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Confronting the last Taboo – Orthodox Judaism and Homosexuality

Submitted on November 5, 2009 – 7:10 pm [272 Comments](#)



Michael Barnett of Aleph takes Orthodox Jewry to task on treatment of same-sex attracted Jews. His article is followed by a [response](#) by Orthodox Rabbi, [Shamir Caplan](#).

Homosexuality, Orthodox Judaism and Psychological child abuse

by Michael Barnett

Orthodox Judaism is responsible for child abuse.

This statement will sit uncomfortably with many people, but it is an undeniable fact, based on logic and reason.

For over a decade I have been trying to bring awareness of the dangers of not accepting homosexuality or same-sex attraction as a normal and natural part of human sexuality, to the Jewish community. Recent events (see [this](#) and [this](#)) have precipitated a need to escalate my efforts to raise such awareness. Around the same time, overwhelming evidence has also become available that further substantiates my claims.

Child abuse can be physical, sexual and psychological. Society and the law does not tolerate physical or sexual abuse of children and there are harsh penalties for perpetrators. Psychological abuse of children is not dealt with quite as harshly, but is just as damaging and the outcomes are no less tragic.

Whilst the exact percentage of people in a population who are same-sex attracted is unclear, [evidence](#) shows that it may be as high as 10%, or 1 in 10 people.

Recent research (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) has shown that children who are same-sex attracted and who are not encouraged to express their sexuality freely are prone to depression, anxiety and behaviour that may lead to suicide. These attempts at suicide have been shown to occur at rates of up to 14 times higher than for their heterosexual peers.

Orthodox Judaism comes into this discussion due to its vehement intolerance of homosexuality and homosexual sex between consenting adults. Orthodox Judaism does not tolerate or encourage two men or two women to freely love each other and have a meaningful relationship with each other that includes sexual activity. There can be no denying this. The Torah [unambiguously forbids](#) homosexual practices and Orthodox Judaism leaves no room for satisfactory interpretation or compromise.

As children go through puberty they start developing sexual feelings and attractions. It is a natural and normal part of sexual development for people to be attracted to others of the same, opposite or even both sexes (see [this](#)).

Children with same-sex attractions in Orthodox Jewish environments are told by their parents and/or community that their innate sexual attractions are sinful and wrong. They are coerced to behave in a way that is extremely unnatural and uncomfortable for them and are prone to developing depression and/or anxiety because of the conflict between the child's natural sexual feelings and the heterosexual way they are expected to behave. If these emotions spiral out of control it can lead to suicidal behaviour. This intolerant behaviour clearly constitutes psychological child abuse.

This insidious form of child abuse isn't restricted to Orthodox Judaism. Any person, group of people or organisation that perpetrates intolerance of same-sex attraction is complicit.

Just like an alcoholic needs to accept they have a drinking problem before they can address their alcohol abuse, the Jewish community needs to accept that within it there is an endemic problem of psychological child abuse due to intolerance of homosexuality and must then collaborate to prevent further harm. This can only happen when it accepts homosexuality as normal, natural and healthy and starts treating people who have same-sex attractions with dignity and as worthy members of the community.

Ironically, the Jewish community has a fantastic network of support organisations that deal with mental health issues, family violence and discrimination, yet none of these services advertise or appear to deal with matters involving homosexuality. It makes one wonder how seriously they take their charters.

This abuse must be stopped immediately. Do you want your child to be the next (suicide) statistic, at the expense of religious beliefs? (See [this boy's story](#) and [another one](#).)

Michael Barnett is the head of Aleph Melbourne, a friendly, secular, social and support group for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and supporters who have a Jewish heritage, living in or around Melbourne.

The following is a response by Rabbi Shamir Caplan

For many reasons, the topic of homosexuality has to be one of the most challenging issues facing Orthodoxy today, not the least of which being that it pits two central tenets of Orthodoxy against each other: a) the expectation that people strive to live in what is considered the ideal way of life, and b) the fundamental need to show compassion to those who are truly suffering.

Since Orthodoxy has understood heterosexual relationships to be the ideal lifestyle, it is expected that individuals try to structure their lives in that direction. Indeed, in all matters regarding which Judaism has a say, there is an expectation that people make serious and sincere efforts to pursue the ideal, even if it goes against their natural proclivity. In the first instance, the same applies to sexuality.

But some important caveats exist: firstly, the process by which a community expects its members to make reasonable efforts to pursue the ideal should be a healthy process, and should NOT have to involve the use of negativity, such as guilt, fear or anger. That is more a question of appropriate parenting or education, as opposed to Orthodoxy *per se*.

Second caveat: I agree that if people were completely honest, we would find that gender attraction is a continuum, not an “either/or” proposition. Likely, most people would be on the heterosexual end of the spectrum, a good number would be somewhere in the middle (having some feelings of attraction to both genders), and some would be on the homosexual end. For the “strongly heterosexual” and the “people somewhere in the middle”, the expectation of a heterosexual lifestyle is very achievable, even if it involves some self-limitation (indeed, what healthy marriage wouldn’t?!) On the other hand, history shows that even after serious effort, some individuals will find that they are unable to pursue a heterosexual lifestyle. That being the case, the expectation that they do so would have to fall away. If an individual felt that to sleep with someone of the opposite sex would be as unnatural as it would feel for a heterosexual to sleep with someone of the same sex, then to tell them to do so anyway would be cruel. Conversely, treating them with empathy and understanding is nothing short of *pikuach nefesh*, saving a life.

For people in such a situation, the appropriate course of action would be to pursue a compromise position, the substance of which extends beyond the scope of this brief response. Certainly, there are many Orthodox voices emerging from our community that are ready, willing, and able to lend support in this no doubt difficult process. Further, the role of the broader Orthodox community should be to approach people who are “strongly” homosexual with compassion and sensitivity, as they would of any person who genuinely sought to be a part of their community. Sadly, this doesn’t always take place. While communal leadership should be setting the appropriate tone, if an individual nonetheless finds that their Orthodox community is not ready to accept them, they might have to find another Orthodox community that will. I believe that they can, and often do.

Third caveat: the Orthodox responses (and there are different ones) to homosexuality are evolving, just as society’s own understanding of it is evolving. Although their responses would be very different from each other, it is safe to say that from the left to the right, all Orthodox communities are responding to homosexuality today differently than they would be ten years ago. By the way, I believe it is as inappropriate to speak generically about “the Orthodox community” as it is to speak generically about “homosexuals” – doing so leaves no room for understanding subtle distinctions and finding reasoned compromises. Inflammatory speech certainly serves no one’s best interests.


I for one am happy to continue the conversation, hopefully in an environment of sensitivity and mutual respect. There is much more to be said, and I might suggest a good resource for further reading (see [this website](#)). For now, let me just conclude by saying that the way forward is to be honest, to listen carefully, and to act lovingly.

Rabbi Shamir Caplan is chaplain of a local orthodox college and is also a local congregational Rabbi. He can be contacted by email: scaplan@alumni.utexas.net

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272 Comments »

- 
[Simon Holloway](#) says:
[November 5, 2009 at 8:26 pm](#)

This is a very timely issue, and I would be most pleased to see a serious discussion arise from this. Rabbi Caplan’s response is sensitive and considered, but his assertion that one cannot speak of a

single “Orthodox” mindset is a reminder of the fact that there are many within our community and around the world whose views towards homosexuality are of a less tolerant nature. While studying in Jerusalem, I noted the local community’s attitude towards homosexuality as being dismissive and cruel. Homosexuals in Mea Shearim do exist and, while they may make fine husbands, wives and parents, they bear a burden that I cannot begin to understand.

I disagree, Michael, with your suggestion that the Torah is “unambiguous” in its condemnation. As I discussed in [my first article on Galus](#), my reading of the Tanakh is more ambiguous than that. Nonetheless, rabbinic Judaism is certainly opposed to homosexual activity and for real changes to be made, we need to be sensitive to that fact. Orthodox Jews are not going to start reading their texts differently, just because non-Orthodox Jews want them to. Change needs to occur from within, and any outside stimulus must be respectful.

I fear that your language is perhaps too emotive to convince somebody who is a firm believer in the divinity of the Oral Law. If you are not merely preaching to the choir (in which I happily sang along to all you had to say), I would suggest that you bear that in mind. Orthodox Jews are just as fearful of harm to their children as are non-Orthodox Jews, but they don’t see the damage as coming from themselves.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 6, 2009 at 12:44 am](#)

I agree that while I see and believe there is no place for homosexuality within Orthodox Judaism it is clear that homosexuals themselves need to be treated with respect and kindness. In the end it is a halacha they are breaking just like someone eating nonkosher food or breaking the laws of Shabbos.

Judasim has always been about continuity of the people and the faith. it is an essential tenet seen throughout history. The act of exclusive homosexuality does threaten this. Non exclusive homosexuality.. well this would be adultery.



- *Michael* says:
[November 6, 2009 at 10:37 am](#)

I think the day gay and lesbian people are treated in the same way as the celibate, the unmarried, the infertile, the unwilling-to-bear-children (and other people who “threaten” Jewish continuity in the same way), it will already mean that significant progress will have happened.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 6, 2009 at 11:36 am](#)

You are right. Gay and lesbian people should be treated like any other Jew not just those you mentioned irrespective of the threat to Jewish continuity.

A Jew is a Jew is a Jew.

Personally I as an orthodox Jew had my homosexual cousin many times at my Shabbos table without any conflict nor judgment. I knew his boyfriend well.

He knew I did not accept the ACT of homosexuality. He respected my beliefs. I respected his rights to make his own choices.

Just like I do not condemn the Jew who eats non kosher food or commits adultery or any other “sin”. I do believe people are able to control their actions but not always their feelings nor urges.

BUT I am in no place to judge their actions. I like them have my own personal trials and difficulties that I too struggle with.



- Henry Herzog says:
[November 6, 2009 at 1:09 pm](#)

I really feel for those Jewish homosexuals who were brought up in orthodox homes but once they became aware of their sexuality, they were rejected by the parents and community. That is truly heartbreaking.

- [UNGA supports Goldstone Report, Clinton backtracks, Abbas stands down for Fayyad, and Galus Australis takes on Orthodox homophobia](#) « Michael Brull says:
[November 6, 2009 at 3:08 pm](#)

[...] and Galus Australis features a discussion of homophobia in Orthodox Judaism. I find the rabbi's response appalling, and its not helped [...]



- ariel says:
[November 6, 2009 at 4:22 pm](#)

I agree with Simon and Chaim on this issue.

Othodoxy will never accept the legitimacy of a homosexual relationship just like it does not do so for any de facto heterosexual relationship. Needless to say it will never allow homosexual marriage because of what marriage is all about in Judaism, as Chaim points out.

I have heard of apparent homosexuals from Orthodox homes continuing to live as Orthodox Jews, but never marrying and trying to be someone they are not. They view their same-sex attraction as a challenge to deal with rather than a reason to throw in the towel of Torah. After all, there are plenty of seemingly Orthodox Jews who don't keep a large swathe of *mitzvot* and we don't condemn them. We accept that people are of all different levels of observance and we respect them.

I would classify someone who is same-sex attracted, but chooses not to engage in the ACT the same way as a heterosexual who may be born with an uncontrollable urge to constantly engage in sex with the opposite gender; a “nymph” if you will. Yet if they can control their desires, they are to be commended. And even if not, nothing stops you from performing other *mitzvot* or sitting at the Shabbat table, getting and aliya in shule and eating kosher.

Rabbis Shmuley Boteach and Shlomo Riskin have commented much on this issue as well.



- Dalit Kaplan says:
[November 7, 2009 at 9:47 am](#)

I disagree with the distinction between a person and their ‘homosexual behaviour’, as per Chaim's description:

“it is clear that homosexuals themselves need to be treated with respect and kindness. In the end it is a halacha they are breaking just like someone eating non-kosher food or breaking the laws of

Shabbos.”

These are my thoughts on the issue, at the moment: Same-sex attraction is a part of one’s identity and personality. It is not an external act, akin to turning on a light, giving Tzedaka, etc. It is innate and essential to one’s self. Certainly there are actions that result from being same-sex attracted, but by condemning the action, you are also implicitly condemning the person’s self.

I have heard that distinction being expressed by people of many faiths (including Christians who say, “we condemn the sin, not the sinner”).

If you assume that the “sin” can be divorced from the “sinner” than you assume that the sinner has a choice. People don’t have a choice with respect to who they are attracted to. It’s just who they are. OR who they aren’t. Or who they become.... it changes. It’s fluid but it’s no choice....



- *defensa* says:
[November 7, 2009 at 10:34 am](#)

I agree with Dalit Kaplan on this issue.

The Orthodox approach firmly locates homosexual activity in the category of sin, a category that rests on broad assumptions of free choice. The somewhat childish distinction between homosexual inclination and practice reveals a lack of understanding of the nature and function of human sexuality.

The argument for Jewish continuity also holds little water. While meagerly populated tribes of the biblical era may have needed such laws to ensure continuity, in the 21st century with a Jewish population just in excess of 13 million (acc to Wikipedia) such concerns seem to be anachronistic.

As published on this site a few weeks ago, the Mishnaic sages saw fit to challenge a divine law and came out victorious.

Why is it that the standards of the obscure Oven of Achnai cannot be replicated for issues of homosexuality, agunah and others?



- *Bruce Llama* says:
[November 7, 2009 at 1:51 pm](#)

Michael talks about child abuse. He talks about how the attitudes on sexuality, based on religion leads to the psychological abuse of children.

This is the real crux of the matter. Not how orthodox jews think about their faith. The continual denial of sexual orientation leads young people to grow up in psychological abusive homes that treat homosexuality as a sin and not natural. This abuse leads to depression and possibly suicide and you don’t seem to get it.

Children need to grow up free from physical, sexual and psychological abuse. They have no means to defend themselves against the insane practices of their religious parents. Just as we as a society would take children away from neglectful parents, we should also extend that protection to the children of orthodox religion. It is no longer acceptable to say that their faith does not permit it. The faith is out of step with the needs of the child and hiding behind outdated texts is not the answer.

Stand tall and oppose repression, whatever its source may be. Your children depend on it.

- [Bruce Llama » Abuse of children](#) says:
[November 7, 2009 at 2:10 pm](#)

[...] article on richarddawkins.net Religions Real Abuse and then read this article by Michael Barnett at Galus Australis. There should be no doubt in your mind that religion is dangerous and needs to be called to [...]



- *defensa* says:
[November 7, 2009 at 4:59 pm](#)

wow
bruce
even i think thats over the top



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:
[November 7, 2009 at 5:18 pm](#)

defensa, Which bit is over the top?

The fact that children who are same sex attracted are more likely to commit suicide?

Equating religious instruction with child abuse?

Opposing repression?

Oh, and you're not the first person to tell me I'm over the top. Sometimes shaking the tree is an important way to get the fruit. 😊



- *frosh* says:
[November 7, 2009 at 10:26 pm](#)

Bruce,

Your views here and (especially) on your blog could be described as “atheistic fundamentalist.”

While I do agree that gay youth suicide is a very serious issue, your singular focus on religion as being the root of all evil is just another form of intolerant attitude, is it not? It's also worth keeping in mind that history's only mass murder of a population based on sexuality occurred at the hands of an atheistic regime, and not a religious one.

Given your harsh views toward religion, I must wonder what you would do if you had a child who became religious. Would you reject them, or simply reject their behaviour?

Looking forward to ongoing dialogue.



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:
[November 8, 2009 at 1:00 am](#)

Frosh,

The world would be a better place without religion. My opinions are mine, you can accept them or

not, it's your call. I have the choice to make about religion and I made mine. For me. You make your decision for you and its not for me to tell you what to believe or not believe. However, I reserve the right to say what I think.

I have two children. Their mother is catholic. We are a diverse bunch and they can be whatever it is that they like, and they can discuss with me and debate with me about religion, why would I reject them?

My children have not been indoctrinated with religion. Whatever choice they make is fine, it is their choice. I have not told them to believe, and I have not told them not to believe. They know my attitude, and they know the attitude of their believing mother. It's up to them. The decisions they make in life are purely theirs to make. That's the way it should work.



- *frosh* says:
[November 8, 2009 at 10:12 am](#)

Hi Bruce,

Imagine someone rewrote your most recent comment, but substituted the word "religion" for "homosexuality" ("Catholic"/"believing" for "lesbian").

Re-read your comment with those substitutions, and tell me what you would think of the author of such a comment? (I'm not pre-judging, I'm just curious).

Also, I note (from your blog) that in your attacks on religion, you always limit yourself to attacking Christianity and Judaism, but never for example, Islam or Buddhism.

On your blog, you write, "Judaism teaches that homosexuality is an abomination." Actually, there are a number of denominations of Judaism that sanctify gay marriage. Where's your wrath and indignation for Islam? In Islam there are no denominations that sanctify gay relationships, and in most Islamic countries, homosexuality is illegal and is met with severe punishment. When you take this into consideration, as well as the relative sizes of the Jewish vs Islamic populations... well you can see why I am so curious as to how you select your targets.

The problems that gay youth from intolerant religious families face are very serious ones, and we should be actively seeking solutions. However, I don't think the type of attitudes you express on your blog comprise part of the solution.



- *Bruce Llama* says:
[November 8, 2009 at 11:15 am](#)

Frosh,

Changing words is hardly the same thing as reflecting reality. Religion is a choice you can leave it at any time. Sexuality is innate, you can deny it, but it's still innate.

As I said I think the world will be better off without religion. You will find blogs about islam and the dalai lama on my site.

I disagree with your conclusion. I think the way to address the intolerance in any community is to point out what's wrong with it. Homosexuality is a normal part of some people's lives. They are same sex attracted. They didn't 'become' that way, they didn't choose that way, they just are.

The Torah calls homosexuality an abomination. It's not, and that phrase is used as justification to vilify and abuse people. That's wrong, take it out of the book, expunge it from the record.

Pandering to the religious die hards will not change their mind, at the very least perhaps they can be asked to shut up. I'll leave the nice part to people not so forthright.

I'm curious as to how you would address the problem of psychological abuse of children?



- *Chaim* says:

[November 8, 2009 at 11:47 am](#)

Dalit – all I can say is that I disagree. I believe someone's sexual inclination is not an essential part of them. It is a feeling, or a primordial urge and we have to decide if it is better to express that feeling into action or not. Whether it is for same sex, other sex or any other "inclination".

I do not blame people for their inclinations. That is not in their control. Are the actions that follow beneficial for that person or society? As an orthodox Jew I say no. Since I am not in their shoes, I can not judge them for their actions either but I do not have to accept them as OK.

Defensa: you totally misunderstood the story of the Oven of Achnai.



- *Dalit* says:

[November 8, 2009 at 12:07 pm](#)

Many say that without religion, the world would be a better place. I disagree with this, but it is important to acknowledge the significance of such a viewpoint.

Firstly, I don't think that there would be less prejudice against homosexuality or violence and war, if there was no religion. PEOPLE kill and discriminate. Not religion. Religions are created by people to help them explain, understand and relate to the world. Further, religion is inextricably intertwined with culture and I cannot imagine humanity without culture. Certainly there has been mass destruction, pain, suffering and violence perpetrated in the name of religion, but these things were perpetrated by people. That violence and prejudice exist within people and they express it through religion or something else. With respect to the homophobia of, the rabbis simply created laws that reflected their own homophobia or that of the dominant culture and community.

However, I can understand why people object to religion, viewing it as the cause of so much "bad" in the world. And those who challenge religion (from within AND without) provide an important check on religions and religious practices. These challenges ensure – amongst other things – that religion is kept separate from the state, and that people are free to move in and out of them. The right to live a secular life in a secular state is critical, and we should celebrate the fact that one can, if she chooses, live as she wants. Secularism is only a recent phenomena, one that should be fiercely safeguarded...



- *frosh* says:

[November 8, 2009 at 12:20 pm](#)

Hi Bruce,

On your blog you wrote:

“There **should be no doubt** in your mind that religion is poison. **Teaching children about religion is psychological abuse**, and should be stopped.” (My emphasis)

On one of your comments on *Galus* you wrote:

“and they [your children] can discuss with me and debate with me about religion.”

I would argue that *discussing* and *debating* is a form of teaching/learning, and I challenge you to explain how these two quotes of yours are not contradicting each other.

As for my ideas for a solution, well I am willing to admit that I don't have all the answers (and possibly no none does). From a Jewish context, I feel the solution will arise from attitudes that are a lot close to Rabbi Caplan's than to those that call for an absolute rejection of Jewish religious practice and teaching.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 8, 2009 at 12:39 pm](#)

Dalit: You forget that orthodox Judaism believes that the Torah (including the Oral Torah) is of divine origin. It was not about the Rabbis, the culture nor the political climate at the time. It can not and will not be changed.

Homosexuality is not a new phenomenon. If anything, it used to more accepted in ancient times.

I do agree that people should have free choice to their beliefs and practices as long as it does not harm another.

As for Bruce's response I disagree with him in general but would agree that if a family is causing such distress to their child that he may become depressed and suicidal then he should seek help outside and possibly be separated from that family. ANY Rabbi would agree to that. Like I said any person with this dilemma needs compassion and support not humiliation and enmity.



- *Dalit* says:

[November 8, 2009 at 1:03 pm](#)

Chaim: We have fundamentally different philosophical outlooks when it comes to the Torah. I believe that the Torah has human authors and that, while it is without a doubt one of the most brilliant and fascinating pieces of literature in the world, it embodied/responded to the values that were contemporaneous to its writings and thus, needs to be reinterpreted as values change. And I believe that halacha does, and has always, engaged in this project of interpretation. Further, I believe that the “divinity” of the Torah comes from the human creativity and intellectual genius of that process of interpretation.

So, given that that is my framework for understanding the Torah's prohibition on homosexual sex, Halachic thinkers can, and do, reinterpret originally prohibitions in a way to reflect contemporary understandings of sexuality.

Regarding your views on separating sexuality from one's person, you should review some psychology, biology, psychiatry, science, sociology, gender studies, political, etc literature. Basically everyone in the Academy hold that it is natural for sexuality to be fluid, and for people to be attracted to others of the same sex – not that the Academy is the definitive source for determining what is right and what is wrong, but it's a good place to start!



- *Chaim* says:

[November 8, 2009 at 1:25 pm](#)

Dalit: Since we come from such different frameworks. Arguing about halacha is pointless. I was

talking about only the Orthodox viewpoint.

Actually I am a doctor. I am involved with a HIV clinic that is majority homosexual. I have no problem with them and they have no problem with me.

My viewpoint does not always meet eye to eye with the secular academic viewpoints on many many issues. That is OK. I have no problem with science. It is always evolving.

I do not believe homosexuality is a medical disorder. I agree to what R. Caplan said above that everyone has some homosexual tendencies. It is on a spectrum and while they may be “natural”, they may not be right.

Being right is subjective and is based on someones personal system of beliefs.

So I guess we can agree to disagree... without being shot. How far society has come.



ariel says:

[November 8, 2009 at 2:16 pm](#)

I agree with frosh regarding Bruce’s views.

Actually, I go further and agree with Jackie Mason that raising children in a mixed marriage is child abuse.

Confusing a child over its identity and the values he/she should embrace by trying to show them two different cultures/religions simultaneously is psychological abuse of the first order.

By the way Bruce, there are other things which the Torah calls abominations, such as lying and incest. You can’t cherry pick verses out of context to suit your goals; that’s what Islamists do to justify murder in their goal to establish an Islamic Caliphate from North Africa to Indonesia.

Dalit, I would say that I have to agree with Chaim.

As I pointed out in my first comment, one’s sexual desires, whether hetero or homo are ultimately controllable. That is, a person may have a feeling but they don’t have to act on it physically.

On the other hand, it is a person’s Jewish-ness which is an inherent part of them. It is not a matter of choice as Bruce wishes it were. One cannot choose not to be a Jew, only not to practice as one. It is as ridiculous as if an Aboriginal person were to suddenly announce “from this day forth, I am no longer an Indigenous Australian”. Who would they be kidding?



Bruce Llama says:

[November 8, 2009 at 4:45 pm](#)

Ariel,

To equate being jewish with being an indigenous Australian is laughable. You get back to me when you convert to an indigenous Australian.

I agree that the torah is full of very unpalatable things, I’m quite happy to throw them all out. I don’t cherry pick any of it, its all a quaint tale that the world could do without.

