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Rabbis for Religious Freedom & Equality in Israel



“The State of Israel... will guarantee freedom of religion and conscience...”
Israel's Declaration of Independence (May 1948)

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Editorial

March 28, 2016

Dear Friends

In his monumental work on Jewish law, Menachem Elon writes:

"... Nahmanides coined an apt and pointed term that illuminates the meaning of 'doing what is right and good;' A person who acts according to the technical and formal sense of the Torah's laws, i.e.: who carefully follows only the explicit rules but not those implicit from the general spirit of the text, is 'a scoundrel within the bounds of the Torah,' (naval bireshut ha-Torah). Therefore, 'The Torah's method is to particularize and generalize; for after stating the specifics of the law relating to

Discuss this and other issues with fellow RRFEI members in the network's new Facebook group by clicking [HERE!](#)

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BREAKING NEWS:

Non-Jews who don't accept Noahide laws should not live in Israel, chief rabbi says! [\[link\]](#)

הרב שמואל אליהו: "החיייל שחיסל את המחבל בחברון - גיבור" [\[link\]](#)

יש להרוג מחבל גם לאחר שנוטרל- אבל לא נגד כללי הצבא [\[link\]](#)

רבני בית הלל: על פי דין תורה אין לפגוע במחבל לאחר שחלף האיום [\[link\]](#)

RRFEI recommended links on hate speech against liberal Jews:

1. American Jews, Demand Action on ultra-Orthodox Hate Speech, by Jonathan A. Greenblatt

Outrageous comments about Reform Jews by representatives of the Israeli ultra-Orthodox community have become too commonplace not to go unchallenged.

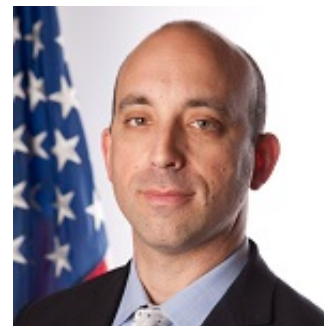
When Religious Services Minister David Azoulay last year

all dealings between men -- you shall not steal, you shall not rob, you shall not cheat, and the other prohibitions -- it states in general terms: 'Do what is right and good.' in order to establish an affirmative commandment to behave with uprightness and fairness and all that is involved in the concept of lifnim meshurat hadin,' for the good of one's fellow man.'"

(Menachem Elon, Jewish Law, vol. 1, p. 185, commenting on Ramban to Lev. 19:2)

The hateful comments expressed in Israel in the last few weeks regarding liberal Jews, and now repudiated by the Prime Minister, risk losing touch with fundamental guiding principles, e.g. -- "not to hate your brother in your heart, and v'ahavta l'rey'echa kamocho." These spokespeople and others look for increasing ways to justify their hatred of outsiders and other Jews, when there are plenty of principles (ahavat Yisrael, tselem elohim, lifnim meshurat hadin) that would reign them back in if they were looking for a peaceful

stated: "Let's just say there's a problem as soon as a Reform Jew stops following the [halakha] Jewish law. I can't allow myself to say that such a person is a Jew." The reaction was powerful from many sectors, including the modern Orthodox leadership in America. More recently, ultra-Orthodox (or Haredi) MK Israel Eichler compared Reform Jews to mentally ill patients.



And on the day the Israeli cabinet voted to support a dedicated space for egalitarian worship at the Western Wall, Moshe Gafni, head of the Knesset's Finance Committee, said that "Reform Jews are a group of clowns who stab the Holy Torah," and added that "there will never, ever be recognition for this group of clowns, not at the Wall or anywhere else." About the same time, Rabbi David Yosef, son of the late revered Rabbi Ovadia Yosef charged that the Reform movement "is a collaboration with idolatry. Reform are idolaters - simply and literally."

Read the full article at <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/>

2. Netanyahu: Shas attacks on Reform Jewry 'inappropriate and unacceptable', by Lahav Harkov

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came out strongly Thursday against comments by MK Yigal Guetta and Religious Services Minister David Azoulay, both of Shas, accusing the Reform Movement of trying to destroy the Jewish people.



