

The Conditionality of Liberal Support for Israel

by Matthew Hausman



Jerusalem Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar speaks at the mixed gender Western Wall plaza, on June 14, 2016

The recent flap over [with a letter](#) to Prime Minister Netanyahu from the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, decrying both the incident and the broader refusal to recognize non-Orthodox authority in Israel. The controversy has generated an avalanche of commentary – much of it from the nontraditional movements to inflame passions that may be less about the availability of mixed prayer services at the Wall than about the Israeli public's ambivalence regarding liberal Judaism.

There have also been liberal threats to cease supporting Israel over the issue, though many liberals have already abandoned the Jewish State for reasons that have more to do with secular politics than religion.

The Reform and Conservative movements have never flourished in Israel as in America, and the reason is not simply that the Orthodox have had a monopoly over the religious establishment since 1948. Though Orthodox hegemony is certainly a fact, there has never been a demand for nontraditional alternatives by secular Israelis, for whom religious identity is not defined by movement affiliation or liberal politics.

Israelis seem to have little affinity for non-Orthodox ideologues who conflate Judaism with progressivism, or for the liberal compulsion to downplay radical Islam and validate supposedly moderate organizations that deny Jewish history and sovereignty...

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