

WHO IS A JEW?

THE FUTURE (AND PAST) OF JEWISH IDENTITY



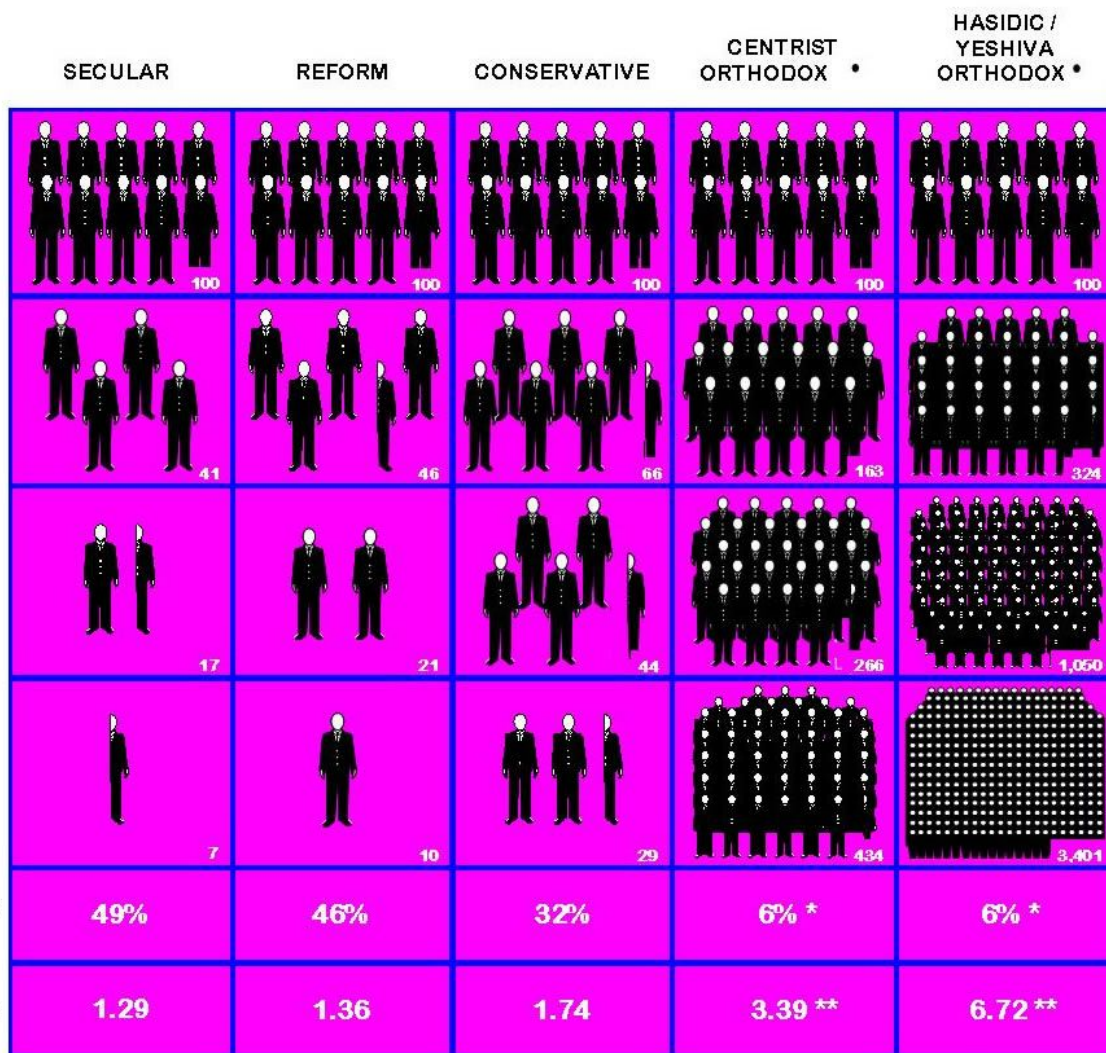
A. Two Faiths - One Home

1. Nechemiah Chapter 13 - History Repeats Itself!

<p>23 Also in those days, I saw the Jews who had married Ashdodite, Ammonite, and Moabite women.</p>	<p>כג גם בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם רָאִיתִי אֶת הַיְהוּדִים הַשִּׁיבוּ נָשִׁים אֲשֶׁדּוּדִיּוֹת (כְּתִיב אֲשֶׁדּוּדִיּוֹת) עַמּוֹנִיּוֹת (כְּתִיב עַמּוֹנִיּוֹת) מוֹאָבִיּוֹת:</p>
<p>24 And half their children were speaking Ashdodite, and they did not know how to speak Hebrew, and [so it was] with the language of every people.</p>	<p>כד וּבְנֵיהֶם חֲצֵי מְדַבְּרֵי אֲשֶׁדּוּדִית וְאֵינָם מְפִירִים לְדַבֵּר יְהוּדִית וְכָל־שׂוֹן עִם וְעַם:</p>
<p>25 And I quarreled with them, and I cursed them, and I struck some of them, and I plucked out their hair, and I made them swear by God, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters either for your sons or for yourselves.</p>	<p>כה וְאָרִיב עִמָּם וְאֶקְלָלֵם וְאֶפָּה מֵהֶם אַנְשִׁים וְאֶמְרֹטֵם וְאֶשְׁבִּיעֵם בְּאֱלֹהִים אִם תִּתְּנוּ בְּנֹתֵיכֶם לְבָנֵיהֶם וְאִם תִּשְׂאוּ מִבְּנֹתֵיהֶם לְבָנֵיכֶם וְלָכֶם:</p>
<p>26 Did not Solomon the king of Israel sin with these, although there was no king like him among the great nations, beloved by his God, Who appointed him king over all Israel? The foreign women caused even him to sin.</p>	<p>כו הֲלוֹא עַל אֱלֹהֵי חֲטָא שְׁלֹמֹה מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְגוֹיִם הַרְבִּיּוֹת לֹא הָיָה מֶלֶךְ כְּמֹהוּ וְאֶהוּב לְאֱלֹהָיו הָיָה וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ אֱלֹהִים מֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל גַּם אוֹתוֹ הִחֲטִיאוּ הַנָּשִׁים הַנִּכְרִיּוֹת:</p>
<p>27 Shall we then hearken to you to do all this great evil to betray our God to marry foreign women?"</p>	<p>כז וְלָכֶם הַנְּשָׁמַע לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל הָרָעָה הַגְּדוּלָה הַזֹּאת לְמַעַל בְּאֱלֹהֵינוּ לְהַשִּׁיב נָשִׁים נִכְרִיּוֹת:</p>
<p>28 And [one] of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the High Priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, and I drove him away from me.</p>	<p>כח וּמִבְּנֵי יוֹיָדָע בֶּן אֶלְיָשִׁיב הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל חָתָן לְסַנְבַּלֵּט הַחֹרֲנִי וְאֶבְרִיָּהוּ מֵעַלִּי:</p>

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN JEWRY

WILL YOUR GRANDCHILD BE JEWISH ? (REVISITED)



* Although there is no clear definition of 'Centrist Orthodox' or 'Hasidic - Yeshiva Orthodox', the main distinguishing factor relates to attitudes regarding formal secular studies, family size, and the type of day school children attend.

