

## **Submission to USCJ and RA Joint Working Group on Interfaith**

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December 22, 2024

I am honored to have been asked to submit a paper at the request of the USCJ and RA Joint Working Group on Interfaith.

I hope that this paper will be helpful to the Working Group as it focuses on methods and best practices for engaging intermarrying couples, gaining a deeper understanding of their needs, and understanding the impact (positive and negative) of current policies and practices.

However, I have publicly advocated for the full inclusion of interfaith families in Jewish communities – which means considering and treating partners from different faith backgrounds as equal – which I believe is essential for interfaith families to engage Jewishly on a widescale basis. I realize that the Conservative movement’s evolving approach to engaging interfaith families is far from full inclusion, which I further realize is inconsistent with current understandings of halakhah. So I understand that what I have to offer may not be helpful to the Working Group, though I hope it will be.

Section I of the paper explains the theoretical framework that supports full inclusion. Section II considers the “almost but not quite full inclusion” approach taken by many mainstream Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis, that the Conservative movement may be approaching and could adopt. Section III addresses issues particular to the Conservative movement.

### **I. A Theoretical Framework for Full Inclusion<sup>1</sup>**

With a 72% rate of interfaith marriage among non-Orthodox Jews,<sup>2</sup> the future vitality of liberal (non-Orthodox) Judaism depends on engaging increasing numbers of interfaith families in Jewish life and community.

But interfaith families are relatively less Jewishly engaged, as for example the 2019 [\*Beyond Welcoming\*](#) study by the Cohen Center confirms.<sup>3</sup> As just one example, the 2013 Pew Report found that 55% of non-Orthodox Jews whose spouses are Jewish are members of a synagogue, compared to 14% of non-Orthodox Jews whose spouses are not Jewish.<sup>4</sup>

There are two sets of reasons why interfaith couples don’t engage. One is that, for a variety of reasons, they don’t see the value proposition – how engaging Jewishly can add meaning to their lives, serve as a framework for raising grounded, compassionate children, and be a source of community and spiritual expression – or that the perceived benefits outweigh the costs. As the *Beyond Welcoming* study found, the Jewish partners had less exposure to Jewish life growing up, and the couples have little interest in religion; hence, proactive invitations and access points that spark curiosity and enthusiasm about Jewish engagement are needed.

My focus is on the second set of reasons: the challenge that interfaith couples, and in particular the partners from different faith traditions, face in feeling welcomed and included – feeling that they belong – in Jewish groups, organizations and communities.

### **A. The Need for Inclusion of Interfaith Couples and Partners from Different Faith Backgrounds**

The *Beyond Welcoming* study declared that we have succeeded “in making intermarried families feel welcome” – a premature declaration of victory, in my view.<sup>5</sup> The study itself notes that interfaith couples who did not feel completely welcome “emphasized their feelings of being ‘other’ and not fitting in.” A companion study, [\*We’ll Cross That Bridge When We Come To It\*](#), reported that “In some cases, despite the initial welcome by a congregation, couples felt an undercurrent of disapproval or being treated as outsiders rather than as integral and valued members of the community.”<sup>6</sup>

The latter study draws an important distinction between welcoming and inclusion. Welcoming makes people feel that their presence as a guest is appreciated. Advocates for every other marginalized Jewish group, including LGBTQ people, people of color, and people with disabilities, all agree that inclusion – the feeling of belonging – is necessary to support engagement. Thus even if we have succeeded in making interfaith families feel welcome, welcoming by itself, while essential, is insufficient. Congregational consultant David Brubaker explains:

A hospitable congregation welcomes visitors ..., showing [them] that existing members are glad that they’ve come... [T]he visitor leaves feeling that his or her presence was truly appreciated.

Having been welcomed... offers no assurance that a visitor will also be fully included... [I]nclusion is a much deeper form of acceptance... [O]nly genuine inclusion will convince me to remain part of the community. I will stay if I feel I truly belong.<sup>7</sup>

Just like every other marginalized group, it stands to reason that interfaith couples and in particular partners from different faith backgrounds will not engage unless they are fully included – made to feel that they truly belong – in Jewish families, organizations and communities.

