

Responsa Across the Denominations: Interdenominational Relationships

Rambam, Laws of Rebels, Chapter 3

1: A person who does not acknowledge validity of the Oral Law is not the rebellious elder mentioned in the Torah. Instead, he is one of the heretics and he should be put to death by any person.

2: Since it has become known that such a person denies the Oral Law, he may be pushed into a pit and may not be helped out. He is like all the rest of the heretics who say that the Torah is not Divine in origin, those who inform on their fellow Jews, and the apostates. All of these are not considered as members of the Jewish people. There is no need for witnesses, a warning, or judges for them to be executed. Instead, whoever kills them performs a great mitzvah and removes an obstacle from people at large.

3: To whom does the above apply? To a person who denied the Oral Law consciously, according to his perception of things. He follows after his frivolous thoughts and his capricious heart and denies the Oral Law first, as did Tzadok and Beitus and those who erred in following them. The children of these errant people and their grandchildren whose parents led them away and they were born among these Karaites and raised according to their conception, they are considered as a children captured and raised by them. Such a child may not be eager to follow the path of mitzvot, for it is as if he was compelled not to. Even if later, he hears that he is Jewish and saw Jews and their faith, he is still considered as one who was compelled against observance, for he was raised according to their mistaken path. This applies to those who we mentioned who follow the erroneous Karaite path of their ancestors. Therefore it is appropriate to motivate them to repent and draw them to the power of the Torah with words of peace.

רמב"ם הלכות ממרים פרק ג

א: מי שאינו מודה בתורה שבעל פה אינו זקן ממרא האמור בתורה אלא הרי זה בכלל האפיקורוסין [ומיתתו בכל אדם]:

ב: מאחר שנתפרסם שהוא כופר בתורה שבעל פה [מזרידין אותן] ולא מעלין והרי הוא כשאר כל האפיקורוסין והאומרים אין תורה מן השמים והמוסרין והמומרין שכל אלו אינם בכלל ישראל ואין צריך לא לעדים ולא התראה ולא דיינים [אלא כל ההורג אחד מהן עשה מצוה גדולה והסיר המכשול]:

במה דברים אמורים באיש שכפר בתורה שבעל פה במחשבתו ובדברים שנראו לו, והלך אחר דעתו הקלה ואחר שרירות לבו וכופר בתורה שבעל פה תחילה כצדוק ובייתוס וכן כל התועים אחריו, אבל בני התועים האלה ובני בניהם שהדיחו אותם אבותם ונולדו בין הקראים וגדלו אותם על דעתם, הרי הוא כתינוק שנשבה ביניהם וגדלוהו ואינו זריז לאחוז בדרכי המצות שהרי הוא כאנוס ואף על פי ששמע אח"כ [שהוא יהודי וראה היהודים ודתם הרי הוא כאנוס שהרי גדלוהו על טעותם] כך אלו שאמרנו האוחזים בדרכי אבותם הקראים שטעו, לפיכך ראוי להחזיר בתשובה ולמשכם בדברי שלום עד שיחזרו לאיתן התורה.

Iggrot Moshe Yoreh De'ah 2:100

On the issue of if it is permissible to be on a committee for the needs of the Jewish community with "heretics" (1970)

The community committee that deals with many of the needs of the city such as charity, culture, education and the religion department...it was decided for many years that this department would be made up of

שו"ת אגרות משה יורה דעה חלק ב סימן ק

בענין אם יש להתיר להיות בועד אחד עם כופרים כשנעשה לצורכי היהודים כ"ג תמוז תש"ל....

בדבר ועד העיר דהקהלה שהיא על כמה עיני וצרכי העיר ובתוכם איכא גם עיני צדקה קולטור חינוך וגם רעליגיע דעפרטאמענט, והועד הזה הוא על כל העינים אשר כל הדעפארטמענטען נוסדים על ידי ועד הזה, והוחלט זה הרבה שנים אשר

