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Rosh Hashanah sermon. "The Grand Themes." 1959.

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THE GRAND THEMES

There will be an integrated design to the four sermons I shall preach this holiday season. These sermons will be seen as one canvas, which when completed, will reveal I hope the meaning of Judaism, its future in America, its relevancy to the problems of the world, and its definitions of God and Israel. Out of all this tapestry each viewer will find some strokes or scenes which will illumine his own life and give him some feeling of pride and grandeur.

Nowhere better than in the Prayer-book can we find the sublime thoughts and the overarching doctrines which make up the skeleton of our faith. Not in the Bible, not in the Talmud, but in the prayerbook must we delve, for this is not a mere manual of ritual. It has rightly been called "Israel's personal diary, catching, as in a series of exquisite vignettes, the scenes and moments of her entire life, and recording, in a diversity of moods and styles, her deepest and most intimate emotions."

For tonight, let me deal with three of these deeply emotional grand themes, as found in the Rosh Hashonah liturgy. One is from the tremendous prayer Unesaneh Tokef of the musaf service, and two are from the morning Shofar service. These three themes deal with self-improvement (i.e. overcoming of sin); God's part in human history; and the role of the people of Israel in cosmic terms.

Let us take the first -- the Unesaneh Tokef -- one of the most awesome prayers of this entire holy day liturgy.

There is a legend about its origin which deals with a certain Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, in the 11th century. The Archbishop of that German town continually pressed the Rabbi to convert to Christianity. The arguments were long, heated, delicate. Once Amnon yielded, to the extent of asking for three days' time in which to consider the matter. At the end of that time, he declined baptism, but acknowledged himself guilty of weakness for even thinking about it, and asked that his tongue, which had requested the three days, be cut out as punishment. The Archbishop ordered that this be executed, and in addition, ordered that his hands and feet be cut off.

This was shortly before Rosh Hashonah. On the day itself, the Rabbi requested that he be carried into the synagogue, and dying of his wounds, interrupted the service, just before the Kedusha, to offer up his own prayer "Une saneh Tokef". Immediately upon its conclusions he died, but then appeared to Rabbi Kalonymos in a dream and taught him the prayer -- now one of the most important and deeply emotional in the Ashkenazic ritual.

In the reform prayer book we read it on Yom Kippur afternoon, instead of Rosh Hashonah. But that makes little difference. The text goes:

"Let us affirm the majesty and holiness of this day, for it is one of awe and dread. On this day, O God, thy dominion is exalted and the throne of thy mercy established. Verily, Thou are the Supreme Judge and Thy judgments are righteous altogether. Before Thee all our deeds are known and recorded. Man forgets but thou rememberest all.

As the shepherd seeketh out his flock, counting his sheep as they pass under his staff, so doest thou cause every living soul to pass before thee, appointing the measure of every creature's life and decreeing its destiny.

On these days of awe, our hearts awaken to the truth that in thy providence Thou givest life and ordainest death. Thine omniscient judgment decides the fortunes and disasters of nations and of men, their joys and their griefs, and their length of days.

But in Thy grace thou hast taught us that penitence, prayer and charity avert the stern decree.

ותשובה ותפלה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזרה

This is the formula for a meaningful life.

Then comes the additional paragraph, omitted in our reform prayer book, which is crucial:

"On New Year's Day the decree is inscribed and on the Day of Atonement it is sealed, how many shall pass away and how many shall be born; who shall live and who shall die; who shall attain the measure of man's day and who shall not attain it; who shall perish by fire and who by water; who by sword and who by beast; who by hunger and who by thirst; who by earthquake and who by plague; who by strangling

and who by stoning; who shall have rest and who shall go wandering; who shall be tranquil and who shall be disturbed; who shall be at ease and who shall be afflicted; who shall become poor and who shall wax rich; who shall be brought low and who shall be exalted."

