

# Out of Step

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There is an old *Punch* cartoon: A mother beams down on a military parade and proudly exclaims, "That's my boy, he's the only one in step."

It is reminiscent of the Jewish rowing team that keeps losing. When they ask an expert from a competing school, he watches them row and says: "Ah, there's your problem. You should have one person calling out and six rowing, not the other way around."

Sometimes we are out of step, do not get the rules of the game, bring our own suppositions to a new endeavor where they do not fit. In any new field it takes time to learn how to navigate the special circumstances required.

Important as familiarity is, innovation and creativity are often stifled by too much routine. Here is the perennial tension between *hiddush* and *hemshech* — innovation and continuity. Some will favor one or another by temperament, training or circumstance. Each is essential to keep an enterprise simultaneously vital and authentic. Habit can be deadening and change disorienting. Tradition needs infusions of newness without losing its essential character, but this balancing act is tricky, and each community has to find its own center to march creatively in step.