* The data pertaining to intermarriage rates for 'Centrist Orthodox' and 'Hasidic/Yeshiva Orthodox' extrapolated from study by Dr. Marvin Schick (2000 - see text of article)

** Based on study by Dr. Marvin Schick, January 2000 'A Census of Jewish Day Schools in The United States' (published by the Avi Chai Foundation 2003-2005)

Graphic design by Rachel Guidry

Based on current intermarriage rates and the average number of children per family, the chances of young, contemporary Jews having Jewish grandchildren and great-grandchildren, with the exception of the Orthodox, are increasingly remote.

This chart is part of an extensive research article conducted by Antony Gordon and Richard M. Horowitz (2003-2005). The chart and the accompanying research will be released as part of a symposium on 'The Future of American Jewry' at Harvard University in February, 2006. Reproduction for any use whatsoever is strictly prohibited unless explicit written permission is given by Antony Gordon and Richard M. Horowitz. Please contact Antony Gordon at (323) 314-1898 or gordon18@aol.com

3. Devarim Chapter 7:1-4 - They Will Lead You Astray

<p>When the Lord, your God, will bring you to the land to which you are coming to possess, He shall cast out many nations before you – the Hittite, Girgashite, Amorite, Canaanite, Perizite, Hivite and Jebusite – seven nations more numerous and powerful than you... You shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughter to their son, and you shall not take their daughter for your son, for he will turn your son away from Me, and they will worship other gods. Then Hashem's wrath will burn against you, and He will destroy you speedily.</p>	<p>כי יביאך יקוק אלהיך אל הארץ אשר אתה בא שמה לרשתה ונשל גוים רבים מפניך החתי והגרגשי והאמרי והכנעני והפרזי והחוי והיבوسی שבעה גוים רבים ועצומים ממך: ונתנם יקוק אלהיך לפניך והכיתם החרם תחרים אתם לא תכרת להם ברית ולא תחנם: ולא תתחתן במ בתך לא תתן לבנו ובתו לא תקח לבנך: כי יסיר את בנך מאחרי ועבדו אלהים אחרים וחרה אף יקוק בכם והשמידך מהר:</p>
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4. Rambam, Mishnah Torah, Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah 12:1 - All Non-Jews

<p>This prohibition of intermarriage applies to all non-Jews, as was made explicit by Ezra, who said, "We should not give our daughters to the peoples of the land, nor should we take their daughters for our sons."</p>	<p>אחד שבעה עממין ואחד כל האומות באיסור זה, וכן מפורש על ידי עזרא ואשר לא נתן בנותינו לעמי הארץ ואת בנותיהם לא נקח לבנינו.</p>
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5. Sefer HaChinuch Mitzva 427 - Always Listen to Your Wife!