<p>people who are followers of the Torah, which is known as Orthodoxy, and now they want to bring in Conservatives into this committee as well...they want to know if we will agree to this or if we will leave and start an only Orthodox community.</p> <p>...In any case, one must distance themselves as much as they can from those Conservatives, as they are "heretics" in many of the essentials of the religion and many mitzvot from the torah, and many of their "rabbis" are instigators of heresy and breaking of the Sabbath, and many other grave transgressions, and there is no difference between them and other "heretics", and they are only getting worse day by day. ... This committee is set up for the Jewish people only, and so there is nothing that would not be related to the Torah, even the giving of charity, culture, and education. There is no way to be on a committee together with these "heretics", and you must create your own community that is only for those who are Torah observant when dealing with issues for the greater Jewish community.</p>	<p>הרעליגיעזר דעפרטאמענט יהיה מאנשי אמונה בדרך התורה הנקרא ארטאדקסישע, ועתה רוצים להכניס גם קאנסערוואטיווע בתוך הועד, ומצד מחאה שלכם הציע צד השני שיבואו הקאנסערוואטיוון בשם בעאבאכטער עד הבחירות ולא יתערבו בעניני הרעליגיע, ורוצים מעלת כבודכם לידיע אם תסכימו על זה או שתצאו מהועד ליסד קהלה מיוחדת של ארטאדקסישע בלבד.</p> <p>...</p> <p>עכ"פ איך שהיה עד עתה אינו נוגע לדינא, כי מעצם הדין צריך להתרחק בכל האפשר מאלו הקאנסערוואטיוון שהם גם כן כופרים בהרבה עיקרי הדת ובהרבה מצות התורה ורוב ראבי"ס שלהם מסיתים ומדיחים לכפירה ולחלול שבת ולעוד הרבה עבירות חמורות, ואין חלוק ביניהם ובין כל מיני כופרים והם נעשים גרועים מיום ליום ... דהא הועד נעשה רק לעניני יהודים בלבד וליכא שום דבר דלא יהיה שייך לדיני התורה דאף עניני צדקה וכ"ש קולטור וחינוך שכל עיקרם הם עניני תורה אין בשום אופן להיות בועד אחד עם כופרים מכל המינים, וצריך לעשות קהלה מיוחדת משומרי תורה לבדם לכל הענינים שנעשה לטובת היהודים, שלכן פשוט אם היה עד עתה נמי באופן לא טוב צריך לשנות ולעשות כדכתבתי. ידידם מוקרים, משה פיינשטיין</p>
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Joint Conservative-Reform Religious Schools

RABBI ELLIOT N. DORFF

(http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/assets/public/halakhah/teshuvot/19861990/dorff_jointschools.pdf)

Question: ... 1.Should I participate in a joint Confirmation service held by the joint Conservative/Reform Religious school at the Reform Temple when there will be many men who refuse to cover their heads? 2. Should I participate in similarly co-sponsored Holocaust services which, when held at the Reform Temple, men refuse to cover their heads? 3. Should I sign school certificates of children in the joint Conservative/Reform Religious school who are only patrilineally Jewish? 4. Are there any guidelines for Conservative synagogues participating in a joint school for patrilineally Jewish children?

Answer: The first issue, of course, is whether Conservative rabbis and institutions should engage in such joint ventures with Reform institutions at all...The philosophical differences between the Conservative and Reform movements, discussed by a number of writers from both movements, become painfully obvious when the details of running a school must be

confronted. There are many areas of agreement between Conservative and Reform Judaism, on the one hand, and between Conservative and Orthodox Judaism on the other; but the three movements are ultimately distinct not only because of historical accident but because they each have a different view of how one should be Jewish in our time. Since the task at hand is to teach these views to the next generation, it certainly should not be surprising that each movement will have a distinctive approach as to how that should be done. Educational approaches and techniques are never ideologically neutral. Moreover, the religious differences between the movements are not confined to the school and synagogue. They pervade the homes. Conservative rabbis and educators may not have succeeded in convincing a large percentage of Conservative members to observe Shabbat and kashrut, but members of Conservative synagogues and those who attend Conservative schools or send their children to them are not surprised when the synagogue or school teaches and advocates observance of those and other mitzvot as part of what it means to be a Jew. Reform ideology requires Reform schools to teach mitzvot so that Reform Jews can intelligently consider them for incorporation in their personal lives, but the emphasis is on the individual's autonomous choice about these matters, not on the imperative to observe. It is a matter of choice in the eyes of Reform Jews, a matter of obligation (however explained and however much violated in practice) for Conservative Jews. As a result, while both Conservative and Reform parents undoubtedly want to assure a high quality, general education, Conservative parents expect- or at least are willing to tolerate -greater duration and depth in their children's Jewish education, as a comparison of the timing and curriculum in existing Conservative and Reform schools would demonstrate...

