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coming as one might have hoped," he said. "We have not always been models of pluralism and tolerance. Orthodox Jews will have to learn to be more civil in their rhetoric, more respectful in their approach, more conscious of their responsibility to 'love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

But beyond the extended hands of friendship and the dramatic shift in tone, Schindler and Lamm came to identical conclusions:

The problems that American Jewry faces are serious but not unprecedented, they both said. Differences in religious understanding cannot be bridged, so Jews will have to learn to live together despite their differences, they agreed. Both urged an end to rhetorical harshness and an effort to solve those problems which could be resolved. Each was unusually forthcoming.

Lamm walked an ideological tightrope with remarkable grace. He is subject to attack from his own right wing for being too conciliatory toward movements it regards as heretical. On the left, he is expected to reach out and embrace his fellow Jews. Lamm's problem is both theological and pragmatic. Pragmatically, he knows that he must work with non-Orthodox Jews and their rabbis. Yet theologically, how does one work with these Jews without abandoning the tenets of Orthodoxy that deny the validity of deviant forms of Judaism?

It is an egregious error, Lamm argued, to deny the functional validity of Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative Judaism. "Facts cannot be wished away...and the facts are that the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist communities are not only more numerous...but they are vital, powerful, and dynamic; they are committed to Jewish survival," Lamm said. Furthermore, "from a functional point of view, non-Orthodox rabbis are valid leaders of Jewish religious communities."

If non-Orthodox Jews "are sincere, if they believe in God, if they endeavor to carry out the consequences of their faith in a consistent manner—then they are religious people," said Lamm.

Such leaders have spiritual dignity, he acknowledged, but he would not concede their legitimacy. "The criteria of such legitimacy is the halachah, the fundamental acceptance of the Torah's divine origin," Lamm said.

Had his speech ended there, one Conservative rabbi said, "it would have been a letdown. He went as far as he could to reach out to other Jews—yet it was not far enough."

Bold Proposal

But Lamm introduced a bold pro-

posal for a national *beth din*, or religious court, comprised of three judges "chosen on the basis of scholarship and personal halachic observance, not institutional affiliation. Rabbis who are expert and personally observant may be authorized to serve." This rabbinic body would be able to rule on all Jewish divorces and conversions, with the cooperation of all Jewish denominations, Lamm proposed.

The words were chosen carefully. Twice, Lamm indicated that it would be the individual rabbi and not the institutional affiliation that would be at stake. He left the door open for others to participate, specifically recalling that the authority of the late Rabbi Boaz Cohen of the Jewish Theological Seminary was recognized. His *gittin* were accepted by the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America and its leader, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik.

Lamm clearly understood the implications of his proposal. "Many of my Orthodox colleagues will not go along because of the implied 'recognition' of non-Orthodox rabbis," he said. "But they have to acknowledge the need to alleviate untold personal suffering by accepting purely halachic stands and not being distracted by organizational/denominational considerations."

The response to Lamm's proposal was positive. "It's a good start, and I hope he doesn't back away from it when he faces the *Roshel Yeshiva*," said one Orthodox participant, referring to the often right-wing yeshiva heads.

Proposal on Divorce

Somewhat elliptically, Lamm also proposed a halachic solution to the problem of *mamzerut*. Deliberately omitting Conservative rabbis, he asked Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis to "explain explicitly to the people they are marrying that they do so according to their understanding of marriage law...and not in accordance with Orthodox law." He also pleaded that these liberal rabbis insist on a *get* before officiating at the remarriage of someone first married in an Orthodox ceremony.

He thus alluded to the view put forth by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the revered Orthodox halachic authority who died the same week, that Reform marriages are not marriages by Orthodox standards; thus even without a religious divorce after the breakup of a first marriage, there need be no fear of *mamzerut* from a second marriage since no first marriage, as understood by the Orthodox, took place to begin with.

In a sense, each participant played the role assigned to him. Elie Wiesel was poetic and pleading. He reviewed the tradition of *clal Yisrael*,



Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations: "I have more than once indulged in the anger of the outcast, using words and invoking images and bitter analogies which I now regret."



Orthodox Rabbi Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University: "Orthodox Jews have not always been as forthcoming as one might have hoped. We have not always been models of pluralism and tolerance."

the unity of the people of Israel, and *ahavat Yisrael*, the love for fellow Jews each Jew is commanded to nurture.

"The enemy always knew who was a Jew," he said. "Our generation is privileged to define for itself what we are." Wiesel urged each movement to be critical of itself and compassionate toward the others. And he recounted his experiences of Jewish unity, in "the kingdom of night," where all Jews were one as concentration camp inmates, in Moscow where Jews reached out for each other and for the past of Israel, and in liberated Jerusalem, where generals and rabbis celebrated the reunification of an ancient people with the eternal city.

Speaking as a Reconstructionist, author Silberman reviewed what was right and wrong with each of the movements. He suggested that Orthodox triumphalism was premature. Orthodoxy is now holding its own, Silberman said. "But it is too early to tell if it can expand its base. And American Orthodoxy cannot remain unchanged. It is impossible to predict what impact the women's movement will have," he said with a smile. American hedonism and emphasis on self-fulfillment will also have its impact, he warned.

Cohen dissented from the working hypothesis of the conference that Jews were divided. "There has never been as much unity in Jewish history. We have never been a unified people," Cohen told his audience. "We have achieved a unity which is unprecedented. It is centered around the fact of the State of Israel, which has done more to unify Jews than any single phenomenon."

Why then the fear of disunity? Cohen asked. "The Orthodox are raising the issue because of their increased power in the State of Israel...and because American Jewish laity have accorded them

power in the community, by regarding them as the 'authentic Jews,'" Cohen said. "The present alarm grows out of the increasing assertiveness of Reform Judaism and the decision of Orthodoxy to confront them head on."

One rabbi, alarmed at the growing signs of polarization and disunity, said: "It's ironic that the one thing each of the denominational leaders could agree upon was that the threat of disunity was not as bad as we thought. Are they trying to shirk responsibility for a situation they helped create?" he asked.

The final word went to the man who initiated the conference and who first rang the alarm of a schism. Yitz Greenberg demonstrated that his thinking had moved far beyond the denominational leaders. Like Norman Lamm, Greenberg was both theological and pragmatic. He suggested nothing less than an Orthodox theology that accepts the legitimacy of the other denominations with love and respect and takes seriously the issues of modernity, authority, autonomy, personal integrity and equality that non-Orthodox Jews raise.

Greenberg proposed a practical program of intra-religious dialogue. "The American Jewish community spends more than \$10 million a year on inter-religious dialogue and less than 1 percent of that sum on intra-religious dialogue," he exclaimed.

A communal professional at the conference, who attends Jewish meetings regularly, summed up the conference best. "All the tough issues were aired, but we knew what they were. The fact that the four talked to each other is a hopeful sign. Calling a truce in the war of incivility and introducing a tone of respect is a true measure of progress."

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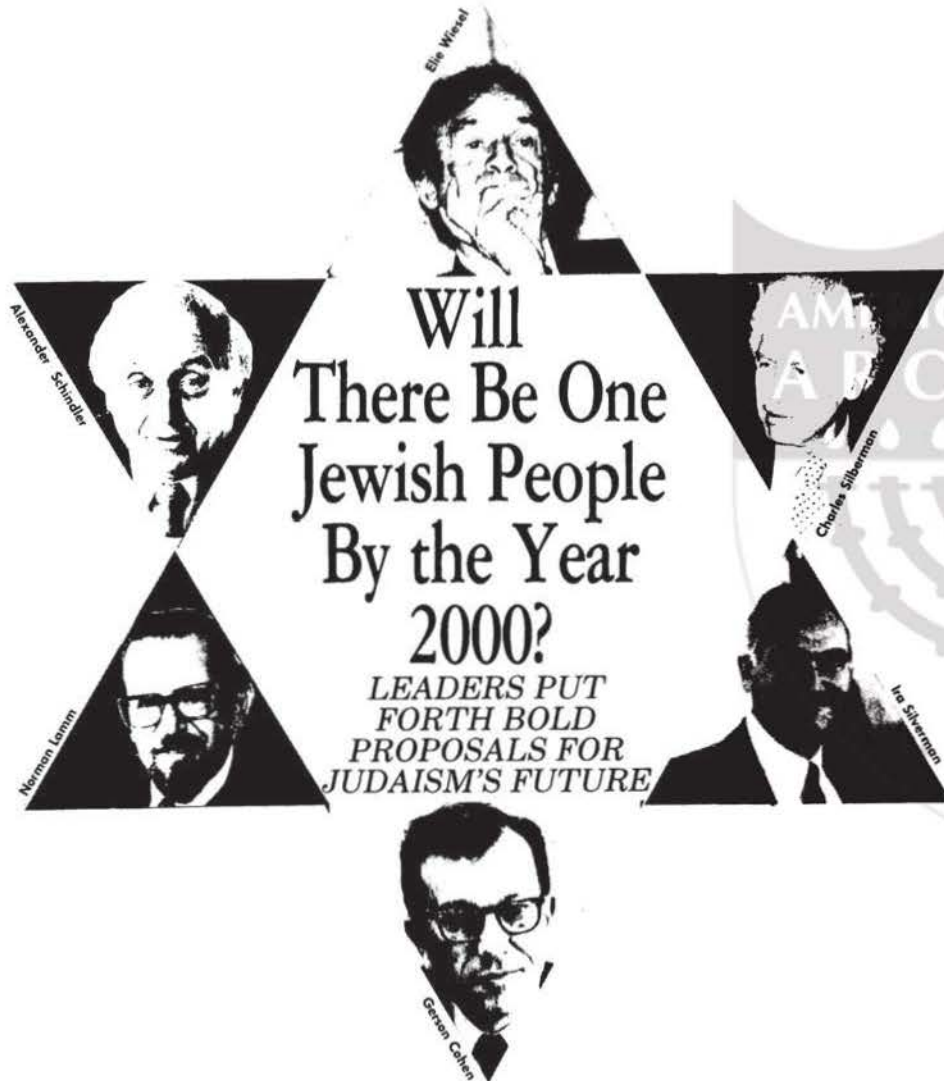
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Jewish religious leaders address threat of schism



BY MICHAEL BERENBAUM
 PRINCETON, N.J.—In single order file, if not together in dialogue, leaders of American Judaism's four denominations gathered here March 16-17 to probe the question, "Will There Be One Jewish People by the Year 2000?"

Convened by Clal, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, the conference was the brainchild of center president Rabbi Irving Greenberg.

An Orthodox rabbi often critical of his movement, Greenberg first sounded the alarm of a potential schism in *World Jewry* in an influential and widely circulated paper. He has since pressed on, advocating the urgent need for intra-religious dialogue between Jewish denominations—a call that has historically met with little success, or even interest on the part of many.

The Princeton conference represented a small milestone in Greenberg's campaign. Assembled was a cross section of communal leadership from Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist and secular backgrounds. Among them were former United Jewish Appeal chairmen and Federation of officers, rabbis, scholars, teachers, philanthropists, communal professionals and laypersons.

Leading Lights of Judaism

They came to hear some of the leading lights of American Judaism. Three were presidents of their movement's seminaries: Orthodox Rabbi Norman Lamm of Yeshiva University, Rabbi Gerson Cohen, retiring chancellor of the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary, and Ira Silverman, who is completing a five-year term as president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. The fourth was Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the fiery leader of Reform Jewry's Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

They were joined by writer Elie Wiesel, who speaks in the name of an experience that made no distinctions among Jews, and Charles Silberman, whose widely acclaimed work, *A Certain People*, has established him as a distinguished interpreter of American Jewry.

But it was not a dialogue. The speakers appeared sequentially, never to occupy the same platform or dais. Was it a concession to extremists or a measure designed to insure civility?

The event was closed to the press—at least until after the four institutional leaders—Lamm, Cohen, Schindler and Silverman—had finished speaking. But by noon Monday, March 17, when Silberman rose to comment on what had happened, the conference was opened—

and within minutes everything that had taken place behind close doors was revealed.

Divisive Issues Clear

The issues threatening Jewish unity were clear to all: There is a growing polarization within American Jewry between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews caused in part by significant demographic changes and bold initiatives by liberal Judaism.

Before long, many fear, committed Jews from different denominations will not be able to marry one another or even be recognized as Jews by many other Jews. Worse yet, there is a growing thunder of extremist rhetoric which makes dialogue—let alone compromise—difficult.

Three problems of personal status are central to the debate: divorce, conversion, and patrilineal descent.

Orthodox and Conservative Judaism require that a religious divorce document known as a *get* be issued along with a civil divorce before a party is free to remarry. The *get* may only be initiated by the husband. If a woman remarries after a civil divorce, but without a *get*, the children born of such a union are considered *mamzerim*—illegitimate. Under traditional Jewish law, or *halacha*, they may marry only other *mamzerim*, with the same applying to their descendants.

In contrast, Reform Judaism does not require a religious divorce and Reconstructionists do not follow the traditional formula for a *get*. Even some religious divorces written by Conservative rabbis are not recognized by segments of the Orthodox rabbinate.

Divorce rates are rising—and Jews have the highest rate of second marriage of any ethnic group—so the problem of *mamzerut* is growing geometrically as many non-traditional Jews produce children in their second marriages that traditionally observant Jews will not consider for marriage. Eventually, some fear, Orthodox Jews will consider all non-Orthodox Jews suspect as marriage partners, unless they can show a family history untainted by *mamzerut*.

Conversion Dispute

Disputes surrounding conversion are equally divisive. Orthodox rabbis in the United States and the state-sponsored rabbinate in Israel do not recognize non-Orthodox conversion, even where the halachic requirements of circumcision and *mikvah*, or ritual bath, have been followed. Even some Conservative rabbis do not accept the validity of those Reform conversions that do not follow traditional practice.

Compounding this problem, in 1983 the Reform movement voted to



Rabbi Ira Silverman, president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, criticized Orthodox Rabbi Norman Lamm for not appearing with him on the same platform: "Am I not Jewish? Am I *traffe*? That's the way it feels."



Schism? What schism? asked Conservative Rabbi Gerson Cohen, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary: "There has never been as much unity in Jewish history... It is centered around the fact of the State of Israel."

accept as Jews children of marriages in which the father alone is Jewish, if the child is brought up as a Jew and identifies with the community in concrete ways, such as becoming bar mitzva. This stand, known as patrilineal descent, is an anathema to Conservative and Orthodox Judaism, which hew to the traditional criterion conferring Jewishness only upon those born of a Jewish mother. Others must convert, according to traditional practice. These more traditional denominations reject the Jewishness of a whole new class of people being welcomed as Jews by the Reform.

The rate of conversions and mixed marriages is skyrocketing. Cautious estimates indicate that more than 10,000 people a year become Jews by choice—mostly in Conservative and Reform ceremonies unrecognized by Orthodox—and the intermarriage rate is at least one in three. With Jewish men intermarrying twice as often as Jewish women, the problem will only intensify.

There was a feeling of discomfort among the four denominational presidents. Until the last moment, the attendance of these four at one conference on Jewish unity was uncertain. Lamm arrived late and was not present for Schindler's speech. He apologized, saying he had gotten lost. Others regarded his absence as "diplomatic."

Although each represented a movement and often spoke as though in the name of the denomination they represented, each leader was careful to indicate that he spoke for himself alone.

The statements they made were not without risk.

There were harsh words. Silver-

man criticized Lamm for not appearing on the same platform. "I am troubled that we have to speak in a series, never appearing together. Am I not Jewish?" Silverman asked. "Am I *traffe*? That's the way it feels."

He was adamant in his critique of Orthodoxy's sexism. "Reconstructionism comes to positions not because of salability but on principle. Our fundamental devotion to equality requires a commitment to patrilineal descent." Silverman called upon Orthodox and Conservative Judaism to consider change.

Schindler Apologizes

Words of consolation and the hope of friendship were extended from the extremes. Schindler was self-critical. "In my volleys with Orthodoxy," he said, "I have, in the heat of response to what I saw as an attack, more than once indulged in the anger of the outcast, using words and invoking images and bitter analogies which I now regret."

Some months ago, Schindler accused Orthodox leaders of practicing "*selectzia*," the word used by the Nazis for the selection process of who was to live and who was to die at the concentration camps. But unlike the Orthodox, Schindler said, the Nazis never distinguished Jew from Jew.

Without retreating from the positions he advocated, Schindler apologized for the tone of some of his statements. "I have responded in kind to the zeal of Orthodoxy's most extreme spokespersons, using their scorn as an excuse for not truly striving to lessen the pain of others," he said.

Lamm was equally candid and critical of his movement. "Orthodox Jews have not always been as forth-

Baltimore

JEWISH TIMES

Candle Lighting. April 18. 6:29 p.m.

AMERICAN JEWISH

EDITORIAL

Daring To Talk

One of the more important issues of the day in the American Jewish community is the widening schism among the various branches of Judaism. We have given the ongoing story a good bit of coverage, beginning last July with a cover story by Rabbi Yitz Greenberg on whether or not there will be one Jewish people in the year 2000.

This week we call our readers' attention to a story (see page 40) on a recent conference sponsored by CLAL (the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership), an organization headed by Rabbi Greenberg, which brought together some

of the key leaders of the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist movements in this country in an effort to have them engage in dialogue and address thorny theological questions that, if left unanswered, could result in the irreparable split of the Jewish people.

The format of the conference had the leaders of each movement deliver a prepared speech, but they never appeared on the dais at the same time and there was no dialogue. Still, given the climate of alienation, it was an accomplishment just to have them present and offering their suggestions to promote a renewed sense of Jewish unity.

Calling For A Truce In The War Of Incivility

The leaders of the major denominations addressed a two-day conference on the growing schism within Judaism. And though they didn't engage in dialogue, it was a start.

STAFF REPORT
Special To The BALTIMORE JEWISH TIMES



RABBI YITZ GREENBERG: Called for a major expansion of intra-Jewish dialogue and more tolerance and respect.



IRA SILVERMAN: No one group has "a monopoly on truth."



RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER: Defended patrilineal descent but apologized for the tone of some statements about the Orthodox.



DR. GERSON COHEN: Disagreed with the premise of the conference, asserting that "there has never been as much Jewish unity" as now.



RABBI NORMAN LAMM: Called for the creation of a National Bet Din.

Princeton, N.J. — They came together to speak, the leaders of the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements and the president of Yeshiva University, and though it was less than a dialogue — they gave prepared talks and never appeared on the dais at the same time — it was still a major advancement in the cause of Jewish unity.