My children are not confused, and they don’t get conflicting ‘values’.

Frosh,

Regardless of whether or not my statements can be taken as contradictory is irrelevant. I do not

stop my children from making a decision based on the information they gather. They are simply not brainwashed with religion.

All of this is nice and all, but the original topic was about Michael's observation regarding the vilification of young impressionable people by orthodoxy. How do you allow someone with an innate orientation to grow up safely in an orthodox house that considers the child a sinner and an abomination? The impact on that child can be catastrophic. That's the topic, how are you going to broach this subject and help to educate and change the prevailing attitude? I've suggesting ditching religion and casting it aside.

If you'd like to take me up on other matters, feel free to email me.



- *ariel* says:
[November 8, 2009 at 5:09 pm](#)

Bruce,

The fact that you place the word values in quotation marks is disturbing. I could claim then that your children are brainwashed to obey the laws of parliament, such as "don't murder", "don't steal", etc.... oh wait a minute! I wonder where governments got those laws from? oh that's right, from some quaint, outdated book.

And yes one can convert to Indigenous Australian. All you have to do is declare that you identify with that People and your in. I'm personally happy being a Jew and thank G-d many times a day for that fact!

Conversion to Judaism is possible, but not encouraged because it's not necessary. It is a difficult process for a reason and it comprises many procedures, one of which is physical transformation into a Jew. Ask your local rabbi for details...



- *Bruce Llama* says:
[November 8, 2009 at 5:24 pm](#)

Areil,

I'm glad that you're happy being a jew. Good luck to you and that. It's nice to know that you can change if you so desire, have you thought about trying out catholicism? Maybe even Scientology, they have some way out theories too.



- *ariel* says:
[November 8, 2009 at 6:11 pm](#)

Bruce,

I would never change, I'm happy with who I am.

A Jew can't change no matter what they do.

I see you've tried hard to suppress your essence, but you're still one of us and I love you.



- *De* says:
[November 8, 2009 at 6:43 pm](#)

Can I just jump in here with regards to Chaim's viewpoint regarding the immutable nature of laws in the Torah.

there is a G'mara (and I forget where, probably in Sanhedrin) that says that in order for a Rabbi to be admitted to the Sanhedrin he must be able to prove that a Sheretz (the most impure thing) is pure according to the Torah.



- *defensa* says:

[November 8, 2009 at 6:52 pm](#)

apologies, last comment above is mine, keyboard is a bit fiddly

to continue:

If within the halachik system as understood by chazal there is scope for a sheretz to be tahor, then there must also be, by the same logic, a different position to adopt regarding homosexuality.

Yes the Torah is adamantly clear that homosexuality is an abomination, yet if a sheretz can be tahor, then an abomination can be not so as well.

The Rabbi's (or at least the ones who held by this view) had an ontological approach that is at odds with the notion of a singular objective reality.

Even the Nefesh HaChaim himself, the arch defender of the traditional halachik outlook had to agree with the Chassidic masters that at the level of ultimate reality all is one and the divisions between pure and impure, kosher and unkosher, are completely dissolved.

If the most traditional and stalwart sources of halachik knowledge can entertain such fluid notions of reality then standing by a viewpoint that the Torah is divine and therefore immutable in way would put one in the same camp as the fundamentalist Christians who read the Bible in the most literal sense, without the benefit of any of the Oral traditions and interpretations that make the Masoretic interpretation of Torah so much more vibrant, logical and functional.



- *Michael Barnett* says:

[November 8, 2009 at 7:19 pm](#)

Does anyone care about the children, your children, your family's children and the rest of the children in the community, who are suffering on a daily basis because of these selfish, inconsiderate, mindless attitudes.

Talk about it as much as you want but you'd be better off practicing Kaddish for the Dead than having this debate.

Everyone who does nothing to prevent the abuse is equally complicit.

Michael.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 8, 2009 at 11:12 pm](#)

Firstly there is more chance that a child from a secular or mixed marriage (Bruce – assuming he is even Jewish) would commit suicide than from an Orthodox Jewish family. Maybe we should take

those children away. Or maybe we should make those families all Orthodox Jewish OR maybe we should find a way to find these kids and help them without wasting your time trying to change orthodox Judaism.

Defensa – you are still missing the point. Yes as with regard to the proof that the sheretz is tahor. There are also different opinions in the gemara for many things. But they NEVER changed the halacha. Obviously I am not talking about gezeira, takanaos which are made up purely by the Rabbis and could be changed by a SAN HEDRIN – which we do not have right now. Maybe you should pray for Moshiach and then we will see what true Judaism will be. I think everyone will be surprised.

The Chassidic or Kabbalistic understandings too do NOT change the halacha.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 9, 2009 at 2:17 am](#)

Firstly there is more chance that a child from a secular or mixed marriage (Bruce – assuming he is even Jewish) would commit suicide that from an Orthodox Jewish family. Maybe we should take those children away. Or maybe we should make those families all Orthodox Jewish OR maybe we should find a way to find these kids and help them without wasting your time trying to change orthodox Judaism.

As I wrote in my article, the alcoholic is the last person to admit they have a problem. This comment from Chaim exemplifies the “head buried in the sand” attitude of so many fundamentalist Jews. “It couldn’t possibly happen to us”. It does, and it will. You’re not exempt from the laws of nature.

Take a moment to read the [story about Danny](#) that I referenced at the end of my article. He died last year from HIV/AIDS because his Chassidic family didn’t want to acknowledge his sexuality and let him suffer in solitude. The only thing they get out of that is a dead son.

Assuming no other forms of intolerance prevail, it’s the secular families who are more ideally placed to deal with having a homosexual child and by corollary, are less likely to have a child suffer depression or suicide than the child of an Orthodox family.



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 9, 2009 at 2:54 am](#)

I am not saying it does not exist Michael – get a grip on reality. If you look at absolute numbers or incidence with risk factors – coming from an orthodox Jewish family is very low on the list.

I have made my views very clear above numerous times. Changing halacha is not the solution. From my experience I have actually seen more problems in secular families rejecting their kids although the true incidence is not clear.

Finding these FEW kids and supporting them is a practical and real solution.

AND the fact Danny died from AIDS and not suicide means you need to really work on safe sexual education with these kids. More will die from AIDS than suicide.

The fact that you push so much to change orthodox Judaism rather than working on realistic goals shows that you are really pushing your own agenda rather than actually trying to help these kids.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 9, 2009 at 3:15 am](#)

I'm not trying to change orthodox Judaism. I'm trying to make people realise there is a real, serious, problem and that something needs to be done about it.

If you read the research I referred to in my article you would have read that same-sex attracted people are up to 14 times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. Those who come from religiously intolerant families are at elevated risk.

You talk about absolute numbers. So if the one person who killed themselves was your child, that would be ok?

No one should be dying from an AIDS related illness. No one should be dying from suicide.

How do you teach these kids about safe sex between two men when the community won't even talk about homosexuality.

I've got a grip on reality. What have you got a grip on?



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 9, 2009 at 3:43 am](#)

OK now we can come to some agreement.

I agree with your quoted figures on elevated risk. I don't agree with the 10% homosexuality incidence in Orthodox Jews but it does exist and the current issues are NOT being adequately addressed.

Yes, even one Jewish child dying is a tragedy. I was making sure on the scale of risk factors for Jewish kids dying, there is some perspective here. The number of homosexual Jewish kids dying from suicide because of their orthodox families is VERY VERY low. Drugs are more of a problem.

How do you start? Lets start by being realistic. Lets make sure the Rabbis know the risks and that they and teachers as well as parents have tools to identify kids at risk. Educate people to identify symptoms of depression and suicide and that help is available and how to get it.

There will always be intolerant people who stick their heads in the sand. You have to work around them. But don't expect them to change their religion. It is not realistic.

Put up a billboard, posters...



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 9, 2009 at 4:14 am](#)

Also mental disorders in general are not recognised, ignored and underestimated in general in the whole Jewish community particularly the Orthodox community and this also need to be addressed.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:

[November 9, 2009 at 9:54 am](#)

I agree with your quoted figures on elevated risk. I don't agree with the 10% homosexuality incidence in Orthodox Jews but it does exist and the current issues are NOT being adequately addressed.

The percentage of same-sex attracted people does not depend on a population's religious beliefs, irrespective of the actual percentage. Because someone is orthodox Jewish does not immunise them against homosexuality. If you disagree I'd like to hear why.

Yes, even one Jewish child dying is a tragedy. I was making sure on the scale of risk factors for Jewish kids dying, there is some perspective here. The number of homosexual Jewish kids dying from suicide because of their orthodox families is VERY VERY low. Drugs are more of a problem.

The psychological abuse perpetrated by the religious intolerance of homosexuality does not always result in suicide. It manifests as depression and anxiety, and there will be many unsuccessful suicide attempts. The "VERY VERY low" number of suicides is just the tip of iceberg as far as this problem is concerned.

How do you start? Lets start by being realistic. Lets make sure the Rabbis know the risks and that they and teachers as well as parents have tools to identify kids at risk. Educate people to identify symptoms of depression and suicide and that help is available and how to get it.

Yes, education is paramount, but to educate people to look for symptoms of depression and suicide rather than try to prevent the symptoms has got to be the most backwards approach to dealing with this problem. The only risk here is the lack of acceptance of homosexuality, as I keep telling everyone.

Also mental disorders in general are not recognised, ignored and underestimated in general in the whole Jewish community particularly the Orthodox community and this also need to be addressed.

Mental disorders such as depression and anxiety perhaps? I wonder why they come about.

Let's talk more.



• *Chaim* says:

[November 9, 2009 at 10:16 am](#)

Immunization is an interesting word you use. Immunization is for disease.

How about genetics? Inbreeding in orthodox Jews where gay people do not have kids nor continue to stay orthodox. Different groups clearly have different incidence of behaviours, characteristics or illnesses. From experience it is clear even if you take into account suppression of true incidence it is not equal to 10%. But this is irrelevant really. My point was if you want to look at risks to Orthodox youth – this topic while important (particularly to you) is close to the bottom of the list.

Similarly when you have such low incidence and absolute numbers, risk factors are always inflated and not accurate.

Again we are back to the same problem. Accepting homosexuality into Orthodox Judaism is just not going to happen. Harping on about this is futile and endangering these youth because you will just have doors closed in your face. Is it the youth you rally care about or your own agenda to get

homosexuality accepted into Judaism?

Depression and anxiety have many causes... Having a religious outlook and being part of a community is actually a negative risk factor. Identifying kids at risk and then monitoring symptoms while treating them (medication, psychology or just social support) is the most effective way to reduce and treat mental illness and subsequently suicide.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 9, 2009 at 1:11 pm](#)

P.S. Alfred Kinsey found that the incidence among Orthodox Jewish groups “appears to be phenomenally low.”

Sexual Behavior in the Human Male by Alfred C. Kinsey



- *Michael Barnett* says:

[November 9, 2009 at 1:29 pm](#)

Hardly evidence of anything other than the oppressive nature of religious indoctrination.

You are about 30 years behind current thinking on human sexuality.



- *Dalit* says:

[November 9, 2009 at 2:02 pm](#)

Alfred Kinsey’s entry on Wikipedia leaves much to be desired. I don’t know if I would source him to prove much:

“Attention was directed to Tables 30-34 of Sexual Behavior in the Human Male, which report observations of orgasms in over three hundred children between the ages of five months and fourteen years.[9] Former and current directors of The Kinsey Institute confirmed that some of the information was gathered from nine pedophiles and that Kinsey chose not to report the pedophiles to the authorities, balancing what Kinsey saw as the need for their anonymity against the likelihood that their crimes would continue”

“James H. Jones’s biography, Alfred C. Kinsey: A Public/Private Life, describes Kinsey as bisexual, and experimenting in masochism. He encouraged group sex involving his graduate students, wife and staff. Kinsey filmed sexual acts in the attic of his home as part of his research.”

See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Kinsey#Interviews_with_pedophiles



- *Chaim* says:

[November 9, 2009 at 5:50 pm](#)

Dalit: there is very little research on sexuality.. if you can come up with more particularly incidence of homosexuality I would love to know. (not from biased groups...) I never said he was a nice guy. He is considered the father of sexology which just show what “could” happen if you base your life around sex and sexuality.

The New York Times:

The untimely death of Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey takes from the American scene an important and valuable, as well as controversial, figure. Whatever may have been the reaction to his findings — and to the unscrupulous use of some of them — the fact remains that he was first, last, and always a scientist. In the long run it is probable that the values of his contribution to contemporary thought will lie much less in what he found out than in the method he used and his way of applying it. Any sort of scientific approach to the problems of sex is difficult because the field is so deeply overlaid with such things as moral precept, taboo, individual and group training, and long established behavior patterns. Some of these may be good in themselves, but they are no help to the scientific and empirical method of getting at the truth. Dr. Kinsey cut through this overlay with detachment and precision. His work was conscientious and comprehensive. Naturally, it will receive a serious setback with his death. Let us earnestly hope that the scientific spirit that inspired it will not be similarly impaired.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 9, 2009 at 6:00 pm](#)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_sexual_orientation

2005: The American Community Survey from the U.S. Census estimated 776,943 same-sex couples in the country as a whole, representing about 0.5% of the population.[24]

2008: Fried's 2008 analysis of General Social Survey data shows the percentage of United States males reporting homosexual activity for three time periods: 1988-1992, 1993-1998, and 2000-2006. These results are broken out by political party self-identification, and indicate increasing percentages — particularly among Democrats (or, perhaps, reflecting a shift of political allegiance among homosexuals). See graph, right.(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fig._7_-_Have_your_sex_partners_in_the_last_12_months_been_men.JPG)

2008: CNN exit polling showed self-identified gay, lesbian, and bisexual voters at 4% of the voting population in the United States presidential election, 2008.



- *Anon* says:

[November 9, 2009 at 6:39 pm](#)

Perhaps the true purpose of religion is being overlooked in these circumstances. One of the foundational tenets of Orthodox Judaism is that there is a higher Being who, aside from having created us and the world, also moulded our innate personalities and tendencies. None of these are perfect. One's purpose in life is to act against his own nature in the name of a greater spiritual picture.

We all have our challenges. The way to deal with them is to follow the Torah that has guided us so well up till now, and acknowledge the flaws of human nature.

Despite this, I do fully agree with the idea that the support needed by homosexual people is sorely lacking; largely a result of the above idea being taken way too far...



- *Bruce Llama* says:

[November 9, 2009 at 10:01 pm](#)

Chaim,

The surveys and polls you quote are giving figures for those that identify as gay. In my straight

years, I would never have identified as gay, nor would I have put such a thing down on a survey. The results presented is for those willing to divulge the information. To get an accurate figure, people like you need to keep quiet. You're not helping those struggling to find out who they are. Your attitude and words are symbolic of the very struggle that Michael was talking about.

Plain and simply the torah is wrong, out of step with reality. Homosexuality is not an abomination, and people such as your self need to accept that and say so. The same way you modify and change the torah to your own views now. It's been interpreted and re-interpreted so many times. Jews have found more loop holes than a catholic confessing on his deathbed to get into heaven. It's time to step up and do it again.

A young person searching the internet looking for homosexuality and jews, will stumble across some of the most vile and hateful speech that will make them feel like an abomination. They're not. They should be encouraged to be who they are, in the love of their family, not taken away and shunned.

There are gay jews, more than you know. Your head in the sand mentality reminds me of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iranian President, when asked about the execution of two gay man in Iran responded with:

“In Iran we don't have homosexuals like in your country. We do not have this phenomenon. I do not know who has told you we have it.”

The president of Iran was actually able to make New Yorkers burst into laughter – though he did not intend to.

[\[SOURCE\]](#)



- *Jon* says:
[November 9, 2009 at 10:07 pm](#)

the problem of homosexuality and orthodoxy is a difficult issue, and it is foolish to minimise the seriousness of the issue. To say it doesn't exist in the religious community is I think a bit of nonsense – in larger jewish communities in the us and israel where there are a critical mass of religious jews, this clearly is an issue (watch the israeli film áhavta').

the argument that says well – í'm against the transgression, but not the transgressor' is a cop out. It assumes they had a choice in the matter. Expecting someone to remain effectively celebrant as an answer, seems ridiculous as well.

i don't have an answer as to how orthodoxy can try and reconcile itself with homosexuality, but the easy answers proposed, don't really cut it.



- *Bruce Llama* says:
[November 9, 2009 at 10:12 pm](#)

Anon,

The true purpose of religion is to control you. It's a man made fiction, I don't think any god created us in any way. It's made up and of little help to those struggling to find their identity when they have to battle against outdated dogma that bears no resemblance to us in the 21st century. We'd be better off ditching the bumpkin and getting on with our life, free of that stuff.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 10, 2009 at 12:50 am](#)

Bruce: I understand the limitations of surveys. Sampling errors, interviewer bias etc. Just like they can underestimate they can also overestimate eg where do bisexuals fit in? Some surveys ask did you ever have a homosexual experience? Manipulation of date is common as is the bias towards study design. Interestingly the CNN on the 2008 US elections would have had a much higher turn out of gay people given the promises Obama made them. In general you have to take them with a grain of salt and look at averages which are probably around 6%.

We are having circular and futile arguments. I have never tried to convince you that the Torah is right or that homosexuality is an abomination. It is a waste of time. Similarly trying to convince me of the opposite is futile.

The rest of your ridiculous comments have been addressed above.

I don't know how many times I can say this. Homosexuals exist in the orthodox world (the numbers are irrelevant). Adults can leave and do or believe whatever they want. Teenagers have a clear problem. They need to be identified and supported with compassion and love, mental illness addressed and if they really need to be removed from their families because of their health, so be it.

Instead of wasting our time debating whether religion is right or needs to be changed, let's work together to help the people in need.

Orthodox Judaism is not going to accept homosexuality. Jon – there are no solutions or apologetics needed. People have free choice to do and believe what they want. No one is going to or even needs to convince anyone else of anything. That is up to G-d.

Who is really being intolerant here?



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 10, 2009 at 2:09 am](#)

Chaim, your contributions to this discussion trouble me somewhat. I want to discuss two points in particular.

You claim to be a doctor and that you are "*involved with a HIV clinic that is majority homosexual.*" Is your medical qualification current and are you registered to practice in Australia?

It staggers me that any doctor who is involved with (works in?) an HIV clinic in Australia could make as profound a statement as "*there is very little research on sexuality*" and still have an iota of credibility.

Which rock have you been hiding under? Do you actually practice medicine in this HIV clinic?

There is an incredible amount of research on sexuality in Australia. Start with the Australian Research Centre into Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS). They have a [list of publications](#) on their spanning 1997-2007 that is quite comprehensive, plus newer research elsewhere on their site.

I have quoted current Australian research from ARCSHS and Suicide Prevention Australia in my article. Did you read (and understand) it?

In a later comment you go on to say:

Teenagers have a clear problem. They need to be identified and supported with compassion and love, mental illness addressed and if they really need to be removed from their families because of their health, so be it.

Teenagers don't have a problem. They are forced by crazy, dangerous religious beliefs into an unenviable situation of being told they have a problem that they don't actually have, which in turn leads to their depression, anxiety and potentially suicide.

You say that their mental illnesses need to be addressed. I say that if they weren't psychologically abused by their families, community and the Jewish religion, they wouldn't have these mental illnesses.

On the one hand your are condoning the abuse and on the other you want to treat it.

What I am trying to do is prevent this insidious abuse, but from what it seems you, and so many others, are incapable of understanding this.

Michael.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 10, 2009 at 2:22 am](#)

Michael: I am sorry and I was not clear. I meant in the Jewish (Particularly Orthodox) Community. Obviously there are multiple institutes throughout the world specializing in research on sexuality and gender.

I am currently actually currently practicing in the USA but had my education in Australia (licenced in both) and still have connections there. I am not a HIV nor an infectious disease specialist. I work in a low income clinic which has an attached HIV clinic and I see their patients for other medical issues.

I have plenty of homosexual patients with and without HIV.

Otherwise I am done... I have nothing to prove. I was willing to help the youth in trouble but you would rather use them to further your political agenda. This is more troubling to me.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 10, 2009 at 2:38 am](#)

You are deft at avoiding the topic of psychological abuse Chaim. Why do you run away from it? Are you unable to defend your beliefs and attitudes?

Substantiate your claims that I have a political agenda. I only want to prevent the psychological abuse as I have stated. You don't seem to care much about preventing this.

I have no hidden agenda. I am up front in all my dealings. I have nothing to hide.

Michael.



- *frosh* says:
[November 10, 2009 at 9:29 am](#)

Bruce,

You wrote:

“Regardless of whether or not my statements can be taken as contradictory is irrelevant.”

The unnecessary “regardless of” aside, making such contradictory statements is a sign of an essential breakdown in logic, and thus is highly relevant.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 10, 2009 at 10:30 am](#)

Frosh,

Thanks for you comment. So noted.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 10, 2009 at 1:21 pm](#)

Throwing his hands up in the air, Chaim states that orthodox judasim will not accept homosexuality. It will continue to consider it an abomination and put the mental state and lives of impressionable teenagers at risk. Chaim, I’m glad to hear you acknowledge that there are gay jews, I’m glad to hear you want to help. I’m glad you raise the question of who’s intolerant. How can any progress be made when the issue of the torah is not resolved and when people continue to use that as a weapon of control and justification to direct people’s lives? Rather than patch the problem, how can the issue of intolerance in the torah be addressed to better reflect the reality of the 21st century and the advances in our understanding of sexuality? I’ve made a few suggestions that have been rejected. What are your suggestions to actually address the vilifying text? Do you really think that throwing your hands up in the air is the answer, or does it deserve some thought as to how it can be fixed? Do you really think that homosexuals are an abomination and that the wording as it stands is correct?

I’m glad we have a common thought on our comments – ridiculous 😊



- [ariel](#) says:
[November 10, 2009 at 5:18 pm](#)

Bruce,

You do yourself no favours by distorting both Chaim’s words and those of the Torah, *lehavdil*.

The Torah *does not* claim homosexuality by nature is an abomination. It also *does not* say that being a liar by nature is an abomination. What it *does* say is that *to act on these desires* is an abomination.

You are right when you say the Torah is here to focus our desires because clearly, we need controlling. I’m curious as to whether you have the same view of your government and the many laws and regulations it places on your life? Am I right to think that we should all live like animals and just act on whatever urges we feel, all the time?



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:

[November 10, 2009 at 6:18 pm](#)

What does “live like animals” mean? Humans are animals. Non-human creatures are quite often as sophisticated in their societies and behaviours as ours, some more so.

If you are suggesting that homosexual sex is more “animal-like” than heterosexual sex then I’d like you to explain in detail why. I can guarantee you that whatever sex heterosexuals engage in is no more or less “animal-like” than any sex homosexuals engage in. In fact, heterosexual sex offers more options than homosexual sex. Ah, the choice!

Now, back to the real topic. Rather than defend Chaim and attack Bruce (or whatever your intent was), what is your suggestion on how to prevent the misery that young people face when they are damaged by psychological abuse from their religion?

Michael.



- [Michael](#) says:

[November 10, 2009 at 6:44 pm](#)

Ariel, I think this would be akin to saying that the Torah does not have a problem with a person BEING left-handed as long as they never USE their left hand for anything. There might be a distinction on the conceptual level, but on the level of practicality it’s vacuous.

Furthermore, I don’t know of any evidence that historically Jews would have seen the same dichotomy, it seems the mantra that there is a strong being/doing distinction in Judaism for homosexuality is a corner that Orthodox Jews have been backed into in order to avoid saying that it’s against the Torah to BE gay or lesbian. (Which I’m fairly sure I’ve seen and heard from some Jews in any case.)



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:

[November 10, 2009 at 6:59 pm](#)

Ariel,

The play on words is interesting, but unhelpful. People like to have sex, gay people like to have sex with people of the same gender and orientation. The torah considers that to be an abomination. It’s not, its a natural sexual response from a someone who is every bit as natural as the next person.

Who says we need controlling? And if that’s right, the torah is the last thing to do it. It isn’t updated and someone threw out the rules for interpretation. We make it up as we go along.

And don’t be silly, the Australian Government is a democratically elected government, they pass rules as the community decides and not one of them is set in stone. The reason we don’t live like animals is very clear, we need each other to survive. We do much better when we rely on one another. You don’t need a book of rules to work that out.



