as a member deeply distressed by a resolution which passed at this conference. I believe it is wrong & unjust. I would like very much to know your position on it ASAT.

The resolution encourages congregations to offer enrollment in their religious schools only to children who are not receiving formal religious education in any other religion.

Until Outreach has established Stepping-Stones-type programs in every congregation that meet these children's special needs, we cannot close our Jewish schools to these children.

The reality of our Jewish lives & our secular lives is diversity. We must accept + educate anyone who appears at our schools with a listening ear. How can we as Reform Jews deny exposure to our great values + our sense of humanity to children who are barraged by computers, video games & MTV?

Our children -- all children -- need spheres of safety like our religious schools. It takes a village to raise a child. We should never close doors until we open others that are equal in quality + substance. In my opinion, those

new doors are not opened yet in most of the country.

The passage of this resolution has happened too soon. It reflects to me insecurity on the part of its proponents, who may fear a child blurted out in their child's religious school class that "Christmas is better than Hanukkah" -- or some other statement reflecting Christian influence.

The child should not be punished. Jews should not be so fearful.

I am so upset about this, + I am so overwhelmed with thoughts about this resolution's implications + underlying motives, that I simply had to write them down to you.

If life + God permit, perhaps I will find the time + clarity of mind back home to write an article about my perceptions, my prideⁱⁿ and yearnings for Reform Judaism. I've wanted to for a long time.

You have become for me a hero + a mentor, and I will miss your voice + your lead very much.

Best wishes for lots of dancing on/under Jacob's ladder with Rhea + your children!

Sincerely

Susan Parsons
1034 E. Chestnut St.
Harleton, PA 18201

P.S. I am married to
Rebecca Bogaza.

Outreach

May 11, 1995
11 Iyar 5755

Egon Mayer, Director
Jewish Outreach Institute
33 West 42nd Street
New York, NY 10036

Dear Egon:

Much to my regret I simply cannot provide a comment for David Sacks' pamphlet at this time. I have far too many deadlines to meet since as my retirement approaches, far from declining invitations to and visit congregations and speak at various functions are heavier than ever.

I did read the pamphlet, however, and am troubled by some of the things David has said as well as some omissions. I just don't have the time to enter into a detailed review.

If there is some way I can help you personally, by all means do call and I will do what I can.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



JEWISH OUTREACH INSTITUTE

CENTER for JEWISH STUDIES 33 W. 42nd St. New York, NY 10036
(212) 642-2688/2181 FAX (212) 642-1988

Rabbi Alexander Schindler
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

May 3, 1995

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

Enclosed here is a pre-publication copy of our latest pamphlet written by JOI's president Mr. David G. Sacks. The title, we hope, speaks for itself. We would be most grateful if you could offer a few comments of endorsement that we may print on the back cover.

Thank you in advance for your kind and prompt consideration. In the interest of time you may fax your comments to us.

With warm regards,

Egon Mayer
Egon Mayer
Director

flex-

I don't find this very sophisticated and wonder how he derives his "expertise". Generally, it's probably not damaging, (to families) although I take exception to some statements (see pages 22, 23, 30, 31, 34.) It's goal is to build JOI + sell their new resource (#35). I think whether or not to endorse it is mostly a political consideration + I have mixed feelings, largely negative at the moment. Hope this helps.

DM

(My computer's down. Sorry.)

To Ego
Regrettably I can't
help you. I have
too many deadlines
to meet + as my
retirement approaches,
I'm free from things slowing
me down.
I read papers throughly
+ am troubled by
some of the things
he said as well
as omits.
If I can help you
personally,
by all
means I
will do
what I
can.

*Welcoming our Loved Ones
who Intermarry into the
Jewish Community*



DAVID G. SACKS

A PUBLICATION OF THE JEWISH OUTREACH INSTITUTE

Dedication

Lovingly dedicated to my own Naomi, my wife, and to all the spiritual heirs of that first Naomi by whose inspiration the Biblical Ruth uttered those memorable words: Where you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God.



Acknowledgements

This publication was made possible by the generous support of The Nathan Cummings Foundation, Mr. Robert Goldman and the Board members of the Jewish Outreach Institute: Mr. David W. Belin, Mr. Terrence A. Elkes, Mrs. Barbara Friedman, Mr. Eugene Grant, Mrs. Ronne Hess, Mrs. Mary Lynn Kotz, Dr. Egon Mayer, Mr. Morris Offit, Mr. David G. Sacks, Mrs. Jerry Tilles, Mr. Roger Tilles.

About the Author

David G. Sacks is President of the Jewish Outreach Institute; director and past president of The Seagram Co., as well as past president of UJA/Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York. A native New Yorker, David and his wife Naomi are parents of four children and grandparents of nine grandchildren.

