

# Young Zionist

## Pluralism – A Paradise?

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Does pluralism need a definition? Is it even possible to be pluralist? In a pluralist service, do we pray with all denominations together? Is prayer separate? Is it about socialising? Or is it about comfort? These are some of the questions that I had to deal with while I was on Machon.

I have come across two perspectives on this idea. The view of BBYO is that denominations should come together in a religious environment and feel the vibe of the community as a whole. In effect, they are always as one movement. FZY has similar but also some contrasting ideas. **For us, pluralism is about creating the most fair and comfortable situation for all its *chanichim*, yet they do not pray as a community.** Does this mean that they are not pluralist? Again, it's a question of definition. Time and time again I have been told that as long as prayer is together nothing matters. Is such a defining term needed? In my opinion, a tri-*mechitza* (dividing wall) situation is not a pluralist service, as it seems that the only way it works is if traditional service is performed. In this way, the reform denominations are hard done by. We could change some prayers, remove the *mechitza* completely and have female leaders! But would the Orthodox even attend? However, is the separate service pluralist in itself? The denominations are not together, but they are comfortable. Strength of numbers in FZY must also be taken into account; it can help such services to be populated compared to other movements who may struggle to achieve *minyanim* (minimum prayer requirement of ten men).

Is pluralism a question of defining the term? I believe it is crucial for any movement to know why they have the denominational method, but due to the many problems that arise out of it, I do not believe that any movement can achieve this pluralist paradise in our modern world. It does provide a hope though, maybe a fool's hope; something to strive for. I think that is the most important thing. Pluralism could be considered as a question of education. Should an Orthodox Jew respect the opinions of other denominations? Should a Reform Jew be open-minded enough that they do not mind being strictly observant on Shabbat?

As long as the pluralist movements educate about the other denominations, this paradise could be achieved and strengthen Judaism to become an even greater religion than it already is.

Ed graduated from Year Course in 2009.