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JEWISH UNITY AND JEWISH EDUCATION

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler



Remarks before the Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative) 66th Annual Convention, Toronto, Canada.

May 18, 1966

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Address before
THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY
Sixty-Sixth Annual Convention
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It is good to be here, let me assure you, and what we do here is good. Those who planned this program and brought it to be well merit our applause; their effort makes no small contribution toward the solution of the very problem which moves us to meet. Not so much for what we say, but the very event of our meeting is of worth, for if the science of education has taught us one lesson it is this: our children make their commitments primarily by means of identification with the ego ideal; they look, more than they listen; they follow the man who is long before the man who only persuades with his lips. The visible demonstration of our desire for unity teaches a lesson more powerful than any ideological agreement we may reach and articulate. In this case surely, as in so many others, the determined quest for an answer in and of itself give shape and substance to that answer.

Let me say, at once, that I respond with a good deal of warmth to Dr. Marvin Fox and what he has to say. I sense him to be a kindred spirit. His presentation appeals to me, at least in its broader outlines. I share his essential conception of our problem as the need to deepen our instruction, to instill in our children not denominational devotion but profound religious convictions, convictions which do not ignore genuine differences but go beyond them to attain a greater unity. I appreciate his

probing analysis of secularism, his refusal to deem the common concern with social issues a sufficient ground for unity when this concern is merely a reaction to external pressures and not also an expression of inner, shared belief. Lastly, I too cling to the hope that an earnest encounter of Judaism's past, the serious study of its teachings as they are expressed in our classic texts, will lead us, and through us, our children, to affirm conviction about God and man and human duty which may not be identical in all respects but nonetheless will be sufficiently akin to justify the claim of our identity.

It is intriguing and a portent of good tidings for the future that Dr. Fox finds the possibility of a concensus in realms and by a means which at first flush might well seem least likely to yield agreement. After all, tradition, its texts, the manner in which we understand and approach them all stand at the very heart and center of our ideological divergence. The liberal Jew does not view the past bounded by a framework which is eternally fixed, and he refuses to submit to its authority. Nonetheless -- so Dr. Fox assures us -- and I share his pious hope: when the liberal Jew is honest in his approach to tradition; when he does not assert the absolute authority of the present over the past but is willing at least to expose the standards of modernity to older judgments; in a word, when he turns to his religious heritage with receptivity, with openness, with seeing eye and hearing ear, why then, he surely will be led to affirmations which may not fully coincide with those of the traditional Jew but will be sufficiently close to them to form a unified whole.

As Dr. Fox himself has occasion to point out, even traditional Jews differ in the degree of sophistication with which they understand some of these truths and this difference of understanding does not destroy the unity of their faith. It is not unreasonable to conclude, therefore, that the common encounter of the Jewish past can bind us all, liberal and traditional Jew, in a knion, or at least a meaningful confederation of belief.

I am especially glad to note, also, that Dr. Fox foresees the possibility of convergence not only in the realm of ideas, but in the realm of practice, in our approach to Mitsver. He feels the binding, unifying force of these practices as they are observed in our personal lives and homes and in the worship pattern of the synagogue. Ordinarily, those who accept a systemic, normative Judaism feel that there is a sharp line -- not just a quantitive but a categorical line -- between the practices of liberalism and orthodoxy. But is this categorical difference really as great as all that? Can we find no common ground in the understanding of commandment? I believe we can once we view mitsvah in its wider dimensions not just as given law, but as law form as commandment invested with purpose.

Traditional Judaism affirms this wider view: it does not believe that the Torah demands just for the sake of demanding; that it was given to us as a vain thing, a test of our obedience only and unrelated to all further purposes of God and needs of man. "The laws of the Torah serve an end" taught the RAMBAM, "an end that is useful in regard to being," -- to bind man and God, to provide man with a means to santify his life. These purposes give substance to the liberal Jew's understanding of commandment and because they do, he shares a vital element of the idea of mitsvah held by those who also affirm the belief in verbal revelation.

But these ideological considerations aside, let us not underrate the unifying force of outer form itself, as it is manifested in our communal life. True, the Chassidic shtible and Temple Emanu-El are worlds apart; but they are also worlds together; they share a host of common elements which give them common character; the ark and the Torah, essential prayers and a coincidence of time when they are voiced, hallowed language and hallowed song, and Jews, yes <u>Jews</u>, who seek the companionship of kindred and aspiring souls in their quest for God.

The Chassidic shtible and Temple Emanu-El are worlds apart, But how many Temple Emanu-El are worlds apart, But how many

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often, when we see true differences we fail to distinguish between variants of sentiment and style and those which reflect true ideological divergence.

What we say concerning religious practice, applies to the matter of its terminology. Liberal and traditional Jew do make <u>different</u> use of the same religious language, but it is still the same religious language; invested with the strength of long-lived, hallowed use, it exercises a contripetal, cohesive force of no small consequence. Hebrew merits an emphasis in our teaching precisely for this reason, if for none other.

As we go about the task of seeking our common ground of belief, we might do well to take a closer, more careful look at the concept of peoplehood itself especially as its meaning has been extended and attenuated to its present composite designation of "Klal Yisroel." No other concept is invoked in our councils with greater frequency and urgency than this -- Klal Yisroel, the Community of Israel -- and none is more abused. It is enlisted, in support of every cause, to bolster every argument, to discontinuous dimeterically opposed, in a word, to designate anything and everything, if only the label Jewish can somehow be applied to it. It has, by its abuse, lost virtually all denominative and valuational force.

The mitsvah of "pidyon sh'vuyim" alone might stir us to the task of definition:

nothing so precious ought long remain debased. But there is more immediate reason

which summons us to do so, a reason more immediate to our concern, and it is rooted

in the pedagogic axiom that vague, amorphous, ill-defined concepts simply cannot be

taught. If we want the concept of community to be meaningful to our children, we

must invest it with discernible meaning first. There was a time not so long ago, when

this concept did not have to be taught, or articulated to be transmitted, when it was

implicit in the Jewish experience, when a sense of belonging was born of a state of

physical being. Not so today. An not so most certainly on the American scene. Here

the cultural and ethnic bonds which bound our community once have loosened and bonds

of faith must serve as unifying force in their stead. This is especially true for our

children whose Jewish self-image reveals primarily the face of religion; nothing else, not culture, not nation, not even the giving of charity, is of essential consequence in securing the continuity of their identification. This is why Dr. Fox is absolutely right when he insists that the attainment of communal unity rests in the final analysis on our ability to transmit our shared and profoundly held convictions. And that is also why the concept of community itself, once implicit in the Jewish experience, must now be made explicit.

But not all of our problem is rooted in the ideological realm; here too Dr. Fox is right. Institutional loyalties, quite unrelated to clear-cut ideological distinctions, exercise a divisive influence which, nolens volens, is reflected in the class-room and conveyed to our students.

Indeed, much of the present-day hardening of institutional lines, far from reflecting greater ideological divergence, is rather the consequence of its convergence, of a blurring of ideological distinctions. Distinctions there are and we should not ignore them, but they are not as great and as many as we often think or say they are, and they certainly do not coincide with denominational demarcations. The overlapping of belief and practice pattern is the rule and not the exception.

Surely I need not elaborate; supportive evidence is hardly wanting and has been offered over and again. Reconstructionism, nurtured in the bosom of the Conservative movement, in its theology is far to the left of the current concensus within Reform. Schechter's espousal of 'haskamat hak'lal' as a determinant of religious practice no longer is acceptable to many Conservative rabbis, and so they embrace a systemic, normative Judaism which separates them from other Conservative rabbis to an extent far greater than the latter are separated from Reform. And so it goes.