FOREWORD

Some fifteen years ago, during a winter vacation in our Florida home, our older daughter, Deborah, called and excitedly told me her news: that the wonderful young man, Stephen, who lived up the street from us in Westchester (a New York suburb), and who had just returned from Africa from two years with the Peace Corps, had asked her to marry him—and she had accepted. I was extremely happy for my daughter. But, my own joy was restrained by the my knowledge that this fine young man, whose family we had known well, was himself a child of an interfaith marriage: of a devout Roman Catholic mother and a non-practicing Protestant father.

Although I suspect my daughter knew how I might react to the news—she asked me if I would attend the wedding—she probably never fully knew my feelings until she read this pamphlet. I assured my daughter that I would want to be at her wedding—even if held in the high Himalayas—unless she chose to flaunt our Judaism by marrying on the Sabbath.

In any event, there was an uncomfortable feeling in the pit of my stomach that blunted my happiness for our child. Having a daughter marry a non-Jew was hardly my view of an ideal marriage—no matter how fine the particular young man and his family were.

Perhaps many other American Jews would not have felt the same discomfort as I on learning of the impending intermarriage of their daughter or son. My wife and I wanted our children to marry Jews because of our own tradition, our love for Judaism, and our

fear of the frequent association between intermarriage and assimilation. We had always hoped to have Jewish grandchildren and wondered to ourselves whether Deborah's choice of Stephen as husband might not foreclose that possibility.

Like many of you, I wondered where I (not she) had gone wrong in my efforts to convey the importance of Jewishness to my daughter. So, in many ways, I share your pain--and your anxieties--if you, too, are a Jewish parent whose daughter or son has married or is soon to marry someone who is not Jewish. Happily, my story has an ending that I wish for all Jewish parents in similar circumstances. My daughter--and her non-Jewish husband--have three wonderful children, all of whom are being brought up as Jews in a home rich with the symbols and observances of the Jewish heritage.

Stephen is more than content with his children's Jewish education, their celebration of Shabbat and other Jewish religious holidays and their identification as Jews. His own conversion to Judaism is probably not in the cards because he simply does not care enough about any religion. But I have watched him become a willing and enthusiastic participant in Shabbat services and in his children's Jewish upbringing. The date for the Bar Mitzvah of their older son has been set and my very Jewish daughter, her non-Jewish husband, my wife and I, and even our grandson's non-Jewish grandparents are looking forward to that exciting event. I consider myself a lucky person, especially when I bask in the reflected glory and Jewishness of my daughter and her children--my

Jewish grandchildren.

I wrote this pamphlet in the hope that perhaps some of my family's experience in dealing with intermarriage might prove to of some help to you as well. Written from the perspective not of a rabbi or Jewish communal professional, but from that of a concerned layman who has been active for many years in the life of the organized Jewish community, this publication is intended as a practical guide to dealing with the many issues triggered when young adults, raised by Jewish parents in Jewish homes, decide to marry someone who is not Jewish.

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

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You Are Not Alone, and Why Intermarriage Is
Increasing

If yours is like the experience of most Jewish families, the first encounter with serious interfaith dating or intermarriage—typically through an adult child or grandchild—will bring on a keen sense of apartness. Apartness at least from your own forebears if not from the wider Jewish community. The long tradition of religious opposition, coupled with social stigma and the historical rarity of intermarriage among Jews, has made many Jewish families uneasy about the prospect of one of the their own marrying someone who is not Jewish. The unspoken question "Why is this happening to us?" is likely to gnaw at your thoughts

for weeks or months. In recent years the issue of intermarriage was brought more sharply to the entire Jewish community's attention by the Council of Jewish Federation's publication of the 1990 National Jewish Population Study. This study reported that in marriages involving Jews since 1985, about 52% were intermarriages.

Intermarriage among Jews usually, but not always, involves marriage with a Christian, and is used in that sense throughout this pamphlet. The 52% rate is probably now approaching 60%. That means that three out of every four marriages involving American Jews are intermarriages. Of every five Jews, three would wed non-Jews, and the other two marry each other. Whether we approve of this trend or not, it is, like the cycles of the sun or the tides, a fact. Knowledge of this simple demographic fact, alone, should lessen some of the emotional turmoil that often attends the first intermarriage to occur in a modern Jewish family.

Intermarriage is increasingly common today among American Jews—as it is among all Americans (perhaps even the experience of the majority)—because of three factors which were largely absent in prior generations—freedom, willingness and acceptability. Unlike the situation fifty years ago (when many neighborhoods, areas and buildings were "restricted," which meant "no Jews"), American Jews are generally free to live where they wish. Jewish "quotas," common until after World war II, are almost non-existent today, so we Jews may freely attend the schools and

universities of our choice. And (partly because it's the law) Jews may work wherever they want. What better places than the neighborhood, college and the work place to meet a future spouse.

