

Identification Information

Submission Identifier Code 112

Entry Title: Keruv Shabbat

Entry Category: FJMC Program

Contact Person: Marvin Krutchik

Contact Person Email: Krutchik@hotmail.com

Beth Torah Adath Yeshurun Men's Club 1349

Number of club members: 72

Synagogue name, city and state: Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus
North Miami Beach, Florida

Club President name (at time of entry): Marvin Krutchik

Club President name (at time of convention): Marvin Krutchik

Person preparing entry: Marvin Krutchik

Email address of person preparing entry: Krutchik@hotmail.com

Date of entry submission: January 5, 2007

Keruv Shabbat

Summary Information

Following the recommendations on how to start the Keruv program discussed at a training session, a social worker was used as a facilitator for the first few meetings.

In our second year the rabbis led the Keruv meetings. This was done to show the congregants and future members that the rabbis were being supportive of the Keruv initiative. In May of 2006 the rabbis who were always pushing for conversion of the non-Jewish spouse made a statement that not everybody must convert but we must look for the children to be brought up Jewish.

After discussions with the rabbis in the fall of 2006 we decided to plan a Keruv Shabbat that would take place in February of 2007. For the planning of the Keruv Shabbat the rabbis chose three interfaith couples. We wanted to openly recognize and honor these interfaith married couples. Each couple was called to the Bima separately to share their feelings and explain why they chose to raise their children Jewish. The Rabbis gave up their Shabbat sermon in lieu of these couples telling their stories. By the end of that Shabbat service there were very few dry eyes in the sanctuary. The response of the congregation was very positive.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Marvin Krutchik
Krutchik@hotmail.com

BETH TORAH ADATH YESHURUN MEN'S CLUB HOST KERUV SHABBAT SERVICES

At Shabbat services on February 3, 2007 Beth Torah Benny Rock Campus recognized interfaith married couples that are raising their children Jewish. Rabbis Edwin Farber and Mario Rojzman selected three families, where one of the partners is a non-Jew, to address the congregation and explain why they decided to bring up their children Jewish. Marvin Krutchik, President of the Beth Torah Men's Club and Keruv consultant, said: "This Shabbat service is not the culmination of the Keruv program, but only the threshold.

At the Keruv services, each family told their story. All indicated how accepted they felt at Beth Torah. Overall, the congregants' reaction to these emotional stories was positive. The Keruv program allows our children who have intermarried to "return home" and be accepted rather than to be excluded from our rich Jewish heritage

The Keruv initiative was started by the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs three years ago. Keruv is Hebrew for "to draw near." The major goal of the Keruv initiative is to draw intermarried couples, their children and their extended families into increased affiliation and activity in Jewish life, particularly into the Conservative Movement.

Keruv

Part III Self Assessment

1. Assess program procedural completeness and achievement of program goals

The goal of the Keruv Shabbat was to recognize the interfaith married couples in our congregation and to honor the supportive non-Jewish spouses who made the commitment to raise their children Jewish. The Shabbat service was a huge success. It showed our congregation the true meaning of Keruv (to bring closer). The non-Jewish spouses felt so honored and accepted by our ritual staff and congregation that they invited their non-Jewish family members to attend the service. The comments from the congregants after the service were overwhelmingly positive. Our congregants felt honored that they belong to a shul that reaches out and accepts the interfaith married couples.

2. Explain presentation and documentation completeness

The rabbis selected a date where there were no bar mitzvahs, baby namings etc. so that the honors would be bestowed solely on the interfaith couples and their stories. The rabbis chose three couples who agreed to tell their stories to those attending the Shabbat service that morning. The rabbis chose not to read or edit the speeches. They did not want to influence the feelings of the couples. To read the stories please see articles.

3. Achievements of program goals, publicity, marketing and advanced planning

The achievement of the program goals was to show the success of the Keruv initiative of the FJMC. By allowing the interfaith married couples to speak from the Bima shows the success of the FJMC Keruv program. This was the first time that Beth Torah openly honored and accepted these couples and permitted them to speak to the congregants. For publicity our temple calendar listed the Keruv Shabbat with no other explanation. An email was sent out to invite presidents of other men's clubs in South Florida to attend the Keruv Shabbat.

