

Keruv Letter to My Children
February 16, 2005

Dear Noah and Janet,

If I had 3 wishes for you,
I would wish for good health for you all your lives
I would wish that you marry someone you love, who loves you for who and what you are;
Not for who or what they would like you to become in the future.
I would lastly wish that you find work in life that gives you pleasure, a sense of being
productive, and offers the opportunity to give something back to the world.

So where's the Jewish part? You know it is coming. I suppose it has something to do with the last two wishes. As my mother and father used to say, "There are a lot of fish in the sea." If you find a Jewish fish, I think you will find the swimming easier. I guess that has something to do with "Birds of a Feather."

And, just so you know that I am not ducking the connection with the third wish, the notion of giving back, of mending the world, is bound into the very essence of Judaism. It is not exactly in the Ten Commandments; you have to read between the lines. Which is, by the way, is what rabbis do for a living.

Now for the Jewish part:

We know you are Jewish because Mommy and I are Jewish. And we know we are Jewish because all our parents are Jewish, as were all their parents. And so forth.

And this goes on and on, weaving its way through time, all the way back to Sinai. It was a schlep to bring down two stone tablets –twice, yet- to find a people who had to be coerced into a contract with a God they couldn't see, but whose fire they felt and whose mighty hand had helped them to freedom. A lot of commandments, in return for the promise of a line of children as many as the stars.

There are a small handful of times in our history, where the Jewish people have felt free enough, successful and wealthy enough to look beyond marrying a Jew, to marrying someone who wasn't Jewish. This is one of those times. You will choose for love. Not something you could do in every generation, but something you can do in this one. And if you choose someone who isn't Jewish, there is a strong likelihood that your beloved's parents will think that is a good decision because Jews make good life partners.

Why Judaism ?

Perhaps for the ethics and for Shabbos. And for the religious overtone that each child that is born, is born free of sin and as pure as the driven snow. Whose fate and destiny is theirs to forge. No baby needs redemption. Every child chooses their path through life.

As Jews, we believe that God chose us to light the way for the world by living a moral and an ethical life.

And by respecting God by resting on the seventh day and pondering, as did God.

And this way of living a life became the cornerstone of the Western World; and the Middle Eastern World.

Not too bad for the Tribe of Jacob, which numbered only 70 when it sought shelter in Upper Egypt during a time of great famine.

Give it up? Leave it? Not me. With all its warts, it is who I am and who I choose to be.

It is who you are as you were born. But you do have choices. Choices about your life and the life you will someday share in choosing for children to be. As you grow, learn more about this heritage and faith you were given. As you do, I think its richness and its warmth will astound you, as it does us all who continue to plumb its depths and wander in its side streams.

The splendor of life is before you. Catch it, savor it and try not to let go of who you are and what makes each of you so special.

Love,
Dad