But unlike those other marginalized people, the partners from different faith backgrounds are by definition not Jewish.<sup>8</sup> How can people who are not Jews feel that they truly belong in Jewish communities?

That is the challenge of our time, to help make partners from different faith backgrounds feel that they belong. We need a new understanding of interfaith marriage, and adapted attitudes and policies, to enable them to feel that way.

### **B. The Traditional Theory Against Inclusion**

The foundation of Judaism is the covenant which is traditionally understood to be between God and the Jewish people. The Jews agree to do what God says – traditionally, follow all the commandments; now, in the more liberal movements, to undertake informed obligations to act in certain ways – and God will reward them. In the traditional view, Judaism is a system of and for Jews. Jews are a people and the Jewish people consists of people who have a fundamentally distinctive Jewish identity. Jews engage in certain behaviors and attitudes, and others do not. Jews feel connected to other Jews, and attachment to Israel. What matters is who is a Jew and who is not.

The focus on being Jewish and Jewish peoplehood is the source of the traditional norm that Jews should marry other Jews, and the source of the negative attitudes Jews have about intermarriage and partners from different faith backgrounds (along with prejudice that excluded and oppressed Jews for centuries).

Conversely, feeling belonging in Jewish communities is challenging to partners from different faith backgrounds who do not feel, or are told that they are not or cannot be, included in the Jewish people. If the Jewish people consists of people who are *in* – who identify as Jews – and if the partner is *out* or *other* – not a Jew – then the partner is not part of the Jewish people. If Judaism is a set of traditions for Jews, in which only Jewish people believe and/or do this and that, then the traditions are not for the partner.

### **C. A New Theory for Inclusion**

We need a new theory of interfaith marriage in which the covenant is understood to be between God and people who are Jewishly engaged. In this radically inclusive view, Judaism is a system in which Jews and others – including their partners from different faith backgrounds – can engage in Jewish life, and a Jewish community consists of those people who do so – some of whom are Jewish, and some of whom are not. What matters is the engaging itself, not whether the person engaging is a Jew or not; in the context of interfaith marriage, what matters is “doing,” not “being.”<sup>9</sup>

### **D. Conversion, Peoplehood and Identity**

Conversion is a neat “solution” to the challenge of inclusion. The partner from a different faith background can become Jewish, become “in,” part of the “us,” included in the Jewish people. Instead of our having to include those who want to do Jewish without being Jewish, we can just include those who are willing to become Jewish.

But if we are only willing to fully include those who convert, then far too many interfaith couples will continue to be disengaged. Conversion is a wonderful, personal, existential choice. It is important that those who might be interested in pursuing conversion know that paths are available to do so. But conversion is not appealing to many couples and partners from different faith backgrounds. The earlier and the more we suggest that we’d like them to convert, or they detect a hidden agenda that we privilege conversion, the less they will ever get involved in Jewish life in the first place.

Partners from different faith traditions who do not convert can be considered and feel part of the Jewish *group*. It helps to think of that group as a *community* rather than as a *people*. Partners from different faith traditions can feel bound to Jewish communities through loving relationships with their Jewish partners. They can feel proud of – and even love for – the history and the accomplishments of the Jewish community, without identifying as Jews themselves. Feeling part of or a member of the Jewish *community* is a more universal approach that appeals to those who are uncomfortable with tribalism, chosen-ness, and particularism.<sup>10</sup>

In a radically inclusive Judaism, identifying as a Jew remains important for Jews, both as an existential choice, and because identifying as a Jew motivates people to “do” Jewish. It may seem paradoxical, but identifying as Jews is important for the children of interfaith couples, for the same reasons. With respect to partners from different faith backgrounds, some may come to informally identify as partly Jewish, kind of Jewish, or Jew-*ish*; some may even decide to make that identification formal and convert. But how they end up identifying is incidental. It’s the feeling of belonging, of being included, that is critical, because feeling included will motivate their engagement in Jewish traditions.

Before my wife converted (after thirty years of marriage) she used to say, “I live Jewishly but I’m not a Jew.” In the traditional view, that doesn’t make any sense. We need a new understanding in which it makes perfect sense. Again, in the context of interfaith marriage, we need to prioritize doing Jewish over being/identifying as Jewish.

