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WEXNER HERITAGE
REVIEW

The Promise

of Community High Schools

It is not enough to advocate for day schools. What kind of day School? Rabbi Daniel Lehmann, the founding Headmaster of the Boston Jewish Community High School, argues for community high schools, suggesting an interesting advantage that these day schools have over denomination-based day schools. Such community schools "may be responding to a dissatisfaction with denominational structures among the baby-boomer generation and the need to bridge the rift between denominations that have often characterized Jewish life in America." He points out that there are few institutions which otherwise allow for an exploration of all Jewish theological positions.

(Sh'ma, September 6, 1996, previously published under the auspices of CLAL The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership; the publication of Sh'ma is being continued by Jewish Family & Life.*)*

Jean Marie LePen

The Threat to the Jews of France

While anti-Semitism is less and less a factor in American Jewish life, the same situation, unfortunately, does not exist in France. The French National-Front Party, led by Jean Marie LePen, captured 15% of the vote in the May 1997 legislative elections. Economic problems have contributed to the rise of the xenophobic party that dislikes Arabs (because of the influx of foreign workers) as well as Jews. The activities of organized French Jewry in combating LePen are described, including the attempt to portray the battle as one between anti-democratic and democratic forces in France. Fortunately, "two major groups in French society that have traditionally been anti-Jewish, the Catholic church and French right-wing intellectuals, are conspicuous by their absence from [support of LePen]."

(Midstream, July-August 1998, 110 E. 59th Street, New York, New York 10022, $21.00 annually*)*

Dreyfus

Was Not The Reason

Leadership is more than instinctive reactions to situations and yet everyone knows that the founder of modern Zionism, Theodor Herzl, became a Zionist after having observed the trial of the French-Jewish military officer, Dreyfus, in the late 19th century. Recognizing that Jews did not have a place in French national life, he developed the ideas that ultimately found fruition in modern Zionism. Wrong. Great leaders have more than great instincts. They study situations carefully. In fact, though Herzl wrote many journalistic pieces about the Dreyfus affair, he touched upon its Jewish aspect only briefly. Herzl's journals instead reveal that his Zionistic ideas were in response to the rising nationalism of the Austro-Hungarian empire in which he lived. He foresaw that the rising tide of ethnic sensibilities would leave little place for Jews in the life of Europe. Herzl wrote that "we wish to distance ourselves from a disaster that was even beyond his worse fears.

(Midstream, May-June 1998, 110 E. 59th Street, New York, New York 10022, $21.00 annually*)*

Sex, Lies and

Talmud

Women have a different kind of power that is evidenced by Wexner Heritage Foundation faculty member, Judith Hauptman's analysis of a brief Talmudic anecdote. She demonstrates how we can hear the voice of a real woman and Professor Hauptman demonstrates the distinctly feminist message contained therein.

(JTS Magazine, the journal of Jewish Theological Seminary, Fall 1997*)*

The Promise

of Community High Schools

By Daniel Lehmann

There is a growing chorus of voices in American Jewish life calling for the transformation of American Judaism. Sociologists, theologians and historians are claiming that the institutions created nearly a century ago as the cornerstones of American Judaism may be inadequate to sustain a vibrant Jewish community in the 21st century. As American Jews re-imagine the structure of the Jewish community in which they live, old institutions may lose their power and new institutions may emerge to address contemporary needs. One new institution that seems to be developing with great rapidity and energy as we come to the end of the millennium is the community Jewish day high school.

New Creations For New Needs

Community Jewish day high schools have existed for some time in communities like Washington DC, Philadelphia and more recently in Denver and Los Angeles. But within the past year a flurry of activity has led to the establishment of new Jewish community high schools in Boston and Atlanta with discussions underway for the establishment of similar schools in Cleveland, Minneapolis, Phoenix, San Diego and Seattle. These new schools are multi-denominational, community-based schools that have developed from the vision and commitments of educated laypeople with the professional support of local Federations.

While some would argue that the community Jewish high school is merely a natural outgrowth of the day school movement and introduces little that is new to the American Jewish scene, I would like to offer a different perspective. It is my contention that the Jewish community high school offers a unique response to a new set of needs that have arisen in the Jewish community of the United States.

Union If Not Unity

Unlike the vast majority of elementary day schools, the community Jewish high schools that are being created are not affiliated with a particular denomination. The decision to make these new high schools multi- or trans-denominational can be attributed to two major factors. One is simply the need to pool resources. High schools are very expensive enterprises. More importantly, however, the community high school may be responding to dissatisfaction with denominational structures among the baby-boomer generation and the need to bridge the rifts between denominations that have often characterized Jewish life in America.

There are precious few institutions in American Jewish life which allow for an exploration of the basic theological and ideological assumptions of the various religious movements. Even fewer places make it possible for particular understandings of Judaism to be played out in the presence of others who possess very different Jewish commitments and interpretations of Jewish practice. The moral implications of this are quite serious. Is it not a fundamental tenet of our tradition that moral refinement is created out of the dialectic interplay of opposing perspectives? Can our religious movements afford the luxury of splendid isolation?

Advancing Our Pedagogic Development

College and university Hillels are often a good model for this type of dynamic interchange, but unfortunately only a small fraction of the undergraduate student's educational experience is framed by Jewish institutions. The emerging Jewish community high school, with its various prayer services and religiously diverse faculty, presents an opportunity to create a new type of Jewish interchange that can shape a generation of Jews who understand the particularity of their own commitments in the context of the broader Jewish community.

The Jewish community high school also represents a new level of seriousness about Jewish education and a new commitment to the particularism of Jewish identity. Elementary day school education, by its very nature, did not challenge the notion that Jewish education was primarily a pre-bar/bat mitzvah enterprise. The establishment of community Jewish high schools, however, takes day school education well beyond the bar/bat mitzvah years into the thick of adolescent identity formation.

The high school years represent a period of intellectual and social development that has been virtually untouched by the advantages of day school education. While youth groups and camps have for some time been able to impact positively on Jewish identity during these important years of a young adult's life, formal Jewish education has had little opportunity to create a sophisticated and literate Jewish community. The students who graduate from these schools will have the skills and knowledge base to conduct their Jewish lives on much firmer and deeper ground. Precisely at the stage when young Jews will be discovering their analytic and creative potential and exploring ideas that will determine their view of the world, they will be engaging in serious Jewish study that will infuse their consciousness with Jewish sources of meaning.

The Challenges

The challenges confronting these new institutions are formidable. Will these schools be able to reach beyond the current day school population to educate a broader spectrum of the community? Can students representing a full spectrum of religious affiliations be attracted to such institutions? Will these schools empower students to see their knowledge of Judaism as a vehicle to transform our Jewish community and our society at large? Will these schools be able to foster a dedication to a disciplined spirituality and renaissance of Jewish creativity? Can a pluralistic Jewish high school education set the stage for a truly pluralistic Jewish community? Will a new type of Jew and a new type of Jewish leadership emerge from the educational experiences of these schools? Are there sufficient numbers of inspiring educators to staff these schools? Will the community focus its resources on the financial needs of these new schools?

The answers to these questions are as of yet unknown. But I am greatly inspired by the vision that is giving birth to these new Jewish community high schools, a vision of Jewish education and the Jewish community that is bold and compelling. Community Jewish high schools are not a panacea to the problems of Jewish continuity, but they are one new response that has great potential to transform our future.

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Jean Marie LePen

The Threat to the Jews of France

By Robert O. Freedman

In an interview in early July 1997, Chaim Musicant, Director of the Conseil Representif des Institutions Juives de France (CRIF), which is France's most important Jewish organization, noted with a combination of anger and astonishment: "It is incredible that 50 years after World War 11, a racist party has arisen in France that was able to capture 15 percent of the vote in the May 1997 legislative elections." The party is the so-called "National-Front," led by Jean Marie LePen, and this essay will analyze the reasons for its rise in popularity; how both Jewish and non-Jewish French organizations are seeking to deal with it, and what the future prospects of the National Front might be.

The Nature of the National Front: Initially founded in 1972 by a group on the extreme right in French politics, including French members of the Nazi Waffen-SS and former members of the terrorist OAS Algerian Settler organization, the National Front did not begin to make a real mark on the French political scene until the early 1980s. Then, in 1995, LePen received 15 percent of the vote in the French presidential elections that were won by Jacques Chirac of the center-right RPR-UDF alignment, and in May and June 1997 the National Front got more than 15 percent of the vote in the first round of the French legislative elections, although after the second round it only received one seat in the 577-person parliament due to French voting rules. Nonetheless, the party increased its share of the legislative vote in 1997 by more than 2 percent over its vote in the 1993 legislative elections. On the local scene, National Front influence is also rising, as the party now controls the office of mayor in four French cities: Toulon, Orange, Marignane, and Vitrolles.

In looking at the causes of the rise in National Front influence there would appear to be three major factors. The first is unemployment, a now chronic problem in France where 12 percent of the working-age population is without a job. Making matters worse is the high degree of youth unemployment, as almost a quarter of working-age youth under 25 are looking for jobs. The second and third causes relate to immigration and France's growing identity crisis. The influx of Muslim immigrants from North Africa, their concentration in suburbs around major cities in France, particularly in the South and East, and the perception among some Frenchmen that these immigrants are not only a major source of crime, but also that they are not assimilating properly into French culture (Muslim girls are wearing veils to schools, etc.) all this creates an identity crisis in France, a country with no tradition of pluralism. This is compounded by growing unease about the subordination of France and "French civilization" to the European Union. For hundreds of years, France has been proud of its "mission civilatrice" ("civilizing mission") where a superior French culture was spread throughout the world by the French government. Now it appears to many Frenchmen that French culture is being subordinated to a vaguely European culture that is dominated by Germany, while, at the same time, it is being undermined from within by unassimilable Muslim immigrants who, the National Front contends, not only take the jobs of "good Frenchmen" but also are the causes of France's sharp increase in crime. Thus LePen asserts that the National Front, by opposing immigration, alone is the defender of French civilization from within and without, and a vote for the National Front is a vote for French civilization, and against European domination and foreign (read Muslim) immigration. Cleverly, LePen has adopted Joan of Arc, who fought to free France from the English invaders, as the Front's national symbol and organizes special Joan of Arc programs and marches on an annual basis.

Facilitating LePen's message (there is a new word in French for it "LePenisme") has been the failure of the major parties of the center right (the RPR-UDF) and the center left (the Socialist party) to adequately deal with France's unemployment and other social problems. During the period that Francois Mitterand, the Socialist president, was in power (1981-1995) these problems festered, and despite promises by Chirac during the 1995 presidential election campaign to solve these problems, and the domination of the French Parliament by the RPR-UDF from 1993-1997, the problems only got worse. With the blurring of the traditionally strong distinction in France between the right wing and left wing parties, and the implication of members of both right and left in political scandals, as well as with the weakening of the French Communist party knowing the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the resulting sharp drop in the Communist vote, which historically had served as France's protest vote, LePen's National front inherited the old role of the Communists as the protest vote against politicians who are seen either as too corrupt, or who don't understand, or who are incapable of dealing with, or who are too aloof from, the problems of the common people.

While unemployment, immigration problems, and the crisis of French identity were the main causes of the growth of the influence of the National Front, there is also the issue of anti-Semitism. In France, the question from Napoleonic times to the present has been whether or not Jews can be part of the French nation. Given the religious divisions in France today (approximately 76 percent Catholic, 5 percent Protestant, 1.2 percent Jewish, 4 percent Muslim, and 10 percent "other"), Jews are a clear minority, but for Frenchmen on the extreme right from the anti-Dreyfus forces at the end of the 19th century to Marshall Petain (who oversaw both the enactment of anti-Jewish legislation and the deportation of French Jews to their deaths in Nazi concentration camps during World War II), to LePen today, Jews are not part of the French nation. LePen's anti-Semitism has been made clear not only by his visit to Saddam Hussein, his embrace of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, and his comments about how B'nai B'rith has manipulated Chirac, but also by the treatment of the eminent French Jewish writer, Marek Halter. Halter was due to receive a literary prize in the National Front-controlled city of Toldon until the National Front mayor of the city, Jean Marie LeChevallier, overruled the selection committee and determined that the prized should be given to a "true" exponent of French culture Brigitte Bardot, a supporter of the National Front.

Plans to Combat the National Front: Although anti-Semitism is not the central focus of LePenisme, it is an important component of the National Front ideology, as even a casual reading of the major National Front newspapers such as National Hedbo, Rivarol, and Presente reveals, let alone the often not so veiled anti-Semitic comments of LePen himself, such as his recent affirmation of the "inequality of races" and his statement that the gas chambers were only a minor footnote in the history of World War II. To combat LePen, the CRIF has embarked on a three-fold strategy. First, whenever LePen, or one of his colleagues in the National Front, makes anti-Semitic or other racist remarks, the CRIF is quick to publicize them in all effort to raise the sensitivity level of Frenchmen to the problem. Second, the CRIF is pushing for legislation to penalize those who make racist remarks. With the Socialists, who have been traditionally more sympathetic to immigrants and less tolerant of racism, now ill control of the French Parliament, the CRIF is guardedly optimistic about its chances, although public opinion polls have revealed a French public that is not only tolerant of racist remarks, but also is increasingly opposed to immigration.

The third major activity undertaken by the CRIF to combat LePen and the National Front has been to build as broad as possible a public alliance against it (in other words, a genuine "National Front" against LePen's National Front). According to Chaim Musicant, Director of the CRIF, the Jewish community does not want to portray

its battle as a struggle between LePen and the CRIF, but between anti-democratic and democratic forces in France.

Thus the CRIF seeks alliances with Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim religious leaders, and is organizing anti-racist programs with teachers and students throughout France.

Yet the ability of the CRIF to deal with LePen is limited. First, given the small percentage of Jews in France's total population, and despite the strong representation of Jews in journalism and other areas of French public life, Jewish influence in France is limited (whatever LePen might say), and on a comparative basis French Jewry has far less influence than does American Jewry. Second, and a significant problem for the CRIF and other Jewish leaders is the fact that not all Jews in France see LePen and the National Front as a serious danger. Indeed, some, seeing themselves on the same side of the barricades as LePen against the Muslim immigrant threat, have reportedly said, "If I were not Jewish, I would be a member of the National Front."

In any case, the actions the organized Jewish community takes against LePen, while serving as a catalyst for rallying anti-Lepeniste forces, cannot be the decisive factor in the struggle against the National Front. To seriously weaken the appeal of the National Front, the key role must be taken by the leaders of the major political parties.

The Future of the National Front: In looking to the future of the National Front and its impact on both the Jews of France and the future of French democracy, several observations can be made. First, despite being the ideological successor of the anti-Dreyfus forces and Marshall P,tain, LePen and the National Front are far weaker in terms of popular support. Two major groups in French society that have traditionally been anti-Jewish, the Catholic church and French right-wing intellectuals, are conspicuous by their absence from the National Front. In fact, the leadership of the Catholic church has recently leaned over backwards to adopt a more philosemitic, as well as a philo-Protestant attitude. On St. Bartholomew's Day, 24 August, the date of a large-scale massacre of Protestants by Catholics in the year 1572, the French Catholic church made a major public apology to the Protestants and, in October 1997, apologized to the Jews for past acts of persecution. In addition, Catholic leaders have joined With their Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim counterparts to denounce racism.

As far as the intellectuals are concerned, very few have joined the National Front. Some commentators feel this is the case because LePen's program is unlikely to provide intellectuals with the kind of employment they want which does not include the street-sweeping jobs currently held by immigrants. Others feel that the intellectuals have perhaps learned a lesson from the Holocaust and from the experience of Vichy collaboration with the Nazis, topics that have become increasingly matters of public discussion in France in recent years. In any case, the lack of strong support at the current time from French intellectuals can be seen as a major weakness of the National Front.

Another weakness in the National front is the possibility of its breaking up following the death of LePen, who is currently 68 years-old. None of his potential successors, neither Bruno Megret nor Bruno Gollnisch, appear to have the charisma or personal magnetism needed to hold the disparate elements of the movement together. Thus, one possibility for the future is the dissolution of the National Front and the adherence of at least part of it to the RPR-UDF alignment, or even the splitting of that alignment into a more center-rightist grouping around Seguin and Chirac, and a more right-wing party composed of right-wing Gaullists such as Robert Pandreau, Alain Peyrefitte, and jean Louis Debre, and such National Front leaders as Bruno Megret. Finally, as his profile and that of the National Front have risen, LePen and his colleagues have gotten themselves increasingly in trouble with the law. LePen was indicted for assaulting a member of Parliament, while Bruno Megret's wife, Catherine, mayor of Vitrolles, has been charged with making racist comments. While their actions may be aimed at increasing support among the disparate rank and file of the National Front, they may also have the effect of bringing down the wrath of the French government and serving to discredit the National Front among broad sectors of French society.

On the other hand, however, the National Front also has a number of strengths. Not only does it deal directly with issues that concern many Frenchmen, it has also begun to build a significant infrastructure on a local and even regional basis. Mention has already been made of the four cities under the control of the National Front, but it should also be noted that it is seeking to expand its influence in social organizations such as dubs and chambers of commerce, and plans to compete in regional elections in 1998, especially the region of Provence-Alpes-C"te d'Azur. And as the National Front consolidates its position in localities such as Toulon, it has begun to conduct both anti-Semitic and anti-democratic activities. Not only is it denying prizes to prominent Jews such as Marek Halter, it is banning marches of anti-National front organizations in the name of "preserving public order."

In sum, in looking to the future of the National Front, it seems clear that if France's new Prime Minister Lionel Jospin takes serious action to deal with France's unemployment, immigration, and national identity problems, then the influence of the National Front may be curbed. On the other hand, however, if France's problems are allowed to continue to fester, and the French public increasingly loses faith in the ability of France's major parties of the Right and Left to deal with the problems, LePen's National Front may well continue to gain in influence. Such a consequence would be dangerous, not only for French Jewry, but also for French democracy.

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Dreyfus

Wus Not The Reason

By Shlomo Avineri

(This essay was adapted and translated from the Hebrew from an article that appeared in the Israeli newspaper Ha'Aretz, 29 April 1998.)

When the 100th anniversary of the first Zionist Congress in Basel was celebrated last year, the well-known tale was told once again: the story of the initiative taken by Theodor Herzl, whose efforts led -- however indirectly -- to the establishment of the State of Israel.

The occasion prompted many people to repeat certain hackneyed, poorly informed myths, which only serve to impede the understanding of historical events. One prominent example is a claim that for decades has persistently appeared in Israeli textbooks and in histories of Zionism. According to this claim, the Dreyfus affair was what made Herzl aware of Jewish emancipation's failure, and of the rise of anti-Semitism all this in the very country that had given the world the Enlightenment and the legacy of a revolution that called for the equality of all citizens. There is very little evidence to support this claim, although Herzl did once say that the Dreyfus affair made him a Zionist. A volume of Herzl's journals has recently been published. It suggests a far more complex picture, which also sheds light on developments that took place in late 19th-century Europe.

When the Dreyfus affair began, Herzl was living in Paris, where he worked as a correspondent for the Viennese newspaper Neue Freie Presse. He witnessed the humiliating ceremony in which the convicted Captain Alfred Dreyfus was deprived of his rank and covered the event for his newspaper. However, though Herzl wrote many journalistic articles about the Dreyfus affair, he touched upon its Jewish aspect only briefly. Herzl was far more disturbed by the atmosphere of public lynching which surrounded the trial the chauvinistic, anti-German nationalist hysteria, fed by France's desire to avenge its defeat in the 1870-71 war. His articles denounced the unholy alliance of the country's military, religious, and political leadership.

In the thousands of pages Herzl filled in his journals between 1895 and 1904, the name Dreyfus is mentioned only a few times, even then only in passing. The more essential and dramatic stages of the Dreyfus affair, which brought the anti-Semitic issue to the foreground, did not occur until Herzl had already left Paris. Emile Zola published his "J'Accuse" in January 1898 two-and-a-half years after Herzl had left Paris and more than a year-and-a-half after he had published Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State). In addition, France's Jewish population at the time amounted to less than 100,000 people; even at the height of the anti-Semitic outbursts that accompanied the Dreyfus affair, no pogroms took place, and no Jews were killed. The more extensive Jewish predicament was to be found in other parts of Europe.

Herzl's journals indeed suggest that he was highly sensitive to this mass predicament, which he discovered, so to speak, in his own back yard: in the Austro-Hungarian empire. After all, at the end of the 19th century, this empire was second only to the Russian empire in the size of its Jewish population. Two million Jews lived in the Hapsburg empire, which included not only what we now know as Austria and Hungary, but also the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Galicia and Bukovina, Transylvania and Croatia.

The Austro-Hungarian empire was perceived by 19th century Jews as a model of tolerance and of enlightened rule not democratic, but nonetheless liberal and representational. The personality of Emperor Franz-Josef, joined with the empire's political philosophy and structure, allowed Jews to live freely and safely, and to enjoy social mobility, economic prosperity, and a sense of belonging.

What makes Herzl's journals a unique document are the repeated entries that show that Herzl himself a product of the liberal atmosphere prevailing in fin-de-si,cle Vienna was aware of the deep rifts, already forming in the Austro-Hungarian regime and predicted its disintegration. Herzl also realized how hazardous this situation was for the Jews of the empire, who stood in danger of losing the tolerance on which their security depended. Vienna and Budapest at the end of the 19th century witnessed the rise to power of nationalistic and anti-Semitic movements. Ten years later, Adolf Hitler would absorb much of his anti-Semitic, nationalistic, and racist ideology from Vienna's many extremist movements. Herzl, in the mid 1890s, saw in Vienna, Budapest, and Prague what many other liberal Jews of his generation preferred not to see. He understood that the competing nationalist movements would destroy the empire, dissolving it into a number of nationalistic countries in which foreigners would not be welcome, and that these nationalist movements pan-Germanic, Hungarian, Czech, would all, each for its own reasons, view the Jews as a hostile foreign element.

In those days, after all, Dr. Karl Lueger was elected mayor of Vienna on the basis of his populist-nationalistic, and anti-Semitic political platform. Herzl considered this ominous for the first time in modern European history, a nationalistic, anti-Semitic politician had won a democratic election. According to his journals, Herzl was particularly troubled by this cruel paradox: the extension of the right of participation in municipal elections to more Austrian citizens was precisely the thing that increased the number of uneducated voters, those most susceptible to the influence of bigoted priests and nationalist demagogues.

At the same time, Herzl was also concerned about the propaganda disseminated by pan Germanic circles in Vienna and Prague. These circles made a practice of including "Aryan sections" in their membership codes. As a result, large groups of educated Jews who had embraced German culture as a means of gaining access to the culture of Europe were excluded from culture and sports associations, student organizations and positions of power on newspapers that had adopted these racist views. At the same time, Czech nationalists denounced the German-speaking Jews of Prague as agents of German nationalism: the Jews suffered a double blow.

Herzl, born in Budapest, spoke Hungarian fluently. He was also very well-informed with regard to developments in the Hungarian territories, with their dense Jewish population clusters. The emergence of an anti-Semitic Hungarian party, of anti-Austrian tendencies that adversely affected Hungary's German-speaking Jews, the demand for explicit legislation against Jews in the Hungarian banks and industry all these are noted in his journals. He also followed closely the disintegration of the liberal-conservative coalition ruling Vienna's House of Representatives. Its weakness undermined the position of the government, which was caught in the crossfire between pan-Germanic and Czech nationalists. Herzl was troubled by all these developments. He saw Austria and Germany as the birthplaces of modern anti-Semitism; he wrote in his journal that he was determined to fight anti-Semitism "where it grew in Germany and Austria." What Herzl found most appalling was that the phenomena he observed were not marginal, occurring in the gutter of society, but rather developments in which the intellectual elite of German-speaking countries was partially involved. Even the turn toward socialism would not save the Jews, Herzl argued, "as we can learn from the case of Marx and Lassalle."

It was there not in France that Herzl saw the intellectual foundations and political expression of racist anti-Semitism. It was there that Jews were targeted by antagonistic nationalist movements, and liberal emancipation was corroded by nationalist incitement. The sources of the incitement were many some of them contradictory and the onslaught was accompanied by aggressive social demagogy, according to which the Jews were both exploiters and a foreign body in the fabric of the nation. And if this could happen in Austro-Hungary whose tolerance and liberalism were much envied by many educated Russian Jews there remained little chance of positive development in Russia, peopled by millions of Jews. Underlying Herzl's insight is what Stefan Zweig called the collapse of "yesterday's world," an idea that takes a different shape in the works of Arthur Schnitzler. Other liberal Jews still believed that reform and good will could save this pluralistic, cultured world. Herzl, with radical cultural pessimism, predicted its downfall. What Herzl foresaw in 1895-1897, what led him to seek the radical solution of an exodus from Europe, is exactly what did occur 20 years later, with

the outbreak of war in Sarajevo, and even earlier than that in the Balkan wars. Radical nationalist conflicts eventually brought about the collapse of the tolerant, multi-national empire. It was replaced by nationalist countries with extremist tendencies, antagonistic to foreigners and anti-Semitic.

With the rare insight of a highly perceptive journalist and author, Herzl saw these developments while most of his contemporaries Jews included preferred to retain their optimistic illusions. In retrospect, a dramatic, personal act such as the humiliation of Alfred Dreyfus, is easily turned into a symbol. Herzl, however, correctly assessed the depth of the historical process overtaking Central and Eastern Europe, as these areas increasingly embraced nationalistic extremism and balkanization. He also understood the implications of these developments for the Jewish population clusters in Austro-Hungary, Germany, and the Russian empire.

The man who said "we wish to distance ourselves from Europe, with its wars and hatred" was not an easily impressionable journalist, but rather a native son of Europe and its culture, who saw the lights of the continent begin to dim. As one British statesman would say later, when World War I began, this terrible darkness gave birth to the Jews' despair, which created the drive to establish the State of Israel. Far more than others, Herzl was able to identify the danger a danger he saw hovering over both Europe and its Jews.

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Sex, Lies and *Talmud*

By Judith Hauptman

Ever since the first feminist critique of Judaism was issued more than twenty-five years ago, many of us have asked how we can remain committed to a system of religious law and practice that discriminates against women. In a number of significant areas, women are disenfranchised and placed under the control of men. Because we believe that Judaism is an ethically driven religion, we feel betrayed.

But Judaism is not static it developed over time. Though we cannot avoid noticing the patriarchal construction of marriage and divorce and most other rules affecting women as they are presented in the Bible and the Talmud, we should also observe that as time passed, the rabbis improved women's position significantly. While equality for sure, was not their goal, limited social change was. Few people today recognize that a well-known series of laws enacted to repair the social order, mipnei tikkun baolam, begins with several rules designed to eradicate specific abuses of women in the divorce process (Mishnah Gittin, Chapters 4 and 5).

Even more interesting, a careful reading of certain Talmudic texts reveals that the rabbis had some self-awareness and may have been uncomfortable with their patriarchal privilege. As surprising as it sounds in a document written by men and for men, we find occasional passages that seem to say that men who maintain control over women will ultimately be hurt by their own behavior.

The following story illustrates this point. Its earthiness is characteristic of a legal document that examines lofty concepts as well as mundane details of life. The incident appears in two versions, one in the Babylonian Talmud and the other in the Jerusalem Talmud. (Both are compilations of rabbinic teachings of the first five centuries CE.)

We will look at both texts and draw inferences.

Samuel wanted to have sex with his wife.

She said to him, "I am ritually impure [and hence not available]."

But the next day [without having immersed in a mikveh] she said to him, "I am now ritually pure."

He challenged her, "Yesterday you were impure and today you are pure?"

She responded, "Yesterday I did not have enough strength [for sex. Today I do]."

He went and asked Rav [if he should believe her that she is pure].

Rav said, "Since she gave a reasonable explanation of her behavior, she is believed."

Jerusalem Talmud, Keturot 2:5; 26c

This anecdote turns marital dynamics upside down. It is well known that issues of ritual purity restrict a woman's availability. For this reason no husband can ever be sure that when he wants to have sex with his wife she will be able to accommodate him. But we find here a new limiting factor: a woman's ability to claim ritual impurity falsely when not in the mood for sex. It would seem that Samuel's wife could "just say no" but decides instead that the easiest and most effective way to resolve the matter is to offer a religious excuse. Samuel, perplexed, does not know which one of her two contradictory statements to accept, nor whether or not he may have sex with her. His colleague, Rav, tells him to overlook her lie, supporting women's ability to exercise power over men in this way. The ultimate outcome is that the purity rules, which some say treat women like objects, give a wife a measure of control over the couple's sex life.

The Babylonian Talmud's version of this anecdote brings other truths to light.

Samuel asked Rav, "If a woman says she is ritually impure and then [the next day] says she is ritually pure, what is the law?" [Is she to be believed when she says, without any intervening immersion in a mikveh, that she is pure? May her husband proceed to have sexual relations with her?]

He said to him, ". . . if she gives a reasonable explanation (for lying), she is believed [when she says she is ritually pure].

Samuel listened to Rav say this forty times [!] and still did not act upon it.

Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 22a

In this version of the incident, Samuel asks Rav precisely the same question that he asks in the other one, but without any reference to his personal circumstances. By not locating Samuel's query within an anecdote, the narrator does not allow a real woman's voice to be heard. As a result. the bite of the story is lost. The issue of a wife thwarting her husband's sex drive because she is not interested in sex at the time, although probably implied, is not

brought to the surface. Samuel is the main character in this version and his excessive piety shares center stage with the halakhic principle. By introducing these changes, the narrator has censored the story, writing it in a way that preserves the legal conundrum but makes the rabbi look righteous rather than foolish (or foolishly righteous).

Returning to the first version we may now ask: Why did men choose to incorporate this story into the Talmud? The simple answer is that it is an apt illustration of a rabbinic rule of evidence: if someone gives a reasonable explanation of a lie, he or she is believed. A better answer is that the deliberate, even savvy inclusion of anecdotes like this one shows that the Talmudic rabbis do not take themselves too seriously. They exhibit a liveliness of outlook and an openness to self-critique. Moreover, the narrator may have deliberately injected a feminist message, namely that clever, resourceful women may take patriarchal structures designed to subordinate women and utilize them instead for their own empowerment within rabbinic (patriarchal) law itself.

In the Talmud, women seem content with gaining a measure of control within a patriarchal system. Today, armed with the knowledge that Jewish law is open to change, women will not rest until they become full-fledged members of the community with unimpeded access to God.

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REVIEW

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(*Moment*, June, 1997, 1-800-777-1005, $18.00 annually)

Israel

Chained And In Chains

By Netty C. Gross

The chain gang in Israel consists of women whose husbands will not grant them religious divorces. The sad realities of the religious courts are succinctly described in this article. Something must be done to remedy such injustices. (*The Jerusalem Report*, August 31, 1998, published bi-weekly, 1-800- 827-1199, $69 annually)

Yisrael Ben-Ami, 38, his feet shackled together with a foot-long chain, sits on a plastic chair in a waiting room outside Jerusalem's Supreme Rabbinical Court reading Psalms. Ben-Ami, disarmingly ordinary in his knitted kippah, wrinkled shirt, and sandals with socks, has been in jail for nearly a year. His offense: denying his 34- year-old estranged wife, Aliza, a get, or bill of divorce, for the last 11 years. According to Jewish law, a husband must agree to give a divorce, but the rabbinic court can push him to want to. And so, Aliza's stubborn husband serves time on a month-by-month basis. Each month, there is a hearing in Jerusalem during which he is asked, in Aliza's presence, whether he's willing to grant a get. So far, the answer has been No.

This time, it's a little different. But not for the better. Aliza, a friendly Orthodox woman with soft brown eyes, wearing a black jumper, white blouse and straw hat, has rushed up to Jerusalem from Beersheba, where she lives with her widowed mother and two young children, to appeal a sudden, lower rabbinic court decision to free her husband. Unlike their civilian counterparts, rabbinic court judges (political, lifetime appointees) don't write opinions explaining their actions. Neither she nor her lawyer knows just why a judge would set Yisrael free, particularly since the couple's file is filled with evidence of domestic violence.

Elana Szokman, head of Mevo Satum (Dead End), a volunteer organization currently aiding Aliza Ben-Ami and another 30 women denied religious divorces by their husbands, supplies one plausible theory. The rabbinate, Szokman says, has never accepted the argument that battery is itself grounds for divorce. Rabbinical court judges typically rule that the marriage should be saved at any cost.

Aliza had hoped that the rabbinical court judge would reverse the decision, or better yet, sentence Yisrael to five years behind bars. Now she's pacing the corridor nervously. Each time she passes her shackled husband he looks up, alternating between a blank stare and a jeering gaze. She's worried, because the case before hers is running a full hour behind schedule, and she has to catch a bus back to Beersheba in time to pick up her children from childcare.

Trained as a special-ed teacher but unemployed, Aliza's daily life is ruled by court appearances, police hearings, the requisite photocopying of documents at the local stationery

store and other tasks of coping with a life in chains. She lives off government subsidies.

There are at least four empty, brand-new courtrooms along the corridor. "Why," I ask a clerk, "can't the Ben-Ami case be heard by a different judge?" He only shrugs.

Again, Szokman offers an explanation. "Absenteeism, she said wearily," is a serious problem here. As is keeping normal work hours. Rabbinic judges, who are supposed to remain in court until 2 p.m., often take off for the day as early as 12:30.

"This is a very inhospitable place for women, adds Szokman." The judges are all ultra-Orthodox males. So are the clerks. Women's needs like the case where someone who gets no child support is strapped to pay a babysitter and cannot be kept waiting are simply not considered."

Nor are other matters. For instance, there's only a men's room on the floor housing the high court. Women must go down a flight of stairs to find a bathroom.

That's a small problem, compared to what I saw on the listing of divorce cases docketed for the lower rabbinic court, one floor down. At least three involve women who have been declared rebellious, a label that includes those unwilling to heed judges' orders to make peace. Among other things, making peace includes sexual relations with their husbands. The implications for rebelliousness include prosecution by the rabbinic court of the woman seeking divorce.

Aliza Ben-Ami knows all about making peace. That's what she was told to do back in 1987, when she first filed for divorce and she complied. Only after her husband attacked her, she says, were the rabbis convinced that the marriage wouldn't work out. Now, 11 years later, she's still making the same arguments before this higher court in Jerusalem.

When Aliza and Yisrael Ben-Ami are finally called into the courtroom, they disappear behind closed doors. The ruling is both a relief and a disappointment for Aliza. Yisrael was, for the time being, sent back to jail. But, once again, only on a month-to-month basis. The next hearing is scheduled for September, after the lower rabbinic court's summer recess.

American Jewry

Ally McBeal And Orthodox Feminism

By Nathan Diament

Orthodox feminism is on the rise even as 1960's style feminism seems to have run its course. Perhaps Orthodoxy is more comfortable with post-feminism, as personified by Ally McBeal. Does this portend a greater role for Orthodox women in Jewish communal affairs? (*Forward*, March 27, 1998, published weekly, (800) 849-1825, $34.46 annually)

By any measure, feminism, no matter how broadly or narrowly you define that term, is having a major impact on the Orthodox Jewish community. There is a surfeit of Torah study programs and conferences aimed at women and women's issues (successive weekends in February and March have seen programs sponsored by Amit, Israel Bonds, the Orthodox Union and, of course, the Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy). And, in what seems to be a recent surge of developments, Orthodox synagogues have hired female interns and re-examined the physical structure of their sanctuaries and the format of their services with an eye toward the concerns of women congregants.

One of the most striking aspects of this cresting of the Orthodox feminist wave is that it comes just as the broader American feminist movement is under siege. One might wonder whether this apparent cultural dissonance merely reflects a cultural time-lag within the Orthodox community, or is a means of explaining the confluence of these cultural forces.

The feminist establishment embodied in organizations such as the National Organization of Women, the National Abortion Rights Action League and individuals such as Hillary Clinton, Gloria Steinem and Ann Lewis is being accused of hypocrisy and being little more than political opportunists. This accusation arises from the failure of the American feminist movement to come to the defense of Monica Lewinsky and Kathleen Willey (not to mention Paula Jones) as they charge the president with sexual harassment.

The contrasts to the battle over Clarence Thomas' Supreme Court nomination and the ouster of Senator Packwood are stark. In pressing their cases then, American feminists asserted that the women who accused these two men of misconduct must be believed because "women don't lie about such things." When defenders of the accused men tried to undermine the credibility of the accusers, the feminist movement quickly countered. When senators wondered whether Anita Hill could have been so offended by her boss's vulgar conduct yet continued to work for him for several years, the feminist establishment lectured Americans about what it's like to work for a powerful man who could destroy a woman's career if he so chose. But the day after the White House challenged Kathleen Willey's credibility by releasing letters containing expressions of her loyalty that she had written to the president subsequent to her Oval Office encounter, feminists were silent.

It is only in recent days that the sheer weight of the charge against the feminist establishment has brought its leaders onto the talk shows and into the newspapers to defend their current position. Gloria Steinem's recent essay in The New York Times in defense of the feminists implicitly concedes that they are a political interest group, rather than defenders of a moral cause, by asking whether environmentalists would be similarly criticized as hypocritical if they continued to support the president after he failed to pass legislation that they favored.

American feminism is losing in the cultural arena as well. Consider this year's most popular new television show, "Ally McBeal." Ally first appears to be a feminist's model woman of

the 1990s; she is an attractive Harvard-educated attorney trying high-profile cases at a leading Boston firm.

Yet what makes her character and the tales of her travails so popular is that this power-suited package contains an (amusingly, of course) neurotic woman who longs for a serious relationship, leading to marriage, leading to children. A series of episodes has taken to conveying Ally's preoccupations with these concerns through the periodic appearance of a computer-generated hologram of a dancing baby; Ally has turned to the TV audience to confide, in hushed tones: "I want to change the world, I just want to get married first."

Observers of American culture must wonder, how can this character be so popular even among the young female segment of TV audiences if American feminism has succeeded? Ally's highly successful career should be fulfillment enough. In fact, the show has been criticized in feminist quarters, but that just underscores the point.

Perhaps it is the collapse of traditional American feminism now accelerated by the stories of Kathleen and Ally that has enabled Orthodox women to feel more comfortable identifying with its coalescing successor, post-feminism.

Orthodox women, sincerely committed to a community of law and tradition, could never feel comfortable with a feminism that championed sexual freedom and abortion. The repudiation of the old guard is paving the way for a post-feminist ideology that embraces motherhood as a noble calling and reaffirms uniquely female virtues and roles: Separate but equal may be acceptable after all, according to post- feminists. This conception, many Orthodox Jews would assert, is what a vibrant Orthodoxy that is timelessly relevant to Jewish women and men has stood for all along.

Nathan Diament is the director of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of Americas Institute for Public Affairs. Reprinted by permission of the author.

The Jewish

Teddy Bear

How is the Teddy Bear part of American Jewish history and part of a great American business success story? Read this.

(*Forward*, April 24, 1998, published weekly, (800) 849-1825, $34.46 annually).

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Teddy bears are a symbol of cuddly gentleness and security the world over. It is well-known that the teddy bear is named for President Theodore Roosevelt. Less well-known is that the inventors of the teddy bear were Rose and Morris Michtom, two Russian Jewish immigrants who lived in Brooklyn.

The establishment of the American bear as the embodiment of gentleness is filled with ironies. For generations, bears had prompted fear, not affection, among rural Americans. The teddy bear's namesake, Theodore Roosevelt, was himself a ferocious warrior and big game hunter a man who killed for sport. But an unlikely alliance between the rugged, native American Protestant president and the inventive immigrant Jewish couple from Brooklyn created one of the most lovable and enduring American icons.

The story begins in 1902. The states of Mississippi and Louisiana were engaged in a disagreement over the location of their common boundary, which bisected some of the least well-developed land in the United States. The governors of both states invited President Roosevelt to arbitrate the dispute. Roosevelt decided to combine his tour of the disputed territory with a five-day black bear hunt.

The president's foray attracted a large contingent of journalists, who reported on Roosevelt's every move. Even more compelling to the reporters than the boundary dispute was the president's pursuit of a trophy bear. For four days, the press reported little about Roosevelt's arbitration of the boundary issue and harped on the ability of the area's bears to elude his crosshairs. On the fifth and last day of the junket, apparently to redeem the president's reputation, one of his hunting companions caught and tied a bear cub to a tree so that the president could shoot it. When he came upon the bear, Roosevelt refused to kill it, saying that he only took prey that had a sporting chance to defend itself.

Roosevelt's demurrer took the nation by storm. The leading American cartoonist, Clifford Berryman, published a cartoon showing Roosevelt turning his back on the young bear. Public response was overwhelmingly favorable. The next day the Washington Post published a second cartoon, depicting the bear as a more placid beast and cementing its docile image firmly in the public imagination.

Enter the Michtoms. Morris had arrived penniless in New York in 1887, while in his teens, a refugee from pogroms. He married Rose and opened a small store that sold notions, candy and other penny items. In the evening, to help make ends meet, Rose sewed toys that they sold in the shop. Like millions of other Americans, the Michtoms avidly followed press accounts of Roosevelt's journey into the Louisiana back country. When Roosevelt refused to shoot the defenseless bear, they were touched by his humanity. Morris suggested to Rose that she sew a replica of the bear represented in Berryman's cartoons. That night, Rose cut and stuffed a piece of plush velvet into the shape of a bear, sewed on shoe button eyes and handed it to Morris to put on display in the shop window. He labeled it, "Teddy's bear." To his surprise, not only did someone enter the store asking to buy the bear, but twelve other potential customers also asked to purchase it. Concerned that they might offend the president by using his name without permission, the Michtoms mailed the original bear to the White House, offering it as a gift to the president's children and asking Roosevelt for use of his name. The president was charmed by the toy and gave it to his children. He told the Michtoms he doubted his name would help sales but that they were free to use it if they wanted.

The rest is an amazing (yet characteristically American Jewish) immigrant success story. The Michtoms began sewing teddy bears and placing them in the window of their shop, but demand was so great, they couldn't keep up. The couple concluded that there was more profit in teddy bears than in penny candy and dedicated their time to producing them. Because of the bear's popularity, Roosevelt and the Republican Party adopted it as their symbol in the election of 1904, and bears were placed on display at every public White House function.

The fruits of the Michtoms' labor grew into the Ideal Toy Company, which remained in family hands until the 1970s. Ideal Toys sold millions of teddies throughout the world, yet the Michtoms were unspoiled by their good fortune. Ever mindful of their humble origins, they became major supporters of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Jewish National Fund, the National Labor Campaign for Palestine and numerous other Jewish causes. While Ideal Toys was unable to secure a patent on the teddy bear and many imitators entered the market, the Michtoms created an American and worldwide icon. Their original teddy bear, treasured and saved by Teddy Roosevelt's grandchildren, is now on display at the Smithsonian.

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European Jewry In Germany

Beyond Guilt

By Hirsh Goodman

Remembrance of the Holocaust in Germany is no longer a collective guilt trip for Germans. "Now it is taught because history teachers and teachers of sociology and political science see the subject as essential in educating toward democracy, in stymieing the trend toward the neo-Nazi groups that are springing up like mushrooms in united Germany." (*The Jerusalem Report*, August 3, 1998, published bi-weekly, 1-800-827-1119, $69.00 annually.)

I recently spent eight days in Germany as a guest of the government. Initially, I was determined not to enjoy myself. Despite an open mind, many German friends, and a belief that the country has made a genuine effort to atone, going to and being in Germany is still, for me, not something to be enjoyed. There are too many memories, too many reminders, too many people who look like they may have been "one of them" to make a visit there a pleasurable experience.

But I came back feeling differently. Something profound is happening there and the key to it, I sensed, is a new maturity in how the country is dealing with the Holocaust. It is no longer being looked at through the sole perspective of guilt. The guilt is there, but so is the realization that the Nazis not only destroyed much of world Jewry, they all but destroyed Germany, and that must not be allowed to happen again.

This change of attitude is to be found primarily in those teaching the Holocaust in schools. Once the subject was a requirement, like Latin or Greek, and rammed down the throats of students because "head office" deemed it so. Now it is taught because history teachers and teachers of sociology and political science see the subject as essential in educating toward democracy, in stymieing the trend toward the neo-Nazi groups that are springing up like mushrooms in united Germany.