Even in the larger Jewish community, in the framework of its organized life, patterns overlap and distinctions are blurred. Synagogues foster attitudes and activities which cannot really be called 'religious;' and so-called 'secular' agencies

assume a religious stance, if not yet fully in their program then at least in their pronouncements, and if not there, then in the symbolic act of turning to the graduates of our seminaries to find their professional leadership.

The point of it all being that when true distinctions are lacking the temptation is great that we create them, or that we magnify them in our teaching and in our preaching -- only for the sake of preserving institutional identity.

Now I do not suggest that we can or should shuffle off our institutional coil.

Nor is this the time or the place to consider a major realignment of existing categories, desirable as this eventuation may be. All I really want to say is the selfrecognition of motivation is the requisite of communal harmony.

When the need for denominational identity effects our teaching and our doing, let us at least say so!

When institutional concerns shape our Temple program let us call them institutional concerns:

When, in the larger community, we engage in a struggle for power, let us call it that let us not obscure its true character by designating it an ideological confrontation!

Whatever it is, let us call it by its honest name, and not try to justify it on the basis that it is something else!

This is not a reprimend, an accusation, cholilo vechas. All I say is really in the way of a confession. Grant me only the privilege accorded by tradition of saying not 'al chet shechotosi,' but rather 'al chet shechotonu,' for the sins which we have sinned.

There is, then, much that we can do to create a sense of communal devotion in our children even before the fuller unfoldment of the quest for an ideological unity which Dr. Fox bids us pursue. There is much that we can do to deepen the devotion of

our children to the larger community, to extend their reach of heart and mind to encompass all of Israel.

What can we do?

We can begin by teaching Judaism in our schools, teaching it, moreover, not as some kind of denominational possession, but as a shared possession to which variant interpretations have a vital relation. And when we speak of our difference -- in faith and form -- we can describe these differences as they really are, we can approach them, examine them -- teacher and student both -- in an atmosphere of respectful inquiry. We can bring our children into contact with one another crossing denominational barriers for communal programs of education and for united activity arising to advance our common cause. Surely more than ideas are involved in our problem. People are involved. The sense of communion is sustained by encounter. We can bring our teachers and educators into more frequent association with one another. We can teach them together, in areas where no ideological divergence is at stake. We might exchange our teachers for a time to broaden their perspective and the perspective of those they teach. We can support communal agencies and programs which seak sincerely to serve us all.

We can do more than that. We might ourselves communalize with some segments of the congregational school program... on a secondary level perhaps ... so that together then we might have the kind of intensive religious high schools which we singly do not have. Or at least we can begin this process by avoiding needless, wateful duplication where none is justified by cooperating with one another in areal vital to our work: in the recruitment of teachers, in the development of educational tools, in the publication of our texts, in the realm of experimentation and research. In this and like manner we can teach our children a love for the community of Israel not just by precept, but by example.

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Galitzyaner, of course. (Laughter) And it offers full explanation for my foolishness in agreeing to come here. (Laughter)

How can I possibly prevail in this arena? EVen before I begin

I am out-Foxed. (Prolonged laughter and applause)

It is good, my friends, to be here, let me assure you, and what we do, is good. Those who planned this program

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and who brought it into being, well merit our applause. For their efforts make no small contribution toward the solution of the very problem which moved us to meet. It is not so much what we say, but the very event of our meeting is a Mitzvah.

For if the science of education has taught us one thing, it is this: our children make their commitments primarily by means of identification with their ego ideals. They look more than they listen. They follow the man who is, long before the man who only persuades with his lips. And thus the visible demonstration of our desire for unity, teaches a lesson more powerful than any kind of ideological agreement we may reach or articulate.

In this case, surely, as in so many others, the determined quest for an answer in and of itself gives shape and substance to the answer.

Now, let me say at once, that I respond with a good deal of warmth to Dr. Marvin Fox, personally, and also to what he has to say. I sense in him a kindred spirit. His presentation appeals to me, in it broader outlines, and even in much of its details. I share his central conception of our problem, as the need to deepen our instructions, to

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instill in our children not denominational devotion but profound religious conviction, convictions which do not ignore ideological and genuine differences, but which go beyond them to affirm a greater unity.

I appreciate his probing analysis of secularism; his refusal to deem the common concern with social issues a sufficient ground for unity, when this concern is merely a reaction to outer pressure, and not also an expression of inner-shared religious belief.

Lastly, I, too, cling to the hope that an earnest encounter with Judaism's past, the serious study of its teachings as they are expressed in our classic texts will lead us, and through us our children, to a firm conviction about God and man and human duty, which may not be identical in all respects, but nonetheless, will be sufficiently close to justify the claim of our identity.

It is intriguing, and a portent of good tidings for the future, that Dr. Fox finds the possibility of a consensus in realms and by a means which, at first blush, may well seem least likely to yield agreement. After all, the past tradition, its texts, the manner in which we understand and approach them, all go to the very heart and center

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This may not fully coincide with both of the Traditional Jews, but it will be sufficiently close to them, to form a unified pattern, a unified whole.

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It is not unreasonable to conclude, therefore, that the common encounter of the Jewish past can bind us all,

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Now, I am especially glad that Dr. Fox foresees the possibility of conversion, even in the realm, not so much of the ideas themselves, but in the realm of practice, of our approach to MITZVAH and how we understand it. That he feels there is a binding and unifying force of the MITWVAH, even as they are observed today, in our personal lives, and as expressed in the worship patterns of the Synagogue.

Ordinarily, those who accept a systemic, normative Judaism, feel that there is a sharp line, not just a quantitative but a categorical line, between the practices of liberalism and Orthodoxy. But this categorical difference really is not as great as all that. I, too, believe that we can find some common grounds in the understanding of Commandment. I believe we can, once we view the MITZVAH in its wider dimensions, not just as giving law, but as law forms, as commandments invested with purpose.

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unrelated to our further services to God and each of man.

The laws of the Torah serve an end, said the RAMBAM, and the end is useful in regard to being. These purposes give substance to the liberal Jew's understanding of commandment, and because they do, he shares a vital element of the idea of Mitzvah, held by those who also affirm the belief in verbal revelation.

But all of these ideological considerations aside, let us not underrate the unifying force of outer form itself, even as it is manifested in our communal life. True, the CHASIDIC SHTIEBEL and the Chicago Temple Sinai, are worlds apart; but they are also worlds together. They share a host of common elements which gives them common character.

The Ark and the Torah, essential prayers and the coincidence of time when they are voiced, hallowed language and hallowed song, and Jew--yes Jew--who seek the companionship of kindred and aspiring souls, in their quest for God.

The Chasidic Shtiebel and Temple Sinai may be worlds apart, but how many Temple Sinais remain on the American scene? And how many Chasidic Shteibel? When we wear denominational language, we often see differences where

none exist. And often when we see true differences, we fail to distinguish between variance of æntiment and style, and those which reflect true ideological diversion.

What we say concerning religious practices, is obviously true in the matter of terminology. Liberal and traditional Jew do make different use of the same religious language. But it is still the same religious language. Given strength by long-lived, hallowed use, this language exercises a cohesive force of no small consequence.

Now, as we go about the task of seeking our common ground of belief, we might all do well to take a closer, more careful, look at the concept of people for itself. Especially as its meaning has been extended to its present composite designation, Klal Yisroel, the community of Israel. No other concept is invoked in our councils with greater frequency and urgency than this, and none is more abused.