CONCLUSION This responsum has not, and cannot, address all of the issues which a joint Conservative-Reform school raises, although it has dealt with some of the major questions. Rabbi Pesach Schindler, in writing about Solomon Schechter Schools specifically, has well stated an important theme when thinking about religious and educational guidelines for any school: The Solomon Schechter Day School Association does not share the view of those who insist that "hammering out" a complete set of guidelines, goals, and objectives for a new Solomon Schechter day school as a condition prior to initiating the organizational process is absolutely essential. Those associated with education and, specifically, Jewish education, have witnessed [the] stultifying, and even the eventual demise, of promising projects on the planning board because "all was not ready and in its proper niche."

In the spirit of , Solomon Schechter day schools (and most day schools in North America) have been organized by those who have felt the need for such a Movement and [who have] followed sound intuition in acting on their convictions. However, equally objectionable are the uncharted policies of schools which, in the heat of organization, continue to organize and expand, without closely examining and reexamining the very purpose of their existence, becoming meandering institutions without true purpose or perspective. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the school authorities, and specifically, the board of education, together with its professional staff, to develop a philosophy of education sufficiently flexible so that it can evolve along with the functioning school. The school will then assume its proper role as a laboratory, wherein objectives and goals are tested, validated, evaluated, and, if need be, modified or changed.

A Conservative-Reform school may require that somewhat more be spelled out at the outset than a Conservative school since the affiliations of the founding people already indicate that they have some disagreements about how they understand and practice Judaism. These guidelines will hopefully help all founders of a Conservative-Reform school to articulate its

distinctive religious policy. Nevertheless, one must remember that some things must be left to experience. The keys to establishing reasonable religious and educational policies in such a setting are to remember that Jewish education is worth whatever headaches it takes to work out a way of providing it; that a school bearing the endorsement of a Conservative synagogue must provide for and encourage halakhic observance in a modern mode; and that where separate movement supplementary or day schools are not feasible, a great deal can be accomplished in coming to an agreement about these issues with our religionists if all will remember our common goals.

CCAR RESPONSA (<https://ccarnet.org/responso/nyp-no-5758-12/>)

Orthodox Minyan in a Reform Synagogue 5758.12

She'elah

A few years ago a young man converted to Judaism at our congregation, which is the only one in the city. He subsequently underwent an orthodox conversion, left the community and attended yeshiva in New York. During a recent visit to Jackson he requested the use of our facilities for an "orthodox" minyan. By this he means that women, though they may attend the service, will not count as part of the minyan and will be denied any opportunity to participate in the service.

My initial response to this request was "no," on the grounds that the minyan would not be egalitarian and therefore contrary to our communal custom (*minhag hamakom*). On the other hand, I wonder if the Judaic value of hospitality to guests (*hakhnasat orechim*) argues in favor of accommodating Orthodox visitors? Does the answer differ when these visitors ask for space for a minyan that meets on a regular or permanent basis? How forthcoming should we be, especially in view of the numerous incidents at the Western Wall, where, to put it mildly, no accommodations are made for liberal practice and "mixed" *minyanim*? (Rabbi James Egolf, Jackson, MS)

Teshuvah

1. ...This *she'elah* presents just such a hard case. It involves a fundamental tension between two important Reform Jewish principles, both of which we proudly affirm. Each of these principles represents a range of values and commitments which express themselves throughout our personal and communal observance. And each of them would seem to argue for a contradictory response to our question. For the purposes of this *teshuvah*, we designate these principles by the labels "Jewish pluralism" and "Reform Jewish integrity."

By "Jewish pluralism," we mean our recognition as *liberals* that there are a number of different and even conflicting paths which Jews might legitimately walk in response to the call of Torah.[3] As Reform Jews, we demand the right to make our own religious decisions, and we reject any effort to impose upon our communities an "orthodoxy" which claims that there is but one correct way to believe, to pray, and to practice our faith. And simple fairness requires that, just as we assert this freedom for ourselves, we must grant it to others. We acknowledge that