An example is the heated national debate around the building of a Holocaust memorial in Berlin. There, a huge plot has been set aside adjacent to the Brandenberg Gate, and Chancellor Helmut Kohl [who was defeated in the September elections] is determined to construct a gargantuan monument to Germany's darkest hour. Many Germans, including the mayor of Berlin, think the idea of building something that will totally overshadow the Brandenberg Gate is indicative of megalomaniac perversity. All are for a memorial, but something in context with the solemnity of the subject, set in harmony with the historic environment, not in contrast to it. Meaningfully, neither Israel nor the Jewish community has assumed a role in the debate. It is not our issue, they say, but something Germans have to deal with themselves. It is their business.

The rise of neo-Nazism is cited by many as one of the reasons Germany is examining its past with new honesty. It is becoming more than a marginal problem, with the neo-Nazi movement gaining in popularity and size fast enough to have mainstream politicians worried. This is happening particularly in the formerly Communist East where unemployment is 30 percent.

It is not only the unemployed who are joining the ranks of the neo-Nazis, but particularly 25-35 year-olds who resent the way the West absorbed the East. They feel they were treated with arrogance and humiliated by the West. People who held key jobs in the Communist hierarchy and in the East's industrial complex found themselves out of jobs. In many cases, they also lost their self-respect. At one air force base, a former East German fighter pilot with the rank of lieutenant colonel is the office cleaner for the colonel I was visiting. There are thousands of similar examples that have converged into rage being expressed through the same rhetoric of hatred that brought Hitler to power.

The specter is very much on the national agenda, and many see teaching about the Nazi era as a weapon in trying to stymie the phenomenon.

It was difficult to gauge what the country's Jews feels about all this. I was all but shunned when I went to shul in Berlin on Saturday morning; perhaps people suspected that I was yet another shnorrer trying to get at their wealth. The media has plugged German Jewry as the fastest growing Jewish community on earth, having doubled in size in the past few years. That is true, but even that puts it at a mere 70,000 out of Germany's 80-million-plus population. And of the 70,000, about half of whom are new arrivals from the former Soviet

Union, many are not considered Jewish by the leadership and are thus ostracized. A mere 600 conversions have taken place in recent years, and even these were against the will of the leadership.

As Germany enters its last phase before the September general election, socioeconomic issues seem to be the main points of contention between the two major rival parties. In many ways, the race between Helmut Kohl and Gerhard Schroeder [Schroeder won] almost mirrors the contest between Peres and Ne-tanyahu: the elder statesman against the TV star with memorable one-liners; an old and tired face against a new one; the last of the political giants against the Blair clones who seem to be taking over the international political scene.

While I tried often to steer conversation in that direction, constantly my interlocutors would bring the conversation back to the past. Maybe because I am a Jew. Maybe because I am an Israeli. But maybe because they finally not only recognize the horror of the past, but identify as victims of it themselves.

Hirsh Goodman is vice-chairman of The Jerusalem Post and founding editor of The Jerusalem Report.Reprinted by permission of The Jerusalem Report

Judaism Reconstructionism

From "Heresy" To "It's What Most Jews Are"

By Suzanne Singer and Judy Oppenheimer

Reconstructionist Jews are barely 1% of the American Jewish population, but their leaders have been on the cutting edge of many ideas that are now commonplace in Reform and conservative Judaism. Even the bat mitzvah celebration, initiated by the founding rabbi of the Reconstructionist Movement, Mordechai Kaplan, has made it all the way to Orthodox congregations. This article describes this small, but very influential branch of Judaism. (Excerpted from *Moment*, June, 1997, 1-800-777-1005, $18.00 annually)

On June 12, 1945, members of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada (the same group that on March 31, 1997, declared the Reform and Conservative movements not Judaism) gathered together at the McAlpin Hotel in Manhattan to burn a book.

The book was the Reconstructionist prayer book, and the burning was the dramatic conclusion of the rabbis' excommunication of its author, Mordechai Kaplan, founding father of Reconstructionism. Evoking the ancient practice of herem, the rabbis declared that because of Kaplan's "atheism, heresy, and disbelief in the basic tenets of Judaism," no Jew was permitted to sit within four feet of him or come within that range to speak to him, nor eat with him, nor count him as one of the ten men needed for a prayer service. Kaplan had earned the group's condemnation because his prayer book deleted all references to the divine revelation of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, to the Jews as God's chosen people, and to the doctrine of a personal messiah. Kaplan's God was not supernatural, but a transnatural presence that made itself manifest in human striving to improve the world.

He saw the concept of chosenness as a barrier to Jewish acceptance in democratic society and rejected it as racist and elitist, though later Reconstructionists would simply redefine chosen as "vocation", the special Jewish responsibility to fix the world.

Even then, the influence of Kaplan's thought could be seen in Jewish belief and practice. Today, a half century later, Kaplan's ideas have so affected American Jewry that Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, executive director of the Jewish Reconstruction Federation, recently bragged that 70 percent of American Jews are Reconstructionists at heart, they just don't know it.

"In Reconstructionism, Jews can have a full spiritual life while maintaining intellectual integrity," he said in a recent interview. "For many years, Reconstructionism was several steps ahead of the American Jewish public, but now we're very much in sync in addressing the questions on people's minds." He pointed to Reconstructionism's "atmosphere of openness" and doctrine of inclusion, of gays as well as intermarrieds, as being responsible for the movement's present expansion rate of ten percent a year.

"When you explain Reconstruction to American Jews, they say, 'That's what I believe.' It's like an undercover movement," said Susan Cohen, founder of Shir Hadash Reconstructionist Synagogue in Northbrook, Illinois.

Despite the growth, the numbers by themselves are not particularly impressive. With some 50,000 members scattered throughout the country in 90 congregations, and a mere 185 bona fide graduates of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC), clearly this is the smallest branch of the American Judaic tree. And though Rabbi Liebling called it the fastest growing movement, another Reconstructionist leader noted sardonically it had only recently "broken into the single digits." A mere one percent of the 5.8 million Jews in the country define themselves as Reconstructionists.

Still, statistics do not tell the full story. Kaplan's ideas, his writings, the force of his personality, had and continue to have a far greater and wider effect on American Judaism than the movement's small size would indicate.

"Many of the major things we consider the most vibrant aspects of the American Jewish community were suggested, or the philosophical underpinnings laid, by Kaplan," said Rabbi Avis Miller, associate rabbi of Conservative Adas Israel congregation of Washington, D.C., who defines herself as Conservative but graduated from RRC in 1986. "The havurah movement, for instance [informal, self-led prayer groups], comes from Kaplan's idea about the democratization of Judaism." And certainly the American feminist movement can trace its roots in part to Kaplan's daughter Judith, who in 1922 became the first girl to celebrate a bat mitzvah.

"Reconstructionism's best ideas get taken up by the mainstream of Judaism; others go into oblivion," said Miller. "One of the reasons Reconstructionism is so hard to explain is that people say, Oh, interactive? Participation of women? Of course. Kaplan's ideas have become so popular that the source has been lost."

In truth, a good working definition of the movement is not easy to come by. What Kaplan was attempting to do, in a nutshell, was develop a Judaism for modern- day America. A non-elitist, democratic, pragmatic, down-to-earth way of being Jewish that would (he felt) best fit the ideas and social reality of the new world he came to at the age of 7, just before the dawn of the 20th century. His overriding principle was his view of Judaism as an evolving religious civilization instead of a religion. His most important book, Judaism as a Civilization, published in 1934, set his ideas in print. He wanted to loosen the hold of halachah (Jewish law) allowing tradition to have, in his most famous phrase, "a vote, not a veto." He believed every congregation should be able to choose its own route, deciding democratically which rituals and standards to keep, which to discard. And he felt strongly that political and social issues were legitimate Jewish concerns. . . .

What Kaplan was not trying to do was create a new fourth movement he felt that three were plenty and hoped his philosophies would be adapted, eventually, by all American Jews. And while things did not turn out exactly as he'd wished, Reconstructionism did, in fact, evolve into a fourth movement in many ways, his ideas have seeped into congregations of every stripe. . . .

Reconstructionism held onto traditional elements in the service that the Reform movement discarded. The primary reason for this, according to Reconstructionist rabbi Sidney Schwarz, founder and former rabbi of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist congregation, Bethesda, Maryland, is that "Kaplan used the Conservative service as the starting point, as the framework, not Reform. Reform is much more free-form, nontraditional."

"Reconstructionism said, 'Let's not aban-don the tradition. Let's find a way to make the tradition useful,'" said Reconstructionist Carrie Linkon, of Palo Alto, California.

In every way, Reconstructionism seems identified with American Judaism. Yet the story of Kaplan and his movement has its roots in Europe, in the small town of Swentzian, Lithuania, where Kaplan was born in 1881. His father, Israel, was a learned Talmudist, who nonetheless had a vibrant interest in secular culture and insisted, quite unconventionally for those times, that his daughter Sophie study Hebrew in the same cheder as her brother. Kaplan's mother Anna ran a small store to support the family and nursed a dream that her son would one day be chief rabbi of Britain.

In 1888 a gentile boycott of the family store forced the Kaplans to leave Swentzian. They set out for America, settling in New York City, where young Mordechai attended private schools and studied Torah with his father. Planning to become a rabbi, he attended the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) at the same time he studied at City College, receiving his bachelor's degree and JTS ordination simultaneously, in 1900. He earned a master's degree from Columbia University in 1902.

In the journal he was to keep for 58 years, Kaplan noted that while studying at JTS he was "tossed by doubts and questions concerning the tradition which I would soon be expected to teach to others." After marriage to Lena Rubin in 1908, he and his wife traveled to Europe, where he was given Orthodox ordination by a distinguished Orthodox rabbi, Yitzhak Reines. Back home, as the rabbi of New York's Orthodox Kehilath Jeshurun synagogue, the doubts continued: his journal recorded the "mental torture," even "nausea," which gripped him reciting the daily prayers or giving sermons he did not really believe. Finally, miserable, he gave up his post and set out on his own path, the path that would eventually evolve into Reconstructionism.

In 1918 Kaplan opened the New York Jewish Center synagogue on West 86th Street as a place where worship could coexist with study, drama, dance, song, basketball, hand-ball, calisthenics offering a foretaste of Jewish community centers, which would one day spring up throughout the land, where Jews could find another way to forge Jewish identity. But after running into opposition from the Orthodox Center board, he resigned and in 1921 established the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (SAJ). In time, SAJ would become the flagship synagogue of the Reconstruction movement, although when it began it was defined as Conservative, since Kaplan was not committed to the idea of a fourth movement. Today SAJ holds a dual affiliation.

Over the next three decades, SAJ was Kaplan's working laboratory, the place where he tried innovations in prayer and ritual. There was none more dramatic, perhaps, than the first: In March 1922, Kaplan's daughter Judith became the first girl to celebrate becoming a bat mitzvah, until then a ritual for boys only. In 1945 a new haggadah was issued. SAJ also served as the launching pad for the prayer book that would earn Kaplan his herem.

Kaplan felt that neither Reform, Conservative, or Modern Orthodoxy (which he called neo-Orthodoxy) could bring Judaism into the modern age or fulfill his vision of an American Jewry democratic, non-elitist, pragmatic, cultural. Long before the concept of multiculturalism had arisen, Kaplan sensed the importance of folk culture to Jewish identity: music, theater, dance, poetry. He was convinced his program would become American Judaism.

Reconstructionism has invariably been in the forefront of change. Some 15 years before Reform Judaism recognized patrilineal descent (in 1983), Reconstructionism had, declaring that the children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers were Jewish if they were raised as Jews. With intermarriage, while Reconstructionist rabbis are urged to reserve traditional Jewish ceremonies for marriages between Jews, they are left to decide on their own whether or not to attend or participate in a ceremony between Jew and non-Jew as long as the couple intends to identify with the Jewish community and establish a

Jewish home. Not surprisingly, when intermarried couples look for a congregation to join, more often than not it is a Reconstructionist one they turn to.

With feminism, Kaplan pioneered from the beginning for the full and equal participation of women. Not only was his daughter the world's first bat mitzvah, but starting in 1951, at his synagogue, SAJ, women began to be called to bless the Torah and able to serve on minyans, both honors traditionally reserved for men. "Reconstructionism has never made a distinction between women and men in ritual or carrying out any rabbinic functions," said Teutsch, noting that today women make up half the college faculty.

In more recent years, as gays and lesbians have sought the right to participate more fully in synagogue life, once again, Reconstructionism has responded sooner than the other branches of Judaism. Gay and lesbian commitment ceremonies are celebrated in a number of Reconstructionist synagogues; gays and lesbians serve as rabbis at Reconstructionist congregations. The Reconstructionist Commission on Homosexuality declared both homosexuality and heterosexuality to be "normal expressions of human diversity." . . .

And there seems to be no doubt that Reconstructionists will continue to be on the cutting edge when it comes to dealing with social concerns. Not long ago, RRC faculty and alumni listed some of the more compelling new ideas: the creation of an ethical kashrut commission (food produced through oppression of workers would be considered unacceptable); the formation of a special havurah within a congregation to provide sanctuary for political refugees; and experimentation in feminist liturgy, which might include unearthing spiritual practices from the past, to see what would fly. . . .

In general, . . its receptivity to experimental, often countercultural, ideas places Reconstructionism far to the left on the Judaic spectrum. Yet clearly, in matters of social consciousness Reconstructionists of today are following in the footsteps of their founder. In other arenas, however, the connection with Kaplan is not so clear. And nowhere is it more tangled than when it comes to questions of spirituality.

Kaplan rejected the idea of a supernatural creator. He did his best to tailor traditional Judaism to meet the needs of skeptical Jews living in the democratic, pragmatic world of 20th century America, a world where reason and science were prized over faith and tradition. He succeeded to such an extent that critics such as Orthodox theologian Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits charged that even Christianity and Islam were closer to genuine Judaism than was Reconstructionism. At one point some years back, author Dennis Prager predicted direly that if the movement continued in its "atheism/naturalism" it would become "increasingly irrelevant to modem men and women who ache for faith in a transcendent personal God."

But somewhere along the way there was a bend in the road. Because today, Reconstructionism, created by a supreme rationalist, has developed into the most spiritually attuned movement of them all. . . .

A 1996 survey of 4,500 affiliated Reconstructionist households done by the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation demonstrated clearly that congregants were more interested in personal growth and spirituality than in any particular social action program. The single most important reason given for joining a Reconstructionist congregation was the warm atmosphere. While 65 percent of those interviewed thought it was very important that their congregation be "as inclusive as possible," a mere 18 percent thought it important that a congregation be "committed to helping the poor."

Somewhat surprisingly, the survey also revealed that a sizable number of Reconstructionists ended up becoming more observant than their Conservative brethren. A recent study of Conservatives reported that only 24 percent observe kashrut, while 34 percent of the Reconstructionists in the survey said they did, this despite the fact that the Conservative movement, unlike Reconstructionism, remains committed to the idea that observance is an obligation.

The survey provided the first general profile of the Reconstructionist community. Reconstructionists are somewhat poorer than the American Jewish community. The household income is $100,000 a year. At the same time, they are somewhat better educated: some 41 percent of the households have at least one adult with a doctorate or a medicine or law degree. Half of the youngest respondents, those under 40, were intermarried and raising their children in a Jewish home.

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WEXNER HERITAGE
REVIEW

Leadership

What Is Leadership?

Dr. David Bernstein of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem gives a succinct analysis of the leadership style of Moses. In particular he notes how Moses' ability to lead had broken down and, under God's direction, he shares his powers with the 70 elders. Whether Moses had fallen out of sync with his people or vice versa, is irrelevant. The key is to understand that leadership dynamics are in constant flux. Other styles of leadership are discussed, including an analysis of the aspects of the early life of Moses that bred him for leadership.
(Havruta, Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, Fall 1978, published by the American Pardes Foundation, 136 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016, www.pardes.org.il*)*

First Class Musings

Second Class Conclusions

Rabbi Emanuel Feldman, formerly of Atlanta and now Jerusalem, got bumped up to first class on an overseas flight to Israel and something strange happened to him. Enjoying his comforts, he began to wonder whether if one is in the first class compartment of a plane and there are no passengers at all in the coach section, are you still in first class? Does the enjoyment of first class come from knowing that others are not living as well? An extraordinary piece from an ordinary event.
(Tradition, a publication of the Rabbinical Council of America, Fall 1998, 305 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10001, $20 annually*)*

A Chain Unbroken

How Do We Mourn Our Parents?

Leon Wieseltier, the literary editor of The New Republic, has published a journal describing the year he said Kaddish for his father. The work has been hailed as a classic of Jewish literature. In particular, see the last quote in this book review.
(The New Yorker, September 28, 1988, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, New York 10036, $39.95 annually*)*

A Choice For The Chosen

How School Choice Can Renew Jewish

Whether the Jewish community should seek government funds for Jewish day schools through school vouchers is an issue that will be much debated in the coming years. There is skepticism as to whether school vouchers will promote greater attendance in Jewish day schools and others worry about the breach of the church-state wall. Professor Jeremy Rabkin of Cornell University, argues in favor of school vouchers. He discusses the issue as to whether the Jewish community has a stake in "protecting" public education by blocking government vouchers to private and religious alternatives.
(Policy Review, January-February 1999, published by The Heritage Foundation, 214 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20002, $24.95 annually*)*

LEADERSHIP

What Is Leadership?

By Dr. David I. Bernstein

What is leadership? *The Oxford English Dictionary*, amongst its many definitions of a leader, uses one that I prefer to adopt for the purpose of this discussion: a leader is "one who is followed." This means leadership cannot exist in a vacuum; it is always contextual, or situational. Similar to Joseph Schwab's four commonplaces of any educational setting, there are commonplaces that define a particular context of leadership: the leader, the potential followers, the milieu, and the goals of the leadership. However talented the leader, however lofty the goals, if one does not figure in the readiness of the audience, one may fail miserably.

Rather than discuss this only theoretically, let us look at one case study: Moshe, the greatest leader of the Jewish people. He has been the object of study and admiration among the Biblical commentators, in the midrash, and in rabbinic Judaism. But he has also been studied and admired by Michaelangelo, Freud, and many other modern thinkers.

Moshe is the heroic defender of the Jewish slave; he is the leader who performs miracles in Egypt; he is the liberator of the Hebrews from slavery. He continues to perform miracles at the Red Sea, and in the desert. Moshe is also the greatest prophet, the one who ascends Sinai and experiences a revelation like no other in Jewish history. It is he who breaks the tablets but it is also he who defends the Jewish people before God after the sin of the golden calf. And it is Moshe who supervises the construction of the "portable Sinai" (the *mishkan*/sanctuary). With its dedication, the *shechina* (God's presence) now rests in the middle of the camp, in the center of a people poised to march on to the Promised Land under his remarkable leadership.

And then it all begins to break down in the 11th chapter of *Bamidbar* (Numbers): the sin of complaining and lusting, followed by complaints against him by his own brother and sister, then the sin of the spies, and finally, the open rebellion against Moshe's leadership by Korach and his followers. Moshe, along with the people of his generation, will never enter the Promised Land.

But the breakdown of leadership is not simply of the followers; we see that Moshe is also no longer the same leader he was in Exodus, where he consistently defended the people against God. As Menachem Liebtag of Yeshivat Har Etzion writes: Instead of defending the people by saying to God, "why have you made it so terrible for your people?" (*Shmot* 5:22), he now asks in frustration, Why have you made it so hard for your servant (me!)" (*Bamidbar* 11:11) Instead of "if you don't forgive them, erase me from your book" (*Shmot* 32:30-32), he now says, "If I have to lead them, I'd rather die" (*Bamidbar* 11:15).

God's immediate response to this lament is to take some of Moshe's power and give it to the 70 elders. God realizes that something has changed in Moshe, or in the people, and

that he needs to share some of his leadership with others who can help him deal with - or better yet, avert - future crises. Perhaps, after spending six months on Mount Sinai in such close communion with god, Moshe has even become too holy to lead the people.

An alternative possibility following *The Oxford English Dictionary* definition (a leader is "one who is followed") is that as the followers change, the leader must adapt his/her leadership style as well; if not, the leader will no longer remain effective. Thus, there is a dynamic relationship between the leader and the followers, the rabbi and his students, Moshe and the people.

Either way, whether it is Moshe who has changed, or the people who have changed, the match, the chemistry, between the leader and the led is no longer the same.

Leadership, even for Moshe, is situational, and depends on the ongoing relationship between the leader and the followers. For professional and lay leaders of the Jewish community, it is critical to bear in mind this idea of situational leadership, of understanding the readiness of our audience, and planning our leadership strategies accordingly.

Sarah Lightfoot, in *The Good High School*, describes changing styles in educational leadership which are applicable to communal leadership as well. She presents three traditional models of leadership: the first, the "military" - style leader, stands alone, straight and tall, rational and objective, larger than life. The second traditional model of leadership is the "coach," the former athlete, full of enthusiasm and energy, motivating teachers and students, and creating a sense of team spirit and loyalty. The third male leadership model she discuss is the "father," the great protector of the family, offering guidance and security in exchange for unquestioned loyalty and approval.

But she also describes more "feminine" styles of leadership which she feels are emerging. The principals of the schools she studied did not stand alone; they all exhibited a need for intimacy and support for themselves, a need for a close colleague, to whom they could turn for advice, and from whom they could accept criticism. (Perhaps for Moshe, his older brother Aharon, and later his father-in-law Yitro served this function.) Lightfoot's leaders defined their job, in part, using maternal terms of patience, nurturing, and attention to emotion.

Moshe himself injects the question of gender in leadership in Bamidbar 11, complaining to the Almighty that he cannot "nurse" the people of Israel, and that he did not "give birth" to them. One interpretation of this complaint is that the ideal leader combines elements of both "masculine" and "feminine" leadership.

Looking over the life of Moshe, I see many elements that combined to make him a great leader, including his strong sense of purpose, his "vision" of what was needed for the Jewish people. But I would like to focus on two elements in his early life that may also have been prerequisites for his successful leadership.

One was the love he received in his infancy and early childhood, not only from his older sister Miriam, and his natural mother Yocheved, who continues to nurse him even as he is raised in Pharaoh's house. He also had the love of Pharaoh's daughter and even Pharaoh himself, who, according to the midrash, were loving and physically affectionate to the young Moshe.

This love that he received may be a necessary precondition for the love that, according to the midrash, he gave to the lost goat in Midian, which he carried on his back and which serves as a parable for the love that he was to give the Jewish people for years afterward.

If we want to create and educate a new generation of Jewish leadership, we must transmit this love to our students and colleagues.

The second element that perhaps bred Moshe for leadership was the fact that he grew up outside his own community. He knew "both sides." He did not have the mentality of a slave, but he also did not have the callousness of the master. (Marx and Lenin similarly write that the leaders of the proletariat will come from the bourgeoisie.)

For Jewish leaders, it is critical that our vision and enthusiasm will not blind us to the pitfalls in our important ideas and that we will be able to not only hear, but even seek out, the other side in every major decision. The midrash says in *Bamidbar Rabbath* that "Moshe is the people of Israel." And in *Mechilta Yitro*, it is re-stated in a different form: "Moshe is equal to the people of Israel." How could one person be "worth" 600,000? How can we give equal weight to a single leader and an entire nation?

Perhaps that is what leadership is truly about: the potential power of a leader is the potential of his followers. A leader can, at times, move many where they could not go alone. Winston Churchill, it can be argued, served that function in galvanizing England's fight against Nazism; some might say that Franklin Delano Roosevelt served that function in America during the depression. Moshe served that function in confronting Pharaoh, bringing the people out of Egypt, and bringing them to Sinai to receive the torah. He remains the greatest leader in our people's history, but still, he was human.

When God gave some of Moshe's spirit to the 70 elders, the midrash tells us: "just as one candle can light many others without being diminished, so Moshe gave of his spirit to the elders without losing any himself."

All of us have been enlightened by our teachers and lay leaders. Our wish for all Jewish communal leaders wherever they may be, is that we may be blessed to share of ourselves with all the students, colleagues, and lay leaders we will encounter. May we do this without diminishing our light, and without extinguishing theirs.

ADAPTED from an address given by Dr. David I. Bernstein, Dean, Pardes Institute, Jerusalem.

First Class Musings

Second Class Conclusions

By Rabbi Emanuel Feldman

Deceitful is the heart above all things, and grievously frail; who can know it?
(Jeremiah 17:19)

I was recently bumped up to first class on an overseas flight to Israel. El Al had oversold the coach section, and I was one of the fortunate few to be given a complimentary seat upstairs. I am not certain that it is worth the extra thousand dollars normally charged for this pleasure, but I must admit that I loved it. The ambience was luxurious, the service gracious, the seat wide and comfortable. But something strange happened to me when I entered that first class compartment.

I confess that before very long I sensed within me the beginnings of an attitude towards those unfortunates in coach that was quite unbecoming: a blend of pride, hauteur, and what can only be described as something akin to condescension towards those "huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

It was at first a deliciously wicked feeling, but soon enough I was troubled by it. *Parvenu that you are,* I scolded myself. *Shameless arriviste. One short flight of stairs on a plane have you climbed, and look to what level you have sunk. By what alchemy have you suddenly been transmogrified into an aristocrat, and they into riffraff? Had it not been for the sheer accident of your being at the right point in the line, you too would be down there rubbing shoulders with those screaming children, irritated parents, and harassed flight attendants. Countless times have you preached about the sin of forgetting our origins, and how the Torah constantly reminds us to remember where we came from. But in the time it takes to climb nine short steps you have forgotten your origins.*

But as quickly as the twinges of guilt settled upon me, just as quickly did they dissipate. Pampered by the luxury, I let myself melt into the hedonistic ambience of eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we arrive in Israel.

* * *

Now and then I wondered about the great unwashed downstairs. Was it noisy there, were the tourists already standing and chatting loudly in the aisles, had the attendants by now become impatient, had the saran-wrapped meals and the plastic cutlery been served, were the aisles already impassable and the rest rooms all occupied?

Thus enclosed in a cocoon of self-satisfaction, I dozed off in my soft leather chair. It had enough leg room and tilted back deeply enough for me to fall into the semi-somnolescent airline state that resembles actual sleep.

And then I dreamed a dream. In the dream an old question was posed to me: *If a tree falls in a forest, does it make a sound?* Without hesitation I answered firmly: *yes. A sound is a sound independent of its listeners. The existence of a sound is not dependent on who hears it.*

A second question was posed to me: *If you are in the first class compartment of a plane, and there are no passengers at all in the coach section, are you still in first class?*

Now this was a more complex question. If there is no second class, there can be no first class. First class-ness itself depends on second class-ness. So if no one at all is in the coach section, by what definition is my section first class?

And yet, the same level of luxury is obtained in first class whether or not there are people sitting in coach. Like the tree that falls in the forest, first class-ness is its own entity: It is a state unto itself, independent of anything else, unrelated to other sections.

Or is it? One of the items the airlines sell with their first class tickets in the unsavory little pleasure of knowing that there are passengers on the same plane who are not in first class-who are sitting in a separate, curtained-off compartment behind you or beneath you in a place euphemistically called "coach," in a section more crowded than yours, in seats narrower than yours, receiving service less frequent than you, attended by stewardesses more harried than yours, eating on table trays not covered by cloths like yours, and-if you don't observe *kashrut*-eating food that is much less varied than yours.

But if the coach section is empty, that means that all the passengers are in first class. If everyone is in first class, that means that the first class passenger is being deprived of his unsavory first class pleasure. First implies a second. (See Rashi to *Genesis* 1:5, s.v. *"Yom ehad."*) After all, as the incisive old adage puts it, it is not what we have that gives us pleasure; it is the knowledge that our neighbor lacks what we have that gives us true pleasure.

So bemused, I spent the next few hours in semi-sleep. Soon enough the question dissolved in the steady hum of the engines, the quiet in the compartment, the whispering attendants, the dim lights, the thick blankets, the oversized pillows. Coach class, first class-why all this *pilpul?* I was, for a change, having a comfortable trip to Israel, period.

The sun came up, and with it, breakfast. Entree, juice, eggs, warm bagels, lox, cream cheese, cereal, coffee, Danish, chocolate, milk-an endless array of goodies. I stretched, yawned, washed, *davened,* and sat down to enjoy the feast.

But the night-time question hung in the air. In the dawn's early light it occurred to me that a truly pious Jew would not have had a difficult time answering it. *Al te-hi baz le-khol adam,* says *Avot,* "Do not look down on anyone." And Ramban in his famous letter warns about humility and the evils of haughtiness and pride:

. . . Humility is the finest quality among all the fine qualities . . .

Know, my son, that he whose heart is arrogant toward other beings is in fact a rebel against God's kingdom, for he is utilizing God's garments to glorify himself-for it is written (Psalms 93:1): "God reigns, he is robed in pride . . ."

Ramban goes on to demonstrate that in whatever a man would be proud-be it his wealth, his glory, his wisdom-he is foolish and sinful, for all these things are God's alone.

Beyond this, the Torah itself (*Deuteronomy* 17:20) warns a king not to multiply chariots or possessions *le-vilti rum levavo* so that his heart not be lifted up among his brethren." A king-who has authority and majesty-is warned against the pride which is his due; how much more so ordinary people!

So the religious answer was obvious: whether or not coach class is empty, the agreeable atmosphere of first class has nothing to do with those who are less fortunate. How could I even for a moment have thought otherwise?

Only two more luxurious hours remained before landing, and I would not allow vexing reveries to disturb my tranquility. Not for me these trivial exercises in pettiness. Thus purified and cleansed, I awaited our arrival in the Holy Land.

* * *

And yet . . . what if no one was in fact down there in coach?

I was only curious. it had nothing to do with my being upstairs; I was simply wondering. Could there be such a thing as a coach compartment without any passengers at all? An entirely empty coach cabin: that wold be something to see. Just theoretically, of course.

I don't recall exactly what happened next-was I dreaming again or not?-but I found myself arising from my chair walking to the cabin exit, and descending the circular stairwell. Nine steps. Once on the lower level I turned towards the back of the plane, parted the curtain and peered inside. Before me were unruly children, impatient flight attendants, a long line before the restrooms, papers and refuse on the floor, mothers diapering babies, two hundred passengers pressed closely together.

I slid back the curtain, climbed back up the stairwell, entered the first class compartment, and sank into my seat. The compartment was tranquil, and the attendant plied me with more Danish and asked me how I would like my coffee.

But my mind was elsewhere. Dream or not, I knew that Ramban would never have experienced the tiny surge of reassurance that coursed through me as I beheld the multitudes overflowing the coach section.

It was then that I became aware of four unvarnished facts of life:

a) For ordinary people who have not attained Ramban's heights, first class does require a second class.

b) The *rum levavo* warning of the Torah is directed not only to a king who is tempted daily by pride, but is directed at every human being; for anything-even a seat that is three inches wider with leg room four inches longer-can generate an attitude of *rum levavo.*

c) The frail human heart not only needs someone to look up to, but also someone to look down at.

d) It is much easier for a religious Jew to be in a first class compartment than to be a first class religious Jew.

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A Chain Unbroken

How Do We Mourn Our Parents?

By Edward Hirsch

When his father died, on March 24, 1996 (Nisan 5, 5756, in the Jewish calendar), Leon Wieseltier set out, somewhat unexpectedly—since he had strayed from religious practice—to observe the traditional rituals of the Jewish year of mourning. This observance, as he makes clear in his new book, "Kaddish" (Knopf, $27.50), is a rigorous process. He went to synagogue daily to recite the prayer known as the mourner's Kaddish during the morning, afternoon, and evening services. When he was away from his home, in Washington, D.C., he found a visiting shul (Yiddish for synagogue) where he could pray. He would fulfill an ancient obligation. He would report to his mother—and to himself—that he had kept a difficult promise and done his filial duty:

> The Kaddish means to me that the survivor publicly manifests his wish and intention to assume the relation to the Jewish community which his parent had, and that the chain of tradition remains unbroken from generation to generation, each adding its own link.

A son, in Yiddish, is often called "a Kaddish," and one of the subtexts of Wiesltier's book is that the son "acquits" or "vindicates" or "vouches for" or "shows merit in" the father. ("This is the principle on which the mourner's Kaddish is

founded.") Another is that this particular son is following the traditional rites of mourning that could not be properly undertaken on behalf of his martyred grandparents or aunts or uncles, all of whom were murdered by the Germans "on that obscene day in the obscene month of that obscene year."

"Kaddish" is the result of Wieseltier's year of mourning. It is a brilliant book—odd, dizzying, learned, racked. It opens with abrupt sounds, the hard blows of his father's funeral: a door slams behind him in a formal black car, a shovel stabs a mound of dirt, a wooden coffin thuds into a pit. The son stands by the graveside, swaying and reciting the traditional Aramaic prayer that he is told to recite: *Yitgadal veyitkadash sheme raba.* The mourner is so shaken that he scarcely comprehends what he is saying: "Magnified and sanctified may His great Name be."

How do we mourn our dead parents? How should our children memorialize us? In particular, how are wayward but diligent sons to mourn their lost fathers—the immigrants and refugees, the enraged lawgivers? This is an especially powerful question for those of us who have a voluntary relationship to religion, a relationship that is not automatically determined. Lucky are the wholehearted believers. Lucky are the ones who have never known an inconsolable grief, who haven't been orphaned, who haven't yet been forced to enact what Freud called "the work of mourning."

Wieseltier soon recognizes that he knows almost nothing about the arduous daily ritual that he is performing with such unexpected diligence, and he longs to find out more about it. "Sorrow, feed me," he writes, and it does. He stands before a wall of books and experiences the sheer immensity—the human plenitude—of Jewish learning. He turns to these old texts, to rabbinical commentaries from six hundred and seven hundred years ago, with such fervor that the quest itself becomes invigorating. As he puts it, "A season of sorrow became a season of soul-renovation." Love, for Jews, is nothing if not bookish.

Yet there is nothing cerebral about Wieseltier's book. He is no disinterested scholar arranging and systematizing his texts. ("I was fixed in my obligation," he writes, "but I was a rover in my tradition.") He throws himself into the old wisdom texts with a headlong desperation. He is starved and riven, he is (the phase is Ruskin's) "unhinged by grief." He feels what he calls "the charisma of learning." The books are peonies closed and clenched with promise. He turns to them for guidance, and they do not disappoint him.

Some friends open a teahouse near Wieseltier's shul, and he repairs there daily to read the commentaries, to track down "the origins and the meanings" of the mourner's Kaddish (it seems to have originated in the thirteenth century, during the time of the Crusades), to rehearse the great debates surrounding it. Friends send him obscure books; the texts he needs bloom suddenly to hand; he feels "the angel of bibliography" guiding his way. At first, he worries that his mourning will interfere with his life, but soon he is concerned because the rest of his life keeps interfering with his mourning.

"Kaddish" is an urgent spiritual journal, a book of commentaries, a summary of findings. Wieseltier intersperses his reading with observations about his observance, about his fellow-mourners, about the small band of the faithful he has joined. He is beset by doubts about what he is doing as he moves between study and prayer, which he calls "the difference between thinking and feeling." He is sometimes exhausted, sometimes exalted by prayer, but he seems always vivified by study: "Back and forth from my desk to my shelves, ten, twenty, thirty times a day . . . the sweet savor rises from the pages. A delirium of study."

Wiesltier becomes what Wallace Stevens calls "the scholar of one candle." He looks down at his Hebrew texts and scents "words as spices, words as perfumes." He looks up and feels "the rustle of being." He has an aphoristic intelligence, and in a sense he is taking his place in a line of philosophers which runs from Pascal to Nietzsche and on to E. M. Cioran. "The history of Jewish civilization is the history of what can be accomplished in a ruin," he writes, and, "Tradition is not reproduced. It is thrown and it is caught. It lives a long time in the air." He delivers a special blow to the author of the idea that God is dead:

> When Nietzsche lost his faith, he concluded that God is dead. This is not critical thinking. This is narcissism. I understand the idea that if God exists, then you must believe in Him. I do not understand the idea that if you do not believe in Him, then God must not exist.

Wieseltier is a modern skeptic who keeps siding with old sources—who longs to be infected by their dimensions, to feel their amplitudes. He seeks the sublime, which Longinus calls our joining with the great. He comes to feel that the mourner's Kaddish is truly the "orphan's" Kaddish. Interpreting the scriptural authority Ovadiah, he writes:

> The son does not request that his father be granted a good fate. The son demonstrates why his father deserves to be granted a good fate. The son is not the advocate, the son is the evidence.
>
> I am the evidence!
>
> Examine me and forgive him.

As this "diligent and doubting son" repeats phrases from the Kaddish like a mantra, an ancient magnificence stirs in the text, and his brokenheartedness is balanced by his exhilaration.

"He taught me to be here," he writes of his father, "and here I am."

A Choice For The Chosen

How School Choice Can Renew Jewish Community

By Jeremy Rabkin

School vouchers will give more parents the resources and the choice to send their children to private schools. In these circumstances, more Jewish parents would be enabled to send their children to Jewish day schools. More Jewish children would then have the chance to obtain a grounding in Hebrew language, in Jewish history and ritual, and in the Bible, the Talmud, and other central texts. And this, in turn, would strengthen Jewish community.

So Jews ought to support vouchers-or tuition tax credits or other programs that would expand school choice. Yet the most prominent Jewish advocacy organizations are opposed to school choice programs. Organizations like the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith do not oppose Jewish education or separate Jewish schools. But they have been firmly opposed to government programs to support education in religious schools-even when the support goes to parents who then can choose what schools are best for their children.

There seem to be two main grounds of opposition. On the one hand, there is skepticism that many more Jewish parents would send their children to separate Jewish schools even if some form of public funding made them more affordable. On the other hand, there is concern that government aid to-or "entanglement" with-religious schools would foster a more religious atmosphere in the country, which would be, in practice, a Christian atmosphere, hence marginalizing to non-Christian groups. Many Jewish organizations are staunch advocates of public education, seeing it as a guarantor of a common public culture, which ensures toleration for religious minorities.

These assumptions and concerns are, I believe, misplaced in contemporary America. But they still need to be confronted. It may be useful, however, to start with some common ground-on why the encouragement of Jewish schooling would be a good thing for the Jewish community on its own terms.

Benefits of Separate Schooling

In the two thousand years since Jews have lived in exile from the Land of Israel, Jewish communities have always organized separate schools for their children to teach the essentials of Jewish religious practice. Yet in America, Jews have been welcomed with full citizenship rights and a fully equal status to a degree unmatched perhaps by any host country in the long history of the Jewish Diaspora. And for perhaps the first time, too, the Jewish community in America trustingly sent its children off to public schools, where they received the same instruction as children of other faiths. Most Jewish children in America receive almost no separate instruction in Jewish religious practice. Most of those who do receive such instruction do so after school or in Sunday school classes, where time is short and distractions are many.

In consequence, most American Jews now observe the ritual law quite imperfectly or not at all. In synagogue worship, the traditional prayers and the readings from the Torah are in Hebrew, a language which most American Jews, again, know only imperfectly or not at all. Jews who have received no serious prior instruction are likely to find the synagogue service bewildering. Certainly, the uninitiated find it hard to take part and must remain, at best, spectators of a staged ceremony and not full participants in communal worship.

Surveys in the early 1990s found that the majority of Jews who married in the previous decade married non-Jews and that conversions of non-Jewish partners were declining. As one might expect, opinion polls report that the children of intermarriages regard religion as a matter of private belief or inner feeling-and not something that requires formal ritual or demonstrative affiliation. Parents who do not establish a Jewish home cannot expect their children to behave differently when they grow up. The demographic trends are so disturbing that even the traditionally liberal Jewish advocacy organizations have recently begun demanding programs to preserve "Jewish continuity."

But the most effective program is Jewish education. Children who receive a more thorough Jewish education are far better equipped to participate in Jewish religious practice. So, when they grow up, they tend to take their religious obligations more seriously and to play a more active or committed role in the Jewish community.

The point should not require documentation but it has, in fact, been documented. A survey conducted by Mordechai Rimor and Elihu Katz (funded by the Avi Chai foundation) found, for example, that 79 percent of Jewish day school graduates married other Jews, compared with fewer than half of those who had only received Jewish instruction in after-school programs.

Does this effect simply reflect the fact that the parents who send their children to Jewish day schools tend to be more committed to "continuity," themselves? A recent survey by Steven M. Cohen sought to control for parental influences and to isolate the separate effect of schools. He found that, among Jewish activities, "part-time school, youth group, adolescent Israel travel, each make partial contributions. Day schools, be they Orthodox or not, typically exert much greater impact."

So why shouldn't Jews support public policies that would allow more Jewish children to attend Jewish day schools? Part of the cold response to voucher schemes seems to reflect a skepticism that there really wouldn't be more children in Jewish day schools even if government policies did make them more affordable. But the skeptical attitude assumes that all Orthodox families are already sending their children to Jewish schools and that demand for separate Jewish schools among non-Orthodox Jews will always remain limited. But assumptions are highly questionable.

Growing Opportunities

The overwhelming majority of Jewish day schools in the United States-78 percent at last count-are Orthodox. But it is not true that Orthodox parents have always sent their children to yeshivas and therefore will always do so, no matter what the prevailing government policy.

As late as 1945, there were only 69 Jewish day schools in the United States, with a combined enrollment of only 10,200 students. The growth in Orthodox day schools in the decades since World War II has been extraordinary. By 1975, there were 425 Orthodox day schools, serving 82,200 students. There are 731 day schools today.

This expansion has occurred despite tremendous financial burden. Vouchers would ease the tuition burden for parents and may allow schools to expand their enrollments and improve their facilities. A 1994 report on "Jewish Day Schools in the United States" sponsored by the Avi Chai Foundation found that day-school enrollment falls off substantially in higher grades, even for Orthodox schools. A survey of very traditionalist schools in New York found twice as many students enrolled in first and second grade as in 12th grade. Why the decline? Cost is clearly a factor, along with some dissatisfaction at small schools and inadequate facilities-which are related, in turn, to financial pressures. A voucher of significant size might enable parents to keep their children in these schools longer. What is more, the schools themselves would enjoy the added resources that could make them all the more attractive as a viable educational alternative.

This argument is even stronger-because the potential numbers are much larger-if we turn to non-Orthodox schools and non-Orthodox families. Although their enrollment is much smaller, non-Orthodox day schools represent a dramatic success story in their own right. Prior to 1957, when the conservative synagogues encouraged the creation of their own Solomon Schechter Schools, the only Jewish day schools were Orthodox. Since then, the number of students in non-Orthodox schools has risen to about 50,000. In addition to the Schechter Schools, which seem to serve the large majority of non-Orthodox day-schoolers, there are now Reform day schools and a network of some 80 "independent" schools not affiliated with any synagogue or denomination.

One reason to expect continuing growth is that, although overall trends are still dismaying, there is substantial evidence of Jewish commitments deepening among those who affiliate with Jewish institutions. Growth in Jewish summer camps, like the Ramah camps sponsored by the Conservative synagogues, has paralleled that of day schools. After-school Jewish instruction, though enrolling far fewer students than it did in the 1960s, is much less likely to be a once-a-week affair than in the past.

Yet most parents outside Orthodoxy do not now send their children to Jewish day schools. Though we do not have reliable numbers, enrollment in such supplementary Jewish programs approaches 300,000, while enrollment of students in non-Orthodox day schools is estimated at 50,000. Such figures imply that only about 15 percent of the potential market for non-Orthodox day schools is now actually served by such schools. By contrast, Catholic schools currently enroll 28 percent of Catholic children in grades K-8 (according to Church estimates), even though intensive religious instruction is not as critical to Catholic worship as it is for full participation in Jewish ritual.

Voucher subsidies might help tip the scales in favor of a Jewish day school, not only for parents concerned about cost but for those concerned about quality. The larger the school, the more it can spread its costs and improve its facilities. Size, moreover, gives an impression of reassuring vigor, just as half-empty classrooms may reinforce a sense of fragility. Particularly for non-Orthodox parents, Jewish day schools would become more attractive if they fed into more good Jewish high schools.