It is enlisted in support of every cause, to bolster every argument, to justify causes, and color these diametrically opposed, in a word, to designate anything and everything if only the label "Jewish," can somehow be applied. to it. It has, by its abuse, lost virtually all denominative and valuational force.

The Mitzvah of PIDYAN SHEVUYIM alone might stir it to the task of definition. Nothing so precious should long remain debate.

But there is a more immediate reason which summons us to do so. A reason more immediate to our concern, and it is rooted in the Pedagogic Axiom, that nothing that is vague, amorphous, and ill-defined, can be taught.

If we want the concept of our community to have meaning for our children, we have to invest it with discernable meaning, first.

There was a time not so long ago, when this concept did not have to be taught, or even articulated to be transmitted; when it was implicit in the Jewish experience; when a sense of belonging was born of a state of physical being. Not so, today, and not so especially on the American scene, where the cultural and ethnic bonds have loosened. And bonds of faith must serve as the unifying force, in their stead.

This is especially true for the world of our children, whose true self-image reveals primarily the face of religion, nothing else--not culture, not nationhood, not even the giving of charity is of essential consequence in

securing the continuity of their identification.

And this is why Dr. Fox is absolutely right, when he insists that the attainment of communal unity rests in the final analysis on our ability to transmit our shared and profoundly held convictions. And that is also why the concept of community itself, once implicit in the Jewish experience, must now be made explicit.

But not all of ourproblems is rooted in the ideological realm. Here, too, Dr. Fox is right. Institutional loyalties quite unrelated to clear-cut, ideological distinction, exercise a devisive influence which known and swollen is reflected in the classroom and conveyed to our students.

Indeed, much of the present-day hardening of institutional lines, far from reflecting greater ideological diversion, is actually the consequence of this convergence of a blurring of ideological distinctions; distinctions there are, and we should not ignore them, but they are not as great and not as many as we often think or say they are. And they certainly do not coincide with denominational demarcations.

The overlapping of belief and practice pattern is the rule, and not the exception.

evidence is hardly one thing, and has been offered over and again. Reconstruction is nurtured in the bosom of the Conservative Movement, and its theology is far to the left of the current consensus within Reform. Schechter's espousal of HASH CHUMASH KLAL as a determinant of religious practice, no longer is acceptable to many Conservative Rabbis, and so they embrace a systemic normative Judaism, which separates them from other Conservative Rabbis to an extent far greater than the latter are separated from the Reform. And so it goes.

Even in the larger Jewish community, in the framework of the organized life, patterns overlap and distinctions are blurred. As Dr. Fox pointed out, Synagogues foster attitudes and activities which cannot really be called religious. And conversely, also, our so-called secular organizations, assume a religious stance. If not yet fully in their program, then at least in their pronouncements. And if not there, then in the symbolic act of turning to the graduates of our Seminary to find their professional leadership.

The point of it all being, that when true

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distinctions are lacking, the temptation is great that we create them, or at least magnify them in our teaching, only for the sake of preserving institutional identity.

Now, I do not suggest that we should or even can, shuffle off our institutional identity. Nor is this the time or place to consider a major realignment of existing categories, desirable as this eventuation may or may not be. All I really want to say, for the time being, is that the self-recognition of motivation is the requisite of communal harmony.

When the for denominational identity affects our teaching and our doing, let us at least say so. When institutional concerns shape our Temple programs, let us call them institutional concerns. When, in the larger community we engage in a struggle for domination, let us call it that; let us not obscure its real character by designating it as a kind of ideological confrontation. Whatever it is, let us call it by its real name, and not try to justify it on the basis that it is something else.

This is no reprimand or accusation, believe it or not. All I say is really in the way of a confession.

Grant me only the privilege accorded by tradition, of saying

not, AL CHAIT A'SHECHATASI, but, rather, AL CHAIT SHECHATANU, for the sins which we have sinned.

There is, then, a good deal that we can do to create a sense of communal devotion in our children, even before the fuller unfoldment of the quest for an ideological unity, which Dr. Fox bid us to pursue. There is much that we can do to deepen the devotion of our children to the larger community, to extend their reach of heart and mind to encompass all of Israel.

What can we do? Yes, we can begin by teaching Judaism in our schools, teaching it, moreover, not as some kind of denominational possession, but as a shared possession to which variant interpretations have a vital relation. And when we speak of our differences in faith and in form, we can describe these differences as they really are. We can approach them, examine them, teacher and student both, in an atmosphere of respectful inquiry.

We can bring our children into contact with one another, crossing denominational barriers, for communal programs of education; for united activities aiming to advance our common cause. For surely more than ideas are involved in our problems. People are involved. The sense of union is

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sustained by encounter.

We can bring our teachers and educators into more frequent association with one another. We can teach them together in areas where no ideological divergence is at stake. We might even exchange our teachers, for a time, a given period during the year, to broaden their perspectives, and the perspectives of those they teach.

We can support communal agencies and programs which seek sincerely to serve us all. We can do more than that: we might even explore the possibility of communalizing, of uniting some segments of the congregational school program; at least on a secondary level. Or at least we can begin this process by avoiding needless, wasteful, duplication where none is justified. By cooperating with one another in areas vital to our work—in the recruitment of teachers, in the development of educational tools, in the publication of texts, in the realm of experimentation and research.

In this and like manner, then, will we give our children a love for the community of Israel. Not just by precept, but by example. And this, in effect, is what we are doing now. Can we take counsel together and meet to express our common concern? That is why we are grateful to those who

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planned this program and brought it to be. For they offer us opportunity to demonstrate the truth of a promise inherent in a saying of a RIMINOVER REBBE:

PAAM VAFAAM HAKADOSH BARUCH HU MENASHEH YISROEL BILVUSHIM ACHAIRIM. At various times the Holy One, Blessed be He, God of Israel in different garments.

PAAM BILVUSH ZEH, UFAAM BILVUSH ZEH. A time in one kind of garment, and a time in another kind of garment.

AVOL HANIKUDAH HAYIHUDIS TOMID NISHARES, UBER
DOS PINTELE YID. It remains, it flames, and it is not
consumed.

- Rae-Give it heading of transcipt -

I appreciate Rabbi Fox's kind introduction, although I feel constrained to note some serious omissions.

Taking into account the ecumenical spirit of the occasion, he might well have added that my first cousin, Pessach Schindler, is the Associate to the Director of Education of the United Synagogue.

He might further have added that I trace my lineage to Moshe Sofer of Pshevorsk, author of the Or Pne Moshe and a spiritual companion of the Besht. This identifies me as a Galizianer, of course, and offers full explanation for my fooloshness in agreeing to come here

How can I possibly prevail in this arena:

Even before I begin, I am outfoxed.

It is good to be here, let me assure you, and what we do here is good.

Those who planned this program and brought it to be well merit our applause;
their effort makes no small contribution toward the solution of the very problem which moves us to meet,

Not so much what we say, but the very even of our meeting of worth, for if the science of education has taught us one lesson it is this: our children make their commitments primarily by means of identification with the ego ideal;

They look, more than they listen;

The visible demonstration of our desire for unity teaches a lesson more powerful than any ideological agreement we may reach and articulate.

In this case surely, as in so many others, the determined quest for an answer in and of itself give shape and substance to that answer.

Let me say, at once, that I respond with a good deal of warmth to Dr. Marvin

Fox and what he has to say the continue of sease him to be a Kindred spirit

His presentation appeals to me, at least in its broader outlines.