all Jews are entitled to observe their Judaism in a manner that speaks to them and suits their spirit. Accordingly, we do not insist that they adhere to our own version of "the correct way." This commitment would lead us to provide this young man and those who would join him with space to worship according to their custom. True, our congregation already offers religious services to which visitors are welcome, and we might think that in making these services available we have fulfilled toward them our duty of *hakhnasat orechim* (if, indeed, that *mitzvah* can be said to apply to our case).[4] Yet by defining themselves as an Orthodox community, these individuals declare that they cannot meet their liturgical needs by participating in our own communal worship. As liberals who affirm Jewish pluralism, we do not wish to compel them to do so. Nor do we wish to bar our doors to them, to tell them that unless they are willing to follow our rules they shall have to assemble elsewhere. To do so smacks of rank intolerance, a narrow-mindedness that ill-befits a liberal movement such as ours. On the contrary: we who affirm the positive value of Jewish religious diversity would prefer that they gather in our synagogue, which might then serve its true purpose as a "house of prayer for all Jews," a place where Jews of differing religious approaches may worship as they see fit.

By "Reform Jewish integrity," on the other hand, we express our conviction that Reform Judaism is based upon certain fundamental affirmations which define and distinguish us as a religious community. These affirmations constitute our core values, the irreducible content of our approach to Judaism, a content we cannot compromise without surrendering our integrity, without denying who and what we are. We are prepared, to be sure, to make some adjustments in our practice out of respect to Jewish diversity. In the present case, we would not oppose a request by a group to hold in our building a service at which a traditional *siddur* is used.[5] We would object, however, when this group identifies itself as an *Orthodox* community, for Orthodox Judaism espouses fundamental affirmations of its own which are incompatible with ours. One of these is its denial of ritual equality to women; thus, female members of our congregation would not be counted in this *minyan* and would be excluded from equal participation in its service. Another is Orthodoxy's refusal to recognize the halakhic validity of conversions supervised by Reform rabbis, on the grounds that our rabbis are incapable of constituting a valid *beit din* (rabbinical court); thus, the Orthodox group would not accept our Jews-by-choice as Jews at all. Our objection, in other words, is not that Orthodox practice differs from ours but that Orthodoxy disenfranchises well over half our membership and proclaims that Reform is not a legitimate expression of Judaism. To permit this group to assemble in *our* building is to transmit the message that its theology is somehow acceptable to us. We must not send that message.

Although we affirm Jewish religious pluralism as a great value, it is not our *only* value. Acceptance of diversity can never be allowed to call our other basic Judaic commitments into question. Put simply, there are limits to our pluralism. These limits are set by those standards which form the essence of our Jewish outlook, standards which can be violated only at the cost of our Reform Jewish integrity. For all our tolerance, we would never permit a group of Jews for

Jesus or other apostates to hold their worship services in our facility. Nor would we allow a group to organize an "alternative" Jewish service which denies as a matter of religious principle the right of participation to any Jew on the basis of gender. No religious community, no matter how liberal, could possibly exist if it were unable to draw lines, to set boundaries, and to agree upon at least the most minimal definitions of what it does and does not believe.[6] Our commitment to gender equality and our affirmation of our own Jewish religious legitimacy are examples of such boundaries; indeed, they are in the category of *minimal* standards, values without which "Reform Judaism" as we know it could scarcely exist. Our congregations dedicate themselves to the furtherance of these values and to the observance of these standards. To allow space to groups which repudiate them is to act in contradiction of our very purpose as a religious community.

2. *A Halakhic Precedent.* ...Our tradition offers us guidance in the form of a helpful precedent. We refer to the Talmud's discussion of one of the halakhic conflicts which divided the early rabbinical "schools" of Hillel and Shammai.[7] The question arises: although the *halakhah* generally follows the view of the school of Hillel,[8] did the school of Shammai ever put its theoretical viewpoint into concrete practice? Some, the Talmud suggests, answer this question in the affirmative. Yet to say this raises a problem: would not such an act violate the prohibition, derived from Deuteronomy 14:1, "do not divide yourselves into separate sects"?[9] This rule, if applied literally, seems to demand that those holding the minority or rejected legal viewpoint yield in practice to the majority or accepted opinion. The Talmud responds that the rule "do not divide yourselves" applies only to the context of a single *beit din* (rabbinical court), so that once a decision is rendered its judges do not express public dissent over it; however, "in a case of two separate rabbinical courts within the same community, the rule does not apply." [10] Each "court" is a distinct religious institution which enjoys its own halakhic integrity and is entitled to practice as it sees fit. The schools of Hillel and Shammai are equivalent to two separate "courts" within the same community; thus, each may practice according to its own understanding of the *halakhah*.