There were harsh words and there were words of conciliation and in the end, several proposals emerged that will now be studied carefully, ranging from an Orthodox leader's call for a national religious court to a Reform leader's suggestion that the rabbis of each branch exchange pulpits.

The occasion was the first annual critical issues conference sponsored by CLAL (the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership), an organization headed by Rabbi Yitz Greenberg and dedicated to Jewish unity and leadership education.

More than 250 of North American Jewry's most prominent lay, rabbinic and professional leaders were on hand for the two-day session in an effort to develop practical solutions to the widening gulf separating the different denominations within Judaism.

Participants were told at the outset that the goal was not to come up with a panacea but to "nurture passionate advocates for unity" and to take a stand against polarization.

Among the proposals was Rabbi Norman Lamm's call for the creation of a National Bet Din, comprised of three judges "chosen on the basis of scholarship and personal halachic observance, not institutional affiliation."

Dr. Lamm, an Orthodox leader and president of Yeshiva University, was aware of the implications of his proposal. "Many of my Orthodox colleagues will not go along because of the implied 'recognition' of non-

Orthodox rabbis," he said. "But they have to acknowledge the need to alleviate untold personal suffering by accepting purely halachic stands and not being distracted by organizational / denominational considerations."

In his presentation, Lamm sought to walk a delicate balance between the right wing Orthodox who would be critical of any conciliatory moves towards the other branches, and the left wing and centrist Orthodox who would favor dialogue with fellow Jews. Said Lamm: "We must try our best within the limits of our integrity to search for Jewish unity. No amount of good-will posturing will resolve the problems facing Jews today. Although there can be more than one response within Jewish law, a pluralism which accepts everything as legitimate can lead to spiritual nihilism. If everything is kosher, then nothing is kosher.

"Orthodoxy," he contin-

ued, "is by its very nature tied to a transcendent view of a Being who is beyond us. That vision includes the revelation of Torah and halacha as a way of life. It therefore obligates us, and we are not authorized to dispose of it according to personal taste or whim."

He called for a renewed spirit of tolerance among all denominations, saying that the issues of conversion and especially Jewish divorce pose a grave threat to Jewish unity. "If Orthodox and Conservative Jews cannot recognize a non-halachic conversion by a Reform rabbi," he said, "at least the person involved can later undergo a conversion according to Orthodox Jewish law. But the lack of a Jewish divorce (get) would label a subsequent Jewish remarriage adultery, and children of that union mamzerim (bastards) who are forbidden to marry other Jews for generations."

Lamm suggested reviving the concept of a National Bet

Din, first discussed in the 1950s to deal with these issues of personal status.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the outspoken president of the Reform movement, apologized for the tone of some of his harsh statements in the past about Orthodoxy while maintaining the positions he advocated. "I have in the heat of response to what I saw as an attack more than once indulged in the anger of the outcast, using words and invoking images and bitter analogies, which I now regret. I have responded in kind to the zeal of Orthodoxy's most extreme spokespersons, using their scorn as an excuse for not truly striving to lessen the pain of others."

According to Schindler, the greatest danger arising from "our wranglings" is not that "the Orthodox refuse to recognize Reform conversions, but rather that the great mass of unaffiliated Jews will be so put off by what they see that they will say 'a plague on all your houses.'"

He defended his movement's recognition of patrilineal descent (adopted by Reform groups), noting that it was not really a new concept, and that biblical lineage was male-oriented. "We have always invoked the 'God our our Fathers,' not of our mothers," said Schindler, who stressed Reform's view that "all changes (in Jewish practice) must be born of necessity and conviction." He said the patrilineal decision was a principled assertion of the equality of men and women, and a response to the anguish of the children who considered themselves Jewish but were pushed into a no-man's land between Jews and Christians.

Schindler issued a plea for mutual tolerance and called for concrete steps to improve relations between the groups, including exchange of ideas and pulpits, joint studies, and a regular nonbinding religious forum where policies and possible mutual compromises could be explored. He concluded with a reminder that "words like Orthodox, Reform, secular ... are adjectives ... the noun is Jew."

Ira Silverman, the president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, criticized Rabbi Lamm for not appearing on the same platform with him. "I am troubled that we have to speak in a series, never appearing together," he said. "Am I not Jewish? Am I *traife*? That's the way it feels."

Asserting that no one group has a "monopoly on the truth," he called for continuing pluralism in bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. For the sake of community, he said that he and other Reconstructionists are prepared to make compromises to enable traditionalists to live with the situation, but said that such compromises must be a two-way street.

He said that Reconstructionism's fundamental devotion to equality requires a commitment to patrilineal descent and he called upon the Orthodox and Conservative movements to consider change. Criticizing the inequality of traditional Jewish divorce, he said that efforts must be made "to make Jewish divorce a more attractive and meaningful option."

Silverman said that "Jews today should not adhere to the rulings of a rabbinical elite, but should judge themselves and reconstruct their Judaism for themselves."

Dr. Gerson Cohen, who will retire this summer as chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Conservative institution, took exception with the underlying premise of the conference that Jews today were increasingly divided. He said that "there has never been as much unity in Jewish history" as now, primarily because of the state of Israel which "has done more to unify Jews than any single phenomenon."

"The present alarm," according to Cohen, "grows out of the increasing assertiveness of Reform Judaism and the decision of Orthodoxy to confront them head on." He said that the current crisis of family identity and Jewish status has come to a head now because of the growing power of the Orthodox in Israel and the U.S. He faulted lay leaders who secretly feel that the Orthodox are "more authentic" and therefore lavish support on them.

Cohen called for collecting an extensive data base to establish the facts of the Jewish condition and on the true numbers of Jews of contested status. He suggested the creation of a joint commission made up of representatives of all branches of

Judaism, including the secular, to explore the new facts of Jewish life and their implications for the tradition. "To insure Jewish survival beyond the year 2000," he said, "there must be a renewal of commitment to Jewish values, not just to the Jewish people."

Elie Wiesel, the noted author and Holocaust historian, made his keynote address a plea for understanding and tolerance, urging each movement to be critical of itself and compassionate toward the others. He voiced his concern for growing religious divisiveness and fanaticism, and expressed his fear that the Jewish people were "entering an era of gratuitous hatred."

Through joint scholarship and learning, he said, "all branches can come together and discuss the urgent issues of our times."

The last word in the two-day conference went to Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, who organized it and whose articles and speeches on the current schism were the motivating force behind it. Greenberg went beyond the denominational leaders, calling on the Orthodox to be open to religious pluralism and accepting of the legitimacy of the other branches. He charged that the present state of intra-Jewish dialogue is less developed than the Jewish-Christian dialogue of 50 years ago, noting that the Jewish community now spends \$10 million a year on Jewish-Christian dialogue, but precious little on dialogue between Jews. "This shows an unhealthy lack of self-respect for Jewish priorities," he said in calling for major expansion of intra-Jewish dialogue at the scholarly, rabbinic and lay levels.

Greenberg called on all Jews to develop a "dual loyalty" — both to his or her own denomination and to the idea of Clal Yisrael, the Jewish People. "Each denomination can be strengthened by the other," he said. "The non-Orthodox can learn discipline

and observance from the Orthodox, while the Orthodox can learn from the openness and commitment of the liberal groups, thus making each group more competent to deal with the vast majority of unaffiliated American Jews. By ignoring and sniping at each other, no group grows."

Rabbi Joel Zaiman of Chizuk Amuno Congreg was the only Baltimore bi at the conference and told the BALTIMORE JEW TIMES that he found it an important attempt to deal with a very serious problem. But in noting that the vast majority of the participants were communal rather than religious leaders, he said that "we're dealing with two different groups here — the rabbis and religious leaders, and the leaders of the American Jewish community whose power base is UJA and Federation and who are not known for their involvement with theological issues. And I don't know how one group can have an effect on the other."

There were others, too, who were skeptical about the practical results of such a major undertaking, but Yitz Greenberg says he was pleased with the results to date. He said that some of the key suggestions and proposals will be studied closely, including the concept of a National Bet Din and the call for informal forums among leaders of the different denominations. He believes that the modern or centrist Orthodox movement is a key bridge in this effort and he feels there have been "significant reverberations" within that community of a positive nature.

Greenberg said that his organization is committed to continuing its efforts to achieve unity within Jewish life, but he would welcome the involvement of other Jewish organizations as well in the dialogue.

Dialogue, he noted, is not negotiation. It is not seeking to swap patrilineal descent for accepting Reform conversions, or women rabbis for a community Bet Din. It is rather, the concept of Jews of different beliefs listening to one another and developing techniques to help heal the sickness that is threatening the Jewish community.

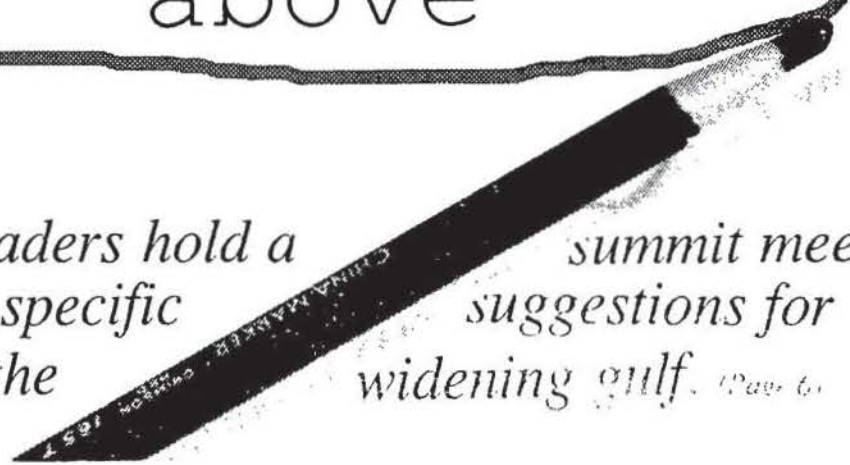
Post & Opinion

1. The "era of gratuitous hatred" among Judaism's denominations is caused by the:

- A. Reform
- B. Conservative
- C. Orthodox
- D. All of the above

Jewish leaders hold a summit meeting and offer specific suggestions for bridging the widening gulf. (Page 6.)

summit meeting suggestions for widening gulf. (Page 6.)



Reform, Conservative and

Rabbi Norman Lamm

The President of Yeshiva University, who spoke from his Orthodox perspective, said, "We must try our best within the limits of our integrity to search for Jewish unity," he said. "No amount of goodwill posturing will resolve the problems facing Jews today. Although there can be more than one response within Jewish law, a pluralism which accepts everything as legitimate can lead to spiritual nihilism, said Lamm. If everything is kosher, then nothing is kosher."

"Orthodoxy," he continued, "is by its very nature tied to a transcendent view of a Being who is beyond us. That vision includes the revelation of Torah and halacha (Jewish law) as a way of life. It therefore obligates us, and we are not authorized to dispose of it according to personal taste or whim."

He called for a renewed spirit of tolerance among all denominations, saying that the issues of conversion and Jewish divorce, especially the latter, pose a grave threat to Jewish unity. "If Orthodox and Conservative Jews cannot recognize a non-halachic conversion by a Reform rabbi," he said, "at least the person involved can later undergo a conversion according to Orthodox Jewish law. But the lack of Jewish divorce (g_{et}) would label a subsequent Jewish remarriage adultery, and children of that union mamzerim (bastards) who are forbidden to marry other Jews for generations."

He called for reviving the National Bet Din (religious court) first discussed in the 1950s to deal with these issues of personal status. Judges would be elected only on the basis of scholarship and personal observance of Jewish law. Thus, at least a partial solution of the problem would be achieved.



Rabbi Norman Lamm

"If everything is kosher, then nothing is kosher."

More than 250 of North America Jewry's most prominent lay, rabbinic and professional leaders met in Princeton, N. J., recently to iron out the problems among Jews of different denominations. The unusual meeting and frank pronouncements that follow represent an effort to develop practical solutions to narrow the widening gulf among Jews. Elie Wiesel delivered the keynote address at the two-day conference, which was sponsored by CLAL (The National Center for Learning and Leadership), and said that the Jewish people were "entering an era of gratuitous hatred." Wiesel made a plea for understanding and tolerance. The remarks of other important Jewish leaders follow.

Rabbi Gerson D. Cohen

The former chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and a leader of the Conservative movement, argued that the Jewish people has achieved unprecedented unity in this century. He said that the current crisis of family identity and Jewish status has come to a head now because of the growing power of the Orthodox in Israel and in the U.S. He faulted lay leaders who secretly feel that the Orthodox are "more authentic" and therefore lavish support on them. "The present alarm over personal status," he said, "is a byproduct of Reform assertiveness and the decision of the Orthodox to confront them."

Cohen called for collecting an extensive data base to establish the facts of the Jewish condition and on the true numbers of Jews of contested status. He suggested the creation of a joint commission made up of representatives of all branches of Judaism, including the secular, to explore the new facts of Jewish life and their implications for the tradition. "To insure Jewish survival beyond the year 2000," Dr. Cohen said, "there must be a renewal of commitment to Jewish values, not just to the Jewish people."



Rabbi Gerson D. Cohen

"To ensure Jewish survival beyond the year 2000, there must be a renewal of commitment to Jewish values, not just to the Jewish people."

Orthodox: Are They One?

Rabbi Alexander Schindler

The president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the synagogue organization of Reform Judaism, said, "our disagreements have not truly inflamed the passions of our people."

"The greatest danger arising from our wranglings," said Schindler, "is not that the Orthodox refuse to recognize Reform conversions, but rather that the great mass of unaffiliated Jews will be so put off by what they see that they will say 'a plague on all your houses.'"

He said that the issue of patrilineal descent (adopted by Reform groups) was not really a new concept, and that biblical lineage was male-oriented. "We have always invoked the 'God of our Fathers,' not of our mothers," said Schindler. Schindler stressed Reform's view that "All changes [in Jewish practice] must be born of necessity and conviction." The patrilineal decision was a principled assertion of the equality of men and women and a response to the anguish of the children who considered themselves Jewish but were pushed into a no-man's land between Jews and Christians.

Schindler issued a plea for mutual tolerance in recognition of the fact that many differences between Orthodox and liberal Jews are unlikely to be resolved. In what participants described as one of the most moving moments of the conference, Rabbi Schindler expressed his regret at some of the polemical language which he and others had used. But he communicated the pain of being the object of denial and the concern at delegitimation out of which Reform Jews spoke.

Rabbi Schindler called for concrete steps to improve relations between the groups, including exchange of ideas and pulpits, joint studies and a regular nonbinding religious forum where policies and possible mutual compromises could be explored. Schindler concluded with a reminder that "Words like Orthodox, Reform, secular...are adjectives...the noun is Jew." He reminded the audience that the Shoah constitutes "a lasting, impelling mandate for unity...Even as we were brothers and sisters in death, so must we ever remain brothers and sisters in life."



Rabbi Alexander Schindler

"The greatest danger arising from our wranglings... (is) that the great mass of unaffiliated Jews will be so put off by what they see that they will say 'a plague on all your houses'."



Rabbi Yitz Greenberg

"By ignoring and sniping each other, no group grows."

Rabbi Irving Greenberg

In summing up the two days of conference, speeches and workshops, Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, president of CLAL, charged that the present state of intra-Jewish dialogue is less developed than the Jewish-Christian dialogue of 50 years ago. He noted that the Jewish community now spends \$10 million a year on Jewish-Christian dialogue, but not a significant fraction of that amount on dialogue among themselves. "This shows an unhealthy lack of self-respect for Jewish priorities," he said.

Greenberg urged that every Jew develop a "dual loyalty" — both to his or her own denomination and to the idea of clal Yisrael. "The dues we pay for such dual loyalty is a willingness to confront one's own group for the sake of the greater Jewish community, and to find unifying rather than separatist solutions."

"Each denomination can be strengthened by the other," Greenberg said. "The non-Orthodox can learn discipline and observance from the Orthodox, while the Orthodox can learn from the openness and commitment of the liberal groups, thus making each group more competent to deal with the vast majority of unaffiliated American Jews. By ignoring and sniping at each other, no group grows."

Greenberg called for major expansion of intra-Jewish dialogue at the advanced scholarly level, at the rabbinic and at the lay level. "Almost all of the outstanding divisive issues could be solved or at least reduced by policies and halachic approaches already in existence, he said. "But first the commitment to each other must be strengthened enough to carry the burden of such an effort to a successful conclusion."

The National Jewish

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MAY 27 1986



CLAL

The National Jewish
Center for Learning
And Leadership

19 Nisan 5746
April 28, 1986

Dear Friend,

I am very pleased to be able to enclose some materials from our recent Critical Issues Conference. You will see from the newspaper stories as well as from the other materials, that this conference was the success that it needed to be. We are at the beginning of an important healing and unifying process.

Also enclosed is a form so that you may order audio and visual materials from the conference for your review, and for dissemination in your own community and among your friends and peers.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Paul Jeser
Executive Vice President

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The National Jewish
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Learning And Leadership

CLAL

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MATERIAL ORDERFORM**

Quantity	Item	Cost per	Total \$
_____	VHS - presentations by Elie Wiesel, Charles Silberman & Yitz Greenberg	\$50	_____
_____	Audio cassette tapes of presentation by Elie Wiesel, Charles Silberman & Yitz Greenberg	\$10	_____
_____	a) "Will There Be One Jewish People?" Rabbi Irving Greenberg	\$5	_____
	b) "Towards A Principled Pluralism" Rabbi Irving Greenberg	(per set)	
	c) "Judaism, Denominationalism, & Pluralism" Rabbi Reuven Kimelman		
	d) "The Four Denominations - A Source Book" Dr. David Elcott		
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CLAL
421 7th Avenue
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New York, NY 10001

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE CRITICAL ISSUES CONFERENCE

**"WILL THERE BE ONE JEWISH PEOPLE
BY THE YEAR 2000?"**

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

SUNDAY-MONDAY, MARCH 16-17, 1986

SCANTICON CONFERENCE CENTER, PRINCETON, NJ



CLAL

THE NATIONAL JEWISH CENTER FOR LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

IN COOPERATION WITH

THE FEDERATION OF JEWISH PHILANTHROPIES OF NEW YORK

AND

THE UNITED JEWISH FEDERATION OF METROWEST (NEW JERSEY)

POLICY SUGGESTIONS OFFERED BY LEADERS OF THE FOUR MOVEMENTS

RABBI GERSON COHEN

Joint and longstanding committee to study problems, data, possibilities of amelioration, and to set goals. Joint, permanent commission to collect data on the actual Jewish condition, study relationships and family law, and explore possibilities of resolving problems.

