

## **Announcing Inter marriages in the Bulletin**

Now that I have your attention, I can tell you that this is actually not the correct title of this column. It should read:

### **Wishing All Our Children a Strong Start at Creating Their Own Jewish Families**

There, doesn't that sound warmer, more inclusive, making more sense?

Historically, we have not announced marriages in the bulletin, if one of the partners in the marriage was not Jewish. Perhaps it was hard for the synagogue to say "Mazel Tov," a Jewish term of joy and congratulations, to a marriage that was fraught with potential to diminish the Jewish People. Perhaps we thought that if we ignored it, the phenomenon of intermarriage would just go away. Perhaps we were just so uncomfortable, that we just didn't know what to say.

Whatever we learned as children about the importance of marrying Jews, not all of our people have followed suit. And now we know, that some of those marriages, which we might have been quick to dismiss as sources of Jewish continuity, in fact produce strong Jewish families, sometimes with the eventual conversion of the non-Jewish spouse, and sometimes not. And the phenomenon of intermarriage is not going away. There are some communities in the United States, where the number of intermarried families is greater than in-married families.

I believe that the greatest chance for Jewish continuity exists when two Jews, engaged in Jewish life, marry each other. But I now also see intermarriage as an opportunity to grow the Jewish people, creating from one Jew, an entire Jewish family in the future.

For this reason, I think that we need to change; instead of turning our eyes from these marriages, we need to embrace both partners in the marriage, and their children to be, and encourage them to be as fully part of our Jewish community and Jewish People as they can.

I know that it has been painful for members of our synagogue when their children have married partners who were not Jewish, and the synagogue has not acknowledged these marriages. I am sorry for those past hurts.

After extensive discussions with our Keruv (outreach) committee, and the Board of Trustees, and the Ritual Committee, and the United Synagogue, and many of my colleagues, a decision has been made for our synagogue to take a different approach. We want Jews to stay Jews, and to become knowledgeable, active, engaged Jews. We want our children to raise Jewish families. And we want to encourage them to do so, in every way that we can.

Beginning immediately, all of our children's marriages will be announced in our bulletin. We hope that all of these unions will yield strong Jewish families, and will result in happiness for the families, nachas

for the parents, and blessing and strength for the Jewish People and all humanity.

We are looking at additional ways to be welcoming and inclusive and encouraging to Jewish families. We want to help them strengthen the Jewish character of their homes and their lives. We come at this challenge from a unique perspective - We are a halachic, traditional, Conservative synagogue \, committed to observance of Jewish law, and with a strong tradition of Jewish practice. Perhaps it is that strength of tradition at our core that will allow us to be flexible in our outreach to embrace families with non-Jewish members, and to help bring them closer to Jewish life. As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback.

Shalom

Rabbi Eliezer Havivi

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