4. Does the program enhance the image of the FJMC, region and /or your club

The Keruv program definitely enhances the image of the FJMC, region and our Men's Club. The following are excerpts from an article written by Rabbis Farber and Rojzman which mentions Keruv Shabbat.

As stated by the rabbis "The approach we have taken over the last few years at Beth Torah is that of Keruv. With the help of the **Men's Club** we have established a Keruv program which reaches out to such families in an active way to bring them closer to Jewish life and to integrate their families in the life of the congregation. We have also established a **Keruv Shabbat** where we honor and thank these families who have chosen to raise their children exclusively as Jews." At the conclusion of the article the rabbis

wrote"Kol Hakavod-Congratulations to our Men's Club for spearheading this Keruv effort.

5. Did you include information so other clubs can use this program

Yes we included information concerning the Keruv initiative. See Summary on ways other clubs can use this program.

6. What is its value in club building – number of named club members participating vs. club size and shul size?

About one quarter of our Men's Club members participated in various Keruv programs including Keruv Shabbat. We have enrolled a few new members into the Men's Club because of the Keruv program.

7. What is the effect on club administration – grooming of new officers for club, shul or region

This program has a very positive effect on grooming potential officers of the Men's Club because Keruv is a continuing every day program. At all monthly Men's Club meetings Keruv is on the agenda.

8. Identification of source of program or practice and description of unique aspects.

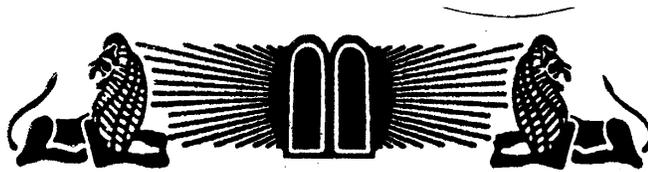
The Keruv Shabbat service evolved from the FJMC Keruv initiative. With the help of the Men's Club spearheading the Keruv program at Beth Torah the rabbis decided to acknowledge and honor the interfaith families who are raising their children Jewish. This was a unique way of showing our gratitude and recognizing the interfaith couples in our congregation.

9. Identification of this program as an adaptation of a previous Torch Award entry or other program.

The Keruv Shabbat was not an adaptation of a previous Torch Award entry or other program.

10. Identification of the part of the programming attributable to the men's club if a joint program with another group.

The Keruv Shabbat was initiated by the Beth Torah Men's Club. See rabbis article.



BETH TORAH MEN'S CLUB

BENNY ROK CAMPUS

KERUV

MONDAY MAY 2, 2005
7:30 PM

FOLLOWING MINYAN AT 7:00 PM

WHAT IS KERUV?

KERUV IS A PROGRAM DEVELOPED BY THE FEDERATION OF JEWISH MEN'S CLUBS TO HELP COUPLES, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS AND THEIR EXTENDED FAMILIES DEAL WITH ISSUES REGARDING INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE. ALMOST HALF THE JEWS WHO MARRIED BETWEEN 1996 AND 2000 MARRIED OUTSIDE THE FAITH. WE ALL HAVE INTERMARRIED COUPLES IN OUR EXTENDED FAMILIES OR KNOW PEOPLE WHO DO.

ATTEND THIS MEETING AND LEARN NEW COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO HELP TALK TO YOUR NON JEWISH EXTENDED FAMILY. SHARE YOUR VIEWS WITH OTHERS.

LEARN WHAT TO SAY AND WHAT NOT TO SAY. HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE JEWISH VALUES AND TRADITIONS WITHOUT INSULTING THE NON JEWISH EXTENDED FAMILY?

THE MEETING WILL BE LED BY JUDITH A. LIEBER, LMHC

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT
MARVIN KRUTCHIK (305) 935 - 0343 email krutchik@hotmail.com



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

MONDAY AUGUST 29, 2005

7:30 PM

FOLLOWING MINYAN AT 7:00 PM

WHAT IS KERUV?