It is perhaps largely because of this prayer that the notion has developed that Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur are the period of special concentration on one's personal balance sheet of right and wrong, the sins committed, the repentance to be done, the wrongs to be made right, the forgiveness to be sought, from both God and fellow-man against whom we may have sinned. It is true that these themes are very much in evidence during this High Holy Day period. On Yom Kippur the long list of sins is recited in Al Chet. The legend persists of the three Heavenly books, one for those who are good, one for evil, and one for those whose fate is yet to be determined, which gave rise to the New Year slogan "May you be inscribed in the Book of Life". This whole approach may be summed up in one of the Hebrew phrases by which Rosh Hashonah is known, namely, Yom Ha-din -- the Day of Judgment. We think of this 10-day holiday period as a period of judgment in which each man reflects on the past year's activities, confesses his sins, makes genuine repentance in his heart, and asks the merciful God for forgiveness. It is a period of stocktaking, soul-searching and determination to improve. Thus judgment is passed, and the fresh page of the year ahead provides the opportunity for personal improvement. Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk once said: "Every man is created twice: first when he is born; second, when he repents his past and takes on new courage to live in ways more acceptable to God."

I think enough has been said to you in your lives thus far about the judgment theme of Rosh Hashonah. You know by now the difference between right and wrong. You know the meaning of ethics and morality. You know when you sin and must repent. You know whether you are capable of overcoming temptation and the troubles that result if you are not. Give yourselves freely to the words of contrition next Yom Kippur day -- search your own hearts -- let the words of the confessional prayer sweep over you and perhaps sweep away some of the bad habits, evil thoughts, base desires. If you emerge stronger, feeling cleaner, determined to improve in the year

ahead, it will be because of your own conviction that an ethically directed life is better than one oriented otherwise. No sermon can do this. Only you, reading the prayers, thinking of the kind of person you want to be, can do it for yourself.

Let us go on to the second theme -- that of God's role. The Jewish view of God is found in the morning Shofar service, which is divided into three parts, after each one of which the Shofar is blown. The three sections are called

מלכות זכרון שופרות which can be roughly translated -- Kingship, remembrance and blasts. These three monumental prayer-structures portray God, in turn, as Sovereign of the Universe, as Divine Judge, and as Lawgiver and Redeemer. The three-fold structure suggests that God is Sovereign of the present, Judge of the past, and Redeemer in the future.

The first part is called מלכות (p.78-79), from the word מלך "King". God is called King, sovereign ruler, God of nature. God is the creator of the world and the source of all existence and reality. There is order in nature. There is a moral law for man. There is a higher law than the state. Mankind's salvation depends upon accepting God as King, not Caesar.

The second part is called זכרון (p.80-81) from the word "remembrance". God remembers even forgotten things. There is a purpose and a plan in history. There is a divine economy in which God, in His providence, remembers the deeds of nations as well as men. Every violation of the divine code of justice, truth and lovingkindness brings in its wake disastrous consequences for individuals and whole peoples. It is not blind fate that determines the rise and fall of nations and Kingdoms; righteousness exalteth a nation, evil shall bring it to ruin. In the long run, it is well with those that build on moral foundations; in the long run, robber-states write out their own curse. History has meaning and moves in a direction, because God remembers.

The third section is called שופרות (p.83) from the word "shofar" or ram's horn. Here we see the God of Revelation -- who revealed Himself to our forefathers at Mt. Sinai amid the thunder and lightning and blasts of the Shofar. These same trumpet blasts will be sounded at the end of time, heralding God's redemption of all mankind through the Messiah. These same trumpet blasts will call back the scattered fragments of Israel from all over the globe and announce the restoration of Jerusalem as the place of sanctuary. Through the great Shofar God reveals himself to man, first Jew, then ultimately everyone, and brings men to the establishment of God's kingdom.

There we have it -- this universalistic, all-inclusive, broad-minded, theology, found in the prayers of the holiest day of the year. God the King, creator

of nature; God the Rememberer, director of History: God the Redeemer, revealed in the Shofar.

