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# Ruach Hiddush - רוח חידוש

## רבנים וחזנים למען חופש דת ושוויון

### Rabbis and Cantors for Religious Freedom and Equality in Israel

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#### Introduction

September 28, 2018 - 19 תשרי 5779

Friends,

Chag sameach,

Beginning this month, we will be striving to include more original materials in our monthly newsletter, and hence the article in this edition from our colleague, Asher Lopatin, a nationally recognized Modern Orthodox leader, who plans to move to Metro Detroit this summer to create an academic center focused on civil discourse — and to lead a new Modern Orthodox synagogue.

The nature and inclusiveness of a Jewish State is on all of our minds. Who defines what is Jewish and the legitimacy of religious streams among our

#### Israel Can Be More of a Jewish State Without A Chief Rabbinate

By Rabbi Asher Lopatin

**Israel was created as a Jewish State and by strong consensus among Israel Jews and Diaspora Jews it should remain so forever. A poll commissioned by the Israel Democracy Institute in 2007 found that 75% of Israeli Arabs support Israel being a Jewish (and democratic) state. Historically, the League of Nations and the United Nations both took the position over the 20th century that there should be a Jewish State (or self-ruled entity) in the historic homeland of the Jewish people. Yet as we are entering the next 70 years of Israel's existence, there is still not a clear understanding or consensus, in Israel or outside, for what it means to be a Jewish state. As MK Rachel Azaria (Kulanu) said at a recent panel discussion in Jerusalem, "... How do we put together a vision of Judaism from so many places? The truth is, we**

people. Arguments we thought were settled with Emancipation have arisen once again, but the politics within an independent state differ from the emancipation arguments of 19th century Europe. Rabbi Lopatin addresses not only inclusion in the power structure, but, also, vitalizing the Jewish people.

In response, Michael Chernick largely agrees, yet questions some of Lopatin's assumptions. We would, likewise, love to have your responses as well, which we would be glad to include, with your permission, in next month's newsletter.

We are celebrating זמן שמחתנו, and indeed we are privileged to live with the Third Jewish Commonwealth. We look forward to hearing from you the special responsibilities you feel are ours in light of the attempts to exclude modern definitions of Judaism from inclusion in the State of the Jewish people.

מועדים לשמחה

Mark H. Levin  
Editor-in-Chief,  
Ruach Hiddush

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**don't really know. We need time to mold our self-identity... We do so that Israel is about to define its Judaism..." (Schechter Institute, April 30, 2018). I would like to suggest three elements are at the core of what it means to be a Jewish state. Each of these elements is threatened by the Chief Rabbinate both in theory and in practice. Thus, while many may see having a Chief Rabbinate as a natural part of having a Jewish State, the Chief Rabbinate has actually harmed the very underpinnings which make Israel a Jewish state, while, at the same time, not being essential at all to the Jewish character of Israel.**

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

## [Some Comments on Rabbi Lopatin's Article](#)

By Rabbi Michael Chernick

**Rabbi Lopatin's interesting essay on the deadly effects of religious coercion used by the Rabbanut and the State itself in backing that institution is especially interesting coming from an Orthodox rabbi. As a friend and fellow Orthodox rabbi I can easily say that I agree with most of what he said. Nevertheless, I am left feeling that my friend Asher has surprisingly called for what amounts to the separation of religion and state with a form of cultural Judaism making Israel Jewish.**

**Unfortunately, as I see it, we are caught between the fire and the frying pan. Cultural Judaism does not have a robust history of being passed from generation to generation. If I knew beyond a doubt that the documentary treasures of the Jewish tradition and thought were required subjects in Israeli schools taught as history or literature, not as authoritative texts by which one had to live one's life, I would be satisfied. At least**

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**this would offer some possibility of an Israeli youngster or adult reaching a deeper appreciation of Jewish values and, if properly presented, end the false Jewish/democratic dichotomy created by supernationalist and Haredi entities.**

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

## **Israelis want American Jewish help in promoting religious pluralism, study finds**

By Ben Sales

**(JTA) — For years, American Jewish groups have agitated for more religious pluralism in Israel. And year after year, the Israeli government has acted as if the country's demographic and political realities make any kind of substantial reform impossible.**

**The latest version of an annual survey disputes that claim: It shows that Jewish Israelis disapprove of how their government handles religious issues. It shows that they want more liberal religious policies. And it says they want American Jews to intervene in the debate.**

[FULL ARTICLE >>>](#)

### **שטח הפקר | עונה 2 - המטרה: נטרול בג"ץ**

**פרק מיוחד על הקרב על בג"ץ: אחרי חוק הלאום, איך עובדת המהפכה להחלשת כוחו? 5 שופטי עליון בדימוס מתייצבים מול המצלמה ומסבירים את הסכנה בבג"ץ חלש. מולם שרת המשפטים שעונה להם - תנו לפוליטיקאים לשלוט**

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רו"ם חידו"ש היא ארגון של רבנים וחזנים הפועל למימוש מלא של הבטחת מגילת הצעמאות לחופש דת ושוויון. מימוש הבטחה זו חיוני לחיזוק זהותה של מדינת ישראל כמדינה יהודית ודמוקרטית ולהמשך השותפות עם העם היהודי לתפוצותיו.

Ruach Hiddush is a network of Rabbis and Cantors working to fully realize the promise of Israel's Declaration of Independence, which guarantees religious freedom and equality. The fulfillment of this promise is vital for strengthening Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, and for maintaining the solidarity of world Jewry.

מיזם ש ל חידו"ש Hiddush of a project

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