## **E. Making Theory Reality**

Inclusion theory posits that inclusion requires an adaptation of underlying attitudes towards those to be included, and adaptive change in the established system with which they engage.<sup>11</sup> In the context of interfaith marriage, full inclusion means *thinking of* as well as *treating* interfaith families as equal to inmarried families, and partners from different faith backgrounds as equal to Jews. Thinking of them as equal is a matter of culture; treating them as equal is a matter of policy.<sup>12</sup>

### **E. 1. Adapted Attitudes**

The traditional “us” vs. “other,” “in” vs. “out” view is the source of negative attitudes about intermarriage, interfaith families and partners from different faith backgrounds, that unfortunately continue to be expressed and discourage interfaith families from engaging.

Examples abound.<sup>13</sup> An editor at Newsweek recently said, about Doug Emhoff: “Every Jewish man marrying a non-Jewish woman gives Hitler a victory from the grave. Emhoff is no different.”<sup>14</sup> Messaging of the recent hit show “Nobody Wants This” suggests that liberal Jews do not want and are hostile to interfaith relationships, and that interfaith couples don’t raise Jewish children.<sup>15</sup>

Some off-putting expressions of attitudes are more subtle – including parents inquiring whether prospective dates or mates of their children are Jewish. Even expressing a preference that our children marry Jews delivers a message of disapproval to the 72% of them who will intermarry

anyway. Feeling disapproved of, devalued, thought of as sub-optimal, is not conducive to feeling belonging.

## E. 2. Adapted Policies and Practices

Inclusion theory also posits that inclusion requires adaptive change in the established system with which people engage.<sup>16</sup> Treating partners from different faith backgrounds as equals<sup>17</sup> implicates policy issues such as what ritual services will be provided to them, what leadership roles they may hold, and what ritual practices they may engage in and lead.

A 2019 survey to which half of all Reform synagogues responded showed that 88% had clergy who would officiate at weddings of interfaith couples, though only 22% had clergy who would co-officiate; that 43% allowed partners from different faith traditions to serve as board members and 24% as officers (but not necessarily as president); and that 70% allowed them to have or join in an Aliyah (but not necessarily say the words of the Torah blessings by themselves).<sup>18</sup> A key takeaway from these survey results is that many view conversion as a *condition* for inclusion: if you convert, you can hold any position and lead any prayer – otherwise you can't.

As noted above, conversion is a wonderful, personal, existential choice to formally identify as and become a Jew – to *be* Jewish. Encouraging partners from different faith backgrounds to *do* Jewish – to engage as fully as they desire in all aspects of Jewish life and community – should not be understood to denigrate or lessen conversion in any way. Instead of viewing conversion as a *condition* to inclusion, we should view conversion as a possible, incidental *outcome* of inclusion.

One thing should be clear: Inclusive policies lead to affiliation. As one example, far more interfaith couples who have only a rabbi officiate at their weddings are synagogue members (34%) than those who have other officiants (7%).<sup>19</sup>

## F. Messaging

Jewish organizations largely do not talk about engaging interfaith families. The Reform synagogue survey revealed that only 18% published their policies and practices on interfaith families' leadership roles and ritual participation. Jewish leaders who do talk about inclusion have moved from focusing on inclusion of LGBTQ people to Jews of Color – a very important but much smaller group than interfaith families. The leaders of Jewish organizations and the Jewish media are largely silent on the issue.

Many interfaith couples are not aware that their presence and participation is very much desired in Jewish organizations and communities. We could do much better communicating a message of welcome – and starting to build a feeling, among those that we want to and need to engage, that if they come, they can feel that they belong.