Some hint of this can be gleaned from a 1995 survey of Jewish parents in Seattle, commissioned by the Samis Foundation. One third of the 419 families who did not currently send their children to a day school said that they were giving the matter serious consideration. Of these, nearly half said they would be willing to pay as much s $3,000 for such a school-but less than 20 percent said they would be willing to pay more than $5,000. The Samis Foundation then provided assistance to the only Jewish high school in Seattle so that it could cap its tuition charges at $3,000 per student. The result was an immediate 34 percent jump in enrollment-from 58 to 78 students. Still, a school with 78 students looks painfully small. With more assistance, the numbers might expand still more and make a separate high school seem more inviting to hesitant parents.

Uncommon Schools

Many Jews will readily accept the argument up to this point. But they will still insist that public assistance to religious schools, even in the form of vouchers to parents, is wrong because it threatens public education's ideal of the common school.

The argument is often phrased in explicitly negative terms. Some Jewish advocates worry that an expansion of religious education will promote an expansion or proliferation of religious attachments. Only last year, an official of the American Jewish Committee remarked at a Baltimore conference on church-state issues that government aid to religious schools is improper because such schools "tend to proselytize."

When we are talking about private schools, where attendance is entirely voluntary, reasonable concerns about religious indoctrination in public schools simply do not apply. Nor is it easy to grasp how indirect government aid to such schools can be seen as "endorsement" of particular sectarian doctrines, when rival doctrines of many sects are equally eligible for such assistance. At bottom, then, the concern seems to boil down to something like this: even if sectarian education is good for the Jews, it might also be good for the Christians and therefore is bad for the Jews.

But in recent decades, the Catholic Church and major Protestant denominations have gone to considerable lengths to eliminate or revise traditional teachings that seemed hostile to Jews. In most American churches, anti-Semitism is not simply a social taboo but a denial of current religious doctrine. In contemporary America, there is no body of reliable evidence to substantiate the concern that Christian religious education will foster intolerance.

Still, public education continues to inspire much Jewish sympathy, as the foundation of a broader public culture in which Jews can fully participate. This attitude is understandable-but sadly anachronistic. The public schools that trained earlier generations of American Jews were the expression of a different America. The sociologist Nathan Glazer captured the point quite well in a personal reminiscence of his experience in the public schools in New York city during the 1930s and early 1940s:

"[N]ot a whiff of cultural pluralism was to be found. Americanization was strong, unselfconscious and self-confident. Although probably two-thirds of the students in New York's public schools were Jewish or Italian, no Jewish or Italian figure was to be found in our texts for literature, for social studies, for history. All cultures but that of the founding English and its American variant were ignored, and students were left to assume, if they thought about the matter at all, that the cultures of their homes and parental homelands were irrelevant or inferior."

In retrospect, one might wonder whether this sort of relentless "Americanization" was an entirely good thing for the American Jewish community. But the era of "strong, unselfconscious, self-confident" Americanization is, in any case, long gone. In the cultural upheavals of the 1960s, public schools were attacked for promoting a false view of America, in the interest of an oppressive white elite. And schools were quick to adapt to new views. Glazer emphasizes the continuing gap between racial minorities and other Americans as a principal factor in fueling demands for "multiculturalist" approaches. Despite his own concerns about fragmentation and social division. Glazer has emphasized the "inescapability" of the new approach in public education. In fact, in We Are All Multiculturalists Now, he acknowledges that "the victory of multiculturalism in the public schools of America" has been "complete."

Since this ideology of public schools is already promoting limitless lifestyle options and respect for all differences, it is hard to refute demands for greater choice by reviving 19th-century slogans about promoting a common culture.

Jewish parents who support public education for their children will still find many excellent, conventional suburban schools. But the question is whether the Jewish community has a stake in "protecting" public education by blocking government vouchers to private and religious alternatives. How much deference should be given to the vision of a common school, when school authorities around the country are now licensing more and more diverse school options? Can it really be in the Jewish interest to see that every sort of diversity has its claim on public support-except religious diversity?

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REVIEW

'Right' Vote

Wrong Reason?

Natan Sharansky describes his position concerning religious pluralism in Israel. On the political level, this piece, which was written prior to the most recent Israeli election, is most important as Sharansky has been appointed Minister of the Interior in the new Barak government and he will bear major responsibility for questions of religious pluralism. At the same time, this piece gives insight into Sharansky's style of leadership. He has a long term vision and intends to pursue the issue patiently, but with persistence. He seeks pragmatic, not idealistic solutions. What motivates him is the belief that the "battle of legitimacy should be waged not in courts or in the Knesset, but in day schools and synagogues."
(*New York Jewish Week*, Feb. 12, 1999, 1501 Broadway, New York, New York 10036, $32.50 annually)

The Road

To Damascus

There have been numerous reports that Israel is giving serious consideration to the return of the Golan Heights to Syria in return for peace. While some may be surprised by this development, Itamar Rabinovich, who has lectured at Wexner Heritage Summer Institutes, has written a book detailing the long history of Israeli-Syrian relations. At times the failure for a peace breakthrough could be laid at the hands of the Israelis, but President Assad of Syria shares much of the blame (as he had been overcautious when negotiating with the late Prime Minister Rabin).
(*The National Interest*, Spring 1999, P.O. Box 622, Shrub Oak, New York 10588-0622, $26.00 annually)

But Will The Rabbis Still Eat It?

Upgrading Kashrut

This pair of articles both deal with contemporary issues concerning the laws of keeping kosher. *But will the rabbis still eat it?* discusses the application of laws of kashrut in connection with genetically altered foods. There is a prohibition in *Leviticus* against hybridization, the mingling of seeds. The question is whether genetic engineering of foods falls under this prohibition.
(*The Jerusalem Report*, Feb. 15, 1999, 1-800-827-1199, $79.00 annually)

The second article *Upgrading Kashrut*, suggests a new set of values for determining what food is kosher. For example, veal should be considered traif, in view of the heartbreaking way the animals are raised caged in dark, small spaces. "The vegetarian brands of Newman's Own Spaghetti Sauce actually do carry hechshers. But the fact that their profits are donated to charity elevates the food to an even higher Jewish status."
(*Moment Magazine*, December 1998, 1-800-777-1005, $27.00 annually)

'Right' Vote

Wrong Reason?

By Natan Sharansky

Note: This article was written before the most recent Israeli elections. The author will serve as the next Minister of the Interior, in the Barak cabinet, and will be responsible for the "Who is a Jew?" issue.

Last week, I voted against a bill that would have forced anyone who wished to serve on a local religious council to swear an oath to abide by the authority of the Chief Rabbinate. It is amazing how quickly this vote transformed my image on one side of the religious divide from persona non grata to hero.

In the past, I had been wrongly accused of contributing to the deligitimization of Reform and Conservative Judaism. Now, I am unjustly praised for their validation.

But despite the change in image, my position on religious issues in Israel has remained the same.

I voted against this bill because I believed that if the law did not pass, the religious parties themselves, rather than sit with Reform and Conservative council members, would have agreed to abolish the councils an abolition which I have advocated for some time and for which the chief rabbi himself is actively campaigning.

These councils mix religion and politics in a way that is unacceptable, and religious services can be provided more effectively within the existing municipal framework.

Yet this vote was held to be a litmus test for one's stance in the battle between "religious pluralism" and "Orthodox hegemony." As usual, when trying to discuss questions of religion and state in Israel, the emotionally charged and acrimonious debate makes the articulation of a rational argument next to impossible. I have encountered an attitude that far too often seeks simple answers to what are in fact very complex questions.

As a political leader, I see my role in solving the practical problems that affect the lives of Israel's citizens, not in granting religious legitimacy to groups of Jews.

The questions that preoccupy me are not who is or is not a Jew, but rather how can I help integrate the country and strengthen the ties that bind it. In a country divided into religious and secular, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, right and left, veterans and immigrants, we must not create a fault line that shatters our identity as one people.

This has proven difficult for diaspora Jewry to accept, particularly in America. Reared in a society where there is a strict separation of church and state and where Reform, Conservative and Orthodox communities each live based on their own beliefs and traditions, many fail to appreciate why Israel cannot reflect the same reality.

But I doubt whether the differences among Reform, Conservative and Orthodox groups are less prominent in the United States because American Jews live in harmony with one another. Rather, in a non-Jewish country, their common goals on a range of concerns often override their theological differences. Yet if Israel is to remain a Jewish state, it must have state laws concerning marriage, divorce, conversion, etc.

The Jewish state will not long survive if we have different classes of Jews. For me, this is not a question of who is right or wrong, but how we can best live together.

At the same time, I recognize that diaspora Jewry must remain active partners with the State of Israel and truly feel that we all share a common destiny. Moreover, while Israel must remain a Jewish state, we must also respect the rights of everyone to live according to their beliefs.

In recent years, pitched battles between religious groups have led to a situation whereby Reform and Conservative Jews in the U.S. are convinced that the State of Israel does not consider them Jewish. The fact that no one has even proposed a law that would effect the status of Jewish communities abroad one that I would fight against has been drowned out in the emotion of the debate.

It seems that we have found ourselves in a situation where we are convinced that we face either an internal fracturing of Israeli society or an external rupturing of our relationship with the diaspora. But this need not be the case. By refusing to see the issues in black and white, and by adopting a pragmatic approach, I believe that we can solve many of the problems that confront us.

For the last three years, I have worked with the Chief Rabbinate to find practical solutions to problems of personal status and we have seen substantial progress. We have developed an halachic solution to the problem of burying intermarried couples, unshackled hundreds of *agunot* who wish to remarry, established 80 conversion institutes across the country, instituted programs whereby Russian-speaking rabbis will provide religious services to new immigrants, and are currently discussing the possibility of instituting civil marriages for non-Jewish couples.

While we still have a long way to go, I am convinced that the best thing for Israeli society in general, and new immigrants in particular, is an approach that seeks not to destroy and uproot institutions but to work within them to press for reform and to create solutions. What we need is patience and persistence, not incitement and intolerance.

My constituency, primarily new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, has been used as pawns in a war of legitimacy that had virtually no meaning to them. Not a week goes by where someone does not claim to speak on behalf of the Russian immigrants, cynically using them for their own agendas. But what my constituency wants is to integrate into Israeli society. What is a question of principle to Jews abroad is a question of pragmatism to new immigrants.

If the State of Israel becomes the battleground for a struggle that has lasted for two centuries, the Jewish people face a no-win situation.

The battle of legitimacy should be waged not in the courts or in the Knesset, but in day schools and synagogues. Its outcome will not hinge on a bureaucratic decision in Israel, but on whether we have succeeded in educating our children and building vibrant Jewish communities.

Israel is an important symbol to the Jewish people. But it is also a place where a large and increasing percentage of the world's Jews live. Living in a Jewish state poses different challenges than living in a Jewish community in the diaspora and requires different solutions.

I will continue to struggle to achieve the greatest possible degree of unity within Israeli society and the greatest possible connection between Israel and the diaspora. Today, these are seen as mutually exclusive. But with understanding and sensitivity, they need not be.

The Road

To Damascus

By Fouad Ajami

The Road to Damascus - a review of Itamar Rabinovich's The Brink of Peace: The Syrian-Israeli Negotiations (Princeton University Press 1998), 283 pages, $24.95

We can only marvel today at the extravagant hopes that attended Syrian-Israeli diplomacy in the interlude between 1993 and 1996, and at the American expectation that a deal was imminent between these two antagonists. It was what the Clinton administration wanted and yearned for. There may have been no great American investment in the endeavor, but a conviction had seized American officials that a Pax Americana that would marginalize Iran was within reach, and that such a design required a Syrian-Israeli accord. Indeed, as the scholar and diplomat Itamar Rabinovich, who conducted Israel's negotiations, tells us in his masterful chronicle of this period, a time had been set aside on Bill Clinton's schedule for a possible meeting with Hafez al-Assad and Yitzhak Rabin in November of 1995.

No such meeting, of course, took place, and it was not just the assassination of the legendary Israeli leader early that month that had brought these hopes crashing down. There had been other troubles along the way, and the thing itself was always a hope against hope that the stalemate would be broken, that Syria's concept of peace and Israel's stake in the Golan Heights could be brought together by agile diplomacy. There was, to begin with, the style of the Syrian strongman, and his method of diplomacy: as Rabinovich writes, Assad had acted over three and a half years "as if time were no constraint." He had brought himself, as it were, to the brink of peace. He had talked of a "peace of the brave", but that peace slogan was "cryptical, cold and enigmatic. Israel was not

mentioned by name, and was told that it could enjoy peace with Syria on the latter's terms." The hesitation of the man in Damascus had only fed the caution of Rabin; the Israeli leader would not leap into the void. "Cerebral, direct, and blunt", Rabin could only countenance a reciprocal peace. In Rabinovich's summation, for Rabin the depth of territorial withdrawal on the Golan Heights would reflect the depth of peace.

The Syrian ruler had been too slow and methodical for his own good. Other options soon overtook the possibility of a Syrian-Israeli accord. There was a stealth peace in the making between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which bore swift results in September 1993. And there was an easier peace between Jerusalem and Amman which was concluded in the summer of 1994 and formally signed in October. Assad had drowned the diplomacy in the details; he had never assimilated the facts of Israel's political system; the circuits had grown overloaded and a Rabin government ruling with a slim majority could not give him the full territorial withdrawal he demanded in return for that "enigmatic" peace.

Nor could Shimon Peres, Rabin's successor, give Assad what he sought. True, Peres had extended an olive branch to Assad, had offered, as Peres put it, "to fly high and fast or low and slow" to accommodate his Syrian counterpart. But whatever promise lay in those negotiations soon fell to the wave of terror that hit Israel in February-March of 1996, and to a bitter proxy Syrian-Israeli confrontation over the Israeli-Lebanese borders shortly thereafter. By the time Peres had been defeated at the polls by Benyamin Netanyahu in May of 1996, the Israeli-Syrian negotiations of 1992-96 had come to an end. The prospect of peace between Israel and Syria had held the Americans in thrall, and it had tantalized the protagonists, but the differences could not be wished away; time overtook the diplomatic work.

It is diplomatic history's luck and good fortune that Itamar Rabinovich was there for that critical interlude. Not since Henry Kissinger's intricate record of his negotiations with Syria and Israel in the aftermath of the October War of 1973 has anyone written of Syrian-Israeli matters with such artistry and precision and knowledge. Everything in Rabinovich's life came together, it seemed, to bring him to those negotiations, and he has honored these gifts with an unforgettable work of diplomatic history. Chance and the exigencies of war had taken him, as a young captain in the Israeli army, to the local headquarters of the Ba'ath Party, in the town of Quneitra on the Golan Heights in June of 1967. There he had found the documents and memoranda of the party, and those documents were to provide the material for his Ph.D. dissertation and for his first book. Over the intervening quarter century-until his patron, friend and neighbor, Yitzhak Rabin, named him as negotiator with Syria and ambassador to Washington-Syria had been his calling and vocation.

That country, so near and yet so far, had tugged at Rabinovich, and had been one of the centerpieces of a distinguished academic career at Tel Aviv University. He knew and understood Syria's history and its currents as precious few people anywhere did. He had the historian's best fidelities: he bore Syria no animus, he entertained no great illusions about an imminent transformation in Syria's politics; he had the historian's fascination with his subject and attentiveness to its details. It must have been the fulfillment of a dream when the assignment was given him by Rabin. Here is my favorite scene, from a book loaded with poignant scenes and happenings. On a Saturday morning, Rabinovich was summoned by his neighbor Rabin. "The prime minister was typically careful. As a hedge against a negative answer he asked me to recommend a suitable academic expert on Syria with public standing to become the new head of the Israeli delegation to the peace talks with Syria. . . . I was naturally reluctant to recommend myself, but we soon found our way around the problem." A book with this kind of stark candor is a delight to behold and never loses its way.

In his work as an historian, Rabinovich had written a prior work of great relevance to this new pursuit, *The Road Not Taken: Early Arab-Israeli Negotiations* (1991). The most arresting part of that book concerned a Syrian adventurer, a colonel by the name of Husni Zaim, who had seized power in March of 1949 and had talked bravely, through American handlers and secret channels, of a great accommodation with Israel. A product of France's colonial levy in the Levant and aloof from the currents of Syrian nationalism, erratic and possessed of fantasies that he was something of a Syrian Ataturk, Zaim was given to grandiose talk about a joint Israeli-Syrian army that would dominate the region. But the adventurer was struck down a bare four months into his rule. Rabinovich had given his Syrian interlocutors a copy of that book. "Right policy, wrong man", the Syrians had said of Zaim. Gone were the days of wild swings in Syrian diplomacy; in Assad excessive caution would now have its day. But caution, too, could fail, we were soon to learn.

Though understated in its tone, Rabinovich's book has a bold thesis of its own: Assad had made the decision for peace, but his particular definition of peace, his personal history, his fear of what peace might do to the closed polity he had come to build over a quarter century-all these would not enable him to make that breakthrough. He was a "meticulous tactician", but a new relationship with Israel that would return the Golan Heights to Syrian sovereignty required more than that. Assad had before him the example of Anwar Sadat the daring passage to Israel in November of 1977, the direct appeal to Israel's people, the relationship he built with its leaders, the land he recovered. But Assad had nothing but contempt for Sadat and his legacy and his example. On Rabinovich's telling, the mere mention of Sadat's name to his Syrian interlocutors was sure to provoke their fury. The Syrians wanted the wages of peace, but the public diplomacy that Israel's political culture required was anathema to them and to their ruler.

Assad's caution brought him the very outcome he dreaded: Yasser Arafat and King Hussein would steal a march on him, in precisely the same manner that Sadat had done a generation earlier. The deal Arafat struck in 1993 must have been particularly bitter to Assad. He had been upstaged, Rabinovich writes, by "a man he despised and disliked." Worse still, that breakthrough with the PLO had not been Rabin's first choice. It was the Syrian peace that had the greater appeal to Rabin. For all its faults, Syria was a stable polity, and its centralized rule, he thought, could deliver a

meaningful accommodation that was beyond the reach and the means of Arafat and his lieutenants. The green light Rabin gave to Shimon Peres to bring the Oslo negotiations to fruition was given only after the Syrian option had stalled in late 1993. Rabin had envisaged a good measure of normalization in return for phased withdrawal from the Golan over a five-year period. He needed the Syrian ruler's help to bring his polity along, to reconcile it to the territorial concessions, but this was not to be. Instead, peace with the Palestinians became "the cutting edge" of Arab-Israeli peace. Thus the Israeli leader ended up making the bold decision of his all too brief career as prime minister "in the Palestinian and not in the Syrian context."

Where Rabin's deliberateness had once taxed the Syrians, they now would have a new alibi: the very "boldness" of Shimon Peres, the audacity of his concept of a "New Middle East" transformed by commerce and the free flow of ideas into a utopian world, a vision of the Benelux in the lands of the Levant. The will to fly "high and fast" exhibited by Peres was not to Syria's liking; nor was Peres' new, liberal utopia the sort of vision to captivate them. Peres was more ambitious, hence more troubling, than Rabin. And then the electoral calendar of Peres imposed its own discipline and limitations on the process. Peres had a choice to make: early elections in the Spring of 1996 or in late October. He went for early elections, in part because he could not secure from Assad an outcome that could serve as the cornerstone of his campaign. That decision wrote the rest of the story, for no great concessions could be granted the Syrians in the midst of a fierce, close election.

Assad took Peres' decision as a deed of betrayal. He was now free to set the Lebanese-Israeli border ablaze, through Hizballah operatives. Peres' response, Operation Grapes of Wrath, a mere few weeks before the elections, boomeranged on him. It ended in failure and tragedy when Israeli artillery hit a group of civilians in southern Lebanon, in the village of Kafar Qana, and took a toll of more than one hundred lives. In the Syrian narrative of late, a breakthrough had been aborted by Netanyahu's victory. But in truth, as we know from this tight account, the process had independently arrived at its own moment of truth.

A day may yet come when a peace without illusions will materialize between Syria and Israel. This possibility is held out in Rabinovich's final pages. If it should come, it would most likely approximate Yitzhak Rabin's stark, unadorned vision: a soldier's peace, one without frills and trumpets. In other words, the sort of peace that Rabinovich labored for and has retrieved and chronicled for us and for the negotiations yet to come in this knowing and moving book. In the interim, this uneasy accommodation on the Syrian-Israeli border is the best that could be hoped for.

Fouad Ajami, Majid Khadurri Professor of Middle East Studies at The Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, is author of *The Dream Palace of the Arabs* (Pantheon Books, 1998). Itamar Rabinovich has lectured at Wexner Heritage retreats and is President of the Tel Aviv University.

But Will The Rabbis Still Eat It?

Upgrading Kashrut

But Will The Rabbis Still Eat It?

By Jill Hamburg Coplan

Mixing up the DNA of different edibles seemed a great idea at first. You want strawberries freezing on the vine? Snip the gene from a strand of salmon DNA that keeps the fish from freezing in icy waters, bombard the berry's DNA with it till it takes, and poof: an all-new, freeze-proof fruit, without even a hint of a fishy taste.

Genetically engineered strawberries can actually be found, albeit only in the lab. But 36 other genetically engineered foods are already on the U.S. market up from zero just three years ago. One-third of the U.S. harvest of soybeans, corn and canola (an oil seed) is now genetically modified, making the crops resistant to bugs. Via additives, corn sweeteners and livestock feed, we're eating the stuff in meat, sweets, soda, pasta, salad and ice cream. The government has declared the technology harmless and the Jewish authorities have deemed it kosher.

Although much is still unknown about the possible effects on humans of genetically modified crops, it has been established that they often produce increased quantities of the proteins that cause food allergies. They also produce new, unfamiliar proteins from the viral and bacterial world, which may turn out to be allergenic, toxic, even carcinogenic. Unfortunately, according to a March 1996 editorial in the New England Journal of Medicine, genetic interplay is so complicated that those scary outcomes are "uncertain, unpredictable and untestable." The commercialization of the technology was moving too quickly, concluded the journal, before sufficient testing could be completed.

And now, a diverse and vocal group of Jewish critics of all denominations are arguing that the products actually violate *kilayim*, a set of halakhic laws against hybridization. By their reckoning, genetically engineered foods are a totally unkosher intermingling of species. And they're ardently lobbying the kashrut supervision agencies to convince the powers that be to reconsider.

Simultaneously, on a separate track, those critics, together with Buddhists, Muslims and representatives of several Christian denominations, are suing the Food and Drug Administration in U.S. District Court in Washington D.C. They hope to force the agency to perform extensive safety testing, and to mandate labeling of all genetically modified food products, so people who want to avoid them can do so. With a growing list of signatories to an amicus brief from the medical/biological world, the plaintiffs are making surprisingly good progress.

Their battles require a grasp of both the intricacies of Jewish law and the genetics behind cutting-edge biotechnology. It also means challenging the influential companies creating the new foods (Monsanto, Novartis Corp.,

DuPont and others), who have won over the American public with a very enticing pitch. They claim genetic modification will soon produce heartier strains that will feed the world's hungry more cheaply; cleaner, bug resistant plants that won't need toxic spraying; "smart" foods with more nutrients and less fat, and even vegetables that will deliver vaccines. For now, however, their crops aren't that bright they mainly contain virus and bacteria genes that make them deadly to bugs, which is a boon for farmers.

These deep-pocketed chemical, seed and agrotech firms have campaigned fervently to win over skeptics. To enlist the support of the rabbis who rule on kashrut at the strict OU (Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America) and its principal competitor, the OK (Kof-K Kosher Supervision), representatives came calling years before the foods hit the market. They held lavish "educational sessions," says Rabbi Yechezkel Auerbach, director of administration of the OK (who said he'd signed nondisclosure agreements and couldn't name the companies). The food-makers' main pitch was that the new products were really no different from ordinary (and kosher) grains, vegetables or fruits. Indeed "substantial equivalence" was, and is, the position of the FDA. It has refrained from safety testing, believing that the likelihood of risks, while conceivable, is "slim," a spokesman said.

The kashrut authorities ultimately bought the argument, reasoning that the foreign material being injected was so minuscule that even if it was unkosher, its invisible volume was negligible under Jewish law. Furthermore, because the inserted material became entirely part of its "host" species, it wasn't the kind of hybridization described in Leviticus, where the mating of two different species, or the sowing of a field with two types of seeds, is prohibited.

Plus, hadn't the companies insisted that this technology like other important modern medical advances could save lives, by feeding the poor, reducing the use of dangerous pesticides and, one day, introducing vaccines into plants and thereby into the food supply? That alone has sometimes been enough to carry the day in contemporary Jewish legal debates. As with favorable rulings on medical procedures, the rabbis feared standing in the way of a scientific breakthrough. "Judaism has been supportive of change, progress, human betterment. This was the same sort of issue," said Rabbi Avram Israel Reisner, a Jewish Theological Seminary professor of Talmud who wrote an opinion declaring genetically engineered foods to be kosher. His paper was adopted by the Conservative movement last year.

But the opposing arguments are now being met with a surprising degree of openness. As the science is better understood, "a number of people in the establishment do have hesitations" about the kashrut ruling, says Reisner of JTS. "When push came to shove we said all right" to genetically engineered foods, he says. "But I don't know about in the future." Both the OU and OK may well be having second thoughts as well.

The Jewish activist facing off against both the rabbis and the FDA is native Iowan Steven Drucker, 52, a lawyer, lecturer and author of books on ethics and psychology and the founder of the Religious Alliance for Bio-Integrity. Drucker, who lives in Fairfield, Iowa, was raised as a Reform Jew, but became strictly observant 15 years ago. He believes the rabbis' ruling that genetically engineered foods are kosher rests on an overly simplistic view of how genes function.

Joining him as plaintiffs in the FDA suit are Reform Rabbi Alan Green of Manitoba; Rabbi Harold White, the Conservative Jewish chaplain of Georgetown University; Rabbi Josef Serebryanski, a Lubavitcher hasid who lives and teaches in Brooklyn; and the entire congregation of a nonaffiliated farm belt synagogue, Beth Shalom of Fairfield, Drucker's hometown. "There are a lot of farms around here," says synagogue president Mark Berkowitz. "The issue really isn't on the radar screen of Jews in most other places."

What might sway the authorities, both religious and secular, are the growing numbers of doctors and scientists raising alarms about the perceptible, irreversible changes that genetically engineered species might introduce. Those changes would first affect the new species and the surrounding soil, next the human body, and ultimately, the environment, both natural and man-made. Take the following case, for example: Genetically engineered plants often contain the genes of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. But hypothetically, this resistance could jump inside our or an animal's stomach, to a pathogenic bacteria, causing it also to be resistant to current medicines. The alarmist result: a plague, with no drugs to stop it.

Visible, perceptible change in species is important because it would undermine one rationale for both the Orthodox and Conservative kosher rulings, which held that genetic changes are "microscopic" and invisible, and thus of no concern. If that's not true, all bets may be off.

"It might end up that they're moving bits and pieces that are more recognizable, and then we'd have a more pressing issue," says OK's Auerbach.

Mention the medical doubts raised in the New England Journal of Medicine to the rabbis and their hesitations come quickly to the fore. "You might have an interesting hypothesis there," says Auerbach. For now, his group is still comfortable with its ruling, but is keeping the issue on its radar.

"I imagine the issue will be opened up again," says Reisner. "And it's not clear these foods will be permissible."

Upgrading Kashrut

By Yosef L. Abramowitz

I was in the supermarket pushing my two daughters in the cart, in search of tomato sauce. Aliza, the five-year-old, decided to explain to Hallel, my three-year-old, that we were not looking for just any tomato sauce, but the kosher one. "The one with the man's face on it," she explained. "They give the money to tzedakah." Newman's Own is kosher in my five-year-old's mind because there are mitzvot (positive commandments) associated with it. Profits go to charity. Into the cart it went with the kids.

There are more than 350 *hechshers* (kosher certification programs and icons) in North America; the familiar OU is dominant. More than 8,100 companies participate in kosher certification of some 40,000 food items. This $35 billion industry is expected to continue to grow as more non-Jews, especially Muslims and Seventh-Day Adventists seek out these Jewish insignias.

The growth of the kosher food industry is often seen as an indication of the vibrancy of American Judaism, which is encouraging given the decline in other leading Jewish indicators. It is also symbolic of the esteemed place Judaism now has in the public consciousness.

While we should celebrate this remarkable development in public Judaism, it should also shame the liberal Jewish denominations into action. All the certification programs are administered by the Orthodox. While I am empowered religiously in most aspects of my progressive Jewish spiritual life, I generally defer to the Orthodox world when it comes to food. I am uncomfortable with this relationship because I believe that my broader food values are sacred, meaningful and, most importantly, Jewish. The kosher establishment doesn't reflect the Jewish food values that my family-perhaps most Jewish families-care about most. It is time for progressive Jewish dreaming and then action.

Our tradition mandates that Jews have a special relationship with food. And not all of it has to do with details such as whether cheese contains *rennet* (the animal stomach lining used to curdle milk into cheese) or whether it is acceptable to eat swordfish because at some stage it loses its scales. There are other commandments: We may not waste (*bal tashchit*). We must treat animals humanely (*tza'ar baalei chayim*). We must set aside food for the hungry. We must bless our food and the Creator.

These, in addition to which animals we may eat and how we may kill them, form a larger Jewish values framework for establishing a holy relationship with food. Yet the current food values system, kashrut, is one dimensional and is based on a very narrow interpretation of what God wants of us.

The Achilles' heel of the current kashrut system is veal. Many Jews do not consider veal to be kosher because the heartbreaking way the animal is raised caged in a dark, small space violates the Jewish value of not being cruel to animals. Even so, nearly every kosher meat restaurant I have ever walked into serves veal. And when I challenge the waiter or manager, they hide behind the kosher certification to demonstrate that eating veal is moral and has rabbinic sanction. They suggest that perhaps I'm crazy. Maybe it's time to organize a boycott of companies that produce veal, hechshers that certify veal, and kosher restaurants that serve it. Progressive Jews have something to teach our Orthodox neighbors about new ways to implement certain Torah values.

My family, which is a work in progress when it comes to food values, has adopted certain standards. We don't eat swordfish, not necessarily because they lose their scales when they mature, but because they mate for life. When you catch one partner, the other swims in circles looking for its mate until it dies. We're fish-eating kosher vegetarians because we think it's a better way to live and is closer to the biblically based ideal outlined in the Garden of Eden. We're ingredient kosher, that is, we will buy a product without a hechsher if the ingredients are vegetarian because we don't want to follow someone else's system mindlessly without actively affirming our values when we shop. And we favor those products that give a portion of their profits to charity.

Purchasing and eating kosher food are important public expressions of Judaism. Certainly a progressive definition of kosher should start with the biblical and rabbinic definitions of keeping kosher. But it shouldn't stop there. American Judaism is blessed to inherit a tradition that is rich in wisdom and grandiose in its vision for the world.

The vegetarian brands of Newman's Own spaghetti sauce actually do carry a hechsher. But the fact that their profits are donated to charity elevates the food to an even higher Jewish status.

The failure of the current system of kashrut to stand for a higher standard of morality undermines Judaism, our relationship to God and the image of our religious system in the eyes of less affiliated and usually younger Jews. Since it is doubtful that any of the certifications in the United States would modify the requirement for a hechsher to include that a portion of profits be donated to charity, it is time for a new hechsher that reflects a broader concern for Jewish values.

Imagine cruising your local supermarket, kids in tow, and seeing an icon perhaps three sheaves of wheat on thousands of food products. You know what the graphic means: There are no meat products inside; ethical business practices are followed by the company; and at least two percent of the profits from the food are donated to combat hunger so that, in the words of the Birkat Hamazon (the blessing after meals), people "may never be in want of sustenance for the sake of God's great name." If all major Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist denominations approved of this system so that all the major food manufacturers would take it seriously, billions of dollars could be generated to alleviate hunger worldwide.

Jewish values have power when they are lived openly in our free society. If American Jews could expand our food concerns from the minutiae of kosher laws to include the broader values of our Torah, not only would we attack hunger, we would rejuvenate Judaism for the next generation.

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WEXNER HERITAGE
REVIEW

A Brief
Hasidic Tale

In order to understand this very brief story, you need to know what a telegram is. If you don't know, ask your parents.
(Retrieved from the Internet)

A Contemporary Understanding
Of Mitzvot

Orthodox Jews seem to reduce mitzvot to an idolatrous transcript, as though God were just a big man with a mouth and the *torah* is the transcript. The author, Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, the Dean of the Zeigler School of Rabbinic Studies at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, sees mitzvot as a way of letting holiness into our lives.
(*Tikkun*, January/February 1999, www.tikkun.org)

The Accidental
Asian

Sometimes, in assessing a situation, leaders can gain insight from the experiences of other groups. This excerpt from the book, *The Accidental Asian*, shows the similarities and differences between the Jewish and Asian immigrant experiences. The writer, a former speech writer for President Clinton, gives an Asian perspective on being Jewish-Americans. It is a healthy reminder that not all Jewish experiences in America are unique.
(*Random House*, 1999, www.randomhouse.com)

Repairing
The World

Intensive Jewish education is not news to Wexnerites, but the Jewish Service Corps in New York adds a new dimension to Jewish studies, by combining it with good works. For example, a study session on Jewish views on aging is followed by the delivery of food packages to homebound elderly. The article describes a similar program in Boston, as well. Consider implementing a similar program in your synagogue.
(*The Jerusalem Report*, May 10, 1999, www.jreport.org)

A Brief
Hasidic Tale

A story is told about a Hasidic "rebbe" who taught that everything that exists in the world has a lesson for mankind. One disciple, sure the "rebbe" was exaggerating, asked, "And what lesson do we learn from a train?"

"That for being one minute late," the master replied, "you can lose everything."

"And from the telegraph?"

"That you pay for every word."

"And the telephone?"

"That what you say 'here,' is heard 'there.'"

Never forget: Every word counts. And never forget: There is One who hears everything you say.

A Contemporary Understanding
Of Mitzvot

by Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson

In Hebrew, the word "mitzvah" means commandment. At its simplest level, a mitzvah embodies God's will, creating an imperative for those who would live their lives in accordance with God's desire. Of course, there are more literal and less literal ways to understand commandments. By refusing to reduce mitzvot to an idolatrous transcript (as though God were just a big man with a mouth and the Torah was simply the written record of a recording at Sinai), we restore God's grandeur and sovereignty, the Torah's dynamism and relevance. Such a nuanced view celebrates the active role of human intellect, soul, and passion in perceiving the content of God's revelation. Mitzvot are our perception of God's will mediated through human understanding.

In Aramaic, the word "mitzvah" means connection. Here, then, is the next level for understanding the word's meaning in a modern context. The business of every Jew is to testify to God's goodness and God's sovereignty by fashioning our lives in ways of holiness and peace. We connect ourselves to our Creator; we link ourselves to the one who liberated us from slavery, by the way we live our lives. Each deed either strengthens our connection to God, or attenuates that link. There is no neutrality in the world of action: we either weave a web of goodness, with each new action adding a new strand to the fabric of our lives, or we snip away at the weave of righteousness that Judaism establishes in the world. In this

second sense, mitzvah isn't just what you do because God said so. God isn't a cop, and mitzvot are not simply statutes. We do mitzvot because we seek to allow holiness into our lives.

On a third level, our prayers speak of the mitzvot that God has given "us," the entire Jewish people. Mitzvot are not possible without the dynamics of relationship: between God and Am Yisrael, between each individual Jew and the House of Israel as an entity. Just as each intimate relationship generates special obligations that testify to the unique contours of that relationship and which keep the relationship fresh and vital, so do the mitzvot emerge between God and us, reigniting our passion, keeping our ancient covenant young.

Finally, mitzvot are, to use the words of the Bible, *kol demama dakah*, that "still small voice" within. Each of us is a product of the raw power that exploded into the reality of the cosmos, in the inexplicable act the Kabbalists call the Creation and physicists call the Big Bang. Just as the force of the Big Bang is still detectable through sophisticated technology, so does the power of the Creation reverberate in each and every human soul. By training ourselves to listen with a spiritual ear, we can learn to hear the ultimate power within. Our sacred tradition comes from that same act of sacred listening, by which the sages of Israel learned to hear the still, small voice, and to transcribe what they heard into words. Those words are the distillation of the Big Bang, percolating into mitzvot: sacred deeds which concretize the amorphous energy of the Creation into the more tangible realm of human society. Through mitzvot, Jews are engaged in tikkun olam, repair of the world, because we are tapping into the primal power that brought the world into being in the first place.

At each of these levels, as commandment, as connection, as expression of relationship, and as the outward crystallization of Creation, mitzvot function as the indispensable manifestation of meaningful Jewish life. Stripped of a zeal for the performance of mitzvot, Jewish living degrades into mere ethnicity or, worse, aesthetics. We may well differ about how God's will is applied in the world. We may not all agree as to what constitutes a mitzvah in each community and in each new age. But the search for answers to the age-old question, what does the Lord require of you? is no less pressing today than it was millennia ago. And in that energizing search, we have an important role to play on behalf of Am Yisrael, the entire Jewish people.

Reprinted from Tikkun: A Bimonthly Critique of Politics, Culture & Society.

Excerpted from

The Accidental

Asian

by Eric Liu

Over the last few years, Asian Americans have come to be known as the New Jews. The label is honorific. It is meant to accentuate the many parallels between these two groups of immigrants-made-good: Jews started out as outsiders; Asians did too. Jews dedicated themselves to schooling; Asians too. Jews climbed the barriers and crowded the Ivies; Asians too. Jews climbed faster than any other minority in their time; Asians too. Jews enjoy Chinese food; Asians well, you get the picture. Somewhere in that half-lit region between stereotype and sociology, the notion has taken hold that Asian Americans are "out-Jewing the Jews."

Usually it is Old Jews who remark upon this phenomenon. And well they should. It is a remarkable thing that there could be New Jews. For what it means is not merely that the Old Jews have assimilated. It means also that here in America, the very metaphor of "the Jew" now stands for assimilation.

Who shall be a Jew?

Whosoever shall arrive at these shores and be regarded as a sojourner, an alien, beyond the pale; whosoever shall resort to clannish ways and strange methods to promote his kind and find, by dint of unseemly ambition, that he exercises influence in this society far out of proportion; whosoever shall, by negation, remind his countrymen of what it means to be a countryman, to belong; whosoever shall alter the very flavor of the society that swallows him; whosoever shall do all these things without meaning to do anything but live by a creed that will, in the end, spell his brilliant unmaking: he, too, shall be a Jew.

Not long ago, *The New York Times* ran a series of advertisements in the lower right corner of the op-ed page. The ads, written as first-person columns, were sponsored by the American Jewish Committee. Their theme was "What Being Jewish Means to Me." In each one, a prominent Jew recounted how heritage and faith had shaped his or her values and formed a lasting foundation for success. The text was always intriguing. The subtext, even more so.

It seems to me that being Jewish today means, in no small measure, having the ability to run ads in *The New York Times* about what being Jewish today means. The public introspection of very public figures a Supreme Court justice, an astronaut, a university president, a Nobel Prize winner is at once an announcement of having made it and an assertion that Jewishness did not prevent them from making it.

At the same time, one can read these ads as an appeal to the younger generation: as an effort to stop the exodus of the heart, the rescattering of the Jews by assimilation. In this light, the ads seem more doleful. They convey nearly as much doubt as confidence.

We should all have so much doubt. Can you imagine a series in the *Times* called "What Being Chinese Means to Me?" Sure, there would be prominent people to showcase, and they'd have thoughtful things to say. But it is a question of concept: Chinese Americans do not imagine themselves a single entity whose voice should fit seamlessly into the daily digest of elite opinion. And yet neither could I imagine a series called "What Being a WASP Means to Me." Somehow, that would seen unnecessary, even unseemly. It is, then, the mark of a particular moment both to have the podium and to be trumpeting one's accomplishment as *ethnic*: it is an epitaph, a farewell to the days of ever proving oneself.

Like many in the second generation, I suffer from an affliction called "memory-envy."

We inherit memory, some of us more than others. I have, of course, my precious store of personal family remembrances: recollections from my twenty-nine years, with an appendix of images and captions that unfolds backward in time and stops abruptly after two generations. But I don't have anything like communal memory, the sense that my life is the latest page in the history of a race. *World of Our Fathers* is what Irving Howe called his great tome on the Jewish migrations from Eastern Europe to America. I would never presume to give a book of mine such a title. I do not have the confidence; I do not have the sort of meta-memory the memory of memory that pulls individuals into a tribe.

And I envy those who do. Lori Hope Lefkovitz writes in *The Kenyon Review* that "We [Jews] maintain the legend that all of us were present for the giving of the law at Sinai, the dead and the yet-to-be-born alike. And when we remember the Exodus at the Passover Seder, we not only commemorate a liberation from slavery in ancient Egypt but we perform an annual reenactment of our own liberation, commanded as we are to regard ourselves as members of the original generation that was saved by divine intervention in history."

These words beguile me. *The dead and the yet-to-be-born alike . . .* My only notion of this is literal: I will want my father to be knowable to my children. But toward the innumerable Chinese of past and future the Long Yellow Line I feel no real affinity . . . *commanded as we are . . .* I do not feel commanded at all; the absence of history's command was the essence of my upbringing . . . *the original generation . . .* This is not some ancient touchstone; it is me. I am the first in my family to be born American.

Lefkowitz writes about being a child of Holocaust survivors. She tells of being in a strange position: the keeper, the speaker, of other people's memories. A ventriloquist. She writes of the Jews as a community of memory.

Of course, even the Jews, especially younger ones, have begun to forget: not the Holocaust, but the heritage that predated and survived the Holocaust. Patterns of ritual and meaning are falling away: dietary laws, Sabbath candles. Intermarriage has produced an identity crisis, spawned a generation that might prove to be Jewish mainly in the way that Italians are Italian.

The assimilationist instinct my instinct, at times is to sand away difference, to aspire to a hairless, skinless, bloodless universalism. But it occurs to me, as I consider the entry of the Jews into the American ethnoscape, that nothing becomes universal unless it is first particular. And it occurs to me that I have never really been grounded so: in a historical tradition, or a faith, in the rites of an ageless culture.

One reason why I could relate to my Jewish friends when I was a boy was that they were the only other kids I knew whose parents made them get an ethnic education. And they, like me, did their best to stifle the enterprise with inattention. Their schooling was on Thursday nights, mine on Sunday afternoons. Hebrew school, from what I could gather, was most notably a social scene, a place where flirtations and intrigue from the regular school day could further develop. Certainly these kids learned *something* in their classes; at least, they always managed to perform well enough at their bar and bat mitzvahs. But their hearts weren't really in it. Many of them had learned that the appearance of observance was as important as observance itself; that religion could be reduced to mechanical obligation.

Chinese school was only three hours a week, but it too felt like an endless chore. I can still see the angle of autumn sunshine, the mournful light of lost playtime, as my parents took me to the middle school that the Chinese Association rented on Sundays. I was a good student, respectful, but what I recall now are only the things that distracted me: someone's notebook left in the desk; a line of loopy cursive on the blackboard; the drone of children reading Chinese in slow unison; the inky smell of the freshly mimeographed grid paper on which we practiced writing characters; the way we rolled that paper into cone-shaped containers for the corn chips the teacher brought; the aloof eyes of the janitor who opened and closed the building for us. One year Dad was the principal and Mom was one of the teachers. We had a great Chinese New Year party that winter. Somebody brought a boxful of hot McDonald's hamburgers.

Given my experience, I'd guess that such schools are fated to disappear in the next generation. But then, these things ebb and flow. On the heels of a recent (and inaccurate) study that showed Jews marrying outside the faith at a rate of over 50 percent come reports now that enrollment in Jewish private schools is surging nationwide. Granted, these are full-time schools, not once-a-week supplements, and many are run by Orthodox Jews, not by the more secular likes of my childhood

neighbors. Still, the emergence of these institutions, ranging from yeshivas to college prep academies, suggests that the future of Jewish identity in America isn't necessarily a steady dwindling down to zero. Another generation is still learning.

In the Washington suburbs where my mother now lives, the weekly Chinese schools are thriving as well. From time to time Mom will drop by the noisy public school gymnasium in Rockville that serves as a Chinese center on weekends. On one side of the gym, kids of many ages play volleyball and basketball. On the other side, parents have set up a table to sell homemade dumplings and other foods. In rooms down the hall are Chinese-language classes, *qigong* classes, calligraphy classes. Minivans crowd the parking lot. This is more than a school. It is a home base. It is an oasis, a refuge from the fierce, leveling winds of assimilation. My mother likes it here. It's too bad, she says, there was never anything so well developed, so comfortably Chinese, back home.

