

September 26, 2005

Quotes for egalitarianism talk:

- 1) Egalitarianism has proven to be a challenge to Orthodox Jews, but also for non-Orthodox Jews who identify themselves as Jews and are therefore must grapple with their role as Jews in Western society. Perhaps one can say that for non-Orthodox Jews, "navigating the boundaries between one's religious/communal/ethnic identity, and one's participation in society, is even more vexing and complex.
- 2) Jewish particularism is in conflict with the pressures of emancipation, a was so for most of the past two-hundred years.
- 3) Moses Mendelssohn was probably the most important and earliest person to articulate the problem of the conflict between Judaism and modernity. He himself realized that contemporary notions of egalitarianism and non-judgementalism had to be rejected if traditional Judaism was to survive intact. Thus Mendelssohn reinforced the immutable authority of Halakhah.
- 4) Great *Gedolim* of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century maintained that the danger to Jewish survival from hostile anti-Semitism, is accompanied by fear that too much acceptance and too much love will be accompanied by a demand that we abandon our exclusivity and simply assimilate. Thus, Rabbi Yosef Baer Soloveitchik (1820-1892) and the Netziv. These *Gedolim* were not opposed to the spirit of emancipation and tolerance brought about in the enlightenment, but they were concerned mostly not with the Gentiles but with the Jews who would try to reciprocate the kindness of the Gentile world by dropping out from Judaism.

*(The above two items come from the article by Edward Breuer, "Jews and Judaism in an Egalitarian Society," in the Orthodox Forum volume entitled "Formulating Responses in an Egalitarian Age.")*

Note: The Netziv lived from 1817 to 1893.

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