

DJC COMMUNITY CONVERSATION #5

A Year of Wrestling Together: The Role of Jews & Non-Jews in Ritual Leadership

January 25, 2016

THOUGHTS FROM THE COMMUNITY

- The discussion provided great insight into the deeply held beliefs and motivations of the DJC members who were present and the rabbi
- Change is difficult. Understand the “ritual leadership” division. But thought is required to list. Not able to meet all needs. Very well articulated points on both sides.
- I appreciate Rabbi Miriam's framing of the issue of who can “lead” Jewish ritual as an issue of integrity in ritual practice – of non-Jews, in the context of Jewish community acknowledging when it is appropriate to be content with being an ally, rather than taking a leadership/representative role. In the context of Jewish community, defined by boundaries that allow the distinction of what's Jewish from what's not, it is ok to acknowledge a distinction between one's personal identity and one's status as a Jew. Also – I (and many people I know) are members of the DJC because of Rabbi Miriam and her beliefs/convictions
- A wonderful and important conversation. It was so helpful and Jewishly to hear different views. Jewish-ness? I have difficulty with this.
- It's a very emotional and divisive issue that we should postpone; nothing good will come from this ... sadly.
- The decision to convert is a choice with privileges and responsibilities. It is appropriate for there to be boundaries and for the rabbi to set some of them.
- A circle would never be considered a line in the sand.
- As a member of the 'old guard' like a parent, I acknowledge that at a certain point we are through parenting and become witnesses. With great love, we wish our children well on their path.
- Community needs to understand what “leadership roles” in ritual are and why they are considered to be so.
- We are only in conversation about 4 specific “roles” that are about speaking/acting on behalf of the DJC Jews.

- I'd be interested in gathering a clearer answer to Miriam's question from someone non-Jewish as to why they want to take a ritual leadership role. I feel people brought up many good points to both sides, but no clear answer to that specific question.
- I understand for the first time why some non-Jews are reluctant to convert to Judaism if they have always felt part of or inside the Jewish community, it seems like an unnecessary step that rejects their feeling of belonging. Can we honour that when making these decisions?
- Can someone who identifies as Jewish or as someone who fully supports Jewish people speak alongside in a Jewish ritual?
- ... my understanding of our Rabbi's limits/boundaries, it is a dangerous road we are navigating, because sooner or later it will mean exclusion. PS The one remark made as a reason for leaving the DJC for a while was the catering to non-Jews, felt really offensive.
- I have come to believe that you can be Jewish in your deepest self while being Christian at the same time in the same deepest self. Being human is messy.
- Thank you. I realize that having spiritual leadership matters to me, but/and I have not until DJC had the opportunity to interact with a Rabbi who could dialogue/would dialogue well!
- I leave with the conviction that distinguishing between Jews and non-Jews is distasteful in the extreme.
- There is a part of me that is very afraid that we will lose Rabbi Miriam over what was discussed tonight (albeit with great respect) and this makes me very sad.
- We grapple, we grapple, we grapple – I think we are blessed to be part of a community that makes space for it. I remain torn. - And yet comforted in the acknowledgement that yes, we are a Jewish community.
- I discovered that I am not alone in my questions, or in my search and need to belong. That DJC as a community is struggling with belonging – the issue of belonging and what that means – and all that is meant to be a positive search for growth, and self-reflection on a personal level and as a community.
- We can trust our leaders. They hold our priorities.
- We can have difficult conversations and continue to have deep respect for one another.
- We need to define ourselves by what we believe and value rather than by

application of an arbitrary set of rules and boundaries and we need to be careful about creating exclusionary distinctions that have the effect of pushing or defining some as out or not worthy.

- Fossilization can happen in any context. This includes within the context of a community which considers its longstanding relationship to Torah and Judaism progressive because of a resistance to change.
- The boundary of Judaism is limited by its inclusiveness.
- The DJC is a Jewish community. The members have “community” covered. Rabbi Miriam has the “Jewish” covered. We need both. She is clearer than the members about what “Jewish” means. Thus, some boundaries are inevitable. Otherwise, let's just be a “community” without the “Jewish”.
- Under conventional Jewish thought there are real questions about leadership, but what opportunities exist in the DJC to find its own way, to be a unique community. Is that an option.
- Spirituality and democracy are difficult. We have the strength to encompass both.
- How do we move forward to embrace boundaries, which is legitimate, without creating lines of division between those we accept as real Jews and non-Jews?