Whoever the New Asians are in the next century or will they be New New Jews? they will first make themselves known in the classroom.

It was in the classroom that Jewish students two and three generations ago worked with feverish intensity, captured the highest prizes, filled the honor rolls. It was in the classroom that a rumor began to circulate: a rumor of Jewish superiority, Jewish smarts. It was in the classroom too that non-Jews learned to contain that rumor, to preserve the order of things, by reducing Jewish smarts to mere "cleverness."

They are imitative. They have a tendency for memorization. They work like machines. So said the deans of Columbia and Harvard of the Jews who were "overrunning" their campuses in the 1920s and 1930s. The Asian today, like the Jew before him, is said to be a grind. A single-minded, relentless automaton. This is how he became known to his countrymen in the 1980s: as the whiz kid and nerd. *Not well rounded. Not cultivated. Rote-minded; not dedicated to learning for its own sake.* Just as Jews once faced college admission quotas, so, it is believed have Asians.

The Asian today, like the Jew before him, is said to be too hungry. In his memoir *Making It*, Norman Podhoretz tells of migrating from the Lower East Side to Columbia in the 1950s: an earnest Jewish boy hungry for knowledge, eager to show his stuff, who finds once there that the prevailing mode of courtly WASP gentility makes him seem *all wrong*. Today Asian kids are the ones who strive, grasp, and stick in the culture's craw because of their unabashed ambition. Rather than acting like normal kids slacker-athletes Asian Americans are seen as pressing an unfair advantage. They are "overachieving." Which raises the question: Over what? Over whose expectations? What unseen ceilings?

One way to explain the abnormal ambition of a group is to racialize it. Hard work and sacrifice? Deferral of gratification? Devotion to education? Today, anyone will tell you, these are "Asian values." But remember, only a few generations ago they were "Jewish values." And once upon a time, of course, they were "Protestant values."

This is tricky territory to navigate. In today's coded conversations about race, rumors of *inherent* Asian superiority can feed rumors of *inherent* black inferiority. This helps explain why some Asian American activists go to great lengths to remind people how troubled their community actually is, how riddled with shortcomings and social pathology. They treat praise as damnation, commendation as calumny.

Certainly there is something condescending and misleading about the "model minority" label. But when an Asian American student does well she should be able to take credit for her diligence without feeling that she's playing into a devious plot to dehumanize her and all colored people. She should be able to say that virtue has its rewards.

She should also, however, give credit where it is due: to circumstance. Stephen Steinberg, a City University sociologist, reminds us in *The Ethnic Myth* that for Jews and Asians alike, many in the first generation arrived with considerable built-in advantages of class, education and expectations. It is this social capital, and the selectivity of the immigration itself, that has helped both groups achieve here.

My own story suggests this. I've always had the desire to do well, and the dedication, but I have also been fortunate. My father and mother were professionals. They had come here not to scrape out a living but to attend university. There was never any question that I would go to college, never any doubt that they'd send me wherever I chose to go. When I was a boy and my cousin went to Yale, it seemed only natural that I should set my sights as high.

Chutzpah!

I am sitting across a cluttered desk from Alan Dershowitz. He is talking about "thinking Jewishly," about how "as a Jew," he has a competitive advantage in lawyering because of the great Jewish tradition of argumentation. He is not the cartoon figure I expected far from it. He is subtle, engaging, attentive. "I was like you when I was your age," he says. "I didn't make a big deal about being Jewish." But I realize that when he was my age, he was getting rejected from every WASP law firm he'd applied to for a summer job even though he was editor of the law review and headed for a Supreme Court clerkship. What's *my* excuse? What's keeping *me* from wearing my heritage on my sleeve?

I struggle to find, in all the American vernacular, a Chinese contribution as significant as chutzpah. Embodied in this word is an attitude, a defanged stereotype, a nutshell explanation for the great success of the Jews. True, there are still settings where it's not wise to be, as the title of a recent art exhibit put it, "Too Jewish." But a society where everyone knows and values chutzpah is already quite Jewish.

By contrast, perhaps the most recognizable, if most misunderstood, aspect of the Chinese cultural style is the idea of "face": saving face, losing face. Face, actually, is the exact inverse of chutzpah. It is about smoothing things over, eliding confrontation, not forcing the issue. Will this subtle art be the Chinese way of shaping American personality? A study in the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* suggests that the Asian style of "impression management" gives whites the false impression that Asian employees aren't fit for leadership. If you ask some first-generation Chinese Americans in private, they'll tell you that the Chinese could stand being more like the Jews: more *lihai*, more assertive.

I think of my mother. When I told her about Alan Dershowitz, she uttered the universal misgivings of the first generation: *He shouldn't say so much.* But it is also my mother who believes the Chinese need to speak out more, especially amid the anti-Asian overtones of the campaign-finance scandals. My mother is brave: she will stand up in any gathering, all Chinese or no-Chinese, to say her piece.

I think of J. D. Hokoyama, a third-generation Japanese American in Los Angeles who founded LEAP: Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics. LEAP provides, among other things, diversity training for corporations teaching managers to unlearn the assumption that if an Asian employee is quiet she has nothing to offer. It also provides assertiveness training teaching the employee to make her voice known.

I think of a Vietnamese medical student my wife knows, a twenty-three-year old immigrant who cannot stop asking questions. She asks the residents, the attendings, her fellow third-years. She asks about medicine, about the weather, about the news, anything. She is indiscriminate, fearless, sometimes senseless in her asking. I have to wonder: is it nature or is it nurture that sends the questions spilling forth?

I think of me, gung ho, ever eager to show that Asians aren't meek. I am overconditioned. Once, in officer candidates school, my platoon commander pulled me aside. "I notice," he said, "that when you give an order you deepen your voice." I blinked, not realizing this. "You don't need to," he said, "Just speak naturally."

As late as 1974 a prominent Jewish commentator could lament that Jews did not run for office more frequently because of their "ghetto mentality" and "feeling of limited expectations and vulnerability." But that very year, notes J. J. Goldberg in his provocative study *Jewish Power*, a new era began. The post-Watergate class of 1974 nearly doubled the number of Jews in the House of Representatives. Since then, the Congress has had a Jewish membership of somewhere between 8 and 10 percent. And no one accuses Jews today of timidity in politics.

Asian Americans well, that is a different story. Consider that between 1976 and 1996, California's Asian American population quadrupled to more than four million transforming the state's schools, workplaces and neighborhoods. During that same period, the Asian American presence in the California legislature doubled from one legislator to two. There are now almost ten million Asian Americans across the country; there are only five voting Asian American members of the House and Senate.

Over the years, many reasons have been offered for this power gap, most of which boil down to "ghetto mentality" and "feelings of limited expectation and vulnerability." It seems to me, though, that demographics are critical here: the Asian American community, after all, is still a community of immigrants two thirds foreign-born. It seems as well that time and acculturation will narrow the gap. Indeed, Don Nakanishi, director of UCLA's Asian American Studies Center, reports that record numbers of Asian Americans entered politics in 1996 as candidates, staffers, voters, and, of course, donors.

The Jews assimilated, we know: became American. But America assimilated too: became Jewish. You could write a book about the Jewish influence on the cultural and social idiom, but then, you would only be writing a book about twentieth-century America.

A novelist from England speaks of "the Great Jews" Bellow, Malamud, Roth, and so on who articulated the inner life of midcentury America. It was a Jewish playwright named Israel Zangwill who immortalized the phrase "the melting pot." And what was Hollywood, asks author Neal Gabler, but the invention of Jews who wanted so badly to invent another America? Listen now to television, or the radio, or a conversation on the bus: the Jews gave us another voice. *What, you need an example?* The Jew changed the every inflection of an American questions. The Jew changed our food, our images, our language, our humor, our law, our literature.

The Asian, so far, has changed our food.

I understate, yes. American culture is Asian in ways we don't even think twice about now: feng shui and Ayurvedic healing and Nintendo. But there is a difference: these, by and large, are direct imports from Asia. They are not the legacy of Asian immigrant life. They are cultural memes, transmitted by the image, by the word, by the airwave, by the byte. They don't need human carriers.

It is perhaps unfair to expect Asian Americans to influence American life in the same fashion, to the same degree, as the Jews have. One reason is the ever-quickening pace of assimilation. For all that we hear about the "disuniting of America," the truth is it has never been easier to assimilate than it is today. Ever since the 1960s, new arrivals at least those with some education have faced gradually fewer barriers to social entry. They do not have to ghettoize. They are not forced, by the ostracism of others, to sustain and draw sustenance from their heritage. They are freer to adopt other styles, to invent their own.

But the other reason why it is unfair to expect Asian Americans to contribute as a people is simply that Asian Americans are not "a people." They are a label. Great deeds and works can be collected under that label, but the label itself is not much of a muse. As an agent of cultural and social change, the Jew is sui generis; the New Jew, mere proof of that.

Repairing
The World

Two programs, in New York and Boston, make the link between Jewish values and social justice

by Yigal Schleifer

On a chilly Wednesday evening, Rachel Levy, a 23-year-old Yale graduate from New Haven, Connecticut, rushes down a quiet Brooklyn street and enters an unassuming brick house. Levy has just returned from East New York, one of the city's most blighted neighborhoods, where she works at an AIDS day-treatment center. Without stopping to rest, she heads into the kitchen, where she starts preparing a dinner of rice and beans for her eight housemates.

As soon as dinner is over, Levy, who still hasn't sat down to rest, finds herself with three of her housemates reading and discussing a Torah portion and a Talmudic text related to Passover and the issues surrounding sacrifices and charitable donations. At around 11 p.m., an exhausted Levy is sitting with the entire household holding a detailed discussion about next week's shopping and their Passover cleaning schedule.

Welcome to an ordinary day in what for Levy and her partners is surely an extraordinary experience. The nine young people who live in the house, under the shadow of an elevated highway, are all participants in Avodah: The Jewish Service Corps (Avodah means work, worship and religious service in Hebrew), launched last August. Emphasizing the link between social activism and Jewish tradition, Avodah places young Jews recently out of college in a variety of social service and social justice organizations for a year of low-paying work, while, at the same time, offering them a year of intensive Jewish study.

Along with Levy's job in the AIDS Center, other Avodah's members work with the homeless, with disadvantaged foster children and with struggling immigrants. "This is really about doing direct, anti-poverty, in-the-trenches kind of work," says Jennifer Cohen, Avodah's program director.

As the Jewish Service Corps, Avodah's emphasis on Jewish learning is just as serious as its commitment to social activism. The group's members meet twice a week for study and learning. On that chilly Wednesday night, while Rachel Levy and half the group are in the living room studying with Rabbi David Rosenn, Avodah's founder and director, downstairs in the basement, the rest of the group is working with an educator who explores Jewish religious themes through art.

Another night, a study session on Jewish views of aging is followed by a delivery of food packages to homebound elderly.

A non-denominational program, Avodah has been able to attract an eclectic mix of Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative and modern Orthodox participants. Hailing from California, Florida, Colorado, Minnesota and the East Coast, the Avodah members all came to the program with extensive volunteer experience with Jewish or campus organizations, in their hometowns and in Israel.

Rosenn, 32, who wears a colorful knitted yarmulke, says he was inspired to set up Avodah after seeing the success of other faith-based organizations and feeling frustration over the lack of meaningful opportunities in the Jewish world for social activism. "If, as an American citizen and a Jew, you wanted to try to make a contribution to . . . issues in the United States, and you wanted to do that as a Jew, nothing did exist," says Rosenn, who was ordained at the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary in 1997. "There are many Jews involved in social change work, but so few of them connect that work to their Jewish life. I couldn't find any Jews who said to me that their involvement in the Jewish community sustained them. That seemed to me a problem."

A charismatic young rabbi with a promising proposal on his hands, Rosenn started laying the groundwork for Avodah in 1996, quickly turning it into reality. While the agencies where the participants work pay their monthly stipend, along with health insurance and transportation costs, Avodah gets substantial grants from the New York UJA-Federation, The Jewish Life Network (a foundation sponsored by philanthropist Michael Steinhardt) and the Nathan Cummings Foundation, which supports projects that enrich Jewish life through learning and social justice.

For Avodah's participants, who are paired up with both professional and spiritual mentors, the program clearly fills a void. "I felt like it was a nearly perfect match," says Ayala Abramovici, a 22-year-old from Chicago, while painting an abstract picture based on Hebrew letters in the Avodah house's rec room-like basement. "It really combined all these worlds that I have been in but never found a meeting spot for." Abramovici, who did volunteer work in high school and college, says she was so eager to continue her social service that she considered joining the Catholic Worker or the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, both of which offer service opportunities for young adults, before she found Avodah. "[Avodah] brought these things together. I couldn't have imagined something better than living together with a bunch of Jewish social activists," says Abramovici, who works with a Brooklyn-

based Chinese immigrant aid organization, where she wrote the successful application for a $250,000 grant to run an after-school program.

Though the program's first year is barely half over, the Avodah experience has made an impact both on participants and the organizations where they work. "I always found in my experience that somebody who comes to this work with a spiritual focus and a sense of right or wrong through their faith tends to be committed to this work and be a very thoughtful advocate," says Patrick Horvath, associate director of the Urban Justice Center, a poverty law organization where Avodah participant Neal Cohen, who spent the year prior to the program studying in Israel, is assigned. "To have someone coming from a Jewish faith perspective, who can comment and think about issues ... has brought a richness to our advocacy work here," says Horvath.

Apparently, Avodah's Rosenn is not the only one to have thought about connecting the worlds of social activism and Judaism. The Jewish Organizing Initiative was launched in Boston at the same time Avodah started its work in New York. Like Avodah, JOI places young Jewish adults in a variety of organizations (although with more of a community organizing bent and without a communal house), while offering them a rigorous course of Jewish study. But while Rosenn may be approaching his work with youthful idealism, JOI's founder and director, Michael Brown, is driven by the lessons of the past.

A veteran organizer and community activist, Brown says the inspiration for the program came out of a meeting of the National Organizers Alliance a few years back, where a number of the Jewish participants realized there had never been an established way for them to figure out how Judaism has an impact on their work. "I'm 51 years old now and I think a lot of us middle-aged organizers are having an increased connection to our spirituality and are trying to put these two things together," says Brown, who was active in the civil rights and anti-war movements in the late 60s and early 70s and is a former director of New England B'nai Brith. "What I hear from a lot of middle-aged organizers is 'I wish there had been something like this for me when I was 25,'" adds Brown.

Like Avodah, JOI asks the organizations hiring its members to pay their salaries. But, also like Avodah, JOI has only been able to survive with support from individuals and foundations, including Steven Spielberg's The Righteous Persons Foundations, the Jewish Fund for Justice and the Shefa Fund. JOI's 10 members, meanwhile, meet once a week for study and discussion and are currently in the midst of a several-month project creating a Passover haggadah reflecting some of the values they are learning during their year of service.

The appearance of Avodah and JOI, say some who are active in Jewish communal work, may reflect the emergence of a young generation of Jews eager to bridge the worlds of activism and Judaism. "I think there are [young Jewish adults] who see the connection between Jewish identity and a commitment to justice as seamless," says Elizabeth Greenstein, a program associate at the Nathan Cummings Foundation, which also supports JOI. "This is such a natural fit. This is where our tradition is," says Greenstein.

Barry Shrage, president of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, agrees. "I think the day of the apparent conflict between universalism and particularism is beginning to fade," says Shrage. "What I'm finding is that people are not uncomfortable in being both engaged in the world and in Torah learning."

JOI and its participants, says Shrage, are serving as models for Boston's Jewish community, which, like many other American Jewish communities, has been looking for innovative ways to keep Jewish life vibrant. "For us, this is like out of heaven," says Shrage. "It's perfect."

The groups' members could also serve as models for other social activists, as both Avodah's and JOI's members have already scored some important victories at the projects where they are working. One JOI member, assigned as a labor organizer with workers at a Jewish nursing home, was able to rally community support for a pay raise and increased benefits for the workers, averting a strike at the home. The Avodah participants' living together, meanwhile, has produced some very practical benefits. When one of Neal Cohen's clients, an unemployed teacher, was on the verge of being evicted, he remembered that his housemate Ayala Abramovici was hiring for her afterschool program. They made the *shiddukh*: The woman is now working at the afterschool program and was able to keep her apartment.

But the participants report that the programs have also had an effect on their Jewish life. At the Avodah house, the issues of maintaining kashrut and Shabbat have led to a number of discussions and creative compromises. "I think that all of our minds have been opened to new interpretations," says Cohen, who is trying to use the year's experience to deepen his level of Jewish observance. "I think those who didn't want to keep Shabbat now say they're happy that there's a day of Shabbat in the house."

JOI's Alison Altschuller, working with a neighborhood development organization in one of Boston's poorest areas, says the combination of work and study has given her a new sense of Jewish community. "The link between the Jewish identity and social justice identity has been very powerful," says Altschuller, 23. "It has opened up the Jewish community to me and let me see a lot of things that I didn't see before."

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WEXNER HERITAGE
REVIEW

YOM HAZIKARON
Remembering the Forgotten Day

Rabbi Nathan Laufer, President of the Wexner Heritage Foundation, has written a major piece concerning Rosh Hashanah. He brings an overwhelming number of proofs to demonstrate that this holiday does not commemorate the creation of the world, as most of us were taught by our teachers, but the covenant at Mount Sinai, when God made the ten pronouncements. It is a scholarly piece that can be read by an amateur with great reward. A different version of this article appeared in the *Jewish Spectator* (Summer 1999).

SARAH'S *Choice*

This poem is feminine take on the Akedah. It makes one wonder what would happen had God commanded Sarah to take her son, her only son, the one whom she loved, to sacrifice him on the mountain.
(University of Chicago Press, 1989)

NOTES
On a Trip to Israel

Joseph Rackman, the Editor of Wexner Heritage Review, spent two weeks in Israel, the second one attending the Wexner Heritage Foundation's Summer Institute. This is a collection of anecdotes concerning what he experienced both within and without Wexner auspices.
(Manhattan Jewish Sentinel, September 3, 1999)

GOOD *Grief*

Gary Rosenblatt, editor of the (New York) Jewish Week contrasts the American expression of grief over the death of JFK, Jr. with Jewish expressions of mourning. "In Judaism we do not mourn the deaths of prophets and kings. We mourn the deaths of ordinary Jews."
([New York] Jewish Week, July 30, 1999, www.thejewishweek.com)

YOM HAZIKARON
Remembering the Forgotten Day

By Rabbi Nathan Laufer

". . . Only take heed, and be very careful to guard the memory of the day you stood before God in Horeb all the days of your life, and teach about it to your children and your children's children. Do not forget the things which your eyes saw and do not remove the memory from your heart. . . ." (Deuteronomy, 4:9,10)

Ever since I was a young man studying Judaism seriously, the holiday of Rosh Hashanah has bothered me for half a dozen different reasons. First, there seems to be no historical referent for the holiday in the Torah. Unlike Passover, which is about the Exodus from Egypt, or Sukkot, which the Torah links explicitly to the people's trek through the desert, Rosh Hashanah has no specific historical event in the Torah with which it is associated.

Five Difficulties

Yes, it is true that the Rabbinic tradition tells us that Rosh Hashanah commemorates the creation of the world, or according to a parallel tradition, the creation of humanity. But the question remains: why didn't the Torah make overt the linkage between Rosh Hashanah and Creation? After all, the Torah tells us that the Shabbat is a commemoration of Creation: "Remember the Sabbath day to make it holy... because for six days God made the heavens and the earth, the seas and all that is within them and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy"(Exodus 20:8, 11). If Rosh Hashanah was supposed to commemorate Creation as Shabbat does, why didn't the Torah tell us?

Second, it troubled me that the holiday of Rosh Hashanah seems out of synch with the rest of the Biblical Jewish holidays. The other holidays, it is universally taught, follow an historical, chronological sequence in the Torah: Passover represents the Exodus; Shavuot, which happened fifty days later, corresponds to the Sinai Revelation which took place about seven weeks later; Yom Kippur symbolizes God's forgiveness of the Jewish People after the sin of the Golden Calf, and Succot represents the journey through the wilderness which follows. In the middle of all this comes Rosh Hashanah, which commemorates the creation of the world -an event which took place, traditionally speaking, at least 2500 years before these other Biblical stories.

Third, unlike all the other holidays which reflect the particular experience and collective memory of the Jewish People, Rosh Hashanah as the commemoration of Creation represents a universal theme common to all humanity. This universal story, while theologically important to Jews and to non-Jews alike, is nevertheless not one which our people

personally experienced. Rosh Hashanah seems inconsistent with the other Biblical, seasonal holidays, which were concentrated in a forty year period and which the Jewish People experienced first-hand.

These first three difficulties are exacerbated by the formula which we use in the kiddush on Rosh Hashanah to commemorate the day, Zecher Leyetziat Mitzrayim. In the kiddush for Shabbat we use the double formula of Zecher Lema'asey Bereishit and Zecher Leyetziat Mitzrayim, a commemoration of Creation and the Exodus. One would think, that the kiddush for Rosh Hashanah, the holiday which commemorates Creation, should be Zecher Lema'asey Bereishit, a commemoration of the process of Creation. Instead, we find that the formula used in kiddush on Rosh Hashanah, as well as in every single Amidah, every silent, devotional prayer during the holiday, is Zecher Leyetziat Mitzrayim, a commemoration of the Exodus. This latter formula indicates that Rosh Hashanah, like the other Biblical holidays, is somehow linked to the post-Exodus cycle rather than to Creation.

Fourth, why is the mood on Rosh Hashanah one of such trepidation? If Rosh Hashanah is a celebration of Creation, as the Rabbinic tradition states, why do we feel fearful? We should be feeling happy, celebrating God's incredible creativity of which we are the primary beneficiaries! We should stand in joyous wonder of the beauty and complexity of nature instead of standing in "fear and trembling".

Fifth, one of the only things which we know about Rosh Hashanah from the Torah is in Leviticus 23 when the holiday is first mentioned. There, Rosh Hashanah is referred to as Zichron Teruah a remembering of the blowing of the Teruah. What does that mean? When was the Teruah blown to be remembered?

The final and related question about Rosh Hashanah is why do we blow the shofar on this holiday? Why is the Shofar, the central ritual symbol of the Holiday? Does the Shofar have something to do with the "remembering of the Teruah"?

I would like to suggest another biblical layer of meaning to Rosh Hashanah: that beyond the Rabbinic understanding of Rosh Hashanah as the commemoration of God's Creation of the universe and of humanity, there is a forgotten Biblical understanding of Rosh Hashanah as the reenactment of God's Revelation at Mount Sinai; that this forgotten understanding of Rosh Hashanah is embedded not only in the Torah itself, but in the liturgy, rituals and customs of the day established by the Rabbis. This thesis does not negate the Rabbinic tradition but supplements it so as to restore a previous layer of religious meaning to our experience of this holiday.

What does the Bible say about Rosh Hashanah?

To make the case for this thesis, let us first see what the Torah tells us about Rosh Hashanah in the books of Leviticus and Numbers, the only two places where the holiday is mentioned:

"The first day of the seventh month shall be a day of rest, a remembrance of the Teruah, a sacred day. You shall not do any service work, and you shall bring a fire offering to God" (Leviticus 23: 24-25).

"The first day of the seventh month shall be sacred for you, no service work shall be done, a day of teruah shall it be for you. . ." (Numbers 29:1).

The first thing to notice is that nowhere in the Torah is the day called "Rosh Hashanah", the "head", or the "beginning" of the Year, i.e. the first day of the first month. Rather, the Torah in both places refers to this day as the first day of the seventh month. This is in accordance with what the Torah explicitly states in Exodus 12:1 regarding the month of Nissan, the month which precedes Rosh Hashanah by seven months: "This month (i.e. Nissan) shall be for you the Rosh ("Head") of the months, the first of the months for you in the months of the year". Following this logic, the first day of Nissan, (i.e. the first day of the first month) should properly be called "Rosh Hashanah" rather than the first of Tishrei, the day which the Rabbinic Tradition has dubbed Rosh Hashanah. Interestingly, Rabbi Joshua claims in contrast to Rabbi Eliezer and to our accepted Tradition, that the world was in fact created in Nissan (BT, Rosh Hashanah 11a).

Since the Torah does not call the first day of the Seventh month by the name Rosh Hashanah, what does it call this day? It is true that the Torah refers to this day as "a sacred day", "a day of rest", "a day when no service work shall be done", but these appellations are found in all the Biblical holidays. What distinguishes this day in particular are the terms: "a remembrance of the Teruah", and "a day of Teruah". What is the Teruah? It is one of two musical notes (the other being a "Tekiah") which are blown by the Trumpet or the Shofar (Numbers 10:1-10, Psalms 47:6, 98:6). In the book of Numbers, the Torah tells us that the Teruah was blown in two sets of circumstances: to call the Jewish people to move from one place to another, and in the event of war, when the people find themselves in dire circumstances, to "remind God" of their precarious plight through the tremulous, staccato sound of their blowing.

What is "teruah"?

Why is this day called in Leviticus "a remembrance of the Teruah"? What "Teruah" is this day supposed to remind us of? And why is it called in Numbers a "day of Teruah", a day in which we blow the shofar?

The only place in the Torah in which the Shofar was blown prior to Leviticus 23, for which Rosh Hashanah could be "a remembrance of the Teruah," was at the Revelation on Mount Sinai in Exodus 19 and 20. There, the Torah speaks three times about the sounding of the Shofar:

"And on the morning of the third day there was thunder (Heb.:"Kolot") and lightning and a heavy cloud upon the mountain, and the sound ("Kol") of the Shofar was very strong, and all the people in the encampment trembled" (Exodus 19:16).

"And the sound ("Kol") of the Shofar continued and was very strong, Moses would speak and God would respond with the Sound ("BeKol")(Exodus 19:19).

"And all the people saw the thunder ("Kolot"), the flames, and the sound ("Kol") of the Shofar, and the mountain smoking, and the people trembled when they saw it and kept their distance" (Exodus 20:15).

The Revelation at Sinai

Since the Revelation at Sinai is the only place in the Torah prior to Leviticus that the Shofar is mentioned, and since the holiday of Rosh Hashanah is described in Leviticus as "a remembrance of the Teruah" a reminder of the blowing of the Teruah with the Shofar, it follows that Rosh Hashanah is a remembrance of the Revelation at Sinai. It also follows from the fact that the sounding of the Shofar plays such a prominent role in the Revelation at Sinai, that in remembering the Revelation we reenact the sounding of the Shofar thereby placing it at the centerpiece of the Holiday. We make Rosh Hashanah "a day of Teruah".

As the sounding of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a reenactment of the Revelation at Sinai, it is also clear why the mood of the day is one of such fear and trepidation. Just as the Jewish People stood trembling before God's awesome and frightening Revelation at Mount Sinai, so too do we stand in fear and trepidation as we reenact God's Revelation with the blowing of the Shofar. The tremulant sounding of the Teruah expresses the fearful experience of the Jewish People during the Revelation.

The sounding of the Shofar carries additional importance in the events of the Revelation, for it was not only the shofar which was "sounded", but God's Presence and Word along with the Shofar. Aside from referring to the sound of the Shofar as "Kol," the thunder and God's response to Moses are also both referred to as "Kol." In case there is any doubt that the word "Kol" was meant to denote not only the sound of the Shofar but also God's Revealed Word, the prelude to the Revelation dispels that doubt: "And now, if you will listen to my voice ("BeKolee") and protect my Covenant, then you will be treasured to me from amongst all the nations" (Exodus 19:5). In Deuteronomy, Moses reiterates this point in describing the Revelation to the Jewish People: "God spoke to you out of the fire; you heard the sound (kol) of words, but saw no image; there was only a voice (kol)." The sounding of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is therefore not only reminding us of the Shofar blasts at Mount Sinai, but reenacting for us the Revelation of God's thunderous Presence and Word at Mount Sinai.

We acknowledge this ritually in three ways:

1. The Blessing recited prior to blowing the Shofar is not "Litkoah Beshofar" , to "blow" the Shofar, or "Al Netilat Shofar", "to take the Shofar" but rather "Lishmoah Kol Shofar", "to hear the Sound of the Shofar". This particular formulation of the blessing has practical significance. Because the Mitzvah is simply to hear the sound itself, rather than to take or blow a physical object, one can fulfill this Mitzvah even with a borrowed or stolen shofar. This is in contrast to a Lulav, where the blessing of "Al Netilat Lulav" denotes the Command to acquire the physical lulav, and where one cannot fulfill the mitzvah with a borrowed or stolen lulav.

2. We are not permitted to speak from the first to the last sounding of the Shofar. Since listening to the sound, the "kol" of the Shofar is tantamount to reexperiencing the Revelation of God's voice at Mount Sinai, it would be sacrilegious to interrupt God's Speech with our own.

3. Since the "sound of the shofar" is mentioned three times in the story of the Revelation, we are obligated to blow three Teruah blasts with the shofar (this despite the fact that the word "Teruah" is found only twice in the Torah in reference to Rosh Hashanah, an anomaly which forces the Rabbis in Tractate Rosh Hashanah 33b to search for another mention of Teruah in the Torah with which to support a three-fold obligation). In addition, we blow three separate musical notes with the shofar on Rosh Hashanah Tekiah, Shevarim, and Teruah, the shofar is blown three times during the mussaf service before the Amidah, during the Amidah, and after the Amidah; and within the Amidah itself, the shofar is also blown exactly three times all this to reflect the threefold mention of the sounding of the shofar at Sinai.

What does the Rosh Hashanah prayer book teach us?

The liturgical link of Rosh Hashanah to the Revelation is also unmistakable. For example, the first paragraph of the Shofarot section in the Mussaf Amidah, the supplemental, silent devotional service, dramatically describes the Revelation at Sinai. The root word "kol" is repeatedly used to alternately describe God's voice, God's thundering Presence, and the punctuating sound of the shofar during the Revelation:

"You Revealed Yourself in the Clouds of Glory to speak to your holy people. From the Heavens you made them hear your Voice ("Kolecha") and you Revealed yourself in pure, thick clouds. The whole world trembled at your Presence, all the creatures were in awe before You , when You, our King, Revealed yourself on Mount Sinai to teach Your people Torah and Commandments, and they heard your majestic Voice ("Kolecha"), and Your holy words in flashes of fire. Amid thunder ("Kolot") and lightning did you reveal yourself to them, and with the sound ("Kol") of the Shofar did You appear to them, as it is written in thy Torah: "And on the morning of the third day there was thunder (Heb.:"Kolot") and lightning and a heavy cloud upon the mountain, and the sound ("Kol") of the Shofar was very strong, and all the people in the encampment trembled. . .And the sound ("Kol") of the Shofar continued very strong, Moses would speak and God would respond with the Sound ("BeKol").. And all the people saw the thunder ("Kolot"), the flames, and the sound ("Kol") of the Shofar, and the mountain smoking, and the people trembled when they saw it and kept their distance". . .

It is not only the Shofarot section which is liturgically linked to the Revelation at Sinai, but also the Zichronot

section, the "remembering" section. The central theme of the Zichronot section of the Amidah is the remembering of the Brit, the Covenant. In the preamble to the Revelation cited above, God premises the chosenness of the Jewish People on their listening to God's Voice ("Kol") and their guarding God's Covenant ("Britee"). This Covenantal agreement at Sinai is the subject of the final proof text of the Zichronot section in the Musaf Amidah:

"Fulfill for us, God, that which You promised in the Torah through Moses your servant, straight from the mouth of your Divine Glory, as it says: "And I will remember for them, the Covenant ("Brit") with the first generation whom I took out of Egypt before the nations to be their God, I, Hashem."

What was the Covenant which God made with the generation that left Egypt? The Ten Commandments, which begin with the words "I am Hashem, your God, who has taken you out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 20:2). Thus on Rosh Hashanah, we both reenact the Revelation of God's Word and remember the content of that Word, that is, the Covenantal agreement, predicated on the exodus from Egypt, embodied in the Ten Commandments.

It is no wonder that we refer to Rosh Hashanah as a day of judgement, a Yom Hadin. God not only revealed His Presence through His Voice, He revealed His Laws, His "Din," through that voice. We are judged, as the Jewish People who stood at Sinai and later fashioned the golden calf were judged, by the terms of the Covenant. The establishment of the Covenant at Mt. Sinai, a Covenant contingent on keeping God's commands, sets the standard for the judgement of the Jewish people.

Why 10 verses in each section of the Rosh Hashanah afternoon Silent Meditation?

It is also not accidental that each of the three sections of the Rosh Hashanah Mussaf Amidah quotes a total of ten verses from the Bible, from Torah, Neviim, and Ketuvim, as proof-texts for its theme. Each group of ten Biblical verses, representing God's speech, parallels the "aseret hadibrot", the Ten Statements God uttered at Sinai, which we call colloquially "The Ten Commandments".

Having established that both the Shofarot and Zichronot sections of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy are linked to the Revelation at Sinai, we should not be surprised that the Malchuyot, the Kingship section, is similarly linked. In the prelude to God's Revelation in Exodus 19, previously cited, God says (v. 5,6): If you listen to my "kol", to my sound, and you keep "Britee", my Covenant, then you will be to me a mamlechet kohanim "a kingdom of priests." If the Jewish People are a kingdom, then that presupposes that God is King. The blasts of the shofar at Mt. Sinai, crowned God as King of the Jewish People. The Mekhilta, cited by the eleventh century French exegete, Rashi, on the first of the ten commandments, makes this explicit: "I took you out of the land of Egypt and I have earned my right to be your king and your ruler," therefore follows the second commandment, "There shall be no other gods beside me."(Exodus 20:2).

Nachmanides, makes a related point in his commentary on the words of Deuteronomy 33:5, "And it was in Yeshurun that God became king, when the leaders of the people gathered together, all the tribes of Israel," explaining that this refers to the bestowing of God's kingship at Mt. Sinai. Not surprisingly, this verse from Deuteronomy "Vayehi beshurun melech" is also part of the Malchuyot section in the Mussaf Amidah on Rosh Hashanah.

In sum, the liturgy of Rosh Hashanah embodies the central themes of the Revelation of God's Kingship, Covenant, and Voice, or what we call Malchuyot, Zichronot and Shofarot.

Two additional proofs Mikvah and Honey

In addition to these linkages of Rosh Hashanah to the Revelation at Sinai in the Torah, in our liturgy and in our rituals, two customs surrounding the holiday assume additional meaning when we understand Rosh Hashanah in this way. The first is the custom of Jews to immerse in a mikvah, in a ritual pool, on the day prior to Rosh Hashanah. Since the Jewish People, prior to the Revelation at Sinai, also immersed in a natural body of water (according to the Rabbinic tradition, plausibly interpreting Exodus 19:10), we do similarly to prepare for the "Revelation."

The second custom is to dip our bread in honey. Since the Revelation at Sinai took place in the desert only twenty days after the beginning of the falling of the "Mon", the "Heavenly Bread", which the Torah describes as tasting like Tzapichit Bedvash, "wafers dipped in honey" (Exodus 16:31), we eat bread dipped in honey to reexperience the miraculous food eaten by our ancestors in the desert as they camped around Mount Sinai. Significant also in this regard, is the placement of the jug of Mon in the Sanctuary immediately adjacent to the Ark of Testimony containing the Ten Commandments (Exodus 16:33, 34). Both in the Sanctuary, the Mikdash, and in our homes, our Mikdashei MeAht, the covenant and the Mon are experienced together.

A proof from Nehemiah

There is an additional Biblical support for the thesis that Rosh Hashanah commemorates the Revelation at Sinai. In the eighth chapter of the Book of Nehemiah, we are told of the re-covenanting ceremony led by Ezra the Scribe after the Jewish People's return from the Babylonian exile. At this Covenantal ceremony, all the men and women gathered and responded "Amen" in awe and fear as Ezra revealed to the confused and struggling returnees, the Torah of Moses which they had forgotten. This "second Revelation" of the Torah, took place on the first day of the Seventh month that is, on the day we call Rosh Hashanah. Apparently Ezra, too, saw the linkage between Rosh Hashanah and the revelation of Torah and Covenant to the Jewish people.

Linking Rosh Hashanah to the Revelation at Sinai solves all the difficulties which we raised at the beginning of this

essay. This holiday, like the other Biblical holidays, commemorates a particular event which our ancestors personally experienced after they left Egypt. Like the other Biblical holidays, Rosh Hashanah is Zecher Leyetziat Mitzrayim. It commemorates the Revelation which was precipitated and predicated upon God's liberation of the Jewish people from Egypt ("I am the Lord, your God, who took you out of the Land of Egypt" [Exodus 20:1]). The holiday follows a proper chronological sequence (after the holiday of Passover commemorating the Exodus but before the holiday of Yom Kippur commemorating God's forgiveness for the worship of the golden calf). The mood is one of awe and trepidation since this reflects the mood of the Jewish People standing at Sinai during the Revelation. The holiday is called Zichron Teruah and the Shofar is sounded, to remember the Sounding of the Shofar and the sound of God's Revelation at Mount Sinai.

What about Shavvot?

Having established this connection, it is striking that we are left with two holidays, Shavuot and Rosh Hashanah, to commemorate the same event. After all, doesn't Shavuot already commemorate the Revelation at Sinai? There are several possible ways of responding to this anomaly:

1. Why not have two holidays commemorate the Revelation? After all, there are two holidays which celebrate the Exodus from Egypt Passover and Shabbat (Deuteronomy 5:15). Only the former corresponds to the actual time of the year in which the Exodus took place. Similarly, with the Revelation, the other of the two most important events which the Jewish People experienced, the Torah may have legislated two holidays by which to remember this landmark in our historical experience.

2. A second way of understanding the seeming redundancy of the holidays of Shavuot and Rosh Hashanah is by making a distinction, in the "Brisk" analytic tradition of Rav Hayyim Soloveitchik, between the act of Revelation by God which Shavuot commemorates (i.e. Matan Torah) and the acceptance of the Covenant by the people which Rosh Hashanah commemorates (i.e. Kabbalat Hatorah). This distinction is used for instance by the "Briskers"to explain the difference between Shavuot and Simchat Torah. The case for adopting this distinction is strengthened by the fact that there were two sets of luchot, two sets of tablets which Moshe presented to the Jewish People, one in the month of Tammuz (but verbally communicated by God in Sivan) and one in the month of Tishrei. Therefore, we have two holidays: one, commemorating their giving, Shavuot in Sivan, and one commemorating their acceptance, Rosh Hashanah in Tishrei. We add all the accouterments of the original Revelation to the giving of the second tablets to testify to the Divine Voice behind their content even though the latter tablets were chiseled by Moses rather than by God. Moreover, since the people, by worshiping the Golden Calf, belied their original, verbal acceptance of the first set of tablets, (which explains why Moses demonstratively, and symbolically shattered them) the Torah was, in effect, not accepted by the people, until the month of Tishrei.

Extrapolating this line of reasoning into the holidays which follow in Tishrei would lead us to the following conclusion: Rosh Hashanah represents the full acceptance of God's Revelation by the people, and Yom Kippur represents the full acceptance of the People's atonement by God. Linking the two, are the Aseret Yemai Teshuva , the ten days of repentance representing the Jewish People's mournful contrition ("Vayitabolu," Exodus 33:4) for having previously worshiped the Golden Calf in violation of the Torah, the Torah which they now genuinely accepted. God's full forgiveness on Yom Kippur leads immediately to the holiday of Succot. The Succah represents God's home, the Tabernacle, built by the Jewish people to house God's Word, the Luchot, and God's Presence, the Annanei Kavod, the clouds of Glory. The passionate, albeit volatile, relationship of God and the Jewish People is consummated as the cloud fills the Tabernacle, at the conclusion of the Book of Exodus.

3. Finally, one might resolve the apparent duplication of Revelation holidays by concluding that in the Written Torah, only Rosh Hashanah commemorated the Revelation at Sinai. Shavuot did not commemorate the Revelation at Sinai at all, but rather commemorated the miraculous falling of the Mon and especially the double portion of Mon which the Jewish People received every Erev Shabbat while they were in the desert. Since the Mon was the first fresh bread that the Biblical Jews were able to eat following the Exodus once their provisions of Matzot ran out, we brought our first fresh bread from the Land's harvest on Shavuot as a gift to God. By doing so, we both thanked God for what God had done for our ancestors in the desert and acknowledged God as the source of the Land's bounty. In addition, Shavuot was the holiday in which we thanked God for the gift of Shabbat by offering God two omers of wheat bread as thanksgiving for the two omers of Mon bread which God gave each and every Jew in the desert on the eve of Shabbat. It is therefore conceivable that in the Written Torah, Shavuot celebrated God's physical nurturance of his people in the desert and on the Land by giving them their daily bread and their weekly rest, while Rosh Hashanah celebrated God's spiritual nurturance of His people via the Revelation at Mount Sinai.

This is not far removed from the view expressed by the fifteenth century Biblical exegete Abravanel, who argues, in his commentary on Leviticus twenty-three, that although Shavuot falls out on the day of the Revelation, it is not meant to commemorate that event at all. Rather, according to Abravanel, Shavuot was meant as a new grain thanksgiving festival "to the One who provides bread to all living creatures". While Abravanel did not link the Holiday of Shavuot to the Mon nor the Holiday of Rosh Hashanah to the Revelation, he nevertheless set a precedent by de-coupling the meaning of the holiday of Shavuot from the Revelation and linking it instead to thanking God for being the source of our "bread".

According to this latter theory, why then does Shavuot fall on the very day of the Revelation? First of all, there is a disagreement in the Talmud (Tractate Shabbat 86b) as to when the Revelation took place, with the disagreement spreading over a two day period. The Magen Avraham (Orach Hayyim 494) states categorically in agreement with Rabbi Yossi's

opinion in the Talmud, that the Revelation took place on the seventh day of Sivan, and not on Shavuot, which occurs on the sixth day of Sivan. Second, with the exception of Passover, none of the other Biblical Festivals fall out precisely on the date when the original historical event occurred, so it could very well be merely coincidental that the Holiday of Shavuot and the Revelation at Sinai occur within one day of each other. Ultimately, the very fact that the Torah did not link the Revelation at Mount Sinai to the Holiday of Shavuot in any of its descriptions of the holiday (Exodus 23:16, Leviticus 23:16, Numbers 28:26, Deuteronomy 16:10), is the most persuasive argument for us not to assume a necessary connection between the two either.

Why did the rabbis create such confusion?

Nonetheless, the question remains, why did the Oral tradition of the Torah, for which our Sages were the medium and transmitters, emphasize the linkage of Shavuot (and not Rosh Hashanah) with the Sinai Revelation, and Rosh Hashanah with Creation? We can only speculate as to the reasons.

Perhaps, the destruction of the Temple and the exile from the Land so demoralised the Jewish People, that the Rabbis felt compelled in the spirit of "ayt la'asot laHashem, heyferu Toratecha" ("for the sake of God, they breached your Torah") to emphasize the Oral tradition in which Shavuot would not be linked to the destroyed Temple or to the then, barren Land. To associate Shavuot with the bringing of the first fruits to the Temple would have evoked immense psychological pain when the Jewish People had neither first fruits nor a Temple in which to offer those fruits to God. Instead, our Sages emphasized the historical tradition correlating Shavuot with the Revelation at Sinai. The Sinai Revelation was far more meaningful for the exiles since it took place outside the land, in the desert, which metaphorically speaking, was where the Jewish People found themselves again. The product which emerged from the Revelation, the Covenant, was one the Jewish People could wholeheartedly embrace while living in the Diaspora. Having linked Shavuot with the Revelation, the Rabbis then searched for an additional, universal meaning to Rosh Hashanah as a commemoration of Creation which could buttress observance of the latter holiday by Jews in the Diaspora and make it more palatable in a predominantly non-Jewish culture. Since they undoubtedly had an ancient Oral Tradition linking the creation of the world and of Adam to this day (BT, Rosh Hashanah 10b), they emphasized that tradition while still leaving discernible vestiges of the Revelation within the liturgy and ritual. This might be called the "domino" theory of how the Rabbis interpreted the holidays.

