Jewish Identity, Belonging, and Community in the 21st Century

Community Beyond the Boundaries

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Shalom Hartman Institute of North America

Wednesday, May 10, 2017
B'nai Jeshurun
Rabbi J. Rolando Matalon’s Webinar Follow-Up to May 10 Shalom Hartman Lecture

Wednesday, May 17  |  12:00PM  |  Online  |  All Welcome
Join Rabbi Matalon’s live interactive webinar as we explore and unfold the ideas raised in Rabbi Dr. Donniel Hartman’s lecture, “Community Beyond the Boundaries.” Tune in at www.bj.org/webinar.

Members’ Input Forum

Wednesday, May 17  |  88th Street Sanctuary & Frankel Hall  |  Members Only
Session 1: 5:00-7:15PM  |  Session 2: 7:45-10:00PM
The Members’ Input Forum will be our last touchstone before making any decisions regarding BJ’s approach to Jewish identity and intermarriage. Because we want an in-depth understanding of our community’s perspectives, we urge each of you to attend one of the two input sessions. In small groups facilitated by Resetting the Table, you will discuss two questions that, in comparison to the thematic discussions we have been having up to now, will be much more granular and concrete. Your answers will directly inform our thinking as we determine our next steps, the first of which we will present at the Annual Meeting on June 15. Email JIBC@bj.org to register, please be sure to specify which session you would like to attend.

INSIGHTS: HELP UP ANALYZE
Now that we have finished collecting new input, the next step in the Insights process is to explore and analyze the thoughts and stories you and your fellow BJ members have shared so generously at bj.insights.us. We plan to have the first of these insights ready to share with you in the coming weeks. As this is a collective reflection, we would like to invite you to be part of this analysis by completing a few simple analytical tasks. All BJ members should have received an email containing their unique link to access the site. If you need help accessing the site or if you have any questions, email insights@bj.org for support.
About the Shalom Hartman Institute

The Shalom Hartman Institute is a pluralistic center of research and education deepening and elevating the quality of Jewish life in Israel and around the world. Through our work, we are redefining the conversation about Judaism in modernity, religious pluralism, Israeli democracy, Israel and world Jewry, and the relationship with other faith communities.

Our work focuses on developing and enhancing:

- **21st Century Judaism**: Developing compelling Jewish ideas capable of competing in the modern marketplace of identities and thought.
- **Religious Pluralism**: Building a Jewish people and a State of Israel that respect and celebrate diversity.
- **Jewish and Democratic Israel**: Ensuring Israel's foundations as the democratic homeland of the Jewish people committed to equal rights and religious freedom for all.
- **Jewish Peoplehood**: Forming a strong mutual commitment between world Jewry and Israelis as equal partners in the future of Jewish life.
- **Judaism and the World**: Serving as a gateway for leaders of other faiths to engage with Judaism and Israel and build new foundations of understanding and cooperation.

The Shalom Hartman Institute of North America enriches the resources, vision, and commitment of the leaders and change agents who shape the future of Jewish life in North America and set the agendas of its educational, religious, and community institutions. Through text study, peer learning, and interdenominational dialogue, the Institute is shaping a future for North American Jewry of intellectual renaissance and renewed inspiration.

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Rabbi Dr. Donniel Hartman is President of the Shalom Hartman Institute and author of *Putting God Second: How to Save Religion from Itself*. Donniel is the founder of some of the most extensive education, training and enrichment programs for scholars, educators, rabbis, and religious and lay leaders in Israel and North America. He is a prominent essayist, blogger and lecturer on issues of Israeli politics, policy, Judaism, and the Jewish community.

He has a Ph.D. in Jewish philosophy from Hebrew University, an M.A in political philosophy from New York University, an M.A. in religion from Temple University, and Rabbinic ordination from the Shalom Hartman Institute.

He is the author of *The Boundaries of Judaism*; co-editor of *Judaism and the Challenges of Modern Life*; co-author of *Spheres of Jewish Identity*; and lead author of *Speaking iEngage: Creating a New Narrative Regarding the Significance of Israel for Jewish Life*. He is currently completing his next book, entitled *Who are the Jews?*

He is married to Adina and is the father of three children and two grandchildren.
Community Beyond the Boundaries
Donniel Hartman

B’nai Jeshurun Jewish Identity Conversation
May 10, 2017

1. Maimonides, Hilkhot Mamrim, Chapter 3 p. 1
2. Rambam Responsa 449 p. 1
3. Babylonian Talmud Hullin 5a p. 2
1. **Maimonides, Hilkhot Mamrim Chapter 3**

1. He who repudiates the Oral Law is classed with the apostates (whom any person has a right to put to death).

2. As soon as it is made public that he has repudiated the Oral Law, (he is cast into the pit and is not rescued from it). He is placed on a par with the apostates, and those who deny the divine origin of Scripture, informers and *Meshumadim* - all of whom are ruled out of the community of Israel. No witnesses or previous warning or judges are required. Whoever puts any of them to death fulfills a great precept, for he removes a stumbling block.

