

Limits of Labels:
Addressing the Challenges to Jewish Unity

LABELS OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

INTRO: (Read aloud)

Jews are most often labeled by their levels of religious observance, the synagogue they belong to, and how they publicly identify. There exists layers upon layers of subcategories within each faction of Jewish observance. Whereas these subcategories allow us to express our individuality, itself a part of the intrinsic beauty of the Jewish religion, these divisions have also prevented us from knowing how to accept each other. Most strikingly, it is these divisions that sit at the forefront of the many disparities within our homeland, the land of Israel.

How can we continue to let our own differences further divide us within the land that is supposed to be an equal home to all? How can we begin to accept one another more openly, so that our common cause has the power of unity behind it?

We are now going to assess various quotes and videos that will cultivate a greater discussion around this topic. There will be a couple of guiding questions in between the sources along with ones that create a discussion around the topic as a whole.

QUOTES: (Read aloud)

An anonymous quote that was posted as a Pre-Rosh Hashannah Message: *“Shana Tova to modern, ultra & just plain Orthodox Jews, Haredi Jews, Mitnagdim, Chasidim, Conservative, Conservadox, Reform & ConForm Jews, Gartel Jews, non-Gartel Jews, Jews with sheitels & without, Tichel Jews, sheitel, tichel & hat Jews, frum from birth Jews, baalei teshuva, black hat, kipa s’ruga, payos in front of the ear Jews, payos in back of the ear Jews, kipa only in shul / hat in shul / no shul at all Jews, [Mizrahi Jews, Aguda Jews, Jews by choice, bathrobe on Friday night Jews, cardiac Jews, Black Jews, White Jews, 3-day-a-year Jews, JTS, RJJ, HUC, HTC, MTJ, BMT Jews, NCSY Jews, feminist Jews, traditional Jews, Kaddish Jews, political Jews, intellectual Jews, tomato Jews & orange Jews, Birthright Jews, single Jews, married Jews, wish I was married Jews, Galitzianers, Litvaks, Polacks, Greener Jews, Redder Jews, Jews in kapatas, Jews in T-shirts, Hungarian Jews, Romanian Jews, Czech Jews, Jews on the Hungarian-Czech Border Jews, Ashkenazim, Sefardim, Yemenite Jews, Jews with an accent, Jews who speak perfect Midwestern English Hebrew, Zionists, non-Zionists, anti-Zionists, post-Zionists, closet Jews, shnorrers, baalei tzedaka, tzadikim, Kohanim, Levi’im, Yisraelim, machers, m’vinim, & poshet Jews, EVERY KIND of Jew in this vast Universe: May we all unite - without a fight!]*”

Strong Together

How do you feel when you hear so many subcategories physically listed out?

(OPEN TO RESPONSES FROM GROUP - 2 to 5 minutes)

WATCH:

Jewish Unity

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFRtthK5skI>

The Rabbi and the Israeli Taxi Driver

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTT99oG6JrE>

Does watching these videos breakdown your outlook on the division between religious and secular Jews? (OPEN TO RESPONSES FROM GROUP - 2 to 5 minutes)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Why do we feel pressured to categorize based on our level of observance?

Why do we yearn for such a belonging?

Why do we find it difficult to appreciate all the different ways we are able to express our Judaism?

What does it mean to you that a Jew can be practicing or not-practicing but still undoubtedly identify themselves as a Jew?

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