IRA SILVERMAN

Establish joint committee for standards of marriage and divorce.

RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER

Establish an informal forum to explore issues and air differences before they reach "flash point"; joint study by seminary faculties; assessment of textbooks to ensure that presentations of other movements are not stereotypical or prejudicial; exchange of pulpits; dialogue among lay leadership and especially youth.

RABBI NORMAN LAMM

Establish a national Bet Din to deal with Jewish divorce issues. Religious leaders ought to consult together behind closed doors.

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS OFFERED BY CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

1. Private meeting among leadership--behind closed doors, allowing for candid expression of views.
2. Strengthen moderate groups within each movement that seek to work cooperatively and connect them to each other.
3. Work on settling problems locally on basis of existing relationships of mutual trust and cooperation.
4. Specific national task forces to explore resolution of conflict issues, involving scholars from all the movements, seeking ad hoc, limited solutions, not permanent global one.
5. Establish local chapters of CHEVRA (CLAL's dialogue-study groups between the rabbis of the denominations).
6. Arrange meetings between Men's Clubs or Sisterhoods of synagogues of different denominations.
7. Joint weekend retreats between synagogues of various denominations with local rabbis as scholar resources.
8. Arrange a meeting of synagogue boards of the community on issues of shared non-controversial interest.
9. Arrange combined youth programs of various synagogues and movements--locally and nationally.
10. Arrange a youth choir made up of the children of various Hebrew and Day schools to perform together.
11. Sponsor public symposia between panels of local or national rabbis to dramatize the will to unity and dialogue.
12. Develop a team of facilitators to meet both sides of any denominational dispute to foster open and respectful listening and responding.
13. Develop a training program for community leaders, both lay and professional, dealing with issues of polarization and clal Yisrael.
14. Federations should review allocations and encourage all recipients of community funds to promote clal Yisrael, and to refrain from any public attacks.
15. Form a "Community Lay Board for Jewish Unity" to monitor public attacks by community rabbis or lay leaders on other movements or their representatives, and to respond publicly to the invective between movements, supporting dialogue, rapprochement and respectful disagreement.
16. Receive pledges that major leaders and community rabbis will never use the press (Jewish or otherwise) or other public forums for attack.



CLAL

SUGGESTED PRINCIPLES OF DIALOGUE

IRVING GREENBERG

1. Jews must work at dialogue with fellow Jews at least as seriously as the dialogue between Jews and Christians.
2. Make a conscious effort to establish friendships, relationships, and alliances, across all lines.
3. One should criticize one's own group, not the other. Let members of each group criticize their own. Such criticism will have much more impact and lead to improvements.
4. One should justify and try to learn from the other, rather than focus on what is wrong or ridiculous.
5. Learn to discern the various positions and differences within each group. Avoid generalizing stereotypes of the other.
6. The test of a true clal Yisrael orientation is a willingness to pay a price for the position; calling on the other to make all the changes or sacrifices for the sake of unity is a misuse of the principle.
7. Philanthropists should review their giving, and emphasize to recipients their concern that they respect clal Yisrael and do not attack or delegitimize others.

IF YOU ARE PREPARED TO START DIALOGUE OR OTHER PROCESS IN YOUR COMMUNITY, CLAL STANDS READY TO WORK WITH YOU AND TO GUIDE YOU.

CLAL — The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership

March, 1986

421 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10001

(212) 714-9500

"WILL THERE BE ONE JEWISH PEOPLE BY THE YEAR 2000?"

SUNDAY, MARCH 16

12:30 - 1:30 Lobby	REGISTRATION	
1:30 - 1:45 Auditorium A	OPENING REMARKS	Herschel Blumberg, Chairman, CLAL
1:45 - 2:45 Auditorium A	KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY ELIE WIESEL	Introduction by Dan Shapiro President, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York

PRESENTATIONS

"AN AGENDA FOR CLAL YISRAEL"

3:00 - 4:00 Auditorium A	RABBI GERSON D. COHEN	Introduction by Stephen Peck, Chairman, Executive Committee, JTS
4:00 - 4:10	MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE CHAIM HERZOG PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL	Delivered by Sanford Solender Executive Consultant, N.Y. UJA/Federation Member, CLAL Board of Directors
4:15 - 5:15 Auditorium A	MR. IRA SILVERMAN	Introduction by Aaron Ziegelman, Vice Chairman, RRC Board of Governors Vice Chairman, CLAL
5:15 - 5:45	BREAK — MINCHA AND MAARIV	Traditional (Auditorium B) Egalitarian (Auditorium A)
6:00 - 7:30 Banquet Rooms	DINNER	
7:30 - 8:30 Auditorium A	RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER	Introduction by Melvin Merians, Vice Chairman, Board of Trustees, UAHC
8:30 - 8:40	MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE SHIMON PERES, PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL	Delivered by Lester Pollack Chair, JWB Jewish Education/JCC Committee Member, CLAL Executive Committee
8:45 - 9:45 Auditorium A	RABBI NORMAN LAMM	Introduction by Herbert Tenzer, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Y.U.
9:45 - 10:45 Banquet Rooms	RECEPTION HOSTED BY THE UNITED FEDERATION OF METROWEST, (NEW JERSEY)	

MONDAY, MARCH 17

7:00 - 8:00	SHACHARIT SERVICES Conservative (Auditorium A) Orthodox (Auditorium B)	Reconstructionist (H-5) Reform (Black Swan)
8:00 - 9:10 Banquet Rooms	BREAKFAST AND INTRODUCTION TO WORKSHOP I	Klara Silverstein, Conference Co-Chair
9:15 - 11:15 By Assignment	WORKSHOP I — STEREOTYPES, REALITY AND VISIONS	
11:30 - 1:30 Banquet Rooms	LUNCH AND ADDRESS BY CHARLES SILBERMAN "THE COMMUNITY — HOW DOES IT SHAPE UP?" "THE ISSUES — HOW DO WE RESPOND?"	Introduction by Frank Kreutzer, President, USA
1:30 - 3:30 By Assignment	WORKSHOP II — PROPOSALS, POLICIES AND PROCESS	
3:45 - 4:45 Auditorium A	RABBI IRVING GREENBERG "WHAT UNITES US — WHAT DIVIDES US"	Introduction by Robert Loup, Chairman, Board of Trustees, UJA Vice Chairman, CLAL
4:45 - 5:00 Auditorium A	CLOSING REMARKS	Sol Kimerling, Chairman Critical Issues Conference

CRITICAL ISSUES CONFERENCE

OPENING REMARKS

HERSCHEL BLUMBERG, CHAIRMAN

CLAL - THE NATIONAL JEWISH CENTER FOR LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP

GOOD AFTERNOON: RABBIS, HONORED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

ON BEHALF OF CLAL AND OUR CO-HOSTS, THE FEDERATION OF JEWISH PHILANTHROPIES OF NEW YORK AND THE UNITED JEWISH FEDERATION OF METRO-WEST (N.J.), IT IS MY DISTINCT PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU TO THIS CONFERENCE.

WE ARE NOT ONLY PLEASED YOU HAVE JOINED US, BUT WE ARE MOST SINCERELY DEEPLY HONORED.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS CONFERENCE ADDS IMMEASURABLE STRENGTH TO OUR CONVICTION THAT THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR US TO COME TOGETHER.

OBVIOUSLY, YOU HAVE TRAVELLED TO THIS SITE BECAUSE OF THE CRITICAL ISSUE WHICH IS BEFORE US, AND BECAUSE OF YOUR DESIRE TO HEAR THE DISTINGUISHED RABBIS AND SCHOLARS WHO HAVE GRACIOUSLY ACCEPTED OUR INVITATION TO SPEAK TO US.

WE EAGERLY ANTICIPATE HEARING THEM AND SPENDING TODAY AND TOMORROW WITH YOU.

ALL OF YOU, AS LEADERS OF ORGANIZATIONS, HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH OTHER CONFERENCE PREPARATIONS AND CONSEQUENTLY WILL APPRECIATE MY EXPRESSION OF SINCERE THANKS TO SOL KIMERLING AND HIS COMMITTEE AND THE VERY CAPABLE STAFF OF CLAL FOR THEIR METICULOUS PLANNING. MOST ESPECIALLY, SOL HAS BEEN CONCERNED THAT ALL VIEWPOINTS BE HEARD AND THAT EVERYONE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE.

THIS WILL HELP EXPLAIN THE AGENDA AND SCHEDULE OF EVENTS.
SOL'S VISION HELPED CREATE THIS CONFERENCE. HE AND HIS
CO-CHAIRS DESERVE TO BE RECOGNIZED.

WILL YOU PLEASE STAND, SOL.

JIM FINGEROTH
KLARA SILVERSTEIN
DR. SAUL SINGER

STEPHEN WALD
LEON WEINER
RONALD WORNICK

THE COMMITTEE HAS BEEN EXTREMELY CONSCIENTIOUS IN MAKING
EVERY EFFORT TO SATISFY WHAT WE KNOW ARE YOUR HIGH STANDARDS OF
PROGRAMMING, SCHEDULING AND ACCOMMODATIONS.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO METRO-WEST FOR PROVIDING THE VOLUNTEERS,
WHO HAVE ALREADY BEEN SO HELPFUL, AND FOR SPONSORING TONIGHT'S RECEPTION.

CLAL IS PROUD TO BE CO-HOST WITH NEW YORK FEDERATION AND THE
METRO-WEST FEDERATION AND WE ARE ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL TO THEIR
PRESIDENTS AND TOP PROFESSIONALS, DAN SHAPIRO AND WILLIAM KAHN OF
NEW YORK, AND JIMMY SCHWARZ AND HAROLD CHARISH OF METRO-WEST.

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR READY AGREEMENT TO JOIN WITH US AND
WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRESENCE AND HOSPITALITY.

IF ONE IS KNOWN BY THE COMPANY ONE KEEPS, CLAL'S REPUTATION
IS GREATLY ENHANCED BY THIS FELICITIOUS ASSOCIATION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

AS YOU SEE FROM THE AGENDA IN YOUR KITS, THIS AFTERNOON AND
THIS EVENING WE SHALL BE PRIVILEGED TO HEAR FROM FIVE OF JUDAISM'S
MOST DISTINGUISHED LEADERS AND SPOKESMEN.

AS TEACHERS, SCHOLARS, RABBIS, ADMINISTRATORS, THEY HAVE
MADE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO JUDAISM, TO THEIR RESPECTIVE
ORGANIZATIONS, AND TO THEIR FIELDS OF SCHOLARSHIP.

TOMORROW, AT MORNING AND AFTERNOON WORKSHOPS, WE SHALL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS OUR VIEWS OF THE ISSUES WHICH BRING US HERE AND DISCUSS THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESENTATIONS MADE TODAY.

AT LUNCH TOMORROW, OUR SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE - WELL KNOWN SCHOLAR AND AUTHOR, CHARLES SILVERMAN, WILL PRESENT HIS ANALYSIS OF STATE OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY AND WHAT THIS IMPLIES ON THE QUESTIONS BEFORE US, AND YITZ GREENBERG WILL CONCLUDE THE DAY WITH A CHARGE CONTAINING SUGGESTIONS FOR BEHAVIOR AND GUIDELINES FOR POLICIES.

FOLLOWING THE PRESENTATION OF EACH SPEAKER, IF TIME PERMITS, THERE WILL BE A QUESTION PERIOD.

PLEASE, WRITE YOUR QUESTIONS ON THE PAPER PROVIDED AND PASS THEM TO AN USHER AS EACH SPEAKER FINISHES.

YOU WILL UNDERSTAND, I'M SURE, IF WE INSIST UPON ABIDING BY THE TIME SCHEDULE.

WE WANT TO GIVE EACH PRESENTER AN EQUAL AMOUNT OF TIME.

IN THE INTEREST OF TIME, WHICH MEANS WE WANT MORE TIME FOR TACHLIS, WE SHALL NOT MAKE THE USUAL INTRODUCTIONS OF THE DISTINGUISHED INTRODUCERS. THEY UNDERSTAND; WE HOPE YOU DO, TOO.

IN YOUR KITS YOU WILL FIND BACKGROUND PAPERS WHICH WE HOPE YOU WILL FIND USEFUL AND I BELIEVE YOU WILL FIND CHALLENGING.

WE SHALL BE DISCUSSING COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT ISSUES FOR WHICH WE DARE EVENTUALLY TO SEEK SOLUTIONS.

OUR CREATIVITY, PATIENCE AND PERSISTENCE WILL SURELY BE TESTED.

OUR COMING HERE IS AN ACT OF FIDELITY TO OUR GOD, OUR PEOPLE AND OUR CHOSEN DESTINY.

WE SHALL LEAVE HERE MONDAY HOPEFULLY WITH A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER'S POSITIONS, OF THE DEPTH OF OUR CONCERNS, AND OF THE NEED TO FIND MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTIONS.

THIS CONFERENCE IS BOTH A CULMINATION AND A BEGINNING.

FOR MORE THAN 13 YEARS, PRINCIPALLY THROUGH THE DYNAMIC PERSONALITY OF RABBI IRVING GREENBERG - YITZ, TO MOST OF US, CLAL'S PRIMARY WORK HAS BEEN TO PRESENT JEWISH LEARNING, BOTH CLASSICAL AND MODERN, IN ORDER TO ENRICH THE PERSONAL LIVES OF COMMUNAL LEADERSHIP, TO BUILD UNITY AND TO GUIDE POLICY.

CLAL AND ITS FACULTY HAVE PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN DIRECTING FEDERATIONS AND NATIONAL JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS TOWARDS BECOMING VEHICLES OF JEWISH LEARNING.

THE TREASURES OF JEWISH HISTORY AND TEXT HAVE BECOME BETTER KNOWN TO A LARGE NUMBER OF OUR PRESENT AND FUTURE LEADERS THROUGH CLASSES, SHABBATON, LECTURES AND RETREATS.

WHILE THERE ARE OVER 600 LAY LEADERS PARTICIPATING IN CLAL'S CLASSES IN SIX OF OUR MAJOR CITIES, WE ALSO HAVE ON-GOING LEARNING PROGRAMS IN OVER 40 CITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

THE LESSONS OF THE HOLOCAUST, THE POTENTIAL GENERATED BY THE REBIRTH OF ISRAEL, THE NEED FOR POLITICAL ACTION FOR ISRAEL, AND THE ETHICS OF JEWISH POWER HAVE BEEN PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF CLAL'S CURRICULA.

ADDITIONALLY, FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS YITZ GREENBERG AND CLAL HAVE BEEN LAYING THE GROUNDWORK IN PREPARATION FOR THIS MEETING.

FOR EXAMPLE:

CHEVRA, GROUPS OF RABBIS FROM ALL DENOMINATIONS, BEGAN MEETING AND STUDYING TOGETHER IN OUR LARGEST CITIES 5 YEARS AGO.

TODAY THEY MEET IN NEW YORK, LOS ANGELES, CHICAGO, PHILADELPHIA, D.C., BOSTON, SAN FRANCISCO AND DALLAS.

THIS YEAR WE WILL HOLD OUR FOURTH ANNUAL NATIONAL CHEVRA CONFERENCE, AT WHICH WE EXPECT AN ATTENDANCE OF 150 RABBIS.

FOUR INTERNS, ONE FROM EACH OF THE SEMINARIES, HAVE BEEN STUDYING AND WORKING WITH OUR STAFF AND PARTICIPATING IN OUR TEACHING PROGRAMS.

STUDENTS OF THE SEMINARIES MEET SEVERAL TIMES EACH YEAR WITH YITZ AND STAFF.

AND IN JANUARY CLAL'S FIRST SYMPOSIUM FOR UNITY WAS HELD IN WASHINGTON, D.C., AT AN ORTHODOX SYNAGOGUE AT WHICH MAJOR RABBINICAL LEADERS OF THE FOUR DENOMINATIONS SPOKE.

ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN IN PREPARATION FOR CONFRONTING THE GROWING RELIGIOUS POLARIZATION WHICH IS VIEWED AS A THREAT CAPABLE OF CREATING A FUNDAMENTAL SCHISM IN THE AMERICAN/JEWISH COMMUNITY.

THE DIALOGUE WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE IN CLAL'S PROGRAMS HAS CONVINCED US THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR LAY AND RABBINICAL LEADERS TO MEET TOGETHER.

THUS, THIS CONFERENCE.

THE ISSUE BEFORE THIS CONFERENCE IS:

CAN WE, IN OUR PERSONAL AND DENOMINATIONAL DUAL QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING THE FULLNESS OF GOD AND FOR SERVING THE LORD IN TRUTH, DO SO IN HARMONY WITH EACH OTHER?

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CONFERENCE IS TO INFORM IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP THROUGH TODAY'S LEARNED SPEAKERS, AS WELL AS THROUGH THE PAPERS PRESENTED, OF THE INTRICACIES AND COMPLEXITIES OF THE ISSUES CREATED BY THE DIFFERENCES AMONG US AND TO GIVE EACH OF US AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS AND UNDERSTANDINGS, IN THE HOPE THAT (1) THOSE DIFFERENCES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO CREATE FURTHER RELIGIOUS POLARIZATION, AND (2) THE UNDERSTANDING RESULTING WILL BE A CATALYST FOR UNITY.

SIMPLY STATED, WE HOPE TO STIMULATE THE WILL TO COME CLOSER TOGETHER, TO STIFFEN RESISTANCE TO NEW POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT TEND TO SEPARATE US, AND TO DEMONSTRATE THE WORKING OF A MODEL FOR FUTURE DIALOGUES.

IF OUR PRAYERS WILL BE ANSWERED, WHEN WE LEAVE HERE WE WILL UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER, AND THEREBY PERHAPS REMOVE SOME OF THE TENSIONS EXISTING AMONG US.

IT IS ESSENTIAL WE SEEK COMMON GROUND AND LEARN TO COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER AT ALL LEVELS AND ACROSS ALL LINES.

TO SOME EXTENT WE ALREADY SHARE COMMON GROUND, FOR OUR BACK- GROUND ARE PROBABLY SIMILAR IN SEVERAL RESPECTS.

