

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE WORLD UNION OF PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

In care of Rabbi Uri Regev
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We, rabbis, cantors and students of OHALAH: The Association of Rabbis for Jewish Renewal, are writing to express our support for the Reform Movement in general, and our deep appreciation for the outreach work of the Reform Movement in Russia under the auspices of the World Union of Progressive Judaism.

It is an extremely positive sign for future of the entire Jewish people that Judaism in its many forms is beginning to reestablish itself in the former Soviet Union, where a once flourishing Jewish world was brought to the brink of spiritual annihilation. It is nothing less than a miracle that together, Orthodox and Reform Judaism are taking the vanguard in setting down roots and nurturing a burgeoning Jewish community in a land where religious faith and spiritual practice were outlawed and suppressed just a generation ago.

It is very distressing and spiritually painful to see that elements of the CHABAD Movement, a movement which is deeply immersed in service to God, have allowed a prominent spokesman to violate the sacred principle of Klal Yisrael and summarily break the sacred Jewish unity by attempting to vilify, minimize and exclude from the holy covenant between God and Israel, another movement whose commitment to serve God is pure and strong and sorely needed in today's world.

As Jews, we need to work together, regardless of our interpretation of how to live out the mitzvot. We need to express ourselves in a unified and harmonious fashion to bring to fruition the divine plan for the Jewish people and the redemption of all of humanity.

The work of Reform Judaism is not the same as the work of Chabad. Reform Judaism has successfully awakened Jewish identity and stimulated Jewish practice in countless thousands of people, who had effectively been lost to our people, to its teachings and to its holy purpose. The Reform Movement has provided a path for a vast number of Jews, who were marginalized and completely alienated from traditional Judaism and its institutions.

It is the very liberalism of Reform Judaism that renders it a very solid vessel, as well as a most effective vehicle, for a great many of our people for whom the more traditional Jewish forms and practices have ceased to be a viable option. The commitment of Reform Judaism to outreach work, to teaching the ethical imperative so central to Judaism, and to furthering the causes of social justice and tikkun olam is an inspiration for all who truly seek live through Torah.

We, therefore, call upon our beloved and holy brothers and sisters in Chabad to open their hearts to the many beautiful and diverse, meaningful ways in which the Holy Blessed One manifests the Divine Presence in the world and fulfills the divine purpose for the Jewish people and for the entire world.

Most respectfully,

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