

# In a New Book About Queer Allyship, an Orthodox Rabbi Offers Guidance for Solidarity in a post-Oct. 7 World

**'Allyship is needed in all directions,' said Rabbi Mike Moskowitz, who wrote 'Ancestral Allyship' – a book grounded in the Jewish values of interconnectedness and compassion, and shows the need to support marginalized communities and build connections between Jews and non-Jews**

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In the aftermath of October 7 and the ongoing war in Gaza, many Jews felt abandoned by their progressive allies. A new book offers hope and guidance for mending fractured relationships in these divisive times – written by someone skilled in bridging divides between groups with deeply opposing traditions and viewpoints.

In *Ancestral Allyship*, [Rabbi Mike Moskowitz](#), an ultra-Orthodox rabbi and scholar-in-residence for trans and queer Jewish studies at [Congregation Beit Simchat Torah](#) in New York – the world's largest LGBTQ+ synagogue – explores the Torah's teachings on solidarity.

As an ultra-Orthodox rabbi who advocates passionately for the LGBTQ+ community, his journey began when a close family member transitioned, prompting him to delve into the complexities of gender identity. This personal experience led him to challenge norms within Orthodox circles and to become an outspoken ally for transgender and queer individuals.

The book's launch took place in the sanctuary of CBST, bringing together Moskowitz and another trailblazing leader, Rabbi Angela Buchdahl, Senior Rabbi of Central Synagogue, for a conversation on allyship and solidarity.

Moskowitz said he sees his book as an urgent call, offering readers a roadmap for overcoming divisions and fostering renewed connections in a post-October 7 world.

"My hope is that this book encourages people to remain connected, even amidst disagreements. We care for each other not because of how we vote, but because we recognize our shared humanity," he told Haaretz in an interview at the launch.

Since 2019, Moskowitz, a Haredi Jew, has served as the scholar-in-residence for trans and queer Jewish studies at CBST, a position specifically created for him. In this role, he has written extensively on LGBTQ+ issues within the Jewish community, social justice, Jewish practice and more.

Moskowitz describes his book as "Torah without homophobia or transphobia." The book offers teachings from each Torah portion on how "God expects us to show up for each other."

Grounded in traditional texts, with nearly 800 footnotes from Rabbinical and liturgical sources, the book delves into topics such as trans identities, social justice, intergenerational solidarity, and more. It also explores the connections between

ancient Jewish traditions and the practice of allyship as it is seen today.

*Ancestral Allyship* emphasizes the importance of unity within the Jewish community and the need to build connections between Jews and non-Jews. It aims to bridge ideological divides and support marginalized identities, all grounded in Jewish values of interconnectedness and compassion.

Moskowitz talked to Haaretz about the growing isolation and political marginalization felt within the American Jewish and LGBTQ+ communities amid rising tensions over the ongoing war in Gaza.

This was reflected in this year's Pride March in New York, which some LGBTQ+ Jews chose not to participate in, due to the leadership's denouncement of Israel and public rejection of Zionism.

"It's hard not to notice who didn't reach out," he remarked, highlighting the growing divide. "There were a lot of people who really felt betrayed by the silence from those we marched for and with – they just weren't there. Not only were they not there to support us, but some were actively in opposition."

Yet, Moskowitz emphasized allyship isn't transactional – it's a moral commitment to recognize each other's humanity, even in times of conflict. "We don't show up because we expect others will show up for us, but because that is the right thing to do."

Reflecting on the timing of the book's release – a year into the Israel-Hamas war and less than two weeks before the U.S. election – Rabbi Moskowitz noted its relevance in this divisive time. "We can disagree internally, but that should never make us see each other as less human."

As in previous times of crisis in Jewish history, Moskowitz finds optimism in faith and community, no matter its form. "It's easy to be overwhelmed when trying to be a good ally. The complexity of the world can make you feel like you've had enough and just want a quick fix," he said.

"But that's not how real change works. For those who genuinely want to help, that desire and intention matter, but it also requires patience and compassion – both for ourselves and for others – because it takes time for learning and efforts to truly make an impact."

"Allyship is often seen as a response by someone with privilege to the oppression of others, but that response is only necessary when the unity of our humanity has already broken down," he explained.

"In Jewish tradition, we're obligated to prevent this breakdown by adhering to God's expectations of ethical living and striving to create a world free from dehumanization. This book is about fostering connections, expanding our capacity to connect, and feeling so interconnected that we no longer see others as separate from ourselves."

When asked about how his book might be received in traditional Orthodox circles, Moskowitz said he believed much of the book will resonate within these communities, with the exception of some essays specifically addressing trans issues.

"I hope that as the Orthodox community better understands the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals, it will develop new, compassionate approaches," he said.

Rabbi Moskowitz acknowledged that, from the outside, it might seem unusual for an Orthodox rabbi to engage with a Reform

leader like Rabbi Buchdahl or to advocate for LGBTQ+ Jews. However, he believes that such connections are essential for building a stronger Jewish community. "Allyship is needed in all directions," he said. "The Haredi world has much to offer the secular world, and vice versa."

Moskowitz said he believed that the answer to divisions within Israel, the region, and with Jewish communities and beyond is removing the opportunities for evil before they take root, rather than responding reactively.

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