I'M A GRANDSON OF IMMIGRANTS WHO ARRIVED ON TWO SEPARATE WAVES OF IMMIGRATION FROM POLAND AND RUSSIA AROUND 1900.

ONE TRADED VILLAGE LIFE FOR EAST BALTIMORE; THE OTHER WARSAW FOR HAVRE DE GRACE, MARYLAND.

THEIR RELIGIOUS LIVES CHANGED DRAMATICALLY, BUT THEY WERE ORTHODOX, THEY KEPT KOSHER - EVEN IN HAVRE DE GRACE, AND ALL 14 CHILDREN MARRIED JEWS.

WHEN WE MOVED TO WASHINGTON, D. C., WE SOUGHT A SHUL CLOSE TO HOME AND CLOSE TO THE ONE WE KNEW IN BALTIMORE.

THERE WAS VERY LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TRADITIONAL CONSERVATIVE SYNAGOGUE WE JOINED AND THE ONE WE LEFT.

AND, AGAIN, MOST OF OUR FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES BELONGED TO OUR SHUL.

MY ZAIDAS AND BUBAHS WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD THAT I BECAME PRESIDENT AND SPENT ALMOST AS MUCH TIME IN SHUL AS THEY USED TO EVERY DAY.

THEN I BECAME PART OF UJA, AN ACTION TAKEN IN PART BECAUSE OF THE LESSONS I LEARNED FROM MY RABBIS AND TEACHERS.

AT UJA I FOUND A WORLD MUCH DIFFERENT FROM SHUL LIFE.

UJA'S LEADERSHIP CONSISTS OF MEN AND WOMEN FROM ALL ORDERS OF JEWISH LIFE AND FROM ALL DENOMINATIONS AND SORTS OF RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS. THEIR DEDICATION TO ISRAEL AND TO JEWS EVERYWHERE IS WELL KNOWN AND THEIR MOTIVATIONS ARE AS PURE AND UNSELFISH AS ANY I'VE SEEN.

DRIVEN BY LOVE, PRIDE AND COMPASSION, THEY COURAGEOUSLY SACRIFICE THEIR TIME, ENERGY AND WEALTH TO HELP ASSURE THE SURVIVAL OF OUR PEOPLE AND THE FLOURISHING OF ISRAEL.

WHAT IS STRIKING TO ME IS THAT ALTHOUGH THEY COME FROM ALL DENOMINATIONS, THERE IS UNDERSTANDING AND UNQUESTIONED ACCEPTANCE OF EACH OTHER.

THAT DOES NOT MEAN WE AGREE ON ALL RELIGIOUS ISSUES OR PRACTICES; WE DO NOT.

BUT WE RESPECT EACH OTHER.

INDEED, THERE IS LOVE GIVEN AND LOVE RETURNED.

I TRULY FEEL THAT AT UJA I EXPERIENCE THE MEANING OF CLAL YISRAEL.

IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT AN IDENTICAL FEELING IS FOUND ON
CLAL'S BOARD.

CLAL IS DOING IN RELIGIOUS AREAS WHAT UJA HAS DONE IN
FUND RAISING.

THAT'S WHY - IN PART - IM ACTIVE IN CLAL AND AM EXHILIRATED BY
THIS CONFERENCE.

THE PRECEDING GENERATION COULD NOT HAVE MET AT THIS CONFERENCE;
IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO SOON.

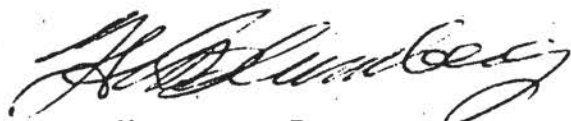
IF TRENDS CONTINUE AND UNHAPPY PROJECTIONS MATERIALIZE, IT WILL
BE TOO LATE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION.

MY FRIENDS, AT THIS CRITICAL ISSUES CONFERENCE WE ARE AT THE
BEGINNING OF POSSIBILITIES.

WHILE BEGINNINGS ARE DIFFICULT AND ARE THE GREATEST TEST
OF LEADERSHIP, IT IS REASSURING TO REALIZE THAT POSSIBILITIES HAVE
MORE POSITIVE CONNOTATIONS THAN NEGATIVE ONES.

THUS, THE ODDS ARE WITH US, ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE.

WITH YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT, SUPPORT, PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP
AT THIS CONFERENCE AND AFTERWARD, THE POSSIBLE CAN BE ACHIEVED.



HERSCHEL BLUMBERG



CLAL

The National Jewish
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And Leadership

Herschel Blumberg
Chairman
Rabbi Irving Greenberg
President
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Stephen Wald
New York, NY
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Houston, TX
Ronald Wornick
San Francisco, CA

TO THE CRITICAL ISSUES CONFERENCE
FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

It is with no small measure of identification that I send you greetings and best wishes from Jerusalem. The central issues with which you are to deal are of basic importance to the future of the Jewish people everywhere. Mutatis mutandis Israel, too, is affected by the divisions, indeed the polarization, you all too rightly see as threatening to split the Jewish community.

It is hard to believe that today's warring groups among us seem to have forgotten how only a generation ago the Jews of Europe were murdered without distinction as to theological commitment -- simply as Jews. Nor was our people's center in Israel established exclusively by Orthodox or Socialist or Conservative or Reform or Hebraist or Yiddishist or otherwise labeled Jews. It is simplistic to stress the varying origins, ideas and creeds which jointly underlay the daring and inspired national endeavor that built a viable State, rescued many hundreds of thousands of Jews, revived our people's language, gave its culture new impetus, naturalness and depth.

CLAL's educational work has, I understand, consistently stressed the overriding significance of those two key points in modern Jewish history -- the Holocaust and the rise of Israel. Certainly those two poles -- the negative and the positive -- should dwarf the differences of emphasis among us and teach us mutual understanding.

For the sake of American Jewry and of Israel itself, I trust your joint deliberations will lead you on the road to tolerance and cooperation.

That is a road we must learn to follow in Israel. Never in the century of modern Jewish resettlement of the Land has there been such perilous polarization between rigid orthodox and the more liberal observant and secular sectors of the community. Rigidity tends to bring with it a chauvinist intolerance of the stranger, totally at odds with Jewish tradition. We find it difficult to accept the import of fanaticism from American Jewry and the support it continues to receive from circles in the United States.

"Will There Be One Jewish People By The Year 2000?" is the frightening question posed to you. But what you think, say and do together may provide a partial answer, an initial answer, towards assurance of unity and Jewish strength.

CHAIM HERZOG

421 Seventh Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10001 (212) 714-9500



CIAL

The National Jewish
Center for Learning
And Leadership

**MESSAGE TO CRITICAL ISSUES CONFERENCE
FROM PRIME MINISTER PERES**

Herschel Blumberg
Chairman
Rabbi Irving Greenberg
President
Robert Loup
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**CONFERENCE
LEADERSHIP**

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New York, NY
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New York, NY
Dr. Saul Singer
Hollywood, FL
Stephen Wald
New York, NY
Leon Weiner
Houston, TX
Ronald Wornick
San Francisco, CA

Dear Herschel Blumberg,
Solomon Kimerling,
and Rabbi Irving Greenberg,

The Prime Minister has asked me to convey his warmest wishes and greetings to all those attending the Critical Issues Conference.

You have taken upon yourselves an important and vital task to arouse the Jewish world to the dangers of polarization and divisiveness.

Today, more than ever, we require a new approach to dialogue which will place the ideals of "clal Yisrael" at the center of the Jewish agenda, out of a sense of responsibility and commitment to the integrity of the Jewish people wherever they may be.

The Prime Minister is confident that you will succeed in finding new approaches to bridge the gap, setting an example for us here and for those of you who remain in the Diaspora.

Y'shar Koach

Avrum Burg
Advisor to the Prime Minister for Diaspora Affairs.



CLAL

ORIENTATION AND BRIEFING PRIOR TO WORKSHOPS

Klara Silverstein
CIC Co-Chairman

The National Jewish
Center for Learning
And Leadership

This Critical Issues Conference is not meant to be a panacea solving all problems of inter-denominational conflict. We recognize that diversity has and will remain a part of Jewish life. We also know that, to remain one people, we must nurture passionate advocates for unity. The goals of this conference are to mobilize Jewish leaders to take a stand against polarization; to open up dialogue between all groups of Jewish leaders; and to locate and develop techniques which will help us heal the hemorrhaging which threatens our community.

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Chairman
Rabbi Irving Greenberg
President
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Dialogue is not negotiation. It is not compromise nor is it the give-and-take one expects from labor arbitration. No one advocating dialogue can demand swapping patrilineal descent for accepting Reform conversions, or women rabbis for a community Beit Din, rabbinical court. That does not mean that such goals are impossible, only that dialogue need not lead to any particular solution.

Today, although many claim that they are pluralists, there are few movement advocates focused on dialogue. Patrilineal descent, conversion without circumcision and ritual immersion, forbidding observant Jews to enter a Reform or Conservative synagogue, public attacks by leaders of one of the movements against leaders of another movement, are reflective of our contemporary reality. In fact, much more money is spent on Christian-Jewish dialogue, in which conversion is certainly no one's goal, than on Jewish inter-denominational dialogue.

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That, more than any other piece of evidence, gives us a sense of the place of Clal Yisrael on our collective list of priorities. Our goal here is to move pluralism and polarization away from benefiting any one movement so that Clal Yisrael can benefit.

We have heard the words and the visions of leaders of the four denominations. We have shared the messages of President Herzog, Prime Minister Peres, and Elie Wiesel.

Your participation is the logical next step and an opportunity for you to share your own thoughts, concerns, and love of Clal Yisrael, and be enriched by those of your colleagues. Now, it is your turn.

Kinnear Chaz
M. Mandoff

Willie Wang
Cool YK

R. YITZCHAK GAZENCZAG - "WILL THERE BE ONE JEWISH PEOPLE BY 2000?"

- MYSTIQUE JEWISH UNITY - CHALLENGED LAST 20 YEARS
- 1) CURRENT DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE; (2) NEGATIVE SOCIAL INTERACTION
- "IF SOCIOLOGICAL FORCES ARE LEFT TO OPERATE UNCHECKED, RESULT WILL BE PREDICTABLE. WITHIN DECADES, JEWISH PEOPLE WILL ~~BE~~ SPLIT APART, INTO TWO, MUTUALLY DIVIDED, HOSTILE GROUPS, WHO ARE UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO ~~MARRY~~ MARRY EACH OTHER.

CONVERSION PATRILINEAL DESCENT / MATRILINEAL (halachically illegitimate kids)

- I CONVERTS - 10,000 TO JUDAISM ANNUALLY
- IF RATE CONVERSION CONSTANT, AN ADDITIONAL 150,000 CONVERTS BY 2,000.
- NOW 150,000 - 250,000 → 300,000 - 400,000 BY 2,000

90% WILL BE REFORM - CONVERSION RITUAL NOT SATISFY ORTHODOX CONSERVATIVE

II PATRILINEAL DESCENT - JEWISH FATHER / NON JEWISH MOTHER AS JEWS -

- WITHOUT CONVERSION - ANOTHER CLASS OF JEWS NOT ACCEPTED BY REST OF COMMUNITY
- ESTIMATE 500,000 CHILDREN OF MARRIAGES JEW & NON-JEW

1/3 OF MARRIAGES PARTNER CONVERTED / ASSUME 1/3 - 500,000 RECAL AT JEWISH OPTIMISTIC - CANU. NOT ILLICITATED

- 2/3 INTERMARRIAGES, EST. 2/3 BCT. JEWISH FATHER, NON-J MOTHER
- OF 335,000 CHILDREN EST. 220,000 OF PATRILINEAL DESCENT.

IF NO CONVERSION, JEWISH TO REFORM BUT NOT TO OTHERS.

NUMBERS INCREASE IN NEXT 15 YEARS

III MATRILINEAL 100 YEARS AGO, REFORM ACCEPT CIVIL DIVORCE AS LEGAL FOR JEWISH MARRIAGE

- FOR 100 YRS. NOT SERIOUS PROBLEM, JEWISH DIVORCE RATE WAS LOW
- SINCE 60S, CHANGE - U.S. DIVORCE RATE 50%; JEWISH 30-40%.

good news
bad news

BUT JEWS HAVE HIGH RE-MARRIAGE RATE (highest among U.S. religious groups)

acc to halacha, marriage dissolved only by Gd - if woman remarries w/o. Gd, considered adulterous; child of subseq marriage = DISMAY ILLEGITIMATE CHILD

ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN CAN NEVER MARRY LEGITIMATE CHILDREN

200,000 - 300,000 JEWISH WEDDINGS / YEAR 20-30% DIVORCE RATE = 60,000 DIVORCES

OF WHOM 30-50% WOULD LEGITIMATE

= MEANS 30,000 SECOND MARRIAGES / YR.

IF ASSUME LOWER FERTILITY RATE (LATER IN LIFE) 1/2 - 1/4 child / marriage) SUGGEST 7,000 - 15,000 DISMAY / YEAR - DEVASTATING NUMBER.

II

- APPROX. 100,000 - 200,000 BY 2,000
- BY TURN OF CENTURY - 750,000 - 1 MILLION WHOSE JEWISHNESS IS CONTESTED, OR WHOSE MARRIAGEABILITY IS DENIED BY LARGE GROUP OF OTHER JEWS.
- TOTAL U.S. JEWISH POP BY 2,000 → 5 MILLION (Some say lower)
- WITHIN 20 YEARS, 15-20% AMER JEWRY WILL BE SOCIALLY & ETHNICALLY SEPARATED FROM TRADITIONAL JEWRY (NOT FRINGE)
- ADD FAMILIES, FRIENDS, TEMPLE, OR MEMBERS, CONSTITUTE MAJORITY OF U.S. JEWRY
- EASILY 50% OF JEWS COULD BE ALLIED W. GROUP VS. TRADITIONAL JEWS WHO CHALLENGE STATUS.
- IMPACT - WATER TOLD YOU'RE NOT JEWISH, BELIEVE YOU ARE ACTIVE WHO IS A JEW CONTRADICTORY - ANGER - CONSIDER NOT INVITE KIBBUTZ IN JEWISH LIFE
- "DELEGITIMIZED" JEWS WILL RESENT/CUT OFF # TRADITIONAL INSTIT. NOT COURTSHIP PARENTS, NOT LET KIDS MEET SUCH JEWS, FEAR NOT JEWISH ITALIANIZATION SOCIALIZE
- RISK OF INTERMARRIAGE, NEW INSIDIOUS FORM.
- PROJECT - ALIENATION/HOSTILITY/WITHDRAWAL - SPLITTING INTO 2 RELIGIONS, 2 SOCIAL GROUPS - OPPOSED TO EACH OTHER
- NEGLECT, DO NOTHING TO COME TRUE - NO SERIOUS DIALOGUE YET
- THREAT - SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS CIVIL WAR.
- SHIFT TO DENOMINATIONAL CONCERN, WRITING OFF OTHER GROUPS
- REFORM - PATRILINEAL DESCENT W.O. CONVERSION. (THOUSANDS - J. HUSBANDS - NON-J WIVES) BRING CLOSER TO JUDAIISM
- NOTHING WE DO WILL SATISFY ORTHOD. - WHILE NOT RABBIS TO THEM - SOLVE OWN PROBLEMS
- LEGON MAYER - WHEN NON-J PARTNER FAILS TO CONVERT, CHILDREN AS J. DROPS
- ORTHO DOX - IMPACT 75% PROBLEM - 25% IN FPP - TO MARRY - TO 25% - CIFIED OF
- 2nd MARRIAGE OF MOTHER - NO Gd IN 1st MARRIAGE - ∴ CHILD ILLEGITIMATE
- R. MOSHE FEINSTEIN RULED - REFORM RABBIS NO RABBIS | 1st MARRIAGE NOT VALID ∴ NO Gd REQUIRED
- SOLVED ORTHODOX PROBLEM BY DISMISSING VALIDITY OF LA. REFORM JEWS
- (ALTERNATIVE - CONVINCING REFORM TO OBTAIN Gd - TOO EXPLOSIVE IN ORTHODOXY)
- CONSERVATIVE - WOMEN RABBIS 1985 (FEINSTEIN, LOBBYING NOT OFFEND ORTHO)
- MEET ROTAL NEEDS, ORTHODO DO NOT ACCEPT CONS.

III

- WOMEN IN REBBINATE - ENRICH JEWISH LIFE / MORAL UPGRADING STATUS WOMEN
- FEWER DIALOGUE WITH OUTSIDER, ASSURE NOT DILUTING JUDAISM, BUT
STRENGTHENING THAN INTEGRATED JEWISH LIFE

[REMAIN FROM WITNESS OF PERSONAL STATUS DOCUMENT FOR DECADE - C-O DIALOGUE
RESOLVE ISSUE
- FAILURE TO REACH OUT, SHOWS EACH GROUP MEETS OWN NEEDS, LET KLAL
SUFFER

> PAST, LARGE NO. CONS, REFORM FROM ORTHODOX HOMES - DESPITE BAREN, FELT
CLOSE TO ORTHO FAMILIES, RELUCTANT TO BURN BRIDGES

- NOW, ORTHO HOLDS ITS CIRCLES / CONS, REFORM RECALIT FROM OWN MOVEMENTS
YOUTH FEEL NO GUILT VS. PARENTS OR PAST / OFFENDED BY ORTHO DISMISSAL OF THEIR
VALIDITY

- MORE TRADITIONAL PERSONALLY, BUT COMMUNITARIAN (IGNORE ORTHODOX)
- EACH MOVEMENT, TENDENCY TO WRITE OFF OTHERS GROWING

- (REFORM - PATRIARCHAL DISSENT - REJECTED BY MILLIONS - SEE RABBIS FOR MALPRACTICE
REF ASSURE FEW PEOPLE WILL CARE ABOUT HALACHA - MARRIAGE WILL BE POSSIBLE
POLICY PREDICATED ON DISAPPEARANCE OF ORTHODOX OR TRADITIONAL CONS.

