

## Mixed Marriage

By Edith Landau

Intermarriage has been the subject of innumerable studies by social scientists and clergymen during the last few years. Their findings have led them to believe that intermarriage is no longer simply a social phenomenon but exists as a sizeable and predictable annual statistic.

Reflecting these conclusions, Rabbi Samuel M. Silver has written a book entitled, "Mixed Marriage Between Jew and Christian," (Arco 107 pp. \$5.95) which deals with the subject from the practical rather than the theoretical viewpoint.

Rabbi Silver, who unequivocally and forcefully espouses marriage within one's own religion as the idea for family stability, recognizes at the same time that perhaps one out of every three Jewish families will have to deal with the problem of mixed marriage, that is, marriage without benefit of conversion to Judaism. Taking the pragmatic view, Rabbi Silver supports two complementary, but to this reader at least, conflicting views; primarily, when a situation involving mixed marriage is unavoidable, he advocates the participation of the Rabbi, arguing that a Rabbi must not only help to solve a human problem, but must also do everything possible to save "one family or one person for Judaism." On the other hand, after stating that family stability is even more important than Jewish numbers, he recommends conversion in situations where one partner's religious commitment is weaker than the other's, and he is not hesitant in stating that this recommendation applies even where a Jew would convert to Christianity.

Arguing in favor of Rabbis participating in the mixed marriage, Rabbi Silver states that if Judaism turns its back on a marrying couple who desire a religious presence at their wedding, they might forever turn their backs on Judaism. He further believes that it is neither inconsistent nor impossible to resolve the problem of having clergy of the two different faiths involved in such a ceremony; that the gap may be bridged simply by emphasizing and focusing on the communality of ideas rather than the differences, and eliminating religious references

that might be offensive to either party.

Such an approach must, of needs, be based on a complicated system of rationales, some of which, such as the universalizing of the meaning of various holidays, rituals, and symbols may be difficult for all but the staunchest proponents of the religious mixed marriage to accept.

But such is the nature of the controversy, and the lack of precedent, that for those who deal with mixed marriage, there is no one way. Some, like Rabbi Silver, have no difficulty performing a mixed marriage in concert with clergymen of another religion, others abhor such a practice; still others will have no part in the ceremony, but will later accept the mixed pair, having been married by another Rabbi, into their congregation.

But this is not a book written for Rabbis, it is written for those parents and children for whom the problem of mixed marriage is real and immediate.

This is a book that attempts to explain the phenomenon of mixed marriage by examining the historical and cultural prohibitions from both Jewish and Christian viewpoints and by reviewing the twentieth century conditions, such as the ecumenical movement; religious interaction in World War II; the Holocaust, the Founding of Israel; permissiveness in the media; and the youth movement with its anti-establishment focus, which caused the prohibitions to give way.

It is a book that lists the obstacles in mixed marriage. Rabbi Silver knows that even for those to whom religion is of little importance, the problem of how to raise one's children, and deal with one's in-laws, or of covert anti-Semitism, even of how to celebrate at holiday times, are unavoidable. The fact that one of every two mixed marriages ends in divorce attests to the number and magnitude of such problems. Understandably, Rabbi Silver reserves judgment whether or not mixed marriages can, in fact, work.

After stating all the problems, Rabbi Silver can offer no concrete solutions, only some sound advice on the handling of human relationships that would be useful in any marriage, but is imperative in the mixed marriage.

In short, this is a useful book, much as a

discussion in the Rabbi's study would be useful, for those who have to learn to live with the situation as it exists, not as they would like it.

One might take exception with Rabbi Silver's point of view in general, or some of his ideas in particular, but one must admit he is a courageous man, who brings the problem into the open and tries to develop solutions, beyond simply theorizing, that are both consistent and rational, to a problem that by definition, defies such solutions.

## Jack Kahan

By Rabbi Samuel M. Silver

Of that sinner, Howard Hughes they used to quip, "When he cashed a check, the bank bounced."

When saintly Jack Kahan, of Los Angeles, turned eighty recently, the world of Labor Zionism bounced.

The Labor Zionist weekly magazine, the Yiddishe Kempfer, devotes much of a recent issue to articles and paid notices praising Mr. Kahan, one of the leaders of Histadrut and the Farband in Los Angeles.

Kahan is lauded for his generosity. He is hailed for his modesty.

He is exalted for his readiness to assume tedious assignments on behalf of the causes to which he is dedicated.

Dr. Berl Frimer, one of Labor Zionism's greats, calls him one of the leading patrons of good literature and the arts.

L.A. Mayor Tom Bradley gave Kahan a plaque on behalf of the city.

Gov. Jerry Brown, in a letter reproduced in the Kempfer, cites Kahan's "contributions" to the protection and enhancement of the Jewish people and calls him an "inspiration."

There are almost as many paid notices by organizations and friends in that issue as there were notices saluting Golda Meir in a previous issue of the magazine.

Most touching is the kudos to Kahan from an older brother, Shmelke, who lives in Paris and who tells in his letter how they lost their father in Russia when they were little.

Wrote the Paris brother: "If my health permits I'm coming to one of your celebrations."

Wish I could. I'd like to meet the man who evokes such adulation.



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