The third of the major ideas for this evening is the cosmic role of the Jewish people. This is to be found in the prayer called Alenu -- the Adoration. This prayer, which became so important, was taken from the Rosh Hashonah liturgy, where it was recited only once yearly, and put into the daily service, where it was recited three times every day, as well as into every Sabbath and Festival service. It is not only one of our most important prayers, but also one of our oldest. Many scholars feel it was written before the destruction of the Temple. So, in this oldest and most important prayer, we have a picture of how the Jew thought of himself, going back thousands of years, as God's elected, God's chosen. In this prayer, it says:

"It is our duty to praise the Lord of all things, to ascribe greatness to him who formed the world in the beginning, since He has not made us like the nations of other lands, and has not placed us like other families of the earth, and has not assigned us a portion like them, and has not made our fate like all their multitudes."

This idea has caused a great deal of trouble. Non-Jews have misinterpreted it and accused us of being arrogant, egotistical, clannish, anti-Christian by looking down upon them. George Bernard Shaw was one such critic. When asked for his opinion of the Nazi theories of racial purity and racial contamination, he replied that the fault of the Jew is his "enormous arrogance" based on his claim to belong to God's chosen race, that the Nordic nonsense is only an attempt to imitate "the posterity of Abraham" and that the anti-Semites do not see how "intensely Jewish" is the Nazi thesis of race superiority.

H. G. Wells also levelled accusations against the Jews for their willfully remaining a "peculiar people" in the French and English-speaking countries, because they are history-ridden and haunted by persuasion that

they are a chosen people with distinctive privileges over their Gentile fellow-creatures. Even Wells sees in the Jewish theory of election a similarity to the impulses of racial pride on which Hitlerism is based.

Jews have misunderstood it, and have either been really guilty of an unwarranted superiority, or have bent over backward the other way fearfully, in an effort to explain to non-Jews that we don't really mean it. We do mean it -- but it should be properly explained -- so that it is neither misinterpreted nor misunderstood.

It is a core doctrine, found in many places, not only in the Adoration.

1. In the Friday night Kiddush, it says:
"For thou hast chosen us and hallowed us above all nations."
2. In the blessings recited before reading the Torah, it says:
"Who hast chosen us from all peoples and given us the Torah,"
3. In the daily morning service, right before reciting the Shema, it says:
"Blessed art thou O lord who has chosen thy people Israel in love,"
4. In the Bible itself, it says:
"I will take you to me for a people and I will be to you a God." Ex.6:7
5. And again Lev. 20:26
"I have set you apart from the peoples that you should be mine.

So here it is stated, time and time again, at the most significant moments -- in the Bible, at the Torah reading, at the Kiddush, at the Shema -- the doctrine of the election or selection or special nature of the Jewish people.

There is an old Yiddish folk-slogan: "Thou hast chosen us from among all nations" -- what, O Lord, did You have against us?"

Thus, the Jew is one of the quintessential of God's creations, different and separate, in quality and character and function, as light is different from dark, as the Sabbath is different from the ordinary day. There is no sense arguing this -- it is a state of affairs, a condition, a fact of existence which is unchanging and unchangeable. This election can mean danger, suffering, death, as it often has and will again. There is nothing to be done but to endure it.

It is an error to think we have any choice. Whether we are cautioned to discard the doctrine as anachronistic, which Mordecai Kaplan tells us to do; or urged to glory in it, which Goethe and Lessing tell us to do -- makes very little difference.

We are touched with a cosmic role, destined to remain locked with the God who created us and needs us as much as we need Him. Only by denying Him can we liberate ourselves. The great sweet mystery of the Unknown beckons us to the farthest future when all shall be clear. Until then the fire is in our souls, and though we tremble and fear, though our hearts be torn out and we must often rise from our own ashes, we hold to the vision of a redeemed mankind whose ultimate triumph we shall stubbornly survive to witness.

Three themes I have tried to delineate tonight -- the improved man, who confesses his errors, accepts his judgment and tries to move forward in a new year to a higher level of conduct; the immanent God, who rules as King, remembers as Judge and redeems mankind through the Shofar, Gabriel's horn announcing the Messiah; and the elected people Israel who bear eternal witness to the belief that man can aspire to the angels. What majesty in these ideas -- what challenge in these thoughts -- what grandeur in these possibilities!