- [ariel](#) says:

[November 10, 2009 at 7:13 pm](#)

Bruce, then why not petition the government to get rid of itself because clearly we don’t need rules?

Michael, I find your fascination with sex to be interesting. I thought I was clear in my allusion to animals. When animals get an urge to do something, they do it. Like when a dog relieves itself in the middle of its walk. Perhaps next time I need to relieve myself during my evening walk I should just drop my pants immediately and go for it. After all, I have the physiological need to do so; I should just immediately fulfil that need. Who cares what effect I have on society?

The argument that humans are animals is an excuse used by those who wish to live by base instinct and desire.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 10, 2009 at 7:28 pm](#)

Ariel,

You're just as effective as Chaim in avoiding the topic. Why did you so conveniently avoid it.

I've met plenty of people who could easily out-animal most animals, and trust me, they are not all outside the Jewish community. When it comes to acting on instinct, animals don't have the monopoly.

Care to talk on the topic of Orthodox Jewish psychological abuse?

Michael.

PS. Other Michael: nice post.



- [ariel](#) says:
[November 10, 2009 at 7:56 pm](#)

The difference between us and animals is that we have the *ability* to control our base instincts and urges.

Your boxing in of all Orthodox Jews with gay children as abusive is fundamentalist and does not warrant any further response other than what Chaim has already said on it. I will only add that I have met Orthodox homosexuals and their parents and they don't fit your description.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 10, 2009 at 8:11 pm](#)

Now this is an unexpectedly welcome twist to the conversation Ariel. I'm genuinely interested to hear how the families of these Orthodox 'homosexuals' cope with having non-heterosexual children.

What support is there for the families of these children and the children themselves? I know it's a rough road to travel alone, withough the support of your community.

Do the parents allow the children to have relationships, assuming they're of an age that they'd be allowed to have relationships if they weren't homosexual?

How do these families reconcile their having children who are homosexual with their religious beliefs?

Please share with us what you can about these people and families because it might hold the key to how the community can make progress.

Nevertheless, there is still a mountain of abuse going on in the community despite what you have mentioned. The attitudes are steadfast and will remain so until people acknowledge the problem.



- *Joel* says:
[November 11, 2009 at 1:52 am](#)

There seems to be quite a lot of mention of the logical justification of maintaining the prohibition against homosexual relationships – namely, that it is mutually exclusive to Jewish continuity.

I would like to point out a number of issues with regard to the development of Jewish law throughout the ages and its response to modernity and new phenomena.

Firstly, orthodoxy, in its truest form, before the codification of the law and sealing of the oral law, was always a dynamic law, one that changed and responded to contemporary issues as they arose. Its stagnant nature is a product of historical necessity that spawned from fear of the loss of the oral tradition. Interestingly, when one peruses the debates conducted between the Sages, one will find a plethora of examples throughout the Talmud of instances whereby a new sociological, economic or moral dilemma arises and the result is that a strict biblical prohibition (the ‘letter’ of the law) clashes with a more general religious precept (the ‘spirit’ of the law) such as *ahavat yisrael* (love and care for all Jews) or the importance of the unity of *klal yisrael* (the wider Jewish People). One example is the laws pertaining to *prozbul*. In short, they are laws that refer to loans between Jews, whereby all loans that stood unsettled, upon the year of the jubilee, were annulled. This created a stagnant and unfortunate economic climate whereby the rich would no longer loan to the poor for fear that the loan would be annulled and their principal would be unrecoverable. The Sages deliberated over the unfortunate situation of the poor being further financially unsupported as a result of an unambiguous torah prohibition and found a way to circumvent the rule. In light of this new economic phenomenon, they created a different system; a system that allowed for assurance to the money-lender and security to the poor. The spirit of the law, as identified by the rabbis, the pivotal tenet of Judaism to care for the less fortunate, defeated the letter of the law. There are many more examples of the ‘spirit’ defeating the ‘letter’ throughout the oral tradition.

Now we are brought to the new phenomenon of homosexuality with regard to Judaism. No, not new, as homosexuality undoubtedly has existed since the beginnings of gender attraction and by proof of it being addressed in the Bible, at least since biblical times. But it is a phenomenon that modernity has drawn to the surface more poignantly than ever in light of unprecedented sexual freedom of expression and one must surely admit, the highest levels of tolerance and acceptance of such expression. Judaism, as ever before, in remaining truthful to its dynamic roots, must attempt to respond to this dialectic in an attempt to reconcile the letter of the law with the spirit of the law.

Many people have suggested a seemingly straightforward response to the essentiality of the prohibition against homosexual relationships – preservation of Jewish continuity. However, when we read the issue of homosexuality and Judaism on the backdrop of modern science and other religious law, we must surely realize that the once sole method of creating a family via traditional heterosexual reproduction has long since been displaced by the contributions of genetic science and adoption procedures. With regard to lesbian relationships, fertility treatment and embryonic research has become widely accepted as an alternate method of conception for couples for whom ‘traditional’ conception is unviable. Thus, for a lesbian Jewish couple, a Jewish family is born. For homosexuals who wish to create a Jewish family, adoption would be the first point of call, via an adoption agency or a surrogate. At a young age, a child is automatically converted to Judaism by the decision of his or her parents and has the option of ‘accepting’ it upon him or herself later in life. Once again, a non heterosexual couple has a way of creating a Jewish family. I will not begin

to respond to those who self-righteously ask, “But what kind of family is that? Is that the way a Jewish family should be?” Such a claim is not justified in light of many dysfunctional heterosexual Jewish families whose Jewish spirit is also in question. The nature of a Jewish family is judged on the choices it makes and priority it places on Jewish values; not the sexual preference of its parents. It is also unjustified in light of general dysfunction that exists in families with heterosexual parents and no clear evidence that homosexual parents would be in any way incapable of creating a safe, warm and supportive family environment.

The logical rationalization of heterosexual relationships over homosexual relationships from a halahik point of view as being the sole and essential route to Jewish continuity, ignores blatant and numerous modern options for creating families. This is not to say that now that this commonly accepted rationalization has been debunked, that the law is no longer necessary. My comments merely point out that the moment one builds a structure of logic around a biblical law with such certainty, it leaves very little to stand on when that logic is disproven. That which bold orthodox leaders must now undertake is a way for the spirit of the law to once more defeat the rigid letter for the sake of klal yisrael and am yisrael.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 2:47 am](#)

Joel, thank you so much for this most insightful, inspiring and refreshing contribution to the conversation.

Please feel free to contact me directly – mikeybear69@gmail.com.

Michael.



- [ariel](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 6:58 am](#)

<http://djs28.tripod.com/>



- [defensa](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 9:01 am](#)

Joel,

You articulated my thoughts far more elegantly and compassionately than I did or could have done. Well done.

The stumbling block I foresee for your line of thinking is as follows.

That the objection on grounds of Jewish Continuity is only part of the actual objection. I imagine that a number of Rabbis and other Orthodox minded people will hold that the Torah’s unambiguous prohibition on homosexual activity points to an in principle objection to homosexuality as being part of the “spirit of the law” itself.

I myself believe that the prohibition is partly an ancient measure at ensuring continuity as well as part of a general taboo on homosexuality found across nearly all ancient cultures.

What is interesting to me (and Im sure the religious contingent will jump on this as being complete heresy) is that the Bible is full of homosexual or at least bisexual heroes.

There seems to me anyway, to be a strong argument for reading the story of Joseph in a way that positions him as a homosexual, and the relationship between David and Jonathan, despite years of Rabbinical mental and linguistic gymnastics, is obviously a gay love story. Moreover, there seems to be some evidence that Reish Lakish was also gay and there are strong erotic undertones within the story of Reish Lakish's initial encounter with Rav Yochanan. And to make things even more complicated, the Torah has no explicit ban on lesbianism at all, although I cannot think of a Biblical or Talmudic figure who was most likely a lesbian.

What's interesting to me is that disciplines like the Kaballah posit ideas of qualities of the soul and inherent spiritual qualities for men and women. Extrapolating from this I would imagine the Kabbalah sees a different spiritual quality in homosexual sex as opposed to heterosexual sex. If this is indeed the case, as science seems to at least currently believe there are strong differences in neuropsychology and physiology between homosexuals and heterosexuals, the population almost certainly needs a certain amount of this other variety for its own internal health and balance.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 9:41 am](#)

science seems to at least currently believe there are strong differences in neuropsychology and physiology between homosexuals and heterosexuals

defensa, could you please elaborate on this and provide a reference or two?



- [The Hasid](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 11:29 am](#)

Shkoyach, Joel!



- [Sally Goldner](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 11:49 am](#)

Joel

Beautiful.

Sally



- [Joel](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 2:16 pm](#)

And if i may add, my comments regarding the 'spirit' vs. 'letter' debate were drawn from ideas elucidated in the book "Essential Essays on Judaism – Eliezer Berkowitz" where he speaks about conversion practices and the decline of the oral law, but the principles applied there were most pertinent to this debate as well. Berkowitz is one of the boldest modern orthodox philosophers and halahik minds alive today and is well worth a read to gain an insight on a far less dogmatic and far more 'small-L' liberal, orthodox mind for which I'm sorry to say, Michael, you have in many ways failed to account for. These are the true, bold minds of the development of Jewish law today and hopefully will guide it into the future.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 2:29 pm](#)

Joel,

My concern at present is only for the mental health of the people being psychologically abused because of their sexuality. I make no apologies for my approach.

Unless a person is *fully accepted* for who they are they are going to continue suffer from the abuse of intolerance. Compromise is not possible.

I do welcome intelligent discussion such as yours, and would like to discuss further.

Michael.



- [David](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 2:49 pm](#)

Joel,

I think it is too simplistic an interpretation of the biblical prohibition against same sex, especially male homosexual relationships to say it is founded on the concern for Jewish continuity. If you look at the language used to depict homosexual behaviour you get a sense of utter abhorrence.

David



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 3:11 pm](#)

Just to add to the conversation (and not have a go at what you said David) I'd like people to question their understanding of the term "homosexual behaviour".

Many people assume homosexual behaviour is just about anal sex and about nothing else. That is about as far from reality as is possible. For a start, anal sex is also the domain of heterosexual sexual behaviour, and given that there are more sexual active heterosexuals than there are homosexuals, it would be fair to say there are more heterosexuals engaging in anal sex than there are homosexuals. It would also be fair to say that not all gay men engage in anal sex. Without running a statistically accurate survey of people in the Jewish community you will never know to what extent this is happening, but I can assure you it is.

What homosexual behaviour is about is love, friendship and intimacy between two people of the same sex. This love and friendship can be expressed in many ways, as it can with heterosexuals. Sharing a home, sharing a family, sharing life experiences, sharing a mortgage, sharing simchas, sharing the birth of a child (with a third party as Joel so sensitively explained), sharing friends and sharing each other.

In essence there is no difference between homosexual behaviour and heterosexual behaviour. What any two people choose to do or not do is ultimately up to them.

So, when people refer to "homosexual behaviour", think about what your own behaviour is and then think about how different that is to that of a same-sex attracted person.



- *ariel* says:
[November 11, 2009 at 6:41 pm](#)

Michael, I agree with your definition.

If that is the case, then why do some GLB people feel the need to have parades expressing it? Maybe we can have parades of “people with IQ’s above 150” or “people who need glasses to read” or “people with lactose intolerance”...

I think you understand the point that nobody cares what you are no matter what that is. There’s no need to flaunt it.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 11, 2009 at 7:29 pm](#)

Ariel,

Do you know why the [Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade](#) exists? In 1978 the New South Wales Polices force brutalised gay people in the most horrific fashion, in response to a peaceful gay rights protest back in 1978. The parade started as a protest against brutal oppression. You might like to consider it similar to Purim celebrations. If you find the fashion of some in the parade not quite to your taste you’re welcome to close your eyes as they pass by.

If you’ve got a problem with people “flaunting” their sexuality then maybe you should start with people “flaunting” heterosexuality, because as I said before, there are plenty more heterosexuals “flaunting” their bits all over the place. Have you ever watched any television, before or after 9:30pm? Lots of titillation, and I can guarantee you most of it is not aimed at the same-sex attracted audience.

In any case, you’ll find the parades of gay, lesbian and bisexual people etc, whatever the name or nature of them, exist purely because of the bigotry and intolerance of people who, just like you, won’t accept the diversity of human sexuality. You can make a difference but it seems you don’t know how to.

Would you like to join in a pride parade next year to show your support those people who are being oppressed? I’m sure you know what oppression is. You are Jewish, aren’t you?



- *Chaim* says:
[November 11, 2009 at 8:05 pm](#)

I want to address some points brought up above.

1) Although there are some mitzvot which are rational, there are many which are not. We as orthodox Jews do not believe in the commandments because of their rationality but rather because G-d commanded us to do them EVEN if they are irrational. You will not find the sages discussing a clear biblical commandment with one group saying it is rational – lets keep it while the other saying it is not – lets ditch it. The argument of rationality is only that we need to rationally need to understand HOW the halacha is derived from the original written text eg The story of R. Eliezer and the Oven. This includes the concept of Jewish continuity- it is not the reason for the mitzvot. There are situations where you have sacrifice your life for the Torah.

2) While some aspects of Halacha were certainly dynamic and even a true prophet has the ability to temporarily suspend some mitzvot, they never went against the original written and Oral Torah.

Since around the destruction of the 2nd temple the halacha became temporarily fixed and NO orthodox Rabbis has the power to change it now. Having said that when an accepted San Hedrin is formed (after Moshiach) and they say G-d changed his mind and homosexuality is accepted now into halacha – Then great I am all for it. Until then Orthodox Jewry is not going change the halacha.

3) Homosexuality in MOST ancient cultures was accepted at normal natural behaviour eg Greece, Rome (not sure about Egypt). It was not until the Torah came along and said this is not part of G-ds plan for creation and he is against it that homosexuality really became frowned upon throughout the world. Therefore the argument that the times are different and the Torah should allow it now have no real standing – it was this way before the Torah. The Torah was revolutionary in this aspect not reactive to societies norms.

4) I personally as I said above many times do not care if you choose to be a homosexual. I do not think you are an abomination. I do not see you as a sinner, evil or anything bad. You are human beings making decisions that you think are correct. I have no problem with love, friendship and intimacy between two people of the same sex.

When it comes to a physical act I would have to disagree with that choice but that is between you and G-d. I would be fine with legal rights to homosexual couples including inheritance, social security, marriage or even adoption in Australian law if the people had that will. It would not affect my personal beliefs regarding homosexual behaviour but I understand as all the arguments brought above and supported currently in science that people can come to this rational understanding. If you want to be homosexual and Jewish, many avenues exist for you – reform, reconstructionist, humanistic and some parts of conservative Judasim (Progressive Judaism as Simon like to call it) BUT orthodox Judaism is not going to work nor change for you.

5) The topic of psychological abuse. Firstly, all forms of sexual behaviours and expression, even masturbation, are frowned upon in orthodox Judaism not just homosexuality. Sexuality is an urge and all urges no matter what they are need to be recognised and contemplated upon as to if they represent G-ds will (as determined by the Written an Oral Torah) before they should be expressed into thought, speech or action.

Secondly, if you think exploring a teenager's sexuality (I understand the earliest feelings of homosexuality are generally around age 11-13) and explaining to him/her what those choices would mean as an Orthodox Jew and the options he/she has (I believe it is a result primarily of social conditioning with some genetic determination, and not a result of an irreversible physical condition) would be psychological abuse then I respectfully disagree. Done the right way would not lead to depression, anxiety or suicide. Denigrating, humiliating, torturing or isolating them, in my opinion, would be clear psychological abuse. How to address this in a realistic, practical way was discussed above.



• *David says:*

[November 11, 2009 at 10:06 pm](#)

Michael,

I think you jumped to the conclusion that by “homosexual behaviour” I was referring to anal sex. And the fact that you drew that conclusion underlines the fact that, in most people's minds sodomy is an underlying aspect of the sexual relationship between homosexual men. Who is to say it is not? I rather suspect that it is because there are fewer biological alternatives in male to male sex than between a man and a woman. Trust me, this is the case. Relatively speaking, as a proportion, far fewer heterosexuals practise sodomy than men who have sex with men. It is sodomy in particular that is abhorrent to the Judaic cultural tradition.

Ariel made the other interesting point that homosexual behaviour is notable for its “in your face”

remonstrations that seek to confront majority values and cultural norms. How would the gay community take to heterosexual parades where hoards of straight men and women in outrageous costumes showed of their tits and arse, even simulated copulation. Isn't that the way gay parades come across to the general population. Sure they are fun to watch for some but definitely not in the line of Judaic tastes or manners.

David



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 10:14 pm](#)

Chaim, you clearly have a lacking understanding of human sexuality. It is evident from your posting above that you have never had a struggle with your sexuality. You should consider taking an accredited course in the subject to understand the concepts better before posting further with any authority on it.

It is also terribly unfortunate that you think a person must sometimes sacrifice themselves for their religion. Would you be so understanding if you found a child of yours hanging dead by a rope with a suicide note saying that he couldn't bear the shame of you finding out he was gay? Or perhaps a child of yours couldn't be gay because you would "do it the right way".

Read the research I have supplied. The psychological abuse I talk about is a real problem. I am not making it up. You don't get it.

Michael.



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 10:17 pm](#)

Ariel,

My walk beachside last night showed lots of young people flaunting it, women and men wearing very little.

My drive to work this morning, I passed a billboard flaunting how I need to make love longer.

As I watched Neighbours with my daughter we saw a couple flaunting it on the screen.

Sex is all around you. Mostly it's straight. Do you live in the real world?



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 11, 2009 at 10:36 pm](#)

David,

Indeed you are right, I did jump to that very conclusion, primarily because that's the only issue orthodox Judaism has with homosexuality. I think in the context I was fair in jumping to that conclusion.

As for the biological alternatives available to gay men vs straight men, you are right that gay men have fewer options available if they are seeking penetrative sex. However there are a variety of other options open for sexual gratification if they (we) are looking for non-penetrative sex. I

assume those options are the same for straight men.

The issue of Judaic taste or manners is not what this discussion is about. I am not an expert on it and my views are likely to offend, so I will leave them to a more appropriate forum.

Any objection to the manner in which some people choose to express themselves in a public parade is no justification for intolerance of homosexuality. That is bigotry at its best. It's attitudes like that that are most destructive to young people who are struggling with their sexuality.

I remember as a young teenager when my late grandmother talked about "those poofters" and said how she hoped her grandchildren never became one. Do you know how much I struggled with that? Do you have any idea how much it upset me to know that I might disappoint my grandmother, knowing full well that I was attracted to boys of my ages and had no desire for girls. I suffered terribly because of her attitude.

Theoretical arguments justifying the intolerance only serve to perpetrate the problem.

The abuse continues. Children continue to suffer.

Michael,



• *David* says:

[November 11, 2009 at 10:41 pm](#)

Michael,

I don't think you understood the points Chaim made, and they are valid points made with considerable sensitivity.

He draws a valid distinction between urges and a more mindful expression of human sexuality. He has put his view that it might be possible to explain this distinction to a teenage child with homosexual tendencies. You are obviously intolerant of his views on the subject, including his view that homosexuality is largely the result of social conditioning with some genetic factors.

He genuinely believes that it is possible to reason with a child in a calm, non-intimidatory way, and explain what Chaim, and other Orthodox Jews, believe to be G-d's design for humans.

You cannot expect tolerance for the gay community while you ridicule a rationally argued case just because it does not fit with your views.

I am disappointed in



• *Mark* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 12:14 am](#)

Michael: You are beginning to sound like a histrionic homosexual obsessed with sex and sexuality.



• *David* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 1:05 am](#)

Michael,

You mentioned how hurt and traumatised you felt as a child when your grandmother condemned “those pooftas” and the lifestyle they represented to her. I assume she was not Orthodox. Why put the blame on Orthodox religious teaching for the stress experienced by adolescents in dealing with their sexuality? Arguably, much of the blame lies with gay activists intent on politicising the “rights” of lesbians and gays from the time they reach puberty.

From a different perspective, has it occurred to you that in disparaging a gay lifestyle, your grandmother might have had your best interest in mind? How many homosexual men or women live in stable family relationships?



- *Chaim* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 1:45 am](#)

Michael..

I have some interesting articles from:

1) Kenneth Zucker. (head of the child and adolescent gender identity clinic at Toronto’s Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.)

2) Ray Blanchard: how many older brothers did you have?

Would you like me to forward them to you?

Also you know nothing about me. I was around a close gay relative my whole life who only came out aged 18 and his completely secular family sent him to multiple psychologists.. I was not always orthodox and socialized and worked with homosexuals who flirted with me but I did not feel any strong reciprocal sexual attraction. I was never offended but yes I have never had to struggle with my sexuality.

You seem to have no understanding of Judaism or religion. It is about something bigger than yourself. For most people sexuality is only a small but important part of their identity and life. You seem to define yourself essentially only by your sexuality.

You don’t get it.. and are clearly intolerant of others. It seems you would actually relish a suicide to prove your ideology rather than accept differences and work together to prevent it.

The story about David and Jonathon is a beautiful gay love affair without sex and then they grew up and got married to women. As I said nothing wrong with love, friendship and intimacy between two people of the same sex just the sexual intercourse itself.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 3:10 am](#)

... homosexuality is largely the result of social conditioning with some genetic factors.

Homosexuality has not been proven to be *largely* a result of social conditioning. There are a variety of possible contributing factors, including hormonal and possibly genetic.

Mark, thanks for that useful contribution to the discussion. I’ll be looking forward to your next instalment. BTW, your avatar (picture icon on your posting) is the same as that for “defensa” and someone else called “David”. Whilst it’s possible these are three different people, it’s also possible it’s one person with three personalities. Hmmm.

With reference to my grandmother, she grew up in a religious house to one extent or another. Yiddishkeit was important to her, but it wasn't everything and she certainly didn't live for her religion. She wanted what she thought was best for her grandchildren, but she was from a generation who had a poorer understanding of human sexuality than we do in 2009.

Whilst I am particularly concerned about the abusive nature of intolerance of homosexuality in orthodox Judaism, I am also concerned about the same abusive intolerance generally. I did mention this in my article.

Arguably, much of the blame lies with gay activists intent on politicising the "rights" of lesbians and gays from the time they reach puberty.

What does this mean? Blame for what? Are you saying same-sex attracted people should not have the same rights as everyone else?

How many homosexual men or women live in stable family relationships?

What is the point of this question (other than to highlight ignorance on the topic)? There is a raft of misery in so many heterosexual relationships, that I can't see any point in singling out homosexual relationships as being any less stable than heterosexual relationships. Just look at the Family Court.

There are plenty of extremely stable same-sex parented families. If you'd like I can introduce you to a number, some of which are actually Jewish.

Chaim, you're more than welcome to forward me those articles, either as links here or to my email address (previously supplied). You say I have no understanding of Judaism or religion. Actually I do, but that is not relevant to my argument.

For most people sexuality is only a small but important part of their identity and life. You seem to define yourself essentially only by your sexuality.

I challenge anyone to deny themselves their sexuality (whatever it is) and see how they cope. Sexuality is not a small part of anyone's identity. It's a significant part. Try not being heterosexual for a week.

I don't define myself at all actually. I don't like labels. I am just Michael, a person who cares about the suffering that people endure because they are not given the opportunity to be who they are.

It seems you would actually relish a suicide to prove your ideology

I don't wish anyone to suicide. Quite the contrary. The research I have listed on the higher rates of suicide in same-sex attracted people speaks for itself. Have you read it?

As I said nothing wrong with love, friendship and intimacy between two people of the same sex just the sexual intercourse itself.

Do you monitor the sexual activities of all your heterosexual friends to make sure they don't do anything forbidden? I think you should. They might be getting up to all sorts of forbidden nooky. Why the obsession with what gay men do privately?

In reading the discussions posted here, a number of people profess to understand human sexuality, yet the same people have no personal experience with a struggle with their sexuality, or a qualification entitling them to speak with any authority on the matter. I will continue to dismiss as ill-informed such comments from people who make negative sweeping statements about homosexuality and cannot justify their positions.

Michael.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 6:33 am](#)

The main reasons cited include genetic and environmental factors, likely in combination. Other factors that may play a role include prenatal hormone exposure, where hormones play a role in determining sexual orientation as they do with sex differentiation; and prenatal stress on the mother.

