

These and These

Eruvin 13b:10-11

Rabbi Abba said in the name of Shmuel, For three years, the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai argued. One said, 'The halakha is like us,' and the other said, 'The halakha is like us.' A heavenly voice spoke: "These and these are the words of the living God, and the halakha is like the House of Hillel." A question was raised: Since the heavenly voice declared: "Both these and those are the words of the Living God," why was the halacha established to follow the opinion of Hillel? It is because the students of Hillel were kind and gracious. They taught their own ideas as well as the ideas from the students of Shammai. Not only for this reason, but they went so far as to teach Shammai's opinions first.

עירובין י"ג ב:כ"ז-ל"ב

א"ר אבא אמר שמואל שלש שנים
נחלקו ב"ש וב"ה הללו אומרים
הלכה כמותנו והללו אומרים הלכה
כמותנו יצאה בת קול ואמרה אלו
ואלו דברי אלהים חיים הן והלכה
כב"ה וכי מאחר שאלו ואלו דברי
אלהים חיים מפני מה זכו ב"ה לקבוע
הלכה כמותן מפני שנוחין ועלובין
היו ושונין דבריהן ודברי ב"ש ולא
עוד אלא שמקדימין דברי ב"ש
לדבריהן

This is a fundamental tension in contemporary Judaism: Each of us must develop our own, personal journey of Jewish spirituality, and yet we are not

alone in doing so. We are inheritors of a larger Jewish tradition, with all of its teachings and customs and different interpretations. There's no such thing as a Jew who just makes up a brand new Judaism for themselves, but rather we always exist as individuals in a creative, covenantal relationship with the larger Jewish community.

This creative dialectic between individual and community works in both ways: Not only does the individual have to find their own "flag" within the larger Jewish tradition, but we must also recognize that the Jewish community is not complete, as it were, unless people are finding their own, comfortable place within it.

Judaism is not "one size fits all!" One person may become zealously observant of ritual practices, another person may devote all her energy to Judaism's vision of social justice, a third may find that studying sacred texts is the proper "flag" for his living Judaism.

... [A] model for true Jewish pluralism [is]: each individual finding his or her unique mission within the broadest Jewish framework, organized with like-minded people into sacred organizations, and each person and each community seen as a necessary, equal component of the whole. Only when we see that different people and different communities have their own sacred purpose can we move together on our journey.

- Rabbi Neal Loevinger

*Source Sheet created on Sefaria by Sarra Alpert
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