Secondly, Jews today are far more willing to marry a non-Jew than they were even one generation ago. Jews choose to marry non-Jews (just as non-Jews choose to marry Jews) for reasons of love and commitment; because of the conviction that "this is the person with whom I wish to share my life." Intermarrying Jews are also not per se rejecting either their heritage or their Jewishness. One need only read The New York Times on any Sunday, note the very high proportion of obvious intermarriages at which a rabbi or cantor officiates, to realize that in so many cases intermarriage neither involves rejection nor denial of the Jewish heritage.

Finally, non-Jewish Americans have generally accepted Jews and are no longer shocked by interdating and intermarried couples. National public opinions surveys suggest that the acceptance of Jews as marriage partners among the broad crosssection of American has increased from about forty-five percent in the early 1960s to nearly eighty percent by the end of the 1980s. Even if the average American non-Jewish family would prefer that their son or daughter not to marry a Jew, the freedom described above has exposed them to Jews in the community, the school and the employment place to a far greater degree than experienced by their own mothers and fathers.

The creation, and success, of the State of Israel has also helped to change many views about the "Jewish stereotype." Likewise, the civil rights movement in the United States—in which Jews had been so visibly active through the 1960s—has also helped to change perceptions about group boundaries. As a matter of fact, the social boundaries have become so porous that Jews-by-birth can drift away from their ancestral heritage as easily as non-Jews can drift into the community through intermarriage.

In our open society, every Jew is, in a fundamental sense, a "Jew by choice." That reality has lead many of us to the recognition that the Jewishness of each family needs to be nurtured and enhanced—regardless of whether the partners are both born as Jews or whether the family includes an intermarried Jew and a non-Jewish spouse. We must not write them off, nor should we abandon their children to the natural assimilatory forces of the great American melting pot. They are all Jewish to some degree. Our task ought to be the increase in the percentage of those who choose to become Jews or, at least, infuse more Jewishness in their lives.

#<#>#<#>#<#>#

Feelings in Perspective: Yours and Theirs

For a variety of reasons, Jewish parents and grandparents tend to be upset when faced with the

prospect of an intermarriage—even when they have no particular objection to the individual young man or woman who is to be their in-law. Occasionally, some intermarrieds report, "Being upset at our intention to marry was the very first identifiably 'Jewish' act in years for our parents." In addition to their own ties to Judaism, their concerns about Jewish survival and suspicions about Christian anti-Semitism, parents whose adult children have intermarried or are about to may well feel some sense of personal guilt—that somehow even if their child's intermarriage is not the child's "fault," it is their own.

Rabbi Rachel Cowan—herself a convert to Judaism after many years of being in an intermarriage—has observed that when she and her late husband Paul (a born, and later "reborn" Jew) married, they didn't believe that they were doing anything wrong. They simply loved each other—what better reason for marriage?

Almost all intermarried couples articulate much the same reasons. Why, then, do so many Jewish families of the newly engaged (or intermarried) couple take a different view? Practical concern is often one of the reasons. With the rate of American divorce climbing almost as rapidly as the rate of intermarriages, parents may also have legitimate concerns about the additional stresses which differing religious and ethnic backgrounds place on the delicate balance of marriage. Many families—Christians as well as Jewish—have deep commitments to their religion that involve emotions, family, community and theology. Many

thoughtful Jews also recognize the central role of the family and the home in transmitting the uniqueness of Judaism, its universalism and emphasis on personal freedom, education, study, and charity (tzedakah). They fear, with some justification, that in an intermarried home those values will be too difficult to transmit since husband and wife will not be able to present a unified message to their children.

From the viewpoint of Jewish parents, there are at least two additional concerns. First, we Jews are a very small group—perhaps no more than 13 million in a world whose population now tops 5 billion—about one-quarter of one percent. Intermarriage is therefore seen by many Jews (unlike the way it is viewed by others) as a threat to Jewish group survival.

Second, Jews often view Christianity as having been the greatest threat to Jewish survival over the last two millennia, and, more specifically, feel that the Christian Church has been a major force of anti-Semitism over the years. In the eyes of many Jews, particularly those who are older and biographically closer to the immigrant experience, intermarriage often evokes feelings of group betrayal, even though the record, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, has gotten demonstrably better over the past generation.

Young couples often seem to be oblivious to these parental concerns. They do not share our alarms about their future. Understandably, they only have eyes for each other as unique and precious individuals and

cannot see the significance of the groups that divide their ancestry. Interestingly, the time surrounding the engagement and wedding is usually also a time of heightened interest in family history and ancestral culture. Parents of the intermarried need to take special care not to "poison" the natural openness of the young couple to family history by openly or subtly emphasizing the young couple's departure from Jewish family norms. It is more useful to find ways to enlist the young couple's curiosity about family history through the sharing of stories that invite admiration, empathy, and emulation.