^ Iemmola, F.; Camperio Ciani, A. (Jun 2009). “New evidence of genetic factors influencing sexual orientation in men: female fecundity increase in the maternal line”. Archives of sexual behavior 38 (3): 393–399. doi:10.1007/s10508-008-9381-6. ISSN 0004-0002. PMID 18561014. edit

^ [3] What the gay brain looks like, Time Magazine;

^ Dörner G, Rohde W, Stahl F, Krell L, Masius WG (January 1975).

<http://allpsych.com/journal/homosexuality.html>



- *ariel* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 6:43 am](#)

Michael and Bruce,
I agree with you 100%.
I am against the flaunting of any sexuality in public.

Regarding the Mardi Gras:

I know why it started. But why does it need to be public?

Purim is celebrated in private parties. I have not seen a Purim parade through Persia recently to flaunt our triumph over there.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 7:30 am](#)

I was celibate for three years. I don't claim to be a sexuality expert. For most people in the world it is not an issue. I refer those people to trained medical professionals.

You did not give a link to the actual research for me to review. Just letters, pamphlets and your personal statement. How many Orthodox Jewish homosexual youth suicides have occurred in Australia?

I don't actually care what you do in private or even public. I have never tried to convince you to do or be anything. I was explaining why Orthodox Judaism will not right now or in the near future accept homosexuality. There are alternative avenues for you.

Michael – I wish you all the best with your life.

I will look out for orthodox youth with sexual orientation difficulties to make sure they have support and help through their difficult times. I would not wish that on anybody.



- *Michael Barnett* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 8:26 am](#)

Ariel,

I am against the flaunting of any sexuality in public.

So it's not homosexuality that you have the objection with in the Mardi Gras parade. You might like to know that the Jewish entry in the Sydney Mardi Gras parade has always been tasteful and modest.

Regarding the Mardi Gras:

I know why it started. But why does it need to be public?

Why should it not be public? The Mardi Gras parade is essentially a protest march.

Purim is celebrated in private parties. I have not seen a Purim parade through Persia recently to flaunt our triumph over there.

I don't know about Persia, but there are public Purim parades in Israel. See the [entry on Wikipedia](#), with a photo taken in Jerusalem.

In Israel there are Purim parades called Adloyada (Ad-טוּ לו־נֵץ Yada-טוּ, Until one didn't know the other). The name refers to the drinking feast described in the book of Ester, after which the guests couldn't tell their friends apart from the other attenders. In these Parades men, women, boys and girls dress in costumes and masks and celebrate publicly.

I'd be more concerned about any overconsumption of alcohol in these types of public celebrations than any public flaunting of sexuality.

Michael.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 8:44 am](#)

Chaim,

In my personal statement I provided a link that leads you to the [Suicide Prevention Australia position statement on Suicide and self-harm among Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Communities](#) along with a quote from the position statement:

Similarly, those belonging to religious faiths that promulgate negative discourses about homosexuality are particularly vulnerable to suicide and self-harm. Conflicts between spiritual or religious beliefs and sexuality can result in significant psychological dissonance as well as division and exclusion from family, friends and community.

For many, these experiences manifest in deep feelings of self-loathing and hatred that, in turn, severely elevate the risk of suicide and self-harm (Hillier et al., 2008). As one young SSA woman describes:

Knowing what was facing me religion-wise and with my family I was pretty suicidal between the ages of about 16 and 19...not so much because of people's homophobia but because of feeling totally trapped between a religion/family that didn't accept homosexuality and being who I was. ('Peggy', aged 20, in Hillier et al., 2008)

How many Orthodox Jewish homosexual youth suicides have occurred in Australia?

This is a good question Chaim. More than likely we'll never know because if homosexuality is identified as the underlying reason for the suicide, the family is not likely to disclose it for fear of shame, if they even disclose that the death was due to suicide.

Lack of evidence is not a good argument to say it doesn't happen, because the research says it does.

Michael.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 9:09 am](#)

Is that research in the Jewish Community? Is it just a case study? Can you please give me the entire reference to review?

Actually in science and medicine lack of evidence is a real problem. Without evidence of its existence your whole position is questionable.



- *Michael Barnett* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 9:18 am](#)

Chaim,

The reference is listed in full in the position statement. Click on the link I just supplied and download the PDF for the position statement. It's worth reading in full to get an understanding of the issues.

I doubt the research is specifically on the Jewish community. Religious intolerance is religious intolerance. I would be surprised if depression and anxiety could tell the difference between the type of intolerant belief inducing it.

Michael.



- *David* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 10:20 am](#)

Michael,

“The Mardi Gras parade is actually a protest march”. It would be worthwhile conducting a survey on how the wider community (presumably the target of this “protest” view the occasion. I guarantee they relate to the parade as free bemusement, something to have a chuckle over. It is not something pitched at a rational level.

The absence of rationality is a distinguishing feature of almost all gay and lesbian activism. It is always fuelled by anger and blame of others. In the vernacular of gay activism, homosexuals do everything right. They are misunderstood, discriminated against or, in the case of this discussion “psychologically abused” by Orthodox Judaism.

I have to feel sorry for members of any minority who go through life in the role of “victims”, always blaming others for the way they feel about themselves.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 10:23 am](#)

Michael: I am really doing your work for you.

Looked at the statement. “Peggy” came from here:

Hillier, L., Mitchell, A., & Mulcare, H. (2008). ‘I can’t do both at the same time’: Same sex attracted youth and the negotiation of religious discourse. *Gay and Lesbian Issues and Psychology Review*, 4(2), 80-93.

which is here:

<http://admin.psychology.org.au/Assets/Files/GLIP%20Review%20Vol%204%20No%202.pdf>

“Their research utilises quantitative and qualitative data collected with same sex attracted young people in order to explore the subjects positions promulgated by many Christian religions.” – NO Jewish subjects – strictly only Christian study.

Maybe Judaism is doing a good job here... No recorderd Jewish homosexual suicides in Australia. “Danny” not from Australia died from AIDS.

I did find this for you:

<http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/16283/for-gay-israeli-youth-suicide-rate-soars-high/>

“The researchers stressed that there have been no comprehensive medical studies carried out in Israel regarding these matters, and that they had to extrapolate from studies carried out in other Western countries.”

Epidemiology of Youth Suicide in Israel

Conclusions: The suicide rates among the youth in Israel, as in adults, are among the lowest in the world. Army service may be a period of enhanced risk, justifying preventive action. The almost worldwide trend of increasing suicide among the young is only partially present. *J. Am. Acad. Child Adolesc. Psychiatry*, 1997, 36(11):1537-1542.

According to a 2008 report released by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center in Newton, Mass., studies that compare the rate of suicide attempts among LGBT youth with those among heterosexual youth show significantly higher rates for LGBT youth, often more than four times as high.

From the studies the depression and suicide is from rejection of the child itself not the sexuality. It is all about how the issue is addressed in the family NOT simply because homosexuality is forbidden.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 10:24 am](#)

David

This is rich coming from a Jew.

Michael.



- *David* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 10:39 am](#)

Michael,

I disagree, unlike gays, western Jews do not go through life feeling bitter and twisted about their identity.

What is more, unlike gays, identifying Jews continue to grow spiritually and multiply in number, eventhough they have had to endure far worse adversity than gays.

We need to preserve our sense of perspective.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 10:46 am](#)

Chaim,

Maybe Judaism is doing a good job here... No recorderd Jewish homosexual suicides in Australia.

I reject that totally. Christian intolerance of homosexuality stems from the same piece of irrational nonsense that Jewish intolerance of homosexuality comes from. The intolerance is the same.

I would postulate that the Jewish community is better at hiding the reality of suicide than in the wider communities.

The suicide rates among the youth in Israel, as in adults, are among the lowest in the world. Army service may be a period of enhanced risk, justifying preventive action. The almost worldwide trend of increasing suicide among the young is only partially present.

Just because the rates of suicide in Israel are lower than most other places doesn't prove anything about sexuality. In Australia there is a serious problem with suicide in regional and rural areas, which is not necessarily related to sexuality. If Israel doesn't have this problem with social isolation that Australia does then that could account for a lower suicide rate in Israel compared to Australia. There could be many reasons for this lower rate of suicide in Israel. In any case, it would be more useful to know the extent of attempted suicide rather than completed suicide.

Also, from my understanding, the most orthodox Jews in Israel avoid army service, so preventive action in military service will not be applicable in those vulnerable communities.

From the studies the depression and suicide is from rejection of the child itself not the sexuality.

My understanding of what "Peggy" had to say was that her family rejected homosexuality:
Knowing what was facing me religion-wise and with my family I was pretty suicidal between the ages of about 16 and 19...not so much because of people's homophobia but because of feeling totally trapped between a religion/family that didn't accept homosexuality and being who I was.



- *David* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 11:02 am](#)

Michael,

Regarding “Peggy” and others like her with suicidal tendencies, as far as I am aware, for many years there has been a gay counselling service in operation. Why didn’t she avail herself of the help that has been available?

If my child had an identity crisis, sexual or otherwise, I would surely notice it and take steps to have him referred to the best professional mental health provider available. This is an essential part of parents’ responsibility.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 11:06 am](#)

unlike gays, western Jews do not go through life feeling bitter and twisted about their identity.

You have no idea what discrimination gay people have had to face over the years. When was it last illegal to be Jewish in Australia? When was the last time a person was bashed by the police for being Jewish in Australia? When was the last time a person was gang bashed and killed for being Jewish in Australia? When was the last time the Australian government told you that you couldn’t marry because you were Jewish.

I don’t know about “bitter and twisted” but I know that gay people have been oppressed more in Australian society than Jews.

What is more, unlike gays, identifying Jews continue to grow spiritually and multiply in number, eventhough they have had to endure far worse adversity than gays.

What does multiplying in number have to do with anything? Perhaps that’s a decent amount of brainwashing speaking through.

As for gays not having faced worse adversity than Jews, I think you’ll find gay people have suffered as much as Jews over the years, if not more. Some countries still kill people for being gay. When was the last time someone was killed by a government for being Jewish?

Michael.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 11:11 am](#)

Regarding “Peggy” and others like her with suicidal tendencies, as far as I am aware, for many years there has been a gay counselling service in operation. Why didn’t she avail herself of the help that has been available?

If my child had an identity crisis, sexual or otherwise, I would surely notice it and take steps to have him referred to the best professional mental health provider available. This is an essential part of parents’ responsibility.

Sometimes children don’t know how to ask for help, or are too afraid to ask for help. If they know their family will reject them because of their sexuality, they are hardly placed to tell them they need help because of their sexuality. Actually it’s not their sexuality they need help about, but the rejection by their family that is the problem.

If your child doesn't tell you what's bothering them, how would you know there's a problem, even if you are perceptive and concerned for their welfare.

It's not as easy as you make it out to be.



- *David* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 11:26 am](#)

Michael,

So what is it you are advocating, or what solution are you in favour of?

Don't tell me we should teach our children, from an early age, that they should feel free to identify as homosexuals since homosexuality is perfectly compatible with our religious teachings, identity and culture. (I am certain that is what the gay and lesbian "rights" lobby would expect.)



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 11:32 am](#)

I won't tell you then.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 11:40 am](#)

"If they know their family will reject them because of their sexuality"

You just repeated my point entirely. What happens if the family does not reject them because of their sexuality but they come to an agreement that the family can not accept homosexuality per se and the child should not "bring that home" but the child is otherwise accepted, loved and supported.

You see this all the time in Australia with the non-frum children from Orthodox families remaining attached to the family despite the child's open and complete rejection of the families beliefs.

"I would postulate that the Jewish community is better at hiding the reality of suicide than in the wider communities."

Jews are not that good at hiding things... We tend to talk a lot. It is a much smaller community and people notice...

It is all about how it is done..... and how a person understands their identity. Can a gay person NOT assume that their sexuality is their whole identity? You seem to deny this ability.

<http://jonahweb.org/index.php> – read the personal statements here...



- *ariel* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 11:50 am](#)

I must agree with the vast majority of what Chaim says and to an extent with David.

Like Chaim, I am no expert on sexuality. All I know from my own experience is that when you abstain from something for a long time – be it sex or beer – when you finally engage in it again, it is the most exhilarating and spiritual moment one will ever experience, if done in the correct mindset.

I would like to add to David's comments by asking why there seems to be some kind of holy synergy between being homosexual and being a small-l liberal (left wing, if you wish)? What does one's sexual orientation have to do with the vast majority of political issues?

I wonder what the majority of GLBT people think of Alan Jones, Christopher Pearson and the late Pim Fortuyn for going against the grain?

Christopher Pearson told Focus that he had joined Gay Liberation in his youth, but found it to be a Maoist front. He said there is a strong recruiting element in the "gay" lobby. "They put pressure on vulnerable adolescents, who may be experiencing passing same-sex attraction, and say, You are one of us," he said. "They are very manipulative.

[Alan] Jones has been targeted because of a heresy dear to many on what remains of the Left. Homosexuals should not be conservatives and, if they are, they must be repressed, in denial or self-hating hypocrites.

This creed, because those who profess it seem to consider it a fundamental truth, pervades public discussion of politics, religion, social justice and sport.



- *David* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 11:53 am](#)

Michael,

I see a double standard on the part of the gay and lesbian lobby (Jewish and non Jewish alike).

You reject being judged in any way by sections of the larger community, because only gays and lesbians can know what is best for the, yet you reproach Orthodox Judaism, indeed any form of Judaism in regard to the way they understand, teach, even practise their religion.

If you construct a distinct, all knowing (self righteous) gay "community", you cannot expect a meaningful dialogue with others.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 12:11 pm](#)

What happens if the family does not reject them because of their sexuality but they come to an agreement that the family can not accept homosexuality per se and the child should not "bring that home" but the child is otherwise accepted, loved and supported.

And what if the family does reject the child? Or what if the child is too scared to find out how the family will react?

In any case, what you suggest is just mean and horrible to the child and they shouldn't have to endure conditional love.

Ariel, you'd need to speak to someone more politically inclined than me to answer your question about any perceived relationships between one's sexuality and politic views. It might be something

to do with brain chemistry, but that's a wild guess.

David, let me reiterate. My concern is about the mental and physical welfare of the people who are suffering psychological abuse due to religious intolerance of their sexuality. I really don't have the time or desire to care about their spiritual needs, as that is, in my opinion, secondary and less relevant to their wellbeing. You may disagree and are entitled to do so. However it is a lot harder to get a dead person to believe in god.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 12:18 pm](#)

I think I was actually describing unconditional love....

Can a gay person NOT assume that their sexuality is their whole identity? You seem to deny this ability.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 12:37 pm](#)

What about your comment above:

“I'm not trying to change orthodox Judaism”

Was that just a lie?



- *David* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 1:18 pm](#)

Michael,

You appear to have missed my point, which was that there is a dogma within gay subculture to the effect that only self appointed spokesmen for the gay “community” are in a position to know what is good for all gays, including pubescent teenagers who think they are gay.

At the same time, a Jewish gay spokesperson comes along and tells Orthodox Jews how they ought to interpret their religion with regard to homosexual practices. It's a bit of chutzpah, don't you think?

David



- *Michael Barnett* says:

[November 12, 2009 at 1:53 pm](#)

I think I was actually describing unconditional love....

Chaim, your example of unconditional love is not very unconditional. It is entirely conditional on the child “not bringing home” their homosexuality.

“I'm not trying to change orthodox Judaism”

Was that just a lie?

No, it was me trying to say that orthodox Judaism must change itself. I don't want to change it. I just want to save the people who are most at risk from the destructive attitudes of fundamental religion.

This attitude of blaming the person coming to help, and pleading that there is nothing wrong is *exactly* what I said about the alcoholic who cannot see they have a drinking problem.

Orthodox Judaism is so blinded to its own shortcomings that it has no idea of when it is actually doing more harm than good. Believers will never be able to understand that concept while they close themselves off from the possibility there is a problem.

At the same time, a Jewish gay spokesperson comes along and tells Orthodox Jews how they ought to interpret their religion with regard to homosexual practices.

David, I'm not telling you how to interpret your religion. What I'd actually like you to do is take a moment to start thinking (independently) and look at the problem I describe from a real-world perspective, not the theoretical perspective of the religious world you talk about. As I just wrote, you need to acknowledge there is a problem in order to fix it, but you seem to be in constant denial of a problem even existing.

Michael.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 1:59 pm](#)

“the child “not bringing home” their homosexuality.”

this is not a condition but rather a reciprocal love the child had for their family – it is called mutual respect. It assumes maturity and understanding and intelligence in the child – something you don't grant them.

Can a gay person NOT assume that their sexuality is their whole identity? You seem to deny this ability.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 2:10 pm](#)

Nonsense Chaim. Asking anyone to exclude any part of their personality to please someone else is placing conditions on them in that relationship. You can wrap it up as much as you want in whatever language most appeals to you but it's always going to be conditional whilst the person cannot express themselves freely.

Mutual respect would be the situation where the parents respect the child's homosexuality and the child respects the parents heterosexuality. Neither are right nor wrong, they just both are. Nothing else needs to be respected in this situation.

Can a gay person NOT assume that their sexuality is their whole identity? You seem to deny this ability.

I don't understand the question, but let me put it back to you so perhaps I can get an understanding of what you mean.

Can a straight/heterosexual person NOT assume that their sexuality is their whole identity?

Michael.



- *Bruce* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 2:12 pm](#)

Chaim,

Can a gay person NOT assume that their sexuality is their whole identity? You seem to deny this ability.

My sexuality is not the whole of my identity. It's an important part, its shallow of you to even suggest this.

Bruce.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 2:53 pm](#)

Michael: This is what religion is about. Not about the father nor family but about G-d who says that somethings no matter how vital, important, essential you think things are, they may be just not right (in G-d's "eyes").. There are always limits on free expression in society – speech, actions (speeding)..

To Bruce and Michael: My point is that a gay person CAN realize that his same sex attraction is an insignificant part of himself and there are higher truer values which can override his homosexual tendencies. A person has FREE will, no matter what his natural born inclinations. An Orthodox Heterosexual Jew controls his expression of sexuality on a continuous basis just like any other of his inclinations.

<http://jonahweb.org/sections.php?secId=180>

But now you have me off track... I promised I was not going to try to convince you of anything except for the ability to have free choice.

I wish you both all the best and May Hashem provide you with happiness, understanding, revelation and peace.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 12, 2009 at 3:20 pm](#)

This is what religion is about.

Religion often gets it wrong, no matter what you believe, and people suffer as a consequence of this. Is it right to see people suffer?

JONAH is extremely dangerous, as are all ex-gay organisations.

Quoting from Wikipedia on [Sexual Orientation, identity, behaviour](#):

Choice vs. innate

The American Psychological Association, American Psychiatric Association, and

National Association of Social Workers stated in an amicus brief presented to the Supreme Court of the State of California: “Sexual orientation has proved to be generally impervious to interventions intended to change it, which are sometimes referred to as “reparative therapy.” No scientifically adequate research has shown that such interventions are effective or safe. Moreover, because homosexuality is a normal variant of human sexuality, national mental health organizations do not encourage individuals to try to change their sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual. Therefore, all major national mental health organizations have adopted policy statements cautioning the profession and the public about treatments that purport to change sexual orientation.”[3] The Royal College of Psychiatrists stated that it “shares the concern of both the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association that positions espoused by bodies like the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) in the United States are not supported by science. There is no sound scientific evidence that sexual orientation can be changed. Furthermore so-called treatments of homosexuality as recommended by NARTH create a setting in which prejudice and discrimination can flourish,”[23] and added that “The best evidence for efficacy of any treatment comes from randomised clinical trials and no such trial has been carried out in this field.”[24]

The APA also writes that “most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation”.[25] In a joint statement with other major American medical organizations, the APA says that “different people realize at different points in their lives that they are heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual”.[26]

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) has stated “some people believe that sexual orientation is innate and fixed; however, sexual orientation develops across a person’s lifetime”.[27] A report from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health states: “For some people, sexual orientation is continuous and fixed throughout their lives. For others, sexual orientation may be fluid and change over time”.[28]
[edit] Sexual orientation change efforts
Main article: Sexual orientation change efforts

Major US, UK and Australian professional and scientific organizations regard attempts to change people’s sexual orientation as potentially harmful, while fringe groups, often motivated by religious beliefs, believe change is possible, or homosexual attraction diminished, for those who cannot accept their sexual orientation.[17][23][24][29][30][31]

How can you continually justify the intolerance of your faith against the weight of overwhelming scientific evidence that says the (religious) intolerance is the problem?



- *David says:*
[November 12, 2009 at 3:50 pm](#)

Micael,

“David, I’m not telling you how to interpret your religion. What I’d actually like you to do is take a moment to start thinking (independently) and look at the problem I describe from a real-world perspective, not the theoretical perspective of the religious world you talk about. As I just wrote, you need to acknowledge there is a problem in order to fix it, but you seem to be in constant denial of a problem even existing.”

For your information, I am a secular Jew who has an open mind, even about Orthodox Jewish views and practises.

Further, I am a distinct identity, not a cheat multi nick name for others in this discussion who do not share your views on the subject. (You insinuated the multi log on in one of your postings. With respect, it is paranoia on your part.)

What makes you think you are approaching this subject from a “real world perspective”? The fact is, you view everything through the distorting prysm of gay activist literature. In that literature and world view, homosexual orientation and “identity” is paramount.

Activist gay methodology also relies on an artificially constructed dychotomy between “straits” or “heteros”, sometimes “breeders” (“THEM”) and gay men and women (“US”).

In the gay construction of the real world, all non liberal “straights” necessarily discriminate against and now, in your formulation “inflict psychological damage” on gays and lesbians.

In any discussion, including this one, a gay activist will always reject out of hand the views and values of non gays which challenge the aforementioned gay constructs.

Of course what you overlook is that people, including non gays, are entitled to live their lives, including practise their religion, as they see fit without self appointed gay activists telling them how to do it.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 4:01 pm](#)

From the Australian Psychological Society:

Following is the APS Position Statement on the use of therapies that attempt to change sexual orientation.

[Use of therapies that attempt to change sexual orientation](#) (26kb) – June 2000

Everyone should read and understand this document.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 4:13 pm](#)

David,

What is your authority on sexuality?

You claim to be open-minded, yet you don't seem very open-minded, or informed for that matter.

Michael.

PS. My comment on questioning whether you might have been using multiple pseudonyms on here was based on your avatar being the same as that for a number of other posters. Each avatar is linked to a unique computer (IP) address, to help identify different (or the same) posters. Without knowing your real identity one has to take everything on face value.

Eds: avatars are calculated based on email addresses, not IP addresses. The avatar that Michael is referring to, which has appeared for multiple commenters in this thread is the avatar that appears when commenters do not enter their email addresses, and is not suggestive of a single person posting under multiple pseudonyms.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 4:20 pm](#)

The fact is, you view everything through the distorting prysm of gay activist literature. In that literature and world view, homosexual orientation and “identity” is paramount.

It would seem that you're the one with a distorted prism on reality. If religious people and even the secular people would remove vilifying language from their faith then we'd all be happy. It really isn't acceptable nowadays to continue to bleat about ancient texts that can be attributed to human authors and pretend that they are the most important documents in the world. The torah is no more sacred than Joseph Smith's Book of the Mormon or L Ron Hubbards book on Dianetics. This blind faith leads to the problem, not activist literature that highlights the very real world issues faced by people. The only reason these 'gay activist' exist is because people like you fight to keep the status quo instead of updating and changing. Give it a burl.



- [David](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 5:35 pm](#)

Bruce,

Ultimately it is the strident self appointed gay activists who will have to adjust to the real world and not the other way around.

Strident activism only serves to alienate the wider community who will simly tune out from your bleatings. In case you have not noticed, more and more posters are ignoring your one sided pronouncements in favour of unbridled gay sexuality. Other people have more to their identity than sex and sexuality. They believe in family, their children and the wider community not just the gay one.



- [David](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 5:47 pm](#)

The Australian Psychological Society is primarily a self interest body for psychologists concerned with lifting the profile and income of their members. It is silly to quote them as the ultimate authority on the subject under discussion.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 5:50 pm](#)

David,

Ultimately? I rather think you're wrong.