- R. MOSHE FEINSTEIN CALCULATES RISING INTERMARRIAGE, ASSIMILATION, NON-OBSERVANT
WILL DISAPPEAR, LEAVING ONLY ORTHO BEHIND

> PAST, ANTI-SEMITES PLANNED JEWS WILL DISAPPEAR

> IMAGE SITUATION, WITHIN GOOD, COMMITTED JEWS PRACTICE SURVIVAL STRATEGIES
ON DISAPPEARANCE OF OTHER JEWS. / UNKIND BUT THAT'S EMOTIONAL TO P

POLARIZATION - INTER-DENOMINATIONAL DELEGITIMIZATION WRING ^{STRATEGICALLY} _{MONETARILY} _{INTERMARRIAGE}

U.S. ORTHO SOCIETY - ALTERNATIVE LIFE STYLES - > NO. PEOPLE CHOOSE ALTERNAT

אנשים ישרים
אנשים דתניים

EACH GROUP STRENGTHENED BY > EFFECTIVENESS OF OTHER - BUILD UP FOR KLAL

- א/ב/ב/ב? - LIFT FOR ORTHODOX, AWAY FROM CONS, REFORM

- CONS, REFORM - STRONGER JEWISH COMMITMENT - USE DAY SCHOOLS - JOBS FOR ORTHO

- " " SUPPORT ORTHO INST. - LUBAVITCH - "HARDLY ANOTHER ORTHO INST CAN SURVIVE
W.O. CONS, REFORM SUPPORT

- ORTHO SHOULD PRAY FOR HETZLU CONS-REFORM - NOT GOING THAT WAY

- OUTSIDE N.Y. - SIGNIF MAJORITY DAY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM CONS, REFORM HOMES

- DAY SCHOOLS TRAINING LEADENS CONS, REFORM. FEDERATIONS - BUT NOT PLANNED

> ORTHO KIPOT ON CAMPUSES CHANGE ASSIMILATED TONE / CITIZEN - DRUGS

- CONS, REFORM KIDS SEE MYSTICAL RELIG APPROACH, STRONG AUTHORITY, DISCIPLINE

IMPORTANT YESHIVA OPTION - ALTERNATIVE REL. MOON, JEWS FOR JESUS, HARE KRISHNA

ו'ן מ'ג'ג מ'ג'ג ו'ן ו'ד'ן
ו'ן מ'ג'ג ו'ן ו'ד'ן

IV

- Each Movement Strengthens Other, Strengthens דב'ר ו'ס
- ↳ SOCIAL SPILT, JEWISH CIVIL WITH LOWER NUMBERS AVAILABLE TO EACH GROUP
INCREASE IN INTERMARRIAGE, GREATER NEG. ACTS
- ↳ DELEGITIMATION OF OTHER DIVERTS FROM FACING OWN ISSUES -
WOMEN - 50% OF ORTHODOXY (DIVORCE)
- ↳ CONVS. REFORM - DISMISS ORTHODOX - AVOID ISSUE OF PRAYER (POWER VS. POWERLESSNESS)
- CONVS. REFORM - NEED MORE DISCIPLINE / DEMAND DEEPER TRADITION
- MODELS FROM OTHER GROUP - ORTHO SHABBAT, YOM TOV
- ↳ ORTHO NEED SOCIAL ACTION, JUSTICE / SPIRITUALITY LAY PEOPLE VS. MECHANICAL
OBSERVANCES - "SPIRITUAL FOREST LOST IN TREES OF DETAIL"
- ↳ WEEKEND RETREATS 3 GROUPS - ARGUMENTS, UNUNDERSTANDING
- ↳ MORAL - SPIRITUAL DISTANCE FROM OTHER, LACK OF RESPECT FOR THEIR RELIGION = MORAL INDIFFERENCE TO FATE (XANS PASSIVITY TO JEWS / (NATIVE FRENCH JEWS TO OST JUDGE IN 1939-40?) "STATELESS")
- ↳ INSTEAD OF SEPARATING, BIND TOGETHER - US. INDIFFERENCE
- ↳ RABBI U. B. SOLOVEICHIK - 70/9 19/7 8/7 -> ד'ר מ'ר - COVENANT OF COMMON FATE
- ↳ AFTER HOLOCAUST, ISRAEL - SEPARATION OUTRAGE
NO DISTINCTIONS IN GAS CHAMBERS
- ABSOLUTE DISTINCTIONS DENY ALL JEWS COMMON FATE OF COVENANT
ALL JEWS ARE GOD'S WITNESSES - יד'ן ד'ר, ר'ג'ו ו'ד'ו ל'ו ס'ו'ו
- ISRAEL - BUILT BY ALL JEWS - COVENANT JEWISH PEOPLE STILL LIVES
SYMBOL
- (SEPARATE NOW, GOING THAN EXODUS, NEVER REACHING SINAI)
- ISRAEL'S REDEEMTIVE SIGNIF - COMMON HOLIDAYS, UNIFYING PRACTICES - BRIDGES

To do

- 1) SYSTEMATIC RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE (LIKE J-X) - SEA (no religion)
- CHEVRA - 120 RABBIS IN 6 CITIES
- ↳ JEWISH-JEWISH DIALOGUE [SCHOLARS / RABBIS / LAY LEADERS]
- CHAZON ISH (ATHISM CULTURAL BIAS RATHER WILFUL DENIAL) HARAV KOGK
- ↳ LIVING FROM DIALOGUES
- ORTHODOX STAYS RELUCTANT OR DENY SEA SCET
- WILL TO UNITY, COMMON FATE

7312 מ 121

Quoted
in notes in
S. 12/22

LION IN JUNGLE - GRABBED TIGER - "WHO IS KING OF JUNGLE?"

YOU ARE MIGHTY LION

BEAR - YOU ARE KING OF JUNGLE

ELEPHANT - TRUNK, SWUNG HIM, TREES,

FINALLY, LION, MORE LIVE THAN DEAD, LOOKED UP AT ANGRY ELEPHANT,

"LOOK, JUST BECAUSE YOU DON'T KNOW MY ANSWER, NO REASON TO GET

SO ROUGH

EXPOSER - SOUTH AMERICA - ARAO BIND - TO MOTHER

LATER, RETURNS HOME - HELPS BIND? / KICK IT!

DON'T YOU KNOW IT SPEAKS 7 LANGUAGES!

SO WHY DIDN'T HE SAY SOMETHING

(LOOK FOR DIFFERENT THINGS IN TC | SOME DIVINE GUIDANCE)

CODE FOR LIVING / MOST FOR COORDINATES

EVERYBODY ASKED TC, NO 11 O'CLOCK NEWS

10 M. LAWS ON BOOKS - ALL TRYING TO CONFUSE TC

BETTER THAN PEOPLE IN

(UNDER FINANCIAL CONTROL, 7-17 RANCO COORDINATE AFTER HIM

WORK IN EMPTY ROOMS START ARGUMENT

Perspectives



National Jewish Resource Center

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New York, N.Y. 10001

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WILL THERE BE ONE JEWISH PEOPLE BY THE YEAR 2000?

- The Demographics of Separation
- The Denominational Politics of Separation
- A Critique of Separation
- What Is It To Be Done?

BY

IRVING GREENBERG

Edited by Nina Beth Cardin



AMERICAN JEWISH

DR. IRVING GREENBERG, President of NJRC, co-edited *Confronting the Holocaust: The Impact of Elie Wiesel*. He has served as Rabbi of the Riverdale Jewish Center, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Jewish Studies of City College of City University of New York, and as Director of the President's Commission on the Holocaust.

זכר אלה יעקב וישראל

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF SEPARATION

"Will there be *one* Jewish people by the 2000?"

Until recently, this question would have been dismissed as mischievous. The normal, ongoing social dynamics of the Jewish community worked to keep us one people. From time to time, special, divisive actions by militants from different groups threatened to disrupt the unity. But "We Are One" appeared to most Jews to be as eternal and solid a truth as the ageless hills.

There has been a decisive challenge to this truth in the past twenty years. The pattern of current demographic change and negative social interaction is leading to grim consequences. If sociological forces are left to operate unchecked, the result will be predictable. *Within decades, the Jewish people will split apart into two, mutually divided, hostile groups who are unable or unwilling to marry each other.*

It will take determined, continuous action to reverse the combination of demographic trends, particularly in the areas of conversion, patrilineal descent and mamzerim (halachically illegitimate children), that is creating this disaster for Jewish survival.

CONVERTS: Everybody complains about intermarriage, but the other side of the open society is that a large number of people choose to join the Jewish community. In the United States, there has been a surge of converts, accelerating over the past few years. A recent *Wall Street Journal* survey suggested that 10,000 convert to Judaism annually. If the rate of conversion remains constant, there will be an additional 150,000 converts by the year 2000. Add them to the already-existing number in American Jewry—which can be estimated at 150,000-250,000—and there will be 300,000-400,000 converts living in our community. Of them, 90% or more will be Reform, which is to say that they will not have undergone a conversion ritual which satisfies the requirements of Orthodox Jews or of the Conservative movement.

PATRILINEAL DESCENT: The recent decision of the Reform rabbinate to recognize the children born of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother as Jews—without conversion—is creating another class of Jews who are not accepted as such by the rest of the community. There are an estimated 500,000 children of marriages between a Jew and a non-Jew in American Jewry. In one-third of those marriages, the partner converted. Let us assume, then, that one-third of the 500,000 children will be

recognized as Jewish. (This is actually too optimistic. Unfortunately, many of those conversions are not acceptable to the Orthodox and Conservative movements, and those children also will be deemed not Jewish.)

Of the two-thirds of the intermarriages in which one of the partners does not convert, an estimated two-thirds are between a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. Applying that ratio to the 335,000 children left in the pool, we can estimate 220,000 children of patrilineal descent. In the absence of conversion, they will be considered Jewish by the Reform movement, but not by the more traditional Jews. Their numbers will undoubtedly increase in the next fifteen years.

MAMZERIM: More than one hundred years ago, the Reform rabbinate decided to accept civil divorce as a legal end to a Jewish marriage. For almost a century, that decision had no serious consequences, mainly because the Jewish divorce rate was so low. Since the 1960s, American values have changed, and the old cultural insulation between Jews and non-Jews has worn away. As a result, there has been a tremendous rise in Jewish divorce. The American national divorce rate is now estimated at 50% in recent marriages. The Jewish rate could easily be at the 30-40% level.

The good news is that Jews have strong family values and commitments. Therefore, Jews have a high re-marriage rate; indeed, the highest re-marriage rate among American religious groups. The bad news is that, according to *halacha* (Jewish law), a marriage can be dissolved only by a *get* (divorce document). If a woman remarries without a *get*, she is considered an adulteress, and any child of this subsequent marriage is considered a *mamzer*, i.e., an illegitimate child. In Jewish law, there is no illegitimacy out of wedlock, only illegitimacy out of incest, adultery, or second marriage without a *get*. These illegitimate children can never marry legitimate children.

A not-unreasonable guess would be that there are 200,000-300,000 Jewish weddings a year. A 20% to 30% divorce rate would equal 60,000 divorces, of whom 30%-50% would remarry. That yields 30,000 second marriages a year. If we assume that such marriages have a lower fertility rate because they occur later in life or because people may be less willing to have children, and if we assess a half- or a quarter-child per marriage (the current Jewish birthrate is 1.2 children per family), that would suggest 7,000-15,000 *mamzerim* a year, a devastating

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number. Let us arbitrarily ignore the number of such children in existing second marriages. The totals still approach approximately 100,000 to 200,000 *mamzerim* by the year 2000.

Add all the above results together: By the turn of the century, there will be between three-quarters of a million and a million people whose Jewishness is contested or whose marriageability is denied by a large group of other Jews. It has been estimated that the total American Jewish population by the year 2000 will be five million. Some say it will be even lower. The conclusion is that, within two decades, 15%-20% of American Jewry will be socially and halachically separated from traditional Jews. Fifteen to twenty per cent is not a fringe phenomenon. Add to these people, their families, friends, their fellow temple and organizational members and they would constitute a major segment of American Jewry. Easily fifty per cent of the Jewish people could be, in some way, allied with this group against the traditional Jews who challenge their status. What do you think would be the impact on you (or your parents) if you were told that you are not Jewish when your parents tell you that you are, when you believe you are, and when you belong to a Jewish temple and engage in Jewish activities?

Tremendous anger surfaced in the "Who is a Jew" controversy. A measure of the intensity is found in the resolution of the highly Zionist Conservative rabbinate to "blacklist" from their pulpits those Knesset members who voted to change the law. Conservative and Reform Jews (mistakenly) believed that the Orthodox were saying that

they are not Jewish, and not merely that their converts are not Jewish. Manifestly, contested Jews and their friends will express resentment, will cut off funds from traditional institutions, and finally will not socialize with the others. It is equally likely that Orthodox and traditional parents will be afraid to let their children meet such Jews out of fear that they are halachically not Jewish. The risk of intermarriage in a new, insidious form will be uppermost in the traditional parents' minds.

One can project a cycle of alienation, hostility, and withdrawal that will lead to a sundering of the Jewish people into two religions or two social groups, fundamentally divided and opposed to each other.

If the above estimates are too high—and they may well be too low—then it may take until the year 2020 or 2050 to arrive at the same disastrous end. But what difference do a few decades make over the long span of Jewish history?

All it will take is neglect, doing nothing, to make this script—which makes my hand shudder as it writes—come true. Yet, at this moment, there is no brainstorming, let alone serious dialogue, between the movements to deal with the problem.

NOTE: The author wishes to acknowledge and recommend Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka's book, *The Coming Cataclysm* (Oakville, Ont., Canada: Mosaic Press, 1984), which opened his eyes to the full crisis, *i.e.*, that in the absence of action, a split is almost inevitable. □

THE DENOMINATIONAL POLITICS OF SEPARATION

As the threat of social and religious civil war looms larger in American Jewry, the most ominous development is in the internal dynamics of the individual denominations. The balance of power within each movement has shifted toward those who would solve social and religious problems in a manner preferred by and most convenient for the individual group, while, in effect, writing off the concerns or the needs of the other denominations.

The decision of the Reform rabbinate to declare a child of Jewish patrilineal descent a Jew—without requiring conversion—is a classic example of this trend. Within Reform congregations, there are thousands of families with Jewish husbands and non-Jewish wives. The need was to bring them closer to Judaism and to make them feel welcome in the Reform community.

Those who opposed the decision argued that it was a breach of the principle of *clal Yisrael*, and would alienate and offend the Orthodox and traditional Conservatives. The response of the Reform rabbinate, in effect, was that "nothing we will do will satisfy the Orthodox anyway. They say that we are not rabbis. Let us then, solve the problem for ourselves, to meet a real need in our own congregations." So distant from the Orthodox have the Reform become, that marginal improvement for Reform congregants overrides concern of a breach in the Jewish people or of offending the Orthodox.

(It should be noted that telling the children, "You are Jewish," and not requiring a conversion ceremony can offer only marginal improvement in their feeling of being wanted in the Jewish community. Moreover, Egon Mayer's research on intermarriage shows that when the non-Jewish partner fails to convert—even when the parents consider their children Jewish—the percentage of such children who ultimately define themselves as Jewish drops to twenty-five per cent.)

For its part, the Orthodox community has begun to feel the impact of the *mamzer* phenomenon. Thanks to the *baal teshuva* (returnees) movement, young people coming from non-observant homes enter yeshivot and become deeply committed, learned, and observant. It happened that such a young person sought to be married and only then was the discovery made that this was the child of a second marriage of a mother whose first marriage was terminated without a *get*—i.e., the child was illegitimate. Facing this crisis, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the dean of the Orthodox rabbinate and its leading decisor, attacked the

problem boldly and liberally. Determined to prevent *mamzerut* (illegitimacy) in accordance with the compassionate tradition of the *halacha*, Rabbi Feinstein simply ruled that since Reform rabbis are not valid rabbis, their marriages are not valid. Therefore the first marriage was not valid and so required no *get*.

Rabbi Feinstein has brilliantly solved the Orthodox problem and permitted worthy people who would otherwise be excluded to marry in the community. He is liberal and compassionate—otherwise, he would have simply rejected the *mamzerim*. However, this solution is predicated on, quite simply, dismissing the spiritual validity of more than a million Reform Jews and their rabbis. The alternative—to approach the Reform rabbinate and seek to work out some policy of convincing the masses to obtain a *get*—would be far more explosive politically in the Orthodox movement.

The Conservative movement also shows the same polarizing tendency. In 1985, the Conservative rabbinate decided to accept women as rabbis. In the past, the Conservative rabbinate, led by such stalwarts as Rabbis Louis Finkelstein and Saul Lieberman, would have opposed such a decision in order not to offend the Orthodox and to avoid an open breach with the traditional *halacha*. Now, the mood is, we want to deal with a real need in our movement; let us go ahead and solve it for our maximum benefit. If the Orthodox do not like it, it does not matter; they will not accept us, anyway.

I believe that women in the rabbinate will make a major contribution to the enrichment of Jewish life, and that this step is a moral upgrading of the status of women. I respect the decision not to wait any longer. However, the decision should have been coupled with a commitment to make extraordinary efforts to enter into dialogue with the Orthodox. It should have been coupled with a commitment to strengthen observance standards so as to reassure traditionalists that admitting women to the rabbinate is not another "dilution," but rather a strengthening of Judaism, allowing all Jews to share in the full challenge of intensifying Jewish life. An offer could have been made by women rabbis to refrain from serving as witnesses on halachic personal status documents for a decade—on condition that an intensive Conservative-Orthodox dialogue to work through the issue be pursued. The failure to redouble efforts to reach out shows this change in psychology. Each group meets its own needs and lets the devil take the others' hindmost.

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In the past, a heavy percentage of Conservative and Reform rabbis came from Orthodox homes. Often, they broke spiritually from their parents on their childhood training and, sometimes, they carried a grudge against the tradition. Still, in the crunch, such rabbis felt a closeness to their families or a social link to the Orthodox community that made them reluctant to burn bridges.

Now, happily, Orthodoxy is far more successful in holding its own children. Happily, the Conservative and Reform denominations are increasingly recruiting rabbis from their own movements. Often, these are people who have been inspired by the movements' youth and camping programs, people who in many cases come from assimilated homes and are becoming much more Jewish than their parents. Their rabbinate is a statement of an upgraded commitment to Jewish life. This is a positive phenomenon. However, such people feel no 'guilt' vis-a-vis their parents or the past. They are offended by the Orthodox dismissal of their spiritual validity. Their psychological health enables them to become more traditional personally but communally freer to act on their own judgment and ignore the Orthodox. The result is even greater polarization.