I would propose a second theory that is even more speculative and which greater historical scholars than myself can either verify or refute. That theory would argue that because of the grave threat which early Christianity posed to Rabbinic Judaism, the Rabbis, in defense of Judaism, emptied Shavuot of its Biblical association to both the Mon and bread generally and instead used the metaphors of bread and Mon to stand for Torah (see, for instance, Sifre on Deuteronomy, Eykev, 48; Midrash Shemot Rabbah, 5:9). They did this as part of their polemic against early Christianity's transmutation of the Mon and of bread to symbolize the body of Christianity's savior (see, for instance John 6:48,49,51 and Matthew 26:26). Thus the holiday of Shavuot, in which the Bible celebrated God's physical nurturance of His people, was decisively reinterpreted by the Rabbis into the holiday celebrating God's spiritual nurturance of His people. Having done this, the Rabbis associated Rosh Hashanah with the Universal message of Creation to counter Christianity's further critique of Judaism as being parochial and particularistic..This might be called the "self-defense" theory of the Rabbinic interpretation of the holidays. In both cases, the Rabbinic interpretation of the Holidays took hold and became authoritative.

In Conclusion

Now that the Jewish People have, thank God, returned to their land, and now that the need for anti-Christian polemics has almost entirely disappeared, it is time, perhaps, to reemphasize the original, Biblical meaning of these holidays in addition to the Rabbinic meanings, in order to deepen our religious experience and bring ourselves closer to God.

Three closing thoughts in this regard:

1. The holiday of Shavuot, which for the Torah was the holiday in which we thanked God for the physical nurturance of our people both in the desert and later on the land, should become, again, a focal point for the physical nurturance of our people today. In other words, in addition to celebrating Matan Torah, the giving of the Torah, Shavuot should become the holiday in which we embrace God's Torah by caring for those who need our physical and psychic nurturance. Shavuot should be the holiday, par excellence, for teaching and practicing Tzedakah and Gemilut Chasadim.

2. Re-appropriating the meaning of Rosh Hashanah as the commemoration of God's Revelation at Sinai in addition to the meaning of Rosh Hashanah as commemorating God's Creation of the world, would parallel the way Shabbat commemorates both the Exodus from Egypt (a particularistic event) and the Creation of the World (a universal event). Both Rosh Hashanah and Shabbat would then signify the celebration of Melech HaOlam, the "King of the Universe", and Hashem Elokeynu, the God of the Jewish people, the two components which dialectically comprise every Jewish blessing. Linking the universal and the Particular in this way would deepen and mutually reinforce the meaningfulness of this holiday.

3. The nearly universal synagogue attendance of American Jews on Rosh Hashanah reflects a Jungian "collective unconscious" memory of Rosh Hashanah as the reenactment of the Revelation at Sinai. Like the Biblical Jews at the Revelation who responded to God's Voice with the words "Na'aseh VeNishma", "we will obey and then understand", contemporary Jews often obediently come to synagogue on Rosh Hashanah without quite fully understanding why they are there. This unconscious memory of standing as a people before God at Sinai should be brought back into consciousness. This would restore the intended

meaning to the term "Yom Hazikaron", the "Day of Remembering", which Rosh Hashanah is aptly called in the Rabbinic tradition. As currently understood, Yom Hazikaron is primarily about God remembering. But God does not have memory problems. It is we who are prone to forget and whom the Torah admonishes to remember God's Revelation at Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 4: 9,10). By remembering what we have forgotten, we can make Rosh Hashanah again for our communities, what it was in the time of Ezra and what it was meant to be in the Torah: the holiday in which we reaffirm God's Revelation and our acceptance of God's Covenant at Mount Sinai.

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SARAH'S *Choice*

By Eleanor Wilner

The testing of Sarah

A little rain
the desert in the beauty of its winter
bloom, the cactus ablaze
with yellow flowers that glow
even at night in the reflected light
of moon and the shattered crystal of sand
when time was so new
that God still walked
among the tents, leaving no prints
in the sand, but a brand burned into
the heart on such a night
it must have been, although
it is not written in the Book
how God spoke to Sarah
what he demanded of her
how many questions came of it
how a certain faith was
fractured, as a stone is split
by its own fault, a climate of extremes
and one last drastic change
in the temperature.
"Go!" said the Voice. "Take your son,
your only son, whom you love,
take him to the mountain, bind him
and make of him a burnt offering."
Now Isaac was the son of Sarah's age,
a gift, so she thought, from God. And how
could he ask her even to imagine such a thing
to take the knife
of the butcher and thrust it
into such a trusting heart, then
light the pyre on which tomorrow burns.
What fear could be more holy
than the fear of that?

"Go!" said the Voice, Authority's own.
And Sarah rose to her feet, stepped out
of the tent of Abraham to stand between
the desert and the distant sky, holding its stars
like tears it was too cold to shed.
Perhaps she was afraid the firmament
would shudder and give way, crushing her
like a line of ants who, watching
the ants ahead marching safe under the arch,
are suddenly smashed by the heel
they never suspected. For Sarah,
with her desert-dwelling mind, could
see the grander scale in which the heel
might simply be the underside of some Divine
intention. On such a scale, what is
a human son? So there she stood, absurd
in the cosmic scene, an old woman bent
as a question mark, a mote in the eye
of God. And then it was that Sarah spoke
in a soft voice, a speech
the canon does not record.

The teachings of Sarah

"No," said Sarah to the Voice.
"I will not be chosen. Nor shall my son
if I can help it. You have promised Abraham,
through this boy, a great nation. So either
this sacrifice is sham, or else it is a sin.
Shame," she said, for such is the presumption
of mothers, "for thinking me a fool,
for asking such a thing. You must have known
I would choose Isaac. What use have I
for History an arrow already bent
when it is fired from the bow?"

Saying that, Sarah went into the tent
and found her restless son awake, as if
he'd grown aware of the narrow bed in which he lay.
And Sarah spoke out of the silence
she had herself created, or that had been there
all along. "Tomorrow you will be
a man. Tonight, then, I must tell you
the little that I know. You can be chosen
or you can choose. Not both.

The voice of the prophet grows shrill.
He will read even defeat as a sign

of distinction, until pain itself
becomes holy. In that day, how shall we tell
the victims from the saints,
the torturers from the agents of God?"

"But mother," said Isaac, "if we were not God's
chosen people, what then should we be? I am afraid
of being nothing." And Sarah laughed.

The unbinding of Isaac

Then she reached out her hand. "Isaac,
I am going now, before Abraham awakes, before
the sun, to find Hagar the Egyptian and her son
whom I cast out, drunk on pride,
God's promises, the seed of Abraham
in my own late-blooming loins."

"But Ishmael," said Isaac, "how should I greet him?"
"As you greet yourself," she said, "when you bend
over the well to draw water and see your image,
not knowing it reversed. You must know your brother
now, or you will see your own face looking back
the day you're at each other's throats."

She wrapped herself in a thick dark cloak
against the desert's enmity, and tying up
her stylus, bowl, some dates, a gourd
for water she swung her bundle on her back,
reached out one more toward Isaac.
"It's time," she said. "Choose now."

"But what will happen if we go?" the boy
Isaac asked. "I don't know," Sarah said
"But it is written what will happen if you stay."

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NOTES

On a Trip to Israel

By Joseph R. Rackman
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Monday, July 5th

I go for an early morning walk on the beach of Herzliya, with the Mediterranean Sea to my left and the sun rising to my right. After a while, the high tide runs up against a barrier wall and I am forced to turn inland. I walk along a residential street which contains the seafront home of the American Ambassador to Israel. I wend my way, following the information from the guidebook, towards the Sidna Ali Mosque. It is not very impressive. Opposite, across a ravine, lies Tel Arsuf, a poor city that was first founded in approximately 4500 B.C.E. It would later be conquered by Persians and then by Arabs. It was near here, in 1191, that Richard the Lion Heart defeated the army of Salah al-Din. The Crusaders were eventually defeated in battle there in 1265. It is another reminder that peace in the Middle East has always proven elusive and that periods of political contentment have been far and few between.

What impresses most this morning is a cement structure ten feet high, ten feet wide and fifteen feet long. The whitewashed cement structure has an iron door. It is a public bomb shelter, a miklat. The sight of it delights me. Why? Because there is a lock on the door. Years ago, the structure would have been accessible at all times, night and day, for Israelis who feared attacks from neighboring Arab armies. May the lock stay on the door for a long time to come.

Tuesday, July 6th

In the north of Israel, in the Galil, I am staying at an extraordinarily tranquil spa, Mitzpeh Hayamim. It is frequented mostly by Israelis. The Americans who are here have heard of it, in the main, from Americans who have made aliyah. Most of the food served here has been grown organically on the grounds. My wife and I are more impressed by the quiet and the breezes as we rest, overlooking Lake Tiberias.

I go walking above the hotel, where they grow the crops. As I get to the northernmost border of the property, beyond the fence, is a land whose only crop is rocks. Bursting through the soil are boulders, some as large as 12 cubic yards, but most are smaller; every square foot has a rock of some size. The land below the fence is fertile, the product of backbreaking work. When trying to explain to our children the miracle that is the State of Israel, perhaps, instead of having them plant a tree, we should have them come to barren soil like this and have them clear a square yard. Some of our children with sharper tongues will point out that now we have

machines that do that, but we can answer that back then they didn't.

Wednesday, July 7th

I have suffered Israeli insolence on a few occasions, but have also met with courtesy more often than on prior visits to Israel.

This time it is an Israeli cab driver who has blocked my car in its space. Since there are a few inches to maneuver, he leaves me to my own devices. My first thought is that this is "typical" Israeli and then my second thought is that New York cab drivers are not any better, but at least in Israel (unlike New York) most of the cab drivers speak English.

By car, I cross the imaginary green line and enter the Golan. It was my intention to visit this are before it again became Syrian. There are beautiful nature trails and a special spot to visit is Banias, where there is temple to the Greek god of nature, Pan; in Arabic there is no sound for the letter "P" so the area, instead of being known as Panais became known by its present name.

In these beautiful semi-arid surroundings I wonder what has changed since 1967 when Syrian troops atop these heights threatened and for long periods of time fired upon the Israelis below. Stunningly, in the last Israeli election, a vast majority of the residents of the Golan Heights voted for now Prime Minister Barak, who seems intent on returning their land to Syria. Additionally, in the near future, large parts of the West Bank will be given over to the Palestinians. The Kenesset of Israel is now filled with soldiers who saw comrades die in the 1967 war (when the West Bank and the Golan Heights were won) and, for reasons that are unclear to me, these former soldiers seem intent on giving back that which they had attained at so costly a price.

The most moving moment of the day (and one of the most moving moments I have had in Israel) came about by accident. On the way back to the hotel, we passed the Dubrovin farm. The guidebook noted that there were nice ceramics for sale there and, so there were. But there was so much more.

The farm is in Yesod Hamaala. Founded in the late 19th Century, it was in the midst of the malaria-infested Hula swamp. Never more than a score or two of families, the settlement remained small and isolated. For sixty or seventy years, there would be no electricity. Families with ten or more children were lucky if one survived. The Arabs marauded and the land was stingy.

Dubrovin, who settled here at the end of the last century, was a Sobbotnikim, a Russian Orthodox Christian sect that felt that in order to understand Christianity, one had to return to Bible study and seek out the Jewish roots of Christianity. Dubrovin went all the way down to the very root and converted to Judaism and then made aliyah before there was a Ministry of Absorption or Ulpans. It was his son, who died at the age of 104, who donated this farmland to the Jewish National Fund, which now maintains it as a museum.

The slideshow depicted how what is now a lush and fertile valley after the Hula swamp had been drained, was once hell on earth. Understand that the settlement of Yesod Hamaala played no role in Jewish history. The few families that were here have no military heroics to boast of, no great cultural figures came from here, in fact, had there never been a settlement of Yesod Hamaala, the course of Israeli history would not have been affected one bit. What fascinates me, though, is the passion these settlers had for religion and for this land on which they staked (and for whom most gave) their lives. In the grand scheme of things, what they did did not matter, but I envy them for they had a passion that consumed them and gave their lives meaning. How many of us can say that about ourselves?

Sunday, July 11th

In the hotel lobby I meet up with a friend from the old neighborhood in New York. He is a number of years younger than I and has become a successful entrepreneur. I leave out his name and the details of his business project for reasons that will be obvious.

He described to me the very interesting business he was trying to open up in Israel. Concerning one aspect of the business, he needed the approval of a ministry controlled by a religious political party. (This was prior to the recent elections.) The discussions with the representative of that party had been going well, my friend told me, until this person responded that he would approve the project provided that ten percent of the profits came to his religious party. The representative was surprised by the vehement and negative reaction of my friend. "What does it matter to you? The money goes to charity." My friend responded, "It is one thing for me to decide what charities the money should go to, and if you want me to agree that ten percent of my profits should go to charity, I do that anyway, and I will gladly put that in writing. But you will not decide for me what charities to give to or that the ten percent must go to your party."

My friend is hopeful that he will now, with a new government, get the approval he needs. One wonders if he will, after all Israel is a Middle Eastern country.

Monday, July 12th

We meet with Christian Zionists, Christians who see the fulfillment of God's word in the return of the Jews to their own independent state. There is no missionary agenda. When the Messiah comes, one of the female volunteer workers says, we'll find out if it is the first or second coming. In the meantime, she does God's work. Her father had been involved in forming a Christian group that was supportive of Jews in the State of Israel because of what he had seen during the Holocaust, as a soldier at the end of World War II. The daughter had come to Israel with her father as a youngster many times and it was a natural extension for her to wind up for the past ten years working for Bridges to Peace.

I am in their warehouse, where volunteers are assembling food packages to be distributed to needy immigrants. The Bibles given to new immigrants are in Hebrew and Russian and contain only the Hebrew scriptures. Each week thirteen hundred families receive help from them.

The dedication and sense of mission of all involved in this enterprise is clearly evident. They see the hand of God working in history. How odd that so few Jews see this, or, perhaps not, as there are not many Christians like these either.

The next visit is with Sister Magdalit and the other sisters of the Beatitude Order. They add on to their Catholic observances many Jewish rituals. So, for example, Friday nights are celebrated with the Kabalat Shabbat service. The members of the order fast on Yom Kippur. At times, they shed their habits and attend synagogues in ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods.

Theirs is an attempt to bring Jewish practices into Christianity, not merely to remind Christians of their Jewish roots. The message they bring is that Judaism is alive and well and that contemporary Catholics can learn from this. This is a direct outgrowth of the Vatican II Council that gave proper status to Judaism as the mother religion of Catholicism.

I asked Sister Magdalit what she would say to Jews who are angry over the granting of sainthood to Edith Stein (a Jew who converted to Catholicism, became a nun, who was rounded up by the Nazis because she had been born a Jew, and who died in Auschwitz). Many Jews have been concerned that this elevation of Edith Stein is reminiscent of the desire of the Catholic Church to convert the Jews, as well as an attempt to make a claim on the Holocaust, that its victims were not only Jews.

Sister Magdalit shakes her head and with her whole body language rejects these assertions. "Absolutely not true. The whole idea was to honor Edith Stein as a Jew. She died because she was a Jew and here we have a Jew who is a saint. The reaction is just the opposite of what it should be."

There is no doubt in my mind that she is sincere in her words.

Tuesday, July 13th

This is the first time I visited the grave site of my mother in Israel. It is an overwhelming experience. In the same burial grounds, eighty feet away, I also go visit the grave of the first husband of my niece. An extraordinarily wonderful young man, he died of a brain tumor at the age of 27. I think of him often for he personifies, for me, the question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" Another ten minute car ride away, I visited the graves of my paternal grandparents.

Even as Israel is a living, breathing organism for me, it is also the land of the dead.

Two nice stories about Haredim, the ultra-Orthodox. First, the (female) Protestant Minister whom we met with yesterday had been a victim of a terrorist bombing two years ago in the Jerusalem open market. She bore no ill will and told how one day a Haredi came rushing into her hospital room and handed her a check. He was out the door by the time she could see that it was for 17,500 Shekels (approximately $5,000 at the exchange rate back then). She had no idea why she had received the check or what it was for. It was only when talking to the other bombing victims who were in the hospital with her, including one Arab, that they realized that they each had received checks in the identical amounts. It turns out that this Hareidi group tries to recompense victims and to give them funds to help them through the difficult times (because of the medical bills and loss of income from not working). In and out came the Haredi, doing a good deed without thought of thanks or praise.

Today, a second, smaller episode. I am walking along the pedestrian shopping area on Ben Yehuda Street. There are pillars with notices on them and a Hareidi has taken out a penknife and is slashing a small posted notice that is in Russian. Of all the many notices on the column, I am wondering why he is attacking this particular one and no others. He says to me, "Missionaries." He is defacing a notice that is seeking out Russian immigrants in order to convert them to Christianity. There are many other posters on the column with which he disagrees, whose models in the pictures are not dressed properly enough and notices of political parties with whom he undoubtedly disagrees vehemently. It is only this notice that he singles out for obliteration.

Thursday, July 15th

The national cemetery in Jerusalem, Mount Herzl, is a somber place, but an essential place. Without these graves, there is no State of Israel.

Slain Prime Minister Rabin's grave site is here. Two large stones sit atop his grave; one is dark charcoal, the other light grey. Perhaps some people see this as symbolic of the good and the evil sides of Israeli society. Probably, of all societies.

What is most interesting is the recent Israeli Supreme Court decision concerning the language on the graves of the soldiers. Until now, the content on the tombstones has been uniform, noting the names, the serial numbers, the places the soldiers fell, and the age at death. Recently, a mother sued and won the right to put a more individualized inscription on her fallen son's tombstone. This reflects the movement of this young nation towards a focus on individuality. This is a luxury that the young State of Israel, beleaguered on all sides, could not afford in its early years. Everything was directed towards the good of the collective (and rightly so). The society is maturing and the State is becoming the vehicle for individuals to realize their own needs instead of that of the State. What is amazing is that it has taken only fifty years to achieve this.

Friday morning, July 16th

I go for an early morning walk around the city of Jerusalem. It is still quiet and there are few cars or pedestrians. Then I noticed my sneakers squeaking against the wet stone, yet it has not rained here in months. (From mid-Spring to mid-Fall there is no rainfall in Israel.) My sneakers have trouble getting a grip on the smooth Jerusalem stones that has been lubricated by the waters. I turn down an alleyway and come into an open plaza and I realize the cause of my imbalance. A street cleaning crew is watering all of the squares and another machine is gathering up the litter and I realized the difference between living as a Jew in the United States and living in Israel. The Old City is being cleaned up for Shabbat. This is the only day of the week when this cleaning occurs, but in Israel the public place reflects Jewish needs. In America, we are almost embarrassed to be twenty-five percent of the Forbes 400. As Jews there are still some of us who say we should not stand out too much. In Israel it makes perfect sense for public activities to be centered around the Jewish calendar. Not so in America where the Jewish place is in the home.

I get lost again and find myself going down an alleyway I have not seen before and come to a small plaza that directly overlooks the Western Wall. I hear the sound of song wafting up and I later learn that the voices are from a group of religious girls who graduated from high school two weeks ago and who had just returned from a trip to Auschwitz. They had gone directly to the Western Wall where their parents were meeting them.

The songs of Zion and of their faith in God that I hear on the overlook are a perfect accompaniment to the swaying bodies that I see before the Western Wall. And then I turn back to wend my way down to the Western Wall to pray and I see a basketball hoop mounted against a wall. This would have so delighted Theodore Herzl, the founder of Modern Zionism. What he desired was a normal state for the Jewish people, one like all others. There is something beautiful about a young person trying to dunk the ball into the basket knowing that he will be able to see the site of the Temple Mount just after passing the ball through the hoop.

Though I had been in Jerusalem for nine days now, I had yet to actually go up to the Western Wall to pray. On the prior Friday evening, our group had welcomed the Sabbath in the plaza above the wall. This time I went down and someone approached me asking if I wanted t'fellin, the prayer boxes that are used during daily prayer. Mine were back in the hotel, so I said yes. And I went up to the wall to pray. In past years I had always gone there the first thing upon my arrival in Israel and this is the only time when I can remember when my sole visit to pray at the wall was on my very last day in Jerusalem.

In prior years, I would pray for things to happen in my life and in the life of my family and my people. This time, my prayer was different. This time I prayed for wisdom. This time I prayed to know what I should want from God.

Friday afternoon, July 16th

The cousin who grew up in the house next door to us and with whom I am very close, lives in an Israeli settlement in the Gaza strip. My wife and I are visiting him for Shabbat. On the way there, in the cellphone era, we called the sleep-away camp in the Catskills where our boys are spending the summer. We learn that the twelve-year old has fractured his elbow. I am disturbed and my wife is (like a good Jewish mother) frantic. Then we recollect that my cousin has four sons in the Israeli army. It certainly places a fractured elbow in perspective

* * *

One last thought. We must remain Israel's guarantor even as it is our guarantor. We are each other's insurance policy, only the premium payments are higher in Israel.

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GOOD *Grief*

By Gary Rosenblatt

Last week was once of profound sadness for us, as Americans and Jews. We mourned the loss of John Kennedy Jr., his wife and sister-in-law, in a tragic plane crash which happened to occur during the saddest days of the Jewish calendar, culminating in Tisha b'Av, when we commemorate the destruction of the Holy Temple.

During that time, I could not help but note the contrast in grieving, between our American culture and our Jewish tradition, between two types of vicarious experiences one intense but fleeting and the other memorialized in time. One is obsessed with celebrity, the individual, while the other is focused on the collective, dealing with tragedy in a way that helps us confront death and live more meaningful lives.

In recent years, thanks in large part to advanced technology, we have seen a globalization of grief. When Yitzchak Rabin was assassinated, when Princess Diana was killed in a car accident and now, with John Kennedy Jr.'s death, people all over the world are immediately caught up in the tragedy. Some bring flowers, candles or notes to a particular site, which becomes an instant shrine. These are sincere expressions of sadness, but for most of us, the experience is intensely passive.

We read about the events in our newspapers and magazines, and sit in front of our television screens. And we see how the media feels the need, particularly with JFK Jr.'s death, to elevate the victim into a hero or larger-than-life personality.

Last week Kennedy was described as a young prince and compared to a variety of Greek gods, including Lycidas and Icarus, who was cursed for attempting to fly too close to the sun, though friends and colleagues described him as remarkably down to earth.

In Judaism, we do not mourn the deaths of prophets and kings. We mourn the deaths of ordinary Jews, as in the readings of elegies on Tisha b'Av, noting the tragedies that have befallen our people from the days of the prophets, to the Crusades in the Middle Ages, to the Holocaust in this century.

We know the yahrtzeit of Moses, our greatest leader (the seventh day of Adar), but it is not a day of national mourning. That is reserved for the destruction of the Temple, and the nameless men, women and children who perished.

Judaism is not about heroes. It's about faith, commandments, justice, and the lessons of history.

Part of the genius of our religion is in its collective memory, its ability to remember long-ago events by internalizing them. The exodus of Egypt is still real for us because, through the annual seder, we taste the bitterness of slavery in the maror and the sweetness of freedom in the four cups of wine.

And on Tisha b'Av we relive the destruction of the Temple. Even though it took place many centuries ago, we abstain from food and drink, we sit on the floor as mourners, we read and recite aloud the wrenching, eyewitness account of the tragedy, and we cry out for the loss of life and of God's tangible presence on earth.

In short, we take an event and make the experience real, while our society's form of national grief, with its televised hype and imagery, is to make the experience unreal.

The Kennedy and Bessette families sought valiantly to maintain privacy and dignity and to mourn through time-honored traditions of religious ritual. But the rest of us were spectators, captives of the media's dramatized images imposed upon us.

The experiential lesson of Judaism, by contrast, is that an event will not have lasting meaning unless we are, in a sense, participants. If we don't mourn the loss of the Temple, it will truly be gone. So we invest our emotions and ourselves. We read the lamentations on Tisha b'Av and sense the change of tone, from the initial eicha, which asks God, in effect, "how could you?" to outright expressions of anger, to a belief in a future in which peace will be restored.

The day of fasting, mourning and prayer offers an emotional catharsis and chance for psychological growth as we work through disbelief, resentment and, finally, acceptance. The lesson is that if we make the investment, we can reap the reward.

We are taught that ultimately Tisha b'Av will be a day of great joy in Messianic times. But only those who understand and appreciate the destruction can understand the potential for renewal, and only they will merit to rejoice.

In last week's Torah reading, we were reminded that Judaism, unlike American culture, is not about Me, the individual, the celebrity. It's about the people, the nation even at the expense of the leader of the nation.

God has decided that after 40 years under Moses in the desert, the Israelites need a new leader to take them into the Promised Land. God is preparing them for a life of normalcy. No more daily miracles and relying on Moses for whatever is lacking. The new life in the land of Israel will revolve around living God's laws, working the lands, getting along with each other.

But on a personal level, this is difficult for Moses to accept. He has led a long, healthy and incredibly fulfilled life. He has had a singularly close relationship with God, led the Israelites out of slavery, and given them the Torah.

But he is not at peace. He wants to enter the Promised Land, even if only briefly. And though God has told him this will not happen, he continues to make his case.

If only I had more time, he no doubt argues, I could accomplish so much more.

It's an age-old plea, for indeed, we never have enough time. That's the inherent tragedy in every life. It ends before we are ready, whether it's John Kennedy Jr.'s at 38, or Moses at 120.

All we can do, then, is be grateful for every new day and look on it as a blessing, to be lived to the fullest. Not as hedonists, but through the discipline of commandments, comforted by the eternity of faith.

Already the Kennedy tragedy has begun to recede in the headlines. The media and our society are on to the next issue. But for the Jewish people, the message of Tisha b'Av has not been lost or forgotten. The events of 2,000 years ago are still real for us, the pain is still fresh in our memories and hearts.

The Talmud says: "Those who mourn for Jerusalem will merit to see it in its joy."

Let's hope that in recalling and experiencing the pain of Jewish history we will be rewarded to share in its glory as well.

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WEXNER HERITAGE
REVIEW

IN SEARCH OF THE
Magic Teen Bullet

This piece, which does not break any new ground, contains a fine survey of the communal debate about the Israel experience and other informal Jewish programatic activities. Read this piece before attending the next budgeting meeting of your local Federation. (*Jewish Spectator*, Fall 1998, P.O. Box 267, New London, New Hampshire 03257, $26 annually)

MOROCCO, *Anybody?*

The "New Middle East" does not seem so changed. Walter Zanger, a rabbi who is a professional tourist guide in Israel, publishes a monthly newsletter. In one issue he included a report of his wife's trip to Morocco. Sad to report, Morocco, which is often thought to be one of the friendlier (to Israel) Arab nations, is not quite as friendly as was hoped. (*From Jerusalem*, a Newsletter from Walter Zanger, fax no. 972-2-6419963, $48 annually)

STEPHEN *DUBNER*

Stephen Dubner was raised by Catholic parents only to discovery that both of his parents had been born Jewish. It is illustrative of the search for identity that is commonplace today in society. This description of Dubner's life includes excerpts from the marvelous story of his self-discovery and reconciliation with his (still) devoutly Catholic mother as told in *Turbulent Souls: A Catholic Son's Return to His Jewish Family*. Both the article and the book itself are well worth reading. (*Lifestyles*, New Year 1999, www.lifestylesmag.com)

LOVE
Without A Cause

Ever attend an Orthodox wedding and wonder about the frenzied dancing that you see? This groom, in the midst of the celebration of his own wedding, finally understood what it was all about and shares his insight with us. (*Moment*, June 19, 1999, published bi-monthly, 1-800-777-1005, $27 annually)

Excerpts from
In Search of the Magic Jewish Teen Bullet

By Yosef I. Abramowitz

Abbe Schindler, twenty-years-old, is ambitious. She wants to be an actress and also to save the Jewish people. She's been to Israel three times twice with Young Judaea and once through March of the Living and she's hooked.

"It was the best experience of my life," she says of her recent year of studies on Young Judaea's Year Course. "I found out the American Jewish community needs me far more than Israel does."

One of only a few Jews in her high school, Abbe went to Hebrew school three times a week until her bat mitzvah. Most importantly, she became active at her parents' behest in Young Judaea at age eight, years before she could rebel. "After my bat mitzvah, I had to choose between continuing the Hebrew school or being active in YJ," she says. "No contest." She subsequently went to Israel with Young Judaea after her sophomore year in high school, and then rose to the top elected post, *mazkirah*, of the 11,000-member Zionist, Hadassah-supported, peer-led youth movement.

"If I had a billion dollars to give to teen programming," she says, "it would go to subsidies to send teens to Israel."

The sentiment is echoed by her father, [Wexner Heritage alumni] Joel Schindler, the former chief executive officer of Israel Experience, Inc., a two-year-old communal instrument to facilitate sending teens to Israel. As it happens, philanthropists Michael Steinhardt and Charles Bronfman are currently considering the possibility of making a trip to Israel a birthright for every teen, but will have to raise and spend a pile of money before they can begin implementing the program. After Bronfman and the organized community spent an estimated four million dollars on a major initiative, 3,659 teens went to Israel this last summer, as opposed to 2,211 teens the previous summer. Most of the increase between 1996 and 1997 is due to the major push Hadassah has made to send teens to Israel on a variety of Young Judaea programs. In 1995, over 3,000 made the trek.

When the Israel Experience initiative was first launched by Charles Bronfman, the dream unveiled in a large-screen video presentation at Radio City Music Hall was to send 50,000 teens to Israel each year starting in the year 2,000. While no one cites such high figures anymore, organizers insist that the numbers will start to grow dramatically in 1999 and 2000 as Israel trip savings programs become due. The typical program involves a family, federation, and synagogue. Each chips in several hundred dollars a year starting around bar/bat mitzvah or earlier into a special account, often called Israel Passport Programs, to send the teen to Israel when she or he is a junior in high school.

The impact is strong and, in some cases, dramatic. In other cases, the impact is minimal. "The Israel visit of one's youth seems to bring with it a fifteen percent increment in the chances of scoring high on Jewish involvement," concluded a 1993 study of teens. Steven Cohen warns that Israel programs increase a participant's connection to and support for Israel, but has little lasting impact on other types of Jewish involvement.

"The teen years are years when youth really begin to explore themselves, their identity," says the elder Schindler, who holds a Ph.D. in molecular genetics and was active in national Young Judaea twenty-five years ago. "Teens begin to ask questions of meaning, what their place in the world is supposed to be and look like. They begin to distance themselves from their nuclear family. It's a time when they begin to question themselves at all kinds of different levels physically, emotionally, intellectually." The Israel Experience, and all substantive informal Jewish teen experiences, are effective because "you take an individual who is asking those questions and put them in an environment where those questions can be answered in a meaningful, experiential Jewish way not in a pedagogic or didactic way. You give the participants an opportunity to learn by experience.

There's a problem. Israel programs will only reach a certain slice of the American Jewish teen pie. Says Joe Riemer of the Hornstein program at Brandeis, "when bombs go off, as they did this past summer, no amount of marketing can attract huge numbers of kids to Israel." Federations find that sometimes there's more excitement among donors than among teens. "We can't give away all the tickets we have," said a senior federation executive of a major city who spoke during a leadership briefing that was not clearly off-the-record. Yet he quickly added, looking at a reporter, "If you quote me, I'll deny I ever said it." Don't have a cow. Everybody knows it, anyway. Or now they do.

"We don't believe this is a magic bullet," says Schindler. "It would be inappropriate to assume that if we had access to all the resources that we really needed, if we could send every Jewish kid to Israel in the summer, that would not, in and of itself, insure or guarantee that they would remain connected to the Jewish people. What I think it would do, is it would enhance their desire and willingness to remain engaged." So there must be enough innovative mechanisms to engage the thousands of charged Israel Experience returnees.

A team from the Louis Guttman Israel Institute of Applied Social Research researched the Jewish involvement of the Baby Boom Generation. "Nine years of Jewish education (by implication, into high school) appears to be a turning point in connecting Jewish education with Jewish involvement" said the study's authors, Mordechai Rimor and Elihu Katz. The report concludes that "Jewish day schools are clearly the best vehicle for implementing Jewish involvement. Their effects far surpass part-time and Sunday schools." Sylvia Barack Fishman in her highly-regarded work, *Negotiating Both Sides of the Hyphen: Coalescence, Compartmentalization, and American-Jewish Values*, similarly argues: "Only extensive formal Jewish education has a positive link with the propensity to marry a Jewish mate, to establish a Jewish household, and to raise Jewish children.

If Jewish high schools are a potential cure-all, why haven't they taken off? Rabbi Irving Greenberg says that while the recognition of the importance of day school education through high school is a feature of Modern Orthodoxy, the larger community's recognition "has been glacially slow." Price is a major barrier. With at least two children in most day school families, and tuition costing $8,000 or so per student, the price of Jewish education soars out of the reach of most families. The average household income in the 1990 NJPS of families with children showed about $50,000. A study commissioned by the Samis Foundation in Seattle demonstrated that when tuition drops, enrollment climbs. The foundation underwrote tuition in one school so that the cost per participant was $3,000 a year. Enrollment shot up fifteen percent the first year. Understanding the relationship between tuition costs and levels of attendance, the Avi Chai Foundation recommends that the Jewish community support controversial school voucher programs, in which the state underwrites a portion of the tuition for each student enrolled in a private school.

While teen enrollment in Jewish high schools will continue to climb as new communities build schools a dozen are in the works the majority of teens will get their Jewish education elsewhere. "Sixty percent of the kids are in supplementary schools," says Isaacs of JESNA. "I think that it's too idealistic to think that day schools are the magic bullet. The truth in America is that we're not going to be increasing day school attendance to eighty percent. It's just not going to happen. So for the large percentage that are in supplementary schools, they ought to be the best darn supplementary schools there ever were."

While nine years or more of Jewish education is highly effective in preventing interfaith marriages, it is still not the elusive magic bullet. The dirty little secret of Jewish education is that twenty-eight percent of the Baby Boomer graduates of nine years of Jewish education have married out still a better ration than other formal or informal educational experiences. According to Phillips, those with two-three days a week of Jewish schooling and no informal Jewish experiences intermarried at above the NJPS's average. A similar Avi Chai-sponsored survey was a bit more optimistic about the effect of two-three days a week Jewish education on the rate of mixed-marriages. According to their study, these teens married out only forty-five percent of the time.

Dr. Steven Cohen of the Melton Center in Jerusalem contends that there is actually a negative correlation between intermarriage and Sunday school Jewish education. "Those Jewish kids who didn't have any Jewish schooling were more likely to marry someone Jewish than those who attended Sunday school," he told a conference of Wexner Graduate Fellow alumni. Phillips reports that those who only attended one-day-a-week school and had no other Jewish experiences intermarried seventy-three percent of the time, or about twenty percent higher than the national average reported in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. In other words, many of the Sunday schools are, like, major turn offs.

Bruce Phillips and the Wilstein Institute and the American Jewish Committee released a study, concluding that "increased attention must be given to dating patterns, peer group influences, and Jewish involvements *during the high school years* [emphasis theirs]. In this regard, Jewish youth groups have been a neglected resource." Phillips found that those adults who had mostly dated non-Jews in high school were more than twice as likely to intermarry than those who had dated mostly Jews. Go figure. Those teens who had mostly Jewish friends in high school were less likely, by about a third, of later marrying out than those who had mostly non-Jewish friends. "I don't date non-Jews," says Abbe Schindler, whose high school was one percent Jewish, but found Jews to go out with through her youth movement, camping and Israel experiences.

With teens, Jewish education is seen as "a girl thang." While the community's efforts for teens are generally lacking, it is nearly off the map when it comes to attracting teenage boys. Check out nearly every Jewish program and there's a gender mismatch: sixty percent girls to forty percent boys, sometimes even higher, like in Brandeis University's Genesis Program which attracted forty girls and twenty boys this last year. The imbalance applies to Israel programs, camps, youth movements, non-Orthodox day schools, and has tremendous implications.

If Jewish girls naturally gravitate to Judaism and Jewish life, then maybe the community should write off boys completely and encourage the classic carriers of tradition and home with full scholarships to schools and programs. Or perhaps the opposite, ponders Fishman of Brandeis. "Maybe it's the boys who need the full scholarships." Should there be separate programs based on gender? Should there be new programs devised to better attract boys? What would they look like? Says JESNA's Isaacs: "No one has studied this yet."

The implications of the gender gap in Judaism are great and extend far beyond the teen years. Synagogue membership and attendance are higher for women. Interfaith marriage is about twenty percent lower for Jewish women than Jewish men, although that gap is quickly closing, Fishman warns. Personal religiosity, home rituals, participation in adult education and other indicators of commitment to Jewish life tend to be higher for women than men. A comprehensive 1997 survey of the American Jewish Committee found that the feeling of being Jewish is "very important" in the lives of many women (sixty percent) and fewer men (forty-one percent). The gender-split first appears during the teen years. .

While certainly there's more than plenty of room for new teen initiatives and programs, what's most needed is a new understanding of what works and why. Enter Amy Sales, senior researcher at the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis. She doesn't think that Jewish life can compete openly and head-to-head with the larger teen culture with its superficial and attractive values, so we need to create "cultural islands." "Put kids on cultural islands morning, noon, and night camp, Israel, USY on Wheels, schools then you have the chance to remove them from their environmental context and live a real Jewish life, often for the first time. We hope that their experience will be sweet enough that they will bring pieces with them back to the mainland."

Often teens who do participate in these cultural island programs are not prepared to integrate what they have lived and learned back to their peer group at home. Simon Klarfeld, the director of the Genesis Program at Brandeis University, says that integration of the Jewish and the secular is at the heart of Genesis, where teens live as a pluralistic Jewish community while studying secular topics such as law, journalism, film, performing arts, and history from a Jewish values perspective. The Genesis model seems to be working, with JESNA and others interested in having the curriculum of the summer program branch out to communities during the year.

Yosef I. Abramowitz is co-author with Rabbi Susan Silverman of Jewish Family & Life: Traditions, Holidays and Valus for Today's Parents and Children (Golden Books); now in paperback, and serves as publisher of a new on-line teen initiative, Jvibe.com, which debuted in February, 1999.

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MOROCCO, *ANYBODY?*

excerpted from From Jerusalem, a newsletter from Walter Zanger

Years ago we used to hear stories from our Ein Karem neighbors, most of whom back then were Jews from Morocco, about how wonderful their life had been there before things went sour in 1948. No way of knowing how accurately they remembered their childhood, but still, Morocco was supposed to be a nice place. Israelis have gone visiting in recent years, since Oslo, and it was on my list of places to visit one of these days.

I haven't made it yet, but Paula [my wife] went during winter break with two lady friends, one Jewish, the other not. That may have been a mistake unaccompanied women do badly in Arab countries but they reported a most interesting (if unpleasant) phenomenon. Moroccan men were angry and aggressive, and somehow this unhappiness and aggression got translated into JEW. Here is a piece of her report:

> The wide streets of the new city of Marrakech appeared clean and our first impression of this red city (pink sandstone buildings, much like the color of Petra) was very positive. We said that we were going to love it there.
>
> But when we were out and about, and in the Old City (which is crumbling and impoverished), seeing children of 7 and 8 at work toiling in booths making copper pots,

and sewing gowns, and laboring and as we listened to arrogant Moroccan men admonishing us if we refused their offers to show us around, calling us "Jew" when we had said "No, thank you" in Arabic or in French, we decided that Morocco is not as enchanting a place as we had hoped it would be.

The women are sad-eyed. They do not answer when spoken to: we asked in French for help or directions, but they just stared.

The guides (we had 3) are arrogant, sleazy, and do not like women . . . certainly not western women traveling without men. We could not talk to each other without our guide in Fez saying "What did you say, madam? What was that?" and he did not let up, thinking we were judging him or his country or questioning something he said. He did not guide much, but just stopped and spoke with acquaintances, told us of a few places, and we saw in the guides that they are ill-informed and ignorant of facts and history. Arrogant, nasty, out to make a commission getting us into shops, which we resisted.

Two guides told us stories of the old cities' histories. Both started with the *mellah*, the Jewish ghetto [The word is used for the Jewish Quarter in Morocco. My encyclopedia says "etymology uncertain"-WZ.] The Fez guide, Rashid (the nasty awful man), told us that *mellah* means salt in Hebrew and the Jews of the *mellah* would salt the hides of the animals, preserving them, saving them, so they could drive up prices. That is how the word *mellah* applied to Jews and that is how these quarters in each city derived their names. He also told us of how a Jewish man in the old city ". . . destroyed a clock tower. No one knew how this fantastic clock worked, and since this Jewish man got very angry with his wife one night long ago, and smashed apart the tower clock, no one will ever know. Experts from all the nations have been sent to try to figure it out, but it cannot be rebuilt because this Jewish man destroyed it." . . .

Then, when walking with my cousin (I wish I had been there, I would have reacted!!) he said, "Do you see this old man? He is a Jew. Look at his big hook nose. That is how you can tell a Jew". Ann was aggravated, and made some comment, but did not get into a big argument. . .

The Arabs of Morocco, the guides, the men hanging around hoping to get us to pay them to take us around are nasty, arrogant and aggressive. They won't let up. "You are lost, admit it." "You can't find your way". Why won't you listen to me and let me take you?" They followed us, they yelled at us, and finally when one yelled "Fuck You" at Kay, she hollered "Police!" Then we were left alone by that menace.

Twice we were called "Jew" in the same way people call others "dirty dog" . . . it is just a derogatory term. I did not encounter that in Egypt or Israel (East Jerusalem) or in Jordan. So, I was surprised. Morocco seems more backward and more impoverished than Egypt. . .

Well, what a remarkable report! Don't know if I want to go to Morocco at all now. Did they have a bad time only because they were 3 unaccompanied women?

I am not surprised at the poverty and unhappiness. Life's rough all over and every country in the Middle East (except one) is worse off now than it was in 1948. But who can explain this fixation on the JEWS? Did the Jews really dominate life in the cities before 1948? Or is it a modern political dislike of Israel? Or is it that a lot of visitors to Morocco these days may be Moroccan Jews who are coming back for the first time in many years?

STEPHEN *DUBNER*

By Nan Goldberg

Stephen Dubner, a newlywed, is looking through his wedding photos for a picture in which you can clearly see the *bimah*.

"The wedding was my coming out publicly," he is explaining. "in a synagogue, in a congregation, as a Jew." As opposed to a bar mitzvah. He didn't have a bar mitzvah.

"So that was my procedure: a wedding, to do a public ceremony as a Jew getting married," he continues. "Although, in my case it was tricky. I was *already* a Jew,"

Well, he was and he wasn't.

Stephen J. Dubner was born a Catholic, in 1963, the youngest of Paul and Veronica Dubner's eight children. He grew up in rural New York and attended church regularly with his parents and siblings.

Paul and Veronica, Dubner says, "were not casual Catholics. They were like a form of Orthodox. They felt their entire life was dictated by the religion. We" -- the Dubner family -- "were the chosen Catholics."

In a way, that was literally true. Both Paul and Veronica had very deliberately and consciously -- and independently of each other, before they'd even met -- chosen to be Catholics. They were born Sol Dubner and Florence Greenglass, and both were born Jewish.

Growing up in Duanesburg, N.Y., 200 miles from New York City, Stephen and his seven siblings were aware that their parents had once been "something called Jewish - whatever that was," Dubner recalls.

"But I didn't know a single Jew. Although many years later I found out that in this other farm town about 15 miles away there was a Jewish family named Rubin -- they were cattle farmers and butchers. But I wouldn't have known that Rubin was a Jewish name -- I wouldn't have known that *Goldberg* is a Jewish name. as moronic as that sounds. I knew nothing about anything."

Today, Dubner is a practicing Jew -- the only Jew in his immediate family of Catholics. And even *he* isn't entirely sure how and why that happened.

"I didn't really go seeking it out; it kind of happened. I fell in with people who taught me and showed me things, and I became interested. It wasn't like I thought, jeez, my family is Jewish by blood so I should find out about it and become a practicing Jew.

"There was a lot of mystery about what happened to me, and a lot of chance encounters that led to my involvement in Judaism. When I look back at them, I think, wow, you don't realize at the moment this is happening that it's going to take you down this road."