The world changes all the time and the use of religion has diminished over the years. It will continue to decline as people see the foolishness of it all. I'm from a very large family, from a very small community. My parents still have faith, but not the rest of us. All those who attended church with me on a regular basis no longer do so, they have no need for the formality of it all, and as they raise their children, there is no religious indoctrination. Of the 30 grandchildren my parents have, not one of them is religious and you know, they all turned out ok. (Or are turning out OK)

As already stated there is a lot more to me than my sexuality. I can see injustice and I like to speak out about it. I believe in family, my children and am involved in the wider community, not just the gay one. Are you so single minded that you thought I had a single track in life?

Please, feel free to ignore me, that just proves my point that people are unwilling to consider and change and adapt. I've done that plenty of times and will continue to do so. For as strident as I am, I have also observed a lot of strident attitudes and concepts that are immovable from this little gathering of brains here. People dismiss me because they don't like my ideas, and hey, that's ok. I come from a different space – but don't tell me how to behave and don't attempt to tick me off, I'll just ignore you. 😊



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 5:51 pm](#)

Jewish Orthodoxy is primarily a self interest body for orthodox jews concerned with lifting the profile and income of their members. It is silly to quote them as the ultimate authority on the subject under discussion.



- [Anonymous](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 7:32 pm](#)

Bruce,

You are an idiot. All you can manage with your pathetic little pea size brain is copy, word for word, what I wrote about the Australian Psychological Society except you substitute Jewish Orthodoxy.

You are also naive. That is obvious by your ignorance of the fact that Jewish Orthodox knowledge and culture goes back way before the concoction that is psychology.

Take it from me, Judaism in all its forms, including Orthodoxy, will outlive this quack science.

Finally, if you are in fact a responsible parent, as you claim, it is hardly within the realm of probability that you would take on the role of gay activist. It is not a fortunate choice, which ever way you look at it.



- [Michael](#) says:
[November 12, 2009 at 7:43 pm](#)

OK, this thread seems to have devolved beyond recognition so let me ask a question of those people who are arguing against the points of the headline post (as well as the “strident”, the “self appointed”):

Is the substantial claim that there is no problem of abuse (psychological and otherwise) of LGBT people in the Orthodox Jewish community? Is that really what's being argued here?

As an aside, for all the heat being thrown in this thread, it might be easy to forget that it's very civil because the readership of Galus Australis is very self-selected.

If so, the logical position would be one of these:

1. There is no abuse of LGBT people anywhere in western society, or societies where they are allowed to live without fear of execution.

2. There is religiously-motivated abuse in other communities but Orthodox Judaism is somehow immune, such that there isn't a problem. This being despite the fact that if you ask members of other religions (eg. evangelical Christianity), although their religion is quite different their religious views on homosexuality might be very similar to some of the views expressed here.

I don't see an alternative so is someone really claiming #1 or #2?



- [Michael](#) says:

[November 12, 2009 at 7:46 pm](#)

I find the fact that Anonymous [I believe) missed the entire point of Bruce's comment (about using deriding language to simply dismiss alternate views) quite telling. Especially for a comment that calls him an idiot thereby doing the same thing!



- [Bruce](#) says:

[November 12, 2009 at 8:00 pm](#)

Thanks Anonymous, well David I guess as you wrote 'I',

All feedback gratefully accepted. Some of it I work with, other bits I spit out of my pea brain. You might want to check your tolerance levels, they seem to be running a bit low.

Is that how you always deal with people who take a dislike to your words? I'm sure you're a decent chap in your own way, and it'd be nice if you'd maintain some civility.

Luckily for you I'm gay and I've had much worse.

Bruce The Naive.



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:

[November 12, 2009 at 10:39 pm](#)

Nathan,

Consider yourself corrected. Go do some reading on the subject, at the very least read the article and the research before making such uninformed comments.

Perhaps then you will understand the reality of sexuality and not be so quick to stereotype people who are gay.

Bruce the Pea Brain.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:

[November 13, 2009 at 12:27 am](#)

Michael,

Thank you for posing an intelligent question into the conversation; a classic case of modus ponens.

To assist with the decision of whether the money is under #1 or #2, I'd like people to read the [book](#)

[summary](#) of “Prayers for Bobby: A Mother’s Coming to Terms with the Suicide of Her Gay Son”, a true story, that I listed at the end of my article.

If possible get the DVD (and a box of tissues).

Michael.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 1:02 am](#)

Reparative therapy clearly work in certain individuals. There are multiple case studies and research papers showing this. Like any behavioural therapy it requires the will and consent of the individual. It comes to the matter of FREE choice. If you really want to change your behaviour you can, if not, then any therapy or intervention is futile and can be dangerous (depression or suicide).

The APS statement is a purely political statement. The APS regards homosexuality as a variant of normal sexual expression. This is subjective and arbitrary. Why is pedophilia (with the minor’s consent) or bestiality (assuming the animal enjoys it) or any fetish in which the individual can lead a functional lifestyle not an expression of normal sexuality? If the APA made a different subjective assumption that homosexuality is not normal, they would make a very different statement as they did in the past.

The fact is there has been no suicides of Orthodox Homosexual youth in Australia and there are very few in the whole world despite millions of practising orthodox Jews. You did not even provide one case or study. Being an Orthodox Jew is preventative to suicide.

While there is the possibility and probability of a homosexual Orthodox Jew, it is an extremely small number. It is inane to think Orthodox Judaism is going to change one of its core beliefs of sexual morality to satisfy a few people. Furthermore Orthodox Judaism, as I explained numerous times, LACKS the ability at this present time to even change the halacha, how much more so the text (Bruce). This is why “progressive” Judaism was started and subsequently rejected by the Orthodox world.

An orthodox Jew who has homosexual tendencies has the free choice how to act on those tendencies. That is between him and G-d. If he wants to suppress and subsequently change his sexuality or behaviour there is help for him. This can clearly be done in a rational, supportive, loving way which in no way constitutes abuse. If not, he can call Aleph!

I mentioned numerous times above a practical and realistic approach to help those few individuals who find themselves in this quandary and getting depressed. There are practical preventative measures similar to other current suicide prevention programs which seek out high risk youth and support them rather than trying to change the whole of society in the off chance that these youth would not get depressed or suicidal eg banning alcohol or forcing people to live in non-rural areas... NO suicide prevention program is 100% successful and reaches out to every youth at risk because of many many reasons. It does not mean it is a waste of time or incorrect. Some people can not be reached nor saved.

A tolerant person who respects individuality and personal choice would jump at the chance to help these individuals while respecting someone else’s beliefs EVEN if they are antithetical to their own.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 2:24 am](#)

Chaim, your posting is deeply disturbing because most of what you write is contrary to everything I have posted regarding current medical and psychological understanding of homosexuality and sexual behaviour.

As a medical practitioner you do your profession a huge disservice by propagating your dangerous, unproven, unfounded beliefs.

The fact is there has been no suicides of Orthodox Homosexual youth in Australia and there are very few in the whole world despite millions of practising orthodox Jews. You did not even provide one case or study. Being an Orthodox Jew is preventative to suicide.

This has got to be one of the most ridiculous, preposterous and outright ignorant statements I have ever read.

Firstly, no self-respecting orthodox Jewish family would ever announce to the world their child who just suicided did so because they were gay. That would render their entire remaining progeny unmarriageable and cast huge shame on their family, more so than there actually being a suicide in the family. As I said, the orthodox community likes to hush issues of shame.

That said, if there are statistics on orthodox Jewish suicides (please point me to a web site), I would be surprised to find a column on homosexuality being the reason for the suicide.

As for not providing a case study, I don't happen to have one handy, otherwise I would. I'm not generally privy to that sort of information.

Being an orthodox Jew is not preventative to suicide. On the contrary, it is a major risk factor when it comes to matters of differing sexuality.

Consider the following from the Religious Tolerance web site on [“Judaism and Homosexuality – Orthodox Judaism”](#):

Author Naomi Grossman wrote: “While there are no statistics available on the community's suicide rate, every gay Orthodox person interviewed for this article told me she or he knew of at least one Orthodox homosexual who had attempted or committed suicide. Experts say the suicide rate among gay Orthodox Jews is likely to be even higher than for the gay community at large, owing to the more restrictive and tight-knit atmosphere of Orthodox communities.”¹

1 [“Trembling before G-d”](#)

and also from the [LA Times](#) on Trembling Before G-d:

Many Orthodox gays and lesbians have committed suicide, the film points out.

From the [Internet Movie Database on Trembling Before G-d](#):

Dubowski interviewed Gays and Lesbians in New York, London, Los Angeles, and Jerusalem, many coping with rejection from their families, issues of suicide and AIDS, and self-acceptance. It is unsettling to hear learned Rabbi's telling them that they must remain celibate, submit to therapy, or pray until their urges disappear. Some of the Rabbis do not even understand what is meant by oral sex and mutual masturbation. The urge to say, “please wake up” is overwhelming. One of the interviewees is David from Los Angeles, a bright and articulate man in his late 30s who, following the advice of a rabbi, tried for many years to change his orientation through therapy. He talks without bitterness about the advice given to him by various rabbis to eat figs, snap a rubber band on his wrist or bite his tongue whenever he feels the temptation to

have sex with another man. Now twenty years later, David confronts the Rabbi who ordered him into therapy and tells him that his advice did not work.

and:

This documentary is a caring and touching look at several people caught in a moral and sexual dilemma. Whom do they deny, themselves, or G-d? If they proclaim their homosexuality to their world, they are dismissed or ignored, shunned or exiled. If they repress their feelings and accept the dogmatic teachings of their draconian faith, then they are driven to suffer in silence, or worse, suicide.

and:

I had heard a lot about this movie before I saw it. I rented it and watched it twice. I never watch movies twice! I think that this movie should be watched by all. Being gay and religious is obviously not just a Jewish problem. There are people all over the world right now from many religions, ethnic groups, and ages that are struggling with potential rejection and/or isolation if they come out. They feel defective and guilty for being who they are. In some cases, the family gets rejected and labeled as the “family with the gay son and /or daughter.” It is really sad and unnecessary. This type of reaction to homosexuality is potentially chasing away good people who can make a difference in our society. Additionally, many teenagers and young adults find themselves with no hope. The only way out for them is suicide. This is horrible.

Your claims that orthodox Judaism is capable of preventing suicide are unfounded, dangerous and ignorant nonsense Chaim.

Michael.



Chaim says:

[November 13, 2009 at 2:42 am](#)

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/statbelief.htm>: We are a multi-faith group. As of 2008-FEB, we consist of one Atheist, Agnostic, Christian, Wiccan and Zen Buddhist. – not Jewish.

“Trembling before G-d” is a biased movie with a political agenda not scientific research.

La times quote:

As the hour grew late, Kanefsky stood off to the side, surrounded by a dozen congregants. He described a point of consensus—that the law should not change, even as people become more open. “It was quite clear that the premise that the Halakha is what it is was soundly embraced,” he said. “That was not brought up for debate.” But, he said, he hopes “Trembling Before G-d” will continue to stimulate discussion in the Orthodox community. “I would love for Orthodox rabbis to come together” to discuss the issue of how to relate to homosexuals, he said. Ultimately, each congregation will have to decide what path to take, he said.

“In my gut, I have a deep feeling that the ultimate resolution will not be satisfactory to those in our congregation who are seeking complete equality,” he said. “But it will be a whole lot better than what happens in the absence of a policy.”

Kanefsky paused.

“I hope. I pray.”

I TOLD YOU HOW TO PREVENT THEIR SUICIDE!

You continue to push your intolerant gay agenda at the risk of these teenagers.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 13, 2009 at 2:56 am](#)

Are you denying that these suicides occurred, despite others claiming they know first hand of people who have attempted or committed suicide?

Next you're going to tell me God is listening to these hopes and prayers and is going to prevent the suicides. Tell me, why didn't God prevent the suicides that already took place? Perhaps God was being a bastard and wanted to let the families suffer, for no reason. Or maybe God was busy with more important matters. God gets busy you know. So many things to do, so little time. It's a wonder some poor unworthy homosexual gets overlooked and has to die.

Michael.



- *ex Yeshiva Talmid* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 10:04 am](#)

Eds: ex Yeshiva Talmid, please send us an email to verify that you were actually a student at Yeshiva College in Melbourne or Sydney, or avoid using title case for 'yeshiva' so as to avoid any ambiguity. In general we appreciate when commenters provide a valid email address so that we can verify details if necessary. This is particularly important when individuals or institutions are named.



- *David* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 12:38 pm](#)

Michael,

Why are we having this discussion if everything which does not fit with your "research" and "article" is automatically dismissed as "disturbing" and "contrary to all research", etc.

Chaim has put a number of rationally argued points about how youth, including Orthodox Jewish youth troubled by sexual orientation issues might be helped in a compassionatye way. He has also pointed out that, contrary to "research" you mention, there have in fact been no Orthodox Jewish suicides over conflicted sexual orientation.

Why must you always dismiss ideas which challenge yours? Do you have a closed mind on the subject?

And what about the point that lots of youth have suffered as a result of sexual abuse by homosexual men in Christian schools, boarding schools and the like? Don't you have any compassion for non homosexual youth who suffer sexual abuse and trauma?



- *David* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 1:49 pm](#)

Chaim,

After reading your postings, I am convinced that anyone with conflicted sexuality would get the most compassionate help from the Orthodox Jewish community.

I well remember high profile homosexual solicitor John Marsden saying on television that he would have preferred to have been born heterosexual. It is likely that a significant proportion of gay and lesbian youth feel the same way about their sexual orientation which may of itself lead to depression. The Jewish community, Orthodox or otherwise, is in no way to blame for this.



- [Michael](#) says:

[November 13, 2009 at 1:59 pm](#)

Will no-one take a stab at my questions?

<http://galusaustralis.com/2009/11/confronting-the-last-taboo-orthodox-judaism-and-homosexuality/#comment-4819>

David — I'm guessing you're asserting #2 then?



- [Bruce](#) says:

[November 13, 2009 at 2:07 pm](#)

David,

The more I read of your postings the more I think you're not grounded in reality.

The reason why a person who is gay would want to be born heterosexual is because of attitudes like yours. The jewish community is to blame for continuing to treat homosexuals as an abomination.



- [Chaim](#) says:

[November 13, 2009 at 2:12 pm](#)

David: I have appreciated your comments throughout a great deal.

To all:

The orthodox community just like every other community has both compassionate people and those less compassionate.. I would hope that any person with a conflicted soul whether from sexuality, drugs, abuse or any other personal issue should be able to reach out to those compassionate individuals.

I do believe we all need to be educated to be aware of these issues and to be able to recognise these people in trouble as well as having the strength and determination to reach out to them in order to support them at those difficult times.

The world nor people are perfect. Judgment is for G-d only.

Blaming others or religion is a distraction from actually helping those in need.



- [Bruce](#) says:

[November 13, 2009 at 2:22 pm](#)

Michael,

I think it's number #2 – there are either no jews with sexuality issues, or the numbers are so small that nobody gives a black rats arse. After all, there is no statistical evidence to support the notion, and what is available has either been conducted by people with vested interests or is a flat out lie. Oh wait, maybe I'm talking about god.

I wonder what needs to happen to get people to take their heads out of their sand buckets.



- *David* says:

[November 13, 2009 at 2:23 pm](#)

Bruce,

The more I read your ponderings the more I understand that you have a problem. For you, nothing exists outside your homosexual “identity”. In a word, you are entirely homocentric.

No amount of rational argument can dissuade you from your fixed idea that a homosexual lifestyle is healthy, or that the rest of society “owes” homosexuals.

You will get nowhere with these attitudes.

I value Chaim's explanation of the compassionate way the Orthodox community is helping Jews with sexual identity issues, including the enlightenment of mindful sexuality as an alternative to homosexual urges.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 13, 2009 at 2:26 pm](#)

Michael: it is neither. Maybe you need to read again from the beginning of the thread so we don't have to keep repeating ourselves...



- *David* says:

[November 13, 2009 at 2:29 pm](#)

Chaim,

Can you let me know where to send a donation to support your work. I am in Sydney.

David



- *Bruce* says:

[November 13, 2009 at 2:30 pm](#)

Chaim,

That's nicely written, I don't agree with the souls or judgment stuff, but that aside...

When a young person is conflicted for whatever reason, and that conflict happens because of the parents attitudes, are you expecting that a pre-adult teenager will understand the source of that conflict and will go out and seek their own help. Will they in the first instance reach out to their

parents who may well deny that there is a problem or send them off for some form of therapy? Do you think it would help to educate parents in sexuality in a way that allows them to maintain their outdated religious beliefs, but at the same time make their home and family life a safe place for their children to grow up in?



- *David* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 2:34 pm](#)

Bruce,

Bruce,

The more I read your ponderings the more I understand that you have a problem. For you, nothing exists outside your homosexual “identity”. In a word, you are entirely homocentric.

No amount of rational argument can dissuade you from your fixed idea that a homosexual lifestyle is healthy, or that the rest of society “owes” homosexuals.

You will get nowhere with these attitudes.

I value Chaim’s explanation of the compassionate way the Orthodox community is helping Jews with sexual identity issues, including the enlightenment of mindful sexuality as an alternative to homosexual urges.



- *Michael* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 2:39 pm](#)

Chaim — there has been virtually nothing of substance said over almost 150 comments. Either there is a problem with abuse in the Jewish community or there isn’t. There is no “neither” and I’m trying to pin the answers down so that opinions can’t be obfuscated behind the verbiage, as they’ve been doing in the comments above.



- *Bruce* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 2:46 pm](#)

Thanks David, as always your way off the mark and clearly have no understanding that the topic of discussion on this forum is about the way orthodox jews deal with sexuality. It’s a single focus so I’m not sure what other depth you would expect apart from a discussion about the topics.

So was your comment a judgment about me or are you trying to reach out and help?

Cheers.



- *ariel* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 3:54 pm](#)

Bruce and Michael:

You need to (re-)read Simon Holloway’s opening comment on this thread.

For Orthodox Jews, we are not blind followers of some transient “faith”. Judaism is not a religion even though it has a substantial religious aspect. For example, a religion does not tell you how to

tie your shoes, how to sleep and how to go to the bathroom. For us, G-d is not something we believe in, by the by, but a complete, everyday reality. Unfortunately, most people, including many Jews, have a very un-Jewish concept of G-d and Judaism.

You are not experts on Judaism and we are not experts on homosexuality. Neither of us will change the other nor will we be able to convince the other to change itself. Change must come from within, without external stimulus otherwise it will never happen.

It appears that change is happening within Orthodoxy (as Rabbi Caplan points out) because Orthodoxy *knows* that it can find solutions within Jewish sources as it has for millenia.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 13, 2009 at 4:05 pm](#)

Ariel,

I don't need to be an expert on religion to see it as nothing more than a man made construct and wishful thinking.

I'm not an expert on homosexuality either, I'm attracted to men, and I know what I like, you should see my love llama!

I'm sure I've said I want to get rid of religion, and I'm sure I've said people can believe whatever they like. That doesn't mean I have to respect it, any more than others have to respect me and my opinions. Change only happens when people ask questions. I'm happy to poke and prod and engage in the conversation. Change can not come from within if there is nobody to ask the question. My experience in life is that most people do not have the ability to ask questions of themselves. Some of the respondents should try asking themselves 'why' a lot more, then maybe there'll be some change.



- [ariel](#) says:
[November 13, 2009 at 4:32 pm](#)

I'll say it again: Judaism is not a religion, therefore your comment does not hold weight.

Perhaps I have proved that you don't actually read other people's comments...



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 13, 2009 at 4:37 pm](#)

I was earlier asked for an example of an orthodox Jewish homosexual who committed suicide. Whilst I can't provide this information (fortunately or unfortunately, depending on the perspective), I can talk about an attempted suicide.

I don't know if this person was orthodox, but that doesn't really matter because he may as well have been given the scenario. About 13 years ago a young Jewish man came to talk to me about his personal situation. He told me he was gay and he wanted to meet other similarly minded people to socialise with. In talking to him he revealed that he had attempted suicide by gassing himself in a car. The suicide was unsuccessful but he was left with some brain damage.

From what I recall of the conversation he did this because of a lack of acceptance of his sexuality by one or both of his parents at the time. I don't know how long he had struggled before trying to take his life but it must have been pretty bad for him to have gone that far.

This person has tried more recently to end his life, again unsuccessfully. I don't know the underlying reasons of this second attempt but I would guess it was depression related.

It's a sad, sorry story and there are no winners.

—

Some people refer to 'homosexuals' and 'the gay community' in their contributions to this conversation. Using these terms makes it easy to distance the problem, make it someone else's issue, "not mine". What I am writing about is not really about "homosexuals" or even the gay community. It's about your children, your family and your community. It's about the people you love and who are dear to you. The children you brought into this world and were entrusted to look after until they are old enough and mature enough to look after themselves.

Any orthodox Jewish parent who one day wakes up to find their child has died from a drug overdose, a hanging, a slashed artery, a gunshot to the head, having jumped off a bridge, driven their car into a tree at high speed (reported conveniently as "ran off the road" or "fell asleep at the wheel") or an electrocution will ask themselves why this happened and want to know where they went wrong as a parent.

The answer is pretty simple. They lied to their child. They told their child the biggest most deceitful, harmful, hurtful lie of all and expected their child to reconcile something inside them that is beyond their control with this lie. The lie, the deception I talk of is the belief that they cannot live as a normal person with a normal sexual orientation because it is incompatible with religious ideology. That is the lie, and it is one of many.

If this child I talk of is your child, and it could be, then don't blame me, don't blame god, but rather, blame yourself for not doing the best you could as a parent by your child.

If you do want to do the best job as a parent and make sure your child is not exposed to the hurtful lies and deceit of the orthodox Jewish attitude to homosexuality, you will find out how to behave as a loving parent and accept your child's sexuality and embrace and encourage them to be the person they are and to love the people they want to. You may need to look outside the orthodox community to find honest answers and advice though.

By bringing up a healthy, happy child in a healthy family environment, you will not only increase the chances of your child's survival to adulthood and beyond, but your child will be better placed to live in this world as a happy individual in the full knowing that you've done your best job as a parent.

Michael.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 13, 2009 at 4:41 pm](#)

Ariel,

Judaism is not a religion even though it has a substantial religious aspect.

For us, G-d is not something we believe in, by the by, but a complete, everyday reality.

Sounds like a religion to me.

If its not them please arrange to have all jewish establishments renounce their religious exemptions, arrange to convert all establishments to incorporated associations or corporations and close any

school that claims to be a religious school. Then kindly change offending texts as if its not mandated by god, you can't claim divine inspiration, it's man made and can be man changed.

I bet you want it both ways.



- *ariel* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 4:49 pm](#)

Again Bruce, you're not reading comments completely.

I said that Judaism is not a religion *although it has a substantial religious aspect*.

The best way I can describe it (and I'm not doing a very good job) is to say that Judaism is a national identity with its own complex legal system, which in turn is mandated and inspired by G-d.

A religion is something you do once a week for a couple of hours...



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 4:57 pm](#)

Religion

A religion is a system of human thought which usually includes a set of narratives, symbols, beliefs and practices that give meaning to the practitioner's experiences of life through reference to a higher power, deity or deities, or ultimate truth.[1] Religion is commonly identified by the practitioner's prayer, ritual, meditation, music and art, among other things, but more generally is interwoven with society and politics. It may focus on specific supernatural, metaphysical, and moral claims about reality (the cosmos and human nature) which may yield a set of religious laws, ethics, and a particular lifestyle. Religion also encompasses ancestral or cultural traditions, writings, history, and mythology, as well as personal faith and religious experience.

Hmmm. Sounds like religion. Looks like religion. Smells like religion. Lucky I didn't step in it...



- *David* says:
[November 13, 2009 at 5:16 pm](#)

Michael and Bruce,

You know of and relate but one case where you say a Jewish youth came to you for advice as he had tried to gas himself because he thought his parents could not accept he was gay. This episode is hardly a body of evidence to support your dramatisation of a huge problem within the Jewish community for gay and lesbian oriented young people.

I am also concerned by the fact that you, Bruce and other self appointed spokesmen for Jewish gays and lesbians are constantly blaming the wider Jewish community for causing hurt to the point of suicidal behaviour. It is as if you are trying to transfer some kind of guilt to the wider Jewish community, especially the Orthodox community, in relation to your chosen lifestyle. The other possibility is that you are doing this to get attention from mainstream Jewish society.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 13, 2009 at 5:30 pm](#)

[repost]

This episode is hardly a body of evidence to support your dramatisation of a huge problem within the Jewish community for gay and lesbian oriented young people.

