

Why Should The Jews Survive As A People?

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If there is anything the average, modern Jewish teenager does not want to accept, it is the fact that the Jew is different from other people. Some adults, also, driven by the same kind of emotional needs that help to motivate the teenager, want desperately to believe that in every respect they are no different from the non-Jew around them. This belief is based on a desire to be accepted by the majority group, a desire which we all share in part. It may also be based on the fear of persecution for being different, a fear that we can all understand.

The sociological facts, however, support the conclusion that Jews, as a group, are different from non-Jewish groups, not in all respects, to be sure, but in some very significant respects. And individual Jews tend to be different from non-Jewish individuals for subtle and complex reasons. Even the fanatic desire on the part of some Jews to lose their Jewish coloration and to become identical with the prevailing majority makes them DIFFERENT from the majority, for no member of the relaxed majority struggles as hard as this individual Jew to be LIKE THE AVERAGE. The very INTENSITY of this Jew reveals the fact that he is a member of a minority group struggling to be accepted by the "in" group. This, too, is understandable.

So, let us admit something about ourselves. However you may strive to be like the "others," you cannot be like them if you know that six million of your people were killed by a modern nation short decades ago. However we may dress like the "others," or use the accepted hair-dos, or drink the popular brands of liquor, or dance the vogue dances, we still react sharply when the newspaper headlines inform us that Syrian invaders tried to blow up an Israeli water line. However relaxed we may be at the office Christmas party, we are suddenly removed from the group when the Christmas carols begin and someone says joyously, "Christ is born in Bethlehem."

How 'Different'?

Some Jews are different for positive reasons. That is, they believe that God is one and not three. They believe that God is in all men and that he didn't come to fruition just in the man, Jesus. They believe that the Jewish people have a role to play in human history of helping to lead man to the "messianic day" of brotherhood. They believe that the experience of wandering and suffering of the Jews has helped to prepare them ESPECIALLY for the role of objective critic and the liberal vanguard. Some Jews, while believing in the equality of all men, nonetheless, believe that the Jewish people are particularly well equipped to serve as the "yeast in the dough," the planter of the seed.

Other Jews are not blessed with this positive orientation towards Judaism. They either are ignorant of its specific content or they have the emotional need to be blind to it. Still, they cannot escape their being different, even if this difference leads them to compulsive imitation of the fads of the majority. How much healthier it would be for all Jews, if they could accept their Jewishness and apply their energies to the positive values of the Jewish group. How much happier they would be, and how much more effective would be our voice in the community!