3. This applies only to one who repudiates the Oral Law as a result of his reasoned opinion and conclusion, who walks light-mindedly in the stubbornness of his heart, denying first the Oral Law, as did Zadok and Boethus and all who went astray. But their children and grandchildren, who, misguided by their parents, were raised among the Karaites and trained in their views, are like a child taken captive by them and raised in their religion, whose status is like that of one who was coerced to do so... since he was reared in the erroneous ways of his fathers... Therefore efforts should be made to bring them back in repentance, to draw them near with the help of friendly relations, so that they may return to the strength-giving source of the Torah.

2. **Rambam Responsa 449**

Question: How should Rabbinates behave toward Karaites concerning the circumcision of their sons, inquiring after them, going to their homes, drinking their wine, and all other matters?

Answer: ...The Karaites living here in Alexandria and in the land of Egypt, and in Damascus, and in other places in Moslem lands and elsewhere, are worthy of respect. We should approach them honestly, and show decency when conducting our affairs with them, abiding by the ways of truth and peace so long as they too behave toward us in good faith, and “put away... a dissembling mouth and perverse lips” (Proverbs 4:24), refraining from slandering the Rabbinic sages of this generation. All the more so, when they forgo mockery and ridicule when considering the words of our holy sages, the *Tannaim* of blessed memory, rabbis of the Mishnah and the Talmud whose words and rulings, as ordained by them, by Moses, and by God, we obey.

If that occurs, it is incumbent upon us to respect them and inquire after them even at their homes, to circumcise their sons even on the Sabbath, to bury their dead, and to comfort their mourners. Evidence for this can be learned from Gittin 61a: “We wish Gentiles a good harvest in the fallow year, and we inquire after them, for the sake of peace [mipnei darkei shalom]”...We learn: One does not go to the house of a Gentile on a day that misfortune afflicts him/her, and when meeting a Gentile at the market on his holiday, one greets him/her briefly and gravely. Hence, we infer from this that visiting a Gentile and inquiring after him on a day when he/she is not afflicted by misfortune is allowed. Many stories in the Talmud point this out, such as that in the first chapter of Tractate Avodah Zarah. And if this is so concerning idolaters, it is even more so concerning those who repudiate all the laws of the Gentiles and acknowledge the one God, may God’s name be exalted, that we are to be allowed to inquire after them, even at their homes.
3. Babylonian Talmud, Hulin 5a

Now this Tannaic statement is self-contradictory. It says: Of you, but not all of you, thus excluding a Meshumad; and then it says: One should accept sacrifices from Israelite felons.

There is no contradiction. The Meshumad who is excluded refers to one who is a Meshumad to reject the whole Torah, while the felon (who is allowed to bring sacrifices), refers to one who is a Meshumad to reject one particular law...

then is the one who offers wine libation to idols, or one who violates the Shabbat in public also excluded? This proves that one who is a Meshumad to worship idols (and to violate the Shabbat in public) are classified as a Meshumad to reject the whole Torah.


Question: in our Minyan there are those who violate the Sabbath in Public... Are we allowed in include them?

Answer: The individuals from America are not to be excluded because of their Shabbat violations for they are like a child who was taken captive...Furthermore, another basis for including them is because in our generation one is not called a violator of the Shabbat in public, given the fact that the majority of people do so. When the majority of Israel are innocent and it is a minority who dare violate this prohibition (regarding Shabbat), then one is a kofer in the Torah, a brazen performer of abominations and an individual who separates him or herself from the community of Israel. However, given the fact that as a result of our multitude of sins the majority breach the barrier (and desecrate the Shabbat in public), their deficiency is the source for their correction, for the individual thinks that it is not such a significant sin and it need not be done in private. As a result his or her public violation is as if it was done in private. Quite to the contrary, the God-fearing in our generation are considered as if they were separated and distinguished (from the community) while the sinners function in a manner that is considered normal.


12) Why did Levi not earn a portion of the Land of Israel or its spoils together with its brethren? Because it was set aside to serve God, to attend to God, and to instruct God's upright ways and just laws to the masses... They were therefore set apart from the ways of the world: they do not conduct warfare like the rest of Israel, nor do they receive a portion [of the land]... They are rather the army of God....

13) Not only the tribe of Levi, but also each and every human being who comes into the world, whose spirit moves them and whose knowledge gives them understanding to set themselves apart in order to stand before the Lord, to serve God, to worship God, and to know God, who walks upright as God had created them to do, and releases his or her neck from the yoke of the many speculations that the children of humans are wont to pursue – such an individual is consecrated to the Holy of Holies, and their portion and inheritance shall be in the Lord forever and ever more. The Lord will grant them in this world whatsoever is sufficient for them, the same as God had granted to the priests and to the Levites.
Join us for a day-long iEngage conference exploring the legacy of the past and the future of modern Israel.

Six Days that shaped 50 Years

New York | May 22, 2017

Key faculty includes:

Yehuda Kurtzer  Elana Stein Hain  Yossi Klein Halevi

JCC Manhattan
1:00 – 9:00 pm

$25 / $18 students | Conference fee includes dinner. Dietary laws observed.

Closing Program: 7:00 - 9:00 pm
“50 Years On: A Conversation on the Legacy of Six Days in June”
Yehuda Kurtzer and Daniel Kurtzer

For more information and to register:
shalomhartman.org/iEngage67
Use code SixDaysStudent for student registration

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New York  May 22, 2017
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