How many more attempted suicides would satisfy you David? One, two, three, 18 (now that's a good number, huh?), or maybe a 1000. You are a sick, sorry individual if you want me to provide you with more evidence of suicide just to acknowledge there's even a problem.

I am also concerned by the fact that you, Bruce and other **self appointed spokesmen** for Jewish gays and lesbians are constantly blaming the wider Jewish community for causing hurt to the point of suicidal behaviour.

No one else is speaking out, so I take it upon myself to give a damn. Most people are either ignorant, pretend the problem doesn't exist, have more important priorities than the welfare of their children, or are just too lazy and would rather leave it to someone else.

No one is blaming the wider Jewish community for anything. The non-fundamentalist sectors of the Jewish community actually have the foresight and wisdom to acknowledge the full diversity of human sexuality and for the most part are doing their best to address the harm their young people face.

... in relation to your *chosen* lifestyle

I chose to be gay as much as you chose to be a man.

The other possibility is that you are doing this to get attention from mainstream Jewish society.

I'm not doing this for the publicity. I've got nothing to gain from this, and to be honest, I'd rather not have to confront the spectacular level of ignorance in the community.



- [David](#) says:
[November 13, 2009 at 5:47 pm](#)

Michael,

How many times must you post the same comment?

Chaim is absolutely right. You will never accept any alternative views. You think you have all the answers while the rest of the community, especially Orthodox Jews are ignorant. Well allow me to let you in on a secret: you are in no position to enlighten the rest of us with your expertise, so called.

It is Friday afternoon, people with families are about to enjoy Shabbat together. Maybe you would be a happier man if you had the same opportunity.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 13, 2009 at 6:00 pm](#)

I apologise for posting the same comment twice. The first time I got the formatting slightly wrong. This interface is not as user friendly as I'd like.

The only alternative view to stopping the abuse is not stopping the abuse, and that's just the status quo, which as far as I'm concerned is unacceptable.

Do you condone psychological abuse?

I too have a family Shabbat dinner to attend, with my homosexual partner. My family is very accepting of me and my partner and we are all a lot happier together because of the acceptance.

How about you have a discussion at your family Shabbat dinner about youth depression, anxiety and suicide in the community and try to work out ways to diminish the harm rather than ignore it.

Michael.



• *ariel* says:

[November 13, 2009 at 6:28 pm](#)

Michael, you should stop quoting wikipedia for your explanations if you want to maintain an iota of intellectual credibility. The definition provided sounds ironically like Judaism, but not 99% of other religions.

Religion is a belief in an idea (from the latin *religi*, to believe), which inspires the believer. Hence I would say that in the US baseball is a significant religion and in Europe, football is what excites them.

The Jews were a nation with a common goal and religion long before we joyfully adopted a particular set of laws. Hence Jews who observe these laws are called "observant", not religious.

I recommend everybody read [Toward a Meaningful Life](#) by Simon Jacobson. You don't have to be observant or Jewish to appreciate it.



• *ariel* says:

[November 13, 2009 at 6:30 pm](#)

PS Shabbat Shalom to all of you!



• *cyberjew* says:

[November 14, 2009 at 3:07 am](#)

Ariel,

"Religi" is most probably not the etymology of "religion". The most probable origin of the term is the Latin "Ligare", "to bind", and it's original sense was something more like "dharma" – not belief in an idea at all. Ancient Roman sources employ the term to describe proper conduct and tradition, and proper service of the gods.

The current use of the term is very much the product of Christian discourse that sees religion as a self-contained activity or belief as distinct from culture, law, ethical philosophy and metaphysical thought in a broader sense. Do you know how to say "religion" in Biblical or Rabbinic Hebrew? Right, you can't ("dat" is essentially a synonym for "gezerah"; "emunah" means something more

like devotion, or even dependence/dependability). There is no parallel term. Also in Arabic, “din” means “law” (there is a passage where the great mystic ibn-ul-’Arabi even suggests that it means “recurrence” or “cycle” but that’s a bit of a chassidishe peyrush). I heard a professor of Indian studies say that until 20 years ago the term didn’t exist in any Indian language either – and current use is an appropriation of European terminology.

Why am I saying all of this? Because your incredibly simplistic definition of who is “religious” (everybody? What does that even mean?) and who is not is somewhat painful, and doesn’t respond to the underlying concerns of the people involved in this discussion. You are playing a word-game.

I would argue three points here:

1. The Torah doesn’t prohibit homosexuality – in the Torah’s world people are not divided into two neat groups based on sexual orientation, and anyway the prohibition of an identity seems rather bizarre – but it prohibits a certain act (penetrative anal sex between two men) for some reason (which I think we should investigate, as we do all things in the Torah, whether or not one chooses to accept that as binding for oneself);
2. It’s very easy for heterosexuals to demand that homosexuals drastically limit their sex lives, or even alter their sexual orientation, as it has no implications for themselves – unfortunately a lot of frum people fall into this trap, and I wish that weren’t so; and
3. If somebody defines themselves in a particular way (“religious”, “secular”, “observant”, “heterosexual”, “homosexual”, the list goes on) that needs to be taken seriously as they are trying to communicate something substantial about themselves and the way that they experience or approach life.

The fact that many of my fellow observant Jews lack the basic sensitivity to listen to other human beings, and to really grasp their concerns and their perspectives, is rather disappointing. I would expect more from people who try to attune themselves to the many voices of Torah and God’s world.

Word games that aim to define who is in and who is out are simply unconstructive, as they avoid the real issues. Especially when they are based on false etymologies. Incidentally, you probably could have checked the etymology on Wikipedia.

Git Shabbes (from America(though I’m an Aussie), though it’ll a gite vokh by the time some of you read it...)

cyberjew.



Chaim says:

[November 14, 2009 at 3:22 am](#)

Cyberjew – where have you been hiding out?

You are playing with words here... and no real chiddish brought here...

you should read the entire thread before accusing anyone of anything.



Michael Barnett says:

[November 14, 2009 at 10:24 am](#)

Etymology of the word [religion](#) from answers.com:

[Middle English religioun, from Old French religion, from Latin religiō, religiōn-, perhaps from religāre, to tie fast. See rely.]

Definition and etymology of the word [rely](#) from answers.com:

intr.v., -lied, -ly·ing, -lies.

1. To be dependent for support, help, or supply: relies on her parents for tuition.
2. To place or have faith or confidence: relied on them to tell him the truth.

[Middle English relien, to rally, from Old French relier, from Latin religāre, to bind fast : re-, re- + ligāre, to bind.]

Thank you for your thoughtful and sensitive contribution cyberjew.

Michael.



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:
[November 14, 2009 at 10:44 am](#)

David,

Your concern for me is most touching, but let me assure you that I am not a spokesman for ‘Jewish gays and lesbians’ self-appointed or otherwise. I’m nobody’s spokesman the views I express here are my own. I’m not blaming anyone, but trying to make otherwise intelligent people realise that their fundamental beliefs are causing harm to others. If you feel like you’re being blamed, then perhaps you need to investigate those feelings and resolve the issues honestly without resorting to projecting your guilt on others.

In your list of possible explanations, you missed the correct one, Michael Barnett has stated that he has nothing to gain from his efforts, he is the only one brave enough here to expose himself as a real person, he’s doing this because he cares.

Why are you being so oppositional David?

Bruce.

p.s. Sorry for the late response, I was out doing a thousand other things not related to my sexuality.



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:
[November 14, 2009 at 11:03 am](#)

Ariel,

Word games indeed.

I understand you are attempting to separate the religion from the culture. That is a brilliant concept. Judaism as a way of life makes so much more sense when you remove the whole god thing from it. The story of the escape from Egypt is much better when it’s a story about a people’s struggle to escape slavery and not a story about an insane god that kills an essentially defenseless enemy, its much better to acknowledge the commandments that Judaism use come from other sources and have been borrowed, it makes more sense when you set it up as a decision made by the elders and not given by some god who could only appear as a burning bush. It’s much better to claim the land as a result of conquering the native inhabitants and not something promised by god.

The world would be so much better if you just removed god. Then the prohibition against the act

of having anal intercourse with a man wouldn't be considered an abomination, just a bad idea when you're trying to build up your stock of warriors for the next war. Then it would be easy to assess the rules and make the change required to stop people using that outdated rule as a way to vilify people who like bum sex.

So, I agree with you dear Ariel, treat your culture as that and not a religion, the world would be a much better place.



- *ariel* says:
[November 15, 2009 at 10:52 am](#)

Bruce,

G-d is vengeful so we don't have to be. I leave the judgement, reward and punishment to Him while I get on with my life. If someone wrongs me, I will usually forgive them and then it's up to him/her and G-d to work out the arrangements.

If people bothered to understand this about G-d they wouldn't take revenge on each other and then claim that it was "G-d's will". Then we'd all live in a peaceful world.

I will no longer be contributing to this thread as it seems nobody is bothering to get beyond their own little world view and understand the other person (except Chaim, yasher koyach).

Haztlacha rabba to you all.



- *Bruce Llama* says:
[November 15, 2009 at 11:57 am](#)

Ariel,

It's easy to forgive people that have wronged you, you don't need god to do that.

I see that you also have not accepted anyone else's world view and have not take the time to understand the other person. That is a real shame, but it's ok. I forgive you, its hard to break out of the indoctrination of religion.

I encourage all of you to stop accepting your religion as blind faith and start asking more why questions. It's not too difficult.



- *David Werdiger* says:
[November 15, 2009 at 6:49 pm](#)

I've been following this delightful thread from afar (have been away travelling). It's unfortunate that 90% of the comments have reeked of intolerance and semantic games.

There was one comment of Michael's from some days ago that really struck me: "*You are about 30 years behind current thinking on human sexuality*".

Herein lies the essence of the debate: Current thinking on human sexuality is the product of just a few decades of research, and pervasive cultural attitudes. Perhaps in a few more decades, new research or schools of thought will emerge and we will look back laughing at the outrageous ideas

they had back in the early 21st century?

Those who believe in the divinity of the Torah, on the other hand, view it in an entirely different timeframe – that of thousands of years. It defines the world and God’s relationship with humankind, and that is something that transcends pop culture. We don’t jump around bending Torah principles every few years to fit current thought, just like countries don’t rewrite their constitutions every few years.

There has been plenty of halachic research and development pertaining to how to live in a modern world, e.g. the interaction between technology and the laws of Shabbat & kashrut. Ditto for issues like medical ethics. I’d like to think Orthodox Jews are able to observe the Torah as well as our ancestors did for hundreds of years.

Perhaps halachic authorities need to apply a similar process to dealing with current thought on human sexuality?

Joel refers to “bold” Orthodox minds, which I take simply to mean those who are prepared to challenge, in an outspoken way, established Orthodox Jewish edicts. But most of these people are on the fringe of the Orthodox world for exactly this reason.

Until both sides of this debate start to accept the “facts on the ground”, there is little hope for progress.



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:
[November 16, 2009 at 12:30 am](#)

David,

The Australian Constitution is a living document, able to be changed by the will of the people. It does not need any divine intervention to interpret or alter. The authors are known, the history is known. To compare it to something like the torah which is ‘inspired’ by god is laughable. Even a cursory glance through the torah will show it full of outdated practices and attitudes that have not been removed and some people still hold to.

You live in the modern world under modern law – you don’t need outdated texts to tell you how to live. Until you start to accept that fact there is little hope for your progress.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 16, 2009 at 1:31 am](#)

David W,

Perhaps in a few more decades...

Perhaps in a few more decades we can count the number of young children who suffered for years and maybe ended their lives, all because they felt they had no way out from the shame and despair of the religious beliefs their families and community thrust upon them, simply for feeling the way they did, *the way that nature made them*.

Wouldn’t it be better if, in a few more decades, we could look back and count the number of young children who grew up to be happy members of the community because they felt loved, valued and accepted by their family and peers. These young people, the children who didn’t take their own lives, might form healthy, meaningful relationships with the same-sex partner of their choice, raise a family and contribute to the next generation.

At what cost are you prepared to put “the divinity of Torah” above the well-being of our young people?

Michael.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 16, 2009 at 12:35 pm](#)

To help exemplify the challenges that arise when homosexuality and Orthodox Judaism come face to face, I want to mention [“Eyes Wide Open”](#), a compelling film that is screening in the Festival of Jewish Cinema, at 7pm this evening in Melbourne and on Thursday in Sydney.

There is a local relevancy to this storyline. An opinion piece by Rabbi James Kennard of Mt Scopus College was published in the Australian Jewish News on October 30 2009, [“Building the blocks of marriage”](#). His argument was that people are too hasty to abandon their marriages these days, rather than persevere with them.

I responded to Rabbi Kennard’s column with an explanation of why some of these failed marriages come about. My letter appears under the title [“Hidden anguish in marriage”](#), published in the AJN on November 6, 2009. My argument is that some people get married to people they are not attracted to, because of pressures from their family, community and ultimately their religious faith.

This is an all too common scenario, one that is prevalent in all communities, but particularly so in those communities where the only type of acceptable relationship available to them is to a person of the opposite sex.

Some people will come to terms with their struggle, sooner or later, and will be able to make the necessary decisions that will allow them to live an honest life. Other people will not have the strength of character to make this decision, and continue to live a life in which their personal integrity is compromised. Often this results in years of inner turmoil, bitterness and unhappiness.

Michael.

Australian Première
[“EYES WIDE OPEN”](#)

Israel-France-Germany 2009 Haim Tabakman 90 mins In Hebrew & Yiddish; English subtitles

Festivals: Cannes, Karlovy Vary, Jerusalem

Israel, the new millennium, and bombs are going off on the edges of Jerusalem. But in Haim Tabakman’s controversial, taboo-breaking début feature, these are nothing like the fireworks exploding behind the closed doors of the city’s tight-knit, ultra-Orthodox community, when one of its own falls head over heels in love with a handsome young outsider. Lust or love, or something else – who is to say? But in this story of a forbidden love, Aaron, a happily married father of four, crosses a fault-line when he takes-up with Ezri, his assistant and a religious outcast. First, he is told to get rid of Ezri, then his shop is stoned and, finally, he is visited by the Decency Police, a real-life squad of enforcers that tries to keep Orthodox problems out of the eyes of the world and the secular police. Aaron’s tender wife never reproaches him but her suffering is, of course, more eloquent than any protest. Will wise communal heads prevail? And how will this pair reconcile the clash between their Orthodox faith and their actions with familial responsibilities? First premièred to much acclaim at Cannes earlier this year, *Eyes Wide Open* is one of the widely sought after films on the international film festival circuit.



- *David* says:
[November 16, 2009 at 10:18 pm](#)

Michael, Bruce, David W

I can't believe how homocentric you are. For you, everything must revolve around your (homo)sexuality.

Don't you realise there is more to life than your gay agenda? Only today, we learned of c.500,000 former Australian children who were tragically abused in institutions, including sexual abuse. Your suffering, so called, pales into insignificance by comparison.

David



- *David* says:
[November 16, 2009 at 10:22 pm](#)

Eyes Wide Open sounds like a gay cult movie, hardly "one of the widely sought after films on the international film festival circuit".

The vast majority of audiences are not the least bit interested in this kind of gay flick.



- *frosh* says:
[November 16, 2009 at 10:27 pm](#)

David,

Grouping David W's point of view in the same bag as Michael B's and Bruce's point of view?

Now that's a first! Perhaps you need to re-read David W's post.

Comprehension exam – epic fail!



- *frosh* says:
[November 16, 2009 at 10:47 pm](#)

Bruce,

It's almost as if you want to abolish the game of tennis because you consider it a pointless past-time, but at the same time you are complaining that you do not have enough access to the tennis courts.

I have the utmost sympathy for the plight of gay people brought up in a religious environment, who are trying to reconcile their religion and their sexuality. However, I fail to understand your point of view – you seem to want to abolish religion (and ban even "teaching about it"), while at the same time you want these religions (who you'd have abolished) to be more accepting of you.



- *David* says:
[November 16, 2009 at 11:19 pm](#)

frosh,

You are right about my having mistakenly lumped David W's views with those of Michael and Bruce. The reason for the misunderstanding was that David W went on about "research" and "thinking" about sexuality.

You make an interesting point; if a gay person negates religion, why should it matter to him how religion views his sexuality or his lifestyle?

David



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 16, 2009 at 11:28 pm](#)

David,

It is far from my desire to quote religious text here, however in response to your recent comment on the plight of sexually abused Australians, of which there is no relevancy to this discussion on psychological abuse, I offer this for discussion:

"Whoever destroys the life of a single Jew ... it is as if he had destroyed an entire world; and whoever preserves the life of a single human being ... it is as if he had preserved an entire world".

With this in mind, and everything else I have said, how many suicides due to intolerant religious Jewish attitudes will you be satisfied with?

Michael.



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 17, 2009 at 12:41 am](#)

Michael: It is always easy to bring and misinterpret quotes...

how about this one:

Chazal tell us that *"the wicked are considered dead even in their lifetimes"*

Some people (NOT I) may think by not trying to convince you to cease your homosexual behavior (acts) as defined forbidden by halacha, we are responsible for your death..

In this context: How many poor confused kids are you killing?

Again these suicides are preventable and the mental disorders treatable WITHOUT changing anything in halacha but rather changing the **approach** we take and giving the **compassion** and support they need.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 17, 2009 at 2:03 am](#)

Chaim, I maintain that the mental disorders we are talking about here, namely depression and anxiety, are caused **directly** by the halachic prohibitions. It's the very existence of the halacha that we are talking about that is the problem. If the prohibition and the lack of acceptance were absent from the start, the mental disorders would not have come about.

Constant reinforcement that a same-sex attracted person cannot live a fulfilling, happy and healthy life because a homosexual lifestyle is contrary to halacha and therefore an abomination (to-evah) is

more than likely to cause the young person to experience depression or anxiety. A parent won't necessarily pick up on that before it becomes a real problem and potentially leads to self harm.

Trying to treat the mental disorder, as you put it, is going about things completely the wrong way around. One example I can think of by analogy, is to break someone's arm and then offer to fix it, but not even offer an apology. By the time you offer help, the harm has already been done.

This shouldn't be a difficult issue to understand. I don't get it why something so logical and rational appears to escape so many people. Perhaps I've set my expectations too high.

Michael.



• *Chaim* says:

[November 17, 2009 at 2:48 am](#)

Some things are wrong by definition without a rational reason and could even be irrational – this is about about faith, religion and beliefs. It is about accepting that as humans we have limitations on our understanding and perceptions and that there is a higher power and order e.g. explain to a child why immunizations are good. They hurt for days and you see no benefit. But as an adult you understand the protection they provide.

Society has a code given by G-d which dictates what is the best way to live – not for personal benefit – but rather for the benefit of mankind even if that benefit is not so apparent to some people.

No rational argument is going to work to change this. Telling people to ignore or change their religion / belief system is not going to work. What will work is a believable prophet or messiah changing the rules or G-d having a huge revelation personally to all orthodox Jews. Until then homosexuality as defined above will not be accepted nor condoned.

My analogy: Someone wants to enter a room. Instead of going through the door or even window they keep trying to walk into the wall hoping one day it just won't be there and they will be able to enter.

I would advise not walking into walls. It is silly, futile and will give you a headache.

I am not sure why you can not understand this... It is not difficult to understand.. Perhaps I've set my expectations too high....

If you want to work to save these kids you have other options... which might actually work.



• *Michael Barnett* says:

[November 17, 2009 at 3:19 am](#)

Religious faith and intolerance won't stop the suicides. Religious faith and intolerance causes suicides. The research I have provided from reputable Australian academic institutes has proven this. As a medical doctor you surprise me that you don't accept this form of proven, accredited academic research. Do you deny all credible research that doesn't meet with your approval?



- *Chaim* says:
[November 17, 2009 at 3:53 am](#)

Religion is protective against suicide. Multiple articles and evidence.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/t1847626044728t0/>

There is a lot of “science” I disagree with particularly when it contradicts my religion. Science is not absolute but changes over time as evidence changes and as assumptions changes. Again as I said above what psychology defines as a normal variant of sexual behaviour is not science but arbitrary and subjective. If you change the assumptions or axioms that are at the basis of this “science” then the results and approach change.

Incest between two consenting individuals (between siblings or parent / child) is against the law and psychology treats it as an abnormal with therapy. Why?

Why is the age of consent 16? There are plenty of 15 year olds and maybe some 12 yr olds who have the capability to give consent.

Doctors can refuse to give abortions or even contraception if it is against their beliefs. They need to only offer alternatives or referrals...

What about euthanasia – Why is it such a struggle with legislation or science. People should be free and able to do what they want.

Society has to set some arbitrary boundaries and laws. But by who and by what criteria are they set? It is not always rational. It is also not always democratic.

When a patient comes to see me with a problem. I assess where they are coming from. What there beliefs are. What they want. I examine them and come out with a likely or definite diagnosis. I explain to them what the illness is and what causes it. I give them all the treatment options and let them make an educated, informed decision.

The decision is theirs on how to act and what to believe. I can only give them advice and I have to accept their decisions no matter how illogical or harmful they may be. I can advise them to find a new doctor if I disagree. It is called FREE CHOICE.

You have it. I have it.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 17, 2009 at 4:20 am](#)

Also I want to clarify

The mental disorders are *caused* by their sexuality issues not halacha.
I have NO issue with science per se. It is a great contributor to the betterment of mankind. It is continuously evolving and changing. It has limitations like anything else and I can still disagree with it on “irrational” or religious grounds. Again **free choice**.



- *Bruce* says:
[November 17, 2009 at 1:14 pm](#)

Frosh,
Yes to both.

I expect that religion has respect for all people of the world and they should not be allowed to discriminate on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, cultural identity and a range of other things. That might mean changing the wording of some of the texts that lead to that discrimination. As already stated, religion is an insult to us humans. The world would be a better place without it. I am fully aware that religion will not disappear over night. I don't expect it to happen in my life time, and as I've already said, I will continue to state my opinion. You are welcome to take it or leave it, it works for me, perhaps it doesn't work for you.



- *Bruce* says:
[November 17, 2009 at 1:20 pm](#)

The decision is theirs on how to act and what to believe. I can only give them advice and I have to accept their decisions no matter how illogical or harmful they may be. I can advise them to find a new doctor if I disagree. It is called FREE CHOICE.

Chaim,
Why are children indoctrinated with religious belief and then told they have free choice? Why not present them with a choice when they're 16 or 18 or 99. They can then weigh up all the various forms of god believe and make a decision.

Oh, I know the answer, its easier to have them believe the fairy tales when they're young. Blew down the walls with a trumpet and a shout..... yeah right.



- *Bruce* says:
[November 17, 2009 at 1:33 pm](#)

David,
You clearly don't get it. I don't just hang around this blog waiting for another inane comment from you about my sexuality.
You really should get out more and explore the world. There's so much more to it than this blog.

You seem much more fixated on my sexuality than you are on the topic at hand, you know, the purpose of the blog, to discuss religion and abuse of young impressionable children who are gay. I'm not sure what discussion you expect considering the topic, perhaps you'd like to hear about the last cricket match I watched?

500,000 people were apologised to yesterday, that's individuals with a varying amount of suffering. I'm not sure why you think any suffering I or others have endured would be any different. I would think the intention was to reduce suffering for all people, regardless of the reason for the suffering.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 17, 2009 at 1:35 pm](#)

Bruce:

I am not going to tell you how to raise your children – they are not Jewish.

I am not going to debate theology with you -I believe you are also not Jewish and it is futile and a waste of my time.

p.s. I was brought up secular and became observant at age 21...



- *Bruce* says:

[November 17, 2009 at 1:44 pm](#)

Chaim,

Children raised, no use telling me how to raise them anyway, jewish or not.

Why is it you didn't actually engage the point? Why are children taught religion when its clearly an adult concept?

Oh, it's because it is futile and a waste of time.

I'm glad you became observant at 21 from a secular background. Now how about letting everyone make that choice at 21?

I'm not jewish, I'm not anything.