<p>Amongst the reasons behind this mitzvah lies the observation that most people are unquestioningly drawn after the advice of their wives. If a man marries the daughter of an idolater, he too will be drawn into idol worship. Furthermore, she will also raise his children to be idolaters, and woe upon he who allows his legacy to become defiled.</p>	<p>משרשי המצוה, לפי שרוב העם דרך טפשות ימשכו אחר עצת נשותיהם, ואם ישא אדם בת אל נכר תמשכהו לעבוד עבודה זרה, ועוד כי גם בניה ממנו תגדל לעבודה זרה, ואוי לו לפוסל את זרעו.</p>
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B. Matrilineal Descent

1. Bereishit Chapter 21 - Ishmael Son of Hagar, Seed of Avraham

<p>13 But also the son of the handmaid I will make into a nation, because he is your seed."</p>	<p>יג וגם את בן האמה לגוי אשימנו כי זרעך הוא:</p>
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2. Talmud Bavli Kiddushin 68b - Son of (Wo)man

<p>"Your daughter you shall not give to his son...for he will turn away your son from following Me" (Deuteronomy 7:3–4). Since the verse is concerned that after one's daughter marries a gentile, the father will lead his children away from the service of God, this indicates that your son, i.e., your grandson, from a Jewish woman is called "your son" by the Torah, but your son from a gentile woman is not called your son, but her son.</p>	<p>קרא (דברים ז, ד) כי יסיר את בנך מאחרי בנך הבא מישראלית קרוי בנך ואין בנך הבא מן העובדת כוכבים קרוי בנך אלא בנה</p>
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3. Rambam Mishna Torah Laws of Forbidden Relationships 15:4 - Matrilineal Descent

<p>This is the general principle: When a child is born from a servant, a gentile, a maid-servant, or a female gentile, he is like his mother. We are not concerned with the father.</p>	<p>זה הכלל בן הבא מן העבד או מן העכו"ם או מן השפחה או מן בת עכו"ם הרי הוא כאמו ואין משגיחין על האב</p>
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C. A Third Approach

1. Nechemiah Chapter 10:31 - Eyes on the Future

<p>31 And that we shall not give our daughters to the peoples of the land, and we shall not take their daughters for our sons.</p>	<p>לא ואֲשֶׁר לֹא נָתַן בְּנֹתֵינוּ לְעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ וְאֵת בְּנֹתֵיהֶם לֹא נִקַּח לְבָנֵינוּ:</p>
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D. "Gerim" in a Strange Land

1. Talmud Bavli Yevamot 47b - Process of Conversion

<p>The Sages taught in a baraita: With regard to a potential convert who comes to a court in order to convert, at the present time, when the Jews are in exile, the judges of the court say to him: What did you see that motivated you to come to convert? Don't you know that the Jewish people at the present time are anguished, suppressed, despised, and harassed, and hardships are frequently visited upon them? If he says: I know, and although I am unworthy of joining the Jewish people and sharing in their sorrow, I nevertheless desire to do so, then the court accepts him immediately to begin the conversion process. And the judges of the court inform him of some of the lenient mitzvot and some of the stringent mitzvot... And they inform him of the punishment for transgressing the mitzvot, as follows: They say to him: Be aware that before you came to this status and converted...had you profaned Shabbat, you would not be punished by stoning...But now, once converted...if you have profaned Shabbat, you are punished by stoning. And just as they inform him about the punishment for transgressing the mitzvot, so too, they inform him about the reward granted for fulfilling them...And they do not overwhelm him with threats, and they are not exacting with him about the details of the mitzvot.</p>	<p>גר שבא להתגייר בזמן הזה אומרים לו מה ראית שבאת להתגייר אי אתה יודע שישראל בזמן הזה דוויים דחופים סחופים ומטורפין ויסורין באין עליהם אם אומר יודע אני ואיני כדאי מקבלין אותו מיד ומודיעין אותו מקצת מצות קלות ומקצת מצות חמורות ומודיעין אותו עון לקט שכחה ופאה ומעשר עני ומודיעין אותו עונשן של מצות אומרים לו הוי יודע שעד שלא באת למדה זו אכלת חלב אי אתה ענוש כרת חללת שבת אי אתה ענוש סקילה ועכשיו אכלת חלב ענוש כרת חללת שבת ענוש סקילה וכשם שמודיעין אותו עונשן של מצות כך מודיעין אותו מתן שכרן אומרים לו הוי יודע שהעולם הבא אינו עשוי אלא לצדיקים וישראל בזמן הזה אינם יכולים לקבל לא רוב טובה ולא רוב פורענות ואין מרבין עליו ואין מדקדקין עליו</p>
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2. Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 268:3 - Triple Play

