
meaningful that no longer needs to be based on isolating ourselves from the world around us.

Mr. Harris, you can have your *challah* and eat it too! One does not have to recede into the self-isolating communities of Williamsburg, Crown Heights and Kirat Yovel, to be a true Jew (they are not the only "authentic Jews"). Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan taught that one can live in two civilizations simultaneously: an American one and a Jewish one. It is possible to know Maimonides as well as you know baseball. Mr. Harris, too often we pose the question to people like you, "Become more Jewish. Judaism has a lot to offer you." This is true, but it is also a two-way street. Judaism also has much to gain by what you bring to Judaism--your thoughts, your ideas, your questions.

I hope this is not the last time we hear from you. Each of us need to bring and share our own divine sparks to help illumine the world. □

Some answers to important questions

Walter Hartmann, *Hammond IN*

Ned Harris' questions show that he has been influenced, positively, by his people's tradition and culture, quite considerably:

1. "Why do many Jews hide their identity...except in the face of antisemitism?" If indeed there are many such, it is a new phenomenon. Earlier, many Jews did try to hide and lose their identity. It is the Shoah (Holocaust) with its awesome mystery, causing feelings of guilt and shame, that has made it unfashionable to deny one's Jewishness.

2. "Why does integration...mean leaving our religious and ethnic roots behind?" Whatever our "ethnicity" may mean (and an "ethnic Jew" without further qualification is a logical, psychological and historical impossibility, making as much sense as a "Jew for Jesus"--none), the Shoah proved once again that it is almost impossible for us to leave our "ethnic roots behind".

And integrated Jews have found in our tradition what they do not, cannot, and do not want to leave behind. In Shai Held's terms, my vocabulary is heavily loaded with Jewish concepts; I do eat and sing as a Jew (in ways meaningful at least to me); I do pray in Jewish settings, with Jewish meanings (I *can* do no other).

Certainly, Fackenheim's commandment not to hand Hitler posthumous victories is important. But I doubt that Harris (or Held) can find a Judaism meaningful or worthwhile if it consists only of resisting Hitler (after 50

years). Letting Adolf Hitler define our Judaism surely is handing him an ultimate victory.

3. "What is the difference between recognizing our heritage...v. receding into the Jewish subculture...our identity (being) based upon the non-Jewishness of other Americans?"

My identity is not based on other Americans' non-Jewishness. It is based on what I perceive as the majesty, reasonableness, need fulfillment, beauty and fun of our tradition as I understand it, which does not include a "receding into the Jewish subculture".

Much more could and should be said. I have tried to write a bare-bones response. □

Positive judaism requires religion

Peter Winkelstein, *Amherst, NY*

Ned Harris (*Sh'ma*, 24/471) writes about his dissatisfaction with his Jewish identity. He suggests that he, and others, "do not identify with the Jewish community on a religious basis. We identify with the Jewish community on an ethnic basis only when 'standing guard' against threats from outside forces". Further, he says that "people like us do not need to be brought back into the fold or assisted in rediscovering our Jewishness".

It is not clear to me what Mr. Harris does need. It seems that he is unhappy with a Jewish identity which is essentially anti-antisemitism. He would like a more "positive" foundation for his identity, but rejects religious affiliation. The issue thus becomes: is it possible to be secularly Jewish without being only a reactionary to antisemitism?

I think not. To have a Jewish identity means to identify with the Jewish group. The Jewish group is defined by those traditions, history and rituals which are specific to Jews and different from those of the society at large. It is the differences that divide a group from its surroundings. In Judaism, the traditions, history and rituals are so intimately connected to religious practices that I think they cannot be separated.

Therefore, in order to affirmatively create a Jewish identity, one must adopt at least some Jewish religious practices. While it is possible for a person to call himself Jewish without embracing any religious practices, I think that without religion he will only experience his Jewishness when faced with anti-Jewishness. Without religion, Jewish living is no different from American living. It is unfortunate that many Jews only see the distinction between Jews and non-Jews through antisemitism. □