KERUV IS A PROGRAM DEVELOPED BY THE FEDERATION OF JEWISH MEN'S CLUBS TO HELP COUPLES, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS AND THEIR EXTENDED FAMILIES DEAL WITH ISSUES REGARDING INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGE. ALMOST HALF THE JEWS WHO MARRIED BETWEEN 1996 AND 2000 MARRIED OUTSIDE THE FAITH. WE ALL HAVE INTERMARRIED COUPLES IN OUR EXTENDED FAMILIES OR KNOW PEOPLE WHO DO.

DON'T SWEEP INTERMARRIAGE UNDER THE RUG

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

IF YOU WANT TO EASE THE TENSIONS BY INTERMARRIAGE IN YOUR FAMILY

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

ATTEND THIS MEETING AND FUTURE MEETINGS AND HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK OPENLY AND FRANKLY ABOUT INTERFAITH MARRIAGE. SHARE YOUR VIEWS WITH OTHERS.

LEARN WHAT TO SAY AND WHAT NOT TO SAY. HOW DO YOU COMMUNICATE JEWISH VALUES AND TRADITIONS WITHOUT INSULTING THE NON JEWISH EXTENDED FAMILY?

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT
MARVIN KRUTCHIK (305) 935 - 0343 email krutchik@hotmail.com

BETH TORAH BENNY ROK CAMPUS
BETH TORAH MEN'S CLUB

BETH TORAH MEN'S CLUB

BENNY ROK CAMPUS

KERUV

August 29, 2005

(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

NAME: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ APT# _____

CITY: _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

SPOUSE'S NAME: _____

HOME PHONE: (____) _____

CELL PHONE: (____) _____

WORK PHONE :(____ _) _____

FAX NUMBER: (____) _____

EMAIL: _____

(Please put a check mark next to your preference of communication.)

Please circle the number(s) of the topics that interest you the most

1. Relating to your child's non-Jewish partner
2. Celebrating religious holidays
3. Interfaith families and Jewish life
4. Explaining Judaism to non-Jews
5. Grandparents and interfaith relationships
6. Exploring conversion to Judaism
7. Your child or grandchild is dating a non Jew
8. Rolls of partners (Jew and non-Jew) in interfaith marriages
9. Integration of non Jewish spouses into Jewish family and community life
10. Other _____

This is an ongoing ad that was placed in the temple bulletin each time it was printed

WANTED

FAMILY MEMBERS OF INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

Looking for parents and grandparents of intermarried children and grandchildren,
in addition to people whose siblings or parents have intermarried.

Please Contact Marvin Krutchik
FJMC Keruv Consultant.
President Beth Torah Men's Club

Please Call 305 935-0343 or
email Krutchik@hotmail.com.



CELEBRATING RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS IN INTERFAITH MARRIAGES THURSDAY SEPT. 22, 2005 7:30PM

Rabbi Edwin Farber Will Present This Program on How Religious
Holidays and Holy Days Affect Interfaith Marriages
Should you involve your non-Jewish family members in events at the shul?
How should or could your non-Jewish relatives participate at your holiday dinners?
Should you join your non-Jewish family members at their religious holiday celebrations?

**Keruv is an attempt to bring Jews and their non-Jewish relatives
closer to us and to our traditional cultural values**

ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF YOUR
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

Mark your calendar for these future Keruv programs

Wednesday, November 16, 2005* GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER? -RABBI ROJZMAN***

