



Can We Build Community Across Difference?

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1. Centering Beliefs

Mishneh Torah, Yesodei haTorah 6:8	רמב"ם יסודי התורה ו:ח
It is forbidden to burn holy scriptures... To what case does that refer? To holy scriptures that were written by a Jew in holiness. But if a heretical Jew wrote a Sefer Torah, we burn it with all of the names of God in it, because they do not believe in the holiness of God and did not write it with God in mind, but rather they consider it just like any other words.	כתבי הקדש... אסור לשורפם או לאבדם... במה דברים אמורים בכתבי הקדש שכתבם ישראל בקדושה אבל אפיקורוס ישראל שכתב ספר תורה שורפין אותו עם האזכרות שבו, מפני שאינו מאמין בקדושת השם ולא כתבו לשמו אלא שהוא מעלה בדעתו שזה כשאר הדברים.
Iggerot Moshe, Oraḥ Ḥayyim 2:50, (R. Moshe Feinstein, 20 th c. United States)	שו"ת אגרות משה או"ח ב:ב
We see from the Rambam that one who doesn't believe in the holiness of God, [when they write holy scriptures] the letters of God's name are just like any other words, and if so, it is obvious that when they say God's name, it is also like arbitrary words... and one should not regard it as a <i>brakhah</i> , since it is like a <i>brakhah</i> that makes no mention of God, and it is also like there is no mention of God's kingship, because they don't regard God as King of the world, but just say this to pad out their words.	חזין מהרמב"ם דמי שאינו מאמין בקדושת השם הוא אותיות השם כשאר דברים, וא"כ פשוט שגם כשמזכיר השם נמי הוא כדברים בעלמא... ואין להחשיבו לברכה דהוי כברכה שאין בה הזכרת השם, וכן הוא גם כאין בה מלכות כיון שאינו מחזיקו למלך העולם אלא אומר זה לפטומי מילי.



2. The Problem with Centering Beliefs

Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, Catherine Bell

The study of ritual has always assumed the close association of rite with belief... ritual has generally been thought to express beliefs in symbolic ways for the purposes of their continual reaffirmation and inculcation...

The traditional association of belief and ritual is...challenged by growing evidence that most symbolic action, even the basic symbols of a community's ritual life, can be very unclear to participants or interpreted by them in very dissimilar ways... Yet...despite the different "cultural" interpretations attached to them, such symbols still promote "social" solidarity. This suggests that some level or degree of social consensus does not depend upon shared information or beliefs, and ritual need not be seen as a simple medium of communicating such information or beliefs. Indeed... ritual forms...are useful... because they rarely make any interpretation explicit; that is, they focus on common symbols, not on statements of belief.

3. Centering Form: An Alternative Model

Mishnah Brakhot 8:8 = Tosefta Brakhot 3:26	משנה ברכות ח:ח = תוספתא ברכות ג:כו
One should answer 'amen' after a Jew who makes a brakhah. And one should not answer 'amen' after a Samaritan who makes a brakhah, until one has heard the entire brakhah.	עונין אמן אחר ישראל המברך. ואין עונין אמן אחר הכותי המברך עד שישמע (את) כל הברכה.
Rosh, Brakhot 8:5, (R. Asher ben Yehiel, 13-14c. Germany/Spain)	רא"ש ברכות ח:ה
If one heard the entire brakhah, it has been proven that [the Samaritan's] intention was not to <i>Avodah Zarah</i> .	אם שמע כל הברכה, מוכח מילתא שאין כוונתו לעבודה זרה.
Minḥat Yitzḥak, Tosefta Brakhot 3:26, (R. Yitzḥak Shvadron, 19c. Galicia)	מנחת יצחק, תוספתא ברכות ג:כו
When one hears the entire brakhah, one answers 'amen', since it has been proven that [the Samaritan's] intention was only to God, since he said the entire brakhah, and also, then, we pay no attention to what is in his heart.	כששומע כל הברכה, עונה אחריו אמן דמוכחא מלתא שאין כוונתו רק להשם כיון שאומר הברכה כולה, וגם לא משגיחין אז למה שבלבו.