In each movement, the tendency to write off the others is growing. How can the Reform rabbinate proclaim the right of patrilineal descent, when they know full well that neither the Orthodox nor the Conservative movement accept such children as Jewish? What if one warrants to people for years that they are Jewish, only for them to

discover that millions of others do not consider them Jewish. They have every right to claim consumer fraud! This is the United States of America. Aggrieved young people may yet sue rabbis for malpractice. But the Reform rabbinate is assuming that when the children of patrilineal descent come of marriageable age, so few people will really care about halachic rules that the supply of partners available for marriage to such patrilineal children will not seriously be affected. In other words, the policy is predicated, tacitly, on the disappearance of Orthodox or seriously traditional Conservative Jews.

The exact same logic underlies Rabbi Moshe Feinstein's rulings. Does he not know that there are a million and more Jews who follow the Reform rabbis, and consider them their spiritual mentors? The answer is that he is mentally calculating that with rising intermarriage and growing assimilation, the non-observant will disappear, leaving only the Orthodox behind.

In the past, anti-Semites built their plans on the expectation and hope that the Jews will disappear. We have come to a tragic situation where good and committed Jews are predicating their survival strategies on the disappearance of other Jews.

Of course, the above statement is unkind. However, it captures the emotional tone of the relationships between the Jewish denominations in the latter part of the twentieth century. ■

A CRITIQUE OF SEPARATION

The move toward greater polarization and increased interdenominational delegitimation is not merely leading to a catastrophe of social division. It is strategically, morally, and theologically wrong.

America is the most open society in human history. Everyone is exposed to varied alternative lifestyles. All people face the challenge of choice in which individuals can define their own values and existence. In such an environment, the more varieties of Jewish living that the community can offer, the greater the number of people who will choose each individual variety. Each group is strengthened by the greater effectiveness of the other. Each group should be building up the other, for its own sake as well as for the greater good of *clal Yisrael*.

When the Conservative and Reform movements grow stronger, Orthodoxy gains. The *baal teshuva* (returnee) movement has given numerical gains and a great psychological lift to the Orthodox community. Most of the *baalei teshuva* are recruited not from those who are totally out of Jewish life, but from those outside of Orthodoxy. Most of the people available to become *baalei teshuva* come from movements nearby on the spectrum. In other words, when Conservative and Reform generate young people with greater Jewish commitment or with different religious needs than their parents, some of them join the pool of Orthodox returnees. Others stay and strengthen their own movement.

As Conservative and Reform lay people have developed stronger Jewish commitments in the past two decades, they have become consumers of day school education for their children. Thus, they provide many jobs and opportunities for influence to Orthodox rabbis; for the Orthodox still run the majority of the day schools. As the respect for tradition engendered by Conservative and Reform rabbis has deepened among their laymen, they have increasingly supported Orthodox institutions. In the past, if a Reform Jew was busy assimilating, he would cross the street to avoid meeting a Hasid. Now, Reform and Conservative money fuels the remarkable growth of Lubavitch, as of the other Orthodox organizations. Indeed, there is hardly a major national Orthodox institution that can survive without the financial support of Conservative and Reform Jews. Logically, then, the Orthodox should pray every day for the health and welfare of the Conservative and Reform movements. But that is not the way that it is going.

As Orthodox effectiveness rises, it gives greater

strength to the Conservative and Reform movements. The day schools are primarily built, supported, and run by the Orthodox. Yet, outside of New York, the significant majority of day school students come from Conservative, Reform, and secular homes. Indeed, the Orthodox day schools are training the future lay leadership of the Conservative and Reform movements—as well as Federation—although for the moment they are not expressing pride in that truth. The presence on college campuses of Orthodox youth wearing *kipot* provides Jewish models and helps change the assimilated tone of the university. *Chabad* houses have had a special success in reaching out to Jewish children in trouble, on drugs, etc., many of them from non-Orthodox homes. And for the children of Conservative, Reform, and secular homes who seek a mystical religious approach, with strong authority and discipline, it is important that there be a Lubavitch or yeshiva option. In an open society, the alternative solution to such unmet needs could well be Reverend Moon, Jews for Jesus, or Hare Krishna.

Thus, each movement strengthens the others with its own strength which in turn strengthens the entire Jewish community. In contrast, a social split would lower the numbers available to each group. In many cases, reducing the number below a certain critical mass will weaken the capacity of the community to support needed institutions for all the groups. A Jewish civil war will undoubtedly lead to an increase in intermarriage and other negative social phenomena.

Delegitimation of the other denominations diverts each one from facing its own real issues. When the Orthodox totally deny Conservative and Reform, they can dismiss the women's question as something which has been raised by the non-Orthodox and therefore illegitimate. This distracts the Orthodox from facing the challenge of inequities in *halacha*, such as in divorce, and from facing the fact that they have not fully incorporated 50% of the talent and religious potential of their community.

When the Conservative and Reform define their own legitimacy by dismissing the Orthodox, they end up defining success as breaking with the rigidity of the past. Thus, for example, translating prayers into English is mistakenly believed to solve the problem of worship. They fail to face the fundamental problem of prayer, of modern man's difficulties with prayer, and of how we can pray out of power as we have prayed out of powerlessness.

To solve their internal problems, each group needs the

help and presence of the other. The Conservative and Reform movements desperately need more discipline, more ability to demand from their lay people a deeper sense of tradition. The rabbis who see this need are frustrated by the limited response of their lay people. The best way to get the lay people to grow is by having them relate to models from the other groups. Out of sympathetic contact with an Orthodox family, Conservative and Reform Jews are more likely to experience the beauty of Shabbat or the strength of the family *yom tov* and are far more likely to begin such observances themselves.

The Orthodox community needs more capacity to respond sensitively and effectively to contemporary urgencies. It needs to be helped to focus on social action and the call to justice. It needs help in enriching the spirituality of its lay people, as against excessively mechanical observance in which the spiritual forest is lost for the trees of details. One of the best ways Orthodox lay people could be encouraged in these directions would be from contact with simpatico Conservative and Reform Jews who are active in these areas. Ideally, Jews from all denominations should gather together for weekends and for chances to exchange agendas and understanding. But this is not possible with the present mood of alienation and separation.

The greatest evil resulting from a split could well show up in a moral side effect. We learned in the Holocaust that spiritual distance from others and lack of respect for their religion translated into moral indifference to their fate. This is why so few Christians helped Jews. Will separated Jews stand idly by the blood of other Jews when they are in danger? Would each group repeat the erroneous attitude of native French Jewry towards "Ostjuden" in 1939-40?

Under the Vichy regime, the native French Jews were tempted to accept the round-up of "stateless Jews" (read: Ostjuden).

Instead of separating, Jews should be binding themselves to each other as closely as possible, lest one group be tempted into indifference to the other's fate. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik proclaimed this insight decades ago in his classic essay *Kol Dodi Dofek*. But the Orthodox movement has failed to translate this mandate into halachic behavior.

Theologically, the separation of the Jewish people is an outrage. We live after the Holocaust and the rebirth of Israel. Clearly, the overwhelming message of those two events is the unity of the Jewish people—the unity of fate which Rabbi Soloveitchik has described as *brit goral*—the covenant of common fate. There were no distinctions in the gas chambers. To elevate the distinctions between Jews to absolute status is to deny the truth that all Jews carry the fate of the covenant, or run the risks of suffering for it. All Jews are God's witnesses.

Israel represents Jewish unity. It was built by religious and secular Jews alike. Israel is supported by Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist alike. Israel is the great symbol that the covenant of the Jewish people still lives. To separate now is like living through the Exodus and going on with business as usual. A community guilty of such ingratitude and spiritual hard-heartedness can only fail religiously. Israel's redemptive significance should be translated into common holidays and celebrations, unifying practices—and concrete efforts to bridge religious gaps between all the groups. □

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

American Jewry must establish a systematic religious dialogue among the Jewish denominations on the scale of the Jewish-Christian dialogue of the past fifty years. Over the decades, the Jewish community has financed dialogue programs of the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Synagogue Council of America, and the joint National Conference of Christians and Jews to ensure that Jews and Christians would overcome the hostilities of the past. Many have criticized the duplication, but the fact is that an extraordinary success was made possible by this significant investment of resources.

A legacy of eighteen hundred years of hatred—and even murder—has been broadly overcome by people inspired by dialogue, religious sharing and theologizing, as well as by personal and social contacts. There are Evangelical Christians now challenging the anti-Semitism of the New Testament. Devout Catholics and Protestants have reformulated their own traditions to eliminate stereotyping and hatred and to advocate Jewish causes such as Israel and Soviet Jewry. Eminent Jewish thinkers have formulated the most positive Jewish models of Christianity ever developed in all the days of their separate existence.

When it comes to Jewish-Jewish dialogue, however, there has been a shortage of organizations. The Synagogue Council of America (SCA) brings together the three denominations. To prevent halachic controversy due to participation in SCA, each movement was given a veto. To avoid straining the weak fabric of the SCA, 'divisive' theological issues have been avoided. Moreover, delegates sit not as individuals but as representatives of their movements, which restricts or prevents growing toward each other. Most local Boards of Rabbis follow this same policy.

At the present time, the National Jewish Resource Center offers the only serious organizational commitment to intra-Jewish ecumenism. NJRC's CHEVRA project for rabbis is committed to *clal Yisrael* and provides a forum for ongoing dialogue. Due to limited budget, only 120 rabbis in six cities are currently involved. That number is not yet large enough to change the outcome of policies or to reverse the present tendency to polarization. NJRC has sought funding to increase the scope of CHEVRA but has found little receptivity to its requests.

Nationally, the Federations are giving millions for

Jewish-Christian dialogue but only pennies for Jewish-Jewish dialogue. The level of consciousness regarding the urgency of the issue is too low. The truth of the matter is, if the growing divisiveness is not stopped, it will split the unity of community, affect the success of local campaigns and cost the Federations millions of dollars.

The internal Jewish discussion should follow the Jewish-Christian dialogue model, in all its aspects (an embarrassing but accurate analogy). There should be a high-level dialogue encompassing systematic theology and studies in *halacha* which respectfully acknowledge divisions between the groups. Theological and halachic reasoning that justify and mandate the necessary steps to cooperate and to construct common solutions must be developed within each movement.

For example: within the Orthodox movement, there are scholars already arguing that even if the non-Orthodox movements follow halachic procedures, all their acts will be invalid. In this view, non-Orthodox theological assumptions (including the possibility of change in halacha) make all non-Orthodox acts ipso facto null and void. Halachic scholarship that seeks unifying solutions should build on the suggestion of the Chazon Ish (the great leader of the most traditional Israeli sector of the past generation!) that disbelief and even atheism should be treated as a modern cultural bias or 'pressure', rather than as a willful denial. There are other possible positive Orthodox approaches in the thought of Rabbis Abraham Isaac Kook and Joseph P. Soloveitchik. Yet, for the most part, the halachic disciples of these great figures are being educated to simplistic philosophies of halacha and socialized to separatist approaches. All three movements need an infusion of high-level scholarship in philosophy, theology, and halacha. Developing such high-level scholarship takes time, talent, and careful cultivation.

In addition, we need middle-level dialogue in which the rabbis and practitioners, as well as the lay leadership of each movement, are brought into systematic and regular contact for learning, for better mutual understanding, and for finding common solutions to common problems.

Finally, there must be a popular level, modeled on the 'living room dialogue' of the Jewish-Christian experience. Through such dialogues, people overcome stereotypes. They learn that there is real commitment in the other groups to values which they also respect and desire. This changes the atmosphere and gives support to the rabbis

who seek to overcome some of the legal and theological obstacles. Without such lay sympathy, it would be impossible for spiritual leadership to overcome barriers.

It is time that those Jews who are not totally 'denominationalized' assert the principle and the priority of *clal Yisrael* (the unity and totality of the Jewish people). I would call upon all Jews to put pressure—peer pressure, moral judgment, even economic pressure—on the leadership of all the denominations. Let a non-Orthodox Jew who is giving money to traditional institutions ask them: What are they doing to advance unity? Are they abusing other Jews? Just asking the question begins to have an impact on policy.

Let Orthodox Jews who are active in the community constantly challenge their non-Orthodox co-workers: What are they doing to insure that their own denominations not act irresponsibly in matters of personal status or issues that affect the overall unity of the Jewish people? It is time to collect I.O.U.s from each other. At least, a combination of moral and political pressure should be brought to bear to advance solutions that favor the good of the total community, rather than the short-term advantages of a particular group.

Among those Jews who view the polarization with equanimity, many are convinced that only their group will survive. But the Orthodox who favor withdrawal should not be so complacent. True, they could turn out to be the saving remnant. They could equally turn out to be the contemporary 'Dead Sea sect'—the group that withdrew to save its own purity and died an arid, nameless death sundered from Jewish history. Those Conservative Jews

who feel that Orthodox is reactionary and a lost cause, those Reform and secular Jews who have written off the survival of the traditionalists, all those who are convinced that they alone are modern enough to survive, should ask themselves whether it is not equally likely that they will simply be assimilated into the magnetic culture of the twentieth century.

We need each other. The renewal of each group is the best insurance for the survival of all groups. It is time to develop true consciousness of the urgency of the polarization problem and to formulate strategies detailed enough and wise enough to attack problems and find root solutions. The will to unity, and recognition of common fate are extraordinarily powerful among the Jewish rank and file. The failure lies in the fact that all that energy has gone into political and philanthropic fields. It is time to translate the sense of common destiny into theological categories, halachic thinking, and religious behavior.

This call for unity is not based on the hope of unanimity or uniformity. There is nothing wrong with disagreements. The divisions need not be papered over. What is needed is restraint to avoid fundamental breaches, and commitments to find common solutions. No one should underestimate either the tradition, or the will and fertile imagination of the Jewish people. There are positive solutions enough within our grasp. We need the intelligence, the courage and the commitment to pursue it. The time to act is now. □

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The author of this special "Perspectives" is solely responsible for the views expressed.



National Jewish Resource Center – A Fact Sheet

History and Organization

The National Jewish Resource Center, is a non-profit educational and nondenominational religious organization founded in 1974 by Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, Elie Wiesel, and Steve Shaw. In 1983, the Institute for Jewish Experience, founded by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, was merged into the NJRC. NJRC's governing body is its Board of Directors and Executive Committee which consists of distinguished lay leaders from throughout the United States.

Purpose

to educate leaders for the new era of Jewish history in the spirit of Clal Yisrael—the unity and totality of the Jewish people.

Program Goals

to enable the Jewish community to meet the challenge of the open society in which Jews must choose to be Jews and to meet the challenge of political power and the ethics of power in the United States and Israel.

What Does NJRC Do To Meet These Goals?

- Through a variety of programs, NJRC educates the community that the Holocaust and the rebirth of Israel are turning points in Jewish history and that policy and spiritual / religious life must incorporate these events and their lessons.
- Persuades the community through actual programs that Jewish learning and experiences are essential to motivate leadership personally and are relevant to community policy decisions.
- Trains and motivates a leadership cadre—lay, rabbinic, academic, communal professional—to learn and apply the Jewish heritage and classic Jewish sources to their lives and organizational work. (Until recently, learning and personal model have not been a key qualification of community leadership.)
- Reaches out to recruit new leaders for Jewry from people of high achievement and talent who have not been involved in the Jewish community. (In the past century, generally, the higher the education, achievement, and wealth, the lower the involvement in Jewish life. This pattern must be reversed.)
- Persuades the community that unity (“we are one”) can be translated into educational values and spiritual facts, not only fundraising and political action. NJRC brings together lay people of all backgrounds, synagogue and Federation leadership, secular and religious Jews to develop a common agenda.
- In its CHEVRA project, brings Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Rabbis and academics together to learn regularly and to explore common approaches to the issues which divide us, such as “Who Is a Jew,” conversion, and ritual.
- Through its Rabbinic Fellows Institute, an outstanding interdenominational faculty trains Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Rabbis and senior rabbinical students to teach in the spirit of Clal Yisrael and to develop programs based on the unity and totality of the Jewish people.

How Does NJRC Do It?

- Through weekends, Shabbatonim, and retreats held across America.
- Through conferences and one-day institutes for lay leaders, Rabbis, and scholars.
- Through special training programs and ongoing study groups.
- Through publications: Holiday guides, policy papers, journals, reports, and columns of commentary on current Jewish issues which appear in many Anglo-Jewish periodicals.
- Through teaching films and audio tapes.

Where Does NJRC Operate?

- Across the United States.
- NJRC has conducted over 100 weekend retreats in 39 states of the U.S.A. and has organized hundreds of classes and conferences in more cities.
- In 1984-1985, NJRC will launch its National Jewish Conference Center for the American Jewish community. The beautiful facility will be a year-round site for weekends—including family Shabbatonim—as well as retreats, summer institutes and special university student summer sessions. The Center will serve as a training place for national Jewish organizations and for rabbis and academics who will be sent to do parallel programs all over the country.

Current Organizational Goals: A Center for Learning and Leadership

NJRC's primary project is the creation of a national Jewish conference center, a modern hotel / conference facility within one hour of New York City and within two hours of the New York airports, to serve a national constituency. The center will offer weekends, retreats, Shabbat experiences, training and summer sessions, scholarly conferences and family programs on a year-round basis to individuals and families, to synagogues and schools, and to national organizations. It will be available for use by Jewish organizations for their own programs as well.

The Conference Center, to be known as the “Center for Learning and Leadership” (CLAL), will enable NJRC to offer Shabbat and weekend programs on a continual basis. Thus, people can find a weekend that fits their schedules rather than having to come on a specific weekend when a temporary facility is available.

The Center will allow for weeklong institutes and summer sessions which are currently prohibitive in cost.

At the Center, a college student program modeled on the Brandeis-Bardin Institute will be offered. The BBI program has been in operation for over thirty years—it offers a thirty-day total Jewish environment and study program once in a lifetime, and has been shown to have permanent effects including lower intermarriage, more Jewish involvement, and more stable family lives.

The Center for Learning and Leadership will be the national source for state of the art leadership training programs. A cadre of Rabbis and academics will be trained at CLAL to bring these programs to communities all over America. CLAL will offer special programs for children of leaders designed to communicate the meaning and purpose of Jewish involvement and to deal with the special burdens and challenge of being the children of achievers.

The Center will host special conferences where scholars and policy analysts will interact with the lay and professional leadership of the Jewish community. Participants will assess emerging trends and problems and identify policies to resolve issues out of common objectives for the benefit of the entire Jewish people.

The Center will offer dialogues, study programs and summer sessions for Rabbis of all denominations, led by an all-denominational faculty committed to the unity and totality of the Jewish people.

