

L E T T E R S

Why Religion Matters

If Krista Tippett is correct that religion is necessary for the maintenance of ethical human behavior (“Why Religion Matters,” Summer 2008), how is it that the Scandinavian countries—the world’s least religious—are also the most charitable toward the disadvantaged, domestically and in the Third World?

I would argue that the origin of ethics is biological rather than supernatural. Any ancestral clan or village in which the majority did not act ethically would have starved or died violently long ago.

Acts of kindness are not a sublime “religious mystery,” but part of our human genetic and cultural evolution.

*Lawrence I. Golbe
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Religions did not arise to answer moral questions, as Krista Tippett believes, but to give mankind a rudi-

mentary sense of control over the natural world. When you needed rain and it wasn’t coming, you did a rain dance or offered a sacrifice to your God.

I do agree with Tippett that religion is not intellectually inferior to science. It is just totally inadequate when compared to the scientific method in trying to understand the workings of the natural world.

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A Path to Shabbat Peace

Thank you for the “RJ Guide to Reform Judaism: 30 Stories” (Summer 2008). The amazing honesty of the contributors helped me to realize that I am not alone. For example, I believed I was the only person who had difficulty learning how to be at peace on Shabbat.

Send letters to: Reform Judaism, 633 Third Avenue, 7th floor, New York, NY 10017, www.reform-judaismmag.org (click on “Submissions”).

After reading and thinking about the Shabbat stories, I understood that Shabbat begins first in my heart. It’s progress, not perfection that counts.

*Mauri Reizes
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Thou Shall Respect the Rabbi

Lucy Kline urges us to respect our rabbis, viewing them as *k’lei kodesh*, holy vessels (“My Opinion,” Summer 2008). If we fail to show the proper respect for the office of rabbi, it might be because of our “consumer Judaism”—where we pay our dues and expect to be served what we want, when we want it.

At the same time, if rabbis want *kavod* (honor), they must earn it. If they want to be considered holy vessels, there must be something holy inside. No gigantic egos, ethical breaches, or light scholarship. No cynicism or hypocrisy. How I wish I could say I have never

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