For example, in 1987, Dubner and his first-wife-to-be, Abigail Seymour (a Christian), were invited to the home of Abby's acting teacher, Ivan Kronenfeld. Kronenfeld, a practicing Jew, had learned about Dubner's strange background from Abigail, and he demanded to know: "You go to church? You go to synagogue?"

Dubner explained he wasn't Jewish, but didn't spend much time in church either. Kronenfeld insisted: "*What* are you? This *is no small thing, coming from a family like yours.* [Italic marks passages are quoted directly from *Turbulent Souls: A Catholic Son's Return to His Jewish Family*.]

"*You'd have been plenty Jewish enough for Hitler*," Kronenfeld assured him. *'You've got the map of Poland written all over your face. You could have worn a crucifix down to your knees, and they still would have thrown you in the ovens, you understand?"*

Dubner was stunned. He'd never thought of himself in that context at all.

Kronenfeld speculated that, according to Jewish law, Dubner might actually be Jewish despite his parents' conversion. *'You're probably Jewish because your mother was a Jew. But I'm not sure, since she converted before you were born. I'm no expert. I know some rabbis, though -- let* me *look* into it. "

A week later, Stephen and Abigail were asked to join the Kronenfelds for dinner, and Ivan announced, "*I put together a beit din the other day. Three rabbis, all Orthodox. They voted two to one. According to halacha, you're a Jew, even though your mother converted. You don't need to know what the third rabbi said -- the majority rules. Now, that's not to say you can't be a Christian, but you sure ought to be something*! "

In the book Dubner has just published, *Turbulent Souls*. A Catholic *Son's Return* to *His Jewish Family*"(William Morrow & Co.), Dubner describes his reaction:

"What did this mean? How could a religion be transmitted through the blood? By what right, by what bizarre law, had these rabbis declared me to be one of theirs?

"*Abigail and I walked home in silence that night. She studied me as if I'd just stepped out of a time-travel machine: Had my cells been irrevocably scrambled, or had they reconstituted themselves in what I was before? What was I before?*

"*As we crossed Seventh Avenue, my legs felt numb. I wondered. Are my legs Jewish? I tried to smile, and Abigail tried to smile back."*

Now, drinking coffee and flipping through wedding shots in the kitchen of his midtown Manhattan apartment, Dubner recalls:

"I was shaken up the way you'd feel after learning some shocking news, like hearing that you're adopted -- it's totally reshaping your identity. It was very disconcerting. I didn't really know what a Jew was, what it meant to be a Jew. I'd had no idea about halacha, that you could be halachically Jewish when you aren't Jewish.

"By Jewish law I'm a Jew," he continues, with a certain vestigial amazement. "By Jewish law all my siblings are Jews. By Jewish law the daughters of my sisters are Jews. The *sons* of my sisters, for that matter, are Jews.

"It intrigued and delighted me to learn that, because I was drawn to it. On the other hand, I felt a little bit like an object, like, who are these rabbis; what is this about; do I have to do something about it? And worse, if I don't do something about it, is that going to be a problem?

"Part of me," he admits, "wanted to run away from it because it seemed too frightening and overwhelming, but another part of me was intrigued. By this time," he explains, "I'd been reading a lot of [Isaac Bashevis] Singer, and I had a sympathetic kind of feeling toward Jewishness. So I thought, I don't know much about this but I like it, it's interesting. It resonates with me."

And that was the beginning of an odyssey that Dubner describes in fascinating detail in *Turbulent Souls* -- the search for his religious identity. In order to get near it, Dubner says now, it was important to try to understand his parents' past and why they made their separate decisions to become Catholic.

Dubner, now a story editor for the *New York Times Magazine,* was well suited to this kind of research. He credits his journalistic instincts for helping him tell the story, as well as uncovering the story in the first place.

His parents never talked about their past. Paul (Sol), who died when Stephen was 10, had tried to hide his conversion from his extremely religious father -- until his father found rosary beads in Sol's pocket, in a scene reminiscent of the frightening climax of Henry Roth's novel Call *It Sleep*. Sol's father immediately cut him off, forever. The family sat *shivah*; Sol was dead to them.

Dubner's mother, Veronica (born Florence), is alive and well and living in Florida, so Dubner went directly to her to learn his parents' history. But she didn't want to talk about it.

"It was so hard to get her to talk about the past. She didn't think about it. She was unhappy as a young person and so was my father, and the parts of their lives where they were most unhappy, they were also Jewish. So I think they just did not want to revisit that. My mother did not like her family very much, my father loved his family and they cut him off -- they didn't want to think about it."

Besides, "Judaism would have been seen as a competitor to Catholicism, I think that's why they didn't talk about it to us. They had chosen the 'right' religion, so they weren't going to talk about Islam either, or Zoroastrianism, or Protestantism."

Dubner was determined to get answers, though. He continued to interview his mother, and over time, she slowly began to give him some of the information he wanted.

It was actually his father's Judaism, rather than his mother's, that Dubner wanted to explore.

"My mother's family was not religious. His family was the kind of family that you read about in a Chaim Potok novel: They were the shtetl Jews from Poland who ended up in Brownsville, the kind that Alfred Kazin wrote about. My mother's family was the merchant class who shucked the old country immediately and were nowhere near as observant. Harry Greenglass [Florence's father] wanted to be an American, he didn't want to be a Jew. So my father's family was the religion that I began to find out about." He contacted Sol's surviving relatives and went to see them in Brooklyn. Sol's family welcomed him warmly, and Dubner and his "new" family quickly became close. The truth was, Dubner felt a peculiar sense of homecoming whenever he spent time with these people and their religion and culture.

Does he think some genetic or spiritual force was exerting influence over him?

"Tricky question. h's more complicated than that. Sometimes I think I have a Jewish *neshama [soul]*, and therefore when I started learning things with my head that were Jewish, my soul reacted to them in a way that was oddly natural. But then I also think there are a lot of psychological reasons I went this way: I was searching for my dead father -- that's a big theme in the history of mankind.

"So, did I fall in with it because it was his, or because I was attracted to it on its own merits? The desires to solve my father and to learn more about Judaism collided and became inextricably linked, so I can't tell what portion was which. But I like to think of religion as exerting a mysterious force, and this fits in with that. I'd like to think that man has free will, but that God does, too."

Whatever the reason, Dubner felt more and more drawn to the religion of his roots. He began to study Judaism, and eventually to practice it.

But, he maintains, "I don't think what I did is anywhere near as unusual as what my parents did, or as brave, frankly. What I did feels pretty natural. I came to feel that there was a significance to the fact that I was halachically Jewish. For them, they were going from Judea to Rome. I was going from Rome to Judea, knowing that my parents had lived in Judea. It's very different."

By the time Dubner had decided to write a book about his experience, he was working at the *New York Times*.

"I was getting to know my bosses, and both of them, independently, encouraged me to write it as an article for the magazine. So I did. That made it a lot easier to write the book, because I had thought a lot of things through."

The article, when it appeared in the *Times Magazine*, caused tension between Dubner and his mother. "*I knew my mother would find a way to forgive me if I became a drug addict, or a homosexual probably even a murderer*, "Dubner wrote in *Turbulent Souls*. "*To become a Jew, though, was quite likely beyond forgiveness.* "

In the book, Dubner relates how that tension over their divergent beliefs caused years of conflict, and how the conflict was gradually resolved. "It took a while, but my mother's all right with it," Dubner says now with obvious relief "Several years ago," he reflects, "I don't think she would have said that I was going to go to hell, but she might have felt that. Now I don't think she feels that."

In a beautifully written scene, the last scene in the book, Dubner and his mother are sitting down to a meal in Florida. Years have passed since Dubner became Jewish, and over time Veronica has come to accept it.

"Should we say some grace?" Dubner asked his mother.

"Okay," she said,

'My mother made the sign of the cross and then prayed, in rusty Hebrew: "Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech ha-olam, ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz." *Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brought forth bread from the earth.*

She crossed herself again,
"Amen," we both said.

"My brothers and sisters who read the book were all shocked" that their mother had said the *brachos* -- "first, that she knew it, and second, that she would do it. It was unbelievable."

But maybe not so unbelievable. In many ways, Dubner believes, his parents managed to impart to him and his siblings a world view that today he would characterize as Jewish.

"You know what it comes down to: *tikkun olam* [improving the world] is what it comes down to. Even though my mother would shudder to think that I could derive from the upbringing we had a Jewish principle, that's really what it was. It was: Be responsible for yourself in a way that promotes a betterment of the world, even if the world you're talking about is a very small one.

" My mother and my father would always say, for example, 'I don't care what you turn out to be, we don't care what you do as long as you're doing a good thing.' It sounds like a simple kind of thing but the deeper you dig into that, the more you realize that their mission was to raise us to be the kind of people that most Jewish parents want to raise their kids to be. And that's one of the things that I look at as a Jewish way of thinking and being that I had in my life long before."

Where does he see his upbringing as diverging from Judaism?

My mother very much believed that everything that happens, or the way that everything happens, is a result of God"s will. Jewishly I think there is a God who is ultimately responsible for the world, but that's the big picture. Within that ...

"My friend Ivan would put it this way: It may be that you're only responsible for 10 percent of what goes on in your life. If you think about outside influences, all the things you can't control --other people, the political situation, etc. What's important, though, is it's your duty to work that 10 percent as hard as you can.

"That, to me, is a good way of looking at things. The way I was raised, you weren't encouraged to work that 10 percent so hard. You were encouraged to think of God having the 100 percent, and once in a while he'll give you an opportunity to put your own wrinkle on something."

This issue -- of how proactive God may be in any person's life -- is bewildering to Dubner no matter which religion he's discussing.

"I don't anthropomorphize God. I used to as a kid, but I don't think he micromanages."

Still, in the "Postlude" to *Turbulent Souls*, Dubner wrote: *"On occasion He blesses me. We had a conversation, a year ago, during which I expressed my readiness -- my extreme readiness -- to meet the woman I would marry. And though I had often ridiculed cause-and-effect prayer, I may now be forced to reconsider, for soon after that conversation I met a woman more lovely and decent than I thought possible, whose name is Ellen, and who is Jewish, and who will being wife and, if God allows, the mother of a few Jewish children.*

I dearly hope my mother lives long enough to cradle her first Jewish grandchild "

Ellen, a photographer, is now indeed his wife -- since Sept. 13 of last year. [1998]

"She grew up very identified as a Jew but not religiously at all," Dubner explains now, in the kitchen of their apartment. "They were extremely culturally identified as Jews. Not just Zionism and liberalism, but Jewish philosophy and literature, etc.

"But she grew up not knowing the *brachos* for the candle-lighting, so now we do that together. I taught her that," Dubner says with pride.

A strange journey, to get back to where you started. Truly, God works in mysterious ways.

Love

Without a Cause

By David Holzel

It was on my wedding day almost six years ago, while dancing on the shoulders of my friend Glenn, that I learned what ecstasy is.

Sheri and I were engaged six months before. But somehow, in the blink of an eye, May became October, and I found myself at the head of a table in our synagogue, launching a *d'var Torah* on the seven blessings God promised Abraham, when a crowd of familiar faces good-naturedly broke into song before I had scarcely made a point. *[Ed: This custom of cutting off the speaker early into the speech is done in order that no groom should be embarrassed on the eve of his wedding by a poor performance; even the best students are prevented from giving their presentation so that all are equal on the eve of the wedding day.]*

At the other end of the table, I saw Sheri, enthroned, enveloped in white, and surrounded by courtiers. The scene was like a woodcut of Jewish life gone by.

The instant we entered the reception hall, a scene of total upheaval erupted. The band broke into a familiar wedding melody and we were circled, seized, swept from our feet, and raised high on chairs as if we were riding the mystical chariot of God.

The chair dance is like riding a camel. As you are leaned backward, then heaved up, and at last pitched forward, you *believe you must* fall. But you don't. The force sustaining you the strength of the four or five celebrating souls who are grasping the chair's legs is stronger than your belief that you must inevitably tumble back to earth.

We were carried like this, the raised center of this joyful dance, for some 20 minutes. Only later, during the second wave of dancing, did I begin to be aware that a mysterious force had overtaken us all. By then our energy was spent, yet the temper was more frenzied than before. Shoulders now replaced the chairs beneath Sheri and me. The circles of dancers sped around us, changing like a kaleidoscope, faces blurred. The music became a throbbing heartbeat. We were all now limbs of a larger body. We had surrendered our egos, our selves were annihilated.

And this is when joy was transformed into ecstasy. The difference? Joy is time bound. Ecstasy is not. Joy adheres to the law of gravity, to the confines of rationality. Ecstasy transcends them all. Including the self.

This is how I believe Glenn and Zach found the strength to bear Sheri and me on their shoulders for so long. It is not reasonable to expect them to have endured our weight and the crush of people who jostled us as they passed and for them to have seen that we remained upright. Something beyond them had taken over.

Ecstasy helped me understand a Jewish wedding tradition that had made me particularly uncomfortable during the months of planning. On their wedding day, *chattan* and *kallah* groom and bride are said to be like king and queen. I was self-conscious about the idea of lording over family and guests, of being the reason for everyone's presence.

Now, hurling above the room, I reached out for balance and found a friend's hand there. I saw Sheri whirling a few feet away, with Zach nearly shrouded beneath her. And I understood what it meant to be king and queen. We were not the subject of this celebration. We were its *object*.

In this ecstasy of sound and movement, we became merely totems. Although raised high, our egos had dissolved in the fever. The event was as much about those surrounding us as it was about Sheri and me.

And the scene was a lesson to anyone who believes ecstasy is limited to gentiles or, at most, to certain Orthodox sects. The fervor that Sunday was ritualistic. It was directed, circumscribed. But the rules that were in force did not limit the passion, they focused and intensified it.

On my wedding day I learned that ecstasy the submerging of ego into a larger self can travel in one of two directions. One leads to causeless hatred and wanton destruction, to Kristallnacht and to Auschwitz. We went the opposite way. And having followed that path, I acquired a solace and sense of optimism I never thought I'd find.

Our tradition says the Jews brought upon themselves the greatest debacle of our history until the Holocaust destruction of Jerusalem and exile from Israel through causeless hatred. This, the kabbalists say, caused a mystical rip in the fabric of the cosmos. What causeless hatred tore apart might best be mended by its opposite. What I saw that Sunday in the whirl of humanity was causeless love.

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HIGH HOLIDAY LETTER

From the Archbishop of New York

A few days before Rosh Hashana, the Jewish community received a very inspiring surprise contained in the letter that the Archbishop of New York addressed to his Jewish friends. In it he pointed out that Ash Wednesday, March 8, 2000, "has been specially set aside as a day for Catholics to reflect upon the pain inflicted on the Jewish people by many of our members over the last millennium." It is incumbent upon Jewish communal leaders to develop an appropriate strategy in response to this, if the spirit in which this letter was written is to be nurtured.

"HISTORIC" *Apology*

The previously mentioned letter from John Cardinal O'Connor created quite a stir, as is evidenced by a report in the *New York Jewish Week* of the rush of the Jewish community to respond to the letter. The letter was even reprinted as the centerpiece in *The New York Times* in a full page advertisement thanking the Cardinal; the ad was sponsored by, among others, Elie Weisel.
(*New York Jewish Week*, September 24, 1999, www.thejewishweek.com)

HITLER'S *Pope*

The best-selling Hitler's Pope strongly documents the failure of Pope Pius XII to assert moral leadership against the Nazis while the Jews of Europe were being annihilated . In addition to focusing on the personal failures of the Pope and the fact that he was, apparently, an anti-Semite, the book also explains the benefits that derived to the Church from its silence in relation to the Nazi atrocities. Essentially, the book argues that the Nazis, in return for the silence of the Vatican, centralized all authority of the Catholic Church in Europe into the Vatican. Previously, the Catholic Churches in various nations had more autonomy. This book is especially controversial in light of the push by the current Pope, John Paul II, for the canonization of Pope Pius XII. This proposed sainthood for a man who, in the eyes of many, was, at best a moral failure, has exacerbated inter-faith relations between Jews and Catholics. While these tensions do not always cause direct problems to Jews in America, they may yet do so, and the issue certainly poses problems for Jews who live in Catholic countries. It is an issue as to which all Jewish leadership must be sensitive and the debate may yet become raucous .
(*The New York Times Book Review*, September 26, 1999.)

THE SAINT

And the Holocaust

Edith Stein was born a Jew, converted to Catholicism and died in the Holocaust because she was a Jew. Her recent nomination to sainthood has caused friction between Catholics and Jews. The latter see the sainthood as an attempt by the Catholic Church to appropriate the Holocaust, in the sense that Catholics are now claiming to have been victims of the Nazis, just as the Jews were. This article deals with this issue, as well as the process of attaining sainthood. (Of particular note is a comment by the Jewish doctor concerning the dramatic recovery from an illness of a Catholic child which was attributed to the miraculous intervention of the deceased Edith Stein, but he did not want to get involved in judging whether any miracle had taken place. He said, "I'm Jewish. Thinking about miracles is not part of the way I think.") As in the prior piece, the issue as to who "owns" the Holocaust surfaces, and this report adds additional detail to the arguments made in *Hitler's Pope*, noting that the Catholic Church almost always cooperated with the Nazis; that the initial opposition of the German Catholic Church in 1932 to the Nazis was undercut by Pope Pius XII; and that only the Dutch Catholic clergy showed any backbone or moral fiber amongst the organs of the Catholic Church in the Nazi era.
(*The New Yorker*, published weekly, June 7, 1999, $42 annually).

High Holiday Letter

From the Archbishop of New York

OFFICE OF THE CARDINAL
1011 FIRST AVENUE
NEW YORK, NY 10022-4134

September 8, 1999

My Dearest Friends:

The Jewish High Holy Days come once again, reminding our world of who created it, who blesses it with life and who judges it in his merciful justice. G-d who gives all humanity the dignity of being made in his image, has chosen Israel as his particular people that they may be an example of faithfulness for all the nations of the earth. With sincere love and true admiration for your fidelity to the Covenant, I am happy once again to send my greetings for a blessed New Year.

This Sabbath evening, as the celebration of Rosh Hashanah commences, a new decade will begin. During the year of 5760 we Christians will start a new era of the year 2000, the turn of another millennium in our history. Our Holy Father Pope John Paul II, has asked all Christians to enter this new millennium in our history. Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has asked all Christians to enter this new millennium in the spirit of Jubilee. Part of the process of Jubilee is a call for teshuva, or repentance. Ash Wednesday, March 8th, has been specially set aside as a day for Catholics to reflect upon the pain inflicted on the Jewish people by many of our members over the last millennium. We most sincerely want to start a new era.

I pray that as you begin a new decade, and as we begin another millennium in our Jewish-Christian relationship, we will refresh our encounter with a new respect and even love for one another as children of G-d. Working in our own ways, but also working together, let us both remain committed to the fulfillment of G-d's reign. I ask this Yom Kippur that you understand my own abject sorrow for any member of the Catholic Church, high or low, including myself, who may have harmed you or your forebears in any way.

Be assured of my prayers and friendship. L'shanah tovah tikotevu!

Faithfully,

John Cardinal O'Connor
Archbishop of New York

"Historic" *Apology*

Cardinal O'Connor letter lauded-by Jewish leaders for courageous direct expression of remorse over Church's wrongs.

***by* Eric J. Greenberg**, Staff Writer

While recovering from surgery to remove a brain tumor earlier this month, Cardinal John 0'Connor composed his annual New Year's letter to his many friends in the New York Jewish community.

In fact, the 79-year-old leader of New York City Catholics has been sending heartfelt holiday greetings twice a year -- on Rosh HaShanah and Passover -- to Jewish leaders for at least 10 years.

Last Passover, for instance, the head of the Archdiocese of New York praised Jews for their steadfast faith. He also confided that he was "ashamed" of the-pain inflicted on Jews by his "co-religionists."

So his latest missive, dated Sept. 8, at first garnered little public attention, seemingly following in the footsteps of Cardinal O'Connor's previous candid remarks.

"I ask this Yom Kippur that you understand my own abject sorrow for any member of the Catholic Church, high or low, including myself who may have harmed you or your forebears in any way," he wrote.

Days went by with little reaction.

But the Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel was struck by Cardinal O'Connor's sincere expression of personal sorrow over the tortured history of Jewish-Catholic relations. He shared the letter with World Bank president James Wolfensohn and Victor Barnett, chairman of Burberry.

Wiesel believed that Cardinal O'Connor's remarks went further than any other Church officer, including Pope John Paul II, and deserved a wide audience.

"He went far in speaking in that he asks for forgiveness," Wiesel told reporters. "He goes further than the official line of the Church and this takes courage. For a prince of the Church to say the things he does, it's very strong."

The trio decided to publish the archbishop's four-paragraph letter as a full-page ad in The New York Times on Sunday, which prompted other newspaper stories.

The initiative took the 79-year-old Cardinal O'Connor by surprise, said spokesman Joseph Zwilling.

Zwilling, who said Cardinal O'Connor was unable to be interviewed for health reasons, said the cardinal "has not expressed to me that he realized" he had hit an emotional chord.

Zwilling said the letter is in keeping with the spirit of the Pope John Paul II's statements on the Holocaust and Jewish-Catholic relations.

Eugene Fisher, head of Jewish-Catholic relations for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, also said there was nothing new here.

He told the Associated Press that Cardinal O'Connor has taken what has been said before by Catholic leaders but put it in a way Jews can understand. "It's not a new statement," he said.

But Jewish leaders insist Cardinal O'Connor's letter is groundbreaking, citing the personal and straightforward language, the scope of those for whom he seeks forgiveness, and the timing --the High Holy Days and Cardinal O'Connor's illness.

"This is historic for the archbishop to publicly ask for forgiveness, not just for what he did: but for anyone in the Church, not just in his lifetime but for the history of the Catholic Church" said Rabbi James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

While he called Cardinal O'Connor's language specific and direct, he noted Pope John Paul II's March 1998 statement, a foreword to the Vatican's historic official statement on the Shoah, was more "nuanced and weighed."

In that letter, the Pope said the Church "encourages her sons and daughters to purify their hearts, through repentance of past errors and infidelities. She calls on them to place themselves humbly before the Lord and examine themselves on the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our time."

Said Rabbi Rudin: "John Paul talks about responsibility. O'Connor has taken it a little further than even the Pope by not just talking about responsibility, but who is responsible."

Other observers said that Cardinal O'Connor's asking for forgiveness for any Church member "high or low" could very well refer to the new controversy involving World War II era Pope Pius XII.

A new book released this week accuses the wartime pope of being an anti-Semite and aiding Hitler. The Vatican is seeking to make Pius XII a saint, over strenuous Jewish objections.

"I think he's going out of his way to say that Pius XII morally failed," said one Jewish group leader who asked not to be identified. "I believe he genuinely wants to protect the historical truth relating to the Shoah."

Father Guy Massie, ecumenical and interfaith chairman for the Diocese of Brooklyn, said Cardinal O'Connor's letter has received an overwhelmingly positive response from clergy and parishioners.

"It's a concern close to my heart that the Jewish people know they have friends in the Catholic community," said the priest, a graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

In his letter Cardinal O'Connor reiterated his plan for a day of Catholic repentance on March 8, 2000, Ash Wednesday, as part of the Catholic celebration of its Jubilee year.

The day "has been specially set aside as a day for Catholics to reflect upon the pain inflicted on the Jewish people by many of our members over the last millennium," Cardinal O'Connor wrote. "We most sincerely want to start a new era."

Reprinted by permission of the *New York Jewish Week*.

HITLER'S *POPE*

The Secret History of Pius XII.
By John Cornwell.
Illustrated. 430 pp. New York:
Viking. $29.95

A Book Review
V.R. Berghahn

In 1963, the German dramatist Rolf Hochhuth published "The Deputy," a play about Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust that was quickly translated into some 20 languages and performed around the globe. Highly controversial in its time, the work marked the beginning of a heated and continuing debate on the Vatican's silence in the face of the mass murder of Europe's Jews in World War II. Hochhuth dedicated "The Deputy" to two Roman Catholics: the Rev. Maximilian Kolbe, who died in place of a Polish fellow prisoner at Auschwitz and was canonized in 1982, and Bernhard Lichtenberg, the provost of St. Hedwig's Cathedral in Berlin, who repeatedly spoke out publicly against Nazi anti-Semitism and criminality and, jailed in May 1942, died in October 1943 on his way to the Dachau concentration camp.

Possibly the most powerful scene in Hochhuth's historical drama is the encounter between an SS doctor on the Auschwitz selection ramp and Riccardo, a Catholic priest who was plucked from the line of Jewish victims shuffling toward the gas chambers. In the ensuing dialogue, the doctor sadistically challenges Riccardo's faith in God and his church, cynically arguing that if God existed he would surely have intervened to stop the industrialized murder of millions of innocent people, and adding, in reference to the inhumanity of the Inquisition: "And what gives priests the right to look down on the SS? We are the Dominicans of the technological age. It is not chance so many of my kind have sprung from good Catholic backgrounds."

While many clerics and ordinary Catholics were indeed killed or tortured for their anti-Nazi beliefs and activities, Pope Pius XII, the head of their church, was living in relative safety in Rome, protected by the Vatican's extraterritoriality, which neither Mussolini nor Hitler ever dared to revoke. More distressing, the Pope could never bring himself to publish a clear message of condemnation of the enormous crimes against Europe's Jews and other minorities who were earmarked for physical annihilation, although ample and reliable information about Hitler's genocidal policies was reaching him from all over Europe from early 1942 on, and although a variety of people who had access to him repeatedly pleaded with him to speak out. The Pope agonized in private, but was held back by his lifelong training in and dedication to the Curia, the Vatican's administrative branch. He tolerated convents and monasteries, clandestinely sheltering Jews and made vague statements, but issued no encyclical or similarly authoritative message.

By combining the painstaking research of other scholars with his own new documentation on Pius's knowledge and behavior during World War II, John Cornwell, a British journalist and research associate of Jesus College, Cambridge, makes a case in "Hitler's Pope" that is very difficult to refute.

Cornwell is a Catholic, and did not expect at the start of his work to be ending up in the camp of those who have highlighted the Pope's sad moral failure and his fallibility as a human being. But reluctantly, he concludes that a loud and widely disseminated statement from Rome would have made a difference to the fate of European Jewry. The least it would have done was to warn the Jews of western Europe that deportation meant certain death, resulting in more of them fleeing or going into hiding. Furthermore, it would have told millions of Catholics that they were involved, as bystanders or even as perpetrators, in a fundamentally evil program, and this recognition would in turn have encouraged resistance and a greater willingness to help their Jewish neighbors.

It is likely that a papal condemnation would have resulted in the arrest, imprisonment or even death of Pius XII, which in turn might have triggered widespread popular unrest. That the Nazis feared this possibility became evident when, following the fall of Mussolini, the SS appeared in the Eternal City in October 1943 to round up Rome's Jews. Again people urged the Pope to denounce the transport of men, women and children to Auschwitz. Although it was by then obvious that Hitler was losing the war and that the liberation of Rome by the Allies, advancing from the south, was merely a matter of time, the Vatican remained passive, much to the relief of the local German occupation authorities.

CORNWELL'S explanation for Pius's behavior is no less explosive than his description of it, and seems calculated to ignite a public debate on the evolution of Catholicism in the decades ahead, using John Paul II's current moves for Pius's canonization as a fuse. To be sure, Cornwell shuns monocausality. He believes that religious anti-Semitism, with its ancient roots in the church, constituted but one motive for the Pope's silence. Another was Rome's deep-seated fear of Communism. But Cornwell devotes most space to his argument concerning the changing internal organization and power structure of the church itself, which is why his study begins in the mid-19th century with the Vatican's confrontation with the forces of modernity. During this period, the Curia came to believe that rallying the faithful behind a centralized papacy was the only way to secure the survival of Catholicism in a hostile world. The Vatican Council of 1869-70, which proclaimed the dogma of papal infallibility, was a major step in asserting the Pope's unchallengeable spiritual as well as administrative leadership. With the further evolution of canon law, the author continues, another stage in the consolidation of autocratic rule was reached by 1917, when a young Vatican bureaucrat, Eugenio Pacelli, later Pius XII, earned his first laurels as a promoter of centralism.

That the forces of modernity had by then infiltrated Catholic laity merely reinforced this quest for control. Catholic political parties were becoming powerful voices in the parliamentary assemblies of Europe. As elected representatives, they demanded a greater say in the councils of the church. Lay communities persisted in organizing their own associational life and pushed for liturgical reform, while the indigenous hierarchy tried to uphold the principle of

"collegiality" against rulings from Rome. In this clash of two very different conceptions of institutional relations and the societal role of Catholicism, the negotiation of concordats - international treaties with secular governments -became a key instrument in the hands of the Vatican, not only to regulate its relations with often unfriendly nation-states but also to assert its primacy over those who dreamed of vibrantly pluralist national churches.

If the 1929 Lateran Treaty with Fascist Italy was, as Cornwell puts it, "designed to cripple political and social Catholicism," the "super concordat" with Germany, brought to a successful conclusion by Pacelli, the Vatican's secretary of state, in secret negotiations with the Nazis in July 1933, seemingly marked the greatest triumph of this strategy. With Hitler solemnly recognizing Rome as the exclusive voice of the church, the treaty destroyed the independence of German Catholicism. The Catholic Center Party was brutally pushed into self-liquidation; the German bishops who had hitherto staunchly opposed Nazism were silenced; the faithful were told that it was all right for them to serve a dictatorship that many of them had previously voted against. In Cornwell's eyes, this outcome was an unmitigated disaster in that it removed a major center of resistance to Nazism. Ultimately, he believes, the Vatican's centralist strategy, coolly pursued by its chief negotiator, Pacelli, was crucial to the rapid consolidation of the Hitler dictatorship. What he underestimates at this point is that many German Catholics were themselves ready to make their peace with the Nazis, whether out of fear or latent sympathy with many of Hitler's political and economic promises.

By 1940-41, the Axis partners, buoyed by their rapid conquest of the European continent, were powerful enough to destroy the centralized papacy if, instead of appeasing the dictators, the Vatican had begun to oppose them. Silence, punctuated by a few generalized warnings against the ravages of total war, now seemed to be the only guarantee for the preservation of an institution and its command structures that Pacelli had so laboriously built in previous decades. The arrest of the Pope by Hitler, Cornwell implies, would have destroyed it all. Worse, the unrest that such a move would have created among the faithful would not only have cost many Catholic lives but, with the Axis defeat on the horizon by 1942-43, would also have resulted in a renewal of precisely those forces of autonomy inside the church that had once challenged the Vatican's quest for autocracy.

THE benefits of Pius XII's strategy of survival became very visible during the rest of his papacy: Until his death in 1958 he "presided over a monolithic, triumphalist Catholic Church in antagonistic confrontation with Communism both in Italy and beyond the Iron Curtain." Cornwell does not think this achievement was worth the moral failure of the Pope's wartime silence.

But the ferment that had been building for a more participatory church since the 19th century could not be quelled in the postwar world. The demand for greater diversity re-emerged during the Second Vatican Council, having found a supporter in Pope John XXIII. However, his early death in 1963, Cornwell contends, restrengthened the authoritarian traditions of the Vatican bureaucracy. It continued to pursue a model of Catholicism that is strictly led from the top, in which "pluralism and collegiality are characterized as antagonistic to central authority," and that is based on an unquestioning popular piety and acclamation by the "masses." We may not quite be back to where we were in the 1950's, but the pendulum has swung back pretty far under Paul VI and John Paul II, Cornwell says, even if, "in an era largely hospitable to religious freedom it is difficult to assess the full extent of the moral and social enfeeblement of the local churches."

Hoping for a different future, Cornwell is depressed by the prospect of the canonization of Pius XII, who "has become the icon, 40 years after his death, of those who read and revise the provisions of the Second Vatican Council from the viewpoint of an ideology of papal power." Knowing that canonization will offend many people, he concludes, "'If better relations are to be built between the Catholic Church and Jews, it will result not from blind faith in the single oracular voice of Catholic apologetics, but from Catholics heeding unflinchingly the pluralist narratives of history." For he is convinced "that the cumulative verdict of history" shows Pius XII "to be not a saintly exemplar for future generations, but a deeply flawed human being from whom Catholics, and our relations with other religions, can best profit by expressing our sincere regret."

Chances are not particularly bright that the ferment of liberal reformism that is again stirring Catholicism in Europe and North America will prevail. The Vatican - immovable, though equipped with the latest communication devices of the technological age - still looks the way it looked a century ago: a fortress built against the tide of time.

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THE SAINT

And the Holocaust

by **James Caroll**

ECHT is a Dutch town near the River Maas, not far from the German border. I visited Echt last summer, on a kind of solitary pilgrimage. I had come looking for the contemplatives' chapel in the Carmelite monastery, and was surprised to find it at the edge of a shopping district. Adjoining the chapel was a cloister with a stout brick facade, and beyond it was the Caf, Apollo, with a sign announcing, in English, "Dancing." Far less obtrusive was a stone tablet on a wall near the chapel door which featured the face of Edith Stein, a Carmelite nun who had fled to the monastery in 1938 and was snatched from it by the Gestapo four years later. I was the only visitor late on a rainy afternoon. The chapel door was unlocked, and it opened onto a stark room with twelve wooden pews. A grainy photograph of the famous nun hung on the wall to the left, behind a vase holding two craning birds-of paradise. As a nun, Stein was known as Sister Benedicta, but here the name she was given at her birth defines her still.

Edith Stein was born a Jew in 1891 in Breslau, Silesia, which was then under German control but is now part of Poland. She was a gifted young woman who made her mark as a philosopher, earning a Ph.D. under the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, at Freiburg. Often described as Husserl's protegee, she made significant contributions to his thought, but they are rarely noted. Her dissertation, "On the Problem of Empathy," which she defended in 1916, was the first of several important philosophical works, but her later devotional writings have been more widely acknowledged. Stein abandoned Jewish religious practice in her student years, and became a Catholic in 1922, at the age of thirty. Her inspiration was St. Teresa of Avila, the sixteenth-century Spanish mystic and Carmelite reformer, and, in 1933, Stein herself entered the Carmelite order and eventually took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Last October 11th in Rome, in a canonization in St. Peter's Square, Pope John Paul II named her a saint, not because of the devoted life she led but because, a week after being taken away from Echt, she was killed in Auschwitz. The Pope, in his sermon, called her "this eminent daughter of Israel and faithful daughter of the Church," and said, "May her witness constantly strengthen the bridge of mutual understanding between Jews and Christians."

So far, the canonization of Edith Stein has done very little to strengthen that bridge. The Church maintains that she was killed because she was a Catholic, in retaliation for an anti-Nazi protest waged by the Dutch Catholic bishops. But critics of the canonization, Jews and non-Jews alike, contend that Stein was murdered because she was a Jew, and they believe that the canonization is another attempt by the Church to Christianize the Holocaust - to present it as something that happened as much to the Church as to the Jews - and, not incidentally, to deflect criticism of its own relationship to the crimes of the Nazis. A week before Edith Stein's canonization, the Pope beatified Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, the wartime primate of the Catholic Church in Croatia, even though the Church he presided over was mortally compromised by Croatia's pro-Nazi regime. Soon after the canonization, reports began to surface of a campaign inside the Vatican to beatify Pope Plus XII, whose failure to forthrightly defend the Jews is the most disputed-though not necessarily the most significant aspect of the Church's record during the Holocaust. The Church has always maintained that the charges against Plus were unfounded, but last year's Vatican statement "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah" moved from a mere denial of his culpability to an assertion of his extraordinary heroism - a heroism on behalf of the Jews - and inevitably raised questions about the manipulation of history. And this month, at a Papal Mass in Warsaw, the Pope is expected to beatify a hundred and eight Polish Catholics who were killed in the Second World War, mostly in Nazi death camps, including fifteen who perished at Auschwitz. The Nazis killed millions of Poles, but this celebration of Catholic martyrdom as part of the Shoah will undoubtedly prove controversial. In this context, how Edith Stein's story is remembered becomes all the more important.

When I was a young seminarian, in the early sixties, I picked up a book in the seminary library entitled "Walls Are Crumbling: Seven Jewish Philosophers Discover Christ," by John M. Oesterreicher. One chapter was headed "Edith Stein: Witness of Love." At the time, Anne Frank's "Diary of a Young Girl" was making real the horror of the genocide by giving one victim a name, a face, and a story. Edith Stein did the same for me and for many other Catholics. It never occurred to us then that there could be something offensive to Jews in our honoring her as "a young woman in search of the truth," as the Pope called her in October. Now, by elevating her death not only above her own life but above the deaths of six million Jews, the Church has made Edith Stein a flash point instead of a bridge. Her story forces one to ask, What is a convert? What is a Jew? What is a martyr? And, with regard to a specific event that took place in Boston eleven years ago, What is a miracle?

THERE are three stages to canonization in the Catholic Church. First, a person is declared venerable by the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. If that person can be proved either to have been a martyr or to have performed "one uncontested miracle," as the Encyclopedia of Catholicism puts it (the miracle can be posthumous), he or she is beatified. Then, after confirmation of at least one more miracle, that person's name is added to the list, or canon, of saints. The Church takes for granted the normalcy of what is called the supernatural; but, precisely because of the conviction that God can and does intervene in human life in surprising ways, the Church does not want the mystery cheapened by superstition, religious hysteria, or magical thinking. (The term "hocus-pocus" originates *in hoc est enim corpus meum*, the Latin words of the Consecration of the Mass.) The veneration of saints is an affirmation that no rigid lines should be drawn between the living and the dead; a miracle is a caution against drawing such lines between what is possible and what is impossible.

Under Pope John Paul II, almost three hundred people have been canonized, and hundreds of miracles have been authenticated by the Vatican Congregation. The procedure

moves *via negativa*: a miracle is deemed to have occurred only when all conceivable mundane explanations of the phenomenon have been eliminated. In effect, the Church has adapted the scientific method to this spiritual purpose. Referring to medical miracles, an official of the Congregation was recently quoted as saying, "We do not accept any cure as a miracle unless we are scientifically, humanly certain that the cure has been instantaneous, not expected, and complete." He added, "If God intervenes and works a miracle, he doesn't do it halfway." Edith Stein was beatified as a martyr in 1987, but she needed to be credited with one miracle in order to be canonized. According to the Church, she performed it that year.

The event involved a two-year-old Catholic child in Brockton, Massachusetts, who, because she was born on August 8th - the eve of the anniversary of Edith Stein's death - had been named Benedicta. (Her parents had named another of their children Tzipora, for Elie Wiesel's sister, who died in the Holocaust.) While Benedicta was in the care of her older siblings, she managed to open a Tylenol bottle and swallow many pills, and she became ill. First taken to a local hospital, she was quickly, transferred to Massachusetts General, in Boston. There she was treated by a pediatric gastroenterologist named Ronald Kleinman, but her condition worsened.

Over the next few days, Dr. Kleinman's team consulted by telephone with Michael W. Shannon, a pediatrician and toxicologist (and a specialist in Tylenol overdose) at the Massachusetts Poison Control system, which is based in Boston's Children's Hospital. Although most children in such circumstances recover, Dr. Kleinman was worried about Benedicta. "I have seen kids die of acetaminophen toxicity," he told me not long ago, as we sat in a small conference room at Mass General. Dr. Kleinman is a lean man with gray hair and appears to be on the young side of fifty. He spoke gravely. "Her liver was beginning to shut down, she was moving toward coma, and had developed a blood-borne infection." He explained the situation to her parents, and, with a circle of friends, they prayed to Sister Benedicta. Within several days, the little girl's condition stabilized and began to improve. Dr. Kleinman wrote on her chart, "This child has made a remarkable recovery." Benedicta went home healthy.

Several years went by. Then an official from the archdiocese of Boston, Monsignor Robert Deeley, got in touch with Dr. Kleinman, and explained that the Catholic Church was investigating the possibility that Benedicta's recovery was "miraculous." It had been miraculous, of course, to Benedicta's family, for them, the return to health of their child represented a confirmation of faith. In fact, about a year after Benedicta's recovery, an article to that effect was published in *Catholic Digest*. Carmelite officials in Rome read the article and started the wheels of the Church bureaucracy moving. (By that time, the Church's impulse to equate Jewish and Catholic suffering during the Holocaust was growing stronger: in June of 1988, the Pope told Jewish leaders in Vienna that Nazi "intentions to kill were clearly directed against the Jewish people, but also against the faith of those who revere in the Jew Jesus of Nazareth.")

Dr. Kleinman testified before an archdiocesan tribunal in 1993 at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, once a vibrant immigrant parish in Boston's old West End but now a church marooned in the shadow of Mass General. Present were the Vice Postulator, who advances the cause of sainthood; a Catholic physician appointed by the archdiocese; and Monsignor Deeley. "It took about four and a half hours, on a very hot day," Dr. Kleinman said of his testimony. "Sometime in the next year, I got a transcript of the proceeding - both English and Latin." Then, about three years ago, Dr. Kleinman agreed to meet with a board of doctors at the Vatican. "They were skeptical. In some ways, that suggests that the Church was doing its best to be careful," he told me. "I did not want to get involved in any judgment about whether this was a 'miracle' or not. I'm Jewish. Thinking about miracles is not part of the way I think."

DR. SHANNON, the toxicologist, also testified before the archdiocesan tribunal. In late 1992, Monsignor Deeley, and others came to his office at Children's Hospital, and as they sat listening to him, Dr. Shannon recalled, they were "poker-faced." Dr. Shannon, an African-American, is tall and thin, and appears to be in his mid-forties. His office is decorated with numerous photographs of children, and on a shelf behind his desk there is a copy of a textbook he co-edited, "Clinical Management of Poisoning and Drug Overdose." He is one of the authors of a chapter on acetaminophen, which is sold as Tylenol. Dr. Shannon, who has never discussed the case in public, told me, "As a toxicologist for the last fourteen years, I have taken care of hundreds of Tylenol-overdose cases every year, and probably, in my career, thousands. I have seen the complications that Benedicta had. They happen sometimes. But it doesn't change the fact that ninety-nine per cent of the time children with Tylenol overdoses fully recover." Dr. Shannon consulted with Mass General over the telephone - he never personally examined Benedicta - and he confirmed its course of treatment. He told Monsignor Deeley's tribunal that, thanks to Dr. Kleinman's team, and to the availability of a highly effective antidote, Mucomyst, the course of Benedicta's recovery was what was to be expected. He told me, "I remember being asked point-blank, 'Do you think this was a miracle?' To which I responded, 'No.' That was it. They left. I got a thank-you letter in February, 1993, and never heard from them again."

I went to see Monsignor Deeley, a tall, burly man of about fifty, in the Tribunal Building of the Archdiocese of Boston, on Lake Street in Brighton. His office, with warm panelling, a hint of old leather in the air, and a view of a neatly planted hillside, could have been in the Palazzi Vaticani. "I was the delegate judge," he said of his role in the miracle investigation. "We proceeded with the interviewing of the witnesses, the gathering of the medical testimony, and the interviews of the doctors and the nurses who were involved." He sent the findings to Rome, where they were reviewed by the Vatican medical board. "There was a dissenting vote as to whether it was a miracle," the Monsignor said. "And they put the dissenter in charge of a second investigation, and brought Dr. Kleinman over." I asked what the Vatican board had made of Dr. Shannon's testimony. "I have no idea. It was presented to them. They did have it," he said.

Last October, Dr. Kleinman was invited to the canonization in Rome. He met John Paul II and watched Benedicta, who is now fourteen, receive Communion from him. Dr. Kleinman has been criticized for his role in the investigation, and he has received what he describes as "nasty letters" from fellow Jews. "I understand that this process of canonization has an in-your-face quality to it," he said. "Of course, Edith Stein died - was martyred - because she was a Jew. But she died a Catholic. That's my way of bridging those two unbridgeable ideas." As for the Church process for which he provided the needed testimony, he said, "When I think of applying the scientific method to things of faith, you end up with something that is not satisfying as science and not satisfying as religion." In fact, the Vatican officials who chose to discount the testimony of Dr. Shannon, a medical expert with intimate knowledge of a case aiming at "scientific, human certainty," subverted both science and religion, and, in the process, perhaps, the real value of the life of Edith Stein.

