

The Erosion of Jewish Identity in America

The compulsion to secularize Jewish identity or correlate it with progressivism has produced a generation that is hostile to traditional observance and tolerant of assimilation.

by Matthew M. Hausman



American non-Orthodox Jews today are less religiously and ethnically grounded than their grandparents and more likely to define Jewishness in secular or political terms. They are also more likely to assimilate and intermarry and to view those who do both as positive role models. Not surprisingly, they tend to validate their cultural detachment by denigrating classical standards of Jewish identity and deprecating traditional observance and devotion to Israel.

They often claim that unbalanced criticism of Israel is consistent with Judaic values and rationalize anti-Semitism as

a reaction to Israeli provocations or Jewish tribalism. The more extreme among them characterize progressive anti-Semitism as political speech, and in their zeal to delegitimize Israel, affirm revisionist propaganda and validate Islamist front organizations posing as moderate.

The Jewish left condemns Israel – often using slurs and stereotypes – and professes to speak with an authentic Jewish voice. This claim is nonsense, however, and instead raises the question of whether those espousing it really understand Jewish tradition, or simply use their heritage to justify political agendas that sanction or tolerate anti-Semitism.

Progressives who promote Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (“BDS”) or organizations like J Street, which endorses labelling products made in Judea and Samaria, are endorsing positions detrimental to Israel and Jewish continuity. Most seem to discount history and observance and to equate Judaism with liberalism and the Democratic Party, despite evidence indicating that bigotry against Jews and Israel today is more common on the left than the right...

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