The Center will offer a particularly rich program of Shabbatonim for families, singles, and groups. These weekends are designed to introduce Shabbat into family life and to enable individuals to grow into the rewarding experiences of Jewish living. In all these programs, people of every religious background will come together in the excitement of discovering the full variety of Jewish living through the inspiration of the most magnetic and spiritually stimulating scholars in Jewish life today.

National Jewish Resource Center

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WE ARE TWO

The Jewish people will split apart within decades into two hostile groups who are unable or unwilling to marry each other. Unless we act now.

BY IRVING GREENBERG
Special To The BALTIMORE JEWISH TIMES



AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

“Will there be *one* Jewish people by the year 2000?”

Until recently, this question would have been dismissed as mischievous. The normal, ongoing social dynamics of the Jewish community worked to keep us one people. From time to time, divisive actions by militants from different groups have threatened to disrupt the unity, but “We Are One” appeared to most Jews to be as



eternal and solid a truth as the ageless hills.

There has been a decisive challenge to this truth in the past twenty years, though. The pattern of current demographic change and negative social interaction is leading to grim consequences. If sociological forces are left to operate unchecked, within decades, the Jewish people will split apart into two, mutually divided, hostile groups who are unable or unwilling to marry each other.

It will take determined, continuous action to reverse the combination of demographic trends, particularly in the areas of conversion, patrilineal descent and *mamzerim* (halachically illegitimate children), that is creating this disaster for Jewish survival. (See Sidebar)

By the turn of the century, there will be a million people whose Jewishness is contested or whose marriageability is denied by a large group of other Jews. It has been estimated that the total American Jewish population by the year 2000 will be five million. Some say it will be even lower. The conclusion is that, within two decades, 15%-20% of American Jewry will be socially and halachically separated from traditional Jews.

Fifteen to twenty per cent is not a fringe phenomenon. Add to these people their families, friends, their fellow temple and organizational members and they would constitute a major fragment of American Jewry. Easily fifty per cent of the Jewish people could be, in some way, allied with this group against the traditional Jews who challenge their status. What do you think would be the impact on you (or your parents) if you were told that you are not Jewish when your parents tell you that you are, when you believe you are, and when you belong to a Jewish temple and engage in Jewish activities?

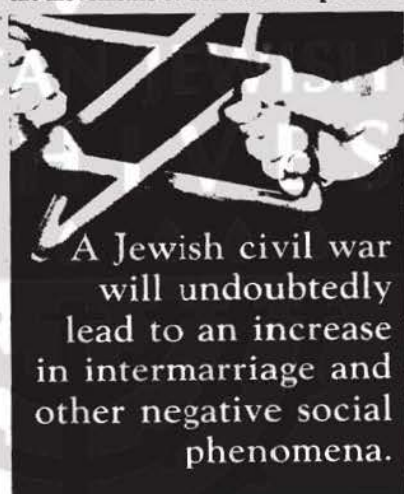
Tremendous anger surfaced in the "Who is a Jew" controversy. A measure of the intensity is found in the resolution of the highly Zionist Conservative Rabbinate to "blacklist" from their pulpits those Knesset members who voted to change the law. Conservative and Reform Jews (mistakenly) believed that the Orthodox were saying that they are not Jewish, and not merely that their converts are not Jewish. Manifestly, contested Jews and their friends will express resentment, will cut off funds from traditional institutions, and finally will not socialize with the others. It is equally likely that Orthodox and traditional parents will be afraid to let their children meet such Jews out of fear that they are halachically not Jewish. The risk of intermarriage in a new, insidious form will be uppermost in the traditional parents' minds.

One can project a cycle of alienation, hostility, and withdrawal that will lead to a sundering of the Jewish people into two

religions or two social groups, fundamentally divided and opposed to each other.

If the numbers in the above estimates are too high—and they may well be too low—then it may take until the year 2020 or 2050 to arrive at the same disastrous end. But what difference does a few decades make over the long span of Jewish history?

All it will take is neglect, doing nothing, to make this script — which makes my hand shudder as it writes — come true. Yet, at this moment, there is no brainstorming, let alone serious dialogue, between the movements to deal with the problem.



Denominational Politics

As the threat of social and religious civil war looms larger in American Jewry, the most ominous development is in the internal dynamics of the individual denominations towards meeting their own needs.

The decision of the Reform rabbinate to declare a child of Jewish patrilineal descent a Jew — without requiring conversion — is a classic example of this trend. Within Reform congregations, there are thousands of families with Jewish husband and non-Jewish wife. The need was to bring them closer to Judaism and to make them feel welcome in the Reform community.

It should be noted that telling the children, "You are Jewish," and not requiring a conversion ceremony can only offer marginal improvement in their feeling of being wanted in the Jewish community. Moreover, Egon Mayer's research on intermarriage shows that when the non-Jewish partner fails to convert — even when the parents consider their children Jewish — the percentage of such children who ultimately define themselves as Jewish drops to twenty-five percent.

Those who opposed the resolution argued that it was a breach of the principle of *Klal Yisrael* (Jewish unity) and would

alienate and offend the Orthodox and traditional Conservatives. The response of the Reform rabbinate, in effect, was that "nothing we will do will satisfy the Orthodox anyway. They say that we are not rabbis. Let us then, solve the problem for ourselves, to meet a real need in our own congregations." So distant have the Reform become from the Orthodox, that marginal improvement for Reform congregants overrides concern of a breach in the Jewish people or of offending the Orthodox.

The Orthodox community has begun to feel the impact of the *mamzer* (illegitimate child) phenomenon. Thanks to the *baal teshuva* (returnees) movement, young people coming from non-observant homes enter yeshivot and become deeply committed, learned, and observant. It happened that such a young person sought to be married and only then was the discovery made that this was the child of a second marriage of a mother whose first marriage was terminated without a *get* (divorce) — i.e., the child was illegitimate.

Facing this crisis, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, the dean of the Orthodox rabbinate and its leading decisor, attacked the problem boldly and liberally. Determined to prevent *mamzerut* (illegitimacy) in accordance with the compassionate tradition of the *halacha*, Rabbi Feinstein simply ruled that since Reform rabbis are not valid rabbis, their marriages are not valid; therefore the first marriage was not valid and so required no *get*. There is no problem of *mamzerut*. In *halacha*, a child out of wedlock is not illegitimate.

Rabbi Feinstein has brilliantly solved the Orthodox problem and permitted worthy people who would otherwise be excluded to marry in the community. He is liberal and compassionate — otherwise, he would simply reject the *mamzerim*. However, this solution is predicated on, quite simply, dismissing the spiritual validity of more than a million Reform Jews and utterly denying their rabbis. The alternative — to approach the Reform rabbinate and seek to work out some policy of convincing the masses to obtain a *get* — would be far more explosive politically in the Orthodox movement.

The Conservative movement also shows the same polarizing tendency. In 1985, the Conservative rabbinate decided to accept women as rabbis. In the past, the Conservative rabbinate, led by such stalwarts as Rabbi Louis Finkelstein and Saul Lieberman, would have opposed such a decision in order not to offend the Orthodox and to avoid an open breach with the traditional *halacha*. Now, the mood is, we want to deal with a real need in our movement; let us go ahead and solve it for our maximum benefit. It doesn't matter if the Orthodox don't like it; they won't accept us anyway.

I believe that women in the rabbinate

The Demographics Of Separation

The following three areas of religious life — converts, patrilineal descent and *mamzerim* (illegitimate children) are creating the greatest potential disaster for Jewish survival. The numbers tell the story:

CONVERTS: Everybody complains about intermarriage, but the other side of the open society is that a large number of people choose to join the Jewish community. In the United States, there has been a surge of converts, accelerating over the past few years. A recent *Wall Street Journal* survey suggested that 10,000 convert to Judaism annually. If the rate of conversion remains constant, there will be an additional 150,000 converts by the year 2000. Add them to the already-existing number of American Jewry — which can be estimated at 150,000-250,000 — and there will be 300,000-400,000 converts living in our community. Of them, 90% or more will be Reform, which is to say that they will not have undergone a conversion ritual which satisfies the requirements of Orthodox Jews or of the Conservative movement for acceptance as Jews.

PATRILINEAL DESCENT: The recent decision of the Reform rabbinate to recognize the children born of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother as Jews — even without conversion — is creating another class of Jews who are not accepted as such by the rest of the com-

munity. There are an estimated 500,000 children of marriages between a Jew and a non-Jew in American Jewry. In one-third of those marriages, the partner converted. Let us assume, then, that one-third of the 500,000 children will be recognized as Jewish. (This is actually too optimistic. Unfortunately, many of those conversions are not acceptable to the Orthodox and Conservative movements, and those children also will be deemed not Jewish.)

Of the two-thirds of the intermarriages in which one of the partners does not convert, an estimated two-thirds are between a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. Applying that ratio to the 335,000 children left in the pool, we can estimate 220,000 children of patrilineal descent. In the absence of conversion, they will be considered Jewish by the Reform movement, but not by the more traditional Jews. Their numbers will undoubtedly increase in the next fifteen years.

MAMZERIM: More than one hundred years ago, the Reform rabbinate decided to accept civil divorce as a legal end to a Jewish marriage. For almost a century, that decision had no serious consequences, mainly because the Jewish divorce rate was so low. Since the 1960s, American values have changed, and the old cultural insulation between Jews and non-Jews has worn away. As a result, there has been a tremendous rise in Jewish divorce. The American national divorce rate is now estimated at 50% in recent

marriages. The Jewish rate could easily be at the 30-40% level.

The good news is that Jews have strong family values and commitments. Therefore, Jews have a high re-marriage rate; indeed, the highest re-marriage rate among American religious groups. The bad news is that, according to *halacha* (Jewish law), a marriage can be dissolved only by a *get* (divorce document). If a woman remarries without a *get*, she is considered an adulteress, and any child of this subsequent marriage is considered a *mamzer*, i.e., an illegitimate child. In Jewish law, there is no illegitimacy out of wedlock, only illegitimacy out of incest, adultery, or second marriage without a *get*. These illegitimate children can never marry legitimate children.

A not-unreasonable guess would be that there are 200,000-300,000 Jewish weddings a year. A 20% to 30% divorce rate would equal 60,000 divorces, of whom 30%-50% would remarry. That yields 30,000 second marriages a year. If we assume that such marriages have a lower fertility rate because they occur later in life or because people may be less willing to have children, and if we assess a half- or a quarter-child per marriage (the current Jewish birthrate is 1.2 children per family), that would suggest 7,000-15,000 *mamzerim* a year, a devastating number. Let us arbitrarily ignore the number of such children in existing second marriages. The totals still approach approximately 100,000 to 200,000 *mamzerim* by the year 2000.

will make a major contribution to the enrichment of Jewish life, and that this step is a moral upgrading of the status of women. I respect the decision not to wait any longer. However, the decision should have been coupled with a commitment to make extraordinary efforts to enter into dialogue with the Orthodox. It should have been coupled with a commitment to strengthen observance standards so as to reassure traditionalists that admitting women to the rabbinate is not another "dilution," but rather a strengthening of Judaism, allowing all Jews to share in the full challenge of intensifying Jewish life. offer could have been made by women rabbis to refrain from serving as witnesses on halachic personal status documents for a decade — on condition that an intensive Conservative-Orthodox dialogue to work through the issue be pursued. The failure to redouble efforts to reach out shows this

change in psychology. Each group meets its own needs and lets the devil take the others' hindmost.

In each movement, the tendency to write off the others is growing. How can the Reform rabbinate proclaim the right of patrilineal descent, when they know full well that neither the Orthodox nor the official Conservative movement will accept such children as Jewish? The Reform rabbinate is assuming that when the children of patrilineal descent come to marriageable age, there will not be a significant number of observant Jews around. So few people will really care about the halachic rules, it will not seriously affect the supply of partners available for marriage to such patrilineal children. In other words, the policy is predicated, tacitly, on the disappearance of Orthodox or seriously traditional Conservative Jews.

The exact same logic underlies Rabbi

Moshe Feinstein's rulings. Does he not know that there are a million and more Jews who follow the Reform rabbis, and consider them their spiritual mentors? The answer is that he is mentally calculating that with rising intermarriage and growing assimilation, the non-observant will disappear, leaving only the Orthodox behind.

In the past, anti-Semites built their plans on the expectation and hope that the Jews will disappear. We have come to a tragic situation where good and committed Jews are predicating their survival strategies on the disappearance of other Jews.

A Critique Of Separation

The move toward greater polarization and increased inter-denominational delegitimation is not merely leading to a

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catastrophe of social division. It is strategically, morally, and theologically wrong.

America is the most open society in human history. Everyone is exposed to varied alternative lifestyles. All people face the challenge of choice in which individuals can define their own values and existence. In such an environment, the more varieties of Jewish living that the community can offer, the greater the number of people who will choose each individual variety. Each group is strengthened by the greater effectiveness of the other. Each group should be building up the other, for its own sake as well as for the greater good of *Klal Yisrael*.

When the Conservative and Reform movements grow stronger, Orthodoxy gains. The *baal teshuva* (returnee) movement has given numerical gains and a great psychological lift to the Orthodox community. Most of the *baalei teshuva* are recruited not from those who are totally out of Jewish life, but from those outside of Orthodoxy. Most of the people available to become *baalei teshuva* come from movements nearby on the spectrum. In other words, when Conservative and Reform generate young people with greater Jewish commitment or with different religious needs than their parents, some of them join the pool of Orthodox returnees. Others stay and strengthen their own movement.

As Conservative and Reform lay people have developed stronger Jewish commitments in the past two decades, they have become consumers of day school education for their children. Thus, they provide many jobs and opportunities for influence to Orthodox rabbis, for the Orthodox still run the majority of the day schools. As the respect for tradition engendered by Conservative and Reform rabbis has deepened among their laymen, they have increasingly supported Orthodox institutions. In the past, if a Reform Jew was busy assimilating, he would cross the street to avoid meeting a chasid. Now, Reform and Conservative money fuels the remarkable growth of Lubavitch, as of the other Orthodox organizations. Indeed, there is hardly a major national Orthodox institution that can survive without the financial support of Conservative and Reform Jews. Logically, then, the Orthodox should pray every day for the health and welfare of the Conservative and Reform movements. But that is not the way that it is going.

As Orthodox effectiveness rises, it gives greater strength to the Conservative and Reform movements. The day schools are primarily built, supported, and run by the Orthodox. Yet, outside of New York, the significant majority of day school students come from Conservative, Reform and secular homes. Indeed, the Orthodox day schools are training the future lay leader-

ship of the Conservative and Reform movements — as well as Federation — although for the moment they are not expressing pride in that truth. The presence on college campuses of Orthodox youth wearing *kipot* provides Jewish models and helps change the assimilated tone of the university. *Chabad* houses have had a special success in reaching out to Jewish children in trouble, on drugs, etc., many of them from non-Orthodox homes. And for the children of Conservative, Reform, and secular homes who seek a mystical religious approach with strong authority and discipline, it is important that there be a Lubavitch or yeshiva option. In an open society, the alternative solution to such unmet needs could well be Reverend Moon, Jews for Jesus, or Hare Krishna.

Thus, each movement strengthens the



Ideally, Jews from
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understanding.

others with its own strength which in turn strengthens the entire Jewish community. In contrast, a social split would lower the numbers available to each group. In many cases, reducing the number below a certain critical mass will weaken the capacity of the community to support needed institutions for all the groups. A Jewish civil war will undoubtedly lead to an increase in intermarriage and other negative social phenomena.

Delegitimation of the other denominations diverts each one from facing its own real issues. When the Orthodox totally deny Conservative and Reform, they can dismiss the women's question as something which has been raised by the non-Orthodox and therefore illegitimate. This distracts the Orthodox from facing the challenge of inequities in *halacha*, such as in divorce, and from facing the fact that they have not fully incorporated 50 per-

cent of the talent and religious potential of their community in a maximum way.

When the Conservative and Reform define their own legitimacy by dismissing the Orthodox, they end up defining success as breaking with the rigidity of the past. Thus, for example, translating prayers into English is mistakenly believed to solve the problem of worship. They fail to face the fundamental problem of prayer, of modern man's difficulties with prayer, and of how we can pray out of power as we have prayed out of powerlessness.

To solve their internal problems, each group needs the help and presence of the other. The Conservative and Reform movements desperately need more discipline, more ability to demand from their lay people, and a deeper sense of tradition. The rabbis who see this need are frustrated by the limited response of their lay people. The best way to get the lay people to grow is by having them relate to models from the other groups. Out of sympathetic contact with an Orthodox family, Conservative and Reform Jews are more likely to experience the beauty of Shabbat or the strength of the family *yom tov* and are far more likely to begin such observances themselves.

The Orthodox community needs more capacity to respond sensitively and effectively to contemporary urgencies. It needs to be helped to focus on social action and the call to justice. It needs help in enriching the spirituality of its lay people, as against excessively mechanical observance in which the spiritual forest is lost for the trees of details. One of the best ways Orthodox lay people could be encouraged in these directions would be from contact with simpatico Conservative and Reform Jews who are active in these areas. Ideally, Jews from all denominations should go away together for weekends and for chances to exchange agendas and understanding. But that is not possible with the present mood of alienation and separation.

The greatest evil resulting from a split could well show up in a moral side effect. We learned in the Holocaust that spiritual distance from others and lack of respect for their religion translated into moral indifference to their fate. This is why so few Christians helped Jews. Will separated Jews stand idly by at the blood of the other Jews when they are in danger? Would each group repeat the erroneous attitude of native French Jewry towards 'Ostjuden' in 1939-40? Under the Vichy regime, the native French Jews were tempted to accept the round-up of "stateless Jews" (or Ostjuden).

Instead of separating, Jews should be binding themselves to each other as closely as possible, lest one group be tempted into indifference to the other's fate. Rabbi Soloveitchik proclaimed this

insight decades ago in his classic essay *Kol Dodi Dofek*. But the Orthodox movement has failed to translate this mandate into halachic behavior and outreach to include the others within Orthodox solutions.

Theologically, the separation of the Jewish people is an outrage. We live after the Holocaust and the rebirth of Israel. Clearly, the overwhelming message of those two events is the unity of the Jewish people — the unity of fate which Rabbi Soloveitchik has described as *brit goral* — the covenant of common fate. There were no distinctions in the gas chambers. To elevate the distinctions between Jews to absolute status is to deny the truth that all Jews carry the fate of the covenant, or run the risks of suffering for it. All Jews are God's witnesses.