I share his essential conception of our problem

deepen our instruction, to instill in our children not denominate the need to define a common ground of belief

national destricts but profound convictions, convictions, convictions

which does not ignore genuine differences

but goes beyond them to reveal a greater unity.

I appreciate his probing analysis of the secual solution IN PACE OF ONE Shis refusal to deem the common concern with communal issues a sufficient ground for unity

when this concern is merely a reaction to external pressures and not also an expression of inner, shared belief.

that an earnest encounter of Judaism's past

the serious study of its teachings as they are expressed in our classic texts

will lead as each in our way our children to sort;

to affirm conviction about God and man and human duty

which may not be identical in all respects

but nonetheless will be sufficiently akin to justify the claim of our identity.

the

It is intriguing and a portent of good tidings for the future that Dr. Fox finds the possibility of a concensus in realms and by a means which at first flush might well seem least likely to yield agreement. After all, tradition, its texts, the manner in which we understand and approach them all stand at the very heart and center of our ideological devergence. The liberal Jew does not view the past bounded by a framework which is eternally fixed, and he refuses to submit to the authority. Nonetheless -- so Dr. Fox assures us -- and I share his pious hope: when the liberal Jew is honest in his approach to tradition' when he does not assert the absolute superiority of the present over the past but is willing at least to expose the standards of modernity to older judgments; in a word, when he turns to his religious heritage with receptivity, with openness, with seeing eye and hearing ear then he surely will be led to affirmations which may not fully coincide with those of the traditional Jew but will be sufficiently close to them to form a unified pathorn

even traditional Jews differ in the degree of sophistication with which they understand some of these truths and this difference of understanding does not destroy the unity of their faith. It is not unreasonable to conclude therefore that the common encounter of the Jewish past can bind us all, liberal and traditional Jew in a union or at least a meaningful confederation of belief.

1 I am Ispecially glad to trote, also, that Dr. Fot forsees the possibility of convergence hot only in the realing ideas, but in the realing practice, in our approach to Mitsvale. He feels the topding, unifying free of there practices as they are observed in our personal lives + homes + in the worship patern of the synagogue. Ordinarily, Huse who accept a systemic normative judaism feel that there but a cortegorical line - between the practices of liberalyou to thisday. But is this categoric difference really letc(as m met page),

the transferred of a many or announce of the configuration of the frequency

I too share his hope that there night be the poss I am somewhat puzzled by Dr. Fox's reluctance to ascribe a binding, unifying to the mitzvot they are observed in our personal lives and expressed in the worship patterns of the synagogue, shouldn't say puzzled, because I understand the philosophical presuppositions which impela him to draw not just a quantitative, but a sharp qualitative line between the practices of liberalism and orthodoxy. But is this qualitative difference really as great as all that? Can we find no common ground in the understanding of commandment? I believe we can once we view motsvah in its wider dimensions not just as given law, but as law form as commandment invested with purpose. Traditional Judaism affirms this wider view: it does not believe that the Torah demands just for the sake of demanding that it was given to us as a vain thing, a test of our obedience only and unrelated to all further purposes of God and needs of man. "The laws of the Torah serve an end" taught Maimonides, "an end that is useful in regard to being, to bind man and God, to provide with a means to sanctify his life. These purposes give substance to the liberal Jew's understanding of commandment and because they do, he shares a vital element of the idea of mitsvah held by those who also affirm the belief in verbal revelation.

But these ideological considerations aside,

let us not underrate the unifying force of outer form itself, as it is manifested in our communal life.

True, the Chassidic shtible and Temple Sinai are worlds apatt; but they are also worlds together.

They share a host of common elements which give them common character: the ark and the Torah

essential prayers and a coincidence of time when they are voiced, hallowed language and hallowed song, and Jews,

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But how many Temple Sinais remain on the American scene - and how many Chassidic Shtibl When we wear our denominational lenses we often see differences where none, in fact, exist

And often, when we see true differences

we fail to distinguish between variants of sentiment and style

and those which reflect true ideological divergence.

What we said concerning religious practice, applies to the matter of its terminology.

Liberal and traditional Jew do make different use of the same religious language,

but it is still the same religious language;

invested with the strength of long-lived, hallowed use,

it excercises a centripetal, cohesive force of no small consequence.

Hebrew merits an emphasis in our teaching precisely for this reason, of for none other.

As we go about the task of defining the common ground of belief,

we might do well to take a closer, more careful look at the concept of peoplehood, especially as its meaning has been extended to its present composite designation of Klal Yisroel.

No other concept is invoked in our councils with greater frequency and urgency than this -- K'lal Yisroel, the Community of Israel, -- and none is more abused. It is enlisted, in support of every cause,

to bolster every argument,

to justify policies dimaterically opposed,

in a word, to designate anything and everything, if only the label Jewish can some how be applied to .

It has, by its abuse, lost all denominative and valuational force.

The mitsvah of 'pidyon' sh'vuyim' alone might stir us to the task of definition: nothing so precious ought long remain debased.

more immediate to our concern, that is, and it is rooted in the pegojik axiom that vague, amorphous, ill-defined ideas, simply cannot be taught.

If we want the community idea to be meaningful to our children,

we must invest it with discernible meaning first.

There was a time not so long ago,

when this concept did not have to be taught, or articulated to be transmitted, when it was implicit in the Jewish experience,

when a sense of belonging was born of a state of physical being.

Not so today. And not so most certainly on the American scene.

Here the cultural and ethnic bonds which bound our community once have loosened and only bonds of faith can serve as unfying force in their stead.

This is especially true for our children
whose Jewish self-image reveals primarily the face of religion;
nothing else, not culture, not nation, not even the giving of charity,
is of essential consequence in securing the continuity of their identification.
This is why Dr. Fox is absolutely right when he insists
that the attainment of communal unity rests in the final analysis on our ability

that the attainment of communal unity rests in the final analysis on our ability to smit our share - profoundly below common chiffles, to find and define some common ground of belief.

And that is also why the concept of community itself, once implicit in the Jewish experience, must now be made explicit.

AR STALVES

But not all of our problem is rooted in the ideological realm; here too Dr Fox 15 right.

Institutional loyalties, quite unrelated to clear-cut ideological distinctions,

Plantitudes a divisive influence

which, nolens volens, is reflected in the classroom and conveyed to our students.

Distinctions there are, and we should not obscure them Indeed, much of the present-day hardening of institutional lines.

far from reflecting greater ideological divergence,

is often the consequence of its convergence, of a blurring of ideological distinctions

Distinctions there are and we should not obscure them but they are not as great and as many as we often think say they are and they certainly do not coincide with denominational demarcations.

The overlapping of belief and practice patterk is the rule and not the exception.

Surely, I need not elaborate;

builds
supportive evidence is certainly not wanting and has been offered over and again.

Reconstructionism,

nurtured in the bosom of the Conservative movement
in its theology is far to the left of the current concensus within Reform.

Schechter's espousal of 'haskamat hak'lal' as a determinant of religious practice no longer is acceptable to some conservative rabbis, and so they embrace a systemic, normative Judiasm which separates them from other Conservative rabbis to an extent far greater than thelatter are separated from Reform.

And so it goes.

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Even in the larger Jewish community, in the framework of its organized life, patterns overlap and distinctions are blurred.

Synagogues foster attitudes and activities which cannot really be called 'religious;' and so called 'secular' or 'secularist' agencies assume a religious role, if not yet fully in their program then at least in their pronouncements,

and if not there, then in the symbolic act of turning to the graduates of our seminaries to find their professional leadership.

