

Town Hall #10

December 17, 2019

Meme of the Week:



By Sophie Handelman

Outfit of the Week



The Gist

- Some ultra-orthodox yeshiva day schools in New York are providing almost exclusively a Jewish education to their students, with no substantial education in subjects like English, math, etc.
- In response to the allegedly inadequate education, New York passed a regulation that would require that students in private schools be given a “substantially equivalent” education as provided in public schools

Substantial Equivalence

- during grades 1 through 6, mathematics, including arithmetic, science, and technology; English language arts; social studies; the arts; career development and occupational studies; health education, physical education, and family and consumer sciences. Instruction in these subjects may be integrated or incorporated into the syllabus or syllabi of other courses;

During grades 7 and 8, mathematics (two units of study); English language arts (two units of study); social studies (two units of study); science (two units of study); career and technical education, wherein the unit of study requirement may be initiated in grade 5 (one and three-fourths units of study); physical education (similar courses of instruction to those required in public schools pursuant to section 135.4 of this Title); health education (one-half unit of study); visual arts (one-half unit of study); music (one-half unit of study); library and information skills, which may be incorporated or integrated into any other subjects (the equivalent of one period per week in grades 7 and 8); career development and occupational studies, which may be incorporated or integrated into any other subjects;

- During grades 9 through 12, instruction in English (four units of study); social studies (four units of study); mathematics (three units of study); science (three units of study); health (one-half unit of study); physical education (two units of study); the arts (one unit of study);

The State's Perspective

- “With the regulations, we will ensure that all students — no matter which school they attend — have the benefit of receiving the education state law says they must have”- State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia

The Orthodox Perspective

“The regulations would require our schools to limit the instruction we offer in Jewish studies and require us to replace them with classes in theater, arts, dance, consumer and family science, and other subjects that our parents and our school leaders do not want. Yeshiva education is not identical to public school education. In addition to a robust secular studies curriculum, we offer our students an education that includes studies in Jewish law, ethics and customs. Parents make that choice when they opt for yeshiva.”

- Rabbi Yaacov Sebbag, educator at a New York yeshiva

Right Off the Bat

- Who do you side with, the yeshivas or the State of New York?
- Should the yeshivas be able to educate their students entirely how they see fit or should they have to teach secular studies?

If you side with New York...

- Does a “proper” education trump religious liberties?
- What if a population does not value a secular education?
- How do you balance the value of education with the value of religious liberty?

- How much secular education should the schools be required to provide? The same as public schools or a very basic education?
- Does this law target Jews/ is it anti-semitic?

If you side with the Yeshivas...

- Consider the fact that these are primarily children receiving an education that their parents are determining for them. Would this hinder their ability to function outside of the Orthodox world?
 - Can parents educationally limit their potential for lives outside of the Orthodox world?
- Does society have a responsibility to ensure that all children receive an education that enables them to participate in democracy and the workplace?
- Is there an inherent value to education?
 - Does that value change based upon the type of education? Ex: religious vs secular.

The government's role...

- Is secular education a compelling interest of the state? In all cases?
- How much authority should the government have to impose their vision of education on a religious minority that would prefer to be left alone?
- Is the government attempting to secularize Jews? Or merely holding everyone to the same standards?

Power of Parents

- How much power should parents have to send their children to schools that emphasize religious subjects at the expense of topics such as science or math?
- Should children have more of a say in where they go to school?

As Jews...

- Should we defend other Jews no matter what?
- How does an increasingly anti-Semitic world change our obligations to fellow Jews?