

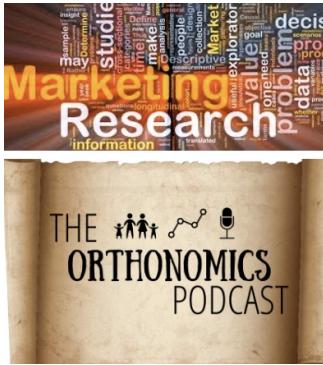
Emes Ve-Emunah

A Forum for Orthodox Jewish thought on Halacha, Hashkafa, and the issues of our time.

Friday, March 17, 2023

The Significance of the Differences Among Us

By Rabbi Mark Trencher, guest contributor



Nishma Research logo from their [website](#)

A few days ago, I discussed a [Yated article](#) by Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer that referenced a [Nishma Research](#) survey. Which was about the beliefs and practices of various categories of Orthodox Jews. However, I didn't really focus on the revealing substance of that survey which is indeed worthy of discussion. I instead focused on the number of categories of Orthodox Jews that were listed.

Even though I agree that categories do matter and have suggested my own list of categories in the past, I was still somewhat surprised that one could break Orthodoxy down into so many of them. Some of which seemed redundant to me. The post was somewhat tongue-in-cheek but with a

serious question about how far we need to go in defining our differences.

Nishma's founder, [Rabbi Mark Trencher](#), has asked me to post his response to that post - which I am happy to do. I just want to add that it was never my intention to offend him and hope he was not. If he was, I truly apologize. I respect the fine work Nishma Research does and consider it a great contribution to Orthodox Judaism. It is far better to know than not to know. Surveys like the ones Nishma does help us know a lot. His words follow:

In response to your comments about the many categories within Orthodox Jewry, the reason why we create these categories in a survey are twofold.

First, if you look at the many surveys that are done of the Jewish community, you'll see that often the Orthodox are not broken out at all and we are simply lumped in with all of the Jews. But even when the Orthodox are broken out, we are almost always presented as a single combined, cohesive group. Apparently, many people in the community, including even researchers, are unaware that within Orthodoxy there are different groups (Modern Orthodox, Yeshivish, Chasidish, and the latter has sub-sects as well), which are actually quite different in many respects.

Or, for researchers who are aware of these groups, it is quite difficult to get adequate samples of the subgroups to make much of the data. So for Nishma Research, one of our goals is to explore the differences among the subgroups within Orthodoxy, to fill in a gap in this area. We have even started to create Yiddish language versions of our surveys, so that we can compare the Yiddish-speaking Hasidic population to the English-speaking population .. and they are different! That's the main reason for the categories.

A second reason is statistical. Different groups have different tendencies to respond to surveys. So, when we present data for all of Orthodoxy, for all of Modern Orthodoxy, for all of the Haredi, etc., we do not simply add all of the respondents together into a single statistic. That would give undue weight to groups that have a greater tendency to respond. Instead, we employ a technique known as stratified sample weighting, which adjusts for the variations in response

rates, and this makes the overall sample and its statistics more reflective of the distribution of the population. This is explained in the appendix of the report.

Nishma's goal is to bring to the Orthodox community state-of-the-art research and statistical techniques, and I draw upon my 51 years of quantitative and qualitative research experience to that end. We also endeavor to provide approximately two-thirds of our research to the community on a pro bono basis. May we continue to express great interest in our community.

Posted by Harry Maryles at 10:23 AM

