

ASSIMILATION IS KILLING THE JEWISH PEOPLE

JOSEPH FRAGER / JNS

Jews have always been at the forefront of progressive ideas. This has made for a creative and dynamic people. Unfortunately, it has also led to increasing rates of assimilation and intermarriage.

According to the Pew Research Study of 2020, only 34 percent of U.S. Jews said that it was very important to them that their grandchildren be Jewish. With “cancel culture” leading the way and “wokism” as the new religion, the rate of assimilation and intermarriage in the United States is on its way up.

According to the Pew study, among American Jews who wed between 2010 and 2020, 61 percent intermarried. Among the non-Orthodox and non-affiliated, it was 72 percent. 98 percent of Orthodox Jews said that they were married to Jews.

Sixty percent of European Jewry has been lost to assimilation since WW II. In Poland, the figure stands at 70 percent. In the former Soviet Union, it reaches 90 percent. These are shocking statistics.

Israel is also far from immune, with a 38 percent jump in intermarriage from 2011 to 2018. Recent work by Dr. Netanel Fisher showed that there are 85,000 intermarried couples in Israel. The majority are Jewish men married to non-Jewish women from the former Soviet Union. A total of 7 percent of marriages in Israel are mixed.

The story becomes even more disturbing when analyzing the number of Israelis who emigrated to America and subsequently intermarried. There are one million Israelis living in the Diaspora. There are high assimilation rates among the second generation.

It is estimated that the rate of intermarriage among second-generation Israelis living in the United States is close to 75 percent. Professor Lilach Lev Ari, an expert on immigration and ethnic identity, explains: “Israeli immigrants find themselves in a pluralistic society, in which they must redefine their Jewish and Israeli identity. When these people lived in Israel, they resided in an area with permanent Jewish characteristics in

their day-to-day life: the community, the Hebrew Language, the educational system, national holidays. That’s not the case abroad. In the United States, you have to work hard to preserve your Jewishness. If you don’t put an effort into it on a daily basis, including financial and mental resources, it will disappear.”

This, of course, does not only apply to Israelis, but to the entire American-Jewish community.

This is where the Jewish Reform movement has failed miserably. It is up to the Orthodox to do a much better job of bringing back our own.

Assimilation and intermarriage is killing the Jewish people. Jewish Leaders must unite to prevent the scourge from overtaking us.

Education, *kiruv* activities and outreach on all levels—much more of a united and concerted effort to fight the epidemic—is needed now.

PATHWAYS OF THE PARSHA

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the left hand; Tiferes, the body; Netzach and Hod, the two legs; Yesod, the *makom hamilah* – as well as the seven orifices of the head: the right eye is Chessed, the left eye is Gevurah, the nose is Tiferes, the two ears are Netzach and Hod, the mouth is Yesod.

Speech and moral purity are closely linked, and you can tell a lot about a person’s *tzniyus* by the way he speaks.

5771

Until the Fourth Generation

A wealthy man died and left a will stipulating that a fund be created from his estate to support his descendants who would be sitting and learning – *ad dor revii*, until the fourth generation. At that point, the will instructed, the remaining money should be divided among the surviving relatives.

What wasn’t clear in the will was how to calculate the fourth generation? The man had children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. The great-grandchildren came and said that they are the fourth generation, so it was time for the money to be divided between the heirs. Others argued that the great-grandchildren were only the third generation – the man’s children were the first generation of descendants, the grandchildren were the second, the great-grandchildren were the third, and the *next* generation would be the fourth, so there should still be another generation receiving support for their Torah study before the money gets divided.

This question came to the Noda b’Yehudah, and is recorded in Choshen Mishpat, Teshuvah 38.

The Noda b’Yehudah reasoned as follows. In Parashas Lech Lecha, Hashem made a promise to Avraham Avinu (15:16): *And the fourth generation shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite shall not yet be full until then*, meaning that the fourth generation of Avraham’s descendants would return to Eretz Yisrael. Who was this fourth generation? Rashi on that *passuk* in Parashas Lech Lecha says that the first three generations were Yehuda, Peretz, and Chetzron, and the fourth generation was Calev, who entered Eretz Yisrael. In Parashas Vayigash, Yaakov Avinu comes down to Mitzrayim, but he is not counted among the four generations.

The Ibn Ezra, however, counts the four generations differently. Kehas, he says, went down to Mitzrayim. He had a son Amram, who had a son Moshe, and Moshe’s children entered Eretz Yisrael. According to this calculation, the people who went down to Mitzrayim were considered first generation.

This *machlokes*, says the Noda b’Yehudah, appears to apply to the case of the wealthy man’s will as well. According to Rashi, the deceased man would not be counted as the first generation, while according to the Ibn Ezra he would. Since we generally consider Rashi the more authoritative of the two, concludes the Noda b’Yehudah, the ruling in this case would follow Rashi, and the great-grandchildren sitting and learning would still be able to benefit from the money without having to distribute it among the other relatives.

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