

How the Jewish Conspiracy works

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I like being a jew. I think it's neat.

There are lots of really fun features to the Jewish religion. It's a good deed to have sex on Friday night. It's the law that you must get drunk for at least one holiday. People are increasingly realizing that kosher food is of higher quality, by law. As for the afterlife: it's a sin to think about it.

I mean, that's so cool.

And the absolute coolest thing about Judaism: it's a sin to depict its deity. As I understand it [which could be completely wrong], the First Commandment was originally: '[...] you shall not make graven images.' The generally accepted Jewish interpretation is: no pictures of a dude with a big white beard and a lightning bolt; no name which you can worship and put on bumper stickers as if the name were the real thing; if you wanna be really strict, He created humans in His image, so no pictures of people either. Kodak lobbied to have this changed, and the King James translation reworks it to 'no graven images of other deities, but graven images of Me are OK.'

Christianity really dropped the ball on this one. This little change of a phrase allowed Jesus paintings on black velvet, tacky manger scenes, youth group t-shirts with Jesus suffering in-your-face style on the back. Meanwhile, what do the Jews have? If you want to picture the Deity In Question, you're left to your own devices, instead of resorting to the, um, prior art.

That's so cool.

Instead of these images, Jews have words. The centerpiece of a Jewish place of worship, where the Christians would put a life-sized statue of Jesus on the Cross, is the Torah, which is a handwritten copy of the first five books of the *Bible*. This is much more than symbolic: there is nothing to the religion but words. There is nothing to the rituals of the religion but reciting and understanding the words (and eating). Passover is a great example of the idea: the ceremony consists of explaining the ceremony. [And eating. And, by law, drinking at least four glasses of wine which are, by tradition, filled to overflowing.]

Throughout the religion, a premium is placed not on works in praise of ", but on actually understanding His words. The stereotype of the bickering Jews (see, e.g., Salomé) comes from the fact that people are encouraged to read the laws and construct their own logical arguments about what those laws mean.

Or, in simple terms, everything about Judaism is built around getting a good education. Other religions certainly praise education as a good thing, but

do not make it the central focus, in so literal a sense as Judaism does. To give another example, the rite of passing into manhood consists of reading and interpreting a passage of the *Bible* for yourself.

So that's how Jews go about running the world: they focus all their energies on educating their kids. My mother certainly followed in this tradition, and spent a whole lot of time pushing for a better education for me and Guy. Her standard strategy was to live in the poorest parts of the wealthiest counties in America (Lake, IL; Montgomery, MD), so we could go to decent public schools.

The amusing thing is that there are 18 million Jews in the world, for a total of 0.2% of the world's population. Compare with Christianity=33% and Islam=20%. As Timothy Leary points out in this sporadically insightful pair of interviews, there are more Buddhists in the USA than Jews.

So when I hear about how Jews run the world, which I sincerely, really do hear from time to time, I get kinda proud. I mean: Judeo-Christian—we even come before the Christians, which are an overwhelming majority of the population.

Now, I'm joking about the whole Jewish Conspiracy thing—I repeat, there is no Jewish Conspiracy. None.—but of course, Jews are such a disproportionately prominent part of the collective psyche because Jews are a perpetual focus of for suspicion. I think that this partly comes from a general anti-intellectual tendency, but simple hatred of others is not to be ruled out. Since Judaism is not a proselytizing religion, Jews will always be in the minority relative to the big two up there, always the odd-religion-out and easy to pick on. Compare that modern number, 18 million, with the number of Jews systematically killed in Eastern Europe in the 1940s: 6 million.

So I also feel lucky in the sense that I exist at all. My grandmother is from Romania, which (I read in Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*) was so cruel to its Jews that the German persecution specialists who visited were horrified by what they saw there. If I have the family lore correct, her siblings were killed, but she was not, leaving me to write this blog. Here's Bertolt Brecht: "I know of course; it's simply luck that I've survived so many friends. But last night in a dream I heard those friends say of me: 'Survival of the fittest.' And I hated myself."