"Wholesale and ad hominem attacks on any part of the Jewish people are inappropriate and unacceptable," Netanyahu said, adding that "Israel is the home of all Jews.

...

On Wednesday, in a motion to the Knesset's agenda on the eve of Purim, Guetta compared Reform Jewry to Haman, the villain of the Scroll of Esther.

path forward.

Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and National Director of the Anti-Defamation League sounds this alarm:

- The status quo leads to cynicism about state institutions and the law itself.
- It raises questions about Israel's commitment to [equality for all its citizens](#).
- It undermines respect for religion itself in society.

Current hatred toward liberal Jews goes hand in hand with undermining the democratic underpinnings of the state intended by the Founders and assaulting Israel's Supreme Court, both essential to North American understanding of the raison d'etre of a Jewish homeland.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts. Please send your comments to:

organizers@rrfei.org

You may also find our FB group at: [\[link\]](#), and our website: www.rrfei.org.

Kol tuv,

Mark

...

“God forbid such a thing should reach us,” he said.

Read the full article at <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/>

3. Reject Our Unworthy Members, by Harry Maryles

There are a lot of Orthodox Jews, myself included, that often say that all observant Jews have more that unites us than what divides us. No matter how widely our Hashkafos differ. Even if the gap is wide as it is between Satmar and the most left leaning of Orthodox Jews.



I have always believed that. As long as we all do not entertain heretical beliefs we are all united by our adherence to Halacha. The Halacha that is seen as the most indicative of that is Shmiras Shabbos - Sabbath observance. If one is a Shomer Shabbos, that shows that they are observant. Even if there are minor infractions of Halacha – which all of us are guilty of at one time or another. With few exceptions in history, there is no Jew alive or was ever born that lived their lives without sin.

But sometimes behavior becomes so offensive that it challenges that notion. At least for me. A photo of a hanging IDF soldier on display in the Meah Shearaim section of Jerusalem yesterday qualifies as challenging that notion. The group responsible for that abomination not only challenges that notion, for me it disqualifies membership in the greater Orthodox world. They should be rejected from Klal Yisroel, despite their obvious observance of Halacha.

Read the full article at <http://haemtza.blogspot.co.il/>

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4. A declining Reform Movement wants to Reform Israel, by Yaakov Menken

Resources

- [Western Wall compromise agreement](#)
- [Chief Rabbi Lau attacks Bennett over pluralism](#)
- [J-REC / AJC Mission to Israel](#)
- [Giyur K'halacha](#)
- [Acts of violence](#)
- [Kashrut regulations for hotels and event halls](#)

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A recent Pew survey brought disheartening news to the American leaders of the Reform Movement: despite investing decades and millions of dollars to increase their presence, they are making little to no headway in Israel. A mere 3 percent of Israeli Jews identify with the movement, and even fewer attend one of the only 42 Reform congregations in the country. Even members may have little understanding of the Reform philosophy, only that it is at traditional and advocates for complete personal autonomy.



Reform is not simply a different nusach (prayer service), a different minhag (custom), or merely about men and women praying without a mechitzah (gender separation). In terms of Jewish practice, Israeli hilonim (non-observant) would be surprised to learn that compared to Reform in America, they are practically haredi. Even half of self-described "secular" Israelis claim to light Shabbat candles (at least sometimes), and one-third keep Kosher at home. Among American Reform Jews, only one in ten usually lights Shabbat candles, and only 7% keep a Kosher home. Hebrew Union College Rabbinical students claim the college itself serves non-Kosher meat.

Israel's current President, Ruby Rivlin, was a freshly-elected Likud MK in 1989 when Reform Rabbi Uri Regev brought him to the United States to learn more about American Jewry. Upon his return, he told the Israeli media that "as a Jew who does not observe 613 commandments and perhaps not even 13 commandments, I was deeply shocked... Any connection between [Reform] and Judaism didn't approach reality. I felt as if I were in a church."

Read the full article at

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/>

Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel represents a broad spectrum of Jewish belief and practice, and champions the values of religious freedom and equality fundamental to World Jewry, in partnership with Hiddush for the realization of these principles in Israel and the Diaspora.

Rabbis for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel

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