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"Is it appropriate for Jews to advocate for their religious choices in conversation with Jews who have chosen differently?"

Response by Rabbi Peter Schweitzer

Some say *to-mah-to*, some say *to-may-to*. Pronunciation questions of this kind may be innocuous and inconsequential. One's fate and destiny do not ride on the outcome. But in the arena of religion, clearly much more is often at stake. If I am convinced that salvation depends on a particular set of beliefs and practices, and that one who doesn't affirm these beliefs is condemned to eternal suffering, then I need to not only get with the program myself, but make sure you do too. I can't just save myself and leave you behind.

Judaism, however, has never taken this view. From the beginning, with the Noahide laws, we recognized that there had to be a set of rules and imperatives that assured non-Jews an equal-opportunity path to a place in the world to come. One might say, ironically, that was very generous of us. Considering that we were the minority population on the world stage, it was good that others tolerated us, not that we tolerated them.

Internally, Jews have never been unified in our criteria for required beliefs and practices. We have had sectarian, denominational, and philosophical divisions over all the centuries. Rather than proclaim one right way, we ought to acknowledge the multiplicity of our ways and the strength of our diversity. But I am a realist. I do not expect stringent, fundamentalist Jews to give me this courtesy, but I will still give it to them.