For example, describing with some humor the courtship of grandma and grandpa, illustrated by photographs, if possible, is a gentle way to weave a subtle web of attachment between the young family-to-be and their Jewish heritage. You need not be the one to emphasize how intermarriage differs from Jewish family norms. Your children are likely to know that quite well already. You need to help the new couple find a way to forge a link that will bind them to those venerable norms. Open to them the treasure-trove of your own family memories, be it in conversations or letters. These may well be the first heirlooms with which they will "Judaize" their own new nest.

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How Not To React...and How To

From the very first moment you learn—or suspect—that your (adult) child plans to intermarry, you are likely to experience a variety of powerful feelings: feelings of personal failure or guilt ("Where did we go wrong?"), feelings of betrayal ("Why is s/he doing this to us?"), feelings of shame "What will grandpa say?") and feelings of genuine alarm about your son or daughter's marital future ("How are they going to be able to raise children? Overcome their own differences?"). Worse, still, anxieties around these matters can, at times, trigger conflict even among the Jewish parents themselves with useless "if only" recriminations ("If only you had been a 'better' Jew all of this would not be happening now"). Save yourselves the angst. Concentrate, instead, on all the wonderful things you can do to celebrate the continuity of your Jewish life with your intermarried children and grandchildren (and, if you are married, with each other as well).

At times the feelings of anxiety about your children's and grandchildren's Jewish future can trigger conversations with our children or prospective in-laws which generate considerably more heat than light. Their volume and intensity can overshadow substance and meaning. We must be more than commonly cautious about our words, our deeds and even our body language. Your child, and his or her non-Jewish fiancée,* are going to be extremely sensitive to what you say and do, how you act--and the attitude of the non-Jewish

fiancée toward both your family and possibly toward the

Jewish heritage itself may be forever colored by your initial reactions to the unfolding relationship.

For the sake of future relationships in the family, it is vital that we be accepting about our children's choices, collaborative about their wedding plans and positive about their future. The magic word is "welcoming"—welcoming the new person into the family, and into the larger Jewish community.

[*Fiance is used in this pamphlet, contrary to good French usage, as both feminine and masculine.]

At the time you first learn about the proposed wedding, it is generally way too soon to be discussing officiation by a rabbi, wedding plans (other than the date), conversion or the religion of our grandchildren. You might start those discussions—sooner, rather than later—with your own son or daughter. Later, you may want to discuss these honestly with your child's non-Jewish fiance. Eventually, you must also be welcoming toward the fiance's own family.

None of this is meant to suggest that we be

dishonest with our child, or with his/her fiance, or that we bury our feelings or wishes. Nor does being welcoming toward your own intermarrieds mean an abandonment of your basic feelings about your own Judaism and its values regarding the primacy of Jewish family life. Your own feelings about our heritage and traditions are as authentic, legitimate and an object of valid concern as their feelings for one another.

You might also at a very early stage be presented with matters your children consider fait accompli that you would find very difficult to accommodate (e.g. "We are going to be married on a Saturday morning by Nancy's uncle who is a priest"). Open discussion will be beneficial for all. But be careful of the words and inferences. Judge your son's or daughter's fiance as a person, not as a representative of a nationality, or of a religion, or of a political party, or any other group. (This is equally true, of course, if your son or daughter marries someone who is of Jewish origin and an American with the same national origins.) All of those Jewish mother jokes aside, there's a real difference between saying, "Not many of our relatives will come to such a wedding," and

suggesting that "the guest list requires some further thought."

There is a great difference between sharing your deepest feelings and concerns with your children and using your feelings as tools with which to try to shape their life plans. Honesty with yourself will be the best indicator of just what it is you are trying to do. Efforts to influence your child's life with respect to their choice of spouse or other equally important life decisions, are likely to backfire because they will be perceived as unacceptably manipulative. Try to avoid it.

If you want your own child's fiance to help in maintaining a Jewish home or to impart Jewish traditions to their children, you must avoid communications which imply that the couple has done something wrong in marrying in the first place, or are making a mistake and will, some day, regret their marriage choice.

There are some general comments about intermarriage, often heard in Jewish circles, that are best avoided, even in the abstract. It is not helpful to make passing comments about intermarriage as "a

shame," or "a sin," or "a shandah," or "the death-knell of the Jewish people." Intermarriage is not "a plague," it is not "pernicious" or any other pejorative noun or adjective you might muster. In choosing their life mates our own son or daughter's intermarriage is not a rejection of us, our faith, or our community. Our young people are not marrying their particular beloved to punish us, nor is there cause for guilt feelings by anyone. Therefore the words we use to discuss their relationship should be positive and respectful of the momentous significance of their choice of each other as marriage partners. Your (intended) son- or daughter-in-law is not likely to be an anti-Semite. After all, he or she has fallen in love with one of your children.

Words that stigmatize, like "goy," "momser" or (depending on gender) "shickseh" or "shaygetz" are completely inappropriate, particularly as references to someone who is likely to be a parent of your grandchildren. The couple, and their marriage, are not merely to be tolerated, or forgiven or treated with condescension. Ours are wonderful young people who are embarking on life's most wonderful and

challenging new partnership venture. They need, and deserve, your support and good wishes. With that support and those good wishes, at the very least there will be one more American Christian family with a more favorable view of Jews, Judaism and Israel; and at the very best, there may be a newly Jewish spouse and new Jewish grandchildren.

