

Centrist Orthodoxy and the Rest of the Jews

I. A friend has recently spent a Shabbos in a Chassidic community, and now he is bugging you to come with him. "It's the greatest!" he says. "Those *Chassidim* really know how to do Shabbos!" You hesitated at first, but his persistent prodding finally coaxed you to come. Now it's Thursday and you have called up your Chassidic hosts for directions. It starts as a routine call, but after he gives you directions your yiddish-accented host continues:

"Now, you must understand that on *Shabb* - I mean, on the Sabbath, we Jews don't do any work, just like the Bible says, and this includes driving a car." He then tells you by what time you have to get there on Friday afternoon so that you will not "be *mechal* - I mean desecrate, the holiness of the Sabbath."

How should we view those (*chareidi*) denominations of Judaism which either don't understand or simply refuse to accept the legitimacy of centrist Orthodoxy? Do they know something about Judaism that we don't (why do some of us seem to assume that we have to go to the *chareidim* to experience Shabbos?)? Is it worth it to expend our collective energies trying to educate and / or reach out to them? What about the fact that current demographic studies indicate that the *chareidim* will continue to grow even as Reform and Conservative Judaism will dwindle?

II. "Minchah! Minchah!"

You are visiting the campus of a different college when this familiar cry assails your ears. You turn to investigate, and sure enough, leaning out the window of a nearby building is a guy wearing a yarmulka and waving at you. "You're number ten," he yells.

When you enter the room in which the minyan is being held, you stop short. Yeah, there are now ten people in the room, but only four of them are men! A smiling young woman walks over to you and extends her hand. "Welcome to our local egalitarian minyan," she says. "Thanks for coming; it's a really big *mitzvah*."

Should we support the religious practices of non-*frum* Jews? Granted, what they are doing is not *halachicly* correct, but isn't some Judaism better than none? After all, we are not going to be able to be *mikareiv* all of them. Perhaps they even have the right/obligation to interpret Judaism in their own way (what does pluralism mean?)?

What if they didn't ask you to attend the minyan, but to simply sign a petition to allow one to be established?

III. You are sitting on a half-empty A train as it rockets (in fits and starts, as usual) towards midtown, when a man in his late twenties sits down next to you and asks if you would mind answering a question that has been bothering him "so much that I haven't slept in a week." When you cautiously respond yes, he pauses, considers, and then just comes right out and asks, "Do you Jews really believe in the book of Leviticus? All those sacrifices, with their dismemberings, and sprinklings of blood, and sweet fragrances to the Lord; I'm not a big animal rights activist or anything, but I always thought that Judaism respected life and concerned itself with spirituality, like it was different from all of those voodoo

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Indica-
mation: synthesis
(and trial)

religions. But then I look at your Yom Kippur services and I wonder..."

How should we represent orthodoxy to non-Orthodox (and non-Jews), particularly in this age of political correctness? Is it better to faithfully convey what we understand the Orthodox position to be, even if doing so will alienate non-Orthodox questioners? How much should we misrepresent our faith in order to dispose others favorably towards it? What would you say to someone who asked you to justify our *mitzvah* to destroy *Amaleik*? What if the questioner was a woman who asked you why Judaism treats women so unequally?

difficult - not telling truth
= lying...

ACSO - telling about Talm = advice,
+ simple + 137 + 29247 ...