

The JEWISH Spin on Current Events

FREEDOM OF RELIGION VS. FREEDOM FROM RELIGION

Discussion on recent editorials attacking Judaism.

∞ OVERVIEW ∞

1. WHAT IS "FREEDOM"?
2. HOW SHOULD JEWS LIVE AND INTERACT IN A MODERN SOCIETY?
3. LABELS ARE FOR SUITS
4. WHY ISN'T JUDAISM REGARDED AS A CULT?
5. WHAT IS CONSIDERED POSITIVE REBUKE?

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☞ SOURCES ☞

1. What is “Freedom”?

☞ 1A ☞

EXODUS 7:16

You shall say to him, ‘Hashem, the G-d of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying: Send out My people that they may serve Me...’.

In a modern society, however, people understand that others have differing viewpoints, and that religion should not drive secular affairs such as how an ice cream shop does its business and whether or not a bookstore is open on Saturday in contravention of Orthodox Jewish teachings. (Howard Schwach, The Wave, 8/10/07)

☞ 1B ☞

DEUTERONOMY 30:19

I call heaven and earth today to bear witness against you: I have placed life and death before you, blessing and curse; and you shall choose life, so that you will live, you and your offspring’s.

2. How should Jews live and interact in a modern society?

☞ 2A ☞

EXODUS 25:8

They shall make a Sanctuary for Me so that I may dwell among them.

☞ 2B ☞

MIDRASH TANCHUMA, PARSHAS NASSO, CHAPTER 16

Rabbi Shmuel the son of Nachman says: At the time when G-d created the world, He desired to have a dwelling place in the lower worlds just as there is in the upper world. He created Adam and commanded him “From all of the trees in the garden you can surely eat. However, from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad, you must not eat from it.” (Genesis 2:16-17) And he [Adam] violated His command. G-d told him: “This is what I desired, that there should be a dwelling place for me in the lower worlds just as I have in the upper world. There was only one thing that I commanded you, and you didn’t observe it.” Immediately G-d removed the *shechina* [G-dly presence] to the first heavenly firmament.

⌘ 2C ⌘

TANYA, CHAPTER 33

The purpose of the creation of every Jew and of all the worlds is to make a dwelling place for G-d in this world.

Since the birth of modern Orthodox Judaism in 19th-century Germany, a central goal of the movement has been to normalize the observance of traditional Jewish law -- to make it possible to follow all 613 biblical commandments assiduously while still participating in the reality of the modern world. You must strive to be, as a poet of the time put it, "a Jew in the home and a man in the street."

...This ambition is best exemplified today by Senator Joe Lieberman. His run for the vice presidency in 2000 put the "modern" in modern Orthodox, demonstrating that an Orthodox Jewish candidate could be accepted by America at large as essentially a regular guy... Lieberman's overt normalcy really is remarkable. (Noah Feldman, The New York Times Magazine, 7/22/07)

⌘ 2D ⌘

SONG OF SONGS 6:3

I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is to me.

אני לדודי ודודי לי

3. Labels are for Suits

⌘ 3A ⌘

TANYA, CHAPTER 33

[Explaining how a person can fulfill the commandment "You shall love your fellow as yourself"] ...Furthermore, they are actually all equal, they all have one father. It is on account of this common root in the One G-d that all of Israel are called "brothers" – in the full sense of the word, only the bodies are distinct from each other. Therefore, there can be no true love and fraternity between those who regard their bodies as primary and their souls secondary, but only a love based on an external factor.

4. Why isn't Judaism regarded as a Cult?

Even as we students of the Maimonides School spent half of every school day immersed in what was unabashedly a medieval curriculum, our aim was to seem to outsiders -- and to ourselves -- like reasonable, mainstream people,

not fanatics or cult members. (Noah Feldman, The New York Times Magazine, 7/22/07)

⌘ 4A ⌘

CODE OF JEWISH LAW, YOREH DEIAH, CHAPTER 241:4

If his father and mother were completely wicked people, and transgressors, even if they were condemned to death, and they are on their way to be executed, it is forbidden to hit or curse them.

⌘ 4B ⌘

TALMUD, TRACTATE ERCHIN 28A

Rabbi Ila said: In Usha they have established, that one who wants to splurge in giving Tzedaka, he shouldn't give more than a fifth of his income. There is a story of one that attempted to give more than a fifth, and his friends did not permit him.

5. What is considered positive rebuke?

⌘ 5A ⌘

TALMUD, TRACTATE SOTA 47A

A child ... should be pushed aside with the left hand and drawn closer with the right hand.

"I simply cannot understand why any religion would be so egotistic that it would demand that people of other faiths (or no faith at all) should live by its tenets". (Howard Schwach, The Wave, 8/10/07)

⌘ 5B ⌘

TANYA, CHAPTER 12

A little bit of light removes a lot of darkness.