Thursday, January 19, 2006 * EXPLAINING JUDAISM TO NON-JEWS - RABBI PANITCH***

Thursday, March 23, 2006* INTERFAITH FAMILIES AND JEWISH LIFE (TBA) ***

Thursday, May 11, 2006 *EXPLORING CONVERSION TO JUDAISM - RABBI FARBER***

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

MARVIN KRUTCHIK (305) 935 - 0343 email krutchik@hotmail.com

BETH TORAH BENNY ROK CAMPUS
BETH TORAH MEN'S CLUB



INTERFAITH FAMILIES AND JEWISH LIFE

THURSDAY MARCH 23, 2006 7:30 PM
FOLLOWING MINYAN AT 7:00 PM

**INTERFAITH MARRIAGE AFFECTS ALMOST
ALL FAMILIES IN TODAY'S SOCIETY**

RABBI MARIO ROJZMAN WILL BE PRESENTING THIS DYNAMIC PROGRAM

Your extended family includes not only your spouse and children, but a large set of non-Jewish relatives. How do you learn about each other's religions in a non-confrontational manner? How do you maintain Jewish observance in your home and how do you relate to the non-Jewish religious aspect of their homes?

**ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUAL REGARDLESS OF YOUR RELIGIOUS
AFFILIATION ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND**

**FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT
MARVIN KRUTCHIK (305) 935-0343 EMAIL KRUTCHIK@HOTMAIL.COM**

Next program May 11, 2006
Exploring Conversion to Judaism – Rabbi Farber Facilitator

**Keruv is an attempt to bring Jews and their non-Jewish relatives
closer to us and to our traditional cultural values**

**Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus
Beth Torah Men's Club**

DRINKS AND DESSERT FOLLOWING THE MEETING



CELEBRATING RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS IN INTERFAITH MARRIAGES TUESDAY DEC. 5, 2006 7:30PM

FOLLOWING MINYAN AT 7:00 PM

"DECEMBER DILEMMA"

How should or could your non-Jewish relatives participate at your holiday celebrations?

Should you join your non-Jewish family members at their religious holiday celebrations?

You know the problem

Whose home do we go to for the holidays?

Is it okay for a child who is being raised Jewish to decorate a Christmas tree?

How do we celebrate Hanukah?

Who can light candles on the Hanukia?

Join our Rabbis for this discussion

Parents, grandparents, and siblings as well as interfaith married couples should attend

**ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF YOUR
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND**

****FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION**

PLEASE CONTACT

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BETH TORAH BENNY ROK CAMPUS

MEN'S CLUB

Keruv Shabbat Speaker 1

Good morning. My name is Ana Pompas. First of all I'd like to thank all of you for the opportunity to introduce myself and my family to this community of faith. I'll start with a little bit of our background. My husband and I are from Argentina. I was raised Catholic and my husband Arie professes the Jewish faith.

When my husband and I were raising Ari, we always talked about our respective faiths and what would be the best for our son in terms of practicing a religion. At the time, we decided we would let Ari decide what to do when he grew up. Our family has always traveled extensively. Ari traveled with us and had the opportunity to get to know people from different countries, cultures and faiths and have various positive and exciting experiences. Our objective was for Ari to be exposed to many cultures and to have an open perspective on different issues.

In most respects what he absorbed from each experience seemed to fulfill our expectations. The only thing we noticed, with great surprise, was that there was something missing in terms of Ari's spiritual and religious life. We noticed that he accepted and understood both our Christian and Jewish backgrounds but he was unwilling to choose between one of them. So, not wanting to choose between one or the other, he decided instead to choose "no religion" at all.

At this point my husband and I discussed it and became convinced that "we, the parents", were the ones that should decide to give our son the religious education that we thought was most appropriate for our family. I am not a practicing Catholic. On the other hand, my husband has strong bonds with Israel and Judaism. Therefore we decided to introduce him to Hebrew and Judaic studies. Ari attended a Jewish elementary school, where he completed the fifth grade and now attends Ransom Everglades School.

Even though he had a foundation in Judaism, I still noticed there was something missing. Ari needed to address certain doubts and concerns he had. He needed to know that even though his mother was Catholic, he could become Jewish. He needed to ask questions about Christianity without fear of being judged or misunderstood. When we heard that Rabbi Rojzman was in Beth Torah we decided that our son needed to talk to him. As everybody knows, Rabbi Rojzman went to Rome and Israel with the Bishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina. He wrote a book and when we read it we felt we had made the right move. My husband and I brought our son, Ari, to see him. It was a great experience for Ari because he was able to address those doubts and concerns he had.