The great American Jew Stephen Wise summed it up in these words:

"True redemption will come to the Jew only if he bear his name and every other burden imposed upon him by destiny with gleaming courage and

radiant nobleness which, whether or not they evoke the love of the world without, will justify the Jew in his own sight and hallow him anew in the presence of the Eternal to Whom alone he is ultimately accountable."



II

FUTURE OF JEWISH LIFE IN AMERICA

Reish Hashanah Day 1953

By Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

The American Jewish Tercentenary Committee has suggested as a theme for the celebration "Man's Opportunities and Responsibilities Under Freedom" and has offered an excellent paragraph in support of the choice:

"We believe that with this theme the Tercentenary should have purposeful meaning for all Americans and for the entire world. The whole 300th anniversary of Jewish life in America record of American Jews can be made a symbol of hope to oppressed people throughout the whole world. Millions of people in many lands now live in poverty, in despair, in fear, in the straitjacket of totalitarianism. The American experience, and the Jewish experience in America, can give them fresh hope, as millions of human beings seek for themselves and their children, in the lands where they live, the very things that Jews and all other settlers in America sought when they came here -- freedom, self-respect, opportunity, safety, security."

The record of America by and large has been good. True, there have been periods of retrogression, when witchhunts, whether of the Palmer period after World War I or the McCarthy period after World War II, have darkened the face of the land. True, there have been long periods of stagnation as between the Civil War and World War I, when it seemed that the advance of racial equality for the Negro was doomed to frustration. True, there have been periods of incipient fascism, as when federal troops herded the unemployed off the White House lawns during the Great Depression. True, there have been episodes of stony-heartedness, as when the first 23 Jews found it so hard to break the immigration barriers of New Amsterdam in 1654, and their latter-day successors found it so hard to crack the McCarran-Walter law restrictions of today.

But all of this, the retrogression, the stagnation, the stony-heartedness, has been part of the ceaseless struggle to expand the frontiers of freedom and repair the inadequacies of our present democracy. The beauty of America is that the struggle has always been at least partially successful and we pray will always continue to be so.

I would rather speak tonight not of the future development of America, important as that is, but of the future development of the Jews and Judaism. America will emerge safely from the trials of her future whether these constitute attacks upon her body from without by misguided enemies or sabotage upon her soul from within by misguided patriots. I am not so certain that our people and our faith will emerge equally safely from their trials of the next century.

Let me make it clear immediately that I am not speaking of physical dangers which may harm us. While Jewish history is replete with examples of the unexpected and the inexplicable, and while a fatuous optimism embracing the attitude that nothing could happen to us here would indicate an unpermissible blindness, still the likelihood of pogrom, incarceration, genocide here in America, under present circumstances, is remote. Events could transpire to take this country down the path of brutalitarianism, but it is devoutly to be hoped that we would be able to recognize the danger signs in time to join with like-minded fellow-Americans in a total resistance to such events. If we succeeded, well and good. If we failed, not only our survival would be at stake, but the survival of the entire western world.

No -- I speak not of the physical, but rather of the spiritual safety of Judaism in the century ahead. For I feel that there is a greater likelihood of our being killed by kindness than by sword. The very perfection of democracy in America may bring us to the situation wherein our institutions will crumble, our identity be destroyed, the loyalties of our constituency wither through assimilation, indifference, intermarriage and acculturation. The ^{crisis} ~~crisis~~ would be this fate if it were to occur under conditions of improved

freedom, fewer restrictions, increased emancipation.

This is not a new danger. Earlier generations recognized it and have left us a legacy of warnings.

Sir Moses Montefiore said in 1837 "I am most firmly resolved not to give up the smallest part of our religious forms and principles to obtain civil rights."

Lionel Rothschild said in 1869: "We are emancipated, but if our emancipation should damage our faith, it would be a curse instead of a blessing."

