MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 66, Folder 4, Judaism - Jewish law, 1981-1982.

3101 Clifton Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220
(513) 221-1875 phone, (513) 221-7812 fax
americanjewisharchives.org

כנסת הרבנים

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY

3080 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10027

212 RIVERSIDE 9-8000

Cable Address: RABBISEM, New York

August 18, 1982

Dear Colleague:

We are pleased to enclose the first mailing of the New Year, from the Rabbinical Assembly's Homiletics Service. We hope that you will find it helpful in your preparations for the holy days. This material replaces the sermonic material for the High Holy Days formerly sent out under the auspices of the Seminary. We hope that we will be able to live up to the high standards which were characteristic of those mailings.

This issue contains sermons for Rosh Hashanah, Shabbat Shuvah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot. We are pleased to be able to include texts for preaching recommended by Professor Moshe Zucker, we well as sermons written by our colleagues Rabbis Samuel Chiel, Irwin Groner, Theodore Steinberg and Gerald Zelizer. On the back of this letter we have reprinted a D'var Torah delivered at one of our Conventions by Rabbi Shamai Kanter. Past Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly contain many wonderful sermonic ideas.

We are now in our second year of publication. The response to the material that we have distributed has been very gratifying. We are grateful to our many colleagues who have submitted sermons for publication. We have not been able to reprint all of them; some we hope to include in future mailings. We reply upon our members' willingness to share their ideas with their colleagues. We are, of course, always searching for new material. Both outlines and complete sermons are welcome. We do ask that they be typed, and that they be edited for correct grammar and usage. Our main criterion for publication is usability. We cannot use sermons that are tied to specific events and which cannot be readily adapted for later use, or sermons that are too personal for use by others.

We are grateful to Rabbi Stephen Lerner for his help over the past year, and we look forward to working with Rabbi Jules Harlow. I would also like to thank Rabbis Harlow and Kelman for their many helpful suggestions, many of which we hope to implement this year. Your reaction is essential to our success.

בברכת שנה טובה ומתוקה

Kenneth E. Berger

Kenneth E. Berger

BEING UNAWARE OF WHAT WE KNOW

Rabbi Shamai Kanter

One cannot be sure how far to press the significance of a redundancy in the al heit confessional. True, a hasidic master saw its acrostic form only as a convenient limitation: "If we were honestly to confess all our sins we could never stop; at least there is an end to the alphabet." But nevertheless, the requirement of two categories of sin for each letter seems to have forced a number of repetitions.

It would appear so in this line:

על חטא שחטאנו לפניך ביודעים ובלא יודעים.

"For the sins which we have committed before Thee in knowing and not knowing." Sins committed knowingly are included under the category of b'zadon; sins committed unknowingly are included as bishgagah. Why then the need for ביודעים ובלא יודעים? Yet this phrase of the liturgy has focused a problem for me, in reminding me that it is possible to know and not know, at the same time.

Our minds are complex, not simple. We can acknowledge the most important things and live apart from them. We can be unaware of the things we are most familiar with; as husband and wife can live together for twenty-five years, until sudden death makes the husband realize that he hardly knew at all this woman he knew so well: that perhaps he knew her so little because he knew her so well. ביודעים ובלא יודעים He knew his wife and he did not know her.

In our Seminary years we looked for answers to basic religious questions, and we were worried that soon people would require our response to: "What is faith?" "Why pray?" "Why is there evil in the world?" "Why be a Jew at all?" After a while we began to develop answers to these problems, not perfect ones, but at least some useful formulas. And now I begin to worry that living too close to all the answers may obscure the questions and their urgency, that the formulas can come too easily and become a substitute for the realities they represent. Perhaps this is the meaning of the famous story about Levi Yitzhak, which otherwise seems either painfully naive, or charmingly quaint. It is told that he summoned the townspeople of Berditchev to an emergency meeting, and declared: "I have some urgent news for you - there's a God in the world!" Of course Levi Yitzhak's people knew that there is a God. But did they really know?

Edmund Cahn, in the Moral Decision, tells of Goethe's visit to St. Peter's Cathedral. The poet noticed that of all the beggars in front of the cathedral only one seemed to attract the interest of tourists, who would stop and drop a few coins into his cup. When Goethe approached he saw that the man had a sign upon his chest, which read simply: "It is April, and I am Blind." This is the problem for us, religiously, that it is always April, and that we are too often blind.

And so I would like to suggest for your thought, that among our sins שחטאנו which we have sinned, is לפניך that we are before Thee, ביודעים and we know it, ובלא יודעים yet often we do not know it. To know you are dreaming, observed C.S. Lewis, is no longer to be perfectly asleep.

(Reprinted from 1961 Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly)

TEXTS ON TESHUVAH

Dr. Moshe Zucker

I

An understanding of teshuvah is one of the subjects debated by Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Rabbi Joshua ben Hanina, the most prominent students of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus emphatically asserted that there is no geulah without teshuvah.

אם ישראל עושין תשובה נגאלין, ואם לאו אין נגאלין, שנאמר, שובו בנים שובבים ארפא משובותם.

The last of the prophets, Malakhi, likewise called the Jewish people to teshuvah as a means of attaining geulah: שובו אלי ואשובה אליכם

Rabbi Joshua, on the other hand, contended that when the time of geulah arrives, everyone will be redeemed without having to do teshuvah (Sanhedrin 97b).

I have always been bothered by Rabbi Joshua's view. How could a Tanna contradict the concept of history maintained by the prophets? Did not all the prophets of Israel call for teshuvah as a means of becoming worthy of God's affection as well as the way to redemption from oppression and suffering? What is the meaning of prophecy if not this persistent call to teshuvah?

It seems to me, however, that events during our own lifetime clearly reflect a truth that Rabbi Joshua recognized when he gave voice to his opinion. Geulah itself, and the struggle to attain it, leads one to the goal of teshuvah. I have come to understand and to appreciate Rabbi Joshua's point of view through reflection upon the heroic efforts and immense sacrifices made by people of our own generation on behalf of geulat ha-aretz and geulat yisrael. The struggle for geulah in itself is a manifestation of teshuvah, of return to one's own roots----to the people Israel and to the God of Israel----even when some champions of geulah are unaware of the religious impulse associated with their strivings for geulah.

One of the most illustrious religious leaders of modern times, Rabbi Avraham Hakohen Kook, the first chief rabbi of Israel, repeatedly proclaimed this view in public, to the chagrin and anger of other, less profound, religious leaders, when he declared that the halutzim and kibbutznikim are m'kadshei hashem when working with their hammers or other tools, and even when playing soccer.

What Rabbi Kook perceived in his own, somewhat mystic, way has assumed more realistic form in our own day and before our own eyes. The call for teshuvah, for return to God and to the eternal Jewish ideals, pulsates today quite clearly at many kibbutzim, in tzahal, and at other places where young Jews strive for geulah. One has only to read the journal Petahim or attend a meeting of m'vakshei derekh or visit some of the kibbutzim to realize the truth of Rabbi Joshua's view that geulah creates teshuvah, no less than teshuvah brings geulah. Needless to say, this subterranean search for teshuvah of our banim goalim needs proper guidance.

Geulah and teshuvah in eretz yisrael will not be accomplished by political maneuvering and parliamentary decisions, and not even by fiery articles in the Morgen Journal, but by systematic and well-calculated education and clarification.

Geulah and teshuvah will then come together to produce one great light, the light of Israel's revival and continued survival.

II

The possibility of teshuvah, the possibility of changing the facts of one's life with God and oneself by a turning toward the good is a gift of God's grace to man. This thought is expressed very nicely in a maamar hazal quoted in the Palestinian Talmud. אמר רבי פנחס: טוב וישר. למה הוא טוב, שהוא ישר ולמה הוא ישר, שהוא טוב. על כן יורה חטאים בדרך, שמורה דרך תשובה (ירושלמי מכות, פרק ב' הלכה ו').

God's justice and goodness, His midat hadin and His midat harahamim, are not in opposition or contradiction to each other, but are mutually enhancing, complementary. God is good and gracious because He is just, and He is just because of His goodness. The way of teshuvah, His gift to man, flows from both attributes.

שאלו לחכמה, הוסא מה עונשו. אמרה להן, חטאים תרדף רעה (משלי י"ג).
שאלו לנבואה, חוסא מה עונשו. אמרה להן, הנפש החוטאת היא תמות (יחזקאל י"ח).
שאלו לתורה, חוסא מה עונשו. אמרה להן, יביא קרבן ויתכפר. שאלו לקודשא בריך הוא, חוסא מה עונשו. אמר להן, יעשה תשובה ויתכפר לו. היינו דכתיב, על כן יורה חטאים בדרך (משלי כ"ו). יורה לחטאים דרך שהוא תשובה (ירושלמי מכות, פרק ב').

In our daily prayers we express our gratitude to God for this wonderful gift: ברוך אתה ה' הרוצה בתשובה. And it is especially emphasized in our supplications and piyyutim on Yom Kippur. As a matter of fact, the Rabbis teach that man's spiritual world would be void without the possibility of teshuvah. They expressed this in their own metaphoric way of stating that the power of teshuvah is one of the seven realities which existed even before the creation of the universe. שבעה דברים נבראו קודם שנברא העולם ואלו הן: תורה ותשובה וגן עדן וגיהנום וכסא הכבוד ובית המקדש ושמו של משיח (פסחים נ"ד:א).

There would be no worthwhile world without a just and divine law, the possibility of repentance, concepts of reward and punishment, God's high authority, a spiritual center on earth, and the hope for a perfect reign of justice in the world.

The power of teshuvah is limitless, according to Talmudic thought.

גדולה תשובה שמקרבת את הגאולה. גדולה תשובה שמארכת שנותיו של אדם. אמר רבי מאיר, גדולה תשובה שבשביל יחיד שעשה תשובה מוחלין לכל העולם כולו (יומא פ"ו:ב).

Resh Lakish, himself a baal teshuvah, said:

גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכיות (יומא פ"ו:ב).

The Rambam states: לפיכך צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולו כאילו חציו זכאי וחציו חייב. וכן כל העולם חציו זכאי וחציו חייב. חטא חטא אחד, הרי הכריע את עצמו ואת העולם כולו לכף חובה וגרם לו השחתה. עשה מצוה אחת, הרי הכריע את עצמו ואת כל העולם כולו לכף זכות, וגרם לו ולהם תשועה והצלה, שנאמר: וצדיק יסוד עולם. זה שצדק הכריע את כל העולם לזכות והצילו (הלכות תשובה ג:ד).

To my mind, this is the most profound expression of the individual's responsibility for the fate of mankind.

Another expression of the unique and tremendous power of teshuvah:

בכל הקרבנות כתיב "והקרבתם" וכאן כתיב "ועשיתם". אמר להן הקב"ה, משום שנכנסתם לדין לפני בראש השנה ויצאתם בשלום מעלה אני עליכם כאילו נבראת בריה חדשה (ירושלמי ראש השנה, פרק ב'; וראה ויקרא רבה כ"ט:י"ב).

Doing teshuvah is like being reborn.

A STRATEGY FOR JEWISH RENEWAL

Rabbi Samuel Chiel

On these great days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we will be praying and hearing about vital aspects of life, about sin, repentance, God, and the possibility of making a new beginning in our lives. How do we see to it that such themes have lasting import, with genuine impact, so that they will make a difference in the way we live?

Let me tell you what a group of Hasidim used to do, to see if we can adopt their strategy for ourselves. These were Hasidim of the Bratzlaver Rebbe, a rabbi who flourished at the end of the eighteenth century in the Ukraine. A group of his Hasidim who lived in Lodz, Poland, created a group, a chevrah, amongst themselves. They called it Chevrah Shomrey Mishpat, "Guardians of Justice."

The Chevrah maintained a special journal, a kind of calendar-diary for the entire year. At the end of each day, each member of the group would make an entry next to each of several questions, writing 'yes' or 'no' to indicate whether or not he had fulfilled a particular obligation.

What were the questions? The first question was: Did you say the shma today? Why did they choose the shma of all prayers? Because it is so important. Because as a Jew says its words each day of his life, he is declaring and reminding himself, "I believe that there is a God in the world."

That belief has many implications. It means that God insists that we live by His teachings and that there is a difference between right and wrong, moral and immoral, regardless of how many would like to ignore those differences.

It means that there is a God in the world who endows us with countless blessings for which we should give thanks.

It affirms that there is a God in the world who gives us strength when we need it most, in times of trouble and despair. There is a special Psalm we read each day during the month preceding Rosh Hashanah in which the Psalmist affirms his faith in God by saying: Kee avi v'imi azavoonee vadonai yaasfeynee. "Even if my father and mother were to abandon me, my God would take me in." Our God will never abandon any of His children.

So this is the first question which members of that special Chevrah had to answer. Did you recite the shma, did you remember that there is a God in the world?

And they had to answer a second question: Did you study Torah today? Did you study the Shulchan Arukh? The Mishnah? The Talmud? They knew that there is no way to faith in Judaism other than through study. If you don't study Torah, how will you know what God requires of you? They knew that in our religion there are no shortcuts to faith; there is no instant Judaism. To be a Jew requires a lifetime of study.

In our High School of Jewish Studies, I read a story to my students entitled Titchadesh by David Frishman. Titchadesh is a word we use in congratulating a person who is wearing a new garment. This story is about an impoverished boy who dreams of the day when he would acquire a new garment so that people would say to him, as they did to everybody else: "Titchadesh." He becomes ill and

nobody ever says the word to him until the moment he lays dying. Then he sees angels hovering above him and saying to him: "Titchadesh."

The students were deeply moved by this story. One of the girls asked, "How come we never heard of this writer in Hebrew School?" I replied, "You can't cover everything in Hebrew School. That's why we have a High School, and that's why a Jew never stops studying if she is to discover for herself the treasures of Jewish literature and tradition."

Each person of the special Chevrah had to answer a third question: Did you give Tzedakah today? Under the category of Tzedakah they also asked if the Hasid had made a contribution to help publish the Rabbi's writings. If you believe in somebody and his teachings, you want to help spread the word so others might benefit too.

Tzedakah was to be given for other good causes as well. Tzedakah is the Jewish method to right some of the wrongs that the world inflicts upon human beings. Danny Siegel is an idealistic young man, a poet and activist, who has made Tzedakah his special mitzvah. In order to personalize the giving of Tzedakah, he asks for contributions and then he seeks out people in Israel who are doing good work by helping others. If you send Danny a contribution, at the end of the year he sends you a Tzedakah report, detailing the Tzedakah he has distributed.

One example of his giving is to a woman whose name is Esther Segal (not related to him) who lives in Jerusalem. Seventeen years ago, her doctors said her physical condition was hopeless. At that time, she promised herself that if she recovered, she would devote her life to Tzedakah and Gmilut Hasadim. She recovered and she works in three major areas: she provides interest-free loans to people; she gives Tzedakah, money which she does not expect to have returned; and she helps young couples and poor brides. Esther Segal is a one-woman social service agency. A Jew not only gives Tzedakah, but he or she should always be searching for new ways to make the giving more effective and more life-enhancing.

Those Bratzlaver Hasidim had to answer yet another question: Did you dance today? They did not mean social dancing or folk dancing. They were referring to the special dance of Hasidic Jews during a service or at the very end of a service. The founder of Hasidism, Israel Baal Shem, taught: "The dances of the Jew before his Creator are prayers, for it is written in the Book of Psalms: Kol atzmotay tomarnah Adonai mi khamokha. "All my limbs proclaim: Who is like You, O Lord?" It is an attempt by Hasidim to achieve the qualities of hitlahavut, religious ecstasy, and d'veykut, communion with God.

When our congregation's groups visit Israel, we pray at the Kotel on Friday evening. The students of Yeshivat Hakotel dance in a large circle before the Kotel. Our people are usually hesitant to enter the dancing circle because they are unfamiliar with this phenomenon. I urge them to join the circle and, when they do, they love the experience. They begin to understand how dance can also be an expression of love for God.

The next question which had to be answered by the Hasidim: Did you have sichat haverim today; did you have a discussion with a friend? Did you discuss the Rabbi's teachings with another person? They understood the need people have for strengthening each other in their convictions.

People become part of different groups to rid themselves of undesirable habits,

groups like Weight Watchers, Smoke Enders, or Alcoholics Anonymous. People join groups to help them in their resolve to improve themselves. Groups like Havurot, friends celebrating Shabbat or Yom Tov together. The Hasidim created their Chevrah Shomrey Mishpat in order to help strengthen each other in their convictions.

Asking about sichat chaverim had another purpose as well: Did you encourage another person when he needed your help? What good is all your learning and observance unless you are willing to help another person in trouble, visiting a person who is ill, comforting a person who is bereaved, encouraging a person who is depressed?

The final question which the Hasidim had to answer: Did you practice hitbod'dut, solitude, today? This solitude was intended to give a person time to express his innermost feelings.

Each one of us needs to spend time by ourselves each day. A mother needs a little time for herself, away from screaming children. At work, we often feel hemmed in by unceasing tension, and we need some moments of surcease. A teenager who is always aware of peer pressure about him needs some time to ask himself: What do I really feel and want as an individual? Each of us needs hitbod'dut, a little space for ourselves each day.

They saw another reason for hitbod'dut. It was an opportunity to converse with God about your innermost longings and hopes. We need some time each day away from everybody, to think about what is happening to us and what we really want to accomplish with our lives.

In addition, hitbod'dut gave a person time to confess his sins before God and to determine to improve his conduct. Each of us sins. We wrong others so often with our words and our actions. Each day we should make a cheshbon hanefesh, "an accounting of the soul", and try to see how we can make amends and do better the next day.

When should this hitbod'dut take place? The Bratslaver Rebbe suggested that it should be done at night, when the house is quiet, when everybody has gone to sleep. Those are the quiet moments you need to learn more about yourself and to reflect upon the meaning and purpose of your life.

Well, what do you think? Would you consider using the Bratslaver Hasidim's strategy for yourself? If you form a chevrah or chavurah with whom to do it, it will be easier because you will be able to encourage one another. Or perhaps you would like to make your family into a chevrah for using this strategy. Or perhaps you want to do it by yourself. In any case, get yourself a calendar-diary and next to each day, write these six questions:

1. Did you recite the Shma today?
2. Did you study Torah today?
3. Did you give Tzedakah?
4. Did you dance and try to achieve religious ecstacy?
5. Did you spend some time helping another person?
6. Did you practice hitbod'dut, a few moments of solitude, communing with God about the meaning of your life?

Such a strategy can make Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur have a lasting impact upon our lives. Such a strategy can transform us into fully committed and observant Jews.

THE LITTLE FOXES

Rabbi Irwin Groner

During this season of spiritual reckoning, Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh, we discuss the serious problems of our time: the momentous issues, the great dilemmas, and the serious evils that sully and mar human existence. However, it is not my intent, on this Sabbath of Repentance, to talk about the large things, but rather about the small, apparently insignificant and trivial matters that constitute massive and formidable impediments on the path of a good life. When we think about large problems and vast perspectives, we often ignore the minor deficiencies, the petty weaknesses, and the small transgressions to which our conscience has been immunized and of which we no longer take much notice.

"Beware of the little foxes that spoil the vineyards." This is a phrase from the Song of Songs. The owner of the vineyard is not afraid of the large beasts, for he knows how to protect his property. But he has reason to be anxious about the small foxes. They slip into a crack in the fence, or a crevice, and as they despoil the vineyard they lay waste the work of many months. What we have to fear are hidden marauders that gnaw away our spirit.

I believe that we have strength enough to resist the large temptations. I don't think that we would ever rob a bank, or run away with the funds that belong to another, or allow our hostility to drive us to violence or murder. It is true that there may be moments when we are tempted to such things. But the fact that we are here in the synagogue rather than behind bars indicates that, with some measure of success, we have resisted these large temptations. What about the small temptations, the little evasions, the petty hypocrisies, the overlooked duplicities which destroy character?

Consider the matter of religion. People don't seek to overthrow religion anymore. There was a time in Jewish life when we had authentic atheists and self-proclaimed agnostics. Certain writers and critics argued that Judaism as a religion had to be opposed and attacked. That period, the Haskalah, or "Age of Enlightenment," produced a goodly number of apikorsim, Jewish heretics.

I rarely encounter a Jewish atheist in today's world. Such emphatic denial is no longer considered proper. Religion doesn't depart from our lives by some great explosion, by massive rejection. Instead, it is lost by a steady, small leakage. People allow weeks to pass without a religious thought or a spiritual act, and they come to the synagogue at this Season of Awe, spiritually depleted.

People do not lose their faith by repudiating it in one moment. They allow it to evaporate, day by day, reserving religion only for high dramatic moments, removing their daily lives from the domain of its influence. By limiting religion to three days of the year, they diminish the strength and sap the vitality of Judaism.

What religion has to fear in our country is not rejection or dishonor. Religion is respected everywhere in American life. We have yet to hear a political candidate who would have enough candor to say: "I don't attend church or synagogue, and I don't really care to." I am always filled with wonder that on Sunday, when political officials or aspirants attend religious worship, a photographer is fortuitously nearby who seems equally moved by the desire to pray. The latter invariably happens to bring his camera along so that the former might be recorded in this transfigured moment of worship.

Religion will never fail in this country because it isn't respected. The weakness of religion in America arises from a different circumstance; the habits of our daily lives spring out of a contradictory background.

We live in a world of non-religious behavior and motivation. Therefore, when we enter moments of prayer, the service fails to move us. Too great a gap separates the secular with its temptations and its materialistic values and the world of the sanctuary, with its idealistic conceptions of man and his responsibilities to God and his fellow-man.

So do we allow this process to erode character. We tell someone to answer the phone and say, "He's out" when we don't want to be annoyed. We call this a "white lie" for, after all, it doesn't really hurt anybody. But what happens? We have weakened our resistance to untruth, for the significant feature of a half-truth is that it's a half-lie. And thus we adjust ourselves to the legitimacy of lying.

One day, a call is made to us for an urgent communal need, and we satisfy ourselves with less than we can give, with less than we can do. We have a great array of excuses, alibis and rationalizations. "Are others giving more? Besides I have so many obligations. Also, the economic climate is so unfavorable." We soothe ourselves by these evasions; we lower the sense of obligation; and we blunt our sensitivity.

Consider these as small illustrations of a large and regular process that affects every human life. What spoils life is not catastrophic failure but, rather, slipshod habits and trifling stupidity. Tennyson wrote: "It is the little rift within the lute / That by and by will make the music mute / And ever widening, slowly silence all."

We are promised atonement during this season. The prophet Isaiah declares: "Im yihyu chataeichem kashanim kasheleg yalbinu," "Though your sins be as scarlet, they will become as white as snow." We believe that God forgives. He will provide atonement for our grievous sins of omission and commission. He knows how frail is the flesh, how weak and fragile is the human being. He recognizes that we at times are overwhelmed by tidal waves of desire, that we abdicate our will, our judgment and our reason to our appetite. Though our sins be like scarlet, crimson with rebellion and lust, proclaiming our shame, they will be forgiven.

Today I worry about sins that are not scarlet, but gray. They are not vivid, nor do they stand out in bright stripes and sensational colors. These tired sins of inertia, timidity, carelessness and laziness are dull and drab. Not being conscious of their pernicious effect, we are not likely to feel remorse or to seek forgiveness for them.

As a Rabbi, I rarely encounter acts of indefensible wickedness. I am not often consulted about cases of serious crime or actual violence. These sins are not characteristic of our people. What I do see with wearisome regularity? Stupidity, silliness, pettiness, and vanity. Who can calculate the misery we inflict on each other by these small sins?

I once read a prayer composed by a jungle explorer who said: "O Lord, deliver me from the gnats. I can take care of the elephants." I believe that we can manage fairly well with the elephants in the jungle of our lives. We can control those

impulses that might occasionally lead us to anti-social behavior. But what about the little gnats of evasion, resentment, and anger? We are too civilized to fight with those who evoke our displeasure, but we do nurse a grudge rather well. We hold on to our vindictiveness lest we lose it. How tenaciously we nourish a bit of jealousy or a sense of hostility.

My concern is not only what we do to each other, but also what these petty sins do to us, how they constantly weaken us and gnaw away at our character. It does not hurt our self-esteem to unite with the congregation in a general admission as we do on Yom Kippur and say ashamnu bagadnu gazalnu, "We have sinned, we have dealt treacherously, we have stolen." We might almost feel smug about acknowledging that we are unworthy sinners. But let anyone become specific about our known petty faults, our weaknesses, our deficiencies, and we are immediately on the defensive.

On these High Holy Days, the pulpit speaks about the monumental sins of our time. We ponder the eternal dilemmas of human life and destiny, and we reflect upon the pathos of the human condition. But today, on this Sabbath of Return, let each of us, in the privacy of heart and mind, think about the little foxes that destroy the vineyards. Let us seek to examine the small flaws, the little temptations and the minor failures that erode the strength of our character. Let us arm ourselves against them and we shall achieve a triumph of the spirit that will enable us to win God's forgiveness.

THE HUNGERS OF YOM KIPPUR

Rabbi Theodore Steinberg

Tonight the great fast begins. For twenty-five hours we shall refrain from several of life's great pleasures, including eating and drinking. There are different reasons for the fast. The Torah calls this a day of self-denial, inui nefesh. By not partaking of food or drink, we show God that "we mean business," that we are not concerned with ordinary needs.

Another reason is given by the prophet Isaiah. We fast in order to experience personally what it's like to be hungry, and thus we feel a spirit of kinship, compassion and responsibility for all the hungry people in the world.

I want to suggest a third reason. Human beings are always hungry. A baby is born hungry. As soon as he comes into the world, he is yowling for food. Hunger is a signal and we have many hungers. Throughout our lives we seek to satisfy them. There's hunger for food, for love, for beauty, hunger for sexual satisfaction, for money, for power, for truth, for pleasure and approval.

We are always hungry for something, and our hungers tend to affect us in a certain way. They keep us turning outwards, from ourselves to nature and the world and other people. That's where the satisfactions seem to be. Outside us. Then we get enough to eat, we find a mate, we get some money, and pleasure, and recognition. We satisfy our hungers, and yet we are still hungry. The quest for satisfaction doesn't end. The old hungers keep recurring, and new ones appear.

Yom Kippur, with its discipline of self-denial, pushes and prods us to think about our hungers and what they might mean. And it is not only food and drink that we abstain from. We abstain from washing and bathing, from our sexuality, from wearing leather shoes. Our various hungers and our attempts to satisfy them highlight crucial aspects of life and alert us to innumerable possibilities.

Food, for example, is not simply what we take into our mouths to taste and chew. It is something that connects us to the animal, vegetable and mineral world. We are part of one continuum. We eat, and what we eat becomes us.

Sexuality may seem to be only the gratification of a physical need. But it really is about the merging of two separate beings, the mutual yielding of one person to another in the sacrament of love.

Our feet hunger for the comfort of a good pair of shoes. Yet we don't wear leather shoes on Yom Kippur because it costs the life of a living creature. At least today we remember that we are both part of the same chain of life.

And why don't we bathe? Why must we risk being smelly creatures on Yom Kippur? Perhaps because it helps us become mindful that we're hungry for another kind of cleansing today, a cleansing of the soul that comes from the Almighty who gives it to us as an act of grace, whether or not we deserve it.

Our hungers, those we are aware of and those we sense but dimly, highlight crucial aspects of life. They help us become aware of larger matters which may occur to us on ordinary days.

The prayer Shma Kolenu which is recited at every Yom Kippur service is about hunger, but not for food. "Cast us not away from Your Presence, take not Your Holy Spirit from us."

There is such a thing as hunger for God, for a deepened awareness of His Presence.

Al tashlichenu l'et ziknah. "Do not cast us away when we are old, when our strength is gone do not abandon us." There is hunger for security beyond Social Security. And if we do not feel it now, the time will come when we shall.

There are higher and lower hungers, just as there is a difference between feeding and gourmet dining. And of the higher hungers it has been said that all are really versions of just two.

We are hungry for freedom, independence, being ourselves. And we are hungry for union, for attachment, for loving and being loved. We want to be ourselves in all our potential, and we want to be part of all things.

O to be free, loose, unconnected, unbound, free from duty, free from responsibility, free from cooking, free to sing and to dance and to look at the stars. And, at the very same time, we hunger to be united, attached, loved, needed, wanted, connected, and part of all things.

Can both be satisfied? The answer is a curious, wonderful paradox. We find our freedom, our true selves in union, in becoming attached, as we freely unite with someone or something. We are most free when we are most connected.

A fine writer once described the pleasure he gets from composing a good sentence. "It's more than pleasure," he said. "It is creativity, self-expression. I can discuss topics which are important to me, and people read what I write." But he went on to say, "To tell the truth, I wouldn't write if I didn't have to. It's very hard work. I wish I could do something easier."

Why, then, does he write? Because he has attachments -- to his art, to his readers, to his family who needs the income he gets from his writing. He is a lucky man. His hunger for connections forces him to recognize and act on his hunger for creativity. And it is a free choice.

Another example. A few years ago, an extraordinary rabbi died. His name was Rav Kehaneman, but he was better known as the Ponivezer Rov, after the town in Poland where he served until the advent of Hitler. Rabbi Kehaneman was an imposing figure and a marvelous organizer. He saw to the building of a famous Yeshiva in Bnai Brak, in Israel. He was a fundraiser extraordinaire. It is said that a wealthy American once promised to give him a half-million dollars for a school, provided that the students would study without hats. The tycoon thought he was playing it safe. Rabbi Kehaneman, however, accepted the condition and the money.

His disciples were amazed. How could he do such a thing? A yeshivah where the students would study Torah bareheaded?

"It's easy," said the Rav. "I'm going to build a yeshivah for girls." And he did.

Another story about fundraising. After one of Rabbi Kehaneman's generous contributors passed away, the rabbi visited the young man who had inherited his father's wealth, to ask him for the annual contribution. The son said brusquely, "I am not interested in the institution my father supported. Cross his name off your list." The rabbi replied, "I'm sorry, but I can't do it. Your father put his name on this list. He is the only one who can take it off. Since he is no longer here, and you are his heir, you are the only one who has the right to cross it off. Here is a pen. Cross off your father's name." The son took the pen, but his hand started to shake. He couldn't desecrate his father's memory.

I believe that more than sentiment was involved. Perhaps the son thought he was making a free choice when he refused to give. He was helped to understand that true freedom is more complicated. Life is interconnected.

There is freedom and there is duty. They are two sides of the same coin. Freedom does not mean being detached. We are freest when we are part of something worthwhile.

What does this have to do with Yom Kippur and Jewish life?

In twenty-four hours from now we shall all be eating and drinking again. We'll be satisfying some of our basic hungers.

There are other hungers which are just as basic, but less apparent to us:

to feel the hungers of the Jewish people,
to hunger for attachment to Jewish destiny,
to feel the hunger behind the cry Shma Kolenu,
to be hungry for justice in the world,
to be hungry for atonement,
to be hungry for a life of virtue,
to be hungry for learning.

Deep in our being, these hungers too want to be satisfied. Even when we say no to them.

I want to suggest a simple formula. I am not going to tell you to come to Shul, to keep the Sabbath, or the dietary laws, to study, or to give tzedakah.

You might not listen to me.

I am going to suggest just one thing. I want you to listen to yourself.

Simple hungers demand immediate, specific satisfaction. We satisfy them by doing what we have to do. Eating and drinking are in this category. When your stomach is empty, you have to eat.

Our deeper, more complex, hungers are satisfied by doing things we don't have to do, things that do not appear to be incumbent upon us. This is how we exercise our freedom.

You don't have to go to Shul on Saturday morning, but if you do, you are committing an act of freedom in this world.

You don't have to pick up a book and study Torah, but if you do, you are satisfying a need you may not even be aware of yet. And that is the freest of acts.

Before this evening is over, we shall have a chance to respond to the hungers, the legitimate and proper needs of our synagogue. It is a hunger we can choose to avoid, to ignore. We don't have to answer this annual appeal. And yet if we do, we strengthen another connection in our lives: an attachment to our history, our faith, our God, and our people, because these are what this place represents.

How does God fit into all of this? He is the center. The source. The ultimate connection.

And He does not force us. We have to seek Him, and go to Him freely.

That is why faith is faith. There is no hard evidence. If there were, we would have no choice, no freedom. We would have to accept Him. We would have to obey.

But He does not come to us in that manner. We are given hints and allusions. The rest is free choice. To connect freely with Him.

Most of the time, we concentrate on satisfying our felt hungers, the obvious, simple hungers. On Yom Kippur we turn away from satisfying them and try to give attention to deeper, more complicated hungers.

As we try to satisfy them freely, and in harmony with our ideals, we become more complete beings.

In the new year which is before us, may our hungers deepen, and our satisfactions.

VIOLENT TRUTH

Rabbi Gerald Zelizer

Our Mahzor admonishes us against the sin of violence, hozek yad. What kind of violence is meant? Murder? Wife beating, child beating? Hardly.

We Jews are a generally pacific group. Few of us engage in those kinds of violence. We may commit other kinds of crimes. But raw violence is not usually one of our sins.

A newspaper report tells us of an estranged husband who returns home with a gun and kills his wife and two children. A popular film depicts a divorced husband who is aggravated by his former wife's cavorting. He returns home in his car with which he demolishes his wife's new tennis court, risking the lives of his own children as he does so.

We are expected to be appalled by the newspaper report. We are expected to applaud the behavior in the film. Poor guy, confused by the reality of his unfaithful wife. The viewer regrets the act of violence, but understands it because a home has been shattered. Raging bulls on behalf of good causes are accepted, tolerated, even respected.

It is not only our sins which are violent. Our virtues, too, are violent, and that is a painful aspect of our lives.

I have in mind the virtue of truth. Our mahzor encourages that too. We confess "the sin which we have committed in telling lies." We are told by all to be truthful. Our religion teaches it. Clergymen demand it. George Washington inspired it. Parents are admonished not to tell white lies lest our children learn bad examples. A nation which suffered through the political lies of Vietnam and Watergate demands truth of its politicians. Many have come to distrust the very word "politician". The youth of that generation demanded absolute truth as a virtue: "let it all hang out!". In the last ten years, we have been flooded with a multitude of articles and books, both popular and intellectual, urging that truth be returned to our collective and individual relationships.

The insistence on truth recently reached a climax in a book, Lying, by Cecilia Bok, a Professor of Medical Ethics at Harvard University. She brilliantly breaks lying into its component parts, with the skill and precision of a diamond cutter. Professor Bok delineates four reasons why good people resort to lying: to avoid harm (denying correct information to a murderer in search of his intended victim); to produce a benefit (such as national security); to maintain fairness (righting an injustice); and to seek out veracity (looking for a higher truth). The thesis of her book is that we have built in lying at all levels of our society to such a degree we have become dependent on it; even worse, it has become self-defeating. For example, President Roosevelt's deceitful pattern in bringing the American people to accept the war was itself used as a precedent to justify President Johnson's acts of dissimulation. Later President Johnson's deeds were pointed to by those who resorted to duplicity in the Nixon administration. Deceit feeds on itself through precedents.

Lying is accepted on other, more personal levels too. A minister spoke to his congregation, "O Brothers and Sisters, the subject of my serman is Liars. How many of you have read the Chapter on that subject in the Book of Proverbs?" Nearly every hand went up. "You are just the people I want to address. No such chapter exists."

Professor Bok presents the thesis that trust is a social good, like air and water. Once pollution has begun, the process is hard to reverse. In politics, many people don't vote because they don't trust; people who feel they are not receiving the facts straight cannot make informed choices. With rare exceptions , such as life-threatening situations, lying should be expunged from our lives. Even white lies are harmful, and in most cases they are unnecessary. We may rationalize them as necessary to protect the feelings of others. More often than not, however, they are meant to shield our own embarrassment. Other alternatives are usually available. For example, when someone gives you a present that you aren't able to use, instead of telling a white lie which claims how useful the gift is, why not simply say thank you for the kindness of the gift? That way you can be polite, while telling the truth.

The emphasis on truth is not limited to the philosophical discussions of medical school professors. In our personal relationships, the pendulum has swung to truth. We call it honesty, candor, frankness. For example, a woman calls her best friend to inform her that her husband was spotted at lunch with an attractive female companion. Or a father, seeing his son home from college after many months, comments first and foremost how tired he looks and how bad his grades were. Or a husband, whose wife has received a promotion requiring the submission of a departmental budget, reminds her that she was never any good at math.

I wonder whether truth in personal relationships does not do more violence than good. Our Rabbis tell us that when God was about to create Adam, the angels were divided into different groups. The angel of love said , "Let man be created, for he will do loving deeds." The angel of truth said "Let him not be created, for he will be all falsehood." What did God do? He cast truth to the ground. The world requires truth, but the world cannot abide for long solely with truth. This applies to the worlds of our professions, as well as the world of our friends,spouses and children.

Ten years ago, literature for physicians and clergymen encouraged sharing the facts of a serious illness with a patient, assuming that patients with a terminal illness would want time to put their houses in order and to psychologically disengage from relationships with loved ones.

I once visited a fifteen year old boy in a New York hospital. His orthopedist had diagnosed a lump in his leg. Nurses taking him to the x-ray room carried his folder on which the word "carcinoma" was written in large letters. His parents were outraged. His physician responded: "We're sitting here worrying about it, aren't we, so why shouldn't he?" Experts had advised him that truth outranks other virtues, including love. That was the accepted wisdom, still urged by Professor Bok, and popularized in our everyday phrases, like "tell it as it is".

Other experts are beginning to advise us differently, however. Dr. Arnold Roman writes in the New England Journal of Medicine: "It is difficult for healthy people to understand the terrors of those in life threatening situations. The sicker the patient, the more they need reassurance, rather than candor." Dumping the truth makes it easier for the clergyman or doctor. By telling the unadorned truth, the physician or clergyman has discharged his duty, prefering that to sharing the search for a more complex solution.

Truth dumping also occurs in our daily routine. Some of us make a point of our truthfulness. Unfortunately, it is too often a point with which to prick another person. When someone tells me " I am a frank,truthful person", I expect an assault. Too often, frankness with acquaintances is an excuse for violence, hozek yad, the acting out of a serious problem by the person who tells the truth, rather than an expression of love and concern for the person to whom the truth is told.

Good table talk thrives on an intricate network of masquerades. The code which used to prevail involved more than the truth. Imagine saying, at a party: "What a ghastly dress you have on," or "This food is inedible." Now, however, with dumping of candor and truth on acquaintances, who knows? Dinner parties may turn into group therapeutic horror stories! One may vainly try to discuss Kafka, the Bible, the breeding of siamese cats or the flooding of Venice. But the truth teller subjects you to tedious details of a partner's digestive, financial and sexual habits. Our party fare becomes glutted with confessions and voyeurism under the guise of openness and frankness! Frankness with acquaintances is an illusion of false freedom. It prevents us from relating in authentic love.

I wonder on Yom Kippur whether the apparent virtue of truth and candor is not often a violent excuse for hostility and agression. I wonder if truthfulness and candor are not a kind of voyeurism, a type of sport while witnessing the dumping of dirty garbage, at seeing another human being trying to cope when confronted with the painful truth. Most painfully, I wonder whether candor is not the discharge of a problem in preference to lovingly assisting another to grow with a problem. We mislead and delude ourselves by saying: "I have been frank, I have told him. Now let him deal with it." Truth overwhelms love.

Popular wisdom has it that friends should speak frankly. "If a friend cannot tell you, who will? Dr. Carl Scherber, Professor of Psychology at Wesleyan University, contradicts that popular wisdom: "To keep a relationship fresh and to preserve its magic, something more than magic is required." He prescribes "elaboration and embroidery of the truth to meet subtle needs." Between friends, the reassurance that "you look wonderful" means more than truth or untruth of the moment. By exagerrating the present, one confirms a larger and more pertinent truth, an expression of faith in the future.

The truth between loved ones, the love of friendship, requires internal editing. Before the birth of Isaac to Sarah and Abraham in their old age, Sarah ridicules her age and that of Abraham. When God repeats Sarah's doubts to Abraham, God omits her reference to Abraham's age. The Talmud states that this ommission of the truth between God and Abraham, two friends, was no accident; the omission was made in order to preserve peace and happiness. Candor was not necessary. Love was.

The most important application of what I am saying involves our families. We dare not hastily dump the truth on those we love most. This is the most violent virtue of all.

I spend much time in pre-marital counselling. My advice is that the security of the formal marital agreement need not diminish the need to be as considerate of the other person as in the time prior to the marriage. It is dangerous when one spouse thinks that the caution and regard which prevailed before the marriage can be discarded because of the formal marriage agreement and the difficulty and expense of exiting from the marriage. "If I don't tell, who will?" A husband dirties the kitchen floor. He cleans it, but poorly. The wife admonishes: "So you tried to clean it again!" It would have been just as easy to say, "How nice of you to clean the floor. There may be a better way." The difference in language for that one day is insignificant.

The difference in language for the rest of the marriage may be critical. One use of language is truthful, but without love. The other embellishes the truth, but with love. There is ample precedent in Judaism for embellishing the truth in marriage. Three exceptions to absolute truth are stated in the Gemara. One involves the marital relationship (See Baba Metzia 23 b-24a).

Most family relationships rely on some reciprocity to sustain illusions, to suppress a memory too painful to confront, to give support where needed. To tell the truth to children and spouses at all times may be to kill the love that is needed. The world out there is cold enough. There is sufficient truth and candor to fill (or kill) our days.

Writer Joan Gould tells of her husband's struggle with cancer, during which they went shopping for gifts and talked of the future. She asks: "Was I lying to him if I let him think his illness was under control?" "Was I pretending if we stopped to have lunch and talked of the future?" Late one night he got a pill from the bathroom, to help him fall asleep. When he returned to bed he left the bathroom light on. When she got up to turn it off, he said, "Please don't. I'll be in the dark long enough."

At this yizkor hour let us repent not only for the lies but for the truths we told our loved ones. Love is also a truth which can blunt the painful point of utter candor and truth. The decision to adopt silence is based on charity and love more sacred than the insistence on violent truth. Some things are better left unsaid.

There is a second requisite essential to a simchah according to Maimonides: He writes: ooche'shehoo ocheyl v'shoteh, chayav l'haakhil lageyr layatom v'lalmanah im shaar ha'aniyim haoomlalim. "When a Jew eats and drinks at his festive meals, he must also provide food for the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, as well as for other deprived people." Furthermore, he adds: "He who locks his doors and eats together with his family only--eyn zo simchat mitzvah elah simchat kreyso--This is not the simchah of a mitzvah; it is a simchah for his own stomach."

How does a Jew celebrate a simchah? He shares his blessings with others who do not possess his means.

I read a story recently about a lady in St. Petersburg, Florida. Nearly eighty years old, she had survived for a long time on her meager widow's pension. She scrimped and saved, often skipping meals, eating less each day because of the rising costs of food. One morning she was found dead in her tiny apartment. She weighed seventy-six pounds. The coroner concluded that the cause of death was "malnutrition." But an elderly friend had another explanation. She said it was: "surrender. She just stopped believing tomorrow would be better."

Maimonides would say to us that as long as there are people who are hungry in your land or in other countries of the world, if you can't bring them to your house, then at least give to organizations like CARE and OXFAM, to help prevent them from dying of hunger.

If you celebrate a Bar Mitzvah or a wedding, and you spend a great deal of money on the meal, the flowers, and the music, then make certain that you also do an act of tzedakah at the same time. That will make it a simchah shel mitzvah. How should a Jew celebrate a simchah? Not only with his own family and friends, but in helping to provide for those who have no friends.

Lest you think that a simchah consists only of eating and drinking, Maimonides makes it clear that such a regimen is inappropriate. He prescribes that in the morning you should go to the Synagogue to pray and listen to the Torah Reading. After lunch at home, you return to the Synagogue to study Torah and pray, before returning home to eat again. The Jewish pattern of holiness includes sustenance for the body and the soul. A simchah has to include worship of God and study of His Torah. Furthermore, in this same pattern of holiness which he describes, even the eating and drinking at the simchah must be done in moderation. Shehashikroot v'haschok harabah, eynah simchah elah holeyloot v'sichloot. "Drunkenness, excessive levity, and irreverence are not a simchah, but can turn the occasion into a sham and a farce."

The Talmud tells a story about the wedding of the son of Mar, son of Ravina. The host saw that the rabbis and the other wedding guests were reaching a point of reckless abandon in their celebration. The only way he could attract their attention was by smashing a precious, expensive crystal cup. Suddenly they all became serious. Then, he reminded them that even at a simchah, a Jew must never lose his tzelem elohim, the image of God that gives him dignity and holiness as a human being.

When you celebrate a simchah in the manner I have described, whether it's a holy day like Sukkot or one of the rites of passage, or whenever you do a mitzvah, then of such a simchah Maimonides says: Hasimchah sheyishmach adam basiyat hamitzvah . . avodah gedolah hee. "When you truly rejoice in the doing of a

HOW TO CELEBRATE A SIMCHAH

Rabbi Samuel Chiel

How do you celebrate a simchah? It is possible to learn a great deal about this from the Festival of Sukkot.

Rejoicing is clearly of the essence in celebrating this Yom Tov. For example, in describing Sukkot, the Torah uses the word simchah three times, more than for any other festival. In our liturgy, we call Sukkot Zman Simchateynoo, the time of our rejoicing.

Some very specific teachings about how to celebrate a Yom Tov as a simchah are presented by Moses Maimonides, in his Mishneh Torah. The first requisite, he declares, is to celebrate with the family. Pay special attention to the children by giving them special snacks and gifts. Provide your wife with new articles of clothing and jewelry, according to what you can afford. Your meals should be especially festive. For a true simchah, your family must celebrate together.

Sukkot gives us some wonderful opportunities to fulfill that precept. We can build a sukkah together. We can help other families to build a sukkah for themselves. We can go "sukkah-hopping" during Chol Hamoed.

This is true not only of Sukkot; it is true for every holy day, including Shabbat. Celebrating with the family gives the day special meaning and special pleasure. The truth is that we need to set aside time for family not only on holy days and Shabbat. A family can flourish and feel like a family only if its members spend some time together each day.

I was saddened to read an article in the Boston Globe recently pointing out that many families no longer eat dinner together. Mary Lyons, for example, works for the Cambridge School Department. She works all day and is exhausted when she comes home. She prepares dinner for her husband and their three sons, who eat their dinners on trays in the den, watching TV. She says she is happy to eat dinner by herself at the kitchen table while she reads the newspaper and relaxes.

Dr. John Szlyk, a psychiatrist at Tufts New England Medical Center, asks those families who do not have dinner together if they do anything together. Do they play together, go shopping together, do they do anything together that will give them an opportunity to communicate?

If they don't, he says: "I have . . . prescribed reinstituting the family dinner hour." Imagine, today you have to be given a prescription to have dinner together! Dr. Szlyk explains why dinner together is so important: "Food is symbolic of nurturance, and the first activity between the infant and the world is eating. Later, the experience can continue to be about giving. The ritual of passing food from person to person, of sharing food and its preparation, can be rich emotionally. People need some emotional feeding at the end of the day. Children, especially, need to feel taken care of. God knows, they have to take care of themselves later."

We need to be together as a family not only for a simchah, but every day, to develop an appreciation for the gift of being part of a family, of people who truly care for each other.

mitzvah, it becomes an exalted form of worship." It is one of the greatest ways to worship God.

Why does this Festival of Sukkot emphasize the importance of simchah so much? As long as we fulfill the mitzvah, what difference does our mood make?

Our tradition understood that when we are sad, we have no room for anything in our hearts but ourselves. All we can think of is our own ailments, problems and troubles. Our obsessive concern with ourselves crowds out the possibility of reaching out to God and to His children.

But when we learn to rejoice in doing a mitzvah, on our holy days, on Shabbat, in our daily lives, then we suddenly find that something miraculous occurs. Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav described it in this way: Ah simchah efent oif dos hartz, "Rejoicing opens up the heart." A simchah opens our hearts to our own families. It inspires us to love them more and to care for them more.

A simchah opens our hearts to those who are friendless and stimulates in us a greater concern for their needs.

A simchah opens our hearts to God Himself. Instead of complaining our way through life, it reminds us to be grateful to Him for His blessings and miracles which are with us each moment.

ON OVERCOMING THE MOOD OF ECCLESIASTES

Rabbi Irwin Groner

A remarkable portion of the Bible is associated with the latter days of the festival of Sukkot: The Book of Koheleth, or Ecclesiastes, a book with unusual themes and emphases. Most of the Bible affirms great truths with enthusiasm and strength, but Koheleth speaks in gentle and cynical tones. Other books of the Bible describe man's spiritual victories, yet this records an odyssey of spiritual defeat in a search for the meaning of life.

It is the story of a young man who starts out with a passionate love of life. To savor life's beauty and zest, he acquires wealth, vast estates and all the pleasures that his affluence can provide. He gratifies every desire and satisfies every impulse. But he soon becomes sated, weary with self-indulgence.

He continues his search out of deep social concern, a sensitivity to justice and compassion. He ventures forth to visit institutions believed to advance human welfare. He goes to the courts, to the marketplaces and to the political centers of his time. But he is disappointed. In his words, "In the place of judgment there is wickedness. In the place of righteousness there is iniquity. Here are the tears of the oppressed with none to comfort them..." He sees corruption in the very nature of things, and he becomes cynical about all human ideals. Instead of loving life, he now abhors it. He is appalled at man's cruelty. He scoffs at man's pretensions to morality, justice and compassion. Each time he renews his quest he is frustrated, because he sees that everything moves in an endless cycle from birth to death, that all hope and desire are shadows with no substance, and he declares, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," Havel havelim,hakol havel. Human striving is pointless and a chasing after wind.

Why does the Bible include a book describing man's disillusionment,cynicism and despair? The Talmud records a debate between the Sages about the Book of Koheleth. Some Rabbis wanted to suppress it. It would be wiser, they believed, if this book were not given public distribution and official sanction, because of its pessimism and cynicism, because it contains many verses that bespeak the futility of human action. But the Sages who approved of Koheleth prevailed.

I believe that the Bible includes Koheleth because this book expresses a recurring insight into the human condition. There are times when even a man of faith is overcome by doubt and disillusionment. There are times when even the most idealistic person looks upon the world with cynicism. All of us have seen that the race is not always to the swift, that the battle is not always to the brave. We all have moments when our belief in God and in man falters. We all know people leading exemplary lives who endure pain and distress. Truth is often on the scaffold, and wrong is often enthroned.

Who among us has not known a time when he wanted to cry out, with the prophets of old: "O Lord, how long?" Who among us has not known ambitions thwarted, hopes unrealized, or visions frustrated? What man or woman in mature years has not echoed, at some time, the sentiments of Koheleth: Havel, havilim, hakol havel. "It is all futile; it is all a chasing after the wind." Thus do weariness and defeat come upon us as we experience moods of skepticism and doubt.

I believe that the Jewish tradition sought to address this aspect of our lives by preserving Koheleth for us. This book suggests that disillusionment and denial are woven into the texture of human existence (and therefore require expression in the Bible.) They can be found in those who practice the religious way of life. They can be found among those who attend synagogues and devote themselves to religious worship and service. Even the person of faith whose lips offer praise to God in the sacred words of the tradition in daily prayer experiences times when he encounters the mystery of God's judgment that goes beyond human understanding. Why do the innocent suffer? Why do the wicked prosper? Why is the world so far from redemption? To believe, to have faith, means to have moments of doubt and denial.

This mood enters family relationships, even the most happy and felicitous of marriages. There are times when conflict erupts, hostility is expressed, words of anger are hurled like weapons. In those dark moments, a spirit of disenchantment or estrangement possesses a couple who may have known years of happiness. Suddenly, destructive questions come to their minds about the wisdom and permanence of their marriage.

This process occurs in other areas of life. I think of writers, educators, clergy, communal leaders. Generally they have confidence in their work, they affirm the significance of their cause, they dedicate themselves to their ideals. And then something happens.. an act of betrayal, a violation of trust, a callous disregard for their devoted effort... and a mood of despair seizes the heart. One shrugs one's shoulders and says, in the words of Koheleth: Havel havalim, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The work is of no avail, the effort is futile, the goal will never be realized.

This mood affects our lives, shapes our attitudes, and extinguishes the flame of ideals. It is remarkable to note that the Jewish tradition designated the Book of Ecclesiastes to be read just a few days after Yom Kippur. On that sacred day of the Jewish calendar, we listened as the cantor and the congregation recited together: Ut'shuvah ut'fillah u'tzedakah, "prayer, good deeds, and repentance will bring spiritual redemption to life." Today we read a book that says everything is vanity and chasing after wind.

How do we reconcile these dissonant voices? We do so by recognizing that Judaism is a mature religion. Judaism teaches us that the mood of cynicism is universal, that even the greatest saints and prophets have known it. The same Jeremiah who was a passionate spokesman of God turns to the Eternal One and says to Him: "Will You be unto me as a deceitful brook?" The psalmist who said, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," states elsewhere, "Why, O Lord, do You hide Your face from me?"

The same Rabbinic tradition that speaks about the fulfillment of God's justice also states in another text, "There is no judge; there is no justice," Let din v'let dayan.

Why does the tradition include these contradictory texts? Because once we find them, our tension is eased, our confidence is restored. We, too, share in these feelings that even the most revered saints and sages have known. The great spiritual leader is not one who has never doubted, but one who trusted his better self, who has clung to his higher vision, even in the midst of doubts, even in the presence of despair.

Having grasped the first lesson, we can recognize the second. Do not let a dark mood become the philosophy of your life. Koheleth is only a small part of a very large collection of books. Do not let a mood of denial become an attitude. Do not make it your faith. Do not let it shape your life's outlook. Do not let the disillusionment of the hour become the structure out of which you build your world. If someone has betrayed you, do not say that all people are treacherous. If you suffer disappointment, do not conclude that all of life is tragic. If you have been hurt by someone close to you, do not disregard all the affection and joy and devotion that you have received. Moods come and moods go, but faith and trust and affirmation of your ideals should be the deeper motivation of your character.

What should we do when the mood of despair, pessimism and gloom comes over us? A person in the midst of such a mood should say to himself, " I am not going to remain at this emotional level forever. Next week I will feel differently. Today I feel that my work is not worthwhile, that all my beliefs are delusions, that the world is falling apart. But, in the midst of my depression, I know that tomorrow or next week will be different. The mood will pass, and the sun will shine again. Today I frown with good reason. Tomorrow, with an equally good reason, I shall smile again."

We need to say this to ourselves periodically. Otherwise, we become prisoners of those episodes in human life which have the capacity to weaken and enervate our spirits.

A third step is required. If you want the mood to pass, and if you seek renewed faith, change the circumstances which brought about the discouragement and the depression. Examine those arrangements and relationships in your personal or professional life that may have led to these episodes of sadness and pain.

If we are discouraged about Jewish life, this should inspire us to work harder for change and progress. Are we in despair about the survival of Jewish life and the Jewish tradition? Then let us seek to assure that survival, with greater and more zealous effort for those institutions through which the Jewish spirit will be renewed.

Are we concerned about peace in the world? Then let us strive for its realization and use our resources to bring us closer to that ideal.

Do we have moments when we question our faith in God and man? Then let us act in such a way as to confirm the strength, vitality and power of such faith.

Koheleth showed wisdom because he expressed the mood that people have recurrently felt. The world does evoke in us frustration, disappointment and disillusionment. But Koheleth was not wise when he allowed his mood to become his philosophy. When such moods come upon us, we must deepen our trust, enlarge our vision and strengthen our will. We must act upon ourselves and upon our world. In so doing, we shall discover that our lives have been enriched by confidence, hope and restored faith.

כנסת הרבנים

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY

3080 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10027

212 RIVERSIDE 9-8000

Cable Address: RABBISEM, New York

November 8, 1982

Dear Colleague,

We are pleased to enclose our sermonic suggestions for the book of Shemot. We hope that you will find them useful in your work. Included in this mailing is a selection of sermons originally published in the London Jewish Chronicle, selected by Rabbi Matthew Simon, as well as contributions by Rabbis Jules Harlow, Philip Pohl, Howard Hoffman, Henry Sosland, Jack Moline and Alan Silverstein. We are also including a brief bibliography suggested by Rabbi Stephen Garfinkel, as well as a bibliography on revelation prepared by students of Rabbi Neil Gillman.

We would like to invite both your participation in our venture, and your reaction to the material that you have received. Do you use the sermons that are sent out? Do you have any suggestions for including other kinds of material that would be useful in the preparation of sermons? Are the bibliographies helpful?

We are very much in need of material for Vayikra and Bemidbar. While most of us are not able to plan our sermons that far in advance, many of us have preached sermons in previous years that could prove valuable to colleagues. Please, look through your files, and send your sermons to us as soon as possible. We would again ask that you submit only those sermons that can be adapted for use by others. We have not been able to include a number of excellent sermons because they were too personal, and would therefore be of very limited usefulness.

The suggestion has been made that we send out our homiletics mailings only to those rabbis now serving in pulpits. We are anxious to hear from those who are not serving in congregations. Do you read the homiletics mailings? Do you make use of them? Would you like to continue receiving them?

Material for Vayikra should be submitted by the beginning of February. You are also invited to submit material for Pesaḥ. After all, with Ḥanukhah just around the corner, can Pesaḥ be far behind?

Sincerely,

Kenneth E. Berger
Chairman, Homiletics Service

Akiba Lubow
Program Coordinator

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY Rabbi Stephen Garfinkel

The following brief list is offered in addition to the standard reference works (e.g., The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (and Supplementary Volume), Encyclopedia Judaica, "Exodus, Route of the" and "Exodus, Book of"), and traditional mefarshim.

Cassuto, U. A Commentary on the Book of Exodus. trans. Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1967.

Childs, Brevard S. The Book of Exodus: A Critical and Theological Commentary. (The Old Testamen Library) Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974.

_____. Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979. (Treats each book in its "canonical context", reviewing basic issues in the literature. Includes bibliography. Exodus treated pp. 161-179.)

Greenberg, Moshe. Understanding Exodus. New York: Behrman House, Inc. for the Melton Research Center of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1969. (Uses both modern and traditional approaches.)

Leibowitz, Nehama. Studies in Shemot in the Context of Ancient and Modern Jewish Bible Commentary. trans. Aryeh Newman. Jerusalem: The World Zionist Organization, 1976. (Mostly "ancient"; the "modern" is non-critical.)

Bibliography

Levine, Moshe. The Tabernacle: Its Structure and Utensils. Tel Aviv: "Melechet Hamishkan" for The Soncino Press Limited, 1969. (If the Tabernacle existed, this gives an ornate view of its appearance and construction; useful for Exodus 25-30; 35-40.)

Noth, Martin. Exodus: A Commentary (The Old Testament Library) trans. J.S. Dowden. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962. (Deals with documentary inconsistencies and critical issues.)

Plaut, W. Gunther, ed. The Torah: A Modern Commentary. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. (Often Reform apologetic, but does provide wide range of explanation and comment. Exodus treated pp. 363-730.)

A Note to Colleagues

My training to become a rabbi began at my parents' table. One lesson was taught very early -- it was an understanding that rabbis must be each other's best friends. Regardless of tensions, conflicts or personal struggles, a rabbi should feel that in the fellowship of his calling he can rely upon his colleagues for wisdom, understanding and strength.

This is surely true in the way we voluntarily exchange ideas, thoughts, and material with each other.

When I returned from active duty as a chaplain with the U. S. Navy, I attended my first RA convention, as a member, in 1961. Rabbi Wolfe Kelman had arranged for a representative of the London Jewish Chronicle to be present selling subscriptions. I was delightfully surprised to discover within the London Jewish Chronicle not merely articles and reviews of Jewish importance not found in any other publication, but a weekly sermon for Shabbat. I began to clip and file those I most enjoyed. Suddenly in 1967 the sermons disappeared from the pages of the Jewish Chronicle.

Many have downgraded sermons as a source of teaching and inspiration. I disagree. The sermon is a unique teaching device. It not only imparts a lesson but also a professed value. If my parents' table was my first classroom, my father's sanctuary was the synagogue where I learned to appreciate the well-crafted sermon, the choice word, the inspirational moment, and a co-mingling of heart and mind of rabbi and congregation.

The sermons of the London Jewish Chronicle are in this mold. Each is anonymous, yet behind anonymity one can feel the power of the author, the force of his conviction, and a word that endures beyond one's reading.

These selections are personal but at least one has been chosen for each portion of Shemot.

Rabbi Matthew H. Simon

6301 MONTROSE ROAD · ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20852 · 301 881-6550

Shemot

The London Jewish Chronicle

N A M E S T H A T E N D U R E

When we commence reading the Second Book of the Bible we set a new train of thought into motion. Its central feature is the description of Israel's redemption from Egypt and this has given it its name - Exodus. Very different indeed is this English version from the Hebrew title - Shemot.

The book opens with a list of the names of the sons of Jacob who arrived in Egypt. Such a detail would indicate the opening of a great saga. Indeed, this was the beginning of an epoch which was to have world-shattering consequences. To recall the names of those who were first involved would indicate the need to be mindful of origins. This so often escapes our attention.

Reciting the names also draws attention to the fact that the children of Jacob came into Egypt as family units. "Each man and his household did they come," says the text. They lived in accordance with family tradition. They settled in this foreign land in family groups and when they finally left Egypt to travel through the desert their encampments followed the same pattern.

In their final resettlement in Canaan the same principle applied. The family meant much to them and according to Rabbinic tradition this was one of their redeeming virtues - "They did not change their family names." The name spelt a family tradition, an individual history, a tribal record.

Equally significant is the idea reflected in the Midrashic comment which cites in its support the words of Ecclesiastes, "A good name is better than the finest oil." The name is synonymous with reputation. The Israelites entered Egypt with a good reputation. It was not their fault that subsequent generations did not appreciate its worth. But on their departure the Israelites conveyed the remains of Joseph, the creator of their fame, with them. A true indication of their consciousness of the value of a "good name."

The fact that we so often wish to perpetuate the name of our forbears, especially their Hebrew names, is characteristic of the Jewish evaluation of a worthy name. We may change our outward labels, but not the inner quality which is associated with our Jewishness. This is truly symbolized in the retention of the Hebrew Shemot while at the same time adopting the English "Exodus."

Thus three qualities - consciousness of origins and awareness of future prospects, the perpetuation of the family group, and the preservation of the name - form an indissoluble whole. Their true value is perhaps best appreciated when they are examined in reverse order.

By this clinging to the name which helps to preserve the quality of our reputation, we strengthen the ties which bind the family into a unified group. Thereby we ensure our awareness of the historic past and contribute to the strengthening of the foundations on which the future can be constructed.

Vaera

The London Jewish Chronicle

D I V I N E A T T R I B U T E S

GOD SPOKE TO MOSES AND SAID TO HIM, "I AM THE LORD; I APPEARED TO ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB AS EL SHADDAI, BUT BY MY NAME YHWH WAS I NOT KNOWN TO THEM." (Exodus 6: 2-3.)

The opening verses of this week's Sidra represent God's reply to Moses when the latter complained after his first mission to Pharaoh ended in failure. In our text God's name is submitted in two forms, and each one points to a different aspect of the Divine nature.

Ancient Jewish teachers understood that the different names of God express a different aspect of His power and attributes. Thus, Elohim is used to indicate God in His attribute of creativeness and power, Shaddai best connotes God's oneness, while YHWH is used chiefly to describe the Divine justice, mercy and immanence.

The subject of God's attributes was a difficult problem to the Jewish philosophers, who were afraid that such descriptions are necessarily attended by physical characteristics which, of course, cannot be ascribed to God.

On the other hand, God has to be described in terms readily understood by men. Our religious literature describes God as "The God of Abraham. the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob," if to stress that each one of them had to find and experience God in his own way. And the way of each of us is different.

For the writer of Psalm 23, God is like a shepherd exercising loving care over each of his creatures. For Isaiah, He is the transcendent supernatural power. To Amos, God is the uncompromising source of strict righteousness. To a Hosea, God is love and compassion. "The voice of the Law is in strength," declares the psalmist; on which a rabbi comments,"according to the different strength or capacity of every man" so shall God be envisioned.

Zechariah, one of the last prophets, holds aloft the great hope that in the Messianic age human knowledge and wisdom will have developed to such an ideal that all mankind will come to recognize the truth of the One God.

In that day shall the Lord be One and His Name One."

Vaera

The London Jewish Chronicle

THE POWER OF WORDS

GO IN AND SPEAK TO PHARAOH KING OF EGYPT
(Exodus 6:11.)

A strange fascination is to be found in the charge which Moses received at so early a stage in his career. He was to address himself to Pharaoh and his approach was to have a two-fold purpose. He was to attempt to convince him of the existence of God and to persuade him to release the captive Israelites. The former involved the necessity to impress him with an idea; the latter to translate that idea into a positive act. This difficult mission was to be achieved by speaking to Pharaoh, and only when the power of words failed was some tangible proof to be given that the mission was genuine.

As one reads this passage attention is invariably riveted on the epic of plagues. It is as though the final outcome was more important than the initial approach . In so doing we overlook an important feature of the narrative and its deeper implication. Stress is laid on the importance of the spoken word. It was the first lesson which Moses had to learn.

This experience was not unique to Moses; the prophets shared it, too. They relied on the power of words. In their addresses they appealed for loyalty, decent behavior, justice and social morality. How often did they find their words ignored. They, too, could not penetrate the "hardened hearts" of their audiences. And when words failed they, too, had to use a symbolic medium, such as donning sackcloth, or carrying a yoke of walking barefoot; or performing some act bordering on the miraculous in order to offer visible portrayal of their intent.

This is the hardest task which teachers of religion have to undertake. Indeed, it is a heartrending experience to speak, appeal, plead, argue or present a case, knowing that one's words may make little impression. Yet this is the highest, most refined and most enlightened form of communication. It is true that religion requires concrete expression, the outward symbols, the ritual object and the appeal to sight and touch. Judaism certainly clothes itself in visible and tangible form, but without the application of the mind to the use of the ritual object, and without the emotions of the heart which infuse warmth and love into the act, the performance becomes meaningless.

We are thus forced to the realization that we stand in need of the power of words, the message of conviction, the appeal to reason and the call to deeper emotion. Our ceremonies, rich in content, must be explained, the meaning of Judaism and its permanent relevance must be presented in words. Indeed it would be well to remember that the Torah itself was presented in this very form. "These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" forms the introduction to the Ten Commandments.

We have only to permit ourselves to be attuned to them to realize that the spoken message contains an eternally valid truth. And to hear will be to obey.

Bo

The London Jewish Chronicle

A G E A N D Y O U T H

When Moses gave his immortal answer to Pharaoh, "We will go with our young and with our old," he spoke not only to the contemporary king of Egypt, but to all men in all generations throughout the world. National survival, cultural continuity, the transmission of a religious tradition of a spiritual heritage is possible only on the basis of the unity of the ages, the solidarity in outlook and resolve of both young and old.

Notwithstanding its inherent magnificence, the Mosiac dictum bristles with difficulties. Can age and youth ever bridge the historic gap between them? In truth complete identity is impossible. It is the creator's will that each generation should occupy a different stage in the ever-unfolding panorama of human evolution.

Otherwise there would be no mending process of death and birth; one generation would suffice. The fossilized type of mind, which seeks to re-create dead worlds, is actually flying in the face of Providence.

Even more foolish and dangerous is the superstition held in certain other quarters that the inexperience of youth is to be equated with ultimate wisdom; or the belief that history marches in a straight line, without any reactionary regressions.

Neither age nor youth has a monopoly of truth. But there are periods when the generations become integrated by a single, invincible purpose. At such times, the nation or the race or the religious community reaches new heights of understanding and achievement.

This is because the only factor that can enable the old and the young to strive in unison is a cause rooted in eternal values, values that transcend chronological time, values that belong to all generations. Freedom, justice and faith in God are such values. Hence Moses could proclaim with prophetic conviction that young and old would participate in the Exodus.

Our great Lawgiver's imperishable statement also contains the key to Jewish education. Judaism is a tradition that must be transmitted from generation to generation, if the Jewish people is to live. But to be effective, this heritage must be bequeathed in depth; a mere skimming of the ceremonial surface, or a superficial type of education, will not give us heroic heirs but only assimilationist quislings.

Above all, we must inculcate in our children the abiding truths of Judaism that belong to all the ages. Given these, our youth will not shirk the sacrifices essential to Jewish survival. They many not honor a half-hearted faith based on meaningless rituals; but for the Torah's sublime teachings our youth in the future, as in the past, will give their all, their very lives.

The great tragedy of the modern diaspora is that all too often we transmit too little, to too few, of the traditions that have only minor value. But if we make our religious education the channel for Israel's eternal truths, we shall once again be able to declare with Mosaic certitude: " We will go with our young and with our old."

Bo

The London Jewish Chronicle

H O M E L I G H T

ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAD LIGHT IN THEIR DWELLINGS. (Exodus 10:23).

Nowhere is the true inwardness of Judaism more beautifully or succinctly expressed than in our text. Light was the watchword of Judaism in Egypt and has been ever since. And because the Jewish home in all generations has been the seed-bed of Judaism, it is there that this light of Jewish life is particularly to be discerned. What is the nature of this spiritual effulgence?

First, it is the light of faith. The true Jewish home is more than a dwelling; it is a sanctuary. It is replete with Jewish tradition, prayer and ceremonial symbolism that radiate the Divine in Life, that proclaim Providence, that tell of God's love for man. In doing all this it endows the family bond with incomparable strength. Tender devotion traditionally has hallowed the relationship between husband and wife, between parents and children.

Today, unhappily, Jewish homes do not always retain this image. They lack strength; they collapse so easily. The incidence of divorce and intermarriage is growing alarmingly.

The primary sufferers, needless to say, are the children. And the reason for this deterioration? Not all the analyses of all the statistics of all the world's social workers and marriage counselors can alter the simple, irrefutable truth that where spiritual values are desecrated human relations also become defiled.

A distinguishing characteristic of the historical Jewish home was its culture. Bible and Talmud and Midrash formed the basic library of every literate Jew. Even if education sometimes lacked breadth, it always had depth. It was founded on Hebraic ideals; it was oriented towards the Kingdom of Heaven; it was imbued with a sacred optimism, which made the millennium a challenge to personal improvement.

There are homes occupied by Jews today that are devoid of the Torah. Not a Hebrew book may be found there; not a Bible, even in translation, tempers the barren ignorance prevailing there. These are dark homes, where even the ghosts of memories no longer walk. They are seed-beds of Jewish decay.

The Jewish home was always warmed by the Jewish heart. In the light of faith the Jew saw the image of God in man. The old virtues of humanity, charity and compassion are unfortunately giving way to self-seeking materialism, hedonism and avarice. Some Jewish hearts are becoming pharaonically hard.

Our Judaism faces many problems today. In the maelstrom of issues, the greatest issue of all - the Jewish Home - tends to be overlooked. Conceivably Jewry can continue to live without many things, but not without homes ablaze with Hebrew light and Jewish faith."

The London Jewish Chronicle

A S Y M B O L O F F A I T H

AND MOSES SAID UNTO AARON: TAKE A JAR AND PUT AN OMERFUL OF MANNA THEREIN, AND LAY IT UP BEFORE THE LORD, TO BE KEPT THROUGHOUT YOUR GENERATIONS (Exodus 16: 33).

Here we have the birth of the museum as a national institution. Modern museums exhibit articles which were in use in former ages and are of special interest to the antiquarian because they are illustrative of the past. The jar of manna which was to be placed before the Ark of the Lord would not only tell of early history but was also to be a moral lesson for future generations.

Why a jar of manna, and not a wheel of a chariot that told of Pharaoh's defeat, as a witness and a record for this museum of Israel? Why should the museum be on such a simple and homely plane, speaking on such a mundane theme as food, when it could have reflected the grandeur of the scene of conquest where God frustrated the aims of the oppressor?

The jar of manna was to be a lesson on faith for all time. The wheel of Pharaoh's chariot could only speak of the dramatic manifestation of God's power which is called Providence. The phial of manna pointed to the incessant care, but oft unnoticed because of its regularity, that God has for humanity.

The Midrash gives more than a fanciful comment on the words in this week's Sidra. "And Moses caused Israel to journey from the Red Sea," when it declares: "Moses had to compel Israel to move." The fascination for the place was due to their realization that at the Red Sea it was easy to believe: Here they had all the ingredients for faith. The spectacular presentation of God's power was the finest incentive for faith. By moving them from the Red Sea, Moses wished to disabuse Israel of this erroneous conception of faith.

At Sinai the "thunder and the lightning" and the majesty of the scene of the Revelation kept them rooted to the place where the great Commandments were given. The power of God was on so immense a scale that they were sure they could believe at Sinai. Moses took them from the sacred scene of Sinai into the depths of the desert, where they were taught that, in the provision of the necessities of life amid the rigours of their surroundings, the acts of Providence need not be accompanied by the pretentious display of might. Nature, the handiwork of God, which works constantly and silently for the sustenance of mankind, shows forth in greater measure the infinite power of the Creator.

The trend in the modern world is to seek more and more affluence. Does affluence make for better character? Are we finer because of our affluent society? Better living conditions are our challenge. The phial of manna calls to us from the past - our food, our means, our livelihood can either reflect our degeneration or our faith. Our destiny depends on the course we take. Our Rabbis tell us the Messianic Age will be heralded by the establishment of the jar of manna as one of the most precious possessions in Israel's treasury.

Yitro

The London Jewish Chronicle

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Gabriel Marcel, of the French school of religious existentialists, once said of faith that it was a state not of "having" but of "being". He meant that faith was not merely an exercise of the will or intellect, but that it represented a man's total engagement or commitment. In the same way we may say that Judaism, too, is not concerned only with belief; it is not simply the acceptance of a credo or a set of dogmas. It has to do with action, and must express itself in every-day life.

The Ten Commandments, which form the central portion of this weeks's scriptural reading, emphasize this very teaching. They were written on two tablets of stone. The first four Commandments govern the relationship between man and God; the second set of five regulate the relationship of man to man and define his place in society; while the fifth Commandment (to honor one's parents) forms a bridge between the two, for, as some of the commentators point out, parents are partners with God in creation.

The first Commandment is the acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven. Idolatry, taking God's name in vain, and violating the Sabbath - these are all degrees of a denial of God, and directly involve religious belief. The five Commandments on the second tablet, on the other hand, appeal more obviously to man's own reason and intellect, for these are the moral foundations of an enduring social order.

Many people think,mistakenly, that the moral laws are sufficient in themselves in our sophisticated modern world. Judaism insists that moral laws are sure and reliable only if they flow from, and are based upon, a Divine sanction.

On the other hand, faith itself, if it does not lead to right doing, is never enough. "Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord?" - asks the Psalmist. "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." Faith without action tends to be mere empty lip-service ; something to be prated and prattled about in synagogue or church without imposing any sense of obligation. It is such self-centered hypocrisy that is at the root of so much misery in our world.

"Let me walk before the Lord in the lands of the living," declares the Psalmist; and this means, according to the Talmud, not only in the House of God, or while engaged in prayer or study, but in the market-places. In one's common, everyday tasks and relationships - as seller or buyer, master or servant, employer or employee - in all of these situations one must act with the consciousness of being in the presence of the Lord.

The London Jewish Chronicle

T H E L A W S O F L I F E

AND THESE ARE THE ORDINANCES WHICH THOU SHALT SET BEFORE THEM (Exodus 21:1)

This brief verse introducing a code of civil law formed the subject of unique Rabbinic comment. The Midrashic interpreters recognized that the first word serves as a conjunction, joining the code which was to follow with the preceding text. The previous chapter contains the Ten Commandments, the fundamental laws and principles of Judaism, uniquely revealed at Sinai. Hence, they argued, this civil code must be regarded as a continuity of that which precedes it and must also be accepted as having emanated from the same source.

Literary critics may disregard such comments, but its underlying purpose has a profound and permanent value which must make an immediate appeal to all those concerned with humanity's well-being. The civil code referred to in this text is entitled Mishpat, which literally means Justice. The purpose, therefore, of Rabbinic comment was to emphasise that the concept of justice as taught by Judaism has its rules and origin in Divine teaching.

The establishment of a healthy society demands that justice be regarded as a pre-requisite of its foundation. Justice is best served when the code of civil law is honored both by those who administer it and by those who should live by it. Justice reflects the love of one's neighbor and translates an abstract concept into a concrete reality.

When Jewish teaching emphasizes the importance of justice in human relationships, it affirms the belief presented so poetically by the Psalmist that righteousness and justice are the foundations of the Divine throne, for love, justice and righteousness are but varying facets of the same concept. When they are honored and practiced in the certain knowledge that they are God's gifts to humanity, mankind will recognize where it has erred and will seek the means to correct its tragic mistakes.

The second Midrashic comment on this verse draws attention to the expression, "Thou shalt set before them." The contents of these Mishpatim are not merely to be transmitted or incorporated in a code of law; they are to be placed clearly before the public, constantly rehearsed, repeatedly taught, or as the Midrash puts it, explained and expounded as a teacher conveys his lessons to his pupils. These regulations governing the healthy conduct of society demand more than lip-service which can so easily lead to evasion.

The contemporary situation may be somewhat different for Jewry, but the requirements of a healthy and stable society have not materially altered. The ancient message is still valid; for love, justice and righteousness still make their appeal to sensitive souls who suffer because of their absence and, in some instances, because of their denial.

Mishpatim

The London Jewish Chronicle

D I V I N E J U D G M E N T S

At the beginning of this century a great stir was made in theological thinking by the discovery, at Susa (the ancient Shushan), of the Code of Hammurabi, who was king of Babylon about 1700 B.C.E. In view of its seeming superficial similarities with the Torah legislation, and because of its antiquity, this Code was at first thought by some scholars to have been the source that had influenced the laws of Moses.

Yet there is no historical evidence that the Canaanites of ancient Palestine knew or accepted the Hammurabi Code; and the similarities between the Code and the Torah are now thought to stem from the fact that the two systems were set in a culture background common to both. On the other hand, the differences between the two are recognized to be basic and unbridgeable. For while the Hammurabi Code is, in fact, a codification, in large measure, of law and custom as it existed at that time, with the purely secular authority of the king, the Torah reflects the will of God throughout all its laws, ritual and secular, and sets down new and even revolutionary standards in the relationship both between man and God, and between man and man.

Of special interest in this connection are the Torah laws about the humane treatment of slaves, who were always to be regarded as persons with human rights. Our Sidra lays down the first principle that the slave is in any case to go free after six years' service. If, however, the man, of his own volition, chose to remain in slavery rather than take his place as a free man, saying: "I love my master..." then, having made his declaration before judges, he was to be taken tothe door-post of the house, where all who pass by might see, and his ear was to be pierced with an awl, so that he would bear for all time the mark of his voluntary enslavement. And even this poor creature, according to rabbinic interpretation, was forced to accept his freedom when the Jubilee Year arrived. Slavery was to be regarded as an inferior status, in opposition to the will of God who had proclaimed the ideal of freedom. Thus, discussing the question of why the ear was selected for this branding, the rabbis explain: "This ear which heard Me proclaim on Mount Sinai 'For unto Me the Children of Israel are servants,' and yet its owner went and procured another master - let it be pierced! "

What a different attitude is revealed in the Hammurabi Code! There the master's ownership of the slave was complete. The name was tattooed on the slave's arm to ensure that he would not run away; if he succeeded in running away he was returnable, and a reward payable to the captor. Hammurabi gave formal enactment to the accepted norms and customs of that society; the Torah sought to revolutionize those ways on the basis of a spirit of justice and freedom, laying down the pattern for the future Israel that would establish itself in time to come on the religious foundation of Sinai. The one is man's handiwork; the other bears the mark of the Divine.

The London Jewish Chronicle

T R U T H I N T H E H E A R T

KEEP THEE FAR FROM A FALSE MATTER (Exodus 23,7.)

In these few words, three in the Hebrew text, the Torah first enunciates the principle of truthfulness. It is a theme to which the Bible and rabbinic literature frequently return, for the good reason that there are few virtues which are more demonstrably essential for the health and well-being of society than this.

The value of truth is universally acclaimed. We recognize that without it there can be no trust, and without trust there can be no real friendship, no exchange of confidence, no security in business relationships, no faith in leaders. Without truth we have to be constantly on guard, always insecure in our human relationships.

Yet, with all the lip-service to truth, there seems to be in many men what Bacon called "a natural though corrupt love of the lie itself"; and by " the lie itself" one may assume that he meant, not just outright falsehood, but the many varieties of near-lying to which men can be addicted. " A mixture of a lie," he continues, "doth ever add pleasure. If there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, it would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves."

Human ingenuity in the art of equivocation can be endless. There is the half-truth, where one not only misleads others, but gives oneself undeserved credit for truthfulness. For the half-truth is also half-lie and therefore no truth at all.

There is double-talk, in which words are deliberately used ambiguously to convey a meaning which, when challenged, can plausibly be disclaimed. And there is, in the Psalmist's vivid phrase, the " double-heart "of profession unmatched by conviction, of flattery and favor-seeking, and more subtle still, of "the truth that's told with bad intent."

The list goes on. There is deception by deliberate exaggeration and distortion by misleading emphasis. There are the specious devices of incomplete quotation and quotation out of context. And vocal intonation or facial expression can themselves change truth to falsehood. It was not just out of native pessism that Jeremiah exclaimed: "The heart is deceitful above all things; who can know it?"

The gift of the power of communication by speech is one of the distinctive privileges of mankind. It is therefore sad to reflect that this most precious of powers is also the one most frequently abused, and not always for advantage - often it is because of the love of the lie or because dissimulation has become second nature. "The truth is heavy, therefore its bearers are few," says the Midrash. But those who accept its burden are among God's gentlemen, of whom the Psalmist says that they speak the truth in their hearts.

The London Jewish Chronicle

S A N C T U A R Y A N D S Y N A G O G U E

The chapters of the Torah read on the next few Sabbaths deal chiefly with the construction of the Tabernacle and its furniture.

In terms of religious objective what was the function of the Tabernacle?

One thing is clear; it was not to serve chiefly as a sacred shrine for Divine worship. God's presence cannot be restricted to a particular building, nor need the worship of God be confined to a unique place.

"The whole earth is filled with His glory." When Jewish law subsequently made it clear that a religious service can be held in any clean place, it merely codified what was implicit in Jewish thought and attitudes from an early period.

Then why a Tabernacle? We miss the purpose of the entire institution of Tabernacle and Temple unless we understand that it was erected to consolidate the people. The Tabernacle in the wilderness united the tribes of Israel around its focal point. Subsequently, the Temple in Jerusalem was intended to fulfil the same objective. The purpose was communal or national at least as much as it was purely sacerdotal.

This is likewise true of the synagogue, and it is a statement whose truth is proved by history. The Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Ten Tribes were destroyed and lost. A century-and-a-half later the Southern Kingdom of Judah was vanquished and a large part of the population fled or was taken captive.

But Judah survived. There were, of course, many differences in the immediate conditions of both kingdoms, but one of the most important and history-making differences was that the captives from Judah developed the institution of the synagogue.

This created a focal point which gathered together and strengthened all the survivalist powers of a captive people. If we inquire what kept the Jews alive during their captivity the answer has a great deal to do with the synagogue.

Similarly, the synagogue as a centre and reservoir of Jewish communal activity and aspirations was the saving force for Jews in the Dark Middle Ages. That the prayers of the Jew are voiced mainly in the plural is not only an illustration of the special character of the Prayer book; it is a reflection of the work of the synagogue as a unifying force.

Does it still give us all roots in the community with a feeling of belonging to it? Does it enter into the whole area of our life and thought to raise it to the highest possible levels of cultural and spiritual achievement? Does it serve as a unifying force in the life of the entire community so that any Jew influenced by the synagogue lives as a member of a brotherhood?

Few will fail to recognize that there is a great deal to be done to transform our modern synagogues into patterns of the ideal sanctuary.

Terumah

The London Jewish Chronicle

T H E D I V I N E P R E S E N C E

The beautiful story is told of the famous chassidic rabbi, Mendel of Kotzk, that he asked his disciples, "Where is God to be found?" They looked at him in utter astonishment, and answered, "But surely He is to be found everywhere: Scripture tells us, 'The whole world is full of His glory'; and we say 'There is no place void of Him." But the rabbi sadly shook his head and said, "No: He is to be found wheresoever one opens the door and lets Him in."

This week's Sidra introduces the elaborate and exhaustive details of the injunction given to the children of Israel to erect in the wilderness a movable sanctuary which should accompany them in their wanderings. The command, and the details of its fulfillment, together with the account of its dedication, constitute a very lengthy narrative.

Yet the purpose for which this sanctuary was to be set up is expressed in five short Hebrew words, translated, "And they shall make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst" (25:8). And of these five words there is one which is of supreme importance, whose profound lesson we do well to take to heart. As the rabbis point out, it does not say, "And I will dwell in its midst," but "In their midst."

How often, and with what tragic results to our spiritual life and the in-dwelling of God in man, do we, in practice if not in words, overlook that fact and act as though indeed it said, "And I will dwell in its midst."

Even if we know it is true that God is to be found in the synagogue, we tend to confine Him only to it. There we go to pray and establish communion with Him, and there we leave Him when we emerge from its portals.

Not thus did Scripture envisage the role of the central place of worship. If it is invested with a special sanctity, it is only because it constitutes the spiritual powerhouse where we are expected to recharge the run-down batteries of the spirit, and take them with us into our daily lives.

It is to the extent that we succeed in enlarging the area of the sovereignty of God from "Its Midst" to "Their Midst" that our religious loyalties acquire meaning and purpose. Whether that "Midst" is "The Midst of Thy camp," where "The Lord Thy God walketh, therefore, shall Thy camp be holy"; whether it be the Midst of one's home, creating that atmosphere that makes it a habitation for Him; whether it be in the midst of one's business or in one's social relations, unless the spirit of God comes in Medias Res, we fail to live up to those standards of conduct enjoined upon us.

That is the profound meaning of the sage comment of the Chassidic Rabbi. By our own thoughts and words and actions we shut the doors of our hearts and our homes and our businesses against Him, and He is not to be found there; or we open the door and let Him in, for the ennobling of our lives and the spiritualization of our beings.

Terumah

The London Jewish Chronicle

T H E L A W O F L I F E

Why (as enjoined in Exodus 25: 14-15) was the Ark made portable? Perhaps it was in order to teach the Israelites that God is not bound to any one place. Unlike all the idols of antiquity, the God of Israel was not tied to any one sacred space; He could be worshipped anywhere. There was no shrine that could claim that it contained and confined God's presence. "In every place where I shall cause My name to dwell, I will come to you and bless you."

Perhaps the ark was made movable so that it could share the destiny of Israel. It has been the fate of the Jew to have to wander, often at short notice, and His holy objects had to be capable of wandering with Him. Just as Jews did not buy land in the Middle Ages for fear that if they had to leave quickly they could not take it with them so they did not build imposing sanctuaries that they might have to leave behind.

There is a third possible reason why the Ark was portable. Perhaps it was to teach us that no matter how holy it is the Torah cannot stand still. If it is to be a Torah for life then it must be capable of responding to all of the new situations that life brings. A study of history will show that Judaism has always done this. In every age the Torah manifested the necessary vitality and courage to meet new situations.

In the time of the Second Commonwealth, Judaism was a temple-centered religion. Then the Temple was destroyed. It was a catastrophe not only to the body politic, but also to the Jewish religion. Its way of worship was crippled. Its way of celebrating holidays, of obtaining atonement, of giving thanks, were cut off. Before the walls of Jerusalem had fallen, the rabbis were already at work preparing a substitute. The Academy took over the fallen reins of leadership from the Temple, prayer took up the void left by the end of the sacrificial system, and Judaism continued to live.

The example of the Prosbul is one that is well known. A law for the cancellation of debts during the Sabbatical year which was merciful in an agricultural community had become a hardship in a commercial economy that required credit. Hillel instituted a way in which the law could reckon with the exigencies of the new situation.

Of the many examples of Jews who were sensitive, both to the eternity of the Torah and to the needs of their time, one of the best is the late Chief Rabbi of Israel, Abraham Isaac Kook. He was a person deeply sympathetic to the new situation of the emerging community of pioneers and consistenly tried to make the Torah relevant to their special problems. Many moving stories are told of his success in showing that religion was not indifferent to changing needs.

To say that Jewish law is flexible does not mean to say that it can be carelessly or callously changed. It is capable of meeting our needs, not of yielding to our wants. The law is sympathetic to genuine human loss, but it does not cater to convenience. It is a living law that was made portable so that it could go with an guide the children of Israel wherever they might go.

Tetzaveh

The London Jewish Chronicle

A N S W E R T O A N T I S E M I T I S M

We are enjoined this Sabbath to revive the eternal memory of Amalek, the Arch-enemy not only of the Jewish People but of the conception of the sovereignty of God in the world.

He wields ruthless power without any of the restraining influences which moral and ethical considerations of Justice and humanity might impose. This is what is meant by "He feared not God," since "Fear of God" is regarded by the Rabbis as that Divine impulse in man which gives expression in action to the Divine image in which He is formed.

There is a homiletical interpretation which, unlike so many such interpretations, does no violence to the rules of grammar and syntax, but on the contrary is to some extent supported by them. That interpretation makes the subject of the words "He feared not God" the same as the words which immediately precede it. It was Israel which at that momemt and in that context "Feared not God," and thus provided those circumstances which favored the attack of Amalek.

This remarkable interpretation is by no means an isolated one. On the contrary, it is in consistent line with a whole series of other interpretations on the same theme. "And Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim." And "Rephidim" is interpreted to mean "When their hold on the Torah had become weakened."

The juxtaposition of the injunction against Amalek and that against dishonest commercial practices is explained as pointing to the connection between lack of integrity in one's dealings with anti-semitic propaganda, and above all the Mishnah itself interprets the victory which came to the Children of Israel when Moses raised his hands as a mere symbolic gesture to convey the eternal truth that "When Israel directs its thoughts on high and subjects its heart to its Father in Heaven it prevails, otherwise it suffers defeat."

All these homiletical teachings have one aim: To place forcibly before the Jew the perhaps unwelcome and unpalatable, but none the less undeniable, truth that he should not regard himself as entirely innocent of blame for the emergence of anti-semitism, that he should consider his actions and the extent to which he might possibly contribute towards it.

Whether it be the weakening of his hold on *the Tree of Life* which is the Torah; whether it be practices of doubtful integrity in his dealings with his fellow-men; whether a descent from the loft spiritual heights to which he should direct his thoughts and aspirations, becoming of the earth earthy, or whether just a disregard of all that is contained in the comprehensive phrase "The Fear of God" - the fact remains that these things provide the most congenial terrain for Amalek to launch his vicious attacks.

We must realize that the real defense against anti-semitism is not "anti-anti-semitism" but more "pro-semitism," a more intensive cultivation of Jewish values and principles.

The London Jewish Chronicle

A F A T E F U L D E C I S I O N

Both Sidra and Haftara combine to emphasize the unremitting war waged by Israel's great leaders against the evils of idolatry. Moses grinds the Golden Calf to dust, and the lesson leaves a bitter taste in Israel's mouth. Elijah at Carmel strikes a vehement blow against the cult of Baal; successive generations of prophets pour forth biting invective against the folly and the corruption of it.

But idolatry dies hard. Long after Israel had shed the worship of sticks and stones, celebrated Greek philosophers, who by sheer force of intellect had arrived at an elevated conception of the diety, still made their obeisance to the gods of the day.

It is a significant fact that the first of the Ten Commandments, which tells Israel unequivocably: "I am to be the Lord thy God." is followed immediately by the one which warns sharply against the relapse into idolatry. For there can be no spiritual vacuum. It is in man's nature to anchor himself to some ultimate value. If he will not worship God, then he will fix his devotion on the Baal, on any value that he sets up as an absolute.

Contemporary life has its own proliferation of idols. What is the meaning of the modern trend in literature, with its persistent exploration of the hinterland of perversion and the dark forces of the instinct, but the exalation of the "life-force" that recalls the orgiastic nature rites of long ago? What is the unlovely pandering to the bodily appetites and the bored pursuit of pleasure that may be witnessed in modern life, if only we cared to look, but an exaltation of the self as an ultimate value in life?

A great substitution of values has taken place, that can still go by no other name than idolatry. Where man once worshipped the sun, the moon, and the stars, today he worships the power of his own ego. In place of the oceans and rivers, he now adores honor and glory; where once he bowed down to idols of silver and gold, today he worships the mighty god of money and the things it will purchase for him.

Even things that are intrinsically good have been converted to evil by man's indiscriminating penchant for idolatry. Nothing is more beautiful than the desire or parents to shower blessings on their children; but when they become objects of worship who can do no wrong, when discipline is thrown aside and direction withheld, demonic fruit will ensue.

Pride of race, of class or of nation, has produced noble sentiments and noble acts of sacrifice; but when they are set up as ultimate values, claiming the surrender of man's conscience, the surrender of eternal standards of right and wrong, of humanity and and morality, then they end up in devouring their devotees. Scientific research, social progress, the fantastic contrivances of man's fertile brain, are indeed wonderful testimonies to the ingenuity of man; but unless they bring with them humility and a growing awareness of responsibility, they will become a Moloch, consuming all, and the Garden of Eden which we could make of our world will be converted into one vast Gehinnom, the final grave of all man's hopes.

Today, as in former days, we are asked to make a fateful decision. What is the absolute power to which we shall anchor our beings? Is it to God, or the thousand and one Baals of our own devising?

Kitisa

The London Jewish Chronicle

U P , M A K E M E A M A N!

It is still the convention to read the story of the golden calf with raised eyebrows. To think of it, the people that witnessed the Revelation of Sinai and heard the Voice of God were guilty, in a moment of unaccountable spiritual aberration, of so great a religious lapse as to worship a molten idol! Many a self-righteous preacher has trounced our ancestors for their shocking misdemeanor.

It is time that the conventional attitude was challenged. On closer examination we shall find that, however wrong and culpable the behaviour of our forefathers in the wilderness may have been, they acted quite normally. They enjoined Aaron, their high-priest: "Up, make us a god!" And this has been the normative human demand from time immemorial to our own day.

Men haveconstantly evaded obedience to the commandments that acceptance of the Absolute inevitably involves. They have found it far more comfortable and materially profitable to make gods to their own specifications, in their own misshapen image.

Downtrodden peoples may cry "Freedom!" but sometimes when they achieve it they only exchange one form of bondage for another. Certain States profess to be world-saviors, but interpret their concept of salvation in terms of suppression, sabotage and widespread bloodshed. Racialism has become a very dirty word - far worse, it would seem, than anti-Semitism.

It is hurled with great moral vehemence by public speakers and politicians. But the horrors and atrocities that occur in several countries which have recently gained their independence are shrugged off with a fine aphorism about "teething troubles." In all countries of the world those who profess lofty principles of brotherhood and neighborliness towards their fellow-men are often averse in their everyday life and practical conduct.

The making of 'gods' in human image or even lower forms is still very normative; the production of 'golden calves' is a world-wide and high remunerative industry. Only Judaism, as far back as the desert period, had the perceptiveness and courage to condemn it.

If, as happened in the days of Hillel, we were required to express the quintessence of Judaism in a single sentence, it might well be said: "Up, make Me a man!" - a breed of men who will mirror in their life, however faultily, the Divine Absolute that their minds have glimpsed , who in their search for God will spurn every hypocrisy, shatter every idol, scale Jacob's Ladder in their dreaming, and transform the rock-strewn wastelands of our civilization into the hallowed sanctuary of the One God with all mankind as His priesthood.

Kitisa

The London Jewish Chronicle

T H E M O D E R N C H O I C E

Is living the good Jewish life more difficult today than in the past? Millions of committed Jews the world over wrestle with this problem. Some look back longingly to the days when such problems did not exist. Once, everyone (except those who deliberately apostalized) lived in an all-embracing and total Jewish environment. Judaism was then a way of life which brooked no challenge, and lived hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world.

Such a view of pre-modern Jewish life is both romantic and reactionary.

It is romantic, because the present hindsightof history tinges the harsh colors of past reality with a warm overglow of nostalgia not warranted by the facts. Even under the most favorable conditions, except in such rare exceptions as a Golden Age of Spain or a Renaissance Italy, our forbears were less accepted than tolerated in their lands of adoption.

The present situation of being accepted as a Jew in a secular civilization, the gift of emancipation rather than a Jewish goal achieved, places the modern Jew in an unparalleled and unprecendented historical situation. Never before, not even under the Greeks or the Romans, have Jews ever enjoyed such political freedom.

It is reactionary, because such a viewpoint automatically stigmatizes the modern condition of living voluntarily as a Jew in a democratic State as a second-class condition, not the ideal. The ideal, presumably, would be a situation in which the Jew would have no alternative to being a Jew. It is the notion that Jews no longer <u>have</u> to be Jews which irritates the reactionary.

True, there is no anti-Semitism:yet there is also the unquestioned possibility in the long run of complete personal assimilation. In the pre-modern period the only alternative to Judaism was Christianity, never the free possibility of choosing neither.

We Jews should have learned from Exodus at least one thing: that God reveals Himself in and through freedom. A state of affairs where <u>more</u> rather than <u>less</u> freedom is available to the modern Jew cannot possibly violate God's intentions for us. It can only make our options more important and our responsibility for choosing more serious.

If, then, living the good Jewish life is more difficult today, it is also more rewarding. Because, despite the anxiety of striving to make the right choices for oneself and others, the spiritual stakes are patently so much higher. No one <u>has</u> to be a Jew any more. The collective may not assimilate. The individual can. No one can stop him.

For the first time in Jewish history the individual Jew, with other possible options, can nevertheless choose to love God with all his heart, soul and might. If we can fearlessly and courageously fulfil our obligations here we shall have no reason to be ashamed or confounded.

Vayak-hel

The London Jewish Chronicle

G R O W T H I N J U D A I S M

One of the reasons the Torah is called a Torah of life is that it is capable of catering to our spiritual needs at every one of life's stages. From infancy, childhood and adolescence, through maturity and middle age to old age, Judaism provides us with the resources we need to cope with whatever situation in which we find ourselves.

Each of life's stages has its own problems, its own particular challenge and response, its specific insight and illumination. The pity is that our understanding of Judaism rarely increases with the years. We are all too ready to allow our development to be arrested at the Hebrew classes level.

The image of God as an old man in the sky is, no doubt, quite natural, for example, to the child. But it is sad if the adult never grows in his understanding of God as spirit, as the source and ground of our being.

Again, when we are young we rightly read the stories of Genesis as fascinating tales and little more. But reading them year by year as we grow older and richer in experience, we ought to see that their deeper appeal is to our own restless nature in conflict. We are Adam and Eve yielding to temptation, Jacob wrestling with the angel, Joseph and his brethren in confrontation.

Yet again, if a child thinks of Heaven at all, it is as a place in which a vague good time is had by one and all. The adult should think of Heaven as a state rather than a place, as an opportunity of sharing God's goodness, as possible of realization, in some measure, even here on earth in the living of the good life.

It was said of Coleridge that "he had a mind for which 'knowledge' meant 'growledge.'" Judaism only reveals its treasures to minds capable of growth, to hearts which never tire of progress in devotion and worship. And this has far more to do with attitude than with the amassing of facts. It is the person whose powers of appreciation are constantly exercised who comes to know Judaism as the glory it is, not the person merely proficient in a "quiz" on Jewish knowledge.

Schechter was right when he spoke scathingly of certain mechanical students of Judaism as "study machines". The Gaonim, similarly, spoke of them rudely as "donkeys carrying books". When a schoolmaster was passed over for promotion he protested that he had had 20 years' experience. No, he was told, you have had one year's experience 20 times. Learning from the Torah is far more important than learning Torah.

How is growth in Judaism to be achieved? Jewish tradition is unambiguous in its reply: by study and investigation, reinforced by serious reflection.

We tend to speak fondly of Judaism as a "way of life" and leave it at that. But for the road to lead to the right destination the traveller must have a clear eye, strong legs and a stout heart. Most important of all, he must be skilled in map reading.

Pekuday

The London Jewish Chronicle

T R E N D S O F H I S T O R Y

On reaching the end of a book one usually reflects on its contents and recaptures the impression which it leaves on the mind. The Book of Exodus is now completed. The reader recalls that it tells the story of an enslaved people who emerged to freedom, to receive an incomparable moral and legal code. At the same time he is made to realize that a people cannot live always on a high plane.

From the heights of Sinai, Israel sank to the depths by fashioning the Golden Calf; but when taught the error of their ways and having been purged they proceeded to erect a sanctuary, a symbol of renewed spiritual stature. Thus can a people's development be compared to a graph which records upward and downward trends.

The theme of this book is a true reflection of Jewish history as a whole. As such, it is worthy of comparision with the record of other nations and with the manner of their reaction to the variety of circumstances recorded in their own histories. They, too, rose from insignificance, to flourish and prosper, but to decline to extinction.

The graph of history does not lie; it is like the invisible hand which writes indelibly. But when an attempt is made to assess the reason for the decline, one is forced to the conclusion that the basic cause is the lack of a source from which to draw powers of resistance.

The course of Jewish history reveals one significant difference from the record of other nations. At its inception Israel was unaffected by the nations which surrounded her. In later centuries Jewry was precluded from living a free and unfettered life. Any decline in the graph is attributable to extraneous forces, and to exposure to the conflict between loyalty to the great moral code which lay close to the heart of the Jew and the overwhelming pressures brought to bear from without.

When the time comes to judge a nation, one should not regard the quality of acts performed in a rash moment or under the strain of pressing circumstances, but from the aspect of eternity. Jewry knows its weaknesses and acknowledged the causes. It knows its inherent strength and its potentiality to contribute to human well being. But it also knows the influence of history.

The Book of Exodus is a permanent reminder of such history. Reflecting on its contents one recalls that the passage from Sinai to the erection of the Sanctuary was devious.

But within the Sanctuary stood the Ark, and in it there lay side by side the tablets of stone and the broken fragments of the first set of commandments. A true symbolism indeed of a people's record, for they recall the rise and fall in human behavior. If to deflect from the code of Sinai is to display decline, then to be restored and to create a sanctuary in which men's minds turn to higher things, is to rise again and to climb to even greater heights.

Pekuday

The London Jewish Chronicle

THE DIVINE PRESENCE

A common phenomenon for the contemporary rabbi is meeting Jews who, while avowedly utterly devoted to the ideals and aspirations of the Jewish people and of Judaism, find any empirical acknowledgment of these ideals and aspirations personally distasteful. They may be anxious for their children to be exposed to the benefit of a sound Jewish education, without in any way wishing to color their own home life with any of the time-honored Jewish traditions - - as if it were at all possible to teach a child to play the piano at school when its parents studiously refused to allow him to practice at home.

Equally they may espouse, theoretically, the ideals of Jewish philanthropy, yet find their crowded weekly program precludes them from attending fund-raising functions or even from the exercise involved in signing a check. They may be devoted to the Zionist ideal, yet find no way of manifesting this devotion save in mere words.

They have something to be said in their defense. There is, without doubt, a paradox between noble aims and the mundane methods by which they so often have to be realized. It is an old paradox, formulated neither for the first nor the last time, in Solomon's famous invocation at the dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem, part of which is read as the prophetic portion this Sabbath. How, indeed, can the God whom the heavens and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain be conceived of as a dwelling in a house built by an Israelite king in the earthly Jerusalem?

The answer is that it is just such terrestrial channels that God needs in order that His word might become effective among us. "The word of God," as we have recently been reminded by a theological writer, "Is a word spoken by man... Man speaks and while he speaks God takes possession of his lips." We would, perhaps, like something more spectucular. Yet acknowledgment of the simplicity of the fact is the way to spiritual maturity and Divine wisdom. God without man is no more viable a situation than man without God.

Even so with Judaism in general. We need all the trivia of institutional religion so long as through them we are realizing even to a small degree the ideal objectives. By themselves, without the redeeming quality of ultimate Divine purpose, these trivia are useless, even as man without the redeeming quality of Divine motivation is but a beast. Synagogues, temples, committees, institutions, rituals, symbols, and individuals cannot contain God, but they are our only sure means of pointing the way to Him.

By building a temple, Solomon did not limit God. He merely made it more possible for his generation and generations to come to experience far more of the Divine presence than would otherwise have been possible.

SHEMOT

Rabbi Jules Harlow

Times of adversity, like times of great blessing, often elicit similar responses in Jews separated by centuries as well as by geography. Netzach Yisrael is not only a phrase and a theory but a reality due to selfless actions of countless Jews throughout time responding to crises.

One example from ancient Egypt is found in Rabbinic literature elaborating upon qualities exhibited by Israelites during their enslavement and persecution. The Rabbinical Assembly Haggadah incorporates this text into the section of the Haggadah which expands upon the verses from Deuteronomy describing the enslavement and the liberation. One of those verses reads: "We cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; and the Lord heard our plea and saw our affliction, our misery and our oppression." We quote now from the RA Haggadah:

> Our misery. This refers to the drowning of the drowning of the sons, for Pharaoh decreed, "Every boy that is born shall you throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live" (Exodus 1:22). The Isrealites would circumcise their sons in Mitzrayim. The Egyptians would ask, "Why do you insist upon circumcising them? In a little while we shall throw them into the river." The Israelites would respond, "Nevertheless, we shall circumcise them." (The Feast of Freedom, p.51. And see the Hebrew text, p.50. Based upon Seder Eliahu Rabbah 21: see Midrash Hagadol, Deuteronomy 26:7.)

Centuries later, an episode which speaks for itself:

> On May 7, 1942, the Germans decreed that those living in the Kovno Ghetto were not to have children. Every child born would be shot, together with the mother. Nevertheless, children continued to be born in the Kovno Ghetto. I shall never forget one brit milah ceremony in particular. A young couple named Bloch who had been childless for five years were blessed with a child, a baby boy. They had decided to move to a building next to a technical high school, so that the sounds which would be made by a child could be drowned out by the noise of the machinery and other noises. The brit took place there, in secret of course.
>
> As the mohel was about to begin, we heard the noise of screeching brakes and slamming doors in front of the building. A group of men from the Gestapo got out of the cars. We were panic-striken. The hands of the mohel were shaking. We did not know what to do. How could we possibly save the mother and child? The mother was the most courageous amongst us. She shouted to the mohel: "Quickly! Circumcise the child. They are coming to kill us. The child at least should die as a Jew!"
>
> Thank God, the murderers did not come this time. They were merely visiting the school next door. The child was circumcised in the shadow of death. (Adapted from Hurban Lita, by Rabbi Ephraim Oshry.)

In our comfort and our freedom, what are we doing to help insure meaningful Jewish survival?

Explain - lehem mishnah (double portion - two challot) = lehem meshuneh - a different type of bread on Shabbat - different in taste as well as in appearance. (Note: Although the word, meshuneh, carries a negative connotation, this sermon employs the word in its simple meaning, merely "different".)

From the Torah portion: "Six days you shall gather it (the manna), but the seventh day is a Sabbath; on it there shall be none.

ויהי ביום השביעי יצאו מן-העם ללקט ולא מצאו.

"And it came to pass on the seventh day, that there went out some of the people to gather, and they found none." (Exodus 16:27-28)

Question: If they received a double portion on the sixth day, why did they go out on Shabbat to look for more? They doubted Moses' word! Perhaps. It is also possible that these people were not able to view Shabbat as a day which is inherently different than the rest of the days in the week. They had never practiced or observed Shabbat before while in Egypt. As slaves they had no opportunity to do so. Their minds and spirits were not properly trained to find the beauty and refreshment of living one day in a way that is totally elevated from all others. They, like all other human beings, were primarily creatures of habit and if every other day is begun by collecting manna, so should the Sabbath.

Like some of the Children of Israel, many Jews today go out on the Sabbath day as if it is the same as all others and like our ancestors in the wilderness they find nothing of value in it! Like some of our ancestors, they have difficulty breaking the habit of a daily routine. It took a concerted effort for B'nai Yisrael to develop a pattern for Shabbat observance and the same is true for any of us.

Now the Children of Israel received a double portion of manna on the sixth day. Yet, they went out searching for more on the Sabbath. They were not able to appreciate the blessing of the Sabbath. Like so many Jews today they desecrated the Sabbath, not out of force or coercion, but out of choice. Rather than learning how to relax and savoring a period of rest, the Sabbath has been viewed by some as an opportunity to try to get ahead. "Maybe there is more manna out there, and if there is, I'll lose out if I don't go looking for it." What was not, and is not, realized, is that the blessing of manna on the Sabbath is not found in the outside world. Rather, if we prepare properly, it is already in the home, waiting for us to enjoy it.

I met someone recently who complained how on the previous Saturday he had to take his children all over to various activities and how it thoroughly tired him out. He ended the conversation with the exclamation, "I'd rather go to work!" If your activities on Shabbat end up being more tedious than work, then such a Shabbat is not Shabbat at all.

Mordecai M. Kaplan - "An artist cannot be continually wielding his brush. He must stop at times in his painting to freshen his vision of the object, the meaning of which he wishes to express on his canvas. Living is also an art. We dare not become absorbed in it technical processes and lose our consciousness of its general plan. The Sabbath represents those moments when we pause

in our brushwork to renew our vision of this object. Having done so, we take ourselves to our painting with clarified vision and renewed energy. This applies alike to the individual and to the community. For the individual, the Sabbath becomes thereby an instrument of personal salvation, for the community an instrument of social salvation."

Shabbat for me - Time to eat, time to think, time to be with people with whom I work in different contexts during the week, but on Shabbat we sing together, study together, pray together, smile together, drink a L'Haim together. We share the blessings we have; we don't go out looking for more. Shabbat becomes a pattern unto itself, a glorious pattern which crowns the week, allowing it to end in dignity and splendor.

Let us not deprive the Sabbath of its glory. Let us not be like some of our ancestors who could not break away from their slave mentality. Let us not go out on the Sabbath seeking extra blessings of manna while we already have those blessings in our homes and in our shul. Just as the manna which came down as lehem mishnah - a double portion on the Sabbath, was also lehem meshuneh, a different taste of manna, so too should our activities and concerns reflect the fact that compared to all others this day is yom meshuneh, which is qualitatively different from the rest of the week. Let us not make Sabbath a day like every other, but rather let us observe the Sabbath in such a way as to truly make it hemdat yamim - the most desirable of all days.

Mishpatim

Rabbi Howard Hoffman

We read in today's parasha:

וגר לא תונה ולא תלחצנו כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים.

Don't oppress the alien nor suppress him for you were aliens in the land of Egypt," and again a few verses later:

וגר לא תלחץ ואתם ידעתם את נפש הגר כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים.

Don't oppress the alien, since you knew the life of the alien for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."

In all of parshat mishpatim, the contents of which form the basis of the covenant between God and Israel, the only mitzvah repeated is "Don't oppress the alien... for you were aliens in the Land of Egypt." Why this stress on the ger (and by ger we mean alien, not the later meaning of "proselyte")? According to the gemara, Baba Metziah 49b, the Torah warns us 36 times not to oppress the ger. This is more than the mention of Shabat, forbidden foods, lying or stealing. Why this emphasis on the alien, the foreigner, the ger? Why does the Torah go to such lengths to remind us of our alien past, that we were aliens in the land of Egypt?

On the negative side, the ger is a weak and defenseless individual who finds himself alone in a strange land, often scorned and wronged. Without the rights of a citizen he is in need of protection. In ancient Mesopotamia the ger was generally not allowed to live in the city. When there for reasons of trade, he had to live in a special area supervised by a royal official.

It is a world such as this that our parasha deals with. It tells us that since the ger is not protected by the courts of men, God will be his protector, just as He was to Israel in Egypt.

The lowly status of the ger, although fresh in the mind of our people, cannot account for the emphasis on the idea of ger. The Torah must have found something positive in the ger to make it into one of its basic value-concepts. What was it?

Rav Moshe Alshich, a 16th century commentator, although taking ger in its later, developed meaning of proselyte, describes the nefesh hager כי טובה היא שהיא כמתן שנולד. The psyche of the ger is "good...like a new born child", the psyche of the ger is innocent: והייתם קדושים "and even capable of holiness!" Bahya, the 11th century commentator, comments on our verse כל גר נפשו שפלה עליו. "Every ger feels humility!" The Torah knew that the status of being a ger, an outsider has its advantages, not for an easy life but for a holy life. It therefore went to great pains to implant in every Jew the consciousness of the ger. Why would Abraham, coming from inhospitable Mesopotamia, have cultivated so carefully the mitzvah of hospitality if not for the first hand knowledge of what is meant to be a ger in a strange land? Compare his welcome to the three angels to that of the men of Sedom and we get a picture of the consciousness of being a ger and not a member of the settled populace.

The Torah describes Isaac as a ger, Jacob says "I was an alien in Laban's household;" even Moses names one of his children Gershom after his alien existence.

The Talmud warns us concerning the ger, "Don't criticize another for an imperfection which you too possess." But if gerut is an imperfection, why would the Torah have stressed it so highly? Even God is described in the Midrash as accompanying Israel into Egypt during the time whem "they would be aliens in a land not theirs". In the Kabbalah, the Shekninah is described as in exile and in imitation many Kabbalists and Hassidic Rebbis, such as Rab Elimelech of Lizensk, used to go into exile, making themselves gerim, in order to increase their humility and purify their souls. Thus, we find that Torah tries to institutionalize a feeling of gerut, of marginality and the qualities that accompany it.

The Torah was written for Jews in the transitional phase between wandering in the wilderness and settling their land. It was a time when the consciousness of being a ger, the feeling of marginality, was about to be exchanged for that of stability, majority status, civil rights and land ownership. It was a period very much like our own. For the first time in two thousand years of marginality Jews here in America and in Israel are entering a life where we are members of the society, protected by civil rights, participants in the power structure and on the verge of becoming a nation like all other nations. In America, Canada, Britain and France, Jews are educated, prosperous, active in every field of human endeavor. We are heads of corporations, governmental advisors, great scholars and leaders of industry. Jews are found in every major occupation. We've made it, we've arrived, we're part of the establishment. Yet there is something wrong. Why has Jewish involvement in civil rights been cooling and Jewish memberhip in conservative political organizations increasing? Why are our youth more and more alienated from our organized community life? In losing our marginality haven't we lost our innocence, our humility, our longing for holiness? In our attempt to become established, haven't we adopted the attitudes of the establishment? We have forgotten the nefesh hager, "the marginal life" and we're too busy "making it" to remember

כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים

that we were marginal once ourselves.

In Israel a similar situation threatens. Again we are in the transition between the mentality of marginality and of stability. It is reflected in the problems Israel faces. On the one hand the government places a high value on immigration. It gives new olim special rights and privileges, easy loans, tax free cars, furniture, new apartments. "Love the alien". On the other hand, many Israelis are deeply resentful of the new olim, be they from American or Russia. And it goes deeper. Today, the 30,000 Falashas who believe themselves Jews and whom Rav Cook supported in their claim (we'll leave the halakhic questions aside) are receiving aid from the Israeli government. However, when one applied for a visa to immigrate to Israel he was kept waiting for two years and was then granted a tourist visa only provided he could show a large amount of money for his trip plus return tickets to Ethopia. "Don't oppress the ger for you were gerim in the land of Egypt." Is it possible that our people, which spent its entire history learning the value of marginality could forget so soon the nefesh hager?

This is the problem the Torah foresaw when it connected ger with shmitah in our parasha. "Don't oppress the alien since you knew the life of the alien for you were aliens in the land of Egypt," is followed by,

Six years you should sow your land and gather its crops, but in the seventh year let it lie fallow and foresake it."

R. Moishe Deutsch, a 19th century Hassidic Darshan, comments, "that in the year of the shmitah even we become aliens in our land, for when we let it lie fallow, abandon it and can't be lords over the land, this warns us not to oppress the alien by reminding us that "The Lord owns the earth and its fullness and we are his resident aliens."

Haim Yosef David Azulai, the great medieval Jewish bibliographer, developing a similar idea of the Ari's says that "You know the life of the ger for that was your status in Egypt" was only good enough to remind the generation of the desert of their marginality, but for the later generations who didn't know the life of marginality, God instituted the shmitah to teach us that we are gerim and the land belongs to God. Similarly, Shabbat one day in seven we give up title to the world and our hold upon it to remind ourselves of its rightful owner.

Thus the Torah warns us, "Don't be smug", "Don't feel at home in your land", "Don't lose the sensitivity of being an outsider especially now when you are no longer marginal". And it reinforces this warning not to suppress the ger within us by the institutions, shemitah and Shabbat. These remind us of our position of marginality in the world. These force us to admit that while we are at home, we are not at home.

We face precisely the same challenge today that we did 3000 years ago: How to avoid forgetting that we are only gerim in the world and it is davkah we, who have achieved affluence, status and comfort who need to be reminded that we are gerim. For our history has shown that when Israel becomes too comfortable in her land and forgets her marginality, God brings about our reversion to the status of gerim.

How can we keep alive our nefesh hager - our consciousness of marginality? The careful observance of shmitah in Israel will help there. For us a greater emphasis on the meaning of Shabbat will help a little here. However, for the majority of Jews, who are not observant, these traditional methods won't be enough; One method very effective in the past is to raise the spectre of anti-Semitism. I can imagine myself a few years hence going from home to home in my suburban congregation painting a swastika on each door. That Shabbat the shul would be jammed and I could preach a sermon on how we're all gerim and the congregation would really feel their marginality. However, the past shows that even this does'nt last and complacency would soon allow them to forget their geruṭ especially when they discovered who painted the swastikas. There are no easy answers. The question remains and the challenges are great.

It is no accident that every Shabbat, even in Jerusalem we sing

פרוס יח ענך מפום אריותא
ואפיק יח עמך מגו גלותא

Save your flock from the lions mouths and rescue your people from the midst of the exile; for until the coming of the mashiach we will be gerim wherever we are and whatever our situations.

May the redemption come from Zion speedily and in our days.

Ki Tisa

Rabbi Henry Sosland

Four hundred and thirty-seven years after it sank, the pride of King Henry Vlll's fleet, the Mary Rose, has at last been brought to the surface, carefully drawn out of the mud it was buried in one mile off Portsmouth, England. Hailed as "the world's most ambitious underwater archeological operation," this first English warship to mount a cannon between her decks, which sank under the forlorn gaze of its king in 1545, will eventually be open to the public to visit and learn from. Breech-loading and muzzle-loading guns , uniforms, officers' manicure sets, a chess board, even the remains of foods and vegetables eaten by the crew, have all been salvaged, so that future generations will know a large variety of detail about the lives of the sailors who lived in the sixteenth century. The full restoration will include many of the 17,000 artifacts which have been rescued over a period of time from the formerly submerged ship.

Our tradition is constantly raising up its past in order to learn from it. Each year we start "from the beginning" in our Torah, reaching back some thirty centuries into the past not for archeological reasons, but for the purpose of sharpening our perceptions about our values today. Through comparing ancient insights with modern understanding, the process of interpreting Scripture throws light on our lives and values with wisdom and a maturity born of centuries of thought. We are proud of the fact that we have been in this "business" for a modest 1,400 years. The name of the enterprise is Midrash, and it has been doing the equivalent of sending deep-sea divers down to explore the text of the Bible and to bring up new findings and meanings.

Here's a sample of what, to my mind, is but one of our infinite treasures. In Exodus 32:12-13, Moses intercedes on behalf of Israel: Let not the Egytians say, 'It was with evil intent that He delivered them, only to kill them off in the mountains and annihilate them from the face of the earth.'... Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how You swore to them by Your Self and said to them: I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven. Afterwards, Moses received a favorable response: And the Lord renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon His people (verse 14).

Tanna debe Eliyyahu contains the following treasure: By what parable may God's change of heart be understood? By the parable of a mortal king whose oldest son had acted offensively in his presence. The king took hold of his son, turned him over to the steward who was in charge of the household, and said to him, "Take him out, slay him, and give his body to beasts and dogs." What did the steward do? He removed the son from the king's presence and put him up in his own home, and then hastened back to attend the king. After thirty days when the king was disposed to be merry, his servants and members of his household assembled to recline for a meal in his presence. But when lifting his eyes, he did not see his first-born, he let sorrow and sighing enter his heart. No mortal was aware of his grief, however, except his steward, the master of the household who forthwith ran and brought back the king's son and had him stand in his usual place. A beautiful crown was lying before the king, and the king took it and placed it upon the head of his steward, the master of his household (p.18, Braude-Kapstein translation, p.79). Elsewhere, this Midrash states that Moses "surpassed all others in his intercession in Israel's behalf" (p. 33, Braude-Kapstein, p.117).

What a magnificent insight into divine forgiveness. Our Rabbis were attempting in this story to project a world based on human standards which are viable not merely for the immediate future, but in the long run as well. How many individuals today, if they had a chance to rethink past angers and irrevocable decisions made in moments of wrath, would so willingly want to forget the past and forgive and return to a warm relationship with someone whom they had once loved? (Note: The application of this teaching could be spelled out at length through illustrations which we as rabbis frequently know in abundance.)

Here then is but one small example of how we draw from Scripture a lesson that can enrich and improve our lives. Many of us are not exactly tuned into this process of interpreting the Torah on a regular basis. However, nothing prevents us from coming on a Shabbat morning to watch and take part in the drawing up of our own sunken treasures. It is a matter of fascination to some. For others, it is a subject to which they pay tribute on the order of Groucho Marx's inscription in a book he had received: "From the moment I picked up your book until I laid it down, I was convulsed with laughter. Some day I intend to read it."

Maybe that "some day" has come for a few of us. We don't have to wait for the Royal Navy to help us in the process of rescuing our glorious past. We can do it ourselves. Come join us each week as we lift up treasures from the depths and reflect upon them, and enable them to refine our lives.

KI TISA
SHABBAT PARAH

Rabbi Jack Moline

A few weeks ago, on Shabbat Shirah, I had the opportunity to concentrate on Shirat Hayam. I remember that back in the days when my hair was longer than this week's haftarah I had a lot of trouble dealing with part of the song -- the part that asserts, Hashem ish milhama, God is a Man of War. In my days of pacifism and anti-war activity, it struck me that this was a wholly inappropriate way for us to picture God. To glorify God's destructive power? Our God is the God of peace! So whenever we reached the recitation of Shirat Hayam in psukei d'zimra, I would turn my back to the congregation and remain silent.

Well, it seemed significant at the time, but it was an empty gesture. The fact of the matter is that the description is there, is part of the Bible and part of the liturgy, and what's more, given the circumstance and historical context, it is not inappropriate. What finally convinced me of its appropriateness and weaned me away my pacifism was an article by a rabbi whose name I can no longer recall. The rabbi made a single point which stuck with me since I read it ten years ago. He claimed that a Jew could not in good conscience be a pacifist, not because of the security needs of Israel, and not because of the Torah's mandatory wars and not because of the lessons of the Shoah. He claimed that the pacifist makes peace an absolute, the perfect value, for which anything is sacrified. And in Judaism there is only one absolute, only one source of perfection, only one worthy of any and every sacrifice and that is the kadosh barukh hu. To hold peace as the paramount value, he wrote, was to be an idolator.

That was something of a revelation to me, if you'll pardon the expression. It was also one of those unpleasant realities with which we must come to terms every now and then -- that God indeed has a destructive side. Fortunately, it is precisely those unpleasant realities which can lead to insights simply by virtue of the struggle we undertake to accept them.

So when I turned to this week's parashah and looked at a different kind of idolatry; egel hazahav, and at a different kind of unpleasant reality, the Temple sacrifice, I kept in mind the perspective that sometimes we have to accept things about God's nature which have been revealed to us in the Torah, which seem unpleasant. It is striking, this juxtaposition of the perfect representation of the calf and the perfect calf, the cow made of purest gold and the cow covered with the purest of red hair, the heifer which symbolized totally innocent trust. Each was a perfect creation in its own way. Each was pure and physically unblemished. And each was destroyed on the orders of God.

God does a lot of destroying in the Torah. It begins with the Garden of Eden; when Adam and Ḥava eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their perfect world is destroyed. Adam was the person who could name the animals; he knew them and he knew their essence perfectly. In fact, the only barrier between him and God was that knowledge of good and evil. When he attained that, God destroyed Adam's otherwise perfect world -- but he redeemed the again imperfect earthling.

And when the world is perfectly evil, except for Noah, God destroys the world but God redeems Noah, the single, ill-fitting piece in order that he may bear witness to that destruction. When the Tower of Babel is about to reach to heaven, the perfect structure and a monument to perfect cooperation, God destroys it. Sodom and Gomorrah, perfectly degenerate; God destroys them. Amalek, perfectly cruel; God demands their utter destruction. It seems as though every time something approaches perfection, God destroys it. Whether it is evil, as the Golden Calf

or innocent, as the red heifer, it appears that the Holy One, Blessed be He, cannot tolerate the existence of wordly perfection. Why?

Why is it that the Temples were destroyed? They were the centers of worship, the realization of our national dreams, a house for God, "the place where His glory dwelleth." They were perfect, to the letter of the law, and pure, free from any polluting flaw. And they became the end rather than the means. It was Temple worship which the Children of Israel began to worship, it was attention to ritual which became the focus of their attention. Amos protested it in his way, the Sages protested it in theirs. But in the end, the Temple was destroyed. Any why was it destroyed? For the same reason God destroyed the golden calf and for the same reason God demanded the sacrifice of the pure and unblemished red heifer. And herein lies the unpleasant reality which is hard to swallow.

Perfection is the realm of God, and in the foresight and depth of infinite wisdom God recognizes that it is that very perfection which makes him God --perfectly just and perfectly merciful, perfectly immanent and perfectly transcendant. The existence of another object, be it person,place or thing in this world of God's creating, which pretends to perfection, also pretends to usurp God. And it is then that the very unpopular attribute of el kana expresses itself, the jealous God, the God who cannot tolerate perfection in this world. It is then that the terrible power of God is unleashed, be it a hail of fire and brimstone or hailed as the fire on the altar stone. It is when the threat of competition, unworthy competition, but competition nonetheless confronts God that we hear in this same Parashah:

כי לא תשתחוה לאל אחר כ ה' קנה שמו אל קנה הוא.

For you shall not bow down to any other god for jealous is God's name, He is a jealous God.

We all know that perfection is the object of worship and devotion. The perfect pulpit, the perfect test score, the perfect 10; the perfect dress for the party, the perfect Olympic performance, the perfect observance of halakhah. And each of those things lo hayah v'lo nivra -- never was and never will be except as we seek to falsely imbue them with divine qualities. The presumption of perfection if wholly un-Jewish. The search for the panacea for our need to worship something tangible is disloyal to the one true God. And, in fact, if you examine the commentary of Sforno on the pasuk which I have quoted, you will see that he says the same thing; "The name el kana expresses the unique being of God, who will not tolerate any other being to be associated with Him." Understand the depth of that perception: We incur the wrath of a jealous God when we seek perfection elsewhere, and so we must offer as a sacrifice to God that which threatens to distract us from that thought, that which is perfect, the red heifer with not even two hairs of white, lest we cast it in gold and worship it.

And what does that mean for us as menschen? It means that what we reject in animals and in values we must reject in ourselves as well. No person can be perfectly good; no person can be perfectly evil.

When Job in his self-righteousness describes his righteousness, he omits nothing. "If he weighs me on honest scales, being God, He cannot fail to see my innocence!" cries Job. He delineates his goodness, his purity of intention, his perfect devotion. But none of his friends are able to penetrate the reason for Job's world being destroyed around him. They do not grasp the essence of God's willingness to destroy the perfect man. They do not understand that it is precisely Job's perfection which arouses the jealousy of God.

Rabbi Jack Moline

God humbles Job again and again until, having thundered challenge after challenge, He has instilled in Job that flaw which redeems him -- a willingness to be wrong. Job prays for mercy for his friends and sages. And what does he say? We can only guess, and my guess is that he pleads for God to redeem them because they are imperfect, and Job needs them as role models.

And why is it that Pentekakka was assured a place in olam haba? Pentekakka was a low-life, the midrash tell us; his trade was in ladies of the night. He was a man known for carousing and high living and thorough disrespect for the conventions of appropriate behavior. He had sunk to the depths of depravity, except for one moment. A fair young woman came to him, timid and frightened, but determined to join his stable of ladies-for-hire. Stunned by her beauty and unworldliness, Pentekakka tried to turn her away, but she was adamant. I must have this job, she explained, because it is the only way I can raise the ransom for my husband. With that, he gave her the money and told her, "Go, my child, and sin no more." And for that flaw in his character, for that breach in the perfection of his life of sin, he was redeemed.

Job was not perfectly good. Pentekakka was not perfectly evil. Each of them, like each of us, had his redeeming flaw, the very imperfection which makes us human, which ensures our survival to worship God and to aspire to Godliness.

You all know the story of the king who owned the world's most beautiful diamond. Every facet was identical, every angle produced the same magnificient explosion of blue-white sparkle. One day, the diamond slipped from the hand of the king and struck the stone floor of the palace with a loud crack. As he bent to recover it, his heart sank. Cutting its way through the heart of the gem like a bolt of lightning, through the dark summer sky was a jagged crack. His perfect treasure ruined, the king summoned the royal diamond cutters and bade them restore the jewel's beauty by any means possible save breaking it. Each tried to restore its perfection; each died on the orders of the king when he failed. Finally along came an artisan, a common man, who promised to make the stone more beautiful than before. He shut himself in a room for many days, and when he emerged, he presented the king with the diamond, the flaw still fully visible. But at the top of the thin line he had carved a rose. "Your majesty," he said, "many diamonds shine brightly, and one's shine is virtually indistinguishable from the next. But no diamond compares to yours."

My friends, I tell you that the king did not just drop that diamond. It was no accident that it fell. He did so to destroy its perfection and to present to the true and loyal subject an opportunity to serve the king with fullness of heart. It was the diamond's flaw which redeemed it in the eyes of the king, for he could not bear its perfection.

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not suggest that we are struck down, each of us or any of us, for being too good or too bad. We all know that there are too many events in recent history which defy such an explanation.

But I do mean to say that we are inauthentic as Jews when we demand perfection from our loved ones, from our teachers, from our students, from ourselves. Being human means possessing those redeeming flaws. Our individual and collective shortcomings humble us and elevate us as well they should. They humble us before our God and they elevate us in our own minds as we understand our relative strengths and seek to share them with others.

As Ezekiel declares in today's haftarah, the perfect society will be a gift from God which we must earn by demonstrating our readiness to accept our imperfection by an

authentic approach to Jewish living: piety and not perfection; humility and not haughtiness; great rejoicing in ourselves, and not great expectations.

I no longer turn my back on the depiction of Hashem ish milhama. I can no longer hold my pacifism as an improvement on the source of all peace. Rather, I shall join with my fellow human beings in praising God, my Rock and Redeemer, in whom there is no flaw.

What's in a Name?

Rabbi Alan Silverstein

In Chapter two of the book of Exodus we are taught that Moses was given his name to signify that he had been "drawn forth from the water." In Rabbinic tradition, a name represents more than just a label; it represents the essence of a person. Therefore for the Rabbis this water imagery came to represent an ongoing indicator of the life of our great ancestor. The experiences of his life would be seen as a constant struggle between water and the absence of water.

He was able to survive Pharaoh's decree against newborn males, by the good graces of the Nile. He was able to find refuge in Midian by meeting and assisting Jethro's daughters at a watering well. He was able to make contact with God at the site of a bramble bush, one of the few species able to absorb the water of the desert. He was able to initiate the ten plagues of redemption by changing the Nile waters into blood, and he was successful in completing the exodus by parting the waters of the Sea of Reeds. Finally, and most importantly, he survived forty years in the desert by the waters of the oasis of Kadesh Barnea and ultimately by the supreme gift of the Torah, which is constantly compared to water, a nourishing, sustaining ingredient.

Conversely, Moses constantly struggled against the absence of water. Had he not been hidden by the Nile as an infant, Moses would have perished. When he killed an Egyptian and hid his corpse in the dryness of the sand, Moses became a fugitive. Had he not chanced upon the watering-well of Jethro's daughters, the arid conditions of the wilderness would have devoured him. Had the dry flame of the burning bush consumed this divine sign, the pagan environment of Midian would have been his final resting place. Had the bloodying of the Nile not introduced the ten plagues, Moses would not have succeeeded in his mission; nor would he have gained credibility for God among either the enslaved Israelites or among the Egyptians. Even during the desert wanderings, with forty years of challenges, it would be the absence of water, and Moses' final striking of the rock in frustration and anger, which led to the dire punishment of not being permitted to enter the promised land.

Therefore, in a sense, the name "Moses" provides insight into the essence of his eventful life. In his case, and in the case of countless others, throughout the ages and even today, we remain sensitive to names.

In the middle ages, for example, another Jewish leader names Moses established his base of leadership in Fostat, Old Cairo, and provided guidance and hope for the persecuted Jewish community of his day. Moses Maimonides prospered in the twelfth century, at a time when the oppression of fanatic Moslem hordes throughout North Africa had coerced many Jews to convert to Islam, and to accept an ideological bondage to the whims of their oppressors. Consciously aware of his name and his base of authority in Egypt, Maimonides urged the anusim (the forced converts) not to lose faith in the prospect of a brighter future and an opportunity to be reinstated into the Jewish community. He counselled them that a contemporary spiritual exodus was almost at hand.

Maimonides emulated the Moses of old in a variety of other ways as well. For example, the Rambam extolled prophecy, the receipt of revelation from God, exemplified most of all by Moses, as the ultimate human experience, the very purpose of mankind's existence of this earth. Maimonides claimed that being a prophet like Moses required not only being designated by God, but also initial self-conditioning, the cultivation of the mind in order to become an appropriate recipient of God's messages. For Maimonides, therefore, the Moses of old was the ultimate philosopher, and consequently his own primary model.

Maimonides also sought to assist the average Jew in wading through the mounting complex corpus of Talmudic learning and back to the simplicity of Moses' Biblical message. On the other hand, however, the Rambam did not want to omit the Rabbinic interpretations of these sacred texts. Accordingly, Maimonides created a Mishnah Torah, a "second copy" of Moses'Torah, as a brief, clear, easily utilized guide to the wisdom of Moshe Rabbenu through the viewpoint of the ages of Rabbinic interpretation.

Finally, Moses Maimonides expanded upon the ancient Moses' role of magician, and possessor of the wonders of practical knowledge, by becoming a reknowned physician, even to the courts of the Moslem rulers of his day. Therefore, in a variety of ways, Moshe ben Maimon, a prominent medieval Jewish leader, effectively viewed his own name as his essence, as his guide to the fulfillment of his destiny.

An example of the application of the name Moses to a twentieth century figure of great renown is provided by Moshe Dayan. Rabbi Wolfe Kelman related to me that when Dayan was born, as the first child of the first kibbutz (Degania), the secular kibbutznikim, confident of their apparent creation of a new social reality, urged that the baby be named Adam, the first human being created by a totally new world. Dayan, however, was named Moshe, after Moshe Barsky, a martyr of Degania's early efforts to defend itself against Abar marauders.

For Dayan the name Moshe would also guide his life as a Jewish political and folk leader, gaining his fame by military victories against Egypt, and most dramatically by helping to sign a peace treaty with this ancient foe, a treaty which involved a painful although necessary modern day "exodus" from Egyptian territory once again. Like his ancient namesake, Moshe Dayan was brought into prominence due to the intervention into history of a body of water, the Suez Canal, whose sudden closing by Gamal Nasser in 1956, provided the scene for this modern day Moshe's initial move to center-stage in the history of our people. Also like the Moses of old, among Dayan's personal challenges would be a series of battles in the arid Sinai desert, and his fascination with the archaelogical treasures buried in the dry sands of the land of Israel itself.

Modern uses of the name Moses can convey a variety of other ideological strategies relative to Jewish survival and Jewish identity. For example, when European immigrants came to the U.S.A. and changed their names from Moses to Marvin or to Michael or similar Americanized names, they were clearly affirming the priority of their need to demonstrate their desire to be acceptable to their new host environment. On the other hand, when young Jewish males today are names Moshe, the parents are openly stating that their Jewish identity is their highest priority, regardless of what others may think. Similary, when a Jewish family name is Moseson, its origin is related to the hasty need perceived by the European Jew in the period when last names became compulsory, to choose or to be assigned a quick means of identification; Moseson, the son of Moses. Similarly, when an American family named Moseson decides to settle permanently in the State of Israel, and alters their name to Ben Moshe, they are consciously denying the status foisted upon them by the gentile-dominated diaspora of their past, and re-establishing their links with the earlier periods of Jewish autonomy and free self-expression.

The name Moses, "drawn out of the water," can mean a great deal to Jews in a variety of ways. It can point to the very essence of our existence. It is all in the name!

The Moment of Return

Rabbi Alan Silverstein

At two points in the lifetime of Moses, our great ancestor seemed lost to the Jewish people. He seemed to have chosen the convenient route of assimilation, both during his childhood within the palace of Pharaoh and during his lengthy sojourn with his father-in-law Jethro in the wilderness of Midian. Both times, however, Moses returned to the Jewish community, in reaction to dramatic events which reawakened his true loyalties. In the first instance, the midrash informs us that Prince Moses reached maturity by going out to mingle among the slaves, thereby noticing the stark injustice of involuntary servitude. He witnessed "Strong men carrying light burdens and weak men straining under heavy loads; old men performing the tasks of young men and young men doing work suited for old men; men assigned to do women's chores and women carrying out men's work." The sight of such injustice rekindled Moses's identification with the victims of injustice, his people.

In the second instance, as a fugitive Moses had found refuge among the Midianites. He had married Zipporah, one of their women, had fathered children and had become a shepherd to the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro. This time the spark of his fading identity was rekindled by the miraculous sight of the burning bush which was not consumed. A sudden, exceptionally meaningful religious experience brought him back into the fold. Throughout Jewish history, as a minority people living among majority cultures, such as ancient Egypt and Midian, assimilation has always tempted isolated individuals. Appropriately we agonize over each and every loss. Yet we rarely pay enough attention to the remarkable number of individual Jews sho choose at some point, unpredictably, sometimes irrationally, to return to the Jewish community, just as Moses did twice within his lifetime.

From tne Rabbinic period we read the parable of a king who banished his son to a far-off valley, placing the key back into the palace high upon the gate of the valley. The banished son never returns home because he perceives that the key is beyond his reach.

Finally he married, has children and prepares to relinguish any contact with his past. One day, however, when his son reaches Bar-mitzvah age, the boy asks his banished father the meaning of the key at the top of the valley's gate. When he hears of the possibility of returning home, to his grandparents, to his roots, the boy suggests that he climb upon his father's shoulders, thereby being able to reach the key. And they returned to the palace together.

The process is not rational. It cannot be predicted. But at some point, as with Moses, some impulse, some influence, rekindles the flame of Jewish identity, the pintele yid , an aspect of all of us which never dies, but at times flickers temporarily in a diminished fashion.

In the middle ages, a similar fate befell the Jewish community of Spain. Many were forced to flee and many others upon the threat of death became converts to Christianity. Yet the New Christians, conversos, remained in their own neighborhoods, their own network of business, friendships, social contacts, patterns of kinship and marriage.

They retained certain strange ritual customs bearing a striking resemblance to Judaism. They became the Marranos. Sometimes they themselves, or their children or grandchildren, when traveling on business into expanding areas of the globe which offered religious freedom, would suddenly meet a Jew, encounter a Jewish book, an idea, anti-Semitism, a Jewish artifact, or a special synagogue building, and suddenly their subconscious interest in their Jewish roots would be kindled into an active search for their past. They too experienced the return which had twice blessed the life of Moses.

This process of return to Judaism by Jews seemingly on the periphery of Jewish existence , or apparently lost to our people, is a process occuring again and again in our own day.

Last October (1982) at Drew University a symposium honored the tenth yahrzeit of Will Herberg, a Jew who was raised in a secular-socialist household and who became a Marxist and an opponent of organized religion. Later, however, his disillusionment with Marxism led him to search along with other former communists for a new source of ultimate meaning. This quest brought Herberg and his associates into the activist circles of the Union Theological Seminary, Enthralled by their liberal, exstiential ideology, Herberg planned to convert to Christianity. However, upon the suggestion of the great Protestant theologian Rheinhold Neibuhr, Herberg went across the street to the Jewish Theological Seminary to take one last glimpse at the Judaism that he was leaving behind. The rest of the story reads like a legend. Herberg not only returned to the Jewish fold, he became one of the greatest Jewish existential philosophers of our age. Once again we have an example of an unpredictable, supra-rational return to our tradition.

As a final example, consider the return to the fold of Paul Cowan, described at length in his recently published autobiography, entitled An Orphan in History. He was a spiritual orphan like Moses, like the Marranos, or like Herberg, deprived of a meaningful Jewish childhood. Yet he decided to search for his natural parentage, his roots, his heritage.

Cowan (originally Cohen) was the extreme case of the ultra-assimilated Jew. He was an atheist, a tall, blond, Waspish product of the prestigious Choate prep school and of Harvard. His de-judaized father was the wealthy, successful President of CBS. His mother was a sophisticated, affluent mail-order heiress. Paul never became a Bar Mitzvah, nor did he receive any instruction in Judaism. His parents celebrated Christmas and avoided contact with the Jewish community. Paul Cowan intermarried, joined the Peace Corps in the 1960's, and came back home to become a journalist for the Village Voice, an avante-garde secular publication.

The story of Paul's return to Judaism, and specifically of his active involvement in a Conservative Synagogue, is the story - - not stressed often enough - of many young people in our time who are slowly beginning to experience a reawakening of their Jewish identity. In brief summary, Paul (as many others like him) was influenced by a series of major experiences:

1. His mother's dual interpretation of the Holocaust as a command to work for social justice toward all people, plus a recognition that no matter how affluent or assimilated a Jew might be, our enemies will always be present to remind us of our Jewish identity.

2. His father's fascination with the memories gained during his childhood on the Lower East Side, and his insistence that family outings frequently be made to this ethnic enclave.

3. Paul Cowan's on-going encounters with anti-Semitism during his student days at Choate.

4. During his years at Harvard, a momentous visit to Israel, where he experienced first-hand the vitality of Jewish existence.

5. The questions of friends, family and new-in-laws, which accompanied his intermarriage, forcing Paul more and more to confront the reality of his Jewishness.

6. The sudden death of his parents, and the rude awakening to the reality of being either the last in 100 generations of Jews or the next generation in a continuing chain of tradition.

7.The process of saying kaddish for his parents in neighborhood synagogues, touching a living Jewish prayer experience for the first time.

8. Long walks on the Lower East Side with Rabbi Singer, an Orthodox rabbi and a social worker willing to patienty answer Cowan's growing list of questions and concerns .

9. Finally, the recognition that many other young people were experiencing the same process of return, and the willingness to institutionalize that commitment by affiliating with a synagogue Manhattan's (Anshe Chesed), establishing a relationship with a local rabbi (Rabbi Wolfe Kelman) and experiencing the conversion into Judaism of his wife and their children.

Like Moses in the Torah portion, many Jews throughout the ages, and most of all today, may seem temporarily lost to Judaism. Yet their Jewish identity may suddenly be rekindled once again. The pintele yid, the spark of Jewishness, remains alive, awaiting the moment of return.

BIBLIOGRAPHY - ON REVELATION

How Can We Believe in Revelation? Prepared by Roly Matalon

Dorff, Elliot. Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants. New York: United Synagogue Youth, 1977, 110-157.

Fackenheim, E. Quest for Past and Future. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1968, 66-82; 204-228.

Glatzer, N. Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought. New York: Schocken, 1961, index.

Gordis, Robert. A Faith for Moderns. New York: Bloch, 1960, 136-155.

Herberg, Will. Judaism and Modern Man. New York: Atheneum, 1970, 243-261.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. God in Search of Man. New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1981, 167-199; 218-235; 257-278.

_____. The Prophets. New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1962, Ch. 12-14; 28.

Jacobs, Louis. Principles of the Jewish Faith. New York: Basic Books, 1964, 216-301.

_____. A Jewish Theology. New York: Behrman House, 1973, 199-210.

Kaplan, Mordecai M. Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers. New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1972, 154-155.

Moore, George F. Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1927, Volume I: 235-250.

Niebuhr, H.R. The Meaning of Revelation. New York: Macmillan, 1960, 59-80.

Rothschild, F.A. "Revelation: The Embarrassment and the Necessity." Conservative Judaism, 31:2 (1977), 56-63.

Saadya Gaon. Book of Doctrines and Beliefs, in Three Jewish Philosophers, ed. Alexander Altmann. New York: Atheneum, 1977, 93-114.

Schechter, S. Aspects of Rabbinic Theology. New York: Schocken, 1961, 127-137.

What Was Revealed in Revelation? Prepared by Michael Schorin

Buber, Martin. I and Thou. trans. R.G. Smith. Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1937, 109-117.

Cohen, H. The Religion of Reason. trans. S. Kaplan. New York: F. Ungar, 1972, Chapter IV, 71-84.

Exodus. Chapters 19-20:21, 24.

Glatzer, N. Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought. New York: Schocken, 1961, 285.

Glatzer, N. On Jewish Learning. "The Builders" by Franz Rosenzweig and the Buber-Rosenzweig Correspondence.

Gordis, Robert. Understanding Conservative Judaism. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1978, 62-73.

Greenberg, Moshe. Book of Exodus, Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 6 (Jerusalem, 1972), 1056-1060.

Herberg, Will. Judaism and Modern Man. New York: Atheneum, 1970, 243-261.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. God in Search of Man. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1956, Chapters 19-20, 27.

Hick, J. "Revelation," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Volume 7 (New York, 1967) (Good Bibliography Provided).

Jacobs, Louis. Principles of the Jewish Faith. New York: Basic Books, 1964, 216-301.

Kaplan, Mordecai M. The Purpose and Meaning of Jewish Existence. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964, 100-110.

Mishnah Sanhedrin. Chapter 10:1.

Revelation, Encyclopedia Judaica, Volume 14 (Jerusalem, 1972), 117-126.

The Condition of Jewish Belief: A Symposium Compiled by the Editors of Commentary Magazine. New York: Macmillan, 1969. Berkowitz, Borowitz, Eisenstein, Lamm, Siegel, et. al.

NATIONAL JEWISH RESOURCE CENTER

October 1, 1982

Dear Friend,

We live in traumatic times. The impact of the Jewish people's assumption of power has been driven home in the past six months by the Lebanon war and the tragic massacre at the Shatila Palestinian Camp. The transformation from powerlessness to power -- through the creation of the State of Israel and the active political involvement of Jews in the United States -- was inescapable after the Holocaust.*

Today we have the power to protect ourselves and to advance our goals. However, any exercise of power inevitably involves some bad moral side effects (such as civilian casualties in war). There will even be the kind of gross moral miscalculation, with terrible results, as was evident in Shatila.

Jews have been unrealistic in facing up to the new situation. The moral purity which characterized the past 1,900 years of Jewish history was due, in part, to Jewish powerlessness to inflict pain. Jews are not "genetically" perfect morally. The test of a moral people in history is not that they never sin, by omission or commission. Sin is inevitable. The moral test is whether that people admits its error and tries to correct itself for the future. Shatila notwithstanding, Israel performed so well vis-a-vis civilians in Lebanon because the army and its officers had learned from the errors of the Litani incursion in 1978. Jewish self-respect and confidence were deeply shaken by the circumstances surrounding the massacre, yet that the lessons of this tragedy will be assessed and corrected is evident from the massive outpouring of response in Israel.

All this demonstrates the truly revolutionary time in which we live, one of the great heroic ages of the Jewish people. In the enclosed essay, The Voluntary Covenant, I argue that Jews are voluntarily reaccepting the covenant, the classic mission of the Jewish people to witness and lead the world toward redemption. The Jewish people, thereby, have a new role in the covenant. Jews today are united in a new pluralism within the framework of unity which transcends existing divisions. I believe that the voluntary nature of the covenant also implies that no one -- either human or divine -- can make observance of a uniformly high standard of the covenant, or of morality, a sine qua non for Israel's right to exist. To put it another way: Israel and Jews are fallible. If they live up to past models, if their moral goodness is higher, it is so in comparison with others in the real world, and not with an abstract ideal standard. The demand that Israel be perfect is a threat to its existence; when made a condition of Israel's legitimacy, such a demand is an anti-Semitic double standard.

I would welcome your response and reaction to my enclosed essay.

Sincerely,

Yitz Greenberg

Dr. Irving (Yitz) Greenberg

* Those who would like to look into this further can refer to my essay, The Third Era in Jewish History: Power and Politics, November, 1980.

SUITE 216 / 250 WEST 57TH STREET / NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10107 / (212) 582-6116

בנות ישראל

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY

3080 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10027

NEW TELEPHONE
212 678-8060
212 RIVERSIDE 9-8000

Cable Address: RABBISEM, New York

June 1982

Dear Colleague,

Enclosed are the materials Hayyim Kieval prepared for a mini-course he taught at the recent Rabbinical Assembly Convention. Included in this packet, as well, is Elliot Gertel's Mishnah Guide organized according to subject matter.

I believe that both sets of materials can prove useful both for rabbinical continuing education and for adult education classes.

Best wishes for a good summer.

Cordially,

Rabbi Stephen C. Lerner

bv

Enclosures

THE LITURGY OF THE SHALOSH REGALIM

a mini-course in Jewish Liturgy
at the 1982 Convention of the Rabbinical Assembly
by Rabbi Hayyim Kieval

LECTURE ON "THE FOUNDATION-PRAYERS OF THE SHALOSH REGALIM"

1. The interrelationships of the Shalosh Regalim (= S. R.).

   A. In Pentateuch, S. R. (the name is found in Ex. 23:14 and elsewhere) are mentioned in each of the festival calendars, called by Hazal שלש רגלים and are treated already as a group. See Ex. 23:14-19 and 34:18-23; Lev. 23; Num. 28,29; and Deut. 16:1-17.

      (1) The Tenakh links them agriculturally, as harvest-festivals; historically (in the case of Pesah and Sukkot, explicitly), as associated with Exodus; and ritually, as occasions for sacred pilgrimage to the central sanctuary. The dominant mood is joyous: ושמחתם בחגיכם

      (2) Shavuot is tied to Pesah by the calendar; no date of its own.

   B. The Oral Torah extended and intensified these multiple relationships and linkages.

      (1) Shavuot was reinterpreted as עצרת and thus explicitly linked to Pesah and Sukkot both historically and theologically: Exodus-Sinaitic Revelation-Soujourn in the wilderness, under Divine Providence.

      (2) Hazal established common halkhic norms for the three festivals. This, in turn, resulted in a common luturgical format. (Bear in mind that liturgy is dependent on and is a reflection of halkhah, hence הלכות תפלה

      (3) Hazal, furthermore, showed bold creativity in extending the number of Mo'adim:

         (a) They reinterpreted יום טוב אחרון של חג (הסוכות) that is, שמיני עצרת as a מועד (Sukkah 48[a]) and established its character as a rain festival. Indirectly, this move eventuated in an entirely new Mo'ed,

viz., Simhat Torah, which - halakhically and liturgically - is the שמיני עצרת של יו"ט שני

(b) They doubled the number of Mo'adim by instituting the יום טוב שני של גלויות

(c) They established the new concept of חופ המועד

C. S. R. differ from the other מועדי ה' , i.e., Shabbat, Yom (zikhron) Teru'ah, and Yom ha-Kippurim, in two major aspects: they are grounded in the soil of Eretz Yisrael and the historical experience of the people Israel and, second, they are intimately associated with Temple of Jerusalem.

(1) After the destruction of Temple and its sacrificial cult, rituals that lent themselves to detachment from cult were transfered to liturgy of Synagogue and home, e.g., Korban Pesah to the Seder, waving of and processions with Lulav, recitation of Hallel, and Birkat Kohanim.

(2) The essentials of S. R. in Temple worship were now to be reflected in Synagogue prayer: שלש מצוות נוהגות ברגלים אלו הן: ראיה, חגיגה, ושמחה

(Tosefta Hagigah 1:14, and Bavli 6[b])

1. Aside from Hallel, unique prayer-rituals such as Haggadah for Pesah and Hoshanot for Sukkot, and special Scriptural readings, the Foundation Prayers (משבע של ברכות) differ from those of everyday and Shabbat primarily in text of the Amidah. Here distinction between each of the S. R. is negligible.

Furthermore, there are no variations (to speak of) between Amidah texts of Shaharit, Minhah and Ma'ariv (as contrasted with those of Shabbat, a phenomenon which challenged commentators, like Abudarham). No wonder the Payyetanim felt a need to add color and variety to the familiar words of the Foundation Prayers! Musaf Amidah for S. R., of course, differs from that of other three Amidot.

A. Basic Amidah of S. R. is unique only in the fourth (middle) berakhah, ברכת "קדושת היום" , which should be rendered as "(Proclaiming) the

Holiness of the Day." Note that Kiddush over wine is simply home version of ברכת קדושת היום in synagogue. Like names of other six berakhot of Amidah for Shabbat and S. R., Kedushat ha-Yom is Tannaitic (Rosh Hashanah, Chap. 4). Its elements are:

(1) אתה בחרתנו (Minhag Eretz Yisrael: אתה בחרת found in Yoma 87b and elsewhere in Talmud. The concept of chosenness is explicated in the sequel:

(2) ותתן לנו (Berakhot 33b) - God's loving choice of Israel is demonstrated by giving us "Mo'adim for joy." Cf. the berakhah by one who is called to the Torah. The vav is to be rendered not "and" but "because."

(a) Here the specific festival is mentioned: older Biblical name is supplemented by a theological name of post-Talmudic origin.

(b) Term zeman in each name probably adverts to hatimah: מקדש ישראל והזמנים

(c) All Regalim are associated with Exodus experience (as, indeed, are Shabbat and even R. H. and Y. K. -- זכר ליציאת מצרים

(3) ותודיענו - this is festival parallel to אתה חוננתנו as a הבדלה prayer. In Berakhot 33b it is attributed to Rav and Samuel and is called מרגניתא, a "pearl." Wording there differs from our text.

(4) יעלה ויבוא - found in Palestinian and Babylonian versions in literature. Leon J. Liebreich argued that it originated as a zikkaron prayer for Rosh Hashanah and spread to other festivals. The phrase יעלה... ויראה is not as crucial for origins as the refrains יפקד ויזכר זכרוננו ופקדוננו וכו'

(5) והשיאנו -Talmudic (Yer. Berakhot IX, 3).

(a) Hebrew of classical liturgy is Biblical, as in this echo of Psalm 24:5 - ישא ברכה מאת ה'...

(b) Central emphasis on שמחה וששון is carried through up to hatimah.

(6) ברוך... מקדש ישראל והזמנים

(a) Found in Pesahim 9:3 and 117[b]. Cf. Tos. Berakhot 3:13 and Bavli 49[a]). But there were variant texts. Soferim XIX, 5 unquely preserves a possible Palestinian wording: ברוך מקדש עמו ישראל ומועדי שמחה והזמנים ומקראי קדש

(b) Possible that each of S. R. originally had a hatimah unique to it but no traces remain. We know that Babylonian Geonim suppressed similar variations of Palestinian origin in the name of uniformity and simplification.

(c) Inclusion of Yisrael before ha-zemanim (in contrast to hatimah for Shabbat) is simply a liturgical variation with no theological significance - despite familiar Talmudic homily. Term zemanim in preference to the Biblical Mo'adim may be reflection of halakhic emphasis on keeping regalim in their proper tekufah. (see Ber, Siddur Avodat Yisrael ad loc.)

B. Musaf for S. R. is basically same as other Amidot. Ya'alah v-yavo is omitted, although the ancient Palestinian Rite included it in all Musaf services (also Sa'adia in Musaf for R. H.). Prayers dealing with korbanot are added because Hazal explain that Tefillat Musaf substitutes for Korban Musaf of Temple times:

(1) ומפני חטאינו - in Soferim XIX, 5 called (קירוסין)

(a) Opening passage seems to be Babylonian; it is missing in Palestinian (e.g., Genizah) texts.

(b) Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 35[a]) debates necessity of citing Korbanot texts from Torah. One view is that sufficient to state ככתוב בתורתך Accordingly, the Yemenite Rite (Tihklal) omits these texts both on Shabbat and Rosh Hodesh. The Sephardi Rite omits them only on S. R.

(c) These precedents have influenced the Prayerbook Commission of the Rabbinical Assembly in recent and forthcoming editions of our liturgy.

Program Notes - 5742

THE LITURGY OF THE SHALOSH REGALIM

a mini-course in Jewish liturgy
at the 1982 Convention of the Rabbinical Assembly
by Rabbi Hayyim Kieval

LECTURE ON "THE RECITATION OF HALLEL"

1. Halakhic background: basing themselves on many precedents in Scripture, the Hazal established legal norms for reciting song of praise for נסים ונפלאות ה׳ performed for Israel, notably those associated with the Exodus(see Pesahim 117a). The Exodus is mentioned in all forms of Hallel.

   A. Characteristically, Hazal felt no need to compose hymns of praise and thanksgiving תהלות לה׳ for each specific nes but contented themselves with familiar Scriptural texts, viz., the Psalms. They explained that not everyone is worthy לאמר גבורות ה׳ unless he is יכול להשתיק כל תהילתו (Megillah 17b). Contrast the Apocryphal authors and sectarians of Qumran scrolls, who did try to create original hymns, but these are pale imitations of Biblical Psalms.

   B. In addition to the familiar שיר של יום still recited in the Synagogue, a structured Hallel accompanied some rituals in the Second Temple (notably at the slaughter of paschal lambs and at the waving of the Lulav). It was also assumed, based on passages in Chronicles, that some forms of Hallel existed in the First Temple. This would make Hallel the oldest element in Jewish liturgy!