The point of it all being that when true distinctions are lacking of the temptation is great that we create them, that we magnify then in our teaching that when we talk in the classroom of ideas and ideals which are really shared, we do not talk of the not as shared ideas and ideals, but as some kind of denominational possession,

as if there were only one true Judaism and it is ours

-- all this for the sake of presening institutional identity.

Denominational devotion has its place, even its value, don't misunderstand me.

I do not suggest that we shuffle off our institutional coil.

Nor is this the place time or place to consider a major refashioning of existing categories, desireable as this eventuation may well be.

All I really want to say

is that the self-recognition of our motivations is the requisite of communal harmony.

When the need for denominational identity affects our teaching, let us at least say so.

When institutional concerns shape our Temple program let us call them institutional concerns.

When, in the larger community, we engage in a struggle for power, let-us

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Whatever it is, let us call it by its honest name, and not try to justify it on the basis that it is something else.

Forgive me. This is not a regrimand, an accusation and solve the state of a confessional.

I don't mean to assume a holier-than-thou stance.

(short All Everything I say is really in the nature of a confessional.

Det Grant me the privilege accorded by tradition of saying not 'al chet shechotosi,'

For the Sius Ottich we have Spined.

but rather 'al chet shechotonu,' for the sins which we have simmed,

forgive us.

There is then, much that we condo to Create a pluse of communal devotion morn di ldren even befor the fuller unfoldment of the guest for an ideological unity which D. Fox bids us pur sue. There is mude that we con do to deepen the devotion your Children to the larger Community, to effend their reading heart + unind to encourans all of Israel . Mat son we do? ble con begin by teaching Indaine in our schools, teaching it, moreover not as some kind of denominational prosession, but as a chared possession to which variant interpretations have a bital relation of and then we open And shew we (continue as is)

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When we speak of our difference in faith and form we can describe these differences as they really are,
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We can bring our children into contact with one another Crossing denominational barriers

and limitless are our opportunities to do so

in united activity purposing to advance our common cause, Surely more than ideas are involved in our problem.

People are involved.

The sense of communion is sustained by encounter.

and the perspective of those they teach.

We can bring our teachers into more frequent contact with one another.

We can teach them together, in these areas where no ideological divergence is at stake. We might exert exchange our teachers for a time to broaden their perspective

We can support communal agencies and programs which seek sincerely to serve us all We can dom more than that We could ourselves communalize some segments of the congregational school program ... on a secondary level perhaps ... so that together we then might have the kind of intensive religious high schools which we singly do not have Or at least we can begin this process by avoiding needless, wasteful duplication where none is warranted justified by cooperating with one another in areas vital to our work? in the recruitment of teachers in the development of educational tools, in the publication of our texts and especially in the realm of experimentation and research. which suffers precisely because we go, each our way alone although the task of research its by its nature not parochial and its fruit could sustain us all, no matter what our orientation.

In this and like manner we can teach our children a love for the community of Israel not just by precept, but by example.

Even as we are doing now
when we take counsel together and meet to express our common
concern
That is why we are beholden to those who planned this program

and brought it to be.

They offer opportunity to demonstrate the truth of a promise inherent in the saying of the Rimanover Rebbe

Paam vofaam Hakodosh boruch hu menasseh yisroel bilvishim ocherim.
At various times the Holy One blessed be He garbs Israel
in different gaements

Paam bilvush seh ufaam bilvush zeh

At times in this kind of garment and at times in another Kund q garment Avol hanekudoh Hajehudis Tomid nishores

Ober the pintele yid...it remains, it flames, and it is not consumed.



[Dr. Herman Warnum rose. Prolonged applause.]

CHAIRMAN (SEYMOUR) FOX: I am going to ask later,

if we have the opportunity, for Dr. Warnum to say a word.

However, at this point, I would like to have Rabbi Schindler conclude his remarks.

RABBI SCHINDLER: I accept Dr. Fox's expression of condolence for my heritage, understanding that he does not understand that there is no need for condolence, but that there is need for envy. (Laughter and applause.)

Why doesn't he understand this? Because the worm living in horseradish thinks the whole world is horseradish. (Laughter) Just a few minutes of VORNISH ALAILUM.

All-right, I will forget the question about the home, because obviously I don't think there are going to be any objections to our teaching, or our intesnifying our efforts to teach, religion; nor will there be any objection to our forgetting about denominational differences. Because if the truth be told, most of our laymen are very much--very much--appalled by the hardening of institutional lines which they see on the American scene.

On the question of MITZVAH, as the substance of my paper tried to point out, we obviously do not see it just

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as a given law, which we must lend blind obedience to. We teach the MITZVAH as a--I use the term "form"--commandment form, to which the individual must make a commitment, which he must observe with a devotion and a self-discipline, and also with a sense of purpose.

Obviously, in our teaching, we underline the purpose of MITZVAH. They are binding for us: As a means, above all, and without going into all of this detail, to sanctify our lives. This, surely, is a common conception of MITZVOT, that in observing them, we have a means of hallowing life.

Tagree that the SIDDUR ought to be taught.
That bothers me.

As far as areas of diversity are concerned, I certainly agree with Dr. Fox, that the crucial question is the question of TORAS MOSHE MISINAI. This is the question.

This is the ultimate mark of divergency between the liberal and the Orthodox. It is not the ultimate mark of divergence between Conservatism and Orthodoxy and Reform. As I pointed out, there is a crossing, an intermingling, a blurring of differences, especially as pertains to Conservatism and Reform

Obviously, the difference of attitude toward

Torah has its expression in differences of practice. The Shabbos of Dr. Marvin Fox is not the Shabbos of Rabbi Schindler. The two are different. But I maintain, that even in this difference, even in this diversity, there is a greater unity which brings us closer than further apart.

Dr. Fox's Shabbos is different from my Shabbos,
but after all, I still don't celebrate All Saints Day. (Laughter) Now, as far as Hebrew is concerned, precisely for this
reason we ought to teach it, because it is a unifying force,
a unifying bond, which binds us one to another.

Let me add only one more item. Of course we must not consider it just as a lingua franca, but as a lingua sancta, as the most fitting, the most dignified, the most beautiful garment for the sentiment of our faith. And it should be taught as such, and not just as a language for daily use.

We ought to teach our children not just the literal meaning of such terms as MITZVAH, TERUMAH, A'HAVOY, YIRU and KIDUSH HASHEM, but we ought to teach them the meaning of these terms in the fullest context of the spiritual tension. And in this connection I think, and this we have to realize we have been overlooking, all day, and it ought to be

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said in just one sentence:

There to one hore wafter all have been oriubooking allday of must be cannot look at the problem of the Jewish community in America, only in American terms. It must be seen in belder terms. And any definition of the Jewish religion or of the religious community which has meaning for us, must be related in a vital pattern to our co-religionists in MEDINAT VISROEL. (Prolonged applause.)

RABBI (SEYMOUR) FOX: Thank you all very much. And in your name I would like to thank our two colleagues, who came from so far to join us here today.

[The members rose and applauded.]

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TWO CROWNS OF SERVICE

During July, Jerusalem was the site of an historic conference -- the Fifteenth International Convention of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. It was the first time in its 42 year history, that Reform Jewry's world organization held one of its biennial assemblies in Israel.

It was also the largest, if not the most significant World Union convention ever O/a/
held. Our five hundred delegates -- representing Reform Jewish communities of twenty-four lands and five continents -- were in attendance. They heard reports concerning the growth of Liberal Judaism in Latin America, Europe, South Africa, Australia, and India. They listened to prominent Israeli personalities debate the need for liberal alternatives to orthodoxy in the Jewish State. They responded to the presentations of earnest, eager Israeli delegates who sought support in their quest for a redress of grievances against their government.