- *David Werdiger* says:

[November 17, 2009 at 1:48 pm](#)

Bruce,

The Torah is a living document too. Just like lay people are not allowed to make arbitrary changes to the consitution, ongoing interpretation of the Torah is in the domain of experts who devote their lives to studying it, not lay cynics who seek its demise.

Michael,

You are really not doing your agenda any good with hysterical cries of “children are dying”.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 17, 2009 at 2:00 pm](#)

David Werdiger,

The torah is not a living document, it's an ancient text, long past its use by date

I happy to leave the interpretation to the experts, seems like a waste of their lives to me, but there you have it.

The torah is not immune from cynics or critics and deserves to be questioned and torn apart just like everything else. It is after all just a book. Attempting to understand it is similar to trying to work out who's a muggle in Harry Potter, or learning to speak Klingon. All make believe and unimportant to the on going development of the world.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 17, 2009 at 2:30 pm](#)

David W,

“You are really not doing your agenda any good with hysterical cries of “children are dying”.”

Why not? Once they're dead, there's no bringing them back. Death is final, unless you have a miracle cure handy.

Chaim,

“Religion is protective against suicide. Multiple articles and evidence.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/t1847626044728t0/>”

Interesting abstract. If there is any validity or relevance to this research, what if anything it does is mean that the people who contemplate but don't attempt of complete a suicide are going to live with in a deeply miserable state of depression or anxiety. I can guarantee you they aren't going to be happy with their deal in life.

You cannot stop the inner conflict between a person's sexuality and their religious beliefs. It won't go away, so it needs to be expressed somehow, and invariably it will be in the form of a negative self-image.

Reiterating the La Trobe University research findings:

“Similarly, those belonging to religious faiths that promulgate negative discourses about homosexuality are particularly vulnerable to suicide and self-harm. Conflicts between spiritual or religious beliefs and sexuality can result in significant psychological dissonance as well as division and exclusion from family, friends and community.

For many, these experiences manifest in deep feelings of self-loathing and hatred that, in turn, severely elevate the risk of suicide and self-harm (Hillier et al., 2008).”

Michael.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 17, 2009 at 2:44 pm](#)

You cannot stop the inner conflict between a person's sexuality and their religious beliefs. It won't go away, so it needs to be expressed somehow, and invariably it will be in the form of a negative self-image.

And therein is the problem.

It's the old bottling it up thing. When you continue to deny and lie to yourself, you are causing yourself internal angst and stress. Even those who have the ability to present themselves as sane rational people are burning up on the inside and consider themselves sinners, they hate themselves for how they really feel. And why? Because they continue to be subjected to a society and a community that frowns up homosexuality.

People like Michael Barnett are few and far between, we really do need those people who are prepared to challenge us and make us think. Out and out dismissal based on personal attitudes, without thinking, will not help the people who need help. Stop blaming the individual and take a decent look at your own community and try to find a way to change the world. Michael is giving it a go, what are you doing?



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 17, 2009 at 2:47 pm](#)

Right -*Conflicts between spiritual or religious beliefs and sexuality*

you say change the religion because you can't change the sexuality.

I say change the sexuality because you can't change the religion.. or find a new religion..

We will never agree Michael. When will you accept our differences and actually do something that will actually make a difference to these kids...

p.s. there are many many studies on risk factors in suicidal behaviour which state religion in general is protective.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 17, 2009 at 3:06 pm](#)

ps. Religion won't bring back Bobby or Danny, both from deeply religious families.



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 17, 2009 at 10:09 pm](#)

p.s Danny died from AIDS... and Bobby was not from a Jewish family..

I do not deny that a person with strong homosexual tendencies living in a house with a family that does not respect him as a person but rather humiliates, denigrates and isolates him is at a higher risk of more mental disorders and suicidal ideation no matter what their religious faith is (including atheism) or their level of observance.

Once again signing off from this thread. Why didn't I listen to the wise words from Ariel.

Bruce: you are an angry guy with a lot of problems.. I suggest you find a professional psychotherapist.

Michael: All the best.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 17, 2009 at 10:19 pm](#)

and.. sorry..

Your article you keep quoting from hillier is from a purely christian study with no other faiths. surveyed by their *questionnaire*.

Jews have as a inheritance from Abraham compassion and this is surely **generally** reflected in their approach to their homosexual youth and if rightfully expressed will prevent suicidal behaviour.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 17, 2009 at 11:31 pm](#)

p.s Danny died from AIDS... and Bobby was not from a Jewish family..

Danny's death was from an AIDS related illness, however ultimately it was from self-harm (contracting HIV, intentional or otherwise and subsequent lack of treatment) due to neglect by his family and the Chassidic community that led him to his tragic demise. The method is irrelevant Chaim.

As for Bobby, I saw the film that portrayed his life. I challenge you to watch it and then tell me that if he had been Jewish it would have been an iota different. It's on DVD. Borrow it and watch it. You will need a box of tissues, if you have any compassion in you.

Michael.



- *Bruce* says:
[November 18, 2009 at 2:24 pm](#)

Chaim,

You'll be pleased to know that I am not angry nor do I have a 'lot of problems'. But thanks for taking the time to care about my mental well being, I'm touched.

If you see my comments and suggestions as a problem, or you think that what I write in a perfectly calm and rational way suggests to you anger, then perhaps you might consider exploring why you perceive it that way. It may assist you in your quest in life.

Bruce.



- *David* says:
[November 18, 2009 at 9:23 pm](#)

Michael,

With regard to your posting:

“Whoever destroys the life of a single Jew ... it is as if he had destroyed an entire world; and whoever preserves the life of a single human being ... it is as if he had preserved an entire world”. With this in mind, and everything else I have said, how many suicides due to intolerant religious Jewish attitudes will you be satisfied with?”

We have established that you have no proof of even one suicide in Australia “due to intolerant Jewish attitudes”. You admitted that you had personally met one single individual who came to you claiming his family had not accepted him on account of his sexuality.

You insist on blaming “Jewish attitudes” for the alleged unhappiness of gay Jews. Has it occurred to you that your campaigns, which emphasise a person’s homosexuality beyond other aspects of their identity, i.e. religious, spiritual, cultural (in the wider sense) has the effect of separating them from their family, their faith, even their non-homosexual peers? No wonder your members feel marginalized.

David



David says:

[November 18, 2009 at 9:33 pm](#)

Michael,

Regarding your posting:

“Danny’s death was from an AIDS related illness, however ultimately it was from self-harm (contracting HIV, intentional or otherwise and subsequent lack of treatment) due to neglect by his family and the Chassidic community that led him to his tragic demise. The method is irrelevant Chaim.”

Don’t you think it’s time gay people accepted responsibility for their own actions, including unsafe sex?

How can you possibly blame a person’s family, or the Chassidic community, for their having contracted aids through unprotected anal sex (the most common way gay men contract HIV)?

You have a strange logic and moral sense in the way you reapportion responsibility for a gay person’s lifestyle.

David



Michael Barnett says:

[November 19, 2009 at 1:39 am](#)

David,

Your contributions on this blog disturb me because you, an anonymous, cowardly contributor, post wildly ignorant, uneducated, uninformed nonsense, without any form of personal, academic or professional credibility, on topics that are clearly well out of your grasp.

All your contributions do is confirm the *spectacular level of ignorance* in sections of the community.

If a parent leaves the front door of their house open and their child runs out onto the road and is hit by a car, do you blame the child for getting run over or the parent for neglecting their child?

If a family and community don't educate their young about diseases such as HIV and bury their head in the sand saying "this isn't a problem that affects our community" and then young Jewish men contract a disease they know nothing about, do you blame the person for getting the disease or the parents and community for failing in their duty of care to educate the child about the disease.

Danny wasn't a "gay person". Danny was a young Jewish man who was someone's son and a valuable member of his community. Danny was denied the education to help him make an informed choice about using a condom when he was having sex with another man. Danny was also denied the unconditional love and acceptance of his community.

I don't have a ready list of suicides in the orthodox Jewish community. This information isn't available. It will never be. The orthodox Jewish community doesn't talk about suicide. It does talk about homosexuality. It doesn't talk about issues it doesn't want to know about.

However, evidence of suicide or not, the problem of depression and anxiety, precursors to suicidal and self-harming behaviour, has got to be rife in the orthodox Jewish community because of the intolerance of homosexuality, for reasons I have previously discussed.

No amount of prayer, denial, "divine intervention" or any other approach to avoiding the reality of homosexuality will make it go away, and unless a person's natural sexuality is expressed, it festers and simmers and will eventually boil over, one way or another.

The person may not suicide, but they may suffer from aggression, withdraw, behave irrationally, or exhibit a variety of other anti-social behaviours that they cannot easily control.

Of course, none of what I have written here will make any difference to you, so I accept that in the hope that someone else reading this will understand it and see that what I write has some validity.

Michael.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 19, 2009 at 1:43 am](#)

Correction. In the 5th last paragraph of my previous comment I meant to write " It doesn't talk about homosexuality."



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 19, 2009 at 9:57 am](#)

Michael: another approach [here](#)...

Bruce: I was basing my comment on your blog too... I could easily be wrong. I would be interested in your knowing upbringing / your family... Are you willing to divulge or are you always hiding behind llamas...



- *Bruce* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 10:52 am](#)

Sure, happy to let you know.
Catholic, urban-rural upbringing – married at 26 – separated at 33 – 2 children, happy in a relationship with a wonderful man. Living in the city for 15 years now.
That enough for you?



- *Chaim* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 10:55 am](#)

Thank you – now I understand a lot more. But you need to understand as much as you hate religion which is clearly obvious from your blog (for whatever reason... I am sure many people speculate) – you do not understand what a Jew is. I wish you all the best.



- *Bruce* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 11:09 am](#)

Chaim,
I'd prefer people asked the question rather than speculate, but whatever works for them.
Last time I checked, jews appear to be humans, subject to the same feelings and emotions as the rest of us. You seem to be indicating that being jewish is something special. Granted, it might be different, but then so are lots of people in the world. There is nothing special.
I'm not sure on what basis you claim a lack of knowledge about jews, however, I think you are wrong.
I wish you all the best too.
One last thing, you say you were secular and became observant at 21, why judaism? Did you explore other options?



- *David* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 11:12 am](#)

Michael,

As all **reasoned contributors** to this discussion have demonstrated, your "article" and subsequent postings are in fact ill informed accusations levelled at mainstream Judaism in general and Chassidic Judaism in particular.

It is evident that you have no professional qualifications whatsoever which would entitle you to make the sort of categorical statements about the mental health of young people struggling with sexual identity issues or the tenets of Judaism.

You are a self appointed gay Jewish activist without any relevant qualifications. You are also intolerant. You refuse to hear, let alone accept, any information or views contrary to yours. You lampoon anyone who does not share your views.

As if the above were not enough, you constantly blame others for the life choices, even self damaging ones, made by homosexuals. Of course you reject out of hand the healing potential of

religion in general and of Judaism in particular in relation to the problems faced by homosexuals in coming to terms with their issues.

You are a sorry individual indeed. I do feel sorry for you. You obviously feel bereft from the wider Jewish community, possibly on account of your grandmother's disparaging remarks about "those pooftas". Your grandmother had your best interest in mind. She wanted to see you get married and have a family. Instead you feel bitter and unfulfilled. You encourage others with sexual identity issues to feel the same way you feel, including alienation from their family and the wider community. This alienation **your doing**. It has nothing to do with the Jewish community.



- *Bruce* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 11:23 am](#)

David,
How odd, your comments about Michael sound like you're talking about yourself.
You're shaping up to be very intolerant aren't you?



- *David* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 11:24 am](#)

Apologies for this second post as the previous one was written in haste with typographical errors.

Michael,
As all **reasoned contributors** to this discussion have demonstrated, your "article" and subsequent postings are in fact ill informed accusations levelled at mainstream Judaism in general and Chassidic Judaism in particular.

It is evident that you have no professional qualifications whatsoever which would entitle you to make the sort of categorical statements about the mental health of young people struggling with sexual identity issues or the tenets of Judaism.

You are a self appointed gay Jewish activist without any relevant qualifications. You are also intolerant. You refuse to hear, let alone accept, any information or views contrary to yours. You lampoon anyone who does not share your views.

As if the above were not enough, you constantly blame others for the life choices, even self-damaging ones, made by homosexuals. Of course you reject out of hand the healing potential of religion in general and of Judaism in particular in relation to the problems faced by homosexuals in coming to terms with their issues.

You are a sorry individual indeed. I do feel sorry for you. You obviously feel bereft from the wider Jewish community, possibly on account of your grandmother's disparaging remarks about "those pooftas". Your grandmother had your best interest in mind. She wanted to see you get married and have a family. Instead you feel bitter and unfulfilled. You encourage others with sexual identity issues to feel the same way you feel, including alienation from their family and the wider community. This alienation is **your doing**. It has nothing to do with the Jewish community.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 11:54 am](#)

Bruce – yes I did, Mainly eastern religions like Buddhism and modern "spiritual religions". I realised quickly eastern religions were not for me and the modern spiritual groups / religions were fake and self absorbed. I traveled and ended up in Israel and learnt Chassidus or "Kabbalah" and

found my place...

Yes Jews are special but not in the way that I am better than you but have a different spiritual makeup and a different mission... Being a Jew can not be rationally understood therefore hard to understand unless you are one.

My speculations are probably offensive and incorrect.... being brought up Catholic.. with celibate priests... I do not mean to be offensive if it does appear that way.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 19, 2009 at 12:03 pm](#)

David, what do you know about sexuality? Unless there's something you are yet to share with us (perhaps a deep dark secret buried in your closet?) I would suspect the only confusion you've ever had about your sexuality is which hand to use or whether you go on top or underneath.

I had 16 years of struggling with my sexuality before I came to terms with it and accepted it as a normal part of me. I think that amply qualifies me to talk about sexuality from my perspective. Subsequently I have also had 15 years of close association with government health organisations, health researchers, health academics, health policy makers, welfare organisations and so on. I think that gives me enough understanding of the issues at hand here to know when someone knows what they are talking about or otherwise.

I was also raised in a Jewish home, with a reasonable amount of orthodox Jewish influence and education from my family and schooling, so I think I am sufficiently qualified to know what I am talking about from that perspective.

I also know that when I was young there was no discussion of same-sex issues in most Jewish families, schools (the ones that I attended) or in the community. This meant I had no understanding of whether my family would accept or reject me if I disclosed my feelings about my sexuality to them, which I didn't do until I was 26, some 16 years after I started feeling a sexual attraction to boys of my own age when I was 10 years old.

I have no bitterness or sense of unfulfillment in my life David. I don't know where you dreamed that up. Perhaps you are projecting your thoughts. To the contrary, I lead a very happy, full life.

Religious intolerance of homosexuality, due to indoctrination from my orthodox Jewish education, is what sent me into years of anxiety and depression. You are so brainwashed and closed-minded by your religious beliefs that you will never understand this.

I think I am more than adequately qualified to talk on the topic of this blog article. How are you qualified to talk on it?

Michael.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 19, 2009 at 12:19 pm](#)

Chaim,
Thanks for that info – sounds like you've had a very interesting experience in coming to terms with your religion. I congratulate you on the efforts in what I'm sure has been a challenging journey.

I take no offense. I've have enough experience in life to know that we all have different points of view, and while I don't agree with those points of view, I'm not offended because someone has a different point of view to me. It'd be a dull world if that was the case. Respect is another matter and that's always hard to find the balance.

I find your comment about being rational and jewish most intriguing and will keep that in mind. Mind you, being catholic and believing in transubstantiation is fairly irrational.

Just as a matter of interest, I attended catholic churches and schools and was never sexually abused by anyone at those schools. Most catholics get through fairly unscathed by the experience.



- *Chaim* says:

[November 19, 2009 at 12:35 pm](#)

Bruce – I am glad you cleared that up for me in my little knowledge of Catholicism based obviously on the media and movies and hearsay...

We are not so far apart except in everything we we do and believe.... which is not a problem for me either.

I do however believe that no one can say they have the truth for someone else, let alone believe they truly know the truth for themselves. We keep looking, questioning, searching.

My only advice I ever give now is it to be truthful to yourself and know your intellectual and perceptual limitations. Then enjoy the ride...

I hope I did come across as respectful and tolerant. It was my aim. I also like to argue... My only aim in this discussion was to find a practical solution – which never happened apparently. It got very sidetracked. There is obviously a spectrum of gay people with religious beliefs and they will fit into whatever religion they want or don't want – there is a multitude out there... even within the realm of Judaism.

Although I would like Michael to comment on my last link.



- *Michael Barnett* says:

[November 19, 2009 at 12:51 pm](#)

Chaim,

Michael: another approach [here](#)...

I am not looking to try and reconcile halacha with homosexuality. As I stated earlier, I am only interesting in the mental and physical welfare of people who are being exposed to psychological abuse due to religious intolerance of homosexuality (or for that matter any sexuality other than heterosexuality).

I am also not trying to change halacha. That is not my authority and not my goal. What I am trying to do is get people to understand the danger of exposing people to intolerant religious attitudes so that individuals, families and the community can start asking some intelligent questions and hopefully want to acknowledge there is a problem.

The Jewish community knows it has a problem with domestic violence, alcoholism, gambling, drug addiction and so forth. What the Jewish community, and most especially the orthodox (generically) community hasn't yet acknowledged is that it has a very real, very serious problem with intolerance of homosexuality.

In growing up in the Jewish community my experience of being Jewish was that Jews think they are better than the rest of society, that Judaism has all the answers and that non-Jews don't know better. I learnt the words "goy" and "yok" and "shicksa" from being brought up in a Jewish environment and how intolerant and embarrassingly hurtful they can be to describe non-Jewish outsiders. I know that many Jews believe they are superior to non-Jews because of their religious beliefs.

Have you ever taken a moment to consider that your beliefs might be misguided and misinformed, that Jews are as fallible as the rest of humanity, share the same experiences, frailties and emotions as everyone else and that orthodox Judaism does not have the slightest capacity to handle this problem?

Michael.



- *rachsd* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 4:13 pm](#)

[This](#) is most compelling and moving article that I have read on the topic of Orthodox Judaism and homosexuality. The author was an Orthodox rabbi in the closet at the time of writing and has since come out and, amongst other things, written about this in more [detail](#).

The article was published in fifteen years ago in an American context, but nonetheless is relevant to the current discussion. This excerpt is particularly pertinent:

For gay Orthodox Jews, this imagination of engagement between ourselves and the tradition is both terribly exciting and depressing. Regretfully, the communities that we embrace, both gay and Jewish, also reject us. The Jewish community wishes that we remain invisible. The gay community is largely unsympathetic and often hostile to Judaism.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 4:45 pm](#)

Thank you for bringing this to the discussion Rach.

On the comment:

The Jewish community wishes that we remain invisible. The gay community is largely unsympathetic and often hostile to Judaism.

This last sentence has me perplexed as the author has left it to interpretation as to who in the "gay community" he is referring to; Jews or others?

Having been at the nexus of the gay and Jewish communities for quite some time now, I would say that there is as much of a diverse attitude toward Judaism amongst GLBT Jews as there is in the

wider Jewish community.

Hostility by gay Jews toward their faith could be explained by having been marginalised by their family, friends and community. Hostility by gay non-Jews is not something I have not personally experienced, so I cannot comment on that.

Michael.



- *David* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 9:21 pm](#)

Michael,

Regarding your last posting:

“Hostility by gay non-Jews is not something I have not personally experienced, so I cannot comment on that.”

What is this sentence, using two negatives, supposed to mean? Are you or are you not hostile to “non gay Jews” (the vast majority of our community)?

Reading your comments throughout this discussion leaves me in no doubt that you harbour negative feelings, including blame, against the wider Jewish community. Your sole yardstick for judging non-gay members of the Jewish community, or any member of society, is whether they support homosexuals and their lifestyle, especially their sexual practices. That is a rather narrow, homocentric approach to interacting with the wider community.

Regarding your posting:

“David, what do you know about sexuality? Unless there’s something you are yet to share with us (perhaps a deep dark secret buried in your closet?) I would suspect the only confusion you’ve ever had about your sexuality is which hand to use or whether you go on top or underneath.”

I am sorry to disappoint you but I have never been inclined towards same sex experiences and am not about to change. There is a very small percentage of homosexuals in the Jewish community, as in the rest of society. Under your guidance, they will feel more isolated and bitter than if they were allowed to integrate into various aspects of Jewish life which do not emphasize sexuality nearly as much as your gay activist agenda.

” I have had 15 years of close association with government health organisations, health researchers, health academics, health policy makers, welfare organisations and so on.”

This sounds like you are a professional gay lobbyist.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 19, 2009 at 10:12 pm](#)

Michael: because your attitude and desired resolution is so fixed, I can not help you with these youth. You have failed to actually absorb one other opinion throughout this whole thread. I will however look for them on my own and help them through the obvious difficult times of deciding and realizing their sexuality and how to reconcile if possible with their religion. I will try keep them safe, support them if mental disorders arise and in the end give them the free choice to do what they feel is right. What is sad is that you as head of ALEPH will not be part of that process.

Tolerance is accepting diversity **even** if you disagree totally with it. No one else has told you not to be homosexual or that you are evil, abomination or even wrong. Everyone said you have the right and ability to do what you want or believe. I told you how your homosexuality and Judaism can be compatible BUT not in Orthodox Judaism if you want to continue to have anal intercourse. You are the intolerant one here....

You see this as intolerance. I see this as the same attitude to other pork eating, Shabbat driving Jews.

Hostility by gay non-Jews is not something I have not personally experienced, so I cannot comment on that

This is a very surprising comment. You seem to define hostility differently when it comes from Jews or non-Jews.

As for the author of someone who is obviously tolerant and his Judaism means so much to him he will try to find compromises ask him yourself what “gay community” he is referring to – it is probably organizations like ALEPH led by people like you.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 20, 2009 at 12:36 am](#)

PS Rach.. unfortunately your first ink is blocked at my organization.. I did look at the overview of the book though. It is interesting although it would be hard to find any orthodox Rabbi to agree with his “reinterpretation” of the text without the known traditional oral Torah interpretations... however each to his own.

Interestingly:

Greenberg relates an anecdote in his semi-[autobiographical](#) work, [Wrestling with God and Men](#) of him meeting [Rabbi Yosef Sholom Eliashiv](#) while living as a student in Israel.

...beset with an increased awareness of my attraction to a fellow yeshiva student, I visited a sage, Rav Yosef Shalom Eliashuv [sic], who lives in one of the most secluded ultra-Orthodox communities in Jerusalem. He was in poor health but still taking visitors... Speaking in Hebrew, I told him what, at the time, I felt was the truth. “Master, I am attracted to both men and women. What shall I do?” He responded, “My dear one, my friend, you have twice the power of love. Use it carefully.” I was stunned. I sat in silence for a moment, waiting for more. “Is that all?” I asked. He smiled and said, “That is all. There is nothing more to say.”

Greenberg notes that Eliashiv’s comment was not meant to endorse [homosexuality](#), nor to imply that there is no conflict between [homosexuality and Orthodox Judaism](#) (although the Torah forbids it). On the contrary, the point of the story, and the significance of Eliashiv’s reported response, is that it is possible for religious Jews to have compassion and empathy for Jews struggling to remain [frum](#) and who have homosexual urges.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 20, 2009 at 12:54 am](#)

PS I will read his full book which I found online [here](#).

I am all for easing the burden of people and increasing my understanding of others.

Michael: I know I have a limited intellect and I am fallible just like any other person. I unlike you am willing to listen and accept differences.

The Orthodox community will and does attempt to address this problem like any other – look to the Torah for answers, have compassion and be kind. If another Orthodox Jew is not behaving in this way – we should all rebuke the individual – not the religion.

Why does a Jew think he is [special](#):

In what do we pride ourselves? Look to the Talmud again: “What are the three traits of this nation? They have compassion, they have a conscience and they enjoy acts of kindness.” Jews pride themselves in their intellectual powers, as well. Not an unreasonable pride, given the track record.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 20, 2009 at 6:20 am](#)

I did read as much as I could from Wrestling With G-d and Men.

It is very interesting and very thorough. I will continue to try to have an even more open mind to Frum Gay Jews. It is obviously a very complex subject and some of my previous responses may have been immature. I still would consider the anal intercourse to be an aveira but this should not change the way I look at those Jews as opposed to any other Jew – NOT that I thought I did.

