

## And (the) Yisrael dwelled in Shittim, and began to sin with the daughters of Moav. (Bamidbar 25:1)

One of society's more difficult anomalies is interfaith marriage. We live in a time when even marriages which seem perfect on paper fail dismally. Why would anyone in his right mind start married life with someone who is of an opposing faith? I use the word opposing by design, since, for the most part, the Jews have been the world's sacrificial lamb, having been abused, persecuted, tortured, hounded and murdered by anyone who felt they had the right to lord over them. Why would anyone marry into a religion whose elders and doctrine revile us? They say love conquers all – but, is it love, physical infatuation, or just plain foolishness?

The **Bostoner Rebbe, zl**, stood at the forefront of Judaism's struggle with interfaith incursion. He asks: "Why would anyone begin their married life with someone who has a completely different past, present and future? Is it due to a lack of Jewish education and home observance of Torah and *mitzvos*? Is it a lack of parental restraint, or long term perspective, a lack of concern for one's future Jewish children?" Those who have fallen prey to the scourge of intermarriage either were not thinking, or lack the ability to think rationally and recognize cause and effect.

The home becomes the battleground between the religions – or, worse, the Jew just reneges his religion completely. Why not? What does he care? As in all battles, the defenseless and weak are the ones who become the victims of this battle. In this case, it is the children, whose parents manifested a lack of caring, a total disdain for the future of their offspring.

For two thousand years our enemies have attempted to destroy us: massacres; crusades; pogroms; inquisitions; culminating with the Holocaust. As the *Rebbe* sadly notes, however, the persecuted marries the persecutor, and together they disappear from history. Indeed, intermarriage has achieved what the stake and the Holocaust could not. Perhaps, we can say it differently. When "we" are our worst enemy – "we" succeed.

The battleground for the future of our children is both in the public and private sphere. Many a young Jew or Jewess, whose knowledge of his/her heritage is quite limited as a result of his/her parents' ineptitude, becomes a victim every time he or she is exposed to alien cultures. He or she cannot argue, since he/she knows little about his/her own.

The *Bostoner Rebbe* focused on teaching, reaching out to the college students and professionals who crossed his door. For the most part, he was successful with those whom he enlightened. For some, however, it was too late. He writes about Massachusetts State Attorney General, George Fingold, who was the Republican candidate for governor. He was doing fantastic in primary polls, with the vision of a Jewish governor for the state of Massachusetts becoming more and more a reality. As the old adage goes, "Man plans and G-d laughs." All of the best laid plans came to an abrupt end, when the Republican nominee sustained a massive coronary which killed him at the

age of 43. It made national headlines because of its ripple effect on the country. Behind the scenes, a large battle was brewing between his family and the candidate's non-Jewish wife, who wanted him buried in her family cemetery adjacent to her church. The old Jewish mother of the deceased wanted her Jewish son to have a Jewish burial. (It is an interesting phenomenon how Jews who do not want to live as Jews insist on being buried as Jews.) Massachusetts state law granted precedence to the wife's wishes. The way it appeared, the Jewish body did not belong to the deceased. Mr. Fingold was relegated to spending an eternity in a Christian cemetery, with a cross, no less, ensconced above his head. (He certainly did not think of this when he married his wife – but then no one does. They are too infatuated to think of natural consequences.)

It did not end there. Fingold was a Jew, who, although not very religious, still had never parted with Judaism by converting. His mother (would you believe?) regularly attended the Orthodox *shul* in Malden – weekly. She was supported by the *shul's* membership who felt that the deceased was one of their own (now he was one of their own). The judge sided with the Fingold family. Their errant son would be brought home.

The funeral was a tense affair, especially because it followed after a hotly contested court battle. The various family members took sides based upon their position *vis-à-vis* the feud. The venom that permeated the air was palpable. As one friend of the family put it, "If you ever want to see the consequences of intermarriage – this is it."

The *Rebbe* notes that the crowing irony of the entire ordeal was the presence of the body of the deceased, the late George Fingold. He just lay there, unable to finally speak up and say what he wanted for himself. He had made a choice during his life – a choice with which he had lived and later died. During his lifetime, he controlled so much; he was so powerful. In death, he controlled nothing – not even his own corpse. Had he lived, he might have become governor, and who knows where he would go on from there. Now, he controlled nothing – not even himself.

What a sad story, one that plays itself out often in the life and times of the alienated. It is the story of human tragedy, of parents who made bad choices, thus raising children who likewise had no choices. It is not only the story of a human tragedy; it is a reminder to those who have executed the ultimate stray from Judaism. You may think that you are powerful and that you are in control of your destiny. Perhaps you might have a point for the present. The future, however, does not belong to you. When you buried your children's faith, denied them their heritage, you lost your say. They have their own wretched life which you created for them.

I am sure that there are those among *Peninim's* large readership who are wondering why I wrote this article and what it has to do with the Torah world. Sadly, those people are in for a rude wake-up call. Also, because of *Peninim's* wide global readership, its readers may not all be practicing Orthodox Jews.