

CD-1072 Transcription

Phone interview with Edward Kaplan; discusses Abraham Joshua

Heschel. 10 November 1990

ED KAPLAN: We're thinking, as well as some of the details,
because it...

MARC TANENBAUM: For my rationale?

KAPLAN: Yeah.

TANENBAUM: [Or a bunch of -- well?]....

KAPLAN: You know, I guess we're all collaborating on this
project together, and I didn't know that you'd studied
[poem?] -- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

TANENBAUM: Well, I've done that recently --

KAPLAN: You still (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

TANENBAUM: -- only because of -- I work in [Poland?] now,
and I --

KAPLAN: Yes, yeah.

TANENBAUM: -- [it's confidential?]. And --

KAPLAN: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

TANENBAUM: I was supposed to go to Poland this month, in
December or November. But I canceled, because the weather
was below zero, and...

KAPLAN: And they're sure not going to have extra heat there
for the next few months.

TANENBAUM: (laughter) Unless we send it to them.

KAPLAN: That's right, that's right.

TANENBAUM: No, I really...

(break in audio)

KAPLAN: Yeah.

TANENBAUM: And... [I have to be out there and?] confident so
to make the most of it.

KAPLAN: What do you mean, that you saw America as a new
condition for Jews? What's that?

TANENBAUM: [Were they?] [01:00] in Poland [where?] you've
had contact with popes, cardinals, bishops...

KAPLAN: Yeah.

TANENBAUM: I mean, many of -- half the clergy in Poland
wouldn't talk to him. Wouldn't talk to a Jew. No contact
with them. You know, where -- anywhere in Europe would
Heschel's books be read as meditative reading by Catholic
monks.

KAPLAN: Yeah.

TANENBAUM: You know, I used to come into convents and
monasteries. There were people there reading *The Sabbath* as
meditative reading. You know, instead of reading a
liturgical work or Augustine's *Confessions*, they were
reading Heschel's *Sabbath* or... you know, something special
and different was going on here. And I think that's why he

became increasingly responsive [02:00] to the opportunities.

KAPLAN: Yeah. Because he was involved -- in Germany or in Jewish education, you know, adult education, and even in the late '20s and early '30s, with this group around David [Koegan?], he was concerned with issues of history and the place of Jews in world history.

TANENBAUM: [Was that the whole crew?]?

KAPLAN: It was during the years of the whole [crulla?], but Koegan was not himself affiliated with any institution. And I'm just starting to research this circle --

TANENBAUM: I don't know very much about it.

KAPLAN: Very, very interesting.

TANENBAUM: May I say (inaudible) [Wolf?] knows something about it.

KAPLAN: Yeah, yeah. We found this --

TANENBAUM: Wolf has the benefit of seeing him every day, so every day he can pick up, you know, some new piece of information which I just didn't have.

KAPLAN: Now, Heschel recovered with strength of who he was -- I think he [03:00] continued the work that he had begun in Germany, you know, of really a view of culture as world culture, not just, you know, the Jewish -- you know, what's good for the Jews. But also, as a representative of Judaism

and as a Jew...

TANENBAUM: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) in world culture --

KAPLAN: Jewish role in world culture, exactly. And coming to grips with the realities in which he was living every day. So you know, I think it's all relevant.

(break in audio)

TANENBAUM: A statement in the Talmud about differing roles of (inaudible) [sages?]. And one is called the [*malvi lai luvim?*] -- Prophet to the Jews -- and the other is [*malvi lai broyin?*] -- the Prophet to the Gentiles.

KAPLAN: Yes.

TANENBAUM: If there were specializations.

KAPLAN: Right.

TANENBAUM: And Heschel wanted to be another [*malti lai luvim?*] the Jews. [04:00] It took a very long time before that happened.

KAPLAN: That's right.

TANENBAUM: So he had first become a [*malvi?*] to the Gentiles. And as the Gentiles accepted him, he became increasingly accepted by Jews.

KAPLAN: That's right.

TANENBAUM: It seems the rabbinical assembly were much quicker to accept -- to receive him and honor him, after

they began reading his written works especially. But it took quite some time for -- then the Jewish community began rallying around him.

KAPLAN: Yeah.

TANENBAUM: You know, they saw what a -- what a powerful personality he was, intellectually and spiritually.

KAPLAN: But when we talk about the rabbinical assembly, what specifically are you referring to?

TANENBAUM: Well, rabbis who preached in congregations --

KAPLAN: Yes.

TANENBAUM: -- within the country.

KAPLAN: Yes, I see.

TANENBAUM: When the rabbinical assembly had a convention, Heschel was almost always on the program of almost every rabbinical assembly convention. [05:00]

KAPLAN: I see.

TANENBAUM: After he came to the seminary --

KAPLAN: From --

TANENBAUM: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) himself.

KAPLAN: -- before 1953?

TANENBAUM: Probably a little less.

KAPLAN: Because [then?] in '53 is that big speech in which he talked about [inner?] experience and criticized --

TANENBAUM: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) rabbinical

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

KAPLAN: -- and (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) -- yeah.

TANENBAUM: Oedipus complex.

KAPLAN: Oedipus complex, right.

TANENBAUM: Yeah.

KAPLAN: And upset a lot of people. So I can --

TANENBAUM: That you've got to get from Wolf. I mean --

KAPLAN: Yeah, select and trace that --

TANENBAUM: Yeah.

KAPLAN: -- I suppose, in the --

TANENBAUM: That would be interesting, seeing -- to see the
pattern...

KAPLAN: In the programs.

TANENBAUM: -- how often he spoke in the rabbinical assembly

KAPLAN: That's right.

TANENBAUM: -- conventions. Because that was a sign of his
being really accepted --

KAPLAN: I see.

TANENBAUM: -- [by all of them?].

KAPLAN: Yeah, that's very important.

TANENBAUM: I've got to go.

KAPLAN: OK. [phone hanging up] [06:00]

END OF AUDIO FILE