Israel represents Jewish unity. It was built by religious and secular Jews alike. Israel is supported by Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Reconstructionist alike. Israel is the great symbol that the covenant of the Jewish people still lives. To separate now is like living through the Exodus and going on with business as usual.

A community guilty of such ingratitude and spiritual hard-heartedness can only fail religiously. Israel's redemptive significance should be translated into common holidays and celebrations, unifying practices — and concrete efforts to bridge religious gaps between all the groups.

What Can Be Done?

American Jewry must establish a systematic religious dialogue among the Jewish denominations on the scale of the Jewish-Christian dialogue of the past fifty years.

Over the decades, the Jewish community has financed dialogue programs of the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Synagogue Council of America, and the Joint National Conference of Christians and Jews to ensure that Jews and Christians would overcome the hostilities of the past. Many have criticized the duplication, but the fact is that an extraordinary success was made possible by this significant investment of resources.

A legacy of eighteen hundred years of hatred — and even murder — has been broadly overcome by people inspired by dialogue, religious sharing and theologizing, as well as by personal and social contacts. There are Evangelical Christians now challenging the anti-Semitism of the New Testament. Devout Catholics and Protestants have reformulated their own traditions to eliminate stereotyping and hatred and to advocate Jewish causes such as Israel and Soviet Jewry. Eminent Jewish thinkers have formulated the most

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positive Jewish models of Christianity ever developed in all the days of their separate existence.

When it comes to Jewish-Jewish dialogue, however, there has been a shortage of organizations. The Synagogue Council of America (SCA) brings together the three denominations. To prevent halachic controversy due to participation in SCA, each movement was given a veto. To avoid straining the weak fabric of the SCA, 'divisive' theological issues have been avoided. Moreover, delegates sit not as individuals but as representatives of their movements, which restricts or prevents growing toward each other. Most local Boards of Rabbis follow this same policy.

At the present time, the National Jewish Resource Center offers the only serious organizational commitment to intra-Jewish ecumenism. NJRC's CHEVRA project for rabbis is committed to *Klal Yisrael* and provides a forum for ongoing dialogue. Due to limited budget, only 120 rabbis in six cities are currently involved. That number is not yet large enough to change the outcome of policies or to reverse the present tendency to polarization. NJRC has sought funding to increase the scope of CHEVRA but has found little receptivity to its requests.

Nationally, the Federations are giving millions for Jewish-Christian dialogue but only pennies for Jewish-Jewish dialogue. The level of consciousness regarding the urgency of the issue is too low. The truth of the matter is, if the growing divisiveness is not stopped, it will split the unity of community, affect the success of local campaigns and cost the Federations millions of dollars.

The internal Jewish discussion should follow the Jewish-Christian dialogue model, in all its aspects (an embarrassing but accurate analogy). There should be a high-level dialogue encompassing systematic theology and studies in *halacha* which respectfully acknowledge divisions between the groups. Theological and halachic reasoning that justify and mandate the necessary steps to cooperate and to construct common solutions must be developed within each movement.

For example: within the Orthodox movement, there are scholars already arguing that even if the non-Orthodox movements follow halachic procedures, all their acts will be invalid. In this view, non-Orthodox theological assumptions (including the possibility of change in *halacha*) make all non-Orthodox acts *ipso facto* null and void.

Halachic scholarship that seeks unifying solutions should build on the suggestion of the Chazon Ish (the great leader of the most traditional Israeli sector of the past generation) that disbelief and even atheism should be treated as a modern cultural bias or 'pressure,' rather than as a willful

denial. There are other possible positive Orthodox approaches in the thought of Rabbis Abraham Isaac Kook and Joseph P. Soloveitchik. Yet, for the most part, the halachic disciples of these great figures are being educated to simplistic philosophies of *halacha* and socialized to separatist approaches. All three movements need an infusion of high-level scholarship in philosophy, theology, and *halacha*. Developing such high-level scholarship takes time, talent, and careful cultivation.

In addition, we need middle-level dialogue in which the rabbis and practitioners, as well as the lay leadership of each movement, are brought into sys-



Nationally, the Federations are giving millions for Jewish-Christian dialogue but only pennies for Jewish dialogue.

tematic and regular contact for learning, for better mutual understanding, and for finding common solutions to common problems.

Finally, there must be a popular level, modeled on the 'living room dialogues' of the Jewish-Christian experience. Through such dialogues, people overcome stereotypes. They learn that there is real commitment in the other groups to values which they also respect and desire. This changes the atmosphere and gives support to the rabbis who seek to overcome some of the legal and theological obstacles. Without such lay sympathy, it would be impossible for spiritual leadership to overcome barriers.

It is time that those Jews who are not totally 'denominationalized' assert the principle and the priority of *Klal Yisrael* (the unity and totality of the Jewish people). I would call upon all Jews to put pressure — peer pressure, moral judgment, even economic pressure — on the leadership of all the denominations. Let a non-Orthodox Jew who is giving money to traditional institutions ask them: What

are they doing to advance unity? Are they abusing other Jews? Just asking the question begins to have an impact on policy.

Let Orthodox Jews who are active in the community constantly challenge their non-Orthodox co-workers: What are they doing to insure that their own denominations not act irresponsibly in matters of personal status or issues that affect the overall unity of the Jewish people?

It is time to collect I.O.U.s from each other. At least, a combination of moral and political pressure should be brought to bear to advance solutions that favor the good of the total community, rather than the short-term advantages of a particular group.

Among those Jews who view the polarization with equanimity, many are convinced that only their group will survive. But the Orthodox who favor withdrawal should not be so complacent. True, they could turn out to be the saving remnant. They could equally turn out to be the contemporary 'Dead Sea sect' — the group that withdrew to save its own purity and died an arid, nameless death sundered from Jewish history. Those Conservative Jews who feel that Orthodox is reactionary and a lost cause, those Reform and secular Jews who have written off the survival of the traditionalists, all those who are convinced that they alone are modern enough to survive, should ask themselves whether it is not equally likely that they will simply be assimilated into the magnetic culture of the twentieth century?

We need each other. The renewal of each group is the best insurance for the survival of all groups. It is time to develop true consciousness of the urgency of the polarization problem and to formulate strategies detailed enough and wise enough to attack problems and find root solutions. The will to unity, and recognition of common fate is extraordinarily powerful among the Jewish rank and file. The failure lies in the fact that all that energy has gone into political and philanthropic fields. It is time to translate the sense of common destiny into theological categories, halachic thinking, and religious behavior.

This call for unity is not based on the hope of unanimity or uniformity. There is nothing wrong with disagreements. The divisions need not be papered over. What is needed is restraint to avoid fundamental breaches, and commitments to find common solutions. No one should underestimate either the tradition, or the will and fertile imagination of the Jewish people. There are positive solutions enough within our grasp. We need the intelligence, the courage and the commitment to pursue it. The time to act is now.

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Irving Greenberg is President of the National Jewish Resource Center.

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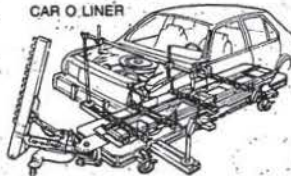
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ceived her visa in 1979 only a few months after applying for it. The process now takes several years.

"The best time," she said, "for Soviet Jews to leave the country was 1979," a 12-month period when over 51,000 Jews left the U.S.S.R., the highwater mark of recent Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union.

And when Frankel and her family came to Baltimore, they already had some close friends here with whom they could stay. Frankel found a job in only 2½ months and her husband, Yur, found his only three weeks later. They moved into their own apartment.

"We had a very smooth transition," said Frankel.

Like most immigrants, the Frankels did have certain difficulties in adjusting to their new country. While both Tat-

and her husband had studied English in high school and the university they had attended in the Soviet Union, about 20 years had elapsed between their language studies and their move to the U.S. This particularly made it difficult for Tatyana to study for the classes she needed to complete before being hired a physicist at Johns Hopkins Hospital's radiation oncology department. (In the Soviet Union, Frankel had taught physics in college.)

But to compensate for difficulties, explained Frankel, "there were so many people who helped us. The Jewish Family and Children's Service gave us furniture and dishes because we could only come with a few suitcases for the whole family. Everyone we contacted — the Jewish agencies, even the government — did everything they could to help us out."

"There is no other country with people and an atmosphere like this one. Everyone is so friendly and tries to help one another. They even forgive your language problem," she added with a laugh, "and try to understand you."

Frankel's praise is genuine. This Fourth of July weekend, she may be watching fireworks with her family. Or she may even go to the beach. But wherever she is, she will be genuinely celebrating the holiday the way it was meant to be celebrated — with a love appreciation for the freedom that she has found in America.

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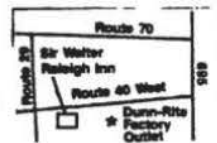
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JUDAISM TODAY



SECOND OF FOUR PARTS

Jewry's great and growing divide

Jewish communities find themselves being torn apart by religious dispute



Ultra-orthodox Jews in Jerusalem neighborhood of Mea Shearim

By William Echikson
Special to The Christian Science Monitor

Petach Tikva, Israel

ON one Sabbath earlier this year, this normally calm city of 135,000 people just outside Tel Aviv turned into a battleground.

Thousands of religious Jews, with the traditional beards and skullcaps, massed in front of a moviehouse, shouting such things as "criminals," "dogs," "Nazis," and "violators of the law of God." When nonobservant Jews tried to buy tickets, the religious threw rocks at them. An open brawl ensued. Scores were injured.

Week after week such demonstrations have continued. The Orthodox say they will not stop them until the law of God is honored and cinemas and cafes closed on the Sabbath — sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. The secular have been just as intransigent.

"It's Jewish Khomeini-ism," says Dan Ben Cnaan, assistant to Petach Tikva's mayor, Dov Tavori. It was Mr. Tavori, a Labor Party member, who triggered the dispute by trying to end the Sabbath restrictions in town. "We will not let the religious take the law into their own hand and tell us how we should act."

The battle between observant Jews and less- or nonobservant Jews is growing sharper throughout Israel. The stakes are immense. The outcome will play a large role in determining not only the future shape of the country's society and democracy, but also its foreign policy. Religious Jews, after all, are leading the settlement drive on the West Bank, and secular Jews, the opposition to it.

The division is also important in the Diaspora, the world Jewish community outside Israel. Diaspora leaders worry whether the American Jewish community can retain its cohesiveness and effectiveness if it is being torn from within. Divisive issues are wide ranging — from whether to accept public funds for religious education to what standards should apply to conversions to the Jewish faith.

"The split is affecting Jewish life everywhere," says Roland Gittelsohn, rabbi emeritus of Temple Israel, a Reform congregation in Brookline, Mass. "When I became a rabbi 48 years ago here, I had lots of Orthodox friends. Today, there's not a single one with whom I can sit down at the same table."

Emancipation posed a crisis for Judaism

The intensity of the struggle and the specific issues between the observant and less observant may be new, but the fundamental question being debated is not.

It dates from the French Revolution of 1789, which led to Jews in the West gaining equal rights with non-Jews. By breaking down the barriers of church and state that kept Jews apart from their neighbors, the emancipation posed a crisis for Judaism — how to adjust one's religious loyalty, which carries with it separation from non-Jews, to Jews' new political and social equality; how to adjust to the new rational, intellectual climate.

Many 19th-century Jews solved the problem either by converting to Christianity or by abandoning religion altogether. Others decided to adapt Judaism by modernizing it and eliminating whatever

WHO IS A

THE DEBATE IN ISRAEL:

The term "Jew" is not defined in the "law of return," which entitles any Jew to immediate Israeli citizenship. A bill proposed this year in the Israeli parliament would amend the

HOW THE THREE MAIN BRANCHES OF JUDAISM DEFINE A JEW:

Orthodox:

- A person born of a Jewish mother.
- Or a person formally converted by an Orthodox

SETTLING ERETZ ISRAEL —

Kiryat Arba, Israeli-occupied West Bank Shoshana Mageni believes that God gave her this land.

"This is Eretz Israel, where the Jewish people were born, where our fa-

external differences might hamper the close relations of Jews with their neighbors. They also tried to remove or play down whatever tended to call into question their loyalty to the country in which they lived.

Jewish laws such as the dietary rules and Sabbath restrictions on travel and work were discarded. Religious services were patterned after Christian services, with the sexes no longer segregated, and music and responsive reading added. The idea of completely dropping Hebrew in favor of the vernacular was even considered. This brand of Judaism, labeled Reform, began in Germany in the early 1800s and was brought to the United States by German Jewish immigrants.

The fundamental difference between the Reform and Orthodox branches lies in their approaches to the Torah. For the Orthodox, these five books of Moses — as illuminated by the oral tradition now contained in the Talmud — are God's revealed word; they can be studied closely and discussed but must be followed as the inviolable law of God. For most Reform Jews, the texts represent the God-inspired words of the early Hebrews; they are to be respected as unique insights but must be adapted to fit each new modern era.

Orthodox are minority among US Jews

Much of modern Jewish history lies across this fault line. Until recently, Reform or Reform-inspired brands of Judaism had the initiative in competition with Orthodoxy.

In the US, Reform Judaism together with Conservative Judaism — which accepts change but values continuity with the Jewish past and the essence of Jewish law — dominate Jewish life. Orthodox Judaism, which holds unswervingly to traditional teachings, remains in the minority.

"For a long time, we were considered namby-pambies, antiques," says Moshe Sherer, president of the American branch of the Orthodox organization, Agudath Israel. "We weren't taken into account in group decisions."

Adds Reform Rabbi Gittelsohn: "We just assumed Orthodoxy was on its way out."

In Israel, no formal Reform movement took root. Many of the early Zionists rejected religion outright, substituting a faith in work and socialism. True to that vision, when Israel was created in 1948, it was fashioned largely as a secular, Western democracy.

Orthodox Jews were on the periphery of Israel's founding. In numbers, they were and remain only about one-fifth of the Israeli Jewish population. Though they gained some influence through their political parties, which joined government coalitions, the Orthodox were never at the forefront forging the new state.

"Twenty years ago, a religious kid in Israel had the feeling he was inferior, that he didn't participate in Israeli life," recalls Avi Ravitzky, a philosophy professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and an observant Jew.

Today, this inferiority complex has vanished. Orthodoxy is experiencing a renaissance, both in the Diaspora and in Israel. It is growing not so much in numbers, but in self-confidence and aggressiveness.

In Israel, the break came in 1967 with the six-

day Arab-Israeli war in which Israel ended up occupying the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Some Orthodox Israelis, finding the Jewish state in possession of what they saw as the old biblical lands of Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), began using religious justifications to settle there. No longer were the socialist Zionists the pioneers.

"After 1967, the religious suddenly had a psychological opening to become leaders," Professor Ravitzky says. "We could go to the [West Bank] mountains and be the new super Jew."

Begin's election boosted Israeli Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy's influence became even more pronounced after the right-wing Likud coalition's Menachem Begin came to power in 1977.

"Begin let the Orthodoxy move to center stage," explains Janet Aviodad, a sociologist at Jerusalem's Van Leer Institute who specializes in the Orthodoxy and is an activist in Israel's dovish Peace Now movement. "His interests coincided with their interests, so he used them, and they used him."

The alliance led to an increase of Jewish settlement on the occupied West Bank. It also meant increased spending on religious schools and greater public observance of the Sabbath — for instance, by stopping Israel's national airline, El Al from flying on Saturdays. Mr. Begin even introduced a bill in parliament to redefine the term "Jew" following the strictest Orthodox interpretation. This issue resurfaced during this year's election campaign and the political maneuvering that followed.

Meanwhile, Orthodoxy drew on its renaissance in Israel to become stronger in the Diaspora, too.

In the US, Orthodox Jews remain only about 10 percent of the American Jewish population, according to Harvard University sociologist Nathan Glazer. But, he says, Orthodoxy includes an increasing proportion of young Jews, which was not the case in the past. Professor Glazer and other sociologists attribute this change to a search found throughout America for religious values.

"There's a rising tide of militancy in Orthodoxy," says Arthur Levine, president of the United Synagogues of America, the national coordinating organization of Conservative synagogues. "Religiously, it translates into greater strictness. Politically, it translates into greater self-confidence."

This new militancy has strained cooperation between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox. The Orthodox have never recognized the theological legitimacy of the other brands of Judaism, and soon they may no longer work with Reform or Conservative Jews on social and political issues.

"They are becoming more right wing," says Milton Himmelfarb, a sociologist with the American Jewish Committee, "and that is causing tension because most Jews are traditionally liberal."

Reform Judaism is responding to the Orthodox challenge by becoming more sensitive to tradition. Specifically, it is increasing the use of Hebrew in its synagogues and restoring other traditional practices.

"In its desire to eliminate everything that smacked of non-reason, early Reform went too far," says Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the

Reform association of synagogues. "Now we're more willing to accept the mystical, emotional aspects of Judaism."

Reform is also counterattacking by strengthening its international influence outside its American stronghold. In Israel, it is lobbying to have its rabbis fully recognized as legitimate by the state. At present, marriages and other Jewish ceremonies conducted by non-Orthodox rabbis are not recognized in Israel.

Rabbi Schindler recalls how he told Prime Minister Begin that "the gates of Auschwitz were open" to all Jews, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, so surely "the gates of Jerusalem must be open to all Jews."

Rabbi Michael Williams of Paris's Rue Copernic Synagogue, the first Reform synagogue in France, adds that the exclusion is unwise: "Only a minority of Jews are going to remain Orthodox. All the others who want to retain some contact with Judaism will have no place to go. They'll either drop it totally or become mad."

In Israel, his prediction rings true. The anger of



Jewish children in San Francisco light candles on Hanuka menorah

many nonreligious Jews is swelling. And the Petach Tikva battle has become a key test for the whole nation. The Labor Party majority on the municipal council is hoping to set a precedent that will keep open entertainment spots in cities throughout the country. Mayor's spokesman Dan Ben Canaan says the dispute involves the very soul of the Jewish state.

"The fanatics are trying to transform Israel into a religious dictatorship, prohibiting the freedom of the individual, just like in Iran," Ben Canaan says. "We want to keep religion and state separate."

The religious, of course, don't see the problem this way. They say violence against nonobservant Jews is committed by a few misguided youths. They also say they don't want rabbis to rule Israel but merely to create enough Jewish "atmosphere" so that Israel retains a true Jewish flavor.

"I'm not telling them what they must do inside their houses," says Rabbi Aharon Beifus of Petach Tikva. "I'm just saying that outside in the streets, the Shabbat [Sabbath] must be guarded."

JOHN ARME