For the first time in a long time, I have felt at peace knowing that my son is doing his Bar Mitzvah because he has come to feel a deep connection with his Jewish faith. I will be candid with you. It is not easy to raise your own son in a religion that you were not born into. Nevertheless, over the years I have developed a great attachment to the Jewish culture. I have always felt that to be Jewish it is not only important to know religious facts but also to have a sense of belonging. Personally, I believe this can be the most difficult part for the non-Jewish parent. We need the help and acceptance of the Jewish community.

I would like to thank Beth Torah very much for giving us, the Pompas family, your help and acceptance. I thank Rabbi Rojzman for his humanity, knowledge and wisdom. Today, we prepare for Ari's Bar Mitzvah with great joy in our hearts and most importantly with the conviction that our son is taking such an important step based on not only what his mind knows but what his heart feels. Thank you.

Speaker 2

Salton, Robin (Miami)

Jose accepts me & our daughters as Jews, unconditionally.
This is the greatest gift of love.
And it has never been an issue in our home.

As parents, regardless, you want your children to be clear & proud about their identity.
Jada & Tori understand they are Jewish & that is how G-d made them.
We kid w/each other, your born a Jew, you'll die a Jew.

There is a good lesson in that.
Equally, we teach our children Jews come in all colors.
We should ALL teach our children Jews come in all colors.

There is a poem, A Reason, A Season, A Lifetime.
I believe things are meant, I believe in Besheart.

About a year & a half ago, My family & I were fortunate to meet Rabbi Farber at a ceremony outside the
synagogue.
His great energy motivated us enough to want to find out more about Beth Torah.
We came to one Fri evening service & never left.

I believe it was not an accident.
My father would quote a Yiddish saying, Man Plans & G-d Laughs.
I believe G-d was opening a door for me to find the right conservative congregation to help
me teach our daughters about their Jewish heritage.

A congregation is always important to Jewish family life.
But in a household where only one parent was born Jewish, it becomes Necessary
for the congregation to help w/parenting Jewish issues.

Beth Torah is a special place
It is unusual because of its diversity & because it emphasizes communications.

During one Fri evening service, Rabbi Rojzman taught us a family that doesn't talk is a sick family.

Beth Torah encourages us to talk about anything whether it's religious, spiritual or political.

We are a congregation where all Jews are welcome here.

Robin.

Speaker 3

I'm very proud to be here today

I am also very honored to raise my 3 children in the Jewish faith.

I told my 4 year old Brenden that I was going to come up here on the Bima and he said "mommy it's so much fun-it's a big thing to go up there-you know"

I explained to my oldest Marley what a special day this is for our family.

She couldn't wait to share with me what she had recently learned at Hebrew school- that a letter looked like a backward lightening bolt -so sounded like lightening -L

I have a great respect for Judaism, as a religion, and as a culture.

I am proud to raise my children Jewish and actively participate in my families Jewish life-
Not a typical Jewish home-but. One we are very proud of.

My husband Brett & I worked thru a process and felt it would be best to raise our children as Jewish.

We are both very fortunate to have loving, supportive families who have given us unconditional love.

My father-who took me to church every Sunday-had such a love for life, people and history.

He would have loved to have been here for this.

He was always asking questions during the Jewish holidays wanting to learn more, and he felt privileged for the opportunity to take part in these new traditions, and boy did he love chopped liver!

My mother always wanted me to marry a good honest loving person.

The man I feel in love with just happened to be Jewish.

We are very fortunate to have very accepting families and friends.

There was never a single negative reaction to me not being Jewish.

Even from our beloved grandpa Bernie, who saw and lived through unimaginable horrors as a Jewish POW, in Germany, during WWII.

Brett's family was always anxious to share their Jewish traditions with me.

I remember being so excited to ask the 4 questions since I was the youngest at the table, at the time.

