

## OF THE IRISH, THE AMISH, AND THE JEWISH

Interest in, and love for, the Jewish people often appears in the most unexpected forms and unlikely places. Consider, for example, the cases of an Irish Rock Star and a group of people devoted to simple, peaceful living and farming.



AP Photo/Julie Jacobson

### “Pride: In the Name of Rankin”

In HD 11.2, we noted that columnist Charles Krauthamer posits an observation he calls, Krauthamer’s Law: Everyone is Jewish until proven otherwise. Might that include Irish Rock Stars? In an interview with a French journalist which became a book entitled, *Bono in Conversation*, U2’s Bono (Paul Hewson) was asked about his darker complexion and its origin (“All my mother’s side of the family has

that taxi-driver-from-Tel-Aviv-look”) and he had this to say:

*Someone suggested to me that Mother’s side of the family may have been Jewish. Rankin (her maiden name, ed.) is a Jewish name. A member of the family came up with some interesting stuff researching the name. Though I haven’t found myself studying Kaballah (Jewish mysticism, ed.) just yet. . . I can lose myself in the Scriptures. It’s true I have an interest in most things Jewish, **I would take it as a great compliment if I turned out to be Jewish. I’d be very flattered.***

### “. . .And One More, in the Name of Love”

It seems that a study of “most things Jewish,” conducted honestly, leads directly to the Jewish Messiah. Bono also said this:

*But I love the idea of the sacrificial lamb. I love the idea that God says: “Look, you cretins, there are certain results to the way we are, to selfishness, and there’s mortality as part of your very sinful nature, and let’s face it, you’re not living a very good life, are you? There are consequences to actions.” The point of the death of Christ is that Christ took on the sins of the world, so that what we put out did not come back to us, and that our sinful nature does not reap the obvious death. That’s the point. It should keep us humbled. . . It’s not our own good works that get us through the gates of Heaven.*

## And Now, the Amish. . .

An Associated Press article, appearing in many U.S. newspapers in the spring of 2009, describes the visit of a group of Lancaster County (PA) Amish to Crown Heights, Brooklyn where they were hosted and given a tour of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community by members of the Hasidic Lubavitcher sect. Remarkably, there seems to be an automatic kinship and affinity between these two groups, both of whom live a lifestyle that sets them apart from mainstream American culture and community.

When Rabbi Beryl Epstein, one of the hosts, “first greeted the Amish with the Yiddish, *Zei gazunt!* (“be healthy”), they understood. After all, the expression is derived from the German, *Sei gesund.*” The Amish speak a dialect of German.

According to numerous reports, there is a movement of God’s Spirit among the Amish, especially in Lancaster County, and many are studying the Bible on their own and coming



Amish visitors to Brooklyn against the backdrop of the deceased Lubavitcher leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson

to a vital personal relationship with Jesus Christ, rather than just depending upon their baptism, church membership, and attention to traditional lifestyle and customs for salvation. Amazingly, many of these “Evangelical Amish” exhibit a very high level of interest in Israel and Jewish evangelism. One of their leaders remarked recently, “Who knows; maybe we have such an interest in the Jewish people because we have Jewish ancestors and we’re actually Jewish!”

## SO WHAT’S WITH THE TWO-HANDLED COFFEE CUP?

Well, actually, it’s not a two-handled coffee cup. It’s a utensil used at the dinner table of Jewish families for the ritual washing of hands before breaking and eating bread. The ritual is called *netilat yadayim* (nuh-tee-laht yuh-die-yim), Hebrew words often inscribed on the cup, meaning “lifting up of hands.” The practice has nothing to do with hygiene, since rabbinical teaching is clear that hands should be thoroughly scrubbed before coming to the table. Rather, like many other ceremonial baths and washings in Judaism, it is symbolic of man’s effort to appear clean and pure before God (Psalm 24:3–4).



In Jesus’ day, the focus of the practice had moved from the meaning behind the action to the action itself, leading the Pharisees to roundly condemn the disciples for not joining

in their meticulously detailed routine of hand washing before eating (Mark 7:1–23). Such misguided religiosity evoked this response from Him: “Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” (vs. 6)

One of our Ministry Affiliates in Israel tells of a believing Jewish friend engaged in conversation with another Jewish woman during traditional “spring cleaning,” preparatory to Passover. She was asked: “But how can we be clean **inwardly?**” to which she replied, “Oh, water will not clean away sin; only blood can do that!”

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