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?, 1/6/13

**Session 2: Interfaith Marriage in Jewish History**

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)
* R. Joshua says: It certainly was a land strange to Moses. R. Eleazar of Modi‘in says: “In a strange land”—where God was like a stranger. Moses said: Since the whole place [Midian] is worshiping idols, whom shall I worship? [And the midrash answers:] Him by whose word the world came into being [i.e. God]. For at the time when Moses said to Jethro: “Give me your daughter Zipporah to wife,” Jethro said to him: “Accept one condition which I will state to you and I will give her to you for a wife.” “What is it?” asked Moses. He then said to him: “The first son that you will have shall belong to the idol and the following may belong to God.” Moses accepted these terms. Jethro then said: “Swear unto me,” and Moses swore. **Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael (Lauterbach Critical Edition)**
* It was on the way, where they were camping, that the Holy One encountered him [Moses and his two sons were there so we’re not sure who the “him” is] – and – shockingly – sought to kill him! [Again, not sure who the “him” is…] So Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son [the text is vague about which one] and touched the foreskin to his feet [again not sure who the “his” is] […] So he released him [the “he” here is apparently the Angel of Death] and Zipporah proclaimed: The life of my bridegroom was threatened because of circumcision. **Exodus 4:24-26**
* Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and he prostrated himself and kissed him, and each inquired about the other’s well-being. […] Jethro rejoiced over all the good that the Holy One had done for Israel, that God had rescued it from the hand of Egypt. Jethro said: Praised be Adonai Who rescued you from hand of Egypt and the hand of Pharaoh, Who has rescued the people from the hand of Egypt. Now I know that the Holy One is greater than all of the other gods [that I have known in my past] because of the heinous way in which the Egyptians conspired against the Israelites. Jethro, the father in law of Moses, took an elevation-offering and feast-offerings for God; and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with the father-in-law of Moses before the Holy One. **Exodus 18:7-12**
* Miriam and Aaron spoke out against Moses regarding the Cushite woman he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. **Numbers 12:1**
* An Egyptian man saved us from the shepherds, and he even drew water for us and watered the sheep. **Exodus 2:19**
* God punished him [Moses] by causing him to die outside of the Promised Land. Joseph, who had proclaimed in public that he was a Hebrew, found his last resting-place in the land of the Hebrews, and Moses, who apparently had no objection to being considered an Egyptian, had to live and die outside of that land. ***The Legends of the Jews* (Ginzberg), 2003 Edition, p. 495**
* It follows that the centre of authority is actually removed from the Bible and placed in some living body, which, by reason of its being in touch with the ideal aspirations and the religious needs of the age, is best able to determine the nature of [the proper interpretation of the Bible]. This living body, however, is not represented by any section of the nation, or any corporate priesthood, or Rabbihood, but by the collective conscience of Catholic Israel. **Solomon Schechter (1896)**
* You will not take a wife for my son from among the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose midst I dwell. Rather you shall go to my land, my birthplace, and get a wife for my son Isaac. **Genesis 24:3-4**
* Abraham wants his son to remain a stranger in Canaan; hence he commands marriage within his own group. Here are the beginning strands of Judaism’s strong feelings about mixed marriages. […] What is at stake is religion and family tradition, not ethnic or racial “purity.” ***The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, edited by Plaut**
* You shall not intermarry with them; do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your children away from Me to worship other gods, and the Eternal One’s anger will flare against you, promptly wiping you out. **Deuteronomy 7:3-4**
* From where do we know that *kiddushin*, a kosher Jewish marriage, does not take effect when one partner is not Jewish? The verse in the Torah which states *You shall not intermarry with them*. **Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 68b**
* When I heard this [i.e. the widespread intermarriage], I rent my garment and robe, I tore hair out of my head and beard, and I sat desolate. Around me gathered all who were concerned over the words of the God of Israel because of the returning exiles’ trespass, while I sat desolate until the evening offering. **Ezra 9:3-4**
* Then Shechan’yah son of Yechi’eil of the family of Eilam spoke up and said to Ezra, “We have trespassed against our God by bringing into our homes foreign women from the peoples of the land; but there is still hope for Israel, despite all of this. Now, let us make a covenant with our God to expel all these women and those who have been born to them, in accordance with the bidding of the Lord and of all who are concerned over the commandment of our God, and let the Teaching of the Torah be obeyed.” **Ezra 10:2-3**
* “We have collectively rejected the option, either of “checking out” of Jewish existence altogether or of so avoiding the present contradictions as to shatter Jewish existence into fragments. […]

For we are forbidden to turn present and future life into death, as the

price of remembering death at Auschwitz. And we are equally

forbidden to affirm present and future life, at the price of forgetting

Auschwitz. […]

We have lived in this contradiction for twenty years without being able

to face it. Unless I am mistaken, we are now beginning to face it,

however fragmentarily and inconclusively. And from this beginning confrontation there emerges what I will boldly term a 614th commandment: *the authentic Jew of today is forbidden to hand Hitler yet another, posthumous victory*. […]

If the 614th commandment is binding upon the authentic Jew, then we are, first, commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. We are commanded, second, to remember in our very guts and bones the martyrs of the Holocaust, lest their memory perish. We are forbidden, thirdly, to deny or despair of God, however much we may have to contend with him or with belief in him, lest Judaism perish. We are forbidden, finally, to despair of the world as the place which is to become the kingdom of God, lest we help to make it a meaningless place in which God is dead or irrelevant and everything is permitted. To abandon any of these imperatives, in response to Hitler’s victory at Auschwitz, would be to hand him yet other, posthumous, victories. **Rabbi Emil Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return Into History* (1978)**