Now, I form Matzo balls with grandma BB, and I try to perfect an age old brisket recipe.

Though, I probably will never eat gefilte fish, no matter how much horseradish there is.

I was also very fortunate to always be surrounded by people who were not prejudice of different races and religions.

I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago (go Bears!) with many gentile and Jewish friends.

I could even say some bruchas after witnessing so many bar mitzvahs.

In turn, I have Jewish friends that we would take to our X-MAS eve service, because it was just so glorious.

These types of experiences make me who I am-

And in turn make my children who they will be.

In a world at war over religion, we have been very fortunate to always find mutual respect and religious harmony.

We first met when living in new Orleans- where everyone can learn a thing or two about brotherhood and one love.

Even in the heart of NYC, and now in Miami we have always surrounded ourselves with people from strong families, with good values.

For Brett and me, we had more of an issue with the Bulls/ Knicks NBA rivalry, then the thought of us not being compatible for our religious beliefs.

Since moving to Miami and having children -

Beth Torah has been our foundation, our rock. I have always felt at home here.

I could not imagine a better environment for our children's early school years. ,

I am so proud of this community and have always felt totally accepted. The comfortable feel I have with everyone here-

The kind and loving teachers and staff

And wonderful rabbi's who have always been there for us.

It can be very humbling to learn religion through your children, and really exciting to see it through their eyes.

Because I feel so accepted and welcome by the Beth Torah community,

I truly knew that our decision to convert our children to Judaism was right for us. I want to eliminate any confusion for my kids. I want them to identify as Jews.

I want them to grow up with a Jewish faith but to respect all religions, just as I did.

I want to raise them to treasure Jewish traditions while respecting mine.

I hope that I can always continue to encourage and support my children's religious lives with your approval and guidance.

I read in a book once "that having a religion is like having a hometown; you know that you belong there, you know everyone, and all of their roles".

You do not always have to stay there, but you always know where it is and you can come back whenever you want.

It is this feeling of a religious hometown that we want for our children.

To: krutchik_e@forn.edu Subject: Re: Keruv
cc:
~Date: Fri, 09 Mar 2007 14:44:09 -0400 . Status: Normal
From: josh8895@aol.com
Reply-to: josh8895@aol.com

default.htm

Marvin Krutchik:

I must tell you how wonderful and exciting it was to be in Beth Torah's Sanctuary on February 3, 2007. As the Executive Director, one of my main concerns regarding synagogue affiliation within the Conservative movement, is one of making potential members feel that they are part of our synagogue family. Unfortunately, due to the existing policy within this movement, all interfaith marriages cannot share in the joy and beauty of what we have to offer as the non- ~ Jewish spouse is "excluded"! from many of the life-cycle simchas that take place in one's life. ~

Therefore, it was heart-warming to listen to those non-Jewish spouses that spoke from our Bima on that day as they shared their views on why they chose to join and become involved with our synagogue family members. One can only hope that the policy-makers, in their inimitable wisdom, will see how changing this policy will allow the Conservative movement to move forward as we attempt to "grow and prosper".

Thank you and all those involved in the Keruv movement for continuing to pursue this avenue. Shabbat

Shalom.

Dr. Joel S. Goldman Executive Director
Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus

Original Message
From: krutchik@hotmail.com To: JOSH8895@aol.com
Sent: Thu, 8 Mar 2007 8:31 PM Subject: Keruv

Can you please email me your comments on the Keruv Shabbat held on Feb. 3. Thanks. Marvin

From the Rabbis' Desks:

Our Conservative movement has been tackling tough issues over the past few decades – i.e. role and status of women; gays and lesbians and intermarried families. We wanted to write this month about the issue of intermarried families as our synagogue has become more actively involved with the national 'keruv' program established by the Men's Club of our movement. The word Keruv in Hebrew means 'bringing close'. The goal is to bring close to the synagogue, Judaism and the Jewish people those intermarried families in our midst who are open to raising their children as Jews but where the non-Jewish spouse has decided at least for now not to convert. It has become clear that in an open society like ours in America that such families are not only numerous but can be expected to even increase in numbers. For years we have seen intermarried families raise their children as Jews and often it was in an environment that was not all that welcoming. Our movement recognizes that such families can indeed be brought close to our people through the synagogue and that their children can be given a strong Jewish identity and strong Jewish ties.

