

**When Only One
Partner
Is Jewish . . .**

**Offering a welcoming
and meaningful
Jewish experience to
Temple Beth Am
intermarried families.**

**Temple Beth Am
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Introduction

Temple Beth Am is an egalitarian conservative synagogue that reaches out to all Jews who wish to affiliate with it. We welcome intermarried families and support your decision to be involved in the Jewish religion and/or raise your children in the Jewish faith. All children born of a Jewish mother are automatically Jewish, and children of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother who wish to raise their children exclusively in the Jewish faith can arrange with the Rabbi for a conversion of the children. At all times, we respect the non-Jewish partner and encourage him/her to participate in as much of temple life as they choose to, within the rules of Conservative Judaism.

This brochure is an attempt to answer some of the specific questions that have come up over the years regarding what participation your family can have at various times in synagogue life. We have had a long and very successful experience with intermarried

families, and wish to affirm our outreach to such families through this brochure.

Rabbi Paul Plotkin

Q. Do I have to be Jewish to belong to Temple Beth Am?

A. Temple membership is available to all members of the Jewish community. In the case of an intermarriage, only the Jewish partner receives a formal membership.. *We strongly encourage the non-Jewish member to attend all aspects of synagogue, such as worship, education, social and social action, on an equal footing.* (While there is no expectation or pressure for conversion, if at any time the non-Jewish member wishes to discuss it, the Rabbi is intricately involved in conversion to the Jewish faith. Please call the Rabbi for an appointment.)

Q. I am Jewish and my partner is not. Are we welcome as a couple to attend services at Temple Beth Am?

A. Yes! As a spouse of a member, you

would certainly be welcome to attend services and participate. With the exception of the High Holy Days, our synagogue doors are open to the entire community, members or not, Jewish or not. We can even arrange for the purchase of an additional seat for the High Holy Days so you may sit with your Jewish-member spouse.

There are certain functions in the service in which lay people participate, and by the nature of the religious practice, these would be limited to people of the Jewish faith. (For families celebrating a life cycle, please see the more detailed answers below that allow for more inclusion of the non-Jewish partner.)

Q. At a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, what role, if any, will my Jewish partner have?

A. There are two types of involvement. At a Bar Mitzvah, one is just the regular participation of any participant of the congregation. The other is the unique involvement of the parents, with one possible exception; everything that a Jewish parent would do, the non-Jewish parent is encouraged to participate in as well. All functions in which the parents are functioning as

parents, the non-Jewish parent partner is encouraged to do. Specifically, twice parents are called up to the Bima (the stage in front of the ark): the first time to present a Talit (prayer shawl), the second time to be with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah after the chanting of the Haftora. At that time family members are encouraged to say a blessing of thanks to God, acknowledging this special occasion. On both the occasion of the Talit presentation and the prayer, the parents come up together with no difference whether a partner is Jewish or not.

A third time is optional, even when both parents are Jewish, and an opportunity not always taken by the parent. Specifically, there is an honor to be called up to the Torah, called an Aliyah. If one of the parents chooses to have that honor, we encourage the other parent to stand by them as they say the prayer. In the case of an intermarried family, the Jewish partner may choose to give themselves that honor, and the non-Jewish partner is encouraged to stand next to them in front of the Torah during the Aliyah.

Q. What participation does the non-Jewish parent have, if any, at a baby naming?

A. Jewish girls are given their Hebrew name at a service in the temple, in which the Torah is read. During that time, one of the parents receives an Aliyah to the Torah; the other parent and the child stand next to that parent. At the conclusion of the Torah reading, the parents and child walk over to the Rabbi, who then chants a blessing which includes the naming for the family and the child. In the case of an inter-married family, the Jewish partner would receive the Aliyah; the non-Jewish partner would stand next to their spouse, and they, with their child, would come over to the Rabbi, who would then give the blessing, and the naming for the child.

Q. We are considering enrolling our child in religious school. Are there limitations on the involvement of the non-Jewish parent?

A. No! We would encourage both parents to participate fully in whatever support programs that the religious school offers, in helping the children's religious education be very successful. We are always appreciative of the willingness of the non-Jewish parent to allow their child to be raised in a strong Jewish environment, and to receive the wonderful Jewish education that Temple Beth Am is noted for.

Q. What role, if any, can non-Jewish grandparents have in their Jewish grandchild's life?

A. We encourage them to participate as much as possible in a manner very similar to their child, who is the non-Jewish parent. We would love to have them attend services in which the children are participating, come for Shabbat dinners and, if they want to be part of the Talit presentation, we encourage that as well.

Q. I don't read Hebrew. How can I possibly follow the service?

A. While it is true that much of our service is in Hebrew, all the prayer books we use have English translation, and many parts that we sing together, are transliterated in the book.

Saturday morning services include a Torah dialogue or Sermon in English, and all instructions and discussions are conducted in English. Many of our converts not raised in the Jewish faith prior to their course tell us that within three months, and with no prior Jewish background, they are familiar and comfortable with the services.

Q. I have questions that do not appear in this brochure. How do I learn more?

A. The Rabbi would love to meet with you and answer any of your individual or particular questions. Please call the Temple office at 954-968-4545 to make an appointment to meet with the Rabbi.