

Jewish Pride

What is the definition of pride? It is a feeling of gratification ensuing from something good or laudable. Unfortunately, at some times in our lives, we don't feel any pride for being Jewish. Often times, we try to hide it by wearing a cap, covering any sign of our Jewish identity. Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski was once riding on a subway in New York city when he came upon a woman who was staring at him and giving him really nasty looks. The woman finally comes over and tells him "I'm Jewish myself, and I can't stand you people, you make me sick...the way you dress- we're not in Eastern Europe anymore!" She goes crazy about his beard, hat and jacket. After she is done with her tirade, the rabbi says to her, "I'm very sorry ma'am...but I'm Amish." She starts apologizing to him, telling him how she loves the Amish and how she visited an Amish community in the summer. "I love the Amish because they could hold on to their values in such times...I feel so horrible." A few stops later, he steps off the subway, and as the doors are closing, he takes off his hat, shows his kippa and says "And is it so bad that I'm Jewish?"

Torah and mitzvot do not go hand and hand with Jewish pride. They are two totally separate things. How come the Palestinian PR is stronger more than ever on college campuses? And this is post-9/11 America! Imagine if the Jews had done 9/11! All the Hillel houses would be empty. All the Jews would be hiding! What's the explanation for this? No matter how hard we try, we have to realize that the Jew is the eternal outsider. Far too often, instead of being embraced for all the things they contribute to society, they are hated and either thrown out or killed. As president John Adams once said, "The Hebrews have done more for the civilized nations than any other nation." And as Mark Twain once said, "If the statistics are right, the Jew is barely over 1% of the population, but he's always been heard of and is as prominent as any other people. His contributions are way out of proportions. Nations like the Greek and Roman were much greater and powerful but they are all gone now. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is still here. **All things are mortal but the Jew.**"

Why are the Jews not accepted in the world? What's the reason we are immortal? The answer to these questions is ultimately the same. We have to realize that we are separate from any other nations. As it says in the book of Vayikra, "You will be holy to me, I have separated you from the nations of the world." And as it says in the Havdala prayer "hamavdil bein kodesh lechol, bein Yisrael le Amim (the one who has separated holy and profane, between Israel and other nations)." Because we are different, we will always be alone. No matter how much we contribute to society, we will still be alone.

Our contributions are often the source of the hatred. Look at the Jews, they control everything; from finance to science to money to medicine. All our contributions are used against us. The Beis Halevi says on Parashat Shemot; the Jews saw that they were outsiders in Egypt so they decided to integrate into the Egyptian society so they could be accepted, but G-d had other plans. Because they tried to assimilate, G-d increased the hatred in the hearts of the Egyptians.

G-d isn't punishing us when he makes the Non-Jews hate us. He's doing it to

preserve us and to keep us from assimilating. As long as we realize that we are different, we will focus on what we are here to do and that is to serve G-d in the best possible way. When G-d separated us, he separated us forever. We will always be separate no matter how much we try to assimilate. The Ohr Somayach (died in 1925, before the holocaust) once said, “If a Jew forgets his origin and considers himself a citizen of his country, if he thinks Berlin is Jerusalem, he will be swallowed up without any pity from G-d.”

. What we have to do is to stand up and protect our country; protect our identity and religion. As Jews, we are the first born nation of G-d. There must be some reason why we are still around after all the persecution and torture we have been through as a nation. As Mark Twain said “All things are mortal but the Jew.”