RABBI BROWN’S EXPLORATION OF THE QUESTION AS TO WHETHER ~~RABBIS~~ HE SHOULD OFFICIATE AT INTERFAITH WEDDING CEREMONIES: SELECTED REFERENCES FROM TODAY’S PRESENTATION

Session 1 of 3: Can/Should Jewish Law Change Over Time?

Session 2: Interfaith Marriage in Jewish History: Ancient, Medieval, and (an emphasis on) Modern, 2/10/13

Session 3: The Role of Those Who Are Not Jewish In Jewish Ritual, 4/21/13

* *Rabbis Talk About Intermarriage* by Gary Tobin and Katherine Simon (1999)
* According to the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey, the most recent attempt by the American Jewish community to comprehensively measure trends connected to Jewish life, only 28% of American Jews light Shabbat candles on a regular basis. <http://bit.ly/13aHOV9>
* “In the highly individualistic contemporary world, a detemporalization and despatialization of Jewish observances enables religious Jewishness to be fashioned by each Jewish person according to her or his lifestyle and needs. When religious observances are shaped by individual Jews as an expression of their personal rhythms we are no longer confronted with the devastating problem of arrhythmic and impotent Jewish observances owing to disharmony with their existential contexts.” **From** **“Two Concepts of Shabbat: The State-of-Being Shabbat and the Seventh-Day Shabbat” by Rabbi Alvin Reines. *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Fall 1987, p. 27.**
* On the question of the Reform Movement’s admittance of a synagogue that describes itself as Humanistic: “In view of these statements we find [the] Congregation's system of beliefs to be outside the realm of historical Reform Judaism. But should we not open the gates wide enough to admit even such concepts into our fold? Are not diversity and inclusiveness a hallmark of Reform? To this we would reply: *yesh gevul*, there are limits. *Reform Judaism cannot be everything, or it will be nothing.*The argument that we ourselves are excluded by the Orthodox and therefore should not keep others out who wish to join us, has an attractive sound to it. Taken to its inevitable conclusion, however, we would end up with a Reform Judaism in which "Reform" determines what "Judaism" is and not the other way around. […] In sum, we hold that the Congregation, as presently constituted, breaks the mold of Reform Judaism and does not have a place among the Union's congregations. **From the CCAR Responsum “Humanistic Congregation” issued in the Jewish Year 5751 [1990-1991],** [**http://bit.ly/VGc712**](http://bit.ly/VGc712)
* *Evoloving Halakhah: A Progressive Approach to Traditional Jewish Law* by Moshe Zemer (1999)
	+ Our Tradition’s List of Circumstances Justifying Jewish Legal Change/Evolution (acc to Zemer, pp. 4-16):
		- On the basis of morality
		- On the basis of human dignity
		- On the basis of genuine emergencies
		- To alleviate suffering
		- To prevent enmity between people
		- To promote peace
* “The need for a feminist Judaism begins with hearing silence. It begins with noting the absence of women’s history and experiences as shaping forces in the Jewish tradition. Half of Jews have been women, but men have been defined as normative Jews, while women’s voices and experiences are largely invisible in the record of Jewish belief and experience that has come down to us. Women have lived Jewish history and carried its burdens, but women’s perceptions and questions have not given form to scripture, shaped the direction of Jewish law, or found expression in liturgy. Confronting this silence raises disturbing questions and stirs the impulse toward far-reaching change. What in the tradition is ours? What can we claim that has not also wounded us? What would have been different had the great silence been filled?” **From *Standing Again at Sinai* by Judith Plaskow (1990), p. 1**
* “It is better for a person to eat the gravy, rather than the fat [or meat] itself.” **Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 82a**
* “It is time to act for the Lord; they have violated Your Torah.” **Psalm 119:126**
	+ “Violate Your Teaching and infringe the law of the Torah, *because* it is time to act for the Lord.” **Babylonian Talmud, Brachot 63a**
	+ “When the time comes to do something for the sake of the Holy One, blessed is He, it is permissible to violate the Torah.” **Rashi**
	+ “It is better that a specific precept of the Torah be uprooted, rather than the entire Torah be forgotten by the Jews.” **Babylonian Talmud, Temurah 14b**
* “Halakhah is an evolutionary and ethical phenomenon. In all of these halakhic texts, the rabbis enacted regulations in response to changes of time, place, and circumstance, or because their conscience demanded it.” **Zemer, p. 36**