These pleadings were re-echoed in Rabbi Shankman's opening-day address as well as in his lucid, urbane impromptu-response to President Shazar's greeting. They were more fully elaborated by Rabbi Eisendrath who spoke as Chairman of the World Union's Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Rights in Israel.

In its bold, broad outline, Reform Judaism's case is this: Israel was established with the promise that complete equality of social and political rights would be granted to all its citizens and that freedom of religion and of conscience is guaranteed. For practical political reasons -- in order to gain a working parliamentary majority, Israel's plurality party required the cooperation of the religious bloc -- certain concessions were made to Orthodoxy. It was agreed that the personal status of Jews would be regulated by Halacha, that the Sabbath and the Festivals would be official days of rest, that parents would retain the right to place their children in state-supported religious schools, and that Kashrut would be kept in public places; lastly, the Rabbinate and its institutions were to be supported by the state,

the Rabbinical Council was made an organ of the state itself and through its Courts granted exclusive jurisdiction in matters of marriage, divorce, and personal status.

This political compromise, somewhat modified by subsequent court decisions, has not served to restrict the freedom of non-Jewish religions in Israel; the religious rights of Moslem and Christian, of Druze and Bahai are fully upheld. Only non-orthodox Judaism is hedged in with vexatious restraints. Reform Rabbis are not considered Rabbis under the law; they may not celebrate marriages, officiate at funerals or serve as army chaplains. Jews converted by Reform rabbis are not permitted to enter Israel as Olim; they are denied admittance under the Law of Return. Aliyah by born Jews of non-orthodox affirmation is regarded with misgiving. In realms where Halachah does not rule, Orthodoxy seeks to impose its will through the exercise of coercive political influence. Thus the Ministry for Religious Affairs gives only lip and token service to the State's injunction that all congregations be granted financial help to build places of worship and to acquire needed religious appurtenances. And when reform congregations thus denied seek to lease facilities for worship, the Rabbinate intimidates the local public and private sector and our congregants are harassed and compelled to move from place to place.

The indignation of the Reform Jewish community can well be understood. After all, our efforts to support Israel have never been open to question; our help is asked and given without reservation. Why, then, in Israel should our Jewishness be impugned and our religious liberties denied? Redress must be made, so concludes the Ad Hoc Committee report. Certainly the problem is "not inherent in the value system of the religious structure of the Jewish people." It is the product, rather, of "political factors which have no valid claim to permanence." It can be altered even as the advantage of the moment brought it to be.

On the morning following his presentation, Rabbi Eisendrath together with Rabbi Shankman met with Premier Levi Eshkol and petitioned the government to grant Reform Judaism wider legal status. Putting aside for the time being their hope for the final separation of church and state in Israel, Progressive leaders requested that (1) Reform rabbis be permitted to marry duly registered Jews in Israel, (2) all Jews converted by Reform rabbis be recognized as Jews and be admitted to Israel under the Law of Return as Jews, and (3) Reform congregations receive aid from the Ministry of Religious Affairs equal to that received by Orthodox congregations.

The Premier seemed willing to consider financial aid but offered scant hope for the fulfillment of other requests "until Reform increases its ranks in Israel." His specious argument, superficially reasonable but fundamentally unfair ("since when is justice predicated on the counting of noses," thundered Rabbi Eisendrath), was to be heard again in the reaction of the Israeli press to the Conference as a whole and especially to 1'affaire Western Wall.

This affair -- which completely overshadowed the convention and well nigh threatened to disrupt its proceedings -- had its genesis in Conference program plans which called for a worship service with men and women praying together at the Wall. Not that the Wall per se was so important to us from a strictly theological point of view; in its approach to worship Reform has always eschewed the sacerdotal, preferring to follow Judaism's prophetic tradition which holds that God can be found wherever He is sought with contrite heart. But the Wall has become something more than the last remaining ruin of Judaism's Second Temple. It is the symbol of a people's destiny, of two-thousand years of pain and perseverance, and finally of triumph. By praying at the Wall, we meant to express our oneness with Israel the land and people reborn.

Be that as it may, a routine request for permission to hold such a service was denied.

Minister of Religion Warhaftig conveniently forgot or perhaps never knew that there
was a time, immediately following the Six-Day War, when the men and women of our

congregations prayed together at the Wall; but those were the days before the Rabbinate had captured the Wall from the State (and what a pity too, if only in contrasting the shabbiness of this site with the sacred beauty with which government-held places such as Yad-VaShem and the Hechal HaSefer are invested). The religious establishment did not stop with refusals lest the Reformers refrain from heeding them. Huge posters were affixed on the walls of Jerusalem's Orthodox quarters, calling the faithful to their duty. "This must not happen!" the signs warned. "It is a profanation of God's Name. Come by the thousands to the Holy Wall." And come they did, shock-troops of black-robed, black-hatted Chassidim, to take their turns guarding the Wall, even while more than one thousand Jerusalem policemen stood by to prevent possible violence.

General Dayan was summoned from his desk in the Ministry of Defense to join a high-level government commission hurriedly convened to deal with the matter. The Commission conceived a compromise: let the Reformers worship not at the Wall, but some distance away from it. But the Reformers were in no mood to confirm the second-class status too often conferred on them. Only two avenues lay open before them that they could choose -- either to brave the stones or to postpone the service. Instinct, bred by our participation in many a civil-rights march, tempted us to take the first course, but other voices prevailed. We were persuaded by Dayan and Eman and their colleagues that pictures of violence, flashed round the world, would give strong argument to Israel's enemies; Israel cannot secure the religious rights of its fellow Jews, they will say, how can it secure the holy places of other faiths. A concern not for our peace but for the peace of Jerusalem united impelled us to act as we did.

Government circles reacted with relief and applauded our decision, as did the general public if comments in the Israeli press provide a true measure of its feeling. "We have reason to be grateful to Reform Jews," said the Jerusalem Post in its page-one editorial, "for withdrawing in time from a painful conflict and saving Jerusalem from the likelihood of shame and disgrace. They showed more respect and regard for the Wall

than others have done." <u>Ha-Arets</u> featured a cartoon which depicted Israelis urging Reform Jews to come to Israel, the latter with baggage in hand prepared to respond but unable to proceed, stopped by the forbidding moat which Orthodoxy has dug.

About the only discordant note in response was struck not by a citizen of Israel but by a visiting Toronto rabbi who published a lengthy J'Accuse depracating Reform leaders for "persistently fighting the wrong battles" -- as if this battle had been chosen by us, rather than for us -- and denouncing them for their failure to cooperate with the Conservative Movement "to establish one program for Israel." His argument would have told with better grace and greater force had not Reform Jewry's offer to cooperate with all non-Orthodox groups in Israel been rejected, ab initio, by the very Movement for which Rabbi Rosenberg is spokesman. We say this not to deny the logic of his reasoning -- indeed, we do not serve Israel's spiritual needs when we transplant our divisive institutional pattern -- but merely to set the record straight.

All in all, then, progress was made and our stake in Israel was confirmed by our corporate presence even as it was established by our deeds of the past. Our seven congregations in Israel may be small and struggling, but their pains are the pains of certain both growth. The number of our leaders and adherents, olim and sabras among them, is steadily increasing. The ground was broken for a multi-million dollar building to house our Leo Baeck Primary and Secondary School in Haifa. Our youth program in Israel is burgeoning; wherever we turned, so it seems, we came upon NFTYites engaged in manifold, meaningful activity. The continued success of the Union's Israel Fund campaign gives promise that the required material resources will also be available.

