

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE RABBI

Please Note: Indirect reference is made in this guide to: THE HELPING INTERVIEW by Alfred Benjamin (2nd edition, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), especially in relation to the stages of the interview process: Initiation, Development, and Closing: Ch. 2 "Stages," p. 10 ff.

1. Setting

This guide is intended to be used in the initial full length interview you select with a young couple who come to you for intermarriage counseling (preferably a couple in their 20's or early 30's). Please select a couple where one partner is Jewishly identified, but not the other. The non-Jewish partner may be of another faith, may or may not be considering Judaism.

The presumption is that the couple comes to you not only for officiating at their marriage ceremony, but also for perspective in handling emotional conflicts related to differing faith experiences and religious outlooks. The nature and complexity of these conflicts will, of course, be determined over a period of time.

2. Goal

The goal of this project is to test the value of an interview model which relies heavily on accepting a couple and individualizing them in terms of their present level of commitment and comfortableness with their own religious experiences and identities. The rabbi's task is to create an atmosphere of openness, mutuality and trust and to free the couple to express their real feelings about where they are in the process of faith formation.

3. Method

The interview should last approximately 90 minutes. If possible, please tape the session (with the couple's permission) and assure them of confidentiality. Anonymity will be preserved both in your recording and in our use of the interview. The following key questions should be covered in your interview. Use your own judgment in reformulating the wording, or in limiting the discussion, or in extending the counseling on any specific phase of concern.

- A. Could you tell me some of your feelings about religion in general and about your own religious background in particular?
- B. Would you like to have a common faith in your married life which would extend to sharing a mutual commitment should you have children?
- C. Describe any conflict you feel surrounding your religious differences. How does this affect your relationship?
- D. Do you feel that the values you share in common transcend religious differences? Or is it important to you to transcend these differences?

- E. Could you see a rabbi consecrating your marriage on the basis of an affirmation of Jewish loyalty that you develop, reflecting the shared religious values you both affirm? (Explain that this would differ from a conversion, if that is their wish and you consent, in that the affirmation is a creative ceremony and does not necessarily include renunciation of a former faith)

4. The Questionnaires

You will note that two distinct questionnaires are enclosed: one for you to use, and the other to be completed privately by the couple. In both cases, these should be returned as quickly as possible, using the enclosed reply envelope.

5. Resume of the Interviewees

Circle the profile that most accurately applies:

1. Separate religions, strong separate commitments.
2. Common religion; differing emphases.
3. Separate faiths, but contemplating conversion (to Judaism).
4. No religious commitment.
5. Willing to affirm shared values (such as the Jewish upbringing of children.)

6. Your Ideological Stance

Circle the correct or most proximate response:

1. I perform intermarriages without conversion.
2. I perform intermarriages, but require Jewish commitments.
3. I would allow a couple to develop a creative affirmation service (eliminating if necessary renunciation of another faith), and on that basis would officiate at the marriage service.

7. Follow Up

I did meet for further counseling with this couple.



B'NAI B'RITH **HILLEL** ON CAMPUS

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November 29, 1983

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*Returned
Jan 11, 1984*

Dear Bill:

I would like to ask you to be kind enough to assist me in a research project. I am a doctoral candidate in pastoral care at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. I am currently writing a dissertation on a pastoral care model for the initial interview in inter-religious marriage counseling.

Some thirty of you are receiving these materials. You are a group I have selected either on the basis of personal acquaintance and friendship, the value of your known ideological and theological stance to the research project, or on the basis of other criteria. Not all of you conform to the model of either performing intermarriages or modifying halachic requirements for conversion. Some of you were suggested by your regional UAHC directors or other colleagues in a position to know of your interest in this subject. Some of you hold positions of responsibility in committee management or outreach activities, so that it would be logical to include you in my research sample.

Please read the instruction sheet carefully and allow me to underscore the criterion of promptness in returning the material. I would like to ask you to have the tape and questionnaires, both by each participant in the couple and your questionnaire, back in my hands by ~~December~~ 1. You will find enclosed a reply envelope for this purpose. January 15.

Generally, the interview will range approximately 90 minutes in length.

I will be delighted, in return for your cooperation, to send you any pertinent data after I have had a chance to analyze the responses. I will be delighted to share my research findings with you and also with the couple.

Please accept my deepest appreciation and heartfelt gratitude for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph H. Levine
Rabbi Joseph H. Levine

INSTRUCTION SHEET

1. Please inform the couple that the questionnaire is part of a research project.
2. We are asking your permission to share this material with CCAR colleagues and the CCAR Committee on Conversion. We also will want to share our research data with you the participants in the study and with the couples interviewed.
3. As the rabbi, you have a complete kit which includes an interview guide, a 120-minute cassette tape for you to use, a set of questionnaires--one for the man and one for the woman of the couple, a questionnaire for the rabbi to use after the interview has taken place, and a return envelope for these to be sent back.
4. In addition, there is a release form which we are asking each of the couples and the rabbi to sign, indicating that we may use this data.
5. Please stress our concern for the confidentiality of the couple and responsibility for their privacy and also our eagerness for everyone involved to return questionnaires promptly, but no later than December 1.
6. When you distribute the questionnaire to the couple, please give the blue one to the man and the yellow one to the woman.