



Let's Tell the Real Story

The pressure being placed upon the prime minister and members of Knesset to recognize Reform as an equal and respectable alternative to Torah-true Judaism is coming from the American Reform movement and other like-minded concerns. They're being sold a bill of goods. Why aren't we marketing the truth?

American Orthodox Jewry has been endowed with many blessings, and one of its greatest privileges is to serve as the backbone support of Torah in Eretz Yisrael. It's a responsibility driven by the joy of the mitzvah, and by the deep-seated knowledge that every Jew is responsible for another. And now, as the Reform movement is flexing its muscles in an effort to denigrate and dilute the power of Torah authority in Eretz Yisrael, American Torah Jewry is faced with another heavy responsibility. Its increasing strength — both in numbers and in influence as the only viable path for the future of American Jewry — puts it in a natural position to assist the Torah Jews of Eretz Yisrael in beating back this destructive assimilationist influence.

No one says it more clearly than Rabbi Pesach Lerner, executive vice president emeritus of the National Council of Young Israel. Rabbi Lerner, a social activist who has been working tirelessly to preserve the holy character of the Kosel, was the power behind the maneuver to flood the Kosel with tens of thousands of women and girls in prayer when the Women of the Wall attempted to force their agenda on Judaism's holiest accessible site.

After reading last week's column about the Reform threat, Rabbi Lerner sent me the following letter. The first step in the mission he proposes is to publicize it.

Dear Rabbi Grylak,

The pressure that is being placed upon the prime minister, members of his cabinet, and members of Knesset to recognize Reform Judaism as an equal and respectable alternative to Torah-true Judaism is coming from the American Reform movement, from American Jewish federations, and from other like-minded concerns.

The Reform are successful because they have opened up lobbying offices in Israel, their leadership is very often in Israel, they meet with government officials, they tell them how most

of American Jewry is Reform, they tell them how important and successful they are, they tell them — no, they threaten the government — that if you don't listen to us, if you don't respond to us, you will lose the support of American Jewry.

And where are we, the American Orthodox Torah community?

We are not lobbying the government, we are not walking the halls of Knesset, we have not opened any offices to tell our story.

We have not educated those same government officials as to the truth about Reform.

They do not know or understand the levels of intermarriage and assimilation among the Reform.

They do not know the shrinking numbers of students and youth in their educational institutions and congregations.

They don't know how few of the Reform Jews light candles Friday night, have a Pesach Seder, or fast on Yom Kippur, compared to even typical secular Israelis.

The government officials don't know how few of them make aliyah, how few of them ever visit Israel, how few of their children study in Israel.

These government officials do not understand how bankrupt the Reform movement is.

These same government officials don't understand how many Reform rabbis support BDS, are members of the anti-Israel New Israel Fund, don't support the Israeli army or the policies of the Israeli government.

On the other hand, these government officials don't understand the strength and growth of our community.

They don't understand how many of our children study in Israel, how many Orthodox families make aliyah, how many of us visit Israel, how many of us invest in Israel.

They don't understand the phenomenal growth of the Orthodox community, the ever increasing numbers of our children in Jewish schools, the growth of our Orthodox communal institutions.

They don't understand that we are the future of world Jewry, that we may be the only ones Jewish in a decade or two, that we

will be the only supporters of Israel.

They don't know any of this, because we don't tell them.

It's time we tell them.

It's time that we open up offices in Israel, hire lobbyists, walk the halls of Knesset, send missions of our leadership, often.

It's time we apply even more pressure than the Reform do.

We have more than enough to say, and we need to say it.

We need to unite the greater Orthodox Jewish community, and fight this battle, together.

There are other action items, such as taking out ads in Israeli papers, to reveal what Reform really is; inviting nonreligious MKs to visit our American communities and see who we are; taking a leadership mission to Washington to meet with the Israeli ambassador, who is *shomer Shabbos*; opening up a legal office to fight the Reform in Israeli courts (let's give them a taste of their own medicine — there are many things we can challenge); and creating a national committee of rabbinic and lay leadership to deal with this issue.

We should create a think tank, invite our brightest minds and activists, and let's see how many other action items we can come up with.

I leave it up to *Mishpacha* to continue to educate the readership to the dangers of Reform, and how giving them credibility at the Kosel will generate Reform kosher, Reform weddings and divorce, Reform conversions, and even a Reform chief rabbinate.

How long will it take for them to have an intermarriage or same-gender wedding at Kosel?

Hopefully, you can challenge the American Orthodox to do something!

Thanks for listening,
Rabbi Pesach Lerner

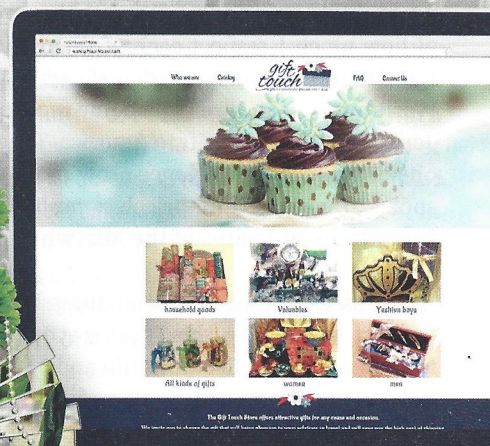
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