

Miller Introduction to Judaism Program
American Jewish University

CLASS #3

Heart of Many Rooms:

Exploring Jewish Diversity



“Both these, and those, are the words of the Living God.”

-Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 13b

DRAW A JEW:

THE HEBREW MAMITA

BY VANESSA HIDARY

I meet a guy in a bar that's cute. He wears LL Bean duck boots and guards my barstool when I have to go pee. He asks me out to dinner for the following Tuesday. I decline. "Tuesday is Yom Kippur. I will be fasting." "You're Jewish? Wow, you don't look Jewish. You don't act Jewish." And he says it in this tone that sounds like he's complimenting me.

And I say... and I say... nothing. I say nothing, which combined with a flirty smile translates to "thank you." I say nothing, 'cause I got a contact high of someone's anti-Semitic crack pipe. I say nothing, because somewhere along my life's graph, I've been swayed to believe that being Jewish is not too cool, not too sexy. I say nothing, 'cause I'm in deep sleep, a Snow White coma, destined to meet my prince five years later in the form of stone in Jerusalem named the Wailing Wall. I place folded paper with written prayers for the dead in a nook, in a nook in the wall next to a woman with concentration camp numbers tattooed on her forearm. Surrounded by fervent praying and bodies swaying, I am far more awake than I ever thought possible.

I suddenly remember the Exodus of the Israelites and I walk barefoot from the Wall in the desert to the bar and look for the guy with the duck boots. He's not there, but I have something to say to him. He's not there, so I make a soapbox and reenact the scene. "Bartender, tell me I don't look Jewish. Tell me I don't act Jewish." 'Cause I'm thinking, I'm saying:

What does Jewish look like to you? Should I fiddle on a freaking roof for you? Should I humor you with *oy veys* and refuse to pay? Oh, 'cause you know how we like to "Jew you down." "Jew you down," I'd like to throw you down. 'Cause I walked here long miles on hot sand to publicly repent my sins. 'Cause I almost forgot, six million died without having the option of giggling on bar stools. Almost forgot that concentration camp survivors are now a dying generation that my children may never have the sensation of seeing in person. And if you must see me as that blood-sucking Jew, see me as that pesky mosquito that bites and sucks the prejudice right out of you. Just feel the need to say I can't be the only exception to the rule, just the one right now using my poetry as a tool, to follow KRS 1 I will use my gift to only uplift, and maybe change just one heart tonight.

I'm the Hebrew Mamita, long lost daughter of Abraham and Sarah, the sexy, *oy veying*, Chutzpah having, non-cheaping, non-conspirasizing, always questioning, hip-hop listening, Torah-scroll reading, all people loving, pride-filled Jewish girl. Bigging up all people who are a little miffed 'cause someone tells you don't look like or act like your people. Impossible. 'Cause you are your people. **You just tell them they don't look, period.**

Available for download at
<http://www.hebrewmamita.com>

Miller Introduction to Judaism Program at American Jewish University

JEWISH GEOGRAPHY

ASHKENAZI

SEPHARDI

MIZRACHI

Jewish Languages:

Hebrew

Yiddish

Ladino

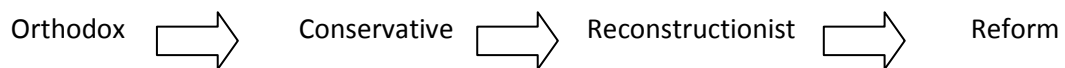
Aramaic

Judeo-Arabic

Farsi

	Orthodox	Conservative	Reconstructionist	Reform
Torah (Revelation)				
Source of Authority				
Ability to Change Halakha				
Gender & Sexual Orientation				
Who is a Jew?				
Other Notes				

Spectrum of Jewish Practice



Spectrum of Jewish Belief



Pursuit of Pluralism

אלו ואלו דברי אלוהים חיים

Both these, and those, are the words of the Living God.

Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 13b

For three years, Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel debated each other. These said that the Halakha follows their view, and these said that the Halakha follows their view. A heavenly voice went forth and declared, These and these are the words of the living God, but the Halakha follows Beit Hillel.

But now that these and those are the words of the Living God, because of what did Beit Hillel merit to fix the Halakha according to their view? Because they were gentle and forbearing and they would study their opinion and the opinion of Beit Shammai. And not only that, but they would mention the matters of Beit Shammai before their own.

Eruvin 13b

“These and these are the words of the living God (Eruvin 13b). The rabbis of France asked: “How can it be that both opinions are the word of the living God, since one says that a certain thing is prohibited and the other that it is permitted?” They answered that when Moses went up to the heavens to receive the Torah, he was shown 49 ways of prohibiting and 49 ways of permitting each thing. When he asked God about this, he was told that this is to be entrusted to the sages of Israel in every generation and the decision will be in their hands.”

Ritba, on Eruvin 13b

Rabbi Yom Tov ben Avraham Ishbili (d. 1330)

**"The opposite of a plain truth, Niels Bohr liked to repeat, is a plain falsehood,
but the opposite of a deep truth is another deep truth."**

Rebecca Goldstein, "Properties of Light"

Make a list of questions that remain for you about Jewish denominations: