

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Hallowed Secularism

The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian
Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly
Excellence and Professor of Law

6-30-2009

June 30, 2009: Rabbi Jill Jacobs on Public Judaism

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism>



Part of the [Constitutional Law Commons](#), and the [Law and Philosophy Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2009). June 30, 2009: Rabbi Jill Jacobs on Public Judaism. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/300>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly Excellence and Professor of Law at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hallowed Secularism by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact beharyr@duq.edu.

Title: Rabbi Jill Jacobs on Public Judaism

Date: 2009-06-30T21:30:00.001-04:00

6/30/2009--Jill Jacobs has written an op-ed for Jewish Telegraphic Agency
(<http://jta.org/news/article/2009/06/30/1006223/op-ed-embracing-public-judaism>)
calling on Jews to enter more fully into public issues on expressly Jewish grounds: "religious traditions -- Judaism, Christianity, Islam and others -- have much to say not only about social and cultural norms, but also about economic policy, equality and inequality, and interpersonal behavior. ...In addition to pushing us to change laws in order to create a sustainable and just economic system, Judaism teaches specific laws aimed at guaranteeing that employers will not take unfair advantage of low-income workers, that landlords will not evict tenants without fair warning, and that the criminal justice system will preserve the dignity of both victims and perpetrators." Naturally, Rabbi Jacobs could not propose such an agenda without considering the separation of church and state. She acknowledges Jewish "attempts to protect ourselves from the intrusion of Christian practice into public institutions, have persuaded us that Judaism has no place in the public sphere." But then she adds, "A powerful rejoinder to this view was offered up by the theologian Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. 'We affirm the principle of separation of church and state,' the rabbi wrote. 'We reject the separation of religion and the human situation.'" This sounds like trying to have it both ways. Religion is to be a strong influence but Christian symbols are nowhere to be seen. Nevertheless it is a step forward to a liberal Jew to acknowledge that religion must be on the street and not just in the home. This is more evidence that there cannot be a political wall of separation.