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## Judaism as an Ethno-Religion

### **Ways of Advancing a Sense of Jewish Identity and Solidarity**

Judaism remains a major religion among the Jews. However, it is also an ethnic group among the Arabs. People consider Judaism an ethno-religion because the communities involved define their ethnic identity through ancestral heritage and religious affiliation. Hence, the characterization of Judaism as being ethno-religious might advance a sense of Jewish identity and solidarity in different ways.

*The Sabbath.* One way that the characterization of Judaism as an ethno-religion might advance a sense of Jewish identity and solidarity is by honoring the Sabbath. As articulated in the Ten Commandments, it remains one of the most significant contributions to humanity as a whole (Sharabi 173). Through the Sabbath, people from diverse religious affiliations reserve one day for rest by banning productive work, commerce, travel by motor vehicle, and anything else defined by religious laws as a form of labor. Even though different religious sects among the Jews observe the Sabbath differently, there is a form of unity in this celebration because it highlights unity and solidarity in honoring this special day.

*Conversion.* Besides the Sabbath, conversion is another aspect that advances a sense of Jewish identity and solidarity. One of the recent trends shows that outside of Israel, most Jews tend to marry non-Jews. The phenomenon demonstrates a lack of Jewish cultural continuity as

people have embraced the integration of other religions (Nissim and Brookner 34). Conversion presents a perfect scenario oriented toward diminishing a sense of Jewish identity.

*Identity.* The Jews in Israel have, to a large extent, a strong feeling of distinctiveness that affirms their connection to the Jewish people as a whole. More than ninety percent of the Jews in Israel would confirm that they are proud of their Jewish identity, and thus, have a strong sense of belonging to that religion. This concept has enabled them to welcome other ethnic groups into their faith because they feel it is one of the best forms of conviction in the land (Miaari et al. 5). Judaism operates as an ethno-religion, where members of diverse ethnic groups share similar religious beliefs.

*Marriage and Divorce.* The characterization of Judaism as ethno-religious might advance a sense of Jewish identity and solidarity through marriage and divorce. From the Jewish standpoint, there is no civil marriage or divorce. Nevertheless, these concepts fall under the jurisdiction of government-sanctioned rabbinical courts (Sharabi 177). In this case, the assimilation of other ethnic groups into Judaism has contributed to the change of structure, enabling the courts to put divorce under man's control.

*Judaism as a Combination of Diverse Religions.* Judaism is a religion in itself, but Jews serve as an ethnic group, mainly in Israel. The characterization of Judaism as ethno-religious advances a sense of Jewish identity and solidarity by being the dominant form of religious affiliation in numerous nations. For instance, Judaism as an ethnic religion has more than thirteen million followers globally. This identity is further strengthened by the fact that Christianity and Islam have some of their roots in Judaism.

### **How Ethno-Religion Has Been a Liability at Various Points in Jewish History**

Judaism as an ethno-religion has been a liability at various points in Jewish history. One of the factors contributing to this problem is the crisis of identity. Even though the Jews in Israel constitute a well-defined national group, this issue creates a constant tension in the country's national existence (Nissim and Brookner 38). Besides the identity crisis, the ethno-religious concept causes various disagreements regarding which ethnic group should be dominant in the region. Integrating other ethnic groups into Judaism has contributed to disputes among communities. In this regard, it has been a threat to local and global cultural trends.

Works Cited

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