There are different approaches in the Jewish world to such families.

- On the far right we have movements which actually believe that the 'neshama' (soul) of a gentile is inferior to that of a Jew and that Jewish law teaches that Jews cannot violate the Shabbat to save the life of a Gentile. We obviously do not accept such teachings because they violate the Spirit of Judaism and it is why we are not part of the far right of our Jewish community
- On the far left we have the patrilineal position which says that a child born to a non-Jewish woman and a Jewish father is considered Jewish even without the benefit of conversion. We do not accept such position because it violates the spirit of the Jewish Law of the last 2000 years and creates a serious schism in our Jewish community.

A third position is to accept the children that are brought to us from such marriages and give them a Jewish education and all that comes with that (Bar/Bat Mitzvah; participation in the youth groups). But the family is given a very low profile in the community and the non-Jewish spouse is given no role even at key life-cycle occasions for the child.

- Another approach is to accept the families and give the gentile parent a role at such life cycle occasions but not to reach out to such families in a public way. In other words they are welcome but we don't seek them out or create special programs to attract them and make them feel more welcome.

The approach taken by Keruv is to not only welcome them but to actively seek to bring them in and integrate them into the life of the synagogue. The gentile spouse would participate in most of congregational life if he/she chose to with the exception of the actual Jewish rituals of the synagogue. On the left of the spectrum we have not only outreach but full integration of the non-Jewish spouse into the community even allowing he/she to participate in the religious ritual of the congregation and have membership in the synagogue.

The approach we have taken over the last few years at Beth Torah is that of Keruv. With the help of the Men's Club we have established a Keruv program which reaches out to such families in an active way to bring them closer to Jewish life and to integrate their families in the life of the congregation. They have roles to play in the life-cycle of their children but they do not participate in the actual Jewish ritual of the religious services. Non Jewish parents who have brought their children to become Bar/Bat Mitzvah do participate in this important life cycle moment but they do not participate the same way a Jewish parent would (i.e. in the actual religious ritual of the service). We have also established a Keruv Shabbat where we honor and thank these families who have chosen to raise their children exclusively as Jews (we don't encourage or participate with a family that chooses to raise a child in two religions). It is important that people know that many such families exist and that should a child of theirs intermarry they should work towards having the grandchildren raised as Jews. This goal is much more attainable when the synagogue becomes a partner in encouraging the intermarried couple in their endeavor to raise their children as Jewish rather than do it with obvious reluctance or hesitation.

It can be argued that such a program in actuality encourages intermarriage. The argument we believe is not a strong one and is not born out by the facts. For two generations religious leaders spoke openly against intermarriage and the Jewish community shunned in many ways the intermarried family. That did nothing to decrease intermarriage rates which rose dramatically during that period. All it did was distance such couples from the Jewish community and reduced the possibilities of the family deciding to raise the children as Jews. In an open society people will choose their own paths and lectures or public policies that put such couples in the 'closet' will not

work. In an open society the best approach is to teach the ideal which is - Jews marrying Jews - but to make sure that we don't push away the ones who choose a different path. Instead, we need to make them aware that there are other choices should they intermarry other than leaving the Jewish community and taking their children with them.

We have been much more open about conversion than ever before and the conversion rate is up. We have been much more open about bringing in intermarried families who want to raise their children as Jews and as a result more and more of those families are identifying with the Jewish community and raising their children as Jews. This is important and good for the Jewish community. The Keruv program has great potential for growing our Jewish community and saving many Jewish families from the heartbreak of seeing grandchildren with no Jewish education or affiliation.

Kol Hakavod – Congratulation to our Men's Club for spearheading this Keruv effort.

Rabbi Ed Farber

Rabbi Mario Rojzman