

## [Modern Orthodoxy's Allies: Hareidim or the Non-Orthodox Movements?](#)

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The current issue of "Deot", the Hebrew-language magazine of Ne'emani Torah vaAvodah, includes an article by Yuval Yavneh of the New Israel Fund's office in Jerusalem. He argues that Modern Orthodoxy needs to think about who its real allies are. Does Modern Orthodoxy have more in common with the Hareidi world, or with the non-Orthodox movements?

At first glance, Orthodox Jews may tend to think that their true allies are those who share a belief in the divine nature of Torah and halakha. Thus the Modern Orthodox and the Hareidi world--in spite of their many differences--are still on "the same team" i.e. they observe Torah and mitzvot as being God-given. In this respect, they are very much at odds with the non-Orthodox movements which either dilute or eliminate the God-given nature of Torah and halakha.

On the other hand, Modern Orthodoxy shares basic values with the non-Orthodox movements, and is actually more in sync with these movements than with the values espoused by the Hareidi world. Examples of these values are: respect for individual autonomy, commitment to Zionism, intellectual freedom, general equality of men and women. Many Modern Orthodox Jews are fed up with the Hareidi-dominated rabbinic courts that make such terrible decisions relating to conversions and agunot. Yuval asks: wouldn't it make sense for Modern Orthodoxy to make alliances with the non-Orthodox movements to fight for those values which they share--and which distinguish them from the Hareidi worldview?

Yuval finds it difficult to understand why Modern Orthodox spokesmen generally support the Hareidi-dominated rabbinic courts and the Hareidi political agenda in the Knesset. Why, for example, do Modern Orthodox leaders fight against the institution of civil marriages (or non-Orthodox marriages), when the current system (permitting only Orthodox marriages in Israel) is so obviously flawed and unpopular?

He makes another interesting point: while Modern Orthodoxy seems to follow in lockstep with the Hareidi rabbinic leadership, the Hareidi leadership itself looks on Modern Orthodoxy with disdain. While the Modern Orthodox try to ingratiate themselves with the Hareidi world, the Hareidim have little use for the Modern Orthodox and see them as little better than religious compromisers and "neo-Reform" Jews.

There's an old witticism relating to the dilemma of the Modern Orthodox Jew: those I can pray with, I can't talk to; and those I can talk to, I can't pray with. Modern Orthodoxy has far more in common with the Hareidi world when it comes to fundamental beliefs and halakhic commitments--but we don't speak the same intellectual language. Modern Orthodoxy may indeed have far more in

common with the non-Orthodox world in matters of values and ethical commitments; and yet we don't speak the same religious language.

Yuval suggests that Modern Orthodoxy make up its mind, and cast its lot with those who share our human, democratic values. Yet, many in the Modern Orthodox community are extremely uneasy making alliances with the non-Orthodox, feeling that this ultimately undermines our religious credibility and seriousness of purpose.

What do you think?

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