

## Non-Orthodox, Non-Jew?

Even though I am a Karaite Jew I still find this type of attitude reprehensible. It only serves to further divide the Jews and cause consternation between people. It also reflects poorly upon the understanding of Torah as well as misunderstanding and repulsive reactions from non-Jews and Jews alike.

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As it has been recently [reported](#), non-Orthodox rabbis will be paid salaries by the Israeli government under certain circumstances. Of course, this does not in any way imply that these rabbis will be given the authority needed to conduct such services as conversions or weddings. However, this is a positive step in the right direction for the recognition of non-Orthodox religious leaders – and their congregations.

What I find fascinating is the call-to-arms of many in the Orthodox world. There is a call to push back and let the world know that the religious leaders of the non-Orthodox world are indeed not rabbis – and indeed, some have even stated that non-Orthodox Jews are not *really* Jews at all. Many in the Orthodox world declare that the non-Orthodox pervert Torah and defile the Holy Land. Take a look at the comments posted on any of the stories regarding this (partial) recognition of non-Orthodox rabbis and you will see what I mean. Here is but one example.

Rabbi Hoffman [writes](#): “Reform and Conservatives have no place in the Holyland [sic]. This is an insult and desecration [sic] to our faith. Saying they are under the Sports ministry is even more ludicrous [sic].”

Simply stated, non-Orthodox Jews have no right to be in the land given to all Jews. I am sure that there are many non-Orthodox Jews who also feel that anti-Zionist Orthodox Jews should also not be permitted in the Holy Land.

This leads me to another [story](#) that I find interesting regarding the Orthodox and Israel. Virtual Jerusalem is reporting that the conversion rate to Orthodox Judaism in the land of Israel has been cut in half from 2007 to 2011.

“Both demographic changes and bureaucratic hurdles have contributed to this change,” said Rabbi Seth Farber, director of ITIM: Resources and Advocacy for Jewish Life.

The impossible hurdles that have been placed in the path of the would-be converts and the fact that only Orthodox conversions are permitted (and recognized) in Israel tends to push people away from Judaism rather than pull them toward Judaism.

Are we not told in the Talmud ( [Yevamot 47a](#)):

“Our Rabbis taught: If at the present time a man desires to become a proselyte, he is to be addressed as follows: ‘What reason have you for desiring to become a proselyte; do you not know that Israel at the present time are persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and

overcome by afflictions'? If he replies, 'I know and yet am unworthy', he is accepted forthwith, and is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments."

So my question is, why would Israel choose to permit an Orthodox monopoly on conversions and other life events within a supposed-Democratic state? The vast majority of Jews in the world are non-Orthodox yet Israel and the Orthodox establishment pressures the non-Orthodox world to support Israel and the Orthodox establishment. Maybe the Orthodox world needs to look into its own sources and realize the *Chillul Hashem* that is being done.

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