C’mon, Bernie, it’s OK to tell us you’re a Jew

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Historians, take note:

Bernie Sanders made history in New Hampshire. The senator from Vermont became the first Jew to win a presidential primary.

EVER.

For the first time in the history of the United States of America, a non-Christian won a presidential primary. That’s huge.

So why doesn’t it feel like it?

In his victory speech, the guy who looks like a rumpled grandpa told the cheering crowd: “I am the son of a Polish immigrant.”

Sanders didn’t talk about being Jewish. Not once.

I gotta tell you, seeing someone who is 74 years old talk about being the child of immigrants didn’t move me, but hearing he’s Jewish would have.

Only he doesn’t call himself Jewish. Sanders calls himself a socialist.

Some would argue that he isn’t all that Jewish since he doesn’t belong to a synagogue, keep the High Holy Days holy and doesn’t mention Israel. He hasn’t been there since he lived on a kibbutz in the 1960s.

Some consider him Jew “ish” because Sanders says he’s culturally Jewish, but not religious.

In the last debate, Gwen Ifill asked Sanders if he was thwarting history by possibly blocking Hillary Clinton from becoming the first woman president. He said his election would be historic, too.

I expected him to talk eloquently about what it meant to be the first Jewish president. Nope. Here’s what Sanders said:

“From a historical point of view, somebody with my background, somebody with my views, somebody who has spent his entire life taking on the big-money interests, I think a Sanders victory would be of some historical accomplishment, as well.”

I don’t know about you, but I was a bit fermish. Was he worried America won’t elect a Jewish president or does he not see himself as a Jewish candidate?

Ten years ago, U.S. Rep Barney Frank said a Jew would never be president: “The presidency is unique. I think we’ve gotten rid of anti-Semitism everywhere but the presidency.”

Fortunately, times have changed. Polls show Americans would vote for a Jewish president. It could be the Seinfeld effect. The popular TV show that ran for years made America comfortable with a bunch of neurotic New York Jews.

Or maybe U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman cleared the way after being named the 2000 VP candidate by Al Gore. But Lieberman, who later sought the White House for himself, never won a primary.

On the Gallup website, a story by Justin McCarthy said 91 percent of Americans would vote for a Jewish candidate, but fewer than half would vote for a socialist: “Sanders’ self-identification as a socialist could hurt him, as half of Americans say they would not vote for someone with that background.”

One of the few times Sanders has ever said, “I’m Jewish” and truly claimed it as his identity, was to ease the fears of a Muslim-American woman in New Hampshire. Sanders said, “I’m Jewish. My father’s family died in concentration camps. I will do everything that I can to rid this country of the ugly stain of racism, which has existed for far too many years.”

At a town-hall meeting, CNN’s Anderson Cooper asked Sanders how he would appeal to religious voters, since “you’re Jewish, but you’ve said that you’re not actively involved with organized religion.”

Sanders said: “I would not be running for president of the United States if I did not have very strong religious and spiritual feelings.” Like many Americans, he chooses spirituality over religion. Sanders said that spirituality means “we are all in this together and that when children go hungry, when veterans sleep out on the street, it impacts me.”

Sanders might not have faith in God, but he has faith in tikkun olam. His entire candidacy is based on repairing the world.

That’s why it matters that he’s Jewish.

Being Jewish is in his DNA. Maybe he doesn’t need to say it because it’s written all over his heart. But I wish he would say it, because it matters that he is Jewish.

It matters to be the first and only.

In the long arc of history, a history that includes more anti-Semitism hatred, hostility, heartache and horror than anyone can fathom, it matters that for the first time in history, a Jewish person won a presidential primary in the most powerful country on earth.

I say we own it.

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