All this is as it should be. We are bound to Israel, by bonds of faith and kinship both. Certainly we need Israel, to heighten our sense of peoplehood, to strengthen our identity, to enlarge the horizon of our self-knowledge and to deepen our faith. Surely Israel also needs us, not just for material and political support, but also for those gifts of the spirit which will satiate the yearning of many of its sons and

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Many rely on the slogans of the past. Israel alone offers safety to the Jew, they say; come, while the coming is good.

Such arguments bear no great weight. Activist American Jewish youth will not be attracted by the call to escape <u>from</u> danger. They may be drawn by the summons to danger, to challenge, to the opportunity for the fulfillment of ideals.

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There is no generation-gap in Israel. There are no hippies, yippies; there is no alienated youth. Young people know that what they do is of importance. They feel that each individual really counts.

* * * * *

The problem of Jewish Education receives careful scrutiny, its needs are explored, its sorry state bemoaned. As at home, these discussions are dispiriting: the diagnosis is detailed, but the cure is wanting.

There is a new appreciation in Israel for the significance of Jewish education, not just as a tool for aliyah but for the sake of survival of the Diasporal community. This too is a fruitage of the six-day war. Even as many American Jews discovered unknown depths of their love for Israel, so did many Israelis rediscover their love for and need of world Jewry.

Golda Meier summarized this new-old spirit: "The battle for Jewish survival is fought not along the frontiers of Israel but in Jewish schools throughout the world... and who is to say which frontier is the more perilous...and the more important."

Her words are heartening. They also challenge us: to bring to our frontier and struggle the same resources, skill and devotion which are mustered in the defenge of Israel.

* * * * *

A quick trip to K'far Galim where the members of seven Israeli Reform congregations are convened in Biennial Assembly.

Close to two hundred men and women are in attendance -- a number comparing favorably with many a regional UAHC convention. The spirit is good. Recently returned

E-I-E students speak with enthusiasm concerning their six-month stay in the States. There are reports of continuing, if painful, growth.

I am embarrassed. Our promises were many but we have not fulfilled them. There is still no synagogue building for any of our congregations in Israel. More personnel is desparately needed -- not just rabbis, but youth leaders and educators. The Leo Baeck School has ample space, in its beautiful new structure, but the classrooms lack furniture and equipment. There is a need to develop new forms of religious expressions; institutions other than synagogue centers should be developed. The issue of rights is far from resolved -- and we are silent.

* * * * *

Back to the President's Conference and more talk. Our endurance is tested, especially by those eternal, infernal "general debates" whose rules are that there are no rules. Anyone can speak on any subject he pleases -- whether germane to the discussion or not -- for as long as he pleases.

Young Israelis disclaimingly designate such debates as Zionut, associating the term with interminable talk and little action. They prefer the direct, unvarnished speech of a Dayan. Conferees are of an older generation; they still respond to the rhetoric of Eban.

AMERICAN JEWISH

A tour of the occupied territories. A flight along the Suez Canal and over Sinai. A brief stop at Sharm el Sheikh. (The Straits of Tiran are nærrower than we conceived them to be -- surely no more than small ships in single file can make passage). Back to Beer Sheba. A visit with Ben Gurion (his voice is still vigorous, his presence still inspiring). And then, too soon, the long journey home.

Was the conference fruitful in its effect? Certain if its purpose was symbolic more than substantive.

We demonstrated our solidarity with Israel...

We affirmed our conviction that the fates of Israel and World Jewry are inextricably intertwined, that an attack on Israel is an attack on the Jew wherever he may be, that Israel's pain is our pain, her victory our gladness...

We symbolized, we concretized our faith, may the reality, that Israel the land and the people are one...

Alexander M. Schindler

DOU LOOK IMPORTATION

JEWISH UNITY AND JEWISH EDUCATION

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

AMMERICAN HEWAISH

A R. C. H. II. V. E. S.

Remarks before the Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative) 66th Annual Convention, Toronto, Canada

May 18, 1966

JEWISH UNITY AND JEWISH EDUCATION

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

I appreciate Rabbi Fox's kind introduction, although I feel constrained to note some serious omissions. Taking into account the ecumenical spirit of the occasion, he might well have added that my first cousin, Pesach Schindler, is the Associate to the Director of Education of the United Synagogue. He might further have added that I trace my lineage to Moshe Sofer of Pshevorsk, the Cr Pne Moshe and a spiritual companion of the Baal Shem Tov. This identifies me as a Galitsianer, of course, and offers full explanation for my foolishness in agreeing to come here. How can I possibly prevail in this arena; even before I begin I am "out-Foxed."

It is good to be here, let me assure you, and what we do here is good. Those who planned this program and brought it to be well merit our applause; their effort makes no small contribution toward the solution of the very problem which moves us to meet. Not so much for what we say, but the very event of our meeting is of worth, for if the science of education has taught us one lesson it is this: our children make their commitments primarily by means of identification with the ego ideal; they look, more than they listen; they follow the man who is long before the man who only persuades with his lips. The visible demonstration of our desire for unity teaches a lesson more powerful than any ideological agreement we may reach and articulate. In this case surely, as in so many others, the determined quest for an answer in and of itself give shape and substance to that answer.

T

Let me say, at once, that I respond with a good deal of warmth to Dr. Marvin Fox and what he has to say. I sense him to be a kindred spirit. His presentation appeals to me, at least in its broader outlines. I share his essential conception of our problem as the need to deepen our instruction, to instill in our children not denominational devotion but profound religious convictions, convictions which do not ignore genuine differences but go beyond them to attain a greater unity. I appreciate his probing analysis of secularism, his refusal to deem the common concern with social issues a sufficient ground for unity when this concern is merely a reaction to external pressures and not also an expression of inner, shared belief. Lastly, I too cling to the hope that an earnest encounter of Judaism's past, the serious study of its teachings as they are expressed in our classic texts, will lead us, and through us, our children, to affirm conviction about God and man and human duty which may not be identical in all respects but nonetheless will be sufficiently akin to justify the claim of our identity.

It is intriguing and a portent of good tidings for the future that Dr. Fox finds the possibility of a consensus in realms and by a means which at first flush might well seem least likely to yield agreement. After all, tradition, its texts, the manner in which we understand and approach them all stand at the very heart and center of our ideological divergence. The liberal Jew does not view the past bounded by a framework which is eternally fixed, and he refuses to submit to its authority. Nonetheless -- so Dr. Fox assures us -- and I share his pious hope: when the liberal Jew is honest in his approach to tradition; when he does not assert the absolute authority of the present over the past but

is willing at least to expose the standards of modernity to older judgments; in a word, when he turns to his religious heritage with receptivity, with openness, with seeing eye and hearing ear, why then, he surely will be led to affirmations which may not fully coincide with those of the traditional Jew but will be sufficiently close to them to form a unified whole.

As Dr. Fox himself has occasion to point out, even traditional Jews differ in the degree of sophistication with which they understand some of these truths and this difference of understanding does not destroy the unity of their faith. It is not unreasonable to conclude, therefore, that the common encounter of the Jewish past can bind us all, liberal and traditional Jew, in a union, or at least a meaningful confederation of belief.