<p>All matters pertaining to a proselyte - informing him of the <i>mitzvot</i></p>	<p>כָּל עֲנִיני הגֵר, בֵּין</p>
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<p>that he may accept them, circumcision, as well as immersion – must be [performed] in the presence of three who are fit to judge and during the day. This, however, is only <i>lekhatchila</i>, but <i>bedi'aved</i>, if [the proselyte] underwent circumcision or immersion in the presence of two or at night... he is a [valid] proselyte and may marry a Jewess. This is with the exception of accepting the <i>mitzvot</i>, which invalidates the conversion if not performed during the day and in the presence of three [judges].</p>	<p>להודיעו המצוות לקבלם בין המילה בין הטבילה, צריך שיהיו בג' הפשרים לדון, וביום. מיהו דוקא לכתחלה, אבל בדיעבד אם לא מל או טבל אלא בפני ב' ובילה...הוי גר ומתיר בישראלית, חוץ מקבלת המצוות שמעפפת אם אינה ביום ובשלשה.</p>
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3. Talmud Bavli Yevamot 24b - Ulterior Motives

<p>Both a man who converted for the sake of a woman and a woman who converted for the sake of a man, and similarly, one who converted for the sake of the king's table, so that he could serve in a prestigious capacity, or for the sake of Solomon's servants, who were also considered prestigious, in all of these cases they are not converts; this is the statement of Rabbi Neḥemya.</p>	<p>אחד איש שנתגייר לשום אשה ואחד אשה שנתגיירה לשום איש וכן מי שנתגייר לשום שולחן מלכים לשום עבדי שלמה אינן גרים דברי ר' נחמיה</p>
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4. Conversion Standards as of April 2007 for RCA & BDA

<p>1. Overall Intent of Process - It is assumed that a candidate for conversion should be motivated by a sincere desire to embrace both the people of Israel and the faith and practices of Judaism. The process set out here is intended to confirm this motivation in a dignified, thorough manner. The goal is not to exclude people, but rather to set approved and appropriate standards. We must be able to ascertain to the extent possible that the candidate is sincere, understands what is involved in conversion itself, and what conversion will require in terms of personal growth and transformation, in both religious and communal involvement.</p> <p>2. The Decision to Convert - If and when the Beit Din is satisfied that the candidate has acquired sufficient knowledge to live as a mitzvah observant Jew, can be relied upon to live up to the commitments of the yoke of mitzvot, and identifies with the Jewish people and its destiny, it will agree to proceed with the actual conversion procedures.</p>
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E. Compassion & Teaching Values!

1. Sefer HaChinuch Mitzva 431 - Walk a Mile in Their Shoes...

<p>“We were commanded to love converts, and we are not to make them suffer about anything whatsoever. Instead, we should do good for them and treat them with loving kindness...It is for us to learn from this precious mitzvah to</p>	<p>מצות אהבת הגרים - שנצטוינו לאהב הגרים, כלומר, שנזהר שלא לצער אותם, בשום דבר, אבל נעשה להם טובה ונגמל אותם חסד...ויש לנו ללמד מן</p>
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have compassion on any human being who is in a town or city that is not his birthplace and the place of his family's ancestors...Scripture alludes to the reason for this mandate by stating, 'for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.' It therefore reminds us that long ago we were scorched by that great pain that comes upon every person who sees himself among a strange people in a strange land. Remembering, then, the great anxiety of the heart that the matter entails, which we experienced in the past until Hashem in His lovingkindness took us out of there, we will be moved to have compassion for every human being who is so situated.

המצוה היקרה הזאת לרחם על אדם
שהוא בעיר שאינה ארץ מולדתו ומקום
משפחות אבותיו...והכתוב רמז טעם
הצווי באמרו כי גרים הייתם בארץ
מצרים, הזכיר לנו שכבר נכוינו בצער
הגדול הזה שיש לכל איש הרואה את
עצמו בתוך אנשים זרים ובארץ נכריה,
ובזכרנו גדל דאגת הלב שיש בדבר, וכי
כבר עבר עלינו, והשם בחסדיו הוציאנו
משם יכמרו רחמינו על כל אדם שהוא
כן.