Edith Stein's conversion to Catholicism had its roots in the carnage of the First World War, which she had glimpsed while working as a volunteer nurse. She had gone to comfort a woman who had just lost her husband in the fighting, and had been deeply moved by the consolation that the woman who was herself a Christian convert from Judaism - was already drawing from "her unshakable faith in a living God." Stein later described the encounter as decisive. Everything we know about Stein suggests that she was deeply affected by the suffering around her, and that she was very conscious of the political changes that were exacerbating that suffering. "The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabout," as Willa Cather put it, and that epochal shift was reflected in Edith Stein's decision that year to join the Church. (The Carmelite mystical tradition embodied in the classic text "The Dark Night of the Soul" offers a way to transform despair into hope.) Through the twenties, the Jews were scapegoated for the troubles of Weimar, and when the Nazi movement became apparent some leaders of the Roman Catholic Church rose to oppose it. In 1932, the Fulda Episcopal Conference, representing the Catholic hierarchy of Germany, banned Catholics from joining the Nazi Party. At the church that Edith Stein attended in M• nster, where she was on the faculty of a Catholic teachers' college, people wearing swastikas were not permitted to take Communion. But everything changed in 1933. Less than a week after the Enabling Act assured Hitler's dictatorial powers, the Fulda conference lifted the ban on Catholic membership in the Nazi Party. The leader of the conference, Cardinal Adolf Bertram, would surely have been known to Edith Stein because his bishopric included Breslau, her home town, where her mother was still living. (Stein's father had died when she was a young child.) Her mother had been deeply wounded by Edith's conversion, but they remained close, and Edith began to fear that her mother might be in danger and that the local Church would be indifferent to her plight. (Beginning in 1935, Cardinal Bertram sent annual birthday greetings to Adolf Hitler.)

Stein then took her first extraordinary initiative as a Catholic - an act that received little attention in last fall's canonization celebration. Before Easter of 1933, she wrote to Pope Plus XI requesting a private audience to plead for an encyclical condemning Nazi anti-Semitism. That spring - probably while she was waiting for a reply - she was informed that she could no longer keep her position as a teacher, because she was "non-Aryan," although the teachers' college, as a Catholic institution, would not yet have been required to take such a step. Also that spring, Martin Heidegger, who had interviewed and rejected Stein for a philosophy professorship at Freiburg, gave his notorious pro-Nazi speech. Whether or not these events influenced Stein, it was then that she applied for admission to a Carmelite convent in Cologne.

Around this time, Stein received her answer from the Vatican. She was invited to attend a ceremonial audience with the Pope, but she was not to be granted a private audience with him. Uninterested in the honorific, she declined the invitation and received in the mail a document bestowing a papal blessing. Her letter to the Pope is often interpreted as an attempt to get him to influence the Nazis-something that defenders of the papal silence on anti-Semitism assert would have been impossible. But Edith Stein understood that. What she wanted Pius to do was to influence her fellow-Catholics to take a moral stand against the Nazis.

When she received word that the Carmelite order would accept her, she went home to Breslau to prepare her mother for the news of her decision. There she began the work that would occupy her intermittently for the rest of her life: an autobiography entitled "Life in a Jewish Family." The book, which was published in Germany in 1985, is an affectionate account of the world into which she was born, and it is especially admiring of her mother. She wrote, "Mother is happiest when she is able to do her own sowing and reaping and can give generously to others from the harvest. Doing so she follows faithfully the old Jewish custom that, instead of keeping for oneself the first of each kind of produce one rather gives them away."

We do not know why Stein chose to leave the Jewish faith, but there are reports that she came to see it, in a traditional Christian context, as a guilty faith. Some of her writings reflect a Christian anti-Judaism. Last fall, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, honored Stein for saying to her sister as the Gestapo took them away to their deaths, "Come, we are going for our people," implying that they died to expiate the sins of what she called an unbelieving people. (Stein's niece, Susanne Batzdorff, who is Jewish, insists that her aunt's fate was "to die with her people, not for her people.") But whatever her ambivalence toward the Jewish faith there is no question that the events Stein witnessed in her lifetime reinforced her loyalty to the Jewish people. She wrote her autobiography, she said, to oppose the "horrendous caricature" of the Jews that was being promulgated by anti-Semites in posters, texts, and diatribes. But, in her impulse to resist those anti-Semites, Edith Stein, as a Catholic, was increasingly alone.

Edith's mother died in 1936, and her sister Rosa soon also became a Catholic and went to live with her in the convent in Cologne. After Kristallnacht, in 1938, Edith fled to Echt, and Rosa followed her there. (Edith wrote to a friend, "I have often wondered since whether my letter" - to the Pope - "may sometime have come to mind?") On July 6, 1942, Anne Frank's family went into hiding. A week later, a group of

Dutch Catholic churchmen sent a telegram to the Nazi authorities denouncing the deportation of Jews. They added a special plea for baptized Jews, which proved to be a mistake, because it put the Nazis in a position to bargain with the Church. They replied that if the clergy ceased its protest baptized Jews would be exempted from deportation. The open arrests and deportation of Jews continued, and the Dutch Catholic bishops could not accept the tacit agreement. They wrote a pastoral letter to the Catholics of the Netherlands which included the text of the telegram, denouncing "the measures already undertaken against Jews" as "contrary to the deepest conviction of the Dutch people and . . . to God's commands of justice and mercy." The Nazi reaction was swift. Two hundred and one Catholic-baptized Jews were promptly arrested, including, on August 2nd, Edith and Rosa Stein.

Years later, a Dutch official who had met Sister Benedicta in a transit camp at Westerbork, in northern Holland, reported that he had asked if he could help her, apparently referring to her obvious status as one of the baptized (she was wearing a full habit). She demurred, saying, "Why should there be an exception made in the case of a particular group? Wasn't it fair that baptism not be allowed to become an advantage?" The point of the story is not, sentimentally, to honor Sister Benedicta for going willingly to her death, especially, since there are reports that she took every opportunity in Westerbork to seek the intervention of the Swiss consul. What is notable is that Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross - Edith Stein rejected the distinction between baptized and non-baptized Jews. And, more important, that she tried to fight Nazism in the only way she knew, via the Church. The Dutch bishops had joined her in that, but few others in the Catholic hierarchy ever did.

The true epiphany of Edith Stein's story is that, in a visceral rejection of Christian theology, she refused to see the Jews as disadvantaged before God. Yet even as her story prompts Christians' repentance for their sins against Jews, it inevitably exacerbates the differences between Christians and Jews. Such contradictions gave shape to the life of Edith Stein. "For now, the world consists of opposites," she was reported to have said en route to Auschwitz. "But in the end none of those contrasts will remain. There will only be the fullness of love. How could it be otherwise?"

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WEXNER HERITAGE REVIEW

Keeping
the Faith

With much of the community's attention focused upon the issue of inter-marriage and the fear of losing large numbers of Jews, comes a report from New Mexico of the opposite phenomenon. Many Catholics are discovering that they are descendants of Jews from Spain who kept alive certain customs reflecting their heritage. It is a reminder not to take our Jewishness for granted.
(*The New Republic*, October 26, 1998, 1220 Nineteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20036, $59.94 annually).

Zion's
Justice

The author, a Justice of the United States Supreme Court, gives praise to three Supreme Court Justices from the past, who were devoted to Zionism. It is a healthy reminder of what Israel, with all its present flaws and tribulations, has represented to some of the greatest jurists of America.
(*The New Republic*, October 5, 1998, Nineteenth Street NW, Washington, DC 20036, $59.94 annually).

The "Cutting Edge"
of Holocaust Studies

A new controversy concerning the Holocaust: A senior editor of *Commentary* magazine attacked the trivialization of the Holocaust by studies focused upon the feminist aspects of that era. The next article is a pointed response to that criticism.
(*The Wall Street Journal*, May 21, 1998.)

Why Is The Wall Street Journal
Now Devaluing Women's Holocaust Experiences?

An attack on the trivialization of the Holocaust by feminist scholars sparked a strong response by Wexner Heritage faculty member, Deborah Lipstadt. She points out that women's experiences in the Holocaust often did differ from those of men. For example, because Jews anticipated that the Nazis would not harm women and children, escape efforts were focused on men. Precious visas were often used for the men on the supposition that once things calmed down, the women would be able to rejoin their families. Lipstadt answers the criticism made on a book about feminist issues concerning the Holocaust. "A small number of political conservatives have convinced themselves that the Holocaust has been hijacked by fuzzy-minded liberals intent on de-Judaizing it and using it for all sorts of political ends. These conservatives... need ammunition to make their argument and they have found it in the study of women in the Holocaust. ...The best that can be said about [the attack on the book made by the author of the prior article] is that [the author] did not allow himself to be confused by the facts."
(*Lilith*, Fall, 1998, 800-783-4903, $18.00 annually.)

NEW MEXICO POSTCARD

Keeping
the Faith

by **Florence Williams**

It's Yom Kippur, yet Paul Carpenter is tucking into an enormous bowl of oatmeal at The Range in downtown Bernalillo, a truck-stop town between Santa Fe and Albuquerque on I-25. Carpenter may be Jewish, but he's not ready to commit just yet. It's been a recent revelation, and his head is still spinning. A 68-year-old retired professor, Carpenter had been teaching a continuing-education course at the University of New Mexico on the history of the descendants of secret Jews in the American southwest for four years when he learned he had more than an academic connection to the topic. A few months ago, his first cousin once removed told him that her grandmother (his aunt) used to kiss a mezuzah after nightly prayers. Another cousin traced the family lineage back to the northern New Mexico expedition of Don Juan de Oñate in 1598, a group at least partly made up of Jews fleeing the Spanish Inquisition.

To Carpenter, who grew up the son of an Hispanic mother and an Anglo father in a tiny town near the Colorado-New Mexico border, it all made sense. "Catholicism never appealed to me. When I was a boy, my Uncle Delfino once took me aside and said, 'Don't worry about the Holy Trinity. Just pray to the Father.'" Now Carpenter is studying Hebrew and learning the Torah. "It's amazing to be sixty-eight and not know who you are," he said. "I feel cheated not having grown up with that part of my culture. But I'm finding it now."

Carpenter is one of the many deep-rooted Hispanics in northern New Mexico whose identities have been strapped into a roller coaster in recent years. Only in the past decade has much of the historical and genetic evidence linking New Mexicans to Spanish and Portuguese Jews been publicized--for instance, a medical student in Albuquerque recently noticed an unusually high incidence of a rare skin disease found more commonly among Jews. And more and more Hispanics have stepped forward to speak of Jewish customs in their childhood. Many of them did not know why candles were lit on Friday nights or why certain dietary rules were followed. "My uncle told us the family was allergic to pork, but he didn't know what would happen if we ate it," remembers Carpenter.

Most historians who study the topic agree that a significant number of arrivals in new Spain were *converses*, Spanish Jews who had become Catholic--at least outwardly--after King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella offered them a choice between baptism and expulsion in 1492. That same awful choice was imposed upon the Jews of Portugal five years later. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Mexican arm of the Spanish Inquisition tried many settlers here for being *judaizante*, or secretly practicing the Jewish faith. But many others probably avoided prosecution.

Stanley Hordes wrote his 1980 doctoral dissertation on seventeenth-century crypto-Jews in New Spain and then became New Mexico's state historian. "Before long, I had bizarre visitors in my office, telling me their grandmother lights candles in the basement on Friday nights; so-and-so doesn't cook beans with ham," he told me. "At first I dismissed them as cranks, but the stories kept coming in. Finally, it hit me: Could it have been possible that there was a survival of residual Jewish customs and even a Jewish consciousness after an additional three hundred years?" Through carefully kept Spanish military, church, and civil records, Hordes began tracing the genealogy of his visitors. "The links are there," he says. Among the families he traced is one that went back 600 years to the sister of a prominent rabbi of Burgos, Spain. Another was that of Pojoaque valley resident Emilio Coca, a 66-year-old retired schoolteacher, whose line went back eleven generations to the family of a *converso* settler tried by the Inquisition in New Mexico.

Coca says that his family always consciously preserved its Jewish faith. He grew up celebrating Jewish holidays and eating meat that was slaughtered according to Jewish custom. The men in his family have always been circumcised. Remarkably, he says his family didn't hide its faith--after all, most of the neighbors practiced the same customs. I visited him at his small adobe house the day before meeting Carpenter. For two hours, he projected slides of gravestones on the wall. It felt illicit, not just because these were someone else's ancestors. To Coca, the pictures are deeply, culturally private. He wouldn't tel me where any of the gravestones are, and he had blotted out the surnames of the dead with black electrical tape. But much of the Jewish symbolism on the markers was unmistakable: Stars of David and Hebrew letters, some bold, some subtle, like a flower's stamen in the shape of the Hebrew Letter *shin*. On Coca's wall hung a large, carefully framed, Civil War-era portrait of his great-grandmother. Clasped to her collar is an *escudo de David*, or Star of David.

Coca says he feels secure in his heritage. "I'm not crypto-anything," he told me. Dozens of Rosh Hashanah cards grace the coffee table next to his easy chair. And he and his wife of 38 years, a transplanted Ashkenazi New Yorker, attend a Conservative synagogue in Los Alamos.

Coca's case, however, is unusual. Most descendants of *converses* became devout Catholics, the dominant cultural influence in the Hispanic Southwest, or incorporated elements of several religions. "My sister calls herself a Sephardic Catholic," one woman told me. And at least half a dozen local groups and conferences have sprouted to help newly discovered crypto-Jews deal with what is often a painful and difficult revelation. Not only are the descendants often thwarting their family's desire to leave the Jewish history alone, but they also find a large cultural chasm between their Sephardic roots and the Ashkenazi roots of most New Mexican Jews. On top of that, they also face the skepticism of some scholars and Jewish legal authorities.

Rabbi Marc Angel of New York's Congregation Shearith Israel, a Sephardic synagogue, is one such stickler for Jewish law. "My problem is not that these people want to explore

their roots," he explains. "That's fine, that's wonderful, that's poetic. But the question that then emerges is, 'Should they be accepted as members of the mainstream Jewish community based on these vague recollections?' I met one man in New Mexico who was wearing a *kippah* and telling me about his Jewishness, and he had a bumper sticker on the car that said, 'JESUS LOVES ME.' How can a rabbi suddenly say, 'Okay, you're a Jew'? You can't say it. Just because you have some Jewish ancestry and even feel Jewish does not make you Jewish." Angel advises crypto-Jews who want to embrace their heritage to undergo a formal conversion "just to be on the safe side."

But the non-crypto crypto-Jews are also being embraced by many of New Mexico's gringo Jews, who find the notion of a secret devotional history enduring under the junipers romantic and alluring. They seem grateful that Jews have at long last gained rank in the state's already dynamic mix of Pueblo Indians, Hispanics, and crystal-worshiping mystics. One popular Española artist, Diana Bryer, has started portraying such syncretic scenes as a tortilla-maker under a Star of David in her paintings. Theresa and Richard Montoya, who sell folk-art *retablos* off the High Road to Taos, now include characters from the Old Testament among the standard-issue saints. "We had requests from Jewish people," shrugs Theresa. Meanwhile, the Lubavitcher representatives of New Mexico and several area rabbis now counsel descendants seeking conversion or what the less stringent rabbis more palatably term "affirmation." And, during the recent High Holiday season, when conservative Jews in Santa Fe were offered a full complement of Yom Kippur services for the first time, several crypto-Jews also attended. "We can learn from each other," said visiting Rabbi Seth Kunin at Temple Beth Shalom's Kol Nidre service. "Many of us take our Jewishness for granted, and here are people who have had to struggle enormously to keep a Jewish consciousness alive for five hundred years."

Does all this synergy mean Hispanic Jews will start eating bagels instead of tortillas? Hardly. "I'm still a farm boy," says Carpenter, downing the last of his oatmeal. "I still don't get 'Seinfeld.' But," he adds, "I might start up a *converso* square dance club."

FLORENCE WILLIAMS is a writer in Montana

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Zions's

Justice

***by* Stephen J. Breyer**

A century ago, Theodor Herzl and a few hundred delegates convened in a crowded hall in Basel, Switzerland, and emerged with a plan. Today the State of Israel is not a plan. It is a nation. It seeks to encompass within its 799 miles of border the Zionist's dream. Many people across the world have contributed to the realization of that dream, among them three members of the Supreme Court of the United States: Louis D. Brandeis, Felix Frankfurter, and Robert Jackson.

Justice Brandeis did not become actively involved in Jewish causes until he was well over 50 years old. He had come from Kentucky from an assimilated Jewish family. His uncle, Lewis Naphtall Dembitz, a successful lawyer and a devout Orthodox Jew, was likely responsible for Brandeis's initial understanding of the Jewish religion. This uncle's influence is suggested by the fact that the teenage Brandeis made his uncle's name—Dembitz—part of his own.

By 1910, Brandeis had become one of the nation's most powerful lawyers. He was actively associated with many progressive causes, including those of labor unions, minimum wage laws, and utilities regulation. But he had not embraced Jewish causes, and, as late as 1905, he had warned against the kind of ethnic identification associated with the use of a hyphen, as in "Catholic-American" or "Jewish-American."

Then, in 1910, he began to represent striking garment workers in New York City. His interaction with these primarily Jewish workers made a deep impression upon him and sparked his interest in Zionism. After meeting with Jacob de Haas, a former secretary to Theodor Herzl, in 1912, he joined the American Federation of Zionists and started making public remarks in support of Zionism. He spent the summer of 1914 reading intensively on Jewish topics, and, after an "emergency" meeting of American Zionists in New York City, he accepted a leadership role in the Zionist movement.

Brandeis worked enthusiastically and with characteristic intelligence, in the service of the Zionist ideal. We can begin to understand his enthusiasm if we examine, for example, the letters to his wife about Palestine itself: "It is a wonderful country," he wrote. "What I saw of California and the Grand Canyon seemed less beautiful than the view from the Mount of Olives upon the Dead Sea and the country beyond. . . . Palestine has won our heart. . . ." "Jewish life," he later said, "cannot be preserved and developed, assimilation cannot be averted, unless there be rerestablished in the fatherland a center from which the Jewish spirit may radiate."

In 1917, for example, his intervention with President Wilson helped secure American support for the Balfour Declaration, thereby assuring its issuance. In 1938, not long before his death, he called upon President Roosevelt, seeking FDR's public diplomatic support for allowing more Jewish refugees to travel to Palestine. He told Frankfurter of his plan to

"telephone Miss LeHand (FDR's secretary) that an expression ... of Palestine's readiness to take one hundred thousand refugees within twelve months would be desirable." Brandeis gave in purely materialistic terms, as well: after 1912, Brandeis donated almost $600,000 (the present equivalent to several million dollars) to Jewish causes.

Today, not all of Brandeis's activities would seem appropriate for a judge. Nonetheless there is one special reason why we still find Brandeis's contributions important. It is because Brandeis used his pen, his pocketbook, and his nationally recognized position as a distinguished member of the legal profession to make perfectly clear to American Jews, and to the world, that support for the Zionist ideal and American patriotism were perfectly compatible.

It is important to remember that Brandeis was a leader at a time when Zionism was controversial among Jews. Indeed, after Brandeis was confirmed as a member of the Supreme Court in 1916, *The New York Times,* with support from some Jewish groups, argued that Brandeis should resign from his public positions in Zionist organizations. And he did so. This opposition reflected something deeper than simple concern for judicial propriety. It reflected a widely held view that American Jews need not—and perhaps ought not—support the Zionist cause because doing so somehow might prove inconsistent with their obligations toward their own country or interfere with their participation in American civic life.

Brandeis strongly believed, however, that it was possible to be a loyal American and an enthusiastic Zionist. Consider, for example, the statement he made to a Jewish gathering in Boston's Symphony Hall. He said that "practical experience and observation have convinced me . . . that, to be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists." He added that the "twentieth-century ideals of America have been the ideals of the Jew for more than twenty centuries. We have inherited these ideals of democracy and social justice. . . ." He said that the "Jewish renaissance in Palestine will enable us to perform our plain duty to America." Today, there is widespread acceptance of these, or similar, conclusions. Brandeis showed that it was possible to be a good American, a good Jew and a good Zionist.

Felix Frankfurter was Brandeis' pupil, in respect to Zionism as in respect to so much else. As a law student in 1905, Frankfurter heard Brandeis speak at the Harvard Ethics Society. Soon thereafter a friendship developed, and Frankfurter eventually became what Brandeis described as his "half-brother, half-son." After graduating from law school, Frankfurter worked in New York U.S. attorney's office for Henry Stimson, then at the War Department, and from 1914 on (until his 1939 appointment to the Supreme Court) as a professor at Harvard Law School.

Brandeis needed an assistant to carry on his Zionist activities, particularly after he was appointed to the Court. He chose Frankfurter. Even while Brandeis was on the Court—in an act now considered highly controversial— Brandeis would deposit between $250 and $3,000 in a bank account to pay Frankfurter's expenses as he traveled throughout the country advocating causes, which included Zionism. Frankfurter made clear that, when he spoke, he spoke "not only as a Jew, but as one who believes in the wisdom of the policy embodied in the Palestine Mandate for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine."

Frankfurter's own career spanned the 1930s and 1940s, when, like the rest of the world, he was confronted with anti-Semitism, fascism, World War II, and the Holocaust. It is not surprising that he began his 1943 dissent in *Barnette*, the second West Virginia flag-salute case, with the statement: "One who belongs to the most vilified and persecuted minority in history is not likely to be insensible to the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution." Nor is it surprising that Frankfurter's attachment to Zionism was characterized by a focus upon the practical difficulties of creating a Jewish state and upon practical efforts to overcome them.

In 1919, for example, Brandeis told Frankfurter to prepare for a practical task: writing legal bequest forms "adequate in the several states" to organize an effort "to get into touch with all Jewish lawyers in America" and to try to have many Jewish clients remember Zion in their wills. That same year, he had Frankfurter travel to the Paris Peace Conference as a leading representative of American Zionists. At that time, the Emir Feisal, leader of the Arab delegation, wrote to Frankfurter, 'We regard [the Zionists' goals] as moderate and proper. We will do out best . . . to help them through. . . . We are working together for a reformed and revived Near East, and our two movements complete one another. . . . Indeed, I think that neither can be a real success without the other.

Twelve years later, with considerable practical perspicacity, Frankfurter wrote:

> Jew and Arab are collaborating in the thousand intimacies of their common life as builders of a new country. . . . There is no easy road, no magic formula for the achievements of that cooperation upon which depends the peace of Palestine. . . . Into the whole texture of Palestine life there must enter unflagging realization that Arab cannot dominate Jew, nor Jew Arab, and that only in fellowship or reciprocal rights and reciprocal duties can be realized the distinctive values to civilization of Jew and Arab.

During the fateful years of World War II, Frankfurter remained in close touch with the Roosevelt administration. He would send views, ideas, and information to Henry Stimson, to David Niles (FDR's liaison to the Jewish community), and to FDR himself. According to Philip Elman, then his law clerk, this Frankfurter "channel" made up part of the effort to help the Jewish cause. Among the many frequent visitors to Frankfurter's office at that time were Stephen Wise and David Ben-Gurion. Using Frankfurter's grandmother's Yiddish, Elman says that Frankfurter was a *koch loffle*—a cooking spoon—who would stir up and transmit ideas, his own and those of others, such as those of his Zionist visitors.

In 1947 came one important practical achievement. With the help of his Supreme Court colleague Frank Murphy, who had previously been governor general of the Philippines,

Frankfurter successfully helped to persuade the Phillippines' United Nations delegate to cast a critical vote in favor of establishing the State of Israel. He later gave Murphy a copy of Chaim Weizmann's book with the inscription, "Frank Murphy, in token of his part in a great historic event, with the warm regards of F.F."

One cannot speak of Zionism and the creation of Israel without reference to the Holocaust. And I want, in this regard, to refer to the contribution made by one other member of our Court, Robert Jackson, who was not a Jew. In 1946, Jackson took leave from the Court to organize the Nuremberg trials, where he worked as chief prosecutor of the Nazi war criminals. He described his own work there as the most important experience of his life, "infinitely more important than my work on the Supreme Court or . . . anything that I did as attorney general." He compiled an evidentiary record, as he said, with such authenticity and in such detail that "there can be no responsible denial of these crimes in the future and no tradition of martyrdom of the Nazi leaders can arise among informed people." He also helped to set a precedent—that nations will not ignore the most barbarous acts of other nations. And today that precedent, while far from perfectly followed, is not totally without force, even in respect to a nation's own past.

Jackson did not see Nuremberg and the allies' "submis[sion] of their captive enemies to the judgment of the law" as an answer to the Holocaust—for there is no answer to what he called "wrongs . . . so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored." Rather, he saw the Nuremberg trials as a recognition of that which is decent and civilized in human nature, a "tribute that Power" will pay "to Reason." That connection between the trial and what went before it is similar to the emotion we feel today when, emerging from a visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum, deeply depressed about the potential for evil that exists in human nature, we suddenly remember that the Holocaust story is not the whole story. We recall that there is much in human nature that remains a cause for optimism.

The creation of Israel, like the trials that sought justice, was a reminder of the best of human aspirations, a symbol of our hope. The work of these three justices, then, embodies elements of the modern Zionist ideal that extend beyond the central notion of return to a land. These include the universal aspiration toward "democracy and social justice," as Brandeis pointed out. They include the practical need for "collaboration" between Jew and Arab, as Frankfurter wrote. And they include the effort to embody in human institutions those civilizing human aspirations—aspirations toward reason, justice, law, and hope itself—that Jackson's work exemplified.

The Zionist ideal is, of course, exactly that—an ideal. It is an objective toward which imperfect reality must struggle. But, whatever the imperfections of reality, this ideal retains its hold upon our imagination and that of the world.

STEPHEN J. BREYER is an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court. This essay is adapted from an address to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

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The 'Cutting Edge'

of Holocaust Studies

***by* Gabriel Schoenfeld**

Nearly two decades ago, the critic Robert Alter warned of the distortions that would ensue as the Holocaust became "academicized." Mr. Alter worried that presenting the fathomless evil of the Holocaust in the detached, dispassionate environment of a university would have, in his words, the "unhappy effect of naturalizing the horror."

In the years since, Holocaust studies have become an established feature of the academic landscape. Undergraduates at Swarthmore can avail themselves of a "multidisciplinary" Holocaust course that also promises to be "truly multicultural." Dickinson State University in North Dakota offers "The Holocaust in Historical Context: An Internet Extension Course." The University of Nevada at Reno offers students a 19-credit minor in Holocaust, genocide and peace studies that includes a hands-on "internship" providing "structured and supervised experience combining professional opportunities with reflective learning."

Holocaust research has indeed been thoroughly academicized. The language in which the murder of six million Jews is discussed has become indistinguishable from that of technical sociology and cultural theory. It is often full of ugly and incomprehensible jargon.

Worst of all, by far, are the excesses of the voguish hybrid known as "gender studies." Like women's studies, from which it evolved, gender studies aims to redress the alleged scholarly neglect of women (and of sexual minorities like homosexuals and the "transgendered"). It was only a matter of time before its accusatory gaze fell upon the study of the Holocaust.

Mainstream scholarship on the Nazi genocide is guilty of consistently minimizing or ignoring "issues of sexual vulnerability and assaults against women," in the words of Joan Ringelheim, director of education at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. At the same time, Ms. Ringelheim claims, such scholarship subtly works to perpetuate misogynist stereotypes and patriarchal institutions -- of which Nazi Germany was an extreme but hardly the only example.

Feminist scholars have been avidly cataloging instances of "gender- differentiated behavior" under conditions of Nazi

persecution, an enterprise that entails studying all the various and unique ways Jewish women experienced the ghettos and the camps. In itself, such an undertaking has merit. Even in the midst of the Nazi genocide itself, Emmanuel Ringelblum, the chronicler of the Warsaw ghetto and the compiler of an extraordinary underground archive, commissioned a study devoted to this very question.

But it is one thing to carry out such work in the name of honest understanding. Feminist scholarship on the Holocaust is intended explicitly to serve the purposes of consciousness-raising -- i.e., propaganda -- something its practitioners proudly admit.

In academic journals and in books like "Women in the Holocaust" (1998), "Different Voices: Women in the Holocaust" (1993) and "Making Stories, Making Selves: Feminist Reflections on the Holocaust" (1993), one can come across, for example, sociologist R. Ruth Linden asserting that the environmental impact of "thousands of pounds of human ash dumped into lakes and rivers" is no less urgent a subject than the Holocaust itself and that its study would serve usefully to "decenter narrowly anthropocentric views of human destruction." The aforementioned Ms. Ringelheim, for her part, has written that "women and minorities, the working class and the poor, prior to and after the Holocaust, have often lived in conditions similar in kind (although not always in degree) to those in the Holocaust."

In their zeal to target the male sex, some feminist Holocaust scholars do not stop with the Nazis. Ms. Ringelheim goes so far as to draw a connection between Nazi "sexism" and the "exploitation" of Jewish women by Jewish men. Many people today, she writes, find it "too difficult to contemplate the extent to which. . . the sexism of Nazi ideology and the sexism of the Jewish community met in a tragic and involuntary alliance."

Faced with such defamatory nonsense, one is tempted simply to dismiss the feminist Holocaustologians as crackpots. But they are not some marginal group. As Lenore J. Weitzman and Dalia Ofer, editors of "Women in the Holocaust," assert, they represent "cutting-edge scholarship in an emerging field," issuing a steady stream of articles and books and increasingly assuming important positions in museums, resource centers and university enclaves.

Unresolved issues -- historical, political, moral and theological -- still swirl around the Holocaust, and studying them remains a task of great importance. It will not be carried out by the sort of malicious theorizing that would assign co-responsibility for the catastrophe to "the sexism of Nazi ideology and the sexism of the Jewish community." Yet this is all too characteristic of "cutting-edge scholarship."

GABRIEL SCHOENFELD is senior editor of *Commentary*, from whose June issue this essay is adapted.

Why Is The Wall Street Journal

Now Devaluing Women's Holocaust Experiences?

A major new anthology has brought together the work of serious scholars of the Holocaust under a "women's" rubric. In so doing, the book inspired a shocking anti-feminist attack. Writing in Commentary magazine, Gabriel Schoenfeld accused these scholars of spreading feminist "propaganda," and commented--gratuitously--that "the general execrableness" of their prose "easily surpasses that of their male colleagues." In a baffling editorial move, The Wall Street Journal adapted this analysis for its op-ed page, making sure Schoenfeld's polemic lost none of its scornful, misogynistic fervor. In the following pages, we offer a clear-headed appraisal of the book and some scholarly responses to the crucial new work of elucidating women's Holocaust experiences.

***by* Deborah E. Lipstadt**

Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman could not have imagined that when their edited volume, *Women in the Holocaust* (Yale University Press, 1998), appeared it would be drawn into a political maelstrom. Their serious academic study, became, within moments of its publication, target for a salvo unleashed by political conservatives.

Despite being a foil for conservative wrath, this valuable collection of essays by 21 writers on women's experiences before the war, in the ghettoes, in the resistance and in the concentration camps makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Holocaust history. The contributors to this volume, the majority of whom are specialists in Jewish history, including the Holocaust, believe that while both Jewish men and women caught up in the whirlwind which was the Holocaust reached the same ultimate destination, men and women often were stopped at different stations along that path. Neither the authors of the various selections nor the editors argue that a woman's situation was necessarily worse than a man's. They do contend that it was different.

Some critics of the whole endeavor of studying women's Holocaust experiences believe that since the Final Solution called for the death of all Jews, to focus on gender in general and sexual vulnerability in particular might seem irrelevant or even irreverent. Some have even said "obscene." But it is axiomatic to note that the Holocaust did not have the same impact on all its victims. No event ever does. Age, geography and economic status are among the factors that differentiated one experience from the other: Child survivors, particularly those hidden, had a markedly different experience than did adults. A number of scholars have tried to ascertain whether Jews who had a strong religious faith were able to endure the torture of ghettoes and camps better than those who did not. Many wealthy Jews were able to arrange for their family's escape from the Reich, while Jews with no resources had fewer chances of avoiding disaster. Jews in German small towns in the 1930's generally fared worse than Jews in larger cities where there was an organized Jewish community to

assist them. Ofer, Weitzman and other scholars before them recognize that even as one explores differences of age, faith, class, geography, and nationality, "unless one understood the condition of women, one would not understand the general human condition." as Ofer explains. This understanding, however, is not--as some critics would have it--a contemporary agenda that feminists are trying to impose on the past. One of the first people to call attention to changes for women as a result of Nazism was the historian Emmanuel Ringelblum, who did his research from within the Warsaw ghetto itself. In Ofer's contribution to the book, "Gender in Ghetto Diaries and Testimonies," she quotes Ringelblum's notes from the beginning of 1940 about women in the Warsaw ghetto.

> "Women's perseverance--the main providers. Men don't go out. When [a man is seized for forced labor], the wife does not let go. She runs after [the kidnappers], she screams and cries "please, Mister"--she is not afraid of the soldiers. She stands on the long line--some are sent to work.... When there is need to go to the *Aleja Szueha* [the Gestapo] the daughter or wife goes.... The women are everywhere since the [men] have been taken to all sorts of work.... When a husband escapes and his wife has to be the sole provider. [Women who never thought of working out of their homes] are now performing the most difficult physical work."

Ringelblum asked his colleague Cecilva Slepak to explore this metamorphosis inside the ghetto. Why did Ringelblum not *also* ask another scholar to do a similar study on how men's lives had changed? Because even then, in the midst of the horror, he recognized as contemporary, conservative critics do not, that the vast majority of the information being gathered by the group of ghetto researchers dedicated to documenting as many aspects of ghetto life as possible focused on men's experiences. That was the norm.

Of the unique experiences of women that have been neglected, Weitzman and Ofer suggest four general categories. First, the roles of women before the war. In Germany, for example, where few women worked, they had fewer Gentile contacts. In less affluent Jewish communities in Poland, on the other hand, women were the ones who had primary contact with the non-Jewish world and thus had Gentile contacts they could approach for help.

Second, suggest Weitzman and Ofer, because Jews anticipated that the Nazis would not harm women and children, they focused their escape efforts on the men. The emigration statistics for German Jewish men and women are, as Marion Kaplan observes, quite different. Precious visas were often used for the men on the supposition that once the situation calmed down women would be able to join their families. Parents willingly sent their sons abroad to pave the way for the rest of the family but regularly insisted that a daughter's proper place was at home with her parents, irrespective of the dire conditions.

Third, the edicts passed by the Nazis tended also to treat men and women differently. We know--and essays in this book attempt to explore why--that in a number of ghettoes the mortality rate for men was higher than that for women. We also know that a disproportionate number of women in their 20s and 30s were deported from the ghettoes for the camps.

Even upon their arrival in the camps women fared differently. Whereas a healthy young man might well avoid being immediately sent to the gas chambers, young women, who might have been selected to work, were sent to the gas chambers because they were with their children. "It is well known" write Weitzman and Ofer in their introduction, "that some of the Jews who worked on the arrival ramp walked among the women lining up for the selection and told the young women to give their children to the grandmother." The workers, who knew that the grandmothers--and the children--were already destined for the gas chambers, were trying to save the lives of the young mothers.... Naturally most women clung to their children... and were sent to the gas chambers with them."

The most striking-and least discussed-difference that women encountered had to do with their sexual vulnerability, a topic that some of the contributors note has been minimized or ignored by researchers. The victimization of Jewish men during the Holocaust did not usually include their sexual exploitation. Even when women were not sexually exploited, they knew that was a danger facing them. Indeed, writes, Myrna Goldenberg based on her study of women's memoirs of Auschwitz, "Although rape by the SS in the death camps was rare, the women were terrorized by rumors or threats of rape."

One woman recalls her uncle telling her "that he had witnessed a mass raping of Jewish girls who were buried alive in mass graves that they had dug." Other women had to face the terrible choice of using sex to try to save themselves and their families.

Finally, this book offers evidence of distinct differences in the way in which men and women responded to the Nazi policies, be it women's refusals to abandon their mothers thus closing off the possibility of escape--or their ability to make meager food and clothing last in the camps or their leadership in the resistance movements.

In light of these clear gender differences in experiences during the war, which this book explicates so sensitively, the question becomes: Why the political maelstrom about this book? Why has this serious work become the subject of devious attacks in leading Jewish and secular journals? A small number of political conservatives have convinced themselves that the Holocaust has been hijacked by fuzzy-minded liberals intent on de-Judaizing it and using it for all sorts of political ends. These conservatives, both within the Jewish community and outside of it, need ammunition to make their argument, and they have found it in the study of women in the Holocaust. In articles in *The Wall Street Journal* and *Commentary*, Gabriel Schoenfeld has glibly dismissed all such work on women in the Holocaust as having nothing more than a naked ideological agenda. He argues that "feminist scholarship on the Holocaust is intended explicitly to serve the purposes of consciousness-raising--i.e. propaganda."

The best that can be said about Schoenfeld's critique is that he did not allow himself to be confused by the facts. Had he not come to this book with his eyes already closed as to its value, he would have recognized it as an important work that will teach us a great deal about the terrible experiences of both Jewish women and men during the Holocaust.

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WEXNER HERITAGE REVIEW

Torah &
Environmental Ethics

With the holiday of Tu B'shvat "sprouting forth" mid-month, we lead off this issue with an essay explaining the relationship of environmental ethics and human needs in Judaism. Although detailed, this wonderful article by a senior member of the Wexner Heritage faculty is sure to reward the reader with new knowledge and insight.

The Ankles
Of King David

Though published nearly a year ago, this column describes the depth of animosity between Jewish factions in Israel. So many of those on the religious right and the secular left in Israel seem intent on a self destructive course.
(*The Jerusalem Report*, Jan. 4, 1999, published biweekly, 1-800-827-1199, $69.00 annually)

Could We
Have Stopped Hitler?

Little known is the debate during 1933 among worldwide Jewry whether to attempt a boycott of German products, in an effort to deliver an economic deathblow to the Nazi Party. Amazingly, this call to action was undercut by the Zionist movement, that had negotiated permission for Jews to leave Germany and to take some of their assets in the form of new German goods, which the Zionist movement would then sell in Palestine and eventually throughout much of the world. In sum, the Zionist plan promoted not a boycott, but the sale of German goods. Admittedly, some 55,000 Jews were able, in this manner, to find a haven in Palestine. Yet we must wonder whether, had the boycott route been pursued, if the Nazis and Hitler would have been toppled from power, before beginning their murderous rampage.
(*Reform Judaism*, 1999, Fall 1999, published quarterly, $12.00 annually, published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 633 Third Avene, New York, New York 10017)

Torah &
Environmental Ethics

by **Saul J. Berman**

Does the Torah address the relationship between persons and nature? Put with such directness and simplicity, the obvious answer is a rousing and unequivocal, yes! Indeed, the issue is not whether the Torah addresses this issue, but what precisely it is that Torah teaches.

Framework for the Torah's Teachings

The framework for Torah's teachings on the environment emerges in the dynamic tension between two verses at the beginning of Genesis. In Genesis 1:28, God blesses the newly-created humans, '. . . Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over . . . every living thing . . .' This apparent grant of absolute power was seized upon by Arnold Toynbee and many environmentalists as a basis for the extraordinarily silly assertion that the Bible was at fault for human exploitation of nature. Toynbee and his cohorts, in their selective reading of the Torah, did not even bother to take note of the language of Torah just one chapter later. In Genesis 2:15, God takes the newly created human, '. . . and placed him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate it and to guard it.' This verse imposes upon the human a stewardship relationship to the world in which he lives.

Are the two verses contradictory or complementary? The obvious approach of all Jewish biblical commentators was to assume that the two verses could be reconciled in arriving at a synthesis of the two extreme indications. Thus, for example, Malbim points out that the verse in Genesis chapter 1 is no more than a blessing, not a directive. Thus, he contends, the point is not simply that if humanity heeds God's commands, then God will allow the land and its contents to be subdued by obedient humanity. The teaching according to Malbim, as according to Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, is in reality the proposition that God, not man, is the continuing owner of all of the earth.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik suggests, more sharply, that the two verses represent two aspects of the nature of the human being which are in a constant state of tension. In Rav Soloveitchik's approach there resides the awareness that there is unavoidable dynamic tension between the capacity to exercise control over nature, and the duty to act towards nature with a sense of fiduciary responsibility.

Truth be told, the various commentators, ancient, medieval and modern who have discovered the essential complementary character of these two verses, drew their awareness, not from any apologetic need to defend the ethical integrity of Torah, but from their recognition that the whole rest of Torah legislation requires this particular understanding of these

verses. Firstly, on a symbolic level, the human's right to exploit nature is severely circumscribed. After all, the essence of the prohibition against *melachah* on Shabbat is to teach that the productive manipulation of the environment is not an absolute right. The laws of the Sabbatical year teach, not only that the powers of the individual are subsumed under the general rights of the community, but also that the individual does not have the right of exclusive dominance even over his own property.

Such teachings come as no surprise to us. The Hebrew language itself conveys the same powerful message through the absence of a single word by which the concept of absolute ownership can be conveyed. All Hebrew words which are commonly used to express ownership, in reality only express the notion of possession. Phrases like *yesh li*, or *shayach li*, or even *baal*, do not convey the sense of absolute ownership, but of possessory or other complex relationships. We would hope that any husband understands that his Hebrew title, *baal*, conveys a complex pattern of duties, rights and responsibilities, but certainly not ownership! The language here is the handmaiden of theology; we cannot speak of human 'ownership' because our theology does not believe that there is rightfully any such notion. God is the 'owner' of all, and we humans have simply rights of possession of various degrees of complexity.

Torah Laws

It is not only on the symbolic plane and on the linguistic plane that the teachings of Torah address the relationship between humankind and nature. On the direct practical level, there are dozens of Torah laws which regulate in great detail what we may and may not do to the environment. The Torah prohibits the crossbreeding of different species of animals, as it bans the transplanting of branches of differing species of fruit trees , and the intermingling of seeds in planting (vis Leviticus, chapter 19). The Torah, here and elsewhere, teaches us the lesson of the inviolability of nature, of our need to make symbolic and real affirmation of nature's original order, in defiance of humankind's manipulative interference.

Likewise, Torah prohibits various forms of activities which would involve cruelty to animals. We may not harness together animals of different strengths; we may not pass by an animal which had collapsed under its load, but are duty bound to help it; we may not slaughter a mother and its young on the same day, as we may not take fledglings while the mother bird hovers over them. Some eighteen different laws of the Torah call upon us to live in awareness of the fact that God's creatures require our care and deserve our attention.

Protected from Being Destroyed

All of God's creation, and even the increments which other humans have made to His world, are entitled to be protected from wanton destruction. Thus do the Sages understand the importance of the verse in Deuteronomy 20:19-20 which literally would ban only the destruction of fruit-bearing trees during war. Rambam understands the law this way in *his Sefer Hamitzvot* (prohibition no. 57), as well as in his *Mishneh Torah* (Kings 6:10) (all that differs in the latter is Rambam's recognition of *lo tash'chit* as a *lav shebbikhlalot*, a compound prohibition, in which the biblical penalty of lashes pertains only to that violation which is expressly mentioned in the Torah).

Lo Tash'chit

What, however, is the underlying attitude of Torah in all of this protective legislation? Is the Torah teaching us that all substances within nature have a right to exist which cannot be violated by humans? The fact is that much of contemporary environmental thinking seems to be moving precisely in that direction. There is an increasing rejection of the stewardship model in favor of an absolutist assertion as to the integrity of nature. Would Torah agree to such a proposition?

The Law of *lo tash'chit* may provide us with an instructive illustration. The language of Rambam, as well as the language of the early halakhic midrash on which his codification of this law relies, is powerful in its generality. The level of protection provided for seems to be vast, all-inclusive and without exception. Yet, careful analysis of the passages in the Gemara dealing with this law reveal a vital and different subcurrent.

The Gemara in *Bava Kamma* 91b-92a suggests that protection even of fruit growing trees may be overridden by economic need. The Gemara of Shabbat 129a contends that destruction for protection of health is permissible. The Gemara, Shabbat 140b, goes even further in indicating that personal aesthetic preference is sufficient to justify what would otherwise constitute a wasteful use of natural resources. The Gemara of Shabbat 105b, to top off the indications, contends that the gratification of a psychological need is sufficient also to override the prohibition of *lo tash'chit*. Indeed, in the context of all of these exemptions, it is difficult to construct a case in which violation of *lo tash'chit* would actually be present.

