

## Jewish Roots

Some of us were from Kiryat Bialik, Israel  
Others, like me, were from Boca  
We were all Jewish teenagers  
Sharing the same Jewish roots  
Meeting, enjoying, learning about  
And learning to understand  
Each other

As Jews  
And as teens  
We had many questions

What is tradition, what is our connection?  
Issues that underlie the survival of the nation  
Asked by its conduit to the future  
By the next generation

The most vital question  
That in essence, includes them all  
Arose and stood there  
Waiting impatiently, desperate to be answered correctly  
Since if the answer was unsatisfactory  
Judaism's survival would be in jeopardy

Some of us attempted to offer the answer  
Some answers contained truth  
But seemed somehow lacking  
I knew the true answer must be found  
So I will begin presenting,  
Attacking,  
Analyzing and weeding through  
Hoping to arrive at the truth  
To the question that affects every Jew

So now I will share the question  
Whose answer may lead to our strength or to our fall:  
Nowadays, why do we connect with Judaism at all?

Some answered:

Our people are told to identify  
With tradition  
"You must call yourself a Jew"

The roots draw it in  
Absorb then channel it  
Through the trunk and the branches

This water, always maintaining the same composition  
Yet always new and never stale  
Extends to the farthest branches  
And to the ever growing  
New fruits and their seeds

The water is a constant that cannot be taken away  
If the tree is deprived  
It will surely decay  
But if water is imbibed  
The tree will then thrive

It is what has kept our religion alive longer than any other  
It is what makes the Holy Land holy  
It is why our forefathers were killed  
Why some were willing to die  
Why we must identify

It is from our past  
For our present  
Meant to sustain our future

It is our connection

If learned about  
If lived  
It will never fail us

It is the Torah

To our ancestors who died  
In the name of G-d and religion  
We certainly owe it to you

6 million  
60 years ago  
Left our total number  
At just more than double that

We cannot let it dwindle any further  
So keep the faith for the sake of the past

But I ask:

If we remove the variable  
The one we say defines our connection  
By positing plausible scenarios  
That prove the binding rope can be unwound  
Then a new definition of this rope must be found

For if Jewish parents are the only reason  
Then what is the reason for a convert  
- How about the very first Jew -  
To be Jewish?

What if there was no holocaust  
What if the number of Jews reached into the billions?  
Would there still be any reason to be Jewish?

If we only look backwards  
If our only connection is our past  
How can our religion hope to proceed?  
How can we ensure that this generation of Jews is not the last?

Some from Kiryat Bialik said their connection to Judaism  
Was the Land of Israel  
And just that  
Nothing else

But I wonder  
If the only connection to Judaism is the land  
Then what happens if this variable is removed?  
How can our religion hope to stand?

What of us who live outside of Israel?  
What of the thousands of years of exiles

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