## II. Almost, But Not Quite Full Inclusion

Many Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis do not agree with a full inclusion/equal consideration and treatment approach. One of the country's most highly-regarded Reform rabbis told me she disagreed because the approach is too universalist and does not privilege conversion – if partners from different faith backgrounds were treated as equal, no one would convert.<sup>20</sup> Another senior Reform rabbi told me his approach was “almost but not quite full inclusion”:

I want my synagogue to be their spiritual home. I want them to participate in any aspect of worship and ritual with which they feel comfortable. If they like, wear a kippah and/or tallit, offer names during Mee Sheberakh, say Kaddish for those they are missing and, if they love to sing, join our choir. If they're invited to come up to the bimah, they are welcome to read in English or Hebrew, light candles, carry the Torah, read the Torah, and so much more. But to recite words that comprise a formal declaration of Jewishness (any “asher kidshanu” prayer or Torah blessings), no. So “full inclusion”? Almost, but not quite.

Another senior Reform rabbi (who also does not officiate at weddings of interfaith couples) told me, regarding the Torah blessings, that “words have meaning” and that the Torah blessings mean “I am a Jew.” Presumably many if not most Conservative rabbis feel the same way.<sup>21</sup>

But whether it is appropriate for a partner who is not Jewish to say “asher kidshanu” prayers or the Torah blessings depends entirely on what one understands the “us” to mean in prayers that thank God for commanding “us” and giving “us” the Torah. I argue that a partner from a different faith background, engaged in Jewish life in a synagogue community, raising children as Jews, could say, with perfect authenticity, that God commanded their family, and gave the Torah to their family, and they are part of their family, and thus part of the “us.” This is not sophistry, or playing with words insincerely, and I believe it is the way many interfaith couples actually think and behave.

Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis who privilege conversion and interpret the prayers to be statements of Jewish identity are expressing the traditional view that there are Jews and “others,” that Judaism is for Jews and not “others,” that what's important is *being* Jewish. They are maintaining boundaries between Jews and “others.” In the past, this made perfect sense. But again, in the context of widespread interfaith marriage today, those boundaries are counter-productive, because they discourage interfaith couples, and partners from different faith backgrounds, from engaging in Jewish life – from *doing* Jewish.

Boundaries may well be necessary to define social groups. But Judaism's boundaries could be around Jewish ideas and behaviors, not around who can engage in Jewish life. Again – a community of Jewishly-engaged people, some of whom are Jews, and some of whom are not.

Rabbis who take the “almost but not quite” approach are basically saying that being welcoming and loving, and explaining their rules and boundaries compassionately, are sufficient to attract and retain interfaith families, that that approach is good enough, as far as we can go; and that if a partner from a different faith background wants full inclusion, they can convert. There certainly are interfaith families who are willing to engage under these terms. But I argue that many interfaith families do not and will not engage in a system which thinks of and treats them as less

than equal. They understand the logic behind rules which make any Jewish practice not available to partners from different faith backgrounds as necessarily implying disapproval of interfaith relationships.

### **III. The Conservative Movement**

It appears to me that the Conservative movement is moving towards the “almost but not quite” approach taken by many mainstream Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis, with perhaps more rituals considered inappropriate for partners from different faith backgrounds.

I applaud the effort to “replace the legacy of disapproval” stated in the Rabbinical Assembly’s Standards Working Group Report 2024.<sup>22</sup> The movement cannot successfully engage interfaith families if it communicates a message of disapproval of interfaith marriage. People will not go where their relationship is viewed negatively.

I applaud the Working Group’s focus on methods and best practices for engaging intermarrying couples. The theoretical framework for full inclusion suggests that any policy or practice be evaluated by whether it will contribute to interfaith families feeling that they are a welcomed and valued part of the community. The more participation in ritual that is permitted and encouraged, and explained as what they can do as opposed to as what they cannot, the better. It does seem that the movement is on a path towards being as welcoming and inclusive as it can be, consistent with its rules.

I am not as current on Reform and Reconstructionist practices as I once was, that might be helpful to the movement. But the movement is fortunate to have Keren McGinity’s expertise available, and the people at 18Doors are also well-equipped to be helpful looking at specific practices.

Obviously the big difference between Conservative, and Reform and Reconstructionist approaches, relates to halakhah. I am not a rabbi and not an expert on halakhah, and thus not equipped to respond to the Working Group’s question about what halakah tells us about this moment. But I feel compelled to say that the movement’s policies with respect to matrilineal descent and wedding officiation seriously hamper its efforts to engage interfaith families.

