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The Book Shelf

Title: *Chicken Soup with Chopsticks: A Jew's Struggle for Truth in an Interfaith Relationship*
Author: Jack Botwinik
Publisher: Paper Spider, Ottawa, Canada
Reviewed by Aharon ben Anshel

At first, The Jewish Press hesitated to review and publicize this book for fear that some readers might wonder whether we are, *chas v'shalom*, encouraging Jewish youth to socially engage with non-Jews. But since many reputable and well-known Judaica stores have decided to stock and sell this



book, major *kirvu* organizations, such as Aish HaTorah, are recommending it and the renowned Jonathan David

Company has agreed to distribute it. Thus, we see this spiritual memoir as having gained the *haskamah* of the Orthodox world.

The author relates his trials and tribulations in dating a gentile, including dealing initially with the judgmental attitudes of many in the community.

Jack Botwinik grew up in a typical middle class, non-Orthodox Jewish home, and primarily dated secular Jewish women. He was turned off by what he

claims was their materialistic values. Belinda, a Chinese woman who grew up in Kowloon (a mainland city opposite Hong Kong), attracted him. She was exotic and, like Botwinik, longed to find the Truth.

Belinda and Jack made attempts to meet each other "half-way" – taking the best of both their worlds. However this didn't seem to satisfy Jack. They tried out a number of religions, including Reform and Conserva-

tive Judaism, but eventually Jack realized that he truly wanted to be part of the Orthodox fold – if only he could find acceptance for himself and his girlfriend.

It is anti-climactic to state that eventually, Belinda and Jack found their home within the Orthodox Jewish community.

The theme of conversion of non-Jews to Judaism has been written about by such well-known philosophers and authors like Arthur Koestler (*The Thirteenth Tribe*) and Yehuda HaLevi (*The Kuzari*).

Interracial couples (where both spouses are Jewish, but of different races) are an oft-overlooked, yet distinctive, part of *Klal Yisrael*. There is at least one Orthodox congregation in Flatbush that I am aware of that has many interracial congregants, including African American, Latino and Asian – a virtual "melting pot."

Let us also remember that the Biblical Ruth – Moabite – was a convert. And it is from her lineage that David *Hamelech* was born, and the Mashiach will come.

Botwinik wrote this book to share his struggles and discoveries with other Jews who are challenged by an interfaith relationship.

If anyone knows of someone in such a dilemma, this book should be required reading. It will either encourage their break-up, or help guide them on the path to truth and the adoption of authentic Torah Judaism. ■