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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

What Can Jewish Parents Really Accomplish

We have made our greatest contribution to the continuity of our people by having and raising a Jewish child or children. That is not altered by the fact that any of them has chosen to marry to a person who is not Jewish. Short of the kind of power that no parent ought to aspire to, it is beyond our power to forbid, much less prevent our children's intermarriage; or to insist on the conversion of a non-Jewish fiancée; or to require that they arrange for a Jewish wedding ceremony and eventually raise their children as Jews.

What we Jewish parents can accomplish for the Jewish future of our children and grandchildren lies beyond the realms of control, insistence or manipulation. Rather, it is in the realm of loving guidance, thoughtful example setting, and responsiveness to needs expressed by the young couple. In that broad framework there is nothing we cannot discuss as mature adults with our equally mature adult children or grandchildren. In the final analysis, the young couple will make their own decisions about all the matters that are important to them. And it is important that they be aware of your understanding of that eventuality. But, to the extent that their decisions are important to us as well, we can and must discuss this with them—naturally, in a sensitive, respectful and mature manner. Our own sons and daughters need to know, and often will want to know, what Jewish religious and cultural issues are important to us and why—if they don't already know it.

Certainly, they should not be expected to make important decisions about wedding plans or any other significant life choices without the benefit of

parental guidance and opinion. Withholding guidance and opinion is no more mature or respectful than is the attempt to impose them by fiat or excessive control. Communication about even the most sensitive matters is far superior to guesswork, and sulking will only lead to hurt.

Efforts at guidance are generally most successful if parents and grandparents hold out their wisdom, knowledge and experience as a resource for the young couple to forge their own lives, rather than as standards the young are expected to live up to. The success of such efforts depends largely on our own communications skills as well as upon those of our children and in-laws who are themselves adults, old enough to marry, independent enough to have their own convictions, wise enough to know what is important to them and, hopefully, sensitive and loving enough to want to maintain warm family ties themselves.

Among the issues that the young couple will likely want to deal with at different stages of their evolving life together are some of the following:

(a) Who is to Officiate at the Ceremony?

Jewish parents are often the first people outside the couple themselves who have to grapple with this issue, which is such a thorny one from the perspective of Jewish tradition. At the risk of proclaiming the obvious too loudly, having a Jewish clergyman officiate (or co-officiate) at an intermarriage ceremony is important only if it matters to the bride or the groom, or to one or more members of their immediate families. The results of a 1993 study by the Jewish Outreach Institute indicate that 77% of Reform Jews, 60% of Conservative Jews and 20% of the Orthodox wanted their rabbi to officiate at their child's intermarriage, if the couple has agreed to raise their children as Jews.

This issue is one of the most controversial ones in the present day Jewish community because most American rabbis are unwilling to officiate at an intermarriage. Those who do officiate at such marriages (many Reform and Reconstructionist and some Conservative rabbis do) will do so only if the couple agrees to maintain a Jewish home and raise their children as Jews. Feelings tend to run high concerning it. Many cantors (who under State laws are clergy,

eligible to perform marriage ceremonies) do officiate at intermarriages. Most Jewish clergymen who do officiate at intermarriages will decline to do so if a Christian, Buddhist or Moslem clergyman also participates.

Among the more difficult problems the intermarrying couple will face is locating clergymen who will officiate. If the couple decides to have a rabbi, they would well advised to proceed with extreme caution. Before asking the Jewish partner's own rabbi to officiate, parents could serve a useful intermediary role to establish that rabbi's likely response and thus avoid potentially bruised feelings and misunderstandings.

✓
couple should
meet with
rabbi (and other
clergy)

If it is known that the family's rabbi will not perform intermarriages, the Jewish parents or grandparents could nevertheless serve as a bridge between the couple and the rabbi for counseling purposes. Perhaps, the family rabbi can be enlisted to help identify a colleague who will officiate.

Many intermarried couples have felt the refusal by the rabbi of the Jewish spouse to officiate, not as a matter of the rabbi's own religious convictions, but

as a rejection by the entire Jewish community. That may be understandable, but it is wrong. Here, again, Jewish parents and grandparents can play a critical role to heal possibly hurt feelings by explaining the complexity of the intermarriage wedding issue in the Jewish tradition.

Before leaving it to others (such as clergy, family or friends) to make this important decision, the intermarrying couple should engage in some honest discussion, designed to establish how important it is for the Jewish partner to have a rabbi, and how important it is for the non-Jew to have a Christian (or other) clergyman. Parents and grandparents can play a constructive role in providing information, particularly to the non-Jewish in-law (or in-law to be) about the significance of Jewish rituals and traditions.