...Our text therefore suggests a compromise which pays allegiance to both these goals. Opposing viewpoints ("courts"; "schools") may coexist within the same institutional framework ("city"), so that each "court," while accepting the existence of the other, possesses a distinct identity. *Unity* is preserved both as a theoretical goal and because each "school" retains the practical authority to determine its own standards. *Diversity* is acknowledged because each "school" is granted Jewish legitimacy within its own realm.

...We are aware of the irony of this position. We know that, were the situation of our *she'elah* to be reversed, an Orthodox congregation would not likely grant permission to a Reform group to hold services in its synagogue building. This is because Orthodox Judaism is not a liberal creed. It proclaims that there is but one correct version of Jewish practice, and that Reform Jewish worship is not an acceptable variation of that correct version....On the contrary: they condemn us as heretics, they cast us outside the pale, they deny the Jewish validity of our

practice. It may be tempting to respond in kind, to reject them in return, to deny them space within our precincts as they would surely deny it to us. Yet our religious principles forbid us the path of retaliation. The conduct of the Orthodox Jews who drive us from our rightful place at the Western Wall cannot serve as a model for our own behavior. If they are not liberals, we are; if their conception of Judaism cannot make room for diversity, ours does and must. We look upon Orthodox Jews not as enemies but as friends. We greet them not as aliens and heretics but as our brothers and sisters. And whether or not they would do the same for us, our liberal Jewish faith demands that we reach out to them in a spirit of fellowship and generosity.

Conclusion. A Reform congregation may provide space within its facility for an Orthodox congregation to worship, provided that the latter maintains a separate and distinct identity. In this way, all will know clearly that our synagogue, while reaching out in friendship to our fellow Jews, in no way endorses those aspects of their religious practice that are offensive to us.

How might we best maintain this "separateness" as we host the Orthodox congregation? On this point, the members of the Committee differ.

Some of us feel that the necessary separation can be maintained only by insisting that this arrangement be temporary. They are willing to provide space to the Orthodox minyan for a strictly limited period, to enable them to find suitable quarters of their own; should this prove impossible, it would be evidence that the community as a whole cannot support a separate Orthodox congregation. In any case, we will have done our duty to assist them.

Others are willing to allow the Orthodox minyan to meet in our building on a permanent basis, provided that they do not assemble for worship in our sanctuary. The sanctuary has been dedicated to Reform Jewish worship, in which all members of our congregation are accepted as equals. An Orthodox minyan would exclude many of us from equal participation. To permit them to assemble in our sacred space would amount to an insult, a lessening of its sanctity.

The majority of us, however, would permit the Orthodox group to meet on a permanent basis in our building, including the sanctuary; we do not agree that the worship service of any legitimately Jewish congregation affects the holiness of that space. We would place two provisos upon our permission. First, the Reform congregation must be acknowledged as the *ba'al habayit*, the owner of the building. This means that the Orthodox group may use our facilities *only* so long as their usage does not conflict with our own services and other events. A clear and binding written agreement specifying the restrictions placed upon their usage of our facilities is a necessity. Second, it is best that this Orthodox group formally and legally constitute itself as an independent congregation, so that it not appear to be a *chavurah* or sub-group of our own. Moreover, we should charge them rent for the use of our facilities, although this rent might well be set at a purely symbolic amount. In this fashion, it will be evident to all that the two groups, their congregation and ours, are separate and distinct

entities, so that each may pursue--together yet independently of the other--its chosen path to Judaism and Torah.

For Further Reading:

- Orthodox Aspersions Against Reform Marriages
(https://archive.org/stream/resentreformresp012939mbp/resentreformresp012939mbp_djvu.txt)
- The Orthodox Attitude of Non-Observant Jews
http://thejewishreview.org/articles/printerfriendly.cfm?id=94&route=printerfriendly#_edn10
- The "Torah Im Derech Eretz" of Samson Raphael Hirsch
http://thejewishreview.org/articles/printerfriendly.cfm?id=94&route=printerfriendly#_edn10
- Judaism and Pluralism <http://pluralism.teachtorah.org/Kimelman%20Pluralism.pdf>
- A Jewish Perspective on Religious Pluralism
<http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1173&context=macintl>
- Articles by Rabbi Irving Greenberg
<http://rabbiirvinggreenberg.com/writing/scholarly-articles/>