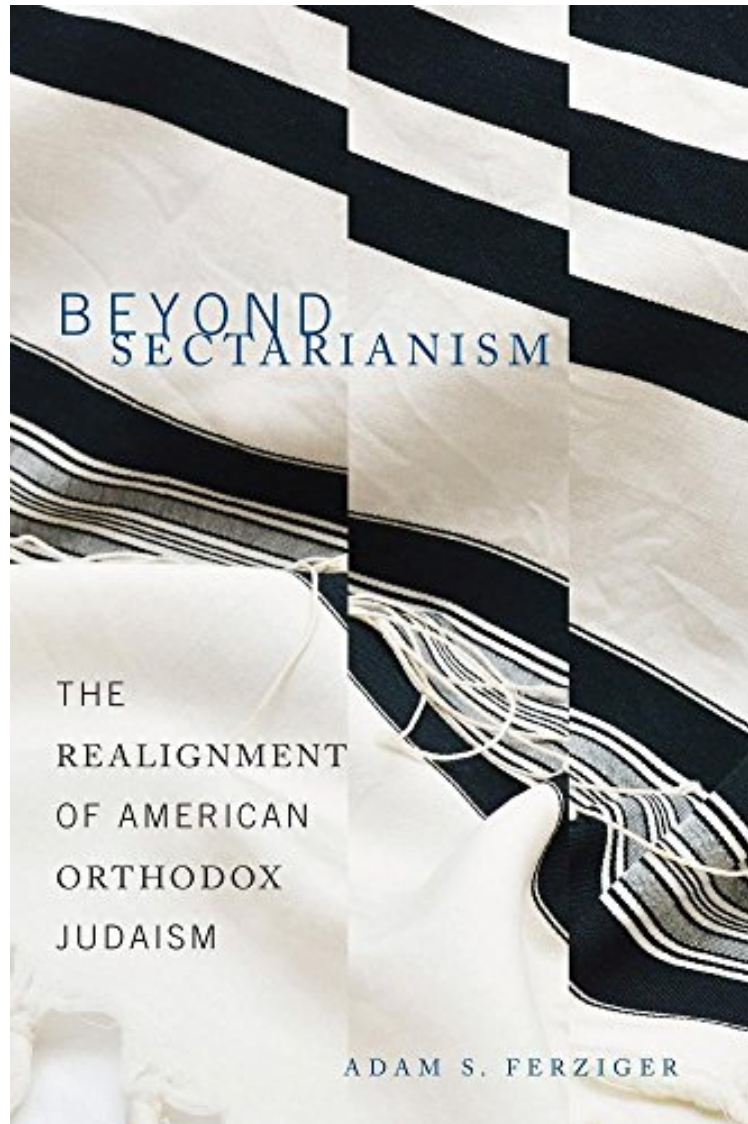


# Beyond Sectarianism: The Realignment of American Orthodox Judaism

*Adam S. Ferziger*

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**Adam S. Ferziger : Beyond Sectarianism: The Realignment of American Orthodox Judaism** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beyond Sectarianism: The Realignment of American Orthodox Judaism:

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Joel M. Schreiber Well thought out history of our Orthodox world. Well written... Ideas flow easily. Gives one the ability to understand the flow of beliefs and see the future. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Read! By Dr. Jay Fascinating Read! Talented author. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. interesting theory By Michael Lewyn 1950s scholars of American Orthodox Judaism tended to divide it into two categories: sectarian, isolationist Haredi Orthodoxy (often referred to as "ultra-Orthodoxy") and outreach-oriented, moderate Modern Orthodoxy. The thesis of this book is that Haredi and Modern Orthodoxy have converged in recent decades: modern Orthodoxy has become stricter and less outreach-oriented, while Haredi Judaism has become more outreach-oriented and more moderate (especially in its willingness to interact with non-Orthodox Jews and their congregations). For example, moderate Haredi scholars are often willing to teach classes in non-Orthodox synagogues. How did this happen? As modern Orthodox Jews have become more numerous and more learned, modern Orthodox rabbis have had to become more scholarly in order to inspire this highly educated core constituency- so they have become more "inreach" oriented as a result. As Haredi Orthodoxy has grown, it has become more self-confident, and less afraid of contamination by the outside world. Near the end of the book, the author explains the controversy over "Open Orthodoxy", a group of liberal-minded Orthodox rabbis who seek to accommodate feminism within the bounds of Jewish law. While Orthodox Jews get along better with non-Orthodox denominations than in the past, right-wing modern Orthodox Jews have united with Haredis in opposition to Open Orthodoxy. Why? Ferziger explains that because the boundaries between Orthodoxy and other Jewish denominations are now pretty clear, Orthodox rabbis no longer view the other denominations as a threat. By contrast, more right-wing rabbis view Open Orthodoxy as blurring boundaries between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, and thus dangerous.

In 1965 social scientist Charles S. Liebman published a study that boldly declared the vitality of American Jewish Orthodoxy and went on to guide scholarly investigations of the group for the next four decades. As American Orthodoxy continues to grow in geographical, institutional, and political strength, author Adam S. Ferziger argues in *Beyond Sectarianism: The Realignment of American Orthodox Judaism* that one of Liebman's principal definitions needs to be updated. While Liebman proposed that the "committed Orthodox" -observant rather than nominally affiliated- could be divided into two main streams: "church," or Modern Orthodoxy, and "sectarian," or Haredi Orthodoxy, Ferziger traces a narrowing of the gap between them and ultimately a realignment of American Orthodox Judaism. Ferziger shows that significant elements within Haredi Orthodoxy have abandoned certain strict and seemingly uncontested norms. He begins by offering fresh insight into the division between the American sectarian Orthodox and Modern Orthodox streams that developed in the early twentieth century and highlights New York's Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun as a pioneering Modern Orthodox synagogue. Ferziger also considers the nuances of American Orthodoxy as reflected in Soviet Jewish activism during the 1960s and early 1970s and educational trips to Poland taken by American Orthodox young adults studying in Israel, and explores the responses of prominent rabbinical authorities to Orthodox feminism and its call for expanded public religious roles for women. Considerable discussion is dedicated to the emergence of outreach to nonobservant Jews as a central priority for Haredi Orthodoxy and how this focus outside its core population reflects fundamental changes. In this context, Ferziger presents evidence for the growing influence of Chabad Hasidism - what he terms the "Chabadization of American Orthodoxy." Recent studies, including the 2013 Pew Survey of U.S. Jewry, demonstrate that an active and strongly connected American Orthodox Jewish population is poised to grow in the coming decades. Jewish studies scholars and readers interested in history, sociology, and religion will appreciate Ferziger's reappraisal of this important group.

About the Author Adam S. Ferziger is a professor and holds the S.R. Hirsch Chair for Research of the Torah and Derekh Erez Movement in the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel, and is co-convenor of the Oxford Summer Institute for Modern and Contemporary Judaism, Oxford, UK. He is the author of *Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy, Nonobservance and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity* and *Jewish Denominations: Addressing the Challenges of Modernity*.