Matrilineal descent says to an interfaith family where the mother is not Jewish that their child has to convert in order to attend religious school and become bar or bat mitzvah. There certainly are interfaith families willing to engage under those terms; but many will not. Matrilineal descent amounts to a statement of disapproval of interfaith relationships, at least where the mother is not Jewish.

Banning Conservative rabbis from officiating at weddings of interfaith couples is an albatross around the neck of the movement’s efforts to engage interfaith couples. As Arnold Eisen recently said in an interview about his new book, “if you can’t have a Conservative rabbi [officiate] your wedding and you’re intermarried or the child of an intermarriage, you’re not going to say, ‘I’m a Conservative Jew.’”<sup>23</sup> No matter how lovingly it is explained, Conservative rabbis’ inability to officiate amounts to a statement of disapproval of interfaith relationships.

I have read the Women and Mitzvot responsum and the HOMOSEXUALITY, HUMAN DIGNITY & HALAKHAH responsum.<sup>24</sup> Again, I claim no expertise on halakhah. But I read that “the principle of *יִסְתַּנּוּ הַזְּמַנִּים* (nishtanu ha-zemanim) or *וְיִשְׁנֻנוּ הָאִיִּתִּים* (shinnui ha-ittim), ‘times have changed,’ has inspired significant change in halakhah.” I read that with respect to the involvement of women in religious life, “The halakhah has recognized that when social customs change significantly, the new social reality requires a reappraisal of halakhic practices.” I read that gay and lesbian Jews are to be welcomed as full members with no restrictions and welcomed to be ordained because your tradition mandates that “rabbis in every generation apply Jewish law sensitively and effectively to the new circumstances of their time.”

Surely times have changed and widespread interfaith marriage with many interfaith families interested and potentially interested in living Jewishly is a new social reality.

Noah Feldman, in *To Be a Jew Today*,<sup>25</sup> says that some modern Orthodox rabbis are increasingly accommodating gay partnerships by developing partnership contracts for them and officiating at their marriages. He says this represents evolution of halacha to correspond to new moral positions. Currently, he says, these rabbis don’t see interfaith marriage as comparable, on the argument that being gay is not a choice, while marrying someone who is not Jewish is. But Feldman says this doesn’t fully take into account modern understandings “according to which a couple who fall in love cannot in good conscience do other than marry each other.... They are in love, they have chosen one another, and Jewish law, as traditionally interpreted, stands in the way of their union.”

The Standards Working Group Report indicates that it has asked the CJLS questions about the halakhah behind the officiation ban, and notes that the movement “has allowed for other marriage ceremonies which lie outside the bounds of traditional kiddushin.” I hope that the movement finds a way for its rabbis to officiate – as that term is commonly understood – at weddings of interfaith couples.

I applaud your efforts to be more inclusive, and wish you success in better engaging interfaith families.



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<sup>1</sup> Section I of this paper is slightly adapted from my essay, “A New Theory of Interfaith Marriage” (2020), published in the Reconstructionist online journal *Evolve*, <https://evolve.reconstructingjudaism.org/new-theory-of-intermarriage/>.

<sup>2</sup> The 72% figure is based on data underlying Pew Research Center, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center’s Religions and Public Life Project, 2013), <https://www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/search-results/study/715> and is stated explicitly in Alan Cooperman and Gregory A. Smith, What Happens When Jews Intermarry, Pew Research Center, November 12, 2013, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/11/12/what-happens-when-jews-intermarry/>. Cooperman is the principal author of what is commonly referred to at The Pew Report.

<sup>3</sup> Michelle Shain et al, *Beyond Welcoming: Engaging Intermarried Couples in Jewish Life* (Waltham: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2019), <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/noteworthy/couples.html>; see also Janet Krasner Aronson et al, *2018-2019 Greater Denver Jewish Community Study* ((Waltham: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2020), [https://bir.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/37152/denver\\_boulder\\_comm\\_study01132020.pdf](https://bir.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/37152/denver_boulder_comm_study01132020.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Pew Research Center, *A Portrait of Jewish Americans* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center’s Religions and Public Life Project, 2013), <https://www.jewishdatabank.org/databank/search-results/study/715>, 48, 60; private communication with Alan Cooperman, principal author, as to non-Orthodox figures.