To rephrase the situation, the talmudic texts recast the prohibition of *lo tash'chit* as a prohibition against the wasteful use of resources, while expanding the range of human needs which are sufficient to constitute a destructive act as non-wasteful. This is a powerful counterbalancing of human needs against the autonomous rights of nature, in which the former clearly wins out. It is this view which is in turn codified by Rambam in his selection of the term *derech hashchatah*, which suggests that only wasteful destruction falls with the purview of the prohibition. This position is adopted as well by the Tosafists, who take even further the exemption for psychological need in their contention that destruction in expression of anger is not violative of the law of *lo tash'chit* (Kiddushin 32a, Tosafot s.v. Rav Yehudah).

The dynamic tension between the two versus *vekhivshuhah* and *le'ovdah uleshomrah* as understood by Rabbi Soloveitchik are simply playing themselves out in the realm of Halakhah. It is not acceptable in Jewish law to make an assertion of the independent rights of nature. The rights of nature need to be carefully balanced, calibrated, against human interests; and in that balancing it will be the human interests which will have priority.

The Life of *Mitzvot*

Can we then safely turn out attention away from the environment and simply refocus on human needs which are, in any case, so vast and demanding? After all, in America as elsewhere, the problems of poverty and homelessness, starvation and AIDS, war and crime, are certainly pressing and make legitimate demands on our time and our resources. How can we turn our attention to the snail darter and the spotted owl, to species preservation and the chemical components of the atmosphere, if we haven't even yet begun to address hatred and inhumanity within our own species?!

The life of *mitzvot* is just that, a life of *commandments*, plural, not a life of *mitzvah*, singular. The life of mitzvot does not have a single overriding, all important value to be sustained singly, beyond all others. Even belief in God, if it is a mitzvah, is just one of six hundred and thirteen.

The life of mitzvot is like a small garden with six hundred and thirteen flowers, each of which needs to be cultivated and cherished so that the magnificent beauty of Torah life in its entirety may be achieved and appreciated. The task before us is not to discard or disregard that garden and to replace it with this single new overriding concern environmentalism. Our task is to discover within the garden of six hundred and thirteen flowers those few or many which demand of us attention to the problems of the environment. And those flowers most certainly exist.

Challenges and Responsibilities

I would like to propose two challenges and thereby two stages in our responsibility to environmental issues.

A. Hatzalah - short term rescue

Jewish law posits a duty of rescue of persons based on the Torah mandate of 'You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor' (Leviticus 19:16). This demand, almost unique in the annals of legal history, makes it a crime for a Jew to fail to intervene in the rescue of an innocent person from injury or death. As is indicated by the conjunction of verses, this duty is based on the underlying principle of "You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Lev. 19:18). It is precisely in consequence of our duty to love the other that we bear also the responsibility to rescue her from danger.

But if there is no duty to love nature or God's world, why then would I assert that we have a duty to rescue it? Firstly because it has become abundantly clear that the real risk in our continued pollution of the environment is not the earth but is humankind. The earth will undoubtedly survive our depredations and will continue to swarm with life, but humankind may be extinguished and end this stage of God's experiment on the earth. If we love humanity, then we must now act to save it from ourselves.

Toynbee had suggested that the only way to proceed to reverse the Judeo-Christian teaching of human mastery over the environment was to revert to pagan, pre-Christian thinking as to the sacralization of nature. Aside his failure to comprehend Jewish teachings on this matter, Toynbee's willingness to abandon the entire moral progress which humanity has made under Jewish influence is astonishing. What price environmentalism! We need not abandon Judaism, nor adopt pagan beliefs. We need simply to teach Torah's duty to rescue humanity from ourselves because of our love of humanity, of ourselves.

A second path to the same conclusion is available through the awareness of our duty to love God. In Jewish law, the duty to rescue persons is extended to the rescue of their property. The mitzvah of the return of lost property is one manifestation of this responsibility. Our duty to the beloved neighbor is to keep him whole in both body and property.

But, as we demonstrated earlier, an essential Jewish teaching is that the entire world belongs to God. If then we love Him, we are duty bound to protect and preserve His property this entire earth.

B. Anavah - long-term rescue

The real cause of environmental pollution, the real reason that people have brought the earth to its present desperate position, has nothing to do with people's excessive observance of the command of 'subdue it!' It is not the Jewish teaching of the centrality of God's covenant with humanity which is at fault for human mistreatment of the environment. The real cause of abuse is human failure to heed religious teachings against the exclusive importance of material goals. The real cause of our destruction of the environment is our total preoccupation with wealth and comfort. To the extent that science and technology have become the handmaidens of profit instead of truth, they have become part of the problem and need now to be redirected to being part of the solution.

The longer term solution to environmental problems depends upon our ability to re-educate ourselves and our children towards humility towards *anavah*, and moderation. We need to devote ourselves to the elimination of material excess in our lives, in our homes, in our offices, in what we eat and in the technology which we utilize so wastefully. Even our waste is wastefully disposed of. Only such reorientation, in which material excess is replaced with deep spiritual awareness of the ultimate partnership between humanity and the earth in the achievement of God's goals, can lay the foundation for a new and more healthy relationship between us and our environment.

The challenge ahead of us is the common challenge of science and religion together to discover and implement means of assuring the physical survival of humanity on earth, and to discover and implement the means of assuring the spiritual survival of a more humble and more modest humanity on this, God's earth.

The Ankles

of King David

by **Stuart Schoffman**

It always startles me when one of my Israeli friends starts bashing the ultra-Orthodox. We're talking sophisticated sabras, politically liberal, well-educated and successful people who speak of the "war" we are already fighting or will have to fight soon, as matter-of-factly as if they were referring to Lebanon or Gaza. "I don't want to understand them, I want to demonize them," one friend actually said to me, as if he were a Marine sergeant out of central casting, responding to an earnest question from a mama's boy about the human rights of the North Koreans.

I'm not having much luck with the ultra-Orthodox either. Twice lately I've been asked to "dialogue" at a public event with a member of the *haredi* community. The first of my co-panelists concluded his evening of dodging questions about religious coercion with the gratuitous observation that "Shakespeare doesn't come up to the ankles of King David," as if it were impossible to believe that God inspires goyim too. At the second forum, the moderator asked my interlocutor and me to indulge in self-criticism of the group we represented. I obligingly chastised my fellow non-Orthodox Jews for their hostility to the Orthodox and their limited grasp of Judaism; and my opposite number said something like this: "If you could only hear the way we Torah Jews criticize ourselves! But I won't tell you what we say because you wouldn't understand." Once again, evasion and condescension.

Some of my best relatives, quick and dead alike, are or were ultra-Orthodox. My first cousin twice removed was a legendary Lubavitcher who wrote a classic work of heroic faith based on his long incarceration in a Stalinist prison camp. Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav's fables, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's indispensable Hebrew translation of the Talmud, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's immortal melodies all these are so much a part of my life, of the cultural trove of contemporary Jewry, that to think of ultra-Orthodoxy as alien or menacing is both strange and sad. Yet how can it be otherwise, when the ultra-Orthodox in Israel manifestly wield inordinate political power, shirk civic responsibility, and seek to impose restrictions on how the rest of us conduct our lives?

Bear in mind, though, that the *haredim* naturally view themselves as victims, not oppressors. In recent weeks, three Supreme Court rulings have sent a chill up the collective spine of the ultra-pious: Reform and Conservative delegates must be seated on the religious councils of Jerusalem and other cities; kibbutzim are allowed to keep their stores open on the Sabbath (including the pork shop at Kibbutz Mizra); and, scariest of all, an 11-judge panel decided unanimously that the current system of draft deferments for yeshivah students is without legal basis, and charged the Knesset to make a new law. Following the report that the ultra-Orthodox stronghold of Bnei Brak is the poorest city in Israel, Rabbi Yisrael Eichler, Israel's best-known ultra-Orthodox journalist a regular on political roundtable TV shows penned a long, noxius diatribe in Hamahaneh Haharedi, the weekly paper of the Belzer hasidim, likening secular Israel animosity toward the ultra-Orthodox with the anti-Semitism of the Nazis, and blasting the ultra-Orthodox public for being as deaf to the current danger it faces as European Jewry was to its imminent destruction. "The Nazi hatred," Yediot Aharonot quoted Eichler as saying, "is taking root among a whole generation of young people in high school and the army, who are incited by the anti-religious media and educators."

Hamahaneh Haharedi isn't available at my neighborhood's pluralistic news stands, so I journeyed to Me'ah She'arim, 15 minutes by bus and several centuries away, to pick up a copy. The ubiquitous broadsides pasted to every wall wailed in pain over the violation of Jewish law in Jerusalem. "*Ahh*!" read one, in huge Hebrew letters, decrying a restaurant on nearby Hanevi'im Street which is open on Shabbat and serves "vile crawling things, may God save us . . ."

It turned out that Yediot had got the thrust of Eichler's article right, but had skipped some of his most telling and anguished lines: "We talk Yiddishkeit and they are deep into the cultures of India and China . . . The 'enlightened' elite understands that one must help poor children whose father is a drunk , a criminal, unemployed, violent, a gentle immigrant or foreign worker, and even and Israeli Arab. All these must be helped . . . but not the Jews who believe in God, and have raised families blessed with many children who walk in the way of God. They're not entitled to water from the faucet or air to breathe . . . If they weren't busy at war with the Arabs, the incited ones would be killing our children, like Pharaoh and Hitler."

Eichler's disgraceful comparison evoked a public outcry, and a few days later, on orders from the Belzer rebbe, he retracted it on TV. But under the hysterical, self-defeating slander lurks an upsetting truth. Israel is a small, tense country that breeds anger, Jews have a long history of fearing the Other, and politically correct Israelis who wouldn't dream of persecuting Arabs need a surrogate target of their wrath. The other night on the television news, a secular man in Bnei Brak referred to the ultra-Orthodox as "ticks." Is this not the language of anti-Semitism? And isn't Eichler's as well, when he accuses his enemies of controlling the money and the media?

There's a curious passage in the Talmud (Shabbat 89a) that notes the similarity between the word "Sinai" and the word *sin'ah*, meaning hatred. To the rabbis, this implied a mutual animosity between Jews and idolaters; and it's frankly disturbing to consider the possibility that hatred is welded into our primal covenant. I suppose its human nature to draw life energy from anger, but don't you wish we could take a break once in a while, and try a nice, nationwide Carlebach *niggun* instead?

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Could We

Have Stopped Hitler?

by **Edwin Black**

In the enormous shadow of guilt that seized American Jewry after the Holocaust, the answer all too often has been, "We didn't do enough." We are quick to shoulder the onus of self-blame for having been timid citizens, afraid to stir the waters in uncertain prewar times. But this version of history is untrue. Immediately after Hitler's rise to power, American Jews mounted a formidable economic war to topple the Nazi regime.

Jan. 30

Just weeks after Hitler assumed power on January 30, 1933, a patchwork of competing Jewish forces, led by American Jewish Congress president Rabbi Stephen Wise, civil rights crusader Louis Untermeyer, and the combative Jewish War Veterans, initiated a highly effective boycott of German goods and services. Each advanced the boycott in its own way, but sought to build a united anti-Nazi coalition that could deliver an economic deathblow to the Nazi party, which had based its political ascent almost entirely on promises to rebuild the strapped German economy.

The boycotters were encouraged by the early successes of their loud, boisterous campaign, complete with nationwide protest meetings, picket signs, and open threats to destroy Germany's economy if the Reich's anti-Jewish actions persisted. Skilled organizing from unions, political groups, and commercial trade associations carried the boycott's message to every facet of American society and abroad. Depression-wracked nations around the world quickly began to shift their buying habits from the entrenched German market to less expensive, alternative goods.

Mar. 27

The anti-Hitler protest movement culminated in a gigantic rally at Madison Square Garden on March 27, 1933, organized by Rabbi Wise and the American Jewish Congress. More than 55,000 protesters crammed into the Garden and surrounding streets. Simultaneous rallies were held in 70 other metropolitan areas in the U.S. and in Europe. Radio hookups broadcast the New York event to hundreds of cities throughout the world.

The boycott unnerved the Nazis, who believed that Jews wielded supernatural international economic power. They knew that in the past Jews had used boycotts effectively against Russian Czar Nicholas II to combat his persecution of Jews, and automaker Henry Ford to halt his anti-Semitic campaign. Whether or not this new boycott actually possessed the punishing power to crush the Reich economy was irrelevant; what mattered was that Germany perceived the Jewish-led boycott as the greatest threat to its survival and reacted accordingly.

Relentless in exploiting the Nazis' vulnerability, Rabbi Wise and the other boycott leaders were determined to form one cohesive international movement under the banner "Starve Germany into submission this winter." But Hitler succeeded in averting this scenario by exploiting divisions within world Jewry.

The Nazi counteroffensive was launched at a secret meeting in Berlin, just six months after the Nazis took power and at the height of the anti-German boycott.

Aug. 7

On August 7, 1933, an official delegation of four German and Palestinian Zionists and one independent Palestinian Jewish businessman were ushered into a conference room at the Economics Ministry in Berlin. The Jewish negotiators were greeted courteously by Hans Hartenstein, director of the German Foreign Currency Control Office. They talked for some time about investment, emigration, and public opinion, but the underlying theme was the boycott. The Nazis wanted to know how far the Zionists were willing to go in subverting the boycott. The Zionists wanted to know how far the Reich was willing to go in allowing them to rescue German Jews.

Hartenstein was about to call the inconclusive meeting to a close when a messenger arrived with a telegram from German Consul Heinrich Wolff in Tel Aviv, who advised Hartenstein that concluding a deal with the Zionist delegation was the best way to break the crippling boycott. Hartenstein complied, and the Transfer Agreement was born.

Aug. 10

Three days later, the Reich Economics Ministry issued the pact as Decree 54/33.

The Transfer Agreement permitted Jews to leave Germany and take some of their assets in the form of new German goods, which the Zionist movement would then sell in Palestine and eventually throughout much of the world. The German goods were purchased with frozen Jewish assets held in Germany. When the merchandise was sold, the sale proceeds were given to the emigrants, minus a commission for administration and a portion reserved for Zionist state-building projects, such as industrial infrastructure and land purchase.

Two Zionist transfer clearinghouses were established: one under the supervision of the German Zionist Federation in Berlin and the other under the authority of the Anglo-Palestine Trust Company in Tel Aviv. The Berlin-based office exchanged blocked Jewish cash for German wares.

The Tel Aviv office, called Haavara Trust and Transfer Office Ltd. (Haavara Ltd.), sold the swapped German merchandise on the open market, collected the proceeds, and matched them up to the German Jewish emigrants whose money had been used. Organized under the Palestinian commercial code, Haavara Ltd. was operated by conventional business managers. Its stock was wholly owned by the Anglo-Palestine Bank, the official Zionist financial institution that later changed its name to Bank Leumi.

The Transfer Agreement enabled both Germany and the Jewish community in Palestine to achieve key objectives. Transfer helped Germany defeat the boycott, create jobs at home, and convert Jewish assets into Reich economic recovery. It helped the Zionists overcome a major obstacle to continued Jewish immigration and expansion in Palestine. Under British regulations then in force in Palestine, Jews could not enter without a so-called Capitalist Certificate, proving they possessed the equivalent of $5,000. To be in possession of such a sum qualified the immigrant as a "capitalist" or investor. Transfer made capitalist immigration possible because destitute Germans received the required $5,000 (actually the immigrant's own seized funds) once the assigned German goods were sold.

The Transfer Agreement also allowed "potential emigrants" to protect their assets in special blocked bank accounts, which could not be accessed without purchasing and reselling German goods. Between the active and potential emigration accounts, the Transfer apparatus, through official and unofficial transactions, generated an estimated 100 million Reichmarks. The more German goods Zionists sold, the more Jews could get out of Germany and into Palestine, and the more money would be available to build the Jewish State. The price of this commerce-linked exodus was the abandonment of the economic war against Nazi Germany.

* * *

The Transfer Agreement tore the Jewish world apart, turning leader against leader, threatening rebellion and even assassination.

In the painful choice between relief vs. rescue, most of the Jewish world opted for relief; that is, defending the right of Jews to remain where they were as free and equal citizens. But the Zionist leadership favored rescue, which was completely in keeping with their solution to anti-Semitism a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

A half-century earlier, the Zionist visionary Theodor Herzl had foreseen that a "Jewish Company" would be created to manage the businesses and assets of Jews who immigrated to the future Jewish State. Their assets would be sold off at a substantial discount to cooperating "honest anti-Semites," who would then step into the former occupations of the departing Jews.

Zionists saw Haavara as Herzl's envisioned "Jewish Company" and Transfer as an opportunity to contract for a more secure Jewish future. Forty years of struggle to create a Jewish State had come to a sudden and spectacular turning point. The Zionist leadership's awesome and difficult task was to enter into cold, anguished negotiations with Jew-haters, not in an atmosphere of emotion and frenzy, but with diplomacy and statecraft.

April

By the end of April 1933, total Reich exports were down 10 percent as a result of the boycott. But the economic war against Germany still lacked cohesiveness. Stephen Wise, who possessed the organization, the universal recognition, and the will to unify and direct an efficient campaign, knew that only a central group could target specific German industries and avoid duplication of effort. Wise also envisioned an enforcement apparatus insuring that any entity that traded with Germany would itself become a boycott target. This strategy set the Zionists and the boycott movement on a collision course. If the Zionists were to finalize a merchandise based pact with Nazi Germany, then Jewish Palestine would be in violation of the boycott and its products and fundraising declared untouchable. Wise and other boycotters felt certain that this threat would derail any exploratory commercial talks between the Zionists and Hitler's regime.

In fact, secret preliminary and partial negotiations and even interim "transfer" agreements had begun in April 1933. When news of these early negotiations leaked out, the Zionists split along Revisionist and Mapai (Labor) lines. Transfer became a convenient battleground in an already tense atmosphere in which Zionist factions fought over economics, settlement policy, and other issues. The Transfer deal was widely seen by Revisionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky as an unholy pact with the Nazis that would mainly benefit Labor-dominated Zionist institutions. Protest meetings, screaming headlines, public debates, and rancorous shouting matches broke out in Zionist circles throughout Europe and Palestine. David Ben-Gurion and other Laborites retaliated, calling Jabotinsky "the Jewish Hitler" and his black-shirted Revisionist followers "Fascists." Revisionists became the most ardent anti-Nazi boycott organizers, attacking any Jew or Zionist who would do business with Hitler. It was all complicated by the fact that the Jewish Palestinian economy was inextricably linked to German commerce. Indeed, Germany was the number-one customer for Palestine's number-one export product oranges.

At the center of the maelstrom was Chaim Arlosoroff, a member of the Jewish Agency Executive Committee. This quiet academician and visionary designed the Transfer plan and supervised all negotiations with the Reich. So tense was the public hysteria over what Transfer was and was not that in May 1933 Arlosoroff granted a lengthy interview to a Zionist newspaper disclosing the entire plan, which only 24 hours earlier had been marked "Top Secret."

June 16

On June 16, 1933. the Revisionist newspaper *Hazit Haam* published what many considered a death threat: "There will be no forgiveness for those who for greed have sold out the honor of their people to madmen and anti-Semites. . . . The Jewish people have always known how to size up betrayers . . . and it will know how to react to this crime." That evening, Chaim Arlosoroff and his wife Sima took a Shabbat walk along the beach in north Tel Aviv at a point now occupied by the Tel Aviv Hilton. Two men dressed as Arabs approached the couple and asked for the time. Sima was worried, but Arlosoroff assured her, "Don't worry, they are Jews." A few moments later, the men returned. one with a Browning automatic. A bullet flashed into Arlosoroff's chest, mortally wounding him. Two Revisionists were charged with the murder and sentenced to death, but they were released later on technical grounds.

The boycott question also divided the American Jewish community. Leaders of B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee, organizations largely comprised of German Jews who had for decades preached staunch Jewish defense, feared that the boycott would subject their brethren in Germany to retaliation. The Jewish War Veterans, who well remembered their German enemy from the Great War, were not swayed by such reservations. Though it lacked the resources of the larger Jewish organizations, the JWV pressed for a total commercial war against Germany. Joining them was feisty Louis Untermeyer, founder of his own anti-Nazi organization, the American League for the Defense of Jewish Rights.

In Germany, the besieged Jewish community opposed the boycott. They fervently appealed to friends and relatives in American Jewish organizations to halt any talk of protest or boycott, fearing the reprisals promised by Reich authorities and Nazi hooligans for any encouragement of anti-Nazi actions. As a result, B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee did their best to blunt the boycott's impact.

Aug. 24

The Eighteenth Zionist Congress opened on August 18 in Prague, only 11 days after the Transfer Agreement was sealed in Berlin. Advocates of the pact planned to outmaneuver, outtalk, outscheme, and outlast boycott proponents. The August 7 pact would be adopted, either overtly before the assembled delegates or covertly in closed-door rules committees. Either way, Transfer would go forward.

At the Congress, Wise fought the Transfer Agreement privately and publicly. He lost. After midnight motions and surprise votes, the Transfer Agreement was adopted on August 24 as official policy. Zionist discipline was imposed upon all boycotters, including Stephen Wise. Despite his allegiance to Zionism, Wise vowed to press ahead with his plan to form a unified global boycott within the framework of a so-called "Central Jewish Committee," which was to be declared two weeks later in Geneva at the Second World Jewish Congress.

But as the days progressed, the plight of German Jewry became more and more desperate. Nazism's stranglehold on Germany appeared all the more irreversible. European anti-Semites everywhere were following suit. Jewry seemed finished in Europe. A Jewish homeland in Palestine seemed the only answer.

Sept. 8

September 8 now became the crucial date: the Central Jewish Committee would be established at the much publicized Second World Jewish Congress in Geneva to deal the economic deathblow to Germany. In the end, however, Wise bowed to Zionist pressure and simply backed down. The boycott was abandoned.

A dejected Wise left for Paris. On the train, he met a 14-year-old German Jewish girl, a refugee, who had heard about the Geneva meeting. Wise asked her whether she thought the decisions there had helped or done damage. Looking, at him, the young, girl answered. "Es muss sein, *es muss sein.*" "What must be, must be."

In the weeks that followed, Wise dodged reporters' questions about the decision. Haunted by the girl's remarks, Wise simply said, "What must be, must be." Decisions had been made that only God could judge, only history could vindicate.

* * *

After war erupted on September 29, 1939, the dispossession of the Jews turned to annihilation. The Transfer Agreement served as a lifeline to the Jews who still could be saved. All debate about Haavara among Jewish groups ceased. The less said the better, lest the Nazis cancel the deal. Ultimately, the war did force an end to Transfer, but not before some 55,000 Jews were able to find a haven in Palestine.

Those who would condemn the Zionist decision to enter into a pact with Hitler have the luxury of hindsight. In 1933, the Zionists could not have foreseen the death trains, gas chambers, and crematoria. But they did understand that the end was now at hand for Jews in Europe. Nazism was unstoppable. The emphasis now became saving Jewish lives and establishing a Jewish State.

From the Zionist point of view, the boycott did succeed. Without it, there would never have been a Transfer Agreement, which contributed immeasurably to a strengthened Jewish community in Palestine and the creation of the State of Israel. And Transfer would never have happened had American Jews not mobilized as quickly as they did, only days after Hitler rose to power.

No one can say what combination of factors might or not might have stopped Hitler. What is clear, however, is that American Jewry did not react to the Nazi threat with indifference, cowardice, or indecisiveness. We were determined, courageous, and resourceful but, ultimately, divided.

Edwin Black is the author of the recently released novel *Format C:* (Brookline Books). This article is based on the newly, updated *The Transfer Agreement* (Brookline Books), which will be published soon. More information is available at www.featuregroup.com/transfer

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The Case For
Reining In Federations

The history of the involvement of the Federations in social service issues dates back to the turn of the 19th into the 20th century, when Jews were largely an immigrant population, often poor and unwelcome or uncomfortable in either Christian social service agencies or the rudimentary public agencies. Over the years, the needs of American Jews have changed, but the social agencies created by Jews during this era have not. Indeed, Jews are now the custodians and managers of huge public funds, estimated at about $3 billion annually, expended for the benefit of a largely non-Jewish clientele. The authors, respected executives of the American Jewish Congress, question the continuation of current arrangements.
(*New York Jewish Week*, August 13, 1999, www.jewishweek.com)

Limit The Freebies
To The Jewish State

That expense-paid junket to the Jewish State, Marvin Schick suggests, may be an unwise expenditure of funds. Many American Jewish educators enjoy such trips at communal expense though "there is zero evidence that these trips improve job performance or lead to other communal gains." Instead, he would prefer that the funds expended be spent directly on American institutions of Jewish learning.
(*The New York Jewish Week*, September 17, 1999, www.jewishweek.com)

Elijah, Teku, &
Living with Tension

Rabbi Shoshana Gelfand, Director of Programs at the Wexner Heritage Foundation, notes that Elijah the prophet has been designated by the rabbis as the one who resolves the unresolvable questions. By invoking his name, in certain situations, Elijah transforms what might otherwise have been seen as a dangerous act into a *mitzvah* filled with holiness. For example, a place is set for Elijah at circumcisions, reflecting the tension between entry into the covenant with the tension that every parent feels as he or she see the scalpel being applied to their son. She further explains why Elijah is invoked at the havdalah service, at the end of Shabbat. Elijah serves the function of teaching us not to be confounded by the unanswerable.
(*Jewish Spectator*, Spring 1998)

The Case For
Reining In Federations

by **Phil Baum and Marc D. Stern**

The merger of the Council of Jewish Federations, which raises funds for domestic Jewish needs, and the United Jewish Appeal, which raises funds for Israel, has prompted repeated calls for a fundamental re-evaluation of the allocation of monies between Israeli and domestic needs.

Unfortunately, these calls for reassessment stop short of recommending a hard look at the way money is allocated among various uses at home. While there are obvious concerns about the scope and direction of domestic Jewish philanthropy, the federation community declines to acknowledge these questions, let alone debate them seriously. The issues, however, are too important to the well-being of the Jewish community to be decided by silence or inertia.

The existing network of federation institutions dates to the turn of this century, when Jews were largely an immigrant population, often poor and unwelcome or uncomfortable in either Christian social service agencies or the rudimentary public agencies. Jews tended to live together so services could easily be provided to primarily Jewish constituencies. Jewish hospitals, vocational agencies, family service agencies, child welfare agencies and the like (together with the three human relations agencies, American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, and our own American Jewish Congress) all date to this era. The expenses were borne largely by the Jewish community itself.

Over the years the funding sources of social service agencies, and the populations they serve, have changed dramatically. The Jewish community by and large has become a middle-to upper-middle-class community. Many Jewish social service programs increasingly serve a non-Jewish population. These programs are supported overwhelmingly by funds from taxpayers and third-party payers, not Jewish donors.

The result? Jews are now the custodians and managers of huge public funds—estimated at about $3 billion annually—expended for the benefit of a largely non-Jewish clientele. The propriety of this arrangement is at best doubtful.

A 1995 CJF study reveals that 77 percent of the funding of Jewish vocational services comes from governmental sources and 61 percent of the funding of Jewish family services. Only a small portion of the remainder is from Jewish philanthropy (15 to 28 percent). The rest comes from United Way, insurance or user fees.

Three-quarters of nursing home fees are governmental. Overall—even excluding hospitals, which get less than 3 percent of their budgets from federation—more than 59 percent of Jewish philanthropic budgets comes from government, and 32 percent from other, non-Jewish sources. In other words, according to the CJF's own figures, exclusive of hospitals, the federation contribution to the agencies it administers amounts to less than 10 percent of their budgets. And including hospitals, almost 97 percent of Federation agency budgets comes from non-Jewish sources.

If the Jewish community has been unwilling to recognize that it is inappropriate for Jewish agencies to receive huge amounts of public funds to administer programs that serve predominantly non-Jews, others have not been. The privilege of administering large public funds and the corresponding power is not cost-free to the Jewish community. In recent years, for example, various Jewish institutions have become the target of criticism from non-Jews, often minority communities, for being alien institutions not sensitive to, representative of or controlled by the communities they are mandated to serve.

In New York, local community groups have complained that they are not given a large enough share of the government social services dollar as compared to established institutions such as UJA-Federation. This is true of child care and adoption, vocational training and even cultural institutions, as indicated by complaints by non-Jewish groups over further municipal funding for the Museum of Jewish Heritage. Colleagues in several large cities inform us that competition for government funding creates real intergroup problems in their communities as well.

Nonetheless, Jewish agencies strive energetically to preserve their share of public funds. In order to retain access to non-Jewish funding, many Jewish institutions, responding either to court orders, demographic pressures or the requirements of funding agencies such as United Way, have so altered their character as to be indistinguishable from their secular (or Protestant or Catholic) counterparts. Many of these institutions, chiefly hospitals, and nursing homes, are so constrained by legal and financial concerns as to end up virtually denuded of Jewish content other than their names.

While the Jewish community continues to expend financial and political capital on such programs, other pressing concerns (Jewish education, continuity and the unique problems confronted by Jews who live distant from major Jewish centers) go without urgently needed resources. Funding for Jewish education has increased in recent years, but it is still inadequately funded almost everywhere.

What explains this reluctance to reconsider current structures? We think there are three main reasons:

■ Personal attachments to existing agencies. Many current leaders of the Jewish community have long-standing and prestigious relationships with these agencies, either themselves or through family. Sentiment and family status has its place, but it is no substitute for efficient use of communal resources.

■ A sense of "noblesse oblige" and the claim of a unique competence and ability. Because many in the federation community take seriously their commitment to social betterment, they sometimes consider it demeaning and an affront to their professional ethic to suggest that Jewish communal agencies ought to give greater emphasis to sectarian interests. While such altruistic desire is laudable, it ought not mean subordinating the natural primary concern of Jewish philanthropic agencies. A commitment to tikkun olam, or repair of the world, does not have to mean doing those tasks that others can and should do, rather than the sectarian tasks that others cannot and will not do.

■ The protection of jobs of both professionals and lay leadership. Any serious re-examination of Jewish priorities would cost some jobs (including, perhaps, ours), power and prestige.

We do not pretend there are easy answers to the question of what the philanthropic network should look like. We are aware that if there are no Jewish social service agencies, successor agencies may be incompetent or hostile to Jews. Certain agencies in some places may be justifiable as now constituted while their counterparts elsewhere are not. Clearly, the recasting of Jewish philanthropy should be done both structurally and case by case. But the fact that there are no wholesale solutions doesn't mean that there are no solutions.

In fairness, it should be noted that federations estimate that more than 70 percent of those who seek help are Jewish. In some communities, officials say more than 90 percent of service recipients are Jewish.

While this may be true of Jewish family services and nursing homes (in the case of the latter, the situation appears to be changing), this certainly is not true of hospitals and, at least in major cities, in the provision of vocational services and institutionalized child-care services.

Let us be clear: We enthusiastically encourage Jewish philanthropy directed at providing nonsectarian aid for all those in need. We endorse the admonition to Jews to help repair the world. But this assistance should be provided in a clear and straightforward manner, with money from Jewish sources that is raised for those purposes.

It should not take the form of managing huge sums of public money intended for nonsectarian purposes on the patronizing assumption that Jews can do the job more efficiently. It is questionable philanthropy whose sole contribution is providing managerial oversight that however altruistic and beneficial, also brings a considerable return in terms of prestige, power and, of course, jobs.

Dollars from Jewish sources represent an insubstantial and relatively trivial factor in the budgets of the hospitals, childcare agencies and vocational guidance services that are managed and operated under Jewish auspices. But these same dollars could play a critical role in further invigorating and strengthening Jewish education or other woefully underfunded projects of Jewish concern.

In one case, the same dollars mean something, in the other case they don't. As it is now, they are not put to meaningful use either way.

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Limit The Freebies

To The Jewish State

by **Marvin Schick**

Summer is the main season for boondoggling—taking advantage of free or heavily subsidized trips to Israel—an expensive pastime that has the sole virtue of being for ordinary folks and not just the rich people. Although it is practiced throughout the year, boondoggling reaches its peak in July and August when thousands of diaspora Jews trek on expense-paid hegiras to the Holy Land. Federations, foundations, the Jewish Agency and other repositories of philanthropic funds that are intended for the betterment of Jewish life foot the bill.

Betterment there is aplenty, as airlines, hotels, restaurants and all who live off the tourist trade in Israel reap economic advantage. The prime beneficiaries are educators, community workers, students and whoever else manages, with or without *protektzia*, to connect with any of the dozens of organizations that offer free trips as they exult in self-delusory ecstasy that a stay in Israel brings about extraordinary transformational results.

There was an especially lamentable example of the tendency to spend limited Jewish communal money on these extravaganzas. More than 350 Jewish educators from around the world came to Israel for two weeks as the guests of the Jewish Agency. They were wined and dined; the culminating event was an expensive catered affair at the magnificent Haas Promenade in East Jerusalem that was followed by a fireworks display.

It may be that the Israeli army had spare cherry bombs that it wanted to dispose of. More likely—and I am told by educators that this was the case—the Jewish Agency had unspent money and could not think of any better way to use the funds at hand.

I am not against going to Israel. We all should go, as often as we can, to experience the glory of our heritage and, less important, to help the country's economy along the way. I also accept, to a degree, the premise of Birthright Israel, that a community-financed trip to Israel may make a difference in the lives of marginally committed teenagers.

What I object to is the lavish expenditures to bring Americans and other foreigners wholesale to Israel and the comparable use of Israeli funds to send Israelis abroad on what usually amounts to shopping and pleasure junkets. The programs that involve educators, community workers, etc. are an egregious example of the broader tendency that encompasses, as just one more illustration, the hundreds of academics who are invited, all-expenses paid, to Israeli conferences on arcane subjects.

What I also object to is the pollyannaish fantasy that sending principals, teachers and others will result in their being better at what they are paid to do. While there is zero evidence that these trips improve job performance or lead to other communal gains, they are failsafe arrangements. The trip to Israel alone is proof of success. Nothing more is required, although it is customary to ask the participants to complete a questionnaire that asks about their degree of satisfaction. It is customary as well for the junketeers to respond that it was a wonderful and meaningful experience and ought to be repeated.

Because it is failsafe, people in the philanthropy business constantly dream up new variations on the theme. Leadership training has become popular. Jewish kids of college age are selected, and while few have demonstrated anything that can be called leadership potential, it is expected that they will emerge from 10 days or two weeks in Israel as nascent Jewish leaders.

All that is being proved is that tens of millions of dollars of Jewish philanthropy can add up to lots of zeros.

These activities limit what foundations and federations can do to advance Jewish life. People involved in day schools claim that for all of the talk of additional philanthropic support, the situation is no better than it used to be and it may be worse. The funders insist that they are doing more. Presumably, both positions cannot be right. Or can they? The explanation lies in the preference of funders for tangential projects, rather than direct support to the schools. Trips to Israel are one manifestation of the trend. There are also family education, workshops and conferences, all of which allow philanthropic givers to believe that they are aiding Jewish education when, in fact, the schools are not being helped.

Day schools are badly underfunded, even with parents being pressured to pay rapidly rising tuition charges. It is difficult to determine the extent to which the high cost of day school education is a disincentive for marginally religious parents. It is certain that inadequate facilities, limited academic programs and a slew of other shortcomings are a disincentive in many cases. American Jewry is not willing to make the investment needed to make day schools attractive alternatives to families that are Jews at risk.

Instead of sending principals to Israel, the money should be utilized to directly assist struggling day schools. This will make them better institutions of Jewish learning. In the process, principals will be capable of doing a better job.

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Elijah, Teku, &
Living With Tension

by **Shoshana Gelfand**

Few milestones test the limits of parental patience more than when children learn to ask "why?" Parents should prepare to hear this question repeated for a long time, until its novelty finally wears thin. The question is so full of promise, often children do not even seek an answer. The process of asking itself fascinates them. Questioning helps them attract a golden moment of attention from their sometimes distracted parents. It makes the busy folks pause, reflect, and occasionally admit their own fallibility. If children are lucky, they will occasionally hit the jackpot with a total stumper.

The rabbis of the Talmud have a distinctly childlike (not to be confused with childish) quality in their passion for questions. They value inquiry first and foremost, and answers only secondarily. When they reach the impasse of an unresolved question, they simply end the discussion with a conversion-stopper *teku.*

Teku literally meaning "it stands [unresolved]." Jewish folklore interprets the word as an acronym for "Tishbi yetaretz kushyot v'baayot"—the one from Tishbi known as Elijah the prophet will explain all questions and solve all problems when he returns. According to legend, the great prophet never actually died. He ascended to heaven in a dramatic display with chariots and horses of fire (*Kings II*, 2:1-11), but the biblical account leaves his fate literally up in the air. Later the prophet Malachi foresaw that Elijah would be sent by God "before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord," so that he could lay the groundwork for the advent of the messianic age (*Malachi* 3:23). According to one prevalent view of the Talmudic sages, he will return eventually and function as the great peacemaker of the world (*Eduyot* 8:7).

The peacemaker will resolve all unexplained riddles. The Hebrew word for peace, "shalom," literally means wholeness. It follows that the one who brings about a sense of wholeness will also clarify that which remains ambiguous.

But why was Elijah designated for this role? What is it about Elijah's name that is associated with unresolved tension?

Elijah is an important part of the Jewish life cycle and of daily activity. We mention his name in Birkat Hamazon and various piyutim. He also appears at many of the most critical ritual moments in life, during the Brit Milah celebration, the Havdalah ceremony, and the Pesach Seder. In each of these cases, he seems to play a similar role in that he helps to sustain the state of tension while at the same time providing hope for its eventual resolution.

For example, he attends every Brit Milah as an honorary guest. He even gets his own chair. Eight days after my nephew was born, my brother-in-law—a physician—performed the Brit Milah. I suspect I was not the only guest whose anxiety level shot through the roof when seeing him standing, scalpel in hand, over his son. Part of me was horrified. Part of me rejoiced in the mitzvah that initiated my nephew into the covenant between the Jewish people and God.

Suddenly the words to the verses from *Malachi*, read traditionally as the Haftarah for Shabbat HaGadol before Pesach, came to me. "Hinei Anochi sholeach lachem et Eliyahu HaNavi, lifnei bo yom Hashem hagadol vehanora. Veheishiv lev avot al banim velev banim al avotam..." "Behold I [God] am sending you the prophet Elijah," Malachi promises, "before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And he will reconcile the heart of fathers with their sons and the heart of sons with their fathers..."

Elijah's presence is so logical and necessary at the Brit Milah. His presence helps father and son bond together. He transforms what might otherwise have been seen as dangerous into a mitzvah filled with holiness. His comforting presence allows us to live with the real tensions that exist within most families without rushing to find forced, temporary, and non-productive solutions. The complex parent-child relationship is fraught with tension. According to Malachi, this together with all other tekus will be resolved before the Messiah comes. Elijah helps us deal with the immediate situation by helping to keep its future resolution in perspective.

Havdalah appears to be free of tension. Some look forward to this simple, comforting service of sweet wine, savory spices, and the multiwick flame all week long. What is Elijah doing there? On Shabbat we experience a "taste of the world to come," a day of holiness and intimacy with God, Torah, family, friends, and sometimes strangers we welcome into our homes. As the day ends, we realize that it is now time to return to the everyday, the "real" world of the work week. The stark contrast between the delectable holiness of Shabbat and the banality of the rest of our lives comes to a head during Havdalah. Like a babe leaving its mother's womb, or a toddler on the first day of day care, part of us desperately does not want to leave. As we make the transition from Shabbat to the secular, we sing "Eliyahu HaNavi," invoking Elijah's name in the hope that his presence will ease our transition and comfort us during the upcoming trials of the week.

The Talmud teaches that the Messiah can come at any time, except on Shabbat or a holiday. On Saturday night we find ourselves torn between the desire to continue observing Shabbat just a little longer, and the desire to begin the weekly task of preparing the world for the Messiah to come. Elijah's role here is to provide hope that this might just be the week. We sing: "Eliyahu HaNavi, Eliyahu HaTishbi, Eliyahu HaGiladi, bimherah b'yameynu yavo alenu, im Mashiah ben David." "Elijah the prophet, the Tishbite, from Gilead, may he come in our time bringing the Messiah with him." Some

struggle with the concept of the Messiah. Life is too consuming for them to focus spiritually. If the announcement came over the airwaves that the Messiah had finally come, it would be hard to imagine some people leaving the stock exchange, the manicurist, Seinfeld's season finale, and all but impossible to pry fans away from the bottom of the ninth. Havdalah, like a Bris, reminds us of priorities and the tensions inherent in trying to live a spiritual existence in a physical world. Elijah's presence legitimates the tensions we feel, acknowledges our struggle, and gives us strength to continue working to resolve them.

At the Pesach seder Elijah appears once again at a moment of extreme tension. The night is no longer young. For those with particularly Jewish families who like to talk, the matza balls may actually have gotten soggy hours ago. We have just seen our ancestors and our own selves leaving the spiritual bondage of Egypt—metaphoric and real, anciently historical and contemporarily personal—on a massive and exhausting exodus. We have been overwhelmed by the stark cruelty of our Egyptian masters and pursuers, and awestruck by God's unfathomable compassion and kindness in saving us.

And now we open the door for the prophet Elijah and recite the discordantly violent passage, "Shefoch chamotcha:" "Pour out Your wrath upon the nations who do not know You," we read, "and upon the kingdoms who do not call upon Your name. For they have consumed Jacob and laid waste his habitation. Pour out Your rage upon them and let Your fury overtake them. Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the heavens of God." Strong words, especially to say as you stand holding open the front door of your house. Hopefully the paper boy will not start his rounds early and assume you are speaking to him.

The seder forces us to examine how Jews are supposed to live in such a hostile world, in which we ourselves often have been the targets of the hostility. How do we open ourselves to those in the non-Jewish world without allowing them to destroy us? In the context of the Exodus story, how do we live in peace with Pharaoh's daughter—who at one time had helped to save us — while not allowing her father to destroy us. Certainly we do not relish the downfall of our enemies, as the Midrash teaches, since they too were made in God's image.

This tension is expressed by our holding the door open despite the rage that we feel towards the non-Jewish world for hurting us. Even though we are outraged, we do not retreat and go into hiding. We remain proud of our Jewishness and we open the door to all the hopefulness Elijah embodies. In the midst of the sharp tension, once again Elijah appears to take his designated seat at our table and drink from the shiny silver goblet we polished in his honor. He does not try to deny the reality of the current tension. But his presence offers hope for its ultimate resolution. Just as in the past when God sent Moses to lead the Jewish people to their salvation on erev Pesach, so in the future will Elijah and the Messiah lead us to the future redemption on erev Pesach. Our current tension will not last indefinitely.

Elijah enters our lives at times of great tension to help us keep perspective. But until he comes to resolve the teku questions, the parent-child dichotomy, our ambivalence about ending Shabbat, the hostility between nations, and other tensions, he teaches us how to cope in the present. Just as he comforts us just by his reassuring presence, like a loyal old friend who never lets us down, so too should we remember our obligation to comfort one another during times of struggle. As the prophet allays our fears about the future, we too must remind one another supportively about better times to come.

We might even reincorporate "teku" into our vocabulary again. The word is so useful. It reminds us that we have the capacity to live with unresolved tensions. Not all questions need resolution. Few need immediate responses at all. Children know this. That is why they sometimes do not stay around to hear their parents answer their "why." The four excellent questions of the Haggadah are asked, but the traditional Haggadah makes no attempt to answer them directly. Yet few leave the seder frustrated or unfulfilled, for the Haggadah uses those questions as a starting point to tell the great master story of our people. Were the Haggadah simply to answer the questions, we would pack up and go home without realizing the deep personal significance of the exodus experience.

Instead of worrying about the unanswerable, we might focus energy on comforting others. Answering with a "teku" could result in great creativity and sensitivity, instead of the intellectual dishonesty of the forced pat response. Like Elijah, teku is a healthy paradox, teaching that many times the way we respond is far more important than the content of the answer.

Elijah will come and answer all our questions someday. Until then, we would do well to answer only when possible, and to help ease tension when not. Perhaps this attitude itself, if more people were to adopt it, would hasten the arrival of the Messiah.

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