Even if the couple choose to have no clergy officiate, they will often recognize that every single word of the ceremony may be important—if not to the bride and groom—perhaps to one or both sets of parents or grandparents. It is lovely to include willing parents and grandparents in the ceremony.

(b) Conversion To Judaism

In biblical times , hundreds of thousands of converts entered Judaism. With the rise of Christianity in the West and, later, Islam in the East, Jews were prohibited from seeking converts on the pain of most severe punishment by religious and secular authorities. Over the centuries of Diaspora living Jewish practice regarding conversion evolved into quite a simple one: don't ask, don't tell, Jews would seldom ask someone not Jewish to become Jewish. And, if asked about conversion, they would be most reluctant to tell anyone how to proceed. Rabbis made conversion to Judaism difficult, both for fear of anti-Semitic backlash and in order to eliminate those prospective converts who lack sincerity. Under the strictest interpretations of post-biblical tradition, the prospective convert was to be turned away at least twice, and no conversion would be effected if it was made a condition to marriage by the Jewish partner.

For the past twenty-five years, at least, Jewish practice and rabbinic thought on this issue has changed significantly. The overwhelming majority of American Jews today believe, according surveys

conducted by the Jewish Outreach Institute as well as others, that conversion to Judaism by the non-Jewish spouse in cases of intermarriage is a highly desirable outcome. But, because Judaism is not currently an active proselytizing religion, it remains to the family to be the initial catalyst in stimulating thinking, discussion, and initiative regarding it.

Those raised as Christians, in particular, find nothing odd or off-putting about the issue of conversion because it is both part of their religious heritage and because changing religious affiliations in America among Christians is a far more common occurrence than it is among Jews. Most people, be they Christians or Jews, do find that the overly zealous advocacy of one person's religion over another is invasive and likely to border on obnoxiousness. However, there is a vast difference between advocacy and "pushiness" as compared to being welcoming, demonstrative, exemplary and communicative about one's heritage.

Once again, it is Jewish parents or other members of the Jewish family who can play a catalytic role in triggering the line of discussion with the young

couple that allows the non-Jewish partner to learn about the more positive attitude of the Jewish community toward conversion. "Have you ever thought about what it might be like to be Jewish yourself?" is not an inappropriate after-dinner question if asked by a brother- or sister-in-law or a grandparent in a private moment after a family seder, for example. Likewise, a Jewish parent can certainly encourage his or her own child to entertain such a question with the latter's wife or husband. As always, common sensical rules of warmth, respect and sensitivity will dictate the appropriate time, place, and phrasing of such discussions. But, it is important that the discussions take place. And, one way or the other, it is often some family setting that makes the most fertile ground for it.

Where conversion has taken place, or is in progress, the Jewish family needs to play a welcoming and instructive role. Conversion will probably be less traumatic for the non-Jewish partner (and his or her family) if it is looked upon primarily as gaining something worth having (Jewish religion) and not as having "given up something." It is also vital to

remember that a person who converts to Judaism does not thereby instantly acquire the kind of Jewish ethnicity that belongs to those of us—religious or not—who were Jews at birth. Becoming Jewish is a process that Jewish families can and ought to nurture. Therefore, Jewish family members must play a supportive role so as to ease the socialization and acculturation of a newly Jewish family member into the ways of the Jewish community.

The recommended response to a non-Jewish son-or daughter in-law today, as regards conversion, is: when asked, tell; and, if not asked, find a way to ask, yourself.

(c) Helping to Raise the Grandchildren As Jews

Becoming a Jewish grandparent is surely one of the best roles we get to play in life. We are a resource and an often venerated presence with potentially a great deal of moral authority and virtually no responsibility. Playing this role well is clearly one of life's greatest joys. But, in situations of intermarriage, it can also require one's every ounce of diplomacy. In most cases, our

grandchildren will have a set of Christian grandparents as well.

Although there is general agreement among experts in child-development that raising children with a single religious identity is preferable, the very best survey data available indicate that about half the intermarried couples do not make a choice of religion for their children. They either fail to discuss their children's religious upbringing, or do not bring such discussions to mutual agreement. We can easily surmise their own difficulties around this issue and need to find ways to ease their path--remembering always that no one else but the parents themselves have the singular responsibility for raising their children, even if those are our grandchildren.

Our principal role is to provide settings such as Jewish holiday celebrations in the home, opportunities for displaying the richness of the Jewish heritage in the context of warm family ties that forge the bonds of memory and affinity through which Jewish identification is born and nurtured. By virtue of their generally greater familiarity with the Jewish tradition, grandparents or other older members of the

Jewish family can often serve as guides to such practices as the b'rith milah (circumcision of boys), baby naming ceremonies, as well as to general Jewish home-based religious customs and rituals that can help your intermarried children raise their children as Jews.