<sup>5</sup> Michelle Shain et al, *Beyond Welcoming: Engaging Intermarried Couples in Jewish Life* (Waltham: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2019), <https://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/noteworthy/couples.html>.

There is much to celebrate in the *Beyond Welcoming* study’s results. The majority of young intermarried couples said they felt welcome in the Jewish community: among interfaith couples, 33% of the Jewish partners and 42% of the partners from different faith backgrounds feel completely welcome in Jewish settings without qualification, compared to 62% of inmarried couples. In addition, “Most Jewish parents were very accepting of their children’s non-Jewish partners, as were most non-Jewish parents of their children’s Jewish partners.” Also, “In premarital discussions about what role religion would play in their future household, most Jewish+non-Jewish couples agreed on most issues and did not feel they made a lot of compromises.”

The study also reports that only 3% of interfaith couples “sought out a rabbi or cantor but were unable [to] find one who would agree to officiate” – but 49% never considered having a Jewish officiant, and another 17% considered it but didn’t contact one. Of course, some of those couples had no interest in having a Jewish officiant. But how many didn’t consider it, or didn’t contact one, because they anticipated rejection? See also Edmund Case, “Beyond Welcoming? Not So Fast,” (2019), <https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/beyond-welcoming-not-so-fast/> (accessed September 11, 2019).

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<sup>6</sup> Fern Chertok et al, *We'll Cross That Bridge When We Come To It* (Waltham: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2019), [https://bir.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/36953/interfaith\\_needs\\_boston080619.pdf](https://bir.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/36953/interfaith_needs_boston080619.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> David Brubaker, "Beyond Hospitality to Inclusion," 2017, <http://www.congregationalconsulting.org/beyond-hospitality-inclusion/> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> The Reform movement's resolutions concerning LGBTQ and transgender/gender non-conforming people, and people with disabilities, recognize the distinction between welcoming and "full integration," "full equality" and "inclusion." "[T]o integrate fully all Jews into the life of the community regardless of sexual orientation," Resolution, Civil Marriage for Gay and Lesbian Jewish Couples, 1997 <https://urj.org/what-we-believe/resolutions/civil-marriage-gay-and-lesbian-jewish-couples>, (accessed July 17, 2019); "[W]elcoming communities of meaningful inclusion, enabling and encouraging people with disabilities and their families to participate fully in Jewish life in a way that promotes a sense of personal belonging for all individuals," Resolution, Resolution in Support of Access to Lifelong Jewish Learning for Jews with Disabilities, 2011 <https://urj.org/what-we-believe/resolutions/resolution-support-access-lifelong-jewish-learning-jews-disabilities>, (accessed July 17, 2019); "[C]ommitment to the full equality, inclusion and acceptance of people of all gender identities and gender expressions," Resolution, Resolution on the Rights of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People, 2015 <https://urj.org/what-we-believe/resolutions/resolution-rights-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-people>, (accessed July 17, 2019). But the movement's resolutions on interfaith marriage commit only to welcoming interfaith families and partners from different faith backgrounds, while also encouraging conversion. Resolution, The Unfinished Outreach Revolution, 2005 <https://urj.org/what-we-believe/resolutions/unfinished-outreach-revolution> (accessed July 17, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> There is support for this view in the Torah. Leviticus 19:34 suggests that the *gerim toshavim* (sojourners that sojourn with you, Fox translation) were included among the people who entered into God's covenant: "You stand this day, all of you, . . . every man, woman, and child of Israel; and the stranger in the midst of your camp; . . . to enter into the covenant of Adonai your God, . . . to establish you as God's people" (Deuteronomy 29:9–12). Elsewhere the Torah refers to *kol adat b'nai yisrael* – translated by Fox as "the entire community of the children of Israel" (Leviticus 19:2).

<sup>10</sup> Critics of interfaith marriage want socially exclusivist, Jewish ethnic groupiness back, at a time when identities are fluid and "life in an open society means that group boundaries are weakened and transgressed." Contemporary Jews disfavor notions that Jews are special, or require exclusivity or separation from others. Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family and Community in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 130.