Achad Ha'am wrote an essay in 1891 entitled "Slavery in Freedom", making the point that many western Jews desiring to participate fully in the new political freedoms offered by the emancipation, were distorting their Judaism. His words flashed with anger: "When I look beyond the borders of Russia I see Jewish professors, Jewish members of academies, Jewish officers in the army, Jewish civil servants; and when I see there, behind the glory and the grandeur of it all, a two-fold spiritual slavery -- moral slavery and intellectual slavery -- and ask myself: Do I envy these fellow Jews of mine their emancipation? -- I answer in all truth and sincerity: No! a thousand times No! The privileges are not worth the price! I may not be emancipated; but at least I have not sold my soul for emancipation."

These are three warning voices from the recent past. There is also one from the present. David Ben Gurion said in 1952: "Inevitably the Jew vacillates between ghetto and assimilation, between scorn and self-effacement, between flight from the world and flight from himself."

And so we come to the key question for the future. Will Jewish life in America tend to disappear under optimum conditions of freedom or will it be preserved by our own will, even in the face of temptation? And if it is to be saved, what shall the forms be? What attitudes are to be adopted? What posture shall we assume in order to live as a healthy organism?

There are three major paradoxes in Jewish life and religion which represent to me the statement of our major problems and at the same time their solutions. If we understand the problems involved in survival and agree to the resolution of those problems, we shall automatically develop such forms and attitudes as will guarantee the future.

First there is the problem of our life as Americans and as Jews. America has been a country in which, almost from the very beginning, we were considered free and equal. Our response to this, in terms of love and loyalty, has been unstinting. We have bled, poured out treasure, assumed enormous loads of civic duty in full consciousness that we were equal partners in the venture of making America stronger and freer and better. And we have done this not under duress but because we wanted to.

Further, our ethical imperative, which has goaded us since the ancient prophets first prodded a social conscience into full awakening, forced us to work even harder than others for the complete realization of equality and freedom for all men. When there is a chance, in at least one land upon earth, to bring messianic dreams to fulfillment we are conditioned to even greater exertions. These goals of justice, peace, fair treatment for all, have been part of our baggage since the beginning, and when we find a land which smiles on these and is in harmony with them, we are impelled to the utmost love for and identification with that land.

Even further, we are really more American than anyone else in this country, for its earliest commonwealths were built upon the bricks of our most sublime ideals. The major themes and premises of America were derived from the Bible -- specifically from the Hebrew Bible. The Atlantic Ocean was called the Red Sea and the English monarch was referred to as Pharaoh. The Pilgrims and Puritans were escaping from the bondage in Egypt and making their Exodus to the Promised Land. The early stories of Massachusetts and Rhode Island read like

parts of the Pesach Haggadah. The Liberty Bell has words from Leviticus on it and the Protestant ministers of the thirteen colonies used texts from Samuel to inspire the Revolutionary War.

Oh, yes -- we are part of America, we are "in" America, we are "of" America, we are, in fact, without supererogation, of its most basic structure and fabrication. We will work for every liberalizing, humane cause, for this is our ethical imperative, and we will cherish every democratic advance, for this is our destiny on earth.

But there is an inner paradox, for while we are integrally involved in a full and complete Americanism in the deepest (not merely flag-waving, shallow) sense, we still feel ourselves to be different from other Americans. And to the extent that our Judaism is strong within us, we want to remember that we are different.

This is a difficult doctrine, often misunderstood. There are some who misunderstand through ignorance and some through willful malice. Our desire to be different does not involve any less loyalty to America. It is purely and simply the desire of any living organism not to surrender the unique characteristics of his individual existence. America, with all of her wonderful attributes, is nevertheless possessed, for example, of some incredible vulgarities. We do not wish to succumb to these. We are the proud people of the book, of learning. Much of America is the land of the comic book. We do not wish to be reduced to that. We have not come this far, in a long and glorious history, to be transformed by America, or any other land, into the lowest common denominator. Our values of family solidarity, for example, must not be cheapened by the quick and easy Reno divorce. Our passion for social justice must not be blunted by the American desire for quick and easy popularity. We must be willing to risk unpopularity for the sake of our special ethical ideals.

