

# Jewish Assertiveness

*Judaism has to be authentic, with values my father held dear, innately and organically Jewish, not progressive attempts to 'pass.'*

by Matthew Hausman



**There's a crisis in** American Jewish leadership and it involves the misuse of communal authority to sanction dogmatic politics.

As reported in the Jewish media in December, a scheduled speaking engagement by Professor Alan Dershowitz was cancelled at New York's Temple Emanu-El, a prominent American Reform congregation. The temple rescinded an invitation to the staunchly pro-Israel Dershowitz but welcomed Peter Beinart, whose hostile views on Israel are perhaps more consistent with the progressive intellectual elite.

Capricious rationalizations aside, progressive anti-Israel antipathy is not justified by revisionist Palestinian Arab history or as a response to Israeli social policies, which often tend to comport with liberal sensibilities. Nor is it emblematic of traditional Jewish introspection. The rejection

of Jewish nationhood and tradition arises from political bias and the discarding of values that historically shaped Jewish moral and social conduct.

It is also fueled by the urge “to pass” that has afflicted culturally ambivalent Jews since Napoleon tore down the ghetto walls.

Though once thought of as the desire to blend in quietly, trying “to pass” today often demands the public embrace of political ideologies that defy Jewish tradition. There is nothing quiet about such conduct. Too often, the liberal establishment disparages traditional Judaism as ethnocentric and trivializes Jewish history by reducing it to partisan allegory, while failing to demand adherence to traditional beliefs as a guide for daily living...

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