Dear Friends,

I suspect we all have preached about the divine hand in history. Our teacher, Eugene Borowitz, wrote about the divine witnessed in the Six Day War. And yet, do we believe that somehow God prefers us above all other nations and peoples? We do not. We see ourselves living peacefully among a family of nations, with "every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none to make him them afraid."

In this week's edition, as in last week’s newsletter you received from Hiddush (www.Hiddush.com), we see how religious exclusivity endangers peaceful relations not only between Israel and the nations but within Israel itself. Reading current

Israel to Publish Criteria for Recognizing Rabbis Who Perform Conversions Abroad

Judy Maltz, Haaretz, Dec. 08, 2016

Click HERE for the full article

Israel's chief rabbis announce overhaul which will allow conversion done abroad to be accepted in Israel, confirming Ivanka Trump’s conversion is kosher.

Ivanka Trump
leaders of Israel’s rabbinical establishment will convene next week to begin drawing up a list of criteria for recognizing Orthodox rabbis abroad who perform conversions, possibly ending an issue was has threatened the conversions of America’s most prominent rabbis, including the one who converted the daughter of President-elect Donald Trump.

In a joint statement, the country’s two chief rabbis, Yitzhak Yosef and David Lau, said the objective was to “put an end to the phenomenon of complaints about conversions undertaken by rabbis from recognized Jewish communities abroad that are not approved.” (Yosef is the chief Sephardi rabbi, and Lau is the chief Ashkenazi rabbi.)

...
Christmas trees and New Year's Eve celebrations from hotels not only are an attempt to apply 12th century Maimonidian understandings of halakhah to modern conditions, but also an answer to the question: "whose vision will the Jewish people fulfill with a Jewish State: exclusivist medievalism appropriate to the the Middle Ages but no longer, or a post-Enlightenment acceptance of the humanity of all peoples and the image of God present in every person?"

Sometimes its easy to lose sight of what is at stake in our struggle for equality. When we lose sight of the consequences, we may also relinquish the urgency. It's not for ourselves that we labor, nor even for those who seek freedom to marry the person of their choosing in their own country. But the real struggle is for the answer the question of Jewish history: will the Jewish State fulfill the vision of essential human equality, or perpetuate the medievalism that sets nations at war?

In the sixties we discussed Israel as the savior of the Jewish people. A professor at Boston University quipped that Israel was for the Jews what heaven was

Trump promised more than once that if he made it to the Oval Office, he would rip the agreement to shreds. In addition, Israel now has its own Queen Esther — the biblical bride of a powerful Persian king who saved the Jewish people from an evil adviser — among the presidential family in the person of Ivanka Trump-Kushner, a Jewish convert — and she's no lightweight convert of the Conservative or Reform variety, either. Ivanka's Orthodox Jewish conversion, the only type accepted by Israel's chief rabbinate, was even authorized by none other than Israel's chief rabbi.

...
I see the soul of Israel and the destiny of the Jewish people on the line in the daily struggle for equality. What's your reaction?

Please send us your feedback, particularly regarding how you use the articles we are sending. We look forward to hearing from you at: organizers@rrfei.org.

Kol tuv,

Mark

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Click HERE for the full article
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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