

GOD BLESS YOU, Gezundheit!

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Gezundheit!

According to a recent study, 83% of the US population believes in G-d. Incredibly, 76% of doctors believe in G-d, a surprising degree of spirituality in a science-based field. According to these numbers a majority of Americans believe in G-d, yet public acknowledgment of G-d comes under debate in American courts of law all the time. Surprisingly enough, though the cases are brought by small groups of citizens – many times they win the cases and take G-d out of the public view.

In the past few years there were many legal challenges against the right of displaying religious symbols in public places draining our court system of time, energy and money that would be better spent on issues that are truly important. The question of the legality of the words 'Under G-d' in the Pledge of Allegiance was recently brought before our courts by, Michael Newdow, an irate atheist father. He was upset that his young atheist daughter was forced to say the words 'Under G-d' in school, even though she doesn't believe in G-d.

The words 'Under G-d' were added to the pledge in 1954 during the cold war as a way to differentiate between the USA and the atheists' communist regimes. Those two words were added to show the difference between a country that respects individual rights and the sanctity of human life and those that don't.

How can people find a problem with words that distinguish our country so positively?

Actually, Mr. Newdow's story began, not in school – but in a store – when he noticed the words 'In G-d we trust' on money. He was angry! He doesn't trust in G-d, yet he's forced to use money that says that he does. I guess he felt the dollar bill belongs to him alone – and not the 83% of people that do trust in G-d.

More recently on June 22, 2005 a federal district court in Maryland ruled that a Ten-commandment display in a park in Frederick is constitutional. The Maryland ruling came a few days before the US Supreme Court is set to rule on the constitutionality of the Ten commandments in two cases – from Texas and Kentucky. And there are two more cases from Ohio pending before the high court which will be determined by the outcome of the Kentucky and Texas cases.

All of these court cases, all of this money spent, because some people are allergic to having G-d mentioned in public. And what are they scared of? Some of these monuments, such as the one in Frederick, Maryland, are on display for more than 50 years with no negative effect. Most likely, noone's more religious because of the display and no one left religion because of it, in fact most people probably passed it by and didn't even notice it there! This is what the Supreme Court is spending its time on!

As a religious leader, I advocate leaving the words 'Under G-d' in the Pledge of Allegiance that children recite every morning, as well as 'In G-d we trust' on our dollar bill and any other public reference to G-d. There are a number of facts that would support mentioning G-d in public places.

One is that the founders of this country created this country to grant religious freedom. In fact, it specifically says that everyone is guaranteed freedom of religion – not freedom from

religion. The founding fathers recognized that it was the Creator who endowed us with the ability to declare independence and form a nation. The same founding fathers that established separation of church and state mention G-d in the Declaration of Independence. They obviously didn't plan on erasing G-d from public life.

Secondly, studies show that children who take a moment in the morning to think about G-d, behave differently all day. Children should have a moment of silence in school, so that they can think about concepts such as an Eye that sees and an Ear that hears, and that we are responsible for all our actions. Doing so will help, many children focus on behaving properly.

A friend of mine taught 4th grade in an inner city public school. He had a difficult time with discipline and decided to try a different tactic. He explained to his class about an Eye that sees and an Ear that hears. He then would start his class with a moment of silent prayer. This one moment of introspection made a tremendous difference in the behavior of the class.

Thirdly, a society that is void of G-d is a society that is self-destructive. People deny that there's a G-d because they don't want accountability or consequences. A society based on non-accountability will eventually destruct itself.

Our politicians should consider drafting a new amendment to the constitution defining what is meant by separation of church and state. The amendment should specify that G-d and religious symbols are allowed in our society as the vast majority of citizens want it.

I recently read a story, about a class that could not pray at its graduation, because of a recent court ruling prohibiting it. The principal and several students were careful to stay within the guidelines allowed by the ruling. They gave

inspirational and challenging speeches, but no one mentioned divine guidance and no one asked for blessings for the graduates or their families.

The speeches were nice, but they were routine . . . until the final speech received a standing ovation. A solitary student walked proudly to the microphone. He stood still and silent for just a moment, and then, it happened. All 92 students, every single one of them, suddenly SNEEZED!

The student on stage simply looked at the audience and said, "GOD BLESS YOU, each and every one of you!" And he walked off stage . . . The audience exploded into applause. The graduating class had found a unique way to invoke God's blessing on their future with or without the court's approval!

Rabbi Shea Hecht
Chairman NCFJE
824 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213
718-735-0200
rabbishea@aol.com