   C. Terminology: in Halakhic contexts, הלל או קריאת הלל, in Aggadic passages, אומר שירה לפני ה׳

   D. Calendar for Hallel recitation

      (1) Tannaitic (Tos. Sukkah 3:2) - 18 days plus one night: 8 days Sukkot, 8 days Hanukkah, 1st night and 1st day Pesah, one day Shavuot. The Tannaim knew nothing of Hallel on last 6 days of Pesah or on Rosh Hodesh, nor anything resembling an abbreviated Hallel: Indeed Tos. Pesahim 10:8 forbids curtailing or supplementing of Hallel. (see Lieberman, Tosefta Kifshutah, IV, p. 652.

      (2) Amoraic (Arakhin 10a) - adds Yom Tov Sheni shel Galuyot, for total of 21 days. Yer. Sukkah IV, 5 also specifies the additional first night of Pesah.

II. Forms of Hallel - note originally recited in responsive manner (Sukkah 3:10 and 38[b]). We still recite certain verses thus.

A. הלל המצרי Psalms 113-118. The name, in Aramaic form is found only in Berakhot 56[a], הלל המצרי.

(1) Bavli explains that it "displaced" Hallel ha-Gadol (see below) because it contained a multiplicity of religious concepts (Pesahim 118[a]).

(2) Name derived from Ps. 114. Ps. 113 was construed as prelude to Ps. 114.

(3) Recited at the Seder and, in many Rites, at synagogue service on first night of Pesah. Text included in Haggadah, where Pss. 113 and 114 are recited before meal.

(4) Came to be known as Hallel ha-Shalem.

B. הלל הגדול - Psalm 136 (Ta'anit 3:9, Tos. Ta'anit 2(3):16; Pesahim 10:7 and 118[a], Berakhot 4[b]).

(1) Several other psalms also so designated (Pesahim 118[a]).

(2) II Chronicles 5:13, 7:3,6 mention Levites singing songs of hallel including the refrain ki l-olam hasdo -- a probable reference to Ps. 136- at dedication of Temple.

(3) Ps. 136 was chanted during eating of Korban Pesah (cf. our Passover Haggadah) and when rains fell after a public fast.

(4) Ps. 136 included in liturgy for Shabbat and Festivals within the פסוקי דזמרה (פזמונות) (Soferim 18:2)

C. הלל של כל יום (Shabbat 118[b]).

(1) Evidence in Tenakh that Levites chanted psalms even in First Temple, especially at korban tamid.

See I Chronicles 23:30 (להודות להלל לה')

(2) Rituals like קרבן פסח and נטילת לולב were considered inconceivable without psalmody (Pesahim 5:6 and 95^b; Sukkah 4:1).

(3) In Tannaitic times, some pietists would be גומרי הלל בכל יום. The Bavli (Shabbat 118^b) equates this with פסוקי דזמרה. Soferim 18:1 defines "completing the Hallel" as referring to the final group of Psalms, viz, 145-150.

D. חצי הלל - more accurately, הלל נוגא, (הלל בדילוגין). Refers to Psalms 113-118 but with deletion of Ps. 115:1-11 and Ps. 116:1-11.

(1) Origin is still obscure. First reference is to usage on Rosh Hodesh in Babylonia (Ta'anit 28^b). When Rav (Abba Arikha) returned from Eretz Yisrael, he noted that Babylonian Jewry recited Hallel on Rosh Hodesh. He wanted to suppress this practice, which was unknown in Palestine. When he saw, however, that they recited the psalms מדלגי דלוגי, he permitted it on the principle מנהג אבותיהם בידיהם.

(2) Note that Rambam still considers Hallel on Rosh Hodesh a <u>minhag</u> and to be recited without <u>berakhot</u>. He also states: יש מדלגין דילוג אחר.

(3) The anomalies of <u>Hatzi Hallel</u> are discussed by Reuven Hammer, "On the Origin of the Partial Hallel," in <u>Conservative Judaism</u>, XXIII, 4 (Summer, 1969):

(a) Babylonian Jewry, remote from Temple practice, could not comprehend the absence of Hallel on Rosh Hodesh (and the closing days of Pesah). They instituted its recitation but consciously deleted two passages to indicate their deviation (in spite of the prohibition in Tos. Pesahim 10:8).

(b) After Babylonian practice exerted its influence on Palestinian Jewry, the authorities adopted the modified Hallel for both Rosh Hodesh and the closing days of Pesah. The latter change, which began with the 7th day, was justified by means of Aggadic homilies, notably the one

Program Notes - 5742

on מעשי ידי טובעים בים ואתם אומרים שירה לפני cf. Pesikta d'Rav Kahana 189, Yalkut Mishle, 960 (end).

III. The Berakhot for Hallel

A. מקום שנהגו לברך אחריו יברך אחריו (סוכה ג:יא) אבל לפניו, מצוה לברך (סוכה לט, עמוד א)

B. Before Hallel - differences in Minhag.

(1) Most Rites distinguish between:

(a) Hallel Shalem - לגמור את ההלל
prescribed by Amram, Saadiah, Rambam

(b) Hatzi Hallel - לקרוא את ההלל

(2) Ashkenazi Rite - always לקרוא את ההלל
prescribed by school of Rashi, Rosh, R. Meir Rothenberg.

(3) Rambam: no berakhah on Rosh Hodesh (Hilkhot Megillah v-Hanukkah, III, 7). The reason is: because it is a minhag.

C. After Hallel - Mishnah (Pesahim 10:3) prescribes ברכת השיר.

(1) This lengthy passage began with נשמת כל חי and ended with יהללוך... כל מעשיך, as in the Passover Haggadah. It was abbreviated in the Synagogue to the closing passage only, יהללוך וכו'.

(2) The hatimah is בא"י... מלך מהלל בתשבחות

(3) This format is parallel to that of the Pesukei d-Zimra (Zemirot) which are introduced by ברוך שאמר with its hatimah and is closed by ישתבח with its hatimah.

IV. Why Hallel is said on some holidays and not on others.

A. Why no Hallel on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?

(1) Halakhic parallel with other Mo'adim would seem to require liturgical parallel but, as an exquisite Aggadah explains, these days are too solemn

for such joyous psalms (Arakhin 10b)

(2) In fact, however, the Mishnah (R. H. 4:7) hints that Hallel may have been recited in an early period when R. H. was still primarily a joyous festival:

B. Why no Hallel on Purim? (Arakhin 10b)

(1) Because it commemorates

(2) Because reading of Megillah replaces Hallel.

C. Origin of Hallel on Hanukkah

(1) In Second Maccabees 10:5-8, re-dedication of Temple was celebrated "for 8 days with gladness, like the Sukkot festival . . .they offered hymns of praise, etc." Thanksgiving for the nes of Hanukkah was an imitation of (in the first case, a compensation for) the Hallel of the 8 days of Sukkot.

(2) Hallel on Hanukkah is not mentioned in the Mishnah (which is silent on Hanukkah generally!) But a Baraita in Bavli Shabbat 21b specifies Hallel for all 8 days of Hanukkah.

Program Notes - 5742

THE LITURGY OF THE SHALOSH REGALIM

a mini-course in Jewish Liturgy
at the 1982 Convention of the Rabbinical Assembly
by Rabbi Hayyim Kieval

LECTURE ON "PIYYUTIM FOR THE SHALOSH REGALIM"

1. From Tannaitic period on, there was a process of poetic embellishment of the Foundation Prayers (Tefillah shel hovah or Stammgebete) by Payyetanim of Eretz Yisrael and Diaspora.

   A. Cycles/chains of Piyyutim were composed for insertion at specific points within Amidah (called Kerovah) and within Birkhot ha-Shema (called Yotzrot in Shaharit and Ma'ara(i)vot in Arvit).

      (1) Selihot form an ancient and major category of Piyyut, the largest in quantity.

      (2) Hoshanot were composed for processions of Lulav in Temple and later Synagogue. Both Selihot and Hoshanot(The earliest forms are similar in style!) go back to Second Commonwealth and Tannaitic periods.

      (3) The Kerovah, Yotzrot and Ma'aravot cycles originated in Amoraic times and flourished throughout Middle Ages in the various Rites (Minhagim).

   B. Special forms of Piyyut: Kinot for Tisha b-Av; Azharot, and, later, Akdamut for Shavuot, Tal for Pesah and Geshem for Shemini Atzeret. (For a summary of relationship of Piyyut to Foundation Prayers and theories on its origin, see H. Kieval, The High Holy Days, Chapters 1 and 2 and Appendix on The Kerovah.)

2. Samples of Piyyut for Shalosh Regalim: Geshem and Tal

   A. All Rites have some form of piyyut for Geshem and Tal. The Ashkenazi Rite, which derives ultimately from (obsolete) Minhag Eretz Yisrael via (obsolete) Minhag Romania and Minhag Italiani, strongly favors compositions by the prolific Elazar Kalir, an early Payyetan of Eretz Yisrael (date unknown). He was the composer of both, so-called "Tefillat" Geshem and "Tefillat" Tal used by Ashkenazim.

   B. The Halakhic Background

      (1) These are not "tefillot," either halakhically or structurally, but poetic embellishments of the Amidah on two Mo'adim. Sephardim call them Tikkun Geshem/Tal.

(2) The Halakhah is that, on Shemini Atzeret, we are only to be מזכירין גבורות גשמים (בתחית המתים) (Berakhot 5:2, cf. Ta'anit 1:1, 4:1-2)

(a) The actual petition for rain does not come until after the עולי רגל (שואלין בגשמים) have had time to return home. Then, Amidah includes ותן טל ומטר וכו'.

(b) Rain that falls too soon is a קללה. That is why we ask that, when God does "cause the wind to blow and the rain to fall," it shall come: לברכה ולא לקללה סימן

(3) As for Tal, there is actually no Halakhic requirement. It is a Minhag on the model of Gesham. That is why the Ashkenazi Rite is silent after the first day of Pesah, when we stop reciting משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם. The Sephardi and other Rites substitute מוריד הטל. The

(a) Dew is a product of the natural climatic conditions of Eretz Yisrael where it "falls" about 200 nights annually.

(b) Palestinian Talmud states: ובקיץ מזכירין מוריד הטל שטל סימן יפה לעולם (Yer. Ta'anit 1:1)

(c) Tal is a blessing at all times; hence, it is not appropriate to state לברכה ולא לקללה in the Piyyut. We say it only because the Tal piyyut is modeled on that of Geshem.

C. Structural and stylistic background

(1) Kalir's Geshem and Tal resemble Kerovah compositions but have significant differences, e.g., concentration on the 2nd berakhah of the Amidah, called Gevurot (cf. The Mishnah quoted above, from Berakhot 5:2, et al).

(2) Even those prayerbooks which still include Kalir's Geshem and Tal have abbreviated them considerably.

(a) The complete format of Geshem begins Af beri. The section beginning Zekhor av, which most contemporary Siddurim present as "Tefillat" Geshem, represents only the final link in the

chain of poems in the original composition.

(b) The complete Tal begins בדעתו אביעה חידות
The section beginning Tal tein, which is all that is included in most "traditional" prayerbooks today is, again, only the finale of Kalir's Tal poem-cycle.

3. Detailed analysis of excerpts from Kalir's piyyutim.

A. Geshem - Zekhor av, etc.

(1) An alef-bet acrostic, beginning after the initial zekhor. Each of the six stanzas begins with the word zekhor, which probably alludes to the rule מזכירין גבורות גשמים

(2) The successive stanzas recount the deeds and devotion of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron and the Twelve Tribes, and the miraculous ways in which God came to their aid with reference to mayim (which is the final word of every verse). There are two refrains, alternating after the four lines of each stanza.

(3) In content, the poem is freighted with a wealth of learned references both to Scriptural and Rabbinic sources.

(4) The text beginning: שאתה הוא... משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם is a prose transition back to the Foundation Prayers of the Amidah. This passage is standard in all versions of the piyyutim for Geshem and Tal.

B. Tal - Tal tein, etc.

(1) Follows essentially the same format as Zekhor av. Also an alphabetical acrostic, but in tashrak order. Each of the six stanzas begins and ends with Tal. There is also a rhyming scheme within each stanza, typical of formal, "literary" piyyutim.

(2) In content, the poem extols Eretz Yisrael, generally, and Yerushalaym in particular. It is a prayer for Divine aid in fructifying the beloved soil. The decided earthiness is balanced by the familiar plea to hasten the ge'ulah of the oppressed people, a reflection of the Midrashic interpretation of dew as symbolic of revival טל של תחיה (Shabbat 88b).

AJC CHICAGO

FROM: RANDY CZARLINSKY

5-6-82

___ HAROLD APPLEBAUM

___ GENE DUBOW

___ SUSIE SCHUB

___ SHEBA MITTELMAN

___ ABE KARLIKOW

___ GEORGE GRUEN

___ LOIS GOTTESMAN

___ DAVID GELLER

___ JIM RUDIN

X MARC TANENBAUM

___ HOWARD KOHR

___ MORT YARMON

___ JONATHAN SCHENKER

Minneapolis Star and Tribune Thur., April 29, 1982 • 11A

City man leads 1,200 of world's rabbis

By Neal Gendler
Staff Writer

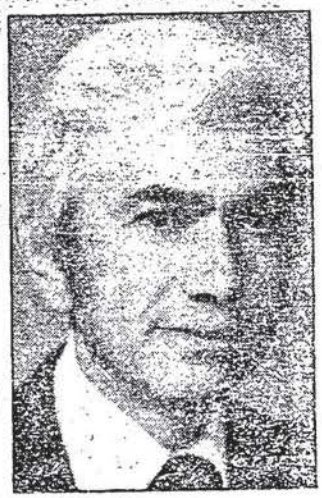
Rabbi Arnold Goodman of Minneapolis was installed Wednesday night as president of the Rabbinical Assembly, the international association of Conservative rabbis.

He now heads 1,200 rabbis in Judaism's Conservative movement, the world's largest, with a membership estimated to be as large as 2½ million. He will continue during his two-year term to serve as rabbi of Adath Jeshurun Congregation, 3400 Dupont Av. S.

Goodman was installed at the assembly's annual meeting at the Concord Hotel in Kiamesha Lake, N.Y. He succeeds Rabbi Seymour Cohen of Chicago.

Most of the nation's approximately six million Jews live in the East, and Goodman is only the second rabbi in a synagogue west of the Mississippi River to be elected president. The first also was from Minneapolis — Rabbi David Aronson, who was president in 1947 and 1948 while rabbi of Beth El Congregation.

Goodman continued on page 11A



Arnold Goodman

Goodman also will sit on the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which represents organized American Jewry in public affairs.

Goodman described the Rabbinical Assembly as a forum for "universal issues, like nuclear proliferation, abortion, the ERA; as well as specific issues of Jewish concern."

This year the assembly adopted a resolution in support of a freeze in nuclear arms development by the United States and the Soviet Union, and another calling on the Reagan administration to review cuts in social-service programs.

The positions it takes are not binding on its members, but they tend to set directions for the Conservative movement.

In Minneapolis, where he leads a congregation of 1,150 families, Goodman has been an advocate for Jewish education, the state of Israel and equality for women in Jewish practice.

American Judaism has three principal groupings: Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, reflecting different approaches to Jewish law and tradition. The Conservative rabbinate is "guided by a commitment to Jewish law and to its validity, while at the same time we seek to be responsive to the demands of modernity," Goodman said.

Concerns facing the Conservative movement include women as rabbis, uniform criteria for conversion, the status of Conservative Judaism in Israel, the difficulties of families in which Jews have married people who were not born Jewish, education, culture and Israel.

Goodman, 53, is credited by officials of his congregation with innovations that have brought the synagogue national attention. He has cast a long shadow not only physically — he is tall and lean — but also as an orator.

He was born in New York, ordained in 1952, served two years as a U.S. Army chaplain and holds a law degree. He was rabbi of a Chicago congregation from 1954 to 1965 before coming to Adath Jeshurun in 1966.

"I think there's no question but what the Adath, during the tenure of Rabbi Goodman, has been responsible for a great deal of the innovative development and ... actually leading in many areas of progress the Conservative movement has had in the past 10 to 15 years," said Martin Miller, a congregation vice president, who characterized Goodman as "a very dynamic, very strong personality, a person with a great deal of original thinking."

"He's a very ideal-oriented person," said congregation president Norman Pink. "He's always looking forward, always looking for new ideas."

In 1969 Adath Jeshurun became "if not the first, certainly one of the first" Conservative congregations to count women in the *minyan*, the 10 adult Jews necessary for a religious service, Pink said. Such status became an official Conservative position several years later. At Adath Jeshurun women have ritual and organizational equality: Last year's congregation president was a woman.

Goodman has made Jewish education a primary concern, said congregation officials. Adath Jeshurun groups children in its Saturday-morning education program by age, with older ones teaching the younger, a method copied nationally.

Goodman also conceived a nationally copied society to handle death and burial, with congregants performing all mortuary and counseling functions for those who request the society's services. The society's activities were the subject of an ABC-TV documentary and a book by Goodman called "A Plain Pine Box."

He has been president of the Minnesota Rabbinical Association and he teaches Jewish studies at The Col-

rom page 1A

lege of St. Catherine in St. Paul.

Goodman's presidency will require time away from synagogue duties, and congregation officials said Goodman sought the synagogue board's permission before accepting nomination. He plans to minimize his absence on weekends, the focal time for worship. The synagogue has an assistant rabbi, but he plans to leave for Israel this summer and a replacement is being sought.

Pink said he believed Goodman's presidency would benefit the synagogue, because Goodman will acquire ideas and experiences and see more of what's happening elsewhere to help identify Adath's strengths and weaknesses.

Goodman said he wanted the job because he was "concerned about the future of our movement and the future of American Jewry. I believe I'm at a stage in my life and my career where I feel comfortable responding to the opportunity to offer leadership."

Goodman and his wife, Rae, live in St. Louis Park. Their oldest son, Ariel, is an industrial economist in Israel; their second son, Daniel, is a physician at University of Minnesota Hospitals, and their daughter, Shira, is a junior at Princeton University.

The American Jewish Committee

MINNEAPOLIS - ST. PAUL CHAPTER • 241 First Avenue North • Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401 • (612) 332-3344

May 4, 1982

Rabbi Arnold Goodman
Adath Jeshurun Congregation
3400 Dupont Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Dear Rabbi Goodman:

On behalf of the Twin Cities Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, and myself personally, I want to officially congratulate you on your election as president of the Rabbinical Assembly.

Please let me know if there is anything the national office of the AJC can do to help you in your duties or provide you with studies, statistics, or any other information to make your task easier. As you know, AJC has enormous informational resources at its command, and you may want to call upon us at some future date.

Again, mazel tov on your new position.

Sincerely yours,

Harry J. Lerner, Pres.

HJL:mc

memorandum

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date August 5, 1981

to Field Staff

from Gladys Rosen

subject Questionnaire on AJSWW Programs and Courses

To update the Academy's efforts to meet the Jewish Education needs and interests of AJC members, we are distributing the attached questionnaire to a random sample of 2000 members across the country. Their responses will serve as a guide in planning our new courses and programs in Judaic Studies. Suggestions and recommendations based on your own experience will also be most welcome.

Should you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact the Academy. Many thanks for your interest and your cooperation.

GR/hh

81-750-114

the academy for Jewish studies without walls

• 165 EAST 56 STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022 • PLaza 1-4000 •

YEHUDA ROSENMAN, Director

August 17, 1981

Dear Friend,

We would very much appreciate your taking a few minutes to fill out the attached questionnaire designed to elicit your interests and preferences in the area of Jewish studies.

The Academy for Jewish Studies Without Walls of the American Jewish Committee has over the years offered a series of correspondence courses, and educational seminars designed for adults. To help us to make these programs maximally responsive to the needs and interests of the large education-oriented Jewish public, we are asking you to complete our brief questionnaire.

We look forward to your response and thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Yehuda Rosenman
Director

YR/ms
81-750-103
7/20/81

Questionnaire To Determine Preferences Regarding Programs of the Academy for Jewish Studies Without Walls

You may know that since 1974 the American Jewish Committee, through the Academy, has sponsored programs in Jewish education for adults. We would like to take about 15 minutes of your time to get your reactions to these programs.

The Academy's basic program comprises ten courses in Judaic studies with syllabi to be used for individual home study by correspondence. The Academy also offers intensive weekend or 5-day seminars conducted by academic specialists and dealing with different aspects of Jewish culture.

In preparing for the coming year we would like to know your preferences. You can help us by answering the questionnaire and returning it to us in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

I. Would you be interested in a substantive home study course with required readings and periodic assignments?

If no, proceed to Question II; if yes, proceed to Questions Ia. - Id.

Ia. Would you want the course to be the traditional semester of 15 weeks?

Yes _____ No _____

Ib. Would you want to qualify for college credit?

Yes _____ No _____

Ic. If not 15 weeks, would you prefer home study courses of shorter duration?

Yes ____

8 weeks Yes _____ No _____

4 weeks Yes _____ No _____

Other _____

Id. If interested in home study, these are subjects for which there are syllabi and reading lists. Which of them would you wish to study?

i. Concepts of the Jewish faith _____

ii. Biblical thought _____

iii. Talmudic thought _____

iv. Modern Jewish thought _____

v. Jewish-Christian encounter _____

vi. Hasidism _____

vii. Bio-ethical issues in the Rabbinic tradition _____

viii. History of American Jewry _____

ix. Zionism _____

x. The American-Jewish experience in literature _____

xi. Any other subjects in the field of Judaica which interest you?

_____

II. Would you care to meet with others in your area for group study and discussion?

Yes _____ No _____

If no, go to Question III; if yes, go to questions IIa. and IIb.

IIa. Would you want the group to meet once a week _____ or once a month? _____ Other _____

IIb. Which subject (s) (see list Id) are you interested in?

(Use numbers) _____

III. Would you be interested in travelling to seminars conducted by academic specialists for concentrated study sessions ?

If yes, go to Questions IIIa. & IIIb. If no, go to Question IV.

IIIb. Which among the following subject areas would you wish to study in these seminars?

i. Specific books of the Bible _____

ii. Rabbinic thought _____

iii. Modern Jewish Philosophy _____

iv. Contemporary literature by Jews _____

v. Contemporary literature about Jews _____

vi. American Jewish Experience _____

vii. Sephardic Jewish Experience _____

viii. Specific periods or movements in Jewish history (name)

_____

ix. Other subject(s) _____

_____

IV. Please list any other types of adult education programs which might interest you:

_____

_____

_____

_____

V. Do you wish to know the results of this questionnaire evaluation?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, may we have your name and address?

Thank you for your interest.