

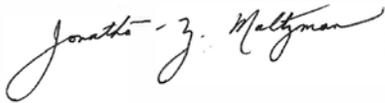
Kol Ha-Rav

A recent article in the Jewish press reported that a Conservative rabbi had performed an intermarriage and was subsequently expelled from the Rabbinical Assembly, the international organization of Conservative rabbis. Once again this has brought the subject of intermarriage to the front burner.

Some argue that Jewish life exists primarily in the postmodern world. If that is the case, then the choice is clear; Conservative rabbis should perform intermarriages and work as hard as possible to keep that partly Jewish family within the fold. Turning a couple away is tantamount to losing them forever.

Others argue that the Pew report showed us that the children of interfaith marriages have very little Jewish identity compared to children with two Jewish parents, in terms of everything from lighting Shabbat and Hanukah candles to attending a Seder. And they point out that intermarried couples' grandchildren have almost no Jewish identity. And while we are aware of examples that demonstrate that some individuals do make a meaningful Jewish life while being married to non-Jews, and their children and even their grandchildren identify strongly as Jews, we must not confuse anecdotes with statistics. A certain percentage of families with mixed religion do stay Jewishly involved and take meaningful roles in the synagogue and Jewish religious life and have Jewish grandchildren. But the majority do not.

We are left on the horns of a dilemma. If one values what we loosely call "Jewish Continuity" and we want that continuity to last for the next 2000 years, then the inevitable choice is not to officiate at intermarriages. However, there is a perfectly stated value choice that says I can only impact today, tomorrow and perhaps the next ten years. And although the Jewish future is important, the Jewish present is even more crucial. That too is a real and respectable position.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jonathan Z. Maltzman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Rabbi Jonathan Z. Maltzman