<sup>11</sup> David Brubaker, "Beyond Hospitality to Inclusion," 2017, <http://www.congregationalconsulting.org/beyond-hospitality-inclusion/> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Full inclusion is consistent with the bedrock principles that "You shall love the stranger as yourself" (Leviticus 19:34) – the ultimate expression of inclusive attitudes – as well as with "You and the stranger shall be alike before the Lord; the same ritual and the same rule shall

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apply to you and to the stranger who resides among you” (Numbers 15:15–16) – the ultimate expression of inclusive policies and practices.

<sup>13</sup> See Edmund Case, *Radical Inclusion: Engaging Interfaith Families for a Thriving Jewish Future* (Newton: Center for Radically Inclusive Judaism, 2019), Chapter 13.

<sup>14</sup> Baruch Green, “Doug Emhoff says Non-Jewish Kamala connects him to his Jewish faith” (2024), <https://vinnews.com/2024/08/22/doug-emhoff-says-non-jewish-kamala-connects-him-to-his-jewish-faith/>.

<sup>15</sup> Edmund Case, “What ‘Nobody Wants This’ gets wrong about interfaith relationships today,” (2024), <https://forward.com/opinion/664138/netflix-nobody-wants-this-interfaith-relationships/>.

<sup>16</sup> Brubaker explains: “Hospitality requires no adaptation on the part of the congregation. (Friendliness and welcoming, yes, but no deep change.) Inclusion is quite different. When a congregation begins to integrate people from a racial group or socio-economic status different from its own dominant culture, it usually must adapt its way of being to be genuinely inclusive. Modes of worship may need to broaden. Methods of decision-making may need to change. And interaction patterns among members may need to evolve... New ideas will stretch the prevailing doctrines and new energies will stress the existing systems.” David Brubaker, “Beyond Hospitality to Inclusion,” 2017, <http://www.congregationalconsulting.org/beyond-hospitality-inclusion/> (accessed September 11, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that the full inclusion framework calling for partners from different faith backgrounds to be treated equally is about partners from different faith backgrounds who want to be fully included, to be treated equally. It does not call for partners from different faith backgrounds to do anything they are not comfortable doing or feel it would be inappropriate for them to do.

<sup>18</sup> Center for Radically Inclusive Judaism, *Survey on Reform Synagogue Interfaith Inclusion Policies and Practices* (2019), <http://www.cfrij.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/URJ-Survey-Report.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Leonard Saxe et al., *Under the Chuppah: Rabbinic Officiation and Intermarriage* (Waltham: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, 2016), <http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/pdfs/jewish%20futures/RabbinicOfficiation102616.pdf>, 11.

<sup>20</sup> This and the following rabbis’ statements were in private conversations and emails.

<sup>21</sup> I believe that Rabbi Brusso has described the Torah blessings as a “Jewish faith statement” that is not appropriate for partners from different faith backgrounds to say. JTS, “Rabbi, Will You Do Our Wedding? New Approaches to Working With Interfaith Couples,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0IMLT4eWAA&t=5s>

<sup>22</sup> Rabbinical Assembly, *RA Standards Working Group Report 2024*, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/page/ra-standards-working-group-report-2024>.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Silow-Carroll, *Allergic to ‘God-talk’? The former head of a rabbinical seminary wants a word*, <https://www.jta.org/2024/11/24/ideas/allergic-to-god-talk-the-former-head-of-a-rabbinical-seminary-wants-a-word>

<sup>24</sup> Rabbinical Assembly, *Women and Mitzvot*, 2014, <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/2011-2020/womenandhiyyuvfinal.pdf>; Rabbinical Assembly, *HOMOSEXUALITY, HUMAN DIGNITY & HALAKHAH: A COMBINED RESPONSUM FOR THE COMMITTEE ON JEWISH LAW AND STANDARDS*, 2006,

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[https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20052010/dorff\\_nevins\\_reisner\\_dignity.pdf](https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20052010/dorff_nevins_reisner_dignity.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Noah Feldman, *To Be a Jew Today* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2024), at 369-371.