More importantly, I now have some productive resources which I can use and I can refer them to which deal with the struggle of orthodoxy and homosexuality realizing that both are important to the individual without being dismissive of either. Unfortunately ALEPH with its “tunnel vision” view will not be a part of this.

For those fixated on the word “abomination.” He does bring alternative meaning from the different times it is used and when looked at in the broader use could indicate that the transgression is more in the nature of a “mistake.”



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 10:02 am](#)

Chaim,

some of my previous responses may have been immature

Definite progress.

I still would consider the anal intercourse to be an aveira

Please move on from this fixation of anal intercourse Chaim. It is hindering your ability to accept homosexuality for what it really is – the attraction of two people to each other, irrespective of whether there is sexual intercourse.

Do you wonder if your heterosexual peers bugger each other? If not, why not? I think you should ask them at next opportunity and if they are offended at your question, then wonder why it would be any different if you asked a gay person that. You might then start to get an appreciation for how petty this obsession of yours is.

You'd be surprised that both heterosexual men and women enjoy [anal stimulation](#), and as I have previously explained, there are more heterosexual people having sex than homosexual people. "Marital aids" such as [dildos](#), strap-on or otherwise, have been used in heterosexual sex for thousands of years.

Anal sex is not what homosexuality is about. Please move on.

Michael.



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 10:31 am](#)

Michael I have said my piece – I have moved on – the clarification on anal sex was for others.

You on the other hand have made no progress at all and are unlikely to ever do – to the detriment to those you claim to represent and want to help. You are hopeless and as pointed out by most others here intolerant.



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 10:43 am](#)

The holier than thou attitude that orthodox jews continue to display shows the true level of intolerance in their communities.

While pointing the fingers at others and claiming they are intolerant the orthodox do nothing to change the way they perceive sexuality and the status quo prevails. To be serious about moving forward, a way needs to be found through the restrictions imposed on people by their religion. It's

really shouldn't be acceptable to fold your arms and shake your head and say there is nothing you can do.

Of course there is, perhaps its time there were a few activist amongst the orthodox community that challenge some of the more inane rules that govern their lives. Change can only happen from the inside, it's your religion, it's time to look at it seriously.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 10:51 am](#)

“Hostility by gay non-Jews is not something I have not personally experienced, so I cannot comment on that.”

What is this sentence, using two negatives, supposed to mean? Are you or are you not hostile to “non gay Jews” (the vast majority of our community)?

I apologise for the typographical error in this statement. The second “not” was unintended.



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 11:14 am](#)

Bruce: You still don't get it. The restrictions are all self imposed. People have free Choice. Judaism tells you what it recommends you to do and why. No one forces anyone to do any thing or places any restrictions on them personally. But if you want to be a part of a group which does follow specific rules (by their own choice) then you are expected also to follow those same rules .

otherwise start your own group.....



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 11:51 am](#)

Chaim,

I got that. I understand that orthodox judaism is not likely to change. People can choose to belong or not as they desire. I understand nobody forces them.

I guess my comments are more about how a person who is gay reconciles his sexual orientation with his/her desire to belong to his/her choice of religion. I think it must be difficult to desire to be observant but to have a barrier in place that prevents you from expressing your sexuality and spirituality. It surely must be very difficult to be raised in an observant household, to discover you are gay and then find out that the religion you grew up with will not accept you unless you deny that part of your being. It's all very well to say that they have a choice, pick the religion or the sexuality, but as we both know, that is easier than it sounds.

To my mind, I say change the rules. That is the answer. You don't agree.

I don't see why there is a barrier, I understand that it makes sense to you, but I'm not sure it makes sense to the person who is searching for an answer to how to reconcile the two.



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 12:09 pm](#)

<http://www.orthogays.org/>



- [Bruce](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 12:20 pm](#)

Chaim,

Yes, I've seen that before. It just says you can only be observant if you don't have sex (anal sex). That's not very helpful. For some men repressing their sexual desires isn't an option, the prohibition means that when those men who try hard to repress those desires and at times give in to them, they then feel abhorrent. They shouldn't feel that way, but that's the way the book tells it. Why shouldn't it change? Why should anyone have to deny their sexual orientation and the great pleasure that brings in life? Both the sexual pleasure and the pleasure of being in a relationship with a loving partner. Again, the focus is on the man who wants to be gay (and have sex) and wants to be observant. I get the feeling that you dismiss that option out of hand.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 12:24 pm](#)

Chaim,

If the Orthogays web site's claim that "it's possible to be gay and frum" offers the answers to this problem of abuse, then I would expect to hear Rabbis preaching it from the bima and yeshivas teaching it.

Not in my wildest dreams can I see that happening any time soon, and that's the problem. It's pointless quoting links to that sort of web site (predominantly for people who are able to talk about their sexuality) and are trying to reconcile it with their faith when the people who are most at risk in the community are too scared to even speak out or acknowledge their sexuality due to the shame and embarrassment of their predicament that the community has put on them.

Michael.



- [Chaim](#) says:
[November 20, 2009 at 2:54 pm](#)

Yes Bruce, I do dismiss that. Why? Because I believe that that is what G-d says and wants. Could I be wrong – sure. But I need an authentic Jewish approach to change anything. Since Judaism is a religion based on revelation not rationality nor philosophy – that is what it will take. A big G-dly revelation whether a prophet or messiah or a sanhedrin (supreme Jewish court which does not exist now)... This is what I personally need to change my beliefs on something so essential like sexual relationships.

Until that time gays who want to be orthodox have a real struggle on their hands. I wish them the strength and courage to find that balance and I believe G-d has unbelievable mercy and will help them and reward them for that struggle even if they fail. In the end G-d judges by intentions and effort. If the intention is to be close to him he overlooks a lot. I truly wish they find peace. But I do not have a suitable solution for them other than what other gay orthodox Jews have tried and are willing to try.

Michael: You don't want to be Orthodox anyway. When you feel that you want to fulfill the whole Torah with all the rest of the halacha / mitzvot even without addressing your homosexuality at all, then we can talk.

I really can not add anything more to this conversation...

Chaim.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 20, 2009 at 2:56 pm](#)

I do recommend both of you reading “Wrestling with G-d and men” so that you can at least understand orthodox Judasim.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 20, 2009 at 3:14 pm](#)

Chaim

Michael: You don't want to be Orthodox anyway. When you feel that you want to fulfill the whole Torah with all the rest of the halacha / mitzvot even without addressing your homosexuality at all, then we can talk.

I'll be sure to contact you for that conversation when I'm ready for it.

I do recommend both of you reading “Wrestling with G-d and men” so that you can at least understand orthodox Judasim.

Thing is, I don't need to understand orthodox Judaism. I don't have a problem with it. The problem is that orthodox Judaism doesn't understand the damage it is perpetrating on the young people it has in it's grip. The damage will continue irrespective of whether I understand orthodox Judaism or not.

The notion of people hiding behind halacha and “god's word” is essentially their lack of desire to deal with the reality of normal human sexuality in it's full diversity. Some might call it homophobic intolerance. People hide behind halacha because they want to follow and be like a sheep in a pack, and are scared to stand up and make a difference, to escape the clutches of the dogma that they have let close their minds and rule their life, and to actually address the real problem.

I really can not add anything more to this conversation...

Really? 😊

Michael.



- *Chaim* says:
[November 20, 2009 at 10:10 pm](#)

No Michael, it is not homophobic intolerance, nor hatred, nor ignorance nor fear – it is just traditional and DIVINE halacha that millions of individual people actually consciously believe is correct whether there is an apparent and logical just reason or not. It has nothing to do with what is *normal* nor how it is defined.

Your claims and desires here are not new – they were brought up many times throughout Jewish history.

As for the young people – well, that has been discussed multiple times above and continues to fall on **your** deaf ears – Why? Because it is not really what is driving you here despite your noble claims.

Chaim



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 20, 2009 at 11:36 pm](#)

Chaim,

Because it is not really what is driving you here despite your noble claims.

What is driving me? You might know better than me.

Michael.



- *David* says:
[November 21, 2009 at 8:17 pm](#)

Michael,

What is driving you, and other gay activists like you is a grudge against the rest of society who are not gay.

Also, along with other male homosexuals, you place far more emphasis on sexual gratification and proclivity than heterosexuals whose ultimate priorities are monogamous relationships, home building and building a family.

If for no other reason, you will always feel marginalised because nature has deprived you of the biological ability to procreate with a chosen life partner.



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:
[November 21, 2009 at 8:29 pm](#)

David,

I can only conclude that you are trying to provoke a fight, because nobody could be that stupid.



- [David](#) says:
[November 21, 2009 at 8:37 pm](#)

Bruce,

Only you are trying to “provoke a fight” by calling people “stupid” for stating the obvious.

Sexual gratification and proclivity is paramount for gay men. You can’t hack a religious person saying that his beliefs prohibit anal sex.

It is also self evident that gay men are biologically precluded from the ultimate fulfillment of procreation with their chosen life partner.

You can object as much as you like but the laws of nature are not negotiable.



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:
[November 21, 2009 at 9:10 pm](#)

David,

At some stage you should seriously take stock of your life, you’re missing out on so much by having such a narrow focus.

You are, as usual, way off the mark, making silly statements and taking pot shots at people you clearly know nothing about.

You don’t know what’s obvious, otherwise you would make such outlandish statements.



- [David](#) says:
[November 21, 2009 at 9:39 pm](#)

David,

Don’t you think you are a wee bit conceited telling people to “take stock of their lives”?

The points I made were not “pot shots” but a statement of the natural limitations on the life possibilities available to gay men.

For gay men, sex is an end in itself because any relationship with another man is divorced from the natural order of home building, procreation and parenting with a life partner.

Your problems are inherent in the condition of being gay, not the result of religious intolerance.



- *David* says:
[November 21, 2009 at 9:44 pm](#)

Bruce,

The above comments were in response to your last posting. The appellation was in error.

I wish you could stop viewing other and the world through the prysm of gay activist literature. It is too limiting.



- *Bruce Llama* says:
[November 21, 2009 at 9:50 pm](#)

David,

As far as I know gay men still breed, still build homes, still parent and every now and then lesbians have been known to pop out a baby and raise it with their life partner. Even I've managed to have children and raise them all the time being gay.

I wish you could stop viewing the world through the prism of religious doctrine, it's too limiting.



- *David* says:
[November 21, 2009 at 10:43 pm](#)

Bruce,

As far as I am aware, sex between homosexual men has never produced offsprings.

Instead of making wild, unsubstantiated claims about “psychological damage” inflicted by the religious community on some supposedly gay youth, it would be more worthwhile to consider the effect of same sex couple parenting on the children they produce though IVF.

For your information, I am not religious. You have an entirely gay outlook on life.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 21, 2009 at 10:47 pm](#)

David,

What is driving you, and other gay activists like you is a grudge against the rest of society who are not gay.

Wrong. Very wrong. In fact, what is driving me is the ignorance exemplified by your postings.

you will always feel marginalised because nature has deprived you of the biological ability to procreate with a chosen life partner.

Oh come on, wasn't it god that did it to me? I thought god did everything. Perhaps you've forgotten to remember that god does everything.

Nature hasn't deprived me of anything David. If I want to have a child I can come to an arrangement with a female reproductive unit and obtain one. However, that is not my priority at this point in my life.

You may have overlooked the fact that many heterosexual couples lack the biological ability to procreate with their chosen life partner. This is clearly another one of god's little challenges. Or is it mother nature's? Oh dear, it's all so complicated. God, Mother Nature, God, Mother Nature... They all look the same to me.

Sexual gratification and proclivity is paramount for gay men.

You're a comedian David. Really, you are. Sexual gratification is important for many gay men. I enjoy a decent romp as much as I can. However, you'll find, to your amazement, that sexual gratification is also important for heterosexual men too. Does that surprise you? Most heterosexual guys would be hard pressed to turn down the offer a frolic in the bush with an attractive woman. Sexual desire is a biologically programmed instinct in people, and is something most of us have no control over. Perhaps you are different. You may have evolved an off switch (or did god give it to you?).

You can't hack a religious person saying that his beliefs prohibit anal sex.

What does this mean? Why does anal sex keep coming up in conversation? Do you like hearing about it? I'm sure if heterosexual religious people can curb their desires for anal sex then I'm sure homosexual religious people can similarly curb their desires for anal sex. You'll find anal sex is not so important for most people, perhaps except you, because you seem to be fixated on it.

It is also self evident that gay men are biologically precluded from the ultimate fulfillment of procreation with their chosen life partner.

Now there's a gem. God forbid gay men could procreate. The world would be over-run with fashion designers and hair dressers.

You can object as much as you like but the laws of nature are not negotiable.

You keep confusing me. I thought this was all god's work. But now it's nature's. So is it god, or nature? Please make up your mind. Anyway, who's objecting? I understand how biological reproduction works. It's all pretty straightforward. No hocus pocus required in that process.

For gay men, sex is an end in itself because any relationship with another man is divorced from the natural order of home building, procreation and parenting with a life partner.

Which piece of anti-gay propaganda did you read to come up with that imbecilic drivel David? You've really outdone yourself now. Congratulations.

Lots of gay men have happy family homes with children that they've parented, adopted or otherwise chosen to love and raise to adulthood. You probably would never make a good gay parent though because you don't seem to have the requisite qualities that gay male parents have, such as unconditional love.

However, if you do decide to find yourself a nice faygele boyfriend one day (I know a handsome Jewish gay doctor from Seattle who's single and looking for Mr Jewish Right), I'd recommend you look up the <http://www.rainbowfamilies.org.au> Rainbow Families Council here in Australia who could help you start a happy same-sex parent family. They are not prejudiced by a person's religious beliefs.

I can guarantee you one thing David. Gay couples don't have children by accident. There's no concept of "whoops" with gay parents who successfully bring a child into the world. Conversely, there are plenty of heterosexual parents who have children unintentionally, possibly with no desire to bring them into the world and further, who may bring them into environments that are devoid of love and care.

Take for example my Jewish lesbian (gay female) friends who have been in a committed relationship for at least 15 years now and who have each given birth to a beautiful (Jewish) baby in recent years. How wonderful is that? Perhaps you'd like to offer then a Mazal Tov.

You really do amaze me David. If it's not too inconvenient, I'd like to suggest you do a little research before you post your next outrageous and offensive statement. People don't get away with posting anti-Jewish comments in our society as successfully as you get away with posting anti-gay statements. I would like you to consider this before posting anything else that is anti-gay on this blog, or anywhere else, because you are seriously ill-informed and plain out wrong on pretty much everything you post.

Michael.



- *David* says:
[November 21, 2009 at 10:49 pm](#)

Bruce,

You did not mention the effect of your being gay (and leading a gay life ?) on the children you had and on their mother. We are after all talking about the effect of attitudes to sexuality on impressionable youth.



- *Bruce Llama* says:
[November 21, 2009 at 10:54 pm](#)

it would be more worthwhile to consider the effect of same sex couple parenting on the children they produce though IVF.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/family/6574238/Lesbians-make-better-parents-says-senior-parenting-official.html>

Stephen Scott, director of research at the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners, has said his research shows children from lesbian couples do better in life than the offspring of heterosexual couples.

Perhaps before you go mouthing off you might do some research – hot off the press that one.

You have an entirely gay outlook on life.

And you think I make unsubstantiated claims.



- [Bruce Llama](#) says:
[November 21, 2009 at 11:03 pm](#)

I'm not sure what effect you think my sexuality would have on my children. They have always known that I was gay. They are well adjusted children, we have a happy family life with my partner and with their mother.

I can't see the point you're trying to make.

Do you have children? Are they religious? Do they drink, take drugs, engage in pre-marital sex? Have you ever been concerned about their well being? Have you ever struck them with your bare hand? Are you even married? Have you ever had sex with a man? A woman?

It doesn't matter, rather than have you answer any of that I'll just make up more stuff and disregard the truth, as per your example.



- [David](#) says:
[November 21, 2009 at 11:08 pm](#)

Michael and Bruce,

You have finally convinced me. The gays and lesbians (your community) do everything right. You have all the answers on how to live fulfilled lives in stable same sex relationships. Furthermore, lesbian, who beget children through IVF, make the best parents.

The only bug bear is that nasty religious Jewish (Chassidic) community. Their members are intolerant of homosexuals to the point of driving them to commit suicide. Some poor gay Jewish boys will even contract HIV and die, all because of the absence of love and understanding from their families and the community.

You obviously live in a gay paradise, not a fool's one.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 22, 2009 at 12:13 am](#)



- [Not A Religion? | Young Australian Skeptics](#) says:
[November 22, 2009 at 10:01 am](#)

[...] Judaism: Judaism is not a religion even though it has a substantial religious aspect. For example, a religion does not tell you how to tie your shoes, how to sleep and how to go to the bathroom. For us, G-d is not something we believe in, by the by, but a complete, everyday reality. Source [...]



- [j](#) says:
[November 23, 2009 at 12:45 am](#)

You people are all nuts. I'd like to hear from some actual orthodox gay jews and see what they think



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 23, 2009 at 1:27 am](#)

Hi J,

I recommend you get a copy of the powerful documentary "*Trembling Before G-d*" (<http://tremblingbeforeg-d.com>) by Sandi Dubowski and experience the very real, very sad stories of these orthodox gay Jews you want to hear from.

Regards,
Michael.



- [j](#) says:
[November 23, 2009 at 9:35 am](#)

Seen it



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 23, 2009 at 9:58 am](#)

J, are there any questions you have that are left unanswered, having seen the documentary?



- [j](#) says:
[November 23, 2009 at 11:44 am](#)

No, not really. I saw it at least a couple years ago. But i'm in a much different place right now, so all is good 😊

- [My Religion's Not a Religion -- a Nadder!](#) says:
[November 23, 2009 at 7:19 pm](#)

[...] Judaism: Judaism is not a religion even though it has a substantial religious aspect. For example, a religion does not tell you how to tie your shoes, how to sleep and how to go to the bathroom. For us, G-d is not something we believe in, by the by, but a complete, everyday reality. Source [...]



- [David](#) says:
[November 26, 2009 at 12:00 am](#)

Micael, Bruce et all

Society in general is not exactly supportive of male to male sex. Most religious communities are disapprove of it. I know a Catholic gay man whose parents made him swear that he would abstain.

What is the point of single out the religious Jewish community? It is not as though they are totally

out of step with the rest of society on the subject of gay sex.



- *David* says:
[November 26, 2009 at 12:06 am](#)

Micael, Bruce et all

Sorry about the typos in my earlier post.

Society in general is not exactly supportive of male to male sex. Most religious communities disapprove of it. I know a Catholic gay man whose parents made him swear that he would abstain.

Why do you single out the religious Jewish community? It is not as though they are totally out of step with the rest of society on the subject of gay sex.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 26, 2009 at 1:17 am](#)

Oh the irony. QED.



- *David* says:
[November 26, 2009 at 3:25 pm](#)

You don't seem to understand that it is not the religious community but the gay community itself which is out of step with wider society on the question of male to male sex.

It's like blaming the car for a car accident caused by reckless driving.



- *Michael Barnett* says:
[November 26, 2009 at 3:56 pm](#)

David,

The gay community is not "out of step with the wider society on the question of male to male sex". I would contend that the wider Australian community has been quite ok with male to male sex for at least 34 years, since the progressive [nationwide decriminalisation of homosexuality](#) between 1975 and 1997.

I would also contend that the religious/orthodox Jews who actually engage in male to male sex, covertly or otherwise, are not out of step with it. I've heard from numerous reliable sources that there are men (married and single) from the *entire* Jewish religious spectrum engaging in sex with other men (Jewish, Muslim etc) in various places in Israel on a regular basis. One friend of mine found out, to his amusement, that one guy he'd been with revealed he was a rabbi.

Irrespective of who does or doesn't have a problem with male to male sex, it doesn't diminish the problem of abuse caused by the intolerance.

Michael.



- *David* says:

[November 26, 2009 at 11:02 pm](#)

Michael

“Irrespective of who does or doesn’t have a problem with male to male sex, it doesn’t diminish the problem of abuse caused by the intolerance.”

What do you understand by “intolerance” of male to male sex, to wit sodomy (which, as most people understand it, is central to the way homosexual men have sex).

If a parent, grandparent, sibling, friend or other members of society react to sodomy in any way other than condoning it, do you regard that as “abuse”?

It is perfectly understandable that a parent (or, as in your case, grandparent) feels heartbroken on learning that his or her child-grandchild is a deviant from the norm in respect of a central aspect of their being, their sexuality. It is even more troubling for them to contemplate their son-gradson engaging in sodomy with another man. As a gay person, it is possibly difficult for you to understand the deep hurt felt by parents on learning that their child is gay. In one of your earlier postings you confided that, along with most gay men, you enjoyed “a good romp”. Most mature heterosexual men and women look beyond the romp. Their ultimate goal is a permanent loving relationship and having children, not through an IVH “agency” which arranges egg and sperm from strangers and surrogate “mothers” to have the babies – all paid for - naturally as a union of their genes.

I wish you could try to understand society’s attitudes on male to male sex as concern or disapproval rather than “abuse”. Disapproval is not the same as “intolerance” or “abuse”.

You cannot expect society to applaud male to male liaisons expressed in sodomy.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 27, 2009 at 11:28 am](#)

David, you’re a beacon of intellectual enlightenment.



- [David](#) says:
[November 27, 2009 at 12:24 pm](#)

Michael, I take your comments as a compliment.

I trust you can now appreciate the difference between concern and disapproval on the part of parents and others over “sex”, to wit sodomy, between men and your notions of intolerance and abuse.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 27, 2009 at 12:49 pm](#)

David, you make some truly magnificent and dazzling assumptions. I am in awe of your prowess.



- [David](#) says:
[November 27, 2009 at 6:01 pm](#)

Michael,

That is ok, so long as you understand that it is no naches for Jewish parents to know that, instead of raising a family, their son is engaging in anal sex with a man. Don't mistake their expressions of hurt as intolerance or abuse.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 27, 2009 at 6:24 pm](#)

David,

It's hypocritical of you to not disapprove of men having anal sex with women whilst you disapprove of men having anal sex with men.

Effectively you are endorsing anal sex between a man and a woman because you aren't speaking out against it. You and I both know guys and girls get into that as well. 😊

Michael.



- [David](#) says:
[November 28, 2009 at 1:48 am](#)

Michael,

Re your last post: "You and I both know guys and girls get into that as well. "

I don't know that guys go in for anal sex with girls and you can't know this as you are gay.

However, I do know that normal Jewish guys and girls do not stoop to sodomy.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 29, 2009 at 3:03 am](#)

David,

I don't know that guys go in for anal sex with girls and you can't know this as you are gay.

However, I do know that normal Jewish guys and girls do not stoop to sodomy.

Just because you don't know something doesn't mean it doesn't happen. Take it from me, it goes on, and my sexuality doesn't prevent me from knowing this . Yours might. Besides, I supplied information earlier outlining that heterosexual couples have been engaging in anal sex for thousands of years.

Of course, you would know what "normal" Jewish guys and girls do to each other because you have asked them all to tell you what sort of sex they have. I bet that was fun. I hope you weren't touching yourself inappropriately at the time.

Interesting discussion topic, although it has deviated from the main issue of psychological abuse

due to religious intolerance, much like what you are showing us so clearly.

Michael.



- [Michael Barnett](#) says:
[November 29, 2009 at 3:16 am](#)

A word to the Galus Australis moderators.

Why do you tolerate anti-gay bile and gay bashing on your site? Would you tolerate anti-Jewish sentiments?

Michael.

Ed: With over 270 comments for this article so far, I can assure you we haven't read all of them (or even a majority of them). If there is a particular comment that someone feels has crossed the line, they are welcome to bring it to our attention via email, and we can discuss that comment on its merits. As it happens, we have already erased a couple of anti-gay comments that we felt had crossed the line.

As for tolerating anti-Jewish sentiments, I believe we have permitted all of Bruce Llama's comments up to now, some which some of our readers may have felt expressed anti-Jewish sentiments. And this is just one example. See some of the other articles to find comments that could also be described as anti-Jewish.



- [GalusAustralis](#) says:
[November 29, 2009 at 11:09 am](#)

Comments have now been closed on this thread. If someone feels that they have a fresh take on the topic at hand, please don't hesitate to email us with regard to writing a new article.

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by Sibella Stern

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