

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

9-2-2015

September 2, 2015: How to be Secular

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. (2015). September 2, 2015: How to be Secular. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/959>

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: How to be Secular

Date: 2015-09-02T05:36:00.004-04:00

9/2/2015—James Kugel, the chair of the Institute for the History of the Jewish Bible at Bar Ilan University in Israel and the Harry M. Starr Professor Emeritus of Classical and Modern Hebrew Literature at Harvard University, is a Jewish superstar I never heard of, until recently. He is concerned with the question, how to be Jewish today. His own response is provocative. He calls himself “self-defined orthodox”. Imagine that. Kugel dares to be a Jew on his own terms, but still insists he is Jewish. These are ways I never managed to undertake. Also, although he lives in Israel, he does not seem to consider the Jewish State to be an important religious issue. One recent book he wrote is entitled *On Being a Jew*. The book is a dialogue between a student and a teacher. I haven’t read it. But I appreciate the genre. Now, why would he write this book? Because being a Jew today is the issue as Judaism declines. He is trying to be helpful. Presumably, he is also helping himself. Now consider all these new secularists, including me. We don’t have any idea how to be secular. And people who sound like they are trying to help us be secular, end up writing about the religious traditions and their weaknesses—like Philip Kitcher’s book, *Life After Faith*. The secular need is greater than the religious one. I tried to write about how to be secular in the book, *Hallowed Secularism*. And there are some meditations in that book that might be helpful. But I didn’t know then how to be secular. Still don’t in fact. But I am learning. Anyway, Kugel has shown us our task—to write, and live, how to be secular.