So here is the first inner paradox -- our organic and radical identity with the best of America; and at the same time our refusal to surrender unique Jewish sensitivities in order to be like everyone else. We are at once more American and less American than the average non-Jew.

Perhaps the resolution of the paradox is to be found in the very propounding of it. Perhaps it is good that we are faced with this -- for the outcome is that we are forced to make two acts of faith -- not one. We must make acts of faith as Americans and as Jews. This requires not diluted loyalties to one or the other, but double loyalties to both, a two-fold cord, a double measure of strength. These are equal but separate strains of our being, our essence, our existence. We are Americans and we are Jews, inter-twined, yet distinct.

The second problem is one which involves American Jewry and world Jewry. Here too there is a paradox. We are of the people of Israel and yet not in the land of Israel. We are part of the world brotherhood of a scattered but united people. If our sense of unity with the sons of Jacob everywhere is shattered, we will quickly drift, even in powerful America, down a side-stream of Jewish history, to wind up on the forgotten shores as a historically interesting but fossilized fragment of Jewish experience. Separation from the main stream of Jewish life, from the world body of the Jewish people, will make of us, in another 300 years, either Protestants or museum relics like the South China Jews.

There are those who deny this concept of the world unity of the Jewish people. They claim that no such entity as the Jewish people exists, but only Frenchmen, Englishmen, Americans of the Jewish faith. They are wrong. The Jewish people is a real entity with solid dimensions in both time and space, in both history and geography. The world-wide bonds of sympathy, feelings of brotherhood, intuitions of identification combine to constitute a real and living entity. One is either blind and cannot see this or closes his eyes and will not see it.

Our belief in the world unity of Jews and our desire to help those of our brethren who are in need, have served as the twin motivations behind the great pro-Zionist sentiment of the American Jewish community. The record of service in this cause is long and valiant, aided not inconsiderably by organizations, which, while not founded expressly for Zionist purposes, still have understood destiny and lent great support.

We, the great bulk of our five million, have joined our voices in a litany of clamor for a Jewish land, independently governed and politically secure. We have massed a great caravan of ships and planes to free the captives and bring the redeemed to Zion. If our financial support has at times faltered, the dedicated ones among us have whipped themselves into renewed effort -- and the initials UJA and BIC will long remain part of our vocabulary. Woe betide the Jew -- be he leader or follower -- who falls prey to ennui or who is guilty of complaining -- how long? History will deal cruelly with him who deserts Israel in her hour of birth. And again, speaking of our bulk, we do not seriously contemplate this. There may be griping -- there may be chafing under the harness -- there may be competition for our interest and our dollars. But through it all the land of Israel will remain paramount as an obligation for the people of Israel.

Having expressed this sentiment with utter conviction, let us recognize the paradox that while we are of the people, we are not in the land. Nor will we be, apparently, in any large numbers -- at least not in the immediate future. There is no large-scale movement of Chalutzit, no large-scale transplantation. Some American (and other western) Jews are going, to make their homes in the pioneering state, but such are few. We remain afar. We support and admire and work for -- but from afar. We may be completely pro-Zionist but we are strangers to the land of Zion.

So here is the second paradox -- that we believe utterly and ineradicably in the world unity of the Jewish people, which causes us to work unceasingly for the state of Israel -- yet we appear to be rooted firmly in this friendly soil of America, with every intention of strengthening and solidifying our position here, so that the voluntary movement of Jews from here outward does not come to pass.

Again I think that the very statement of the paradox yields the clue to its resolution. Perhaps it is good that the paradox exists -- for it forces us to make two acts of faith -- as American Jews and as world Jews. We are not one or the other. We will not reject our brethren abroad nor will we reject our sons at home. It is insufficient and selfish and blind to say that we will build a future only in America, just as it is unwise and unrealistic to say that we will concentrate on world Jewish affairs to the exclusion of matters at home. We build a bridge between our beings as American Jews and as world Jews -- and across this bridge we walk ever back and forth. Two acts of faith create one magnificent archway embracing all our interests.