(d) Joining a Synagogue

If your intermarried couple has agreed to bring up the children as Jews, at some point the issue of synagogue membership is likely arise. Such membership is not necessarily, but often may be, a condition to the children's attendance at a synagogue play school, nursery school or religious school. It is almost impossible for a child to have a bar/bat mitzvah unless the child is Jewish and at least one of the parents is a member of the synagogue.

The rules and standards set by each congregation as to who is defined as Jewish and what are the criteria of membership and participation are varied and often quite complex. Grandparents, or other members of the family who are more likely to be members of a synagogue, can play a useful role in

being pathfinders easing the way of their intermarrieds into synagogue life.

For example, it is important for intermarrieds to be aware that according to halacha (traditional Jewish Law, which prevails in Orthodox and Conservative synagogues) the children of a Jewish mother are presumed to be Jewish, as are children who have been converted to Judaism in accordance with halacha. In Reform, the liberal branch of Judaism, children of a Jewish father are also Jewish if they are brought up as Jews.

Second, although most Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative Jewish congregations pay at least lip service to "outreach" to the intermarried, many will not accept the non-Jewish partner as a synagogue member, but accord "guest" privileges such as a ticket to High Holiday services. While the Jewish spouse can become the member in any case, the non-Jewish spouse may feel like a second class citizen.

In all but the most liberal synagogues, the non-Jewish spouse is ineligible to become an officer or trustee, or to ascend the bimah and read from the Torah. That puts particular stress on the non-Jewish

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in explaining
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parent at the time of a bar/bat mitzvah,

All these rules and standards represent potential stumbling blocks before an intermarried family that is seeking Jewish religious affiliation. Where possible, the Jewish family needs information and timely links with rabbis and educators who can provide appropriate counseling to the intermarried family that may be searching to join the right synagogue.

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1. *disagree*

If the intermarried couple is unable to find a nearby synagogue whose requirements and restrictions are acceptable to them, you can help to investigate havurot and other informal groups, particularly those comprised of, or dedicated to, intermarried couples. You might also seek information through the resources listed at the end of this pamphlet.

(e) Beyond the Home & Synagogue

In addition to serving as a bridge to Jewish family heritage, we, the grandparent generation, serve a potentially important role as the bridge between our intermarried children, grandchildren, and the wider Jewish community. It has long been suspected that if there is one single defining experience which assures

that the child will become a committed (not necessarily the same as "observant") Jewish adult, it is the experience of growing up in a Jewish home, with a Jewish ambiance, committed to Jewish practice and Jewish ethics. Children are almost infallible in detecting hypocrisy ("don't do as I do, do as I say") in their parents. Sending the child to religious school, to a Jewish summer camp, on a trip to Israel, and the like will have almost no effect if neither parent is sincerely committed to being a Jew.

On the other hand, even where the Jewish parent in an intermarriage is a committed to the making of Jewish home experiences, success in rearing Jewish children needs to be reinforced by other Jewish experiences which generally take place outside of the home. Jewish grandparents and other members of the extended Jewish family can serve a useful role in providing information (and material support, if needed and possible) to their intermarried children and grandchildren about age-appropriate programs and activities in Jewish settings, such as: Jewish schools and camps; Synagogues; Jewish youth groups; Programs in Israel; Hillel--on the college campus; and, Jewish

charitable and communal organizations

Most of these are self-evident but all serve the purpose of having the child (particularly the child of an intermarriage) become more aware of and knowledgeable about his/her Jewish heritage and roots and feeling as if they, too, belong to the Jewish people. It is never too early to begin a child's "Jewish" education, so Jewish play school and nursery schools serve a useful purpose when the child is two, three or four years of age. A good religious school (day or supplemental), a good Jewish camping experience (as distinguished from a good experience at a camp at which the campers are all Jews), an in-depth Israel experience during the 'teen years, and a good experience with Hillel on a college campus are all superb reinforcements (not substitutes) for what the child receives from the home environment.

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Building Bridges With Your Non-Jewish In-Laws

Even if they are raised as Jews, the children of your intermarried son or daughter are going to have one set of grandparents who, in all likelihood, will continue to celebrate Christmas and Easter. And you are going to have to learn how to live with that

fact. You need to become reconciled to your grandchildren's exposure to those holidays—with both their religious and non-religious symbols.

Intermarriage, it is sometimes wryly noted, at least eliminates the family arguments about at which parents' homes the newlyweds will attend the first Seder. However, intermarriage exacerbates the "December Dilemma"—the Christmas tree. In many Jewish families—including intermarried ones—Hanukkah has taken on far more significance than it had among Jews historically or theologically.

Inviting your child's non-Jewish in-laws to your Seder—or to participate in your Hanukkah or other holiday celebrations—or to share a Shabbat dinner with you—are all lovely ways to begin to bridge the information gap and widen the zone of comfort for all concerned.

Your child's intermarriage may well cause you to become a better informed Jew. Your non-Jewish son- or daughter-in-law, and his and her parents, will look to you as an expert on Jewish custom, practice and theology. And that will be very good training for the time when your grandchildren begin asking you

What about
going to
their house
?

questions about the same subjects, as well as cross-examining you about Jewish attitudes toward Christianity and its theology and rituals. How are you going to answer their questions about Divinity, the Trinity, Baptism, Communion, Atonement and an Afterlife?

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Where To Get Further Help

The Jewish Outreach Institute (JOI) maintains an updated list of programs (listed geographically) which reach out to, and serve, interdating and intermarried couples. Outreach programs are also maintained by the Reform and Conservative Movements. For additional information, call JOI at 212 642-2181 (Fax 212 642-1988) or write to JOI at The Center for Jewish Studies, CUNY Graduate School, 33 West 42nd Street, N.Y. 10036.



COPY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, NY 10021-7064 (212)249-0100

Outstanding

February 2, 1995
2 Adar I 5755

Rabbi Jeffrey J. Sirkman
Larchmont Temple
75 Larchmont Avenue
Larchmont, NY 10538

Dear Jeffrey:

Thank you so much for your letter of January 23rd which reached me on my return to my desk after an extended journey.

How thoughtful of you to write. This is all the more welcome what with all the brick bats that are usually thrown our way.

Of course, I am not surprised. The reports about Evelyn have been consistently superb.

In any event, my thanks to you. I wish you all the very best from house to house.

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler



**Larchmont
Temple**

הר חיים

75 Larchmont Avenue
Larchmont, NY 10538
Tel: (914) 834-6120
Fax: (914) 834-6503

Jeffrey J. Sirkman,
Rabbi

January 23, 1995

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, Pres.
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021-7064

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

As our Outreach Breakfast came to a close yesterday around noon, I couldn't help but think I had just shared in a journey I never before felt was so much my own.

Evelyn Maltman, as you well know, lay chair of our regional Outreach program, was perhaps the most sensitive, stirring and soulful Outreach presenter we have ever had the pleasure of hosting. Her insights were inspiring, her vitality of vision keen, and her ability to empower us to acknowledge the challenges before us so very important.

Continuing to grow ever since your call for "reaching out," our Temple's Outreach program is just now, after nearly 15 years, integrating into the lifeblood of our congregation weaving itself into the fabric of our total Temple program.

With Evelyn's help, through her powerful and poignant presentation, she made us so very proud to reaffirm our commitment, bringing the message and the mission of Outreach ever more to life. "Reach into your hearts," Evelyn urged us at the close of her remarks, "to rediscover the joy and strength, the great gift of your Judaism. And as you do, may you also find it within your hearts to reach out as well, to share the beauty of that gift with others."

We are truly grateful for the "gift" of Evelyn Maltman, the depth of her dedication, the insight and inspiration she brings to all of us who share the responsibility of "making the choice."

With thanks for all you do to help us continue to reach out...

B'Shalom,

Jeffrey J. Sirkman, Rabbi

JJS:cw

Outreach

✓

January 25, 2995
24 Shevat 5755

Ms. Annie De'Courcy
2501 So. Ocean Drive #501
Hollywood, FL 33019

Dear Ms. De'Courcy:

It was truly gracious of you to write and share your great gratitude for Rabbi Rettig and the wonderful sustenance he provided on your journey to Judaism. I am grateful to you for taking the time to express your appreciation of him and the UAHC Outreach program. Your letter means much to me!

You should know that Edie Miller shared your beautiful letter to her with me and I join in welcoming you into our community. Outreach is a source of pride for our movement and when we hear from people such as you who have chosen Judaism it underscores the magnitude of the program and the positive impact it makes on so many lives. We are most fortunate that rabbis such as Edward Rettig give of their time and talents with such loving care and concern to Outreach and to those whose lives they touch.

With repeated thanks and every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

5" 62e

Annie De Courcy
2501 So. Ocean Dr. 501
Hollywood, Fl. 33019

Union of American Hebrew Congregations
838 41st Ave
Rabbi Alexander M. Schundler
New York, New York 10021-7064

Rabbi Alexander M. Schundler,

My chosen name is ד' 3318 and the Beth Din Convened on 1st Tevet. I am a product of the Reform Out Reach Program; moreover, I am also the result of a Reform Rabbi's mitzvah. Under the tutelage of Rabbi Edward H. Rethig (Temple Sinai, North Dade - North Miami Beach), I have acquired the knowledge necessary for building my foundation in Judaism, and with his direction, my spirit soars. Notably, I have a role model that radiates the essence of being a Jew. In Rabbi Rethig's example, I have the true value of mitzvah, of loving my M-d, and always knowing before whom I stand. These mitzvot live in Rabbi Rethig, his wife Martha, and their children.

I think it is important that you should be made aware of the untapped potential, as well as tapped potential in your Rabbi.

Shalom
Sincerely,
Annie De Courcy