The third and last paradox has nothing to do with the physical disposition of Jews, but rather involves religious and spiritual problems. Our greatest genius was that we were the creators of monotheism and gave to the world a religious message of the most crucial significance. Yet the world today seems to be much more moved by science than by religion.

To effect a synthesis between our religious idealism and modern science is legitimate. The new disciplines of sociology, economics, political science may possibly provide clues to a better social organization of the human race. The natural sciences will constantly unlock new secrets of the universe -- matter, energy, space are being explored. To investigate these and understand them is not to practice idolatry. Our religion is broad enough not to be obscurantist. If new scientific theories explode ancient religious theories we must be flexible enough to accept and to inquire. We need not live with medieval closed-mindedness.

And so the final paradox unfolds itself -- that our religion is based on the premise of faith in a God, while modern science which we want to understand takes nothing on faith. It might even be that astronomy and space travel will ultimately unveil the farthest stretches of the universe and return with the theory that there is no evidence of a God. We want to believe, because life is easier with a belief -- yet we want to partake in the new science, with a gamble that belief may be destroyed.

Again, the statement of the problem leads us to the answer -- that two separate acts of faith are required. Perhaps this paradox also is good -- for it forces us to accept both Sinai and science. We must have faith in Sinai and faith in science. Sinai and science could be the twin poles around which our religious minds and our modern minds would circle in equal orbits. Sinai provides us with a focus for ethical religiosity. Science provides us with a focus for the atomic age ahead. We need not leave morality behind as we enter the new centuries. On the contrary, we may be able to apply our ethics even more successfully in a world where science can grow enough food, provide enough power, invent new systems of distribution so that no man shall be hungry or homeless or hounded.

And, so to the summation. Eliminating the possibility of physical persecution, the American Jew facing the future must contemplate two realistic possibilities. Either the free air of America will smother his sense of Jewish identity and permit him to drift easily into an anesthetized state of painless assimilation -- or he will make vigorous efforts to develop a resistance against this temptation and forge strong links in an anchor chain which will hold him to his own destiny. If he chooses the latter path, and we hope he will, he has three problems -- three paradoxes -- three major areas -- requiring definition and resolution.

First, he must be a liberal fearless American in the best tradition, speaking against evil wherever he sees it, without rationalizing himself into inactivity. This will be his greatest contribution to a developing democracy. Yet he must be a survivalist, separatist Jew, relinquishing nothing of his precious uniqueness in order to be more welcome or better received among non-Jews. This will be his greatest contribution to personal self-respect. He has a right, or even a duty, to reconcile these two aspects of his being -- and he does so best not by pitting one against the other (which am I first, an American or a Jew?) but by accepting them both in the highest integration of their respective values. He makes two acts of faith -- as an American and as a Jew.

Second, he must be a world Jew who is actively identified with the people of Israel all over the globe and the land of Israel in its new-found sovereignty. He must work to join people and land, for otherwise large sections of Jewry and Judaism will surely perish. Yet he has apparently decided, for the historic present at least, to make his own life in America, and therefore must devote much energy to the strengthening of our Diaspora community. Again, the highest integration is achieved when these two aspects of world Jew and America Jew are not pitted against each other but are allowed to harmonize. He makes two acts of faith and lives on both levels -- America and the world.

Third, he must be a religionist, for this is our true mark of distinction, with a metaphysical belief in God and a message of messianic hope for man. Yet in addition to being an ethical religionist, he also wants to be, and should be a disciple of the modern science which is remaking our world. Thus the highest integration of these two aspects of life comes also through harmonizing not through antagonism. Religion must be liberalized but not lost and restored as a central force in the life of man. The two supreme acts of faith -- in Sinai and in science -- can be achieved.

It was a tragedy of the most immense proportions that European Jewry was destroyed in the 20th century. It would be an irony almost equally immense if American Jewry were to wither in the 21st or 22nd. Double acts of faith -- as American and as Jews -- as American Jews and as world Jews -- as religionist and as scientist -- will save us for many another century and will possibly even make of our future a glorious and proud adventure, in which our children will gladly want to share.