II

I am especially glad to note, also, that Dr. Fox foresees the possibility of convergence not only in the realm of ideas, but in the realm of practice, in our approach to Mitsvot. He feels the binding, unifying force of these practices as they are observed in our personal lives and homes and in the worship pattern of the synagogue. Ordinarily, those who accept a systemic, normative Judaism feel that there is a sharp line -- not just a quantitive but a categorical line -- between the practices of liberalism and orthodoxy. But is this categorical difference really as great as all that? Can we find no common ground in the understanding of commandment? I believe we can once we view mitsvah in its wider dimensions not just as given law, but as law form as commandment invested with purpose.

Traditional Judaism affirms this wider view: it does not believe that the Torah demands just for the sake of demanding; that it was given to us as a vain thing, a test of our obedience only and unrelated to all further purposes of God and needs of man. "The laws of the Torah serve an end" taught the RAMBAM, "an end that is useful in regard to being," -- to bind man and God, to provide man with a means to sanctify his life. These purposes give substance to the liberal Jew's understanding of commandment and because they do, he shares a vital element of the idea of mitsvah held by those who also affirm the belief in verbal revelation.

But these ideological considerations aside, let us not underrate the unifying force of cuter form itself, as it is manifested in our communal life. True, the Chassidic shtibel and Temple Emanu-El are worlds apart; but they are also worlds together; they share a host of common elements which give them common character; the ark and the Torah, essential prayers and a coincidence of time when they are voiced, hallowed language and hallowed song, and Jews, yes Jews, who seek the companionship of kindred and aspiring souls in their quest for God.

The Chassidic shtibel and Temple Emanu-El are worlds apart. But how many Temple Emanuel's remain on the American scene? And how many Chassidic shtibels? When we wear our denominational lenses we often see differences where none, in fact, exist. And often, when we see true differences we fail to distinguish between variants of sentiment and style and those which reflect true ideological divergence.

What we say concerning religious practice, applies to the matter of its terminology. Liberal and traditional Jew do make <u>different</u> use of the same religious language, but it is still the same religious language; invested with the strength of long-lived, hallowed use, it exercises a contripetal, cohesive force of no small consequence. Hebrew merits an emphasis in our teaching precisely for this reason, if for none other.

III

As we go about the task of seeking our common ground of belief, we might do well to take a closer, more careful look at the concept of peoplehood itself especially as its meaning has been extended and attenuated to its present composite designation of "Klal Yisroel." No other concept is invoked in our councils with greater frequency and urgency than this -- Klal Yisroel, the Community of Israel -- and none is more abused. It is enlisted, in support of every cause, to bolster every argument, to justify policies diametrically opposed, in a word, to designate anything and everything, if only the label Jewish can somehow be applied to it. It has, by its abuse, lost virtually all denominative and valuational force.

The mitsvah of "pidyon sh'vuyim" alone might stir us to the task of definition: nothing so precious ought long remain debased. But there is more immediate reason which summons us to do so, a reason more immediate to our concern, and it is rooted in the pedagogic axiom that vague, amorphous, ill-defined concepts simply cannot be taught. If we want the concept of community to be meaningful to our children, we must invest it with discernible meaning first.

There was a time not so long ago, when this concept did not have to be taught, or articulated, to be transmitted, when it was implicit in the Jewish experience, when a sense of belonging was born of a state of physical being. Not so today. And not so most certainly on the American scene. Here the cultural and ethnic bonds which bound our community once have loosened and bonds of faith must serve as unifying force in their stead.

This is especially true for our children whose Jewish self-image reveals primarily the face of religion; nothing else, not culture, not nation, not even the giving of charity, is of essential consequence in securing the continuity of their identification. This is why Dr. Fox is absolutely right when he insists that the attainment of communal unity rests in the final analysis on our ability to transmit our shared and profoundly held convictions. And that is also why the concept of community itself, once implicit in the Jewish experience, must now be made explicit.

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But not all of our problem is rooted in the ideological realm; here too Dr. Fox is right. Institutional loyalties, quite unrelated to clear-cut ideological distinctions, exercise a divisive influence which, nolens volens, is reflected in the classroom and conveyed to our students.

Indeed, much of the present-day hardening of institutional lines, far from reflecting greater ideological divergence, is rather the consequence of its convergence, of a blurring of ideological distinctions. Distinctions there are and we should not ignore them, but they are not as great and as many as we often think or say they are, and they certainly do not coincide with denominational demarcations. The overlapping of belief and practice pattern is the rule and not the exception.

Surely I need not elaborate; supportive evidence is hardly wanting and has been offered over and again. Reconstructionism, nurtured in the bosom of the Conservative movement, in its theology is far to the left of the current consensus within Reform. Schechter's espousal of 'haskamat hak'lal' as a determinant of religious practice no longer is acceptable to many Conservative rabbis,

and so they embrace a systemic, normative Judaism which separates them from other Conservative rabbis to an extent far greater than the latter are separated from Reform. And so it goes.

Even in the larger Jewish community, in the framework of its organized life, patterns overlap and distinctions are blurred. Synagogues foster attitudes and activities which cannot really be called 'religious'; and so-called 'secular' agencies assume a religious stance, if not yet fully in their program then at least in their pronouncements, and if not there, then in the symbolic act of turning to the graduates of our seminaries to find their professional leadership.

The point of it all being that when true distinctions are lacking the temptation is great that we create them, or that we magnify them in our teaching and in our preaching -- only for the sake of preserving institutional identity.

Now I do not suggest that we can or should shuffle off our institutional coil. Nor is this the time or the place to consider a major realignment of existing categories, desirable as this eventuation may be. All I really want to say is the self-recognition of motivation is the requisite of communal harmony.

When the need for denominational identity effects our teaching and our doing, let us at least say so!

When institutional concerns shape our Temple program let us call them institutional concerns!

When, in the larger community, we engage in a struggle for power, let us call it that; let us not obscure its true character by designating it an ideological confrontation!

Whatever it is, let us call it by its honest name, and not try to justify it on the basis that it is something else!

This is not a reprimand, an accusation, cholilo vechas. All I say is really in the way of a confession. Grant me only the privilege accorded by tradition of saying not 'al chet shechotosi,' but rather 'al chet shechotomu,' for the sins which we have sinned.

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There is, then, much that we can do to create a sense of communal devotion in our children even before the fuller unfoldment of the quest for an ideological unity which Dr. Fox bids us pursue. There is much that we can do to deepen the devotion of our children to the larger community, to extend their reach of heart and mind to encompass all of Israel.

What can we do?

We can begin by teaching Judaism in our schools, teaching it, moreover, not as some kind of denominational possession, but as a shared possession to which variant interpretations have a vital relation. And when we speak of our difference -- in faith and form -- we can describe these differences as they really are, we can approach them, examine them -- teacher and student both -- in an atmosphere of respectful inquiry.

We can bring our children into contact with one another crossing denominational barriers for communal programs of education and for united activity arising to advance our common cause. Surely more than ideas are involved in our problem. People are involved. The sense of communion is sustained by encounter.

We can bring our teachers and educators into more frequent association with one another. We can teach them together, in areas where no ideological divergence is at stake. We might exchange our teachers for a time to broaden their perspective and the perspective of those they teach. We can support communal agencies and programs which seek sincerely to serve us all.

We can do more than that. We might ourselves communalize some segments of the congregational school program...on a secondary level perhaps...so that together then we might have the kind of intensive religious high schools which we singly do not have. Or at least we can begin this process by avoiding needless, wasteful duplication where none is justified by cooperating with one another in areas vital to our work: in the recruitment of teachers, in the development of educational tools, in the publication of our texts, in the realm of experimentation and research. In this and like manner we can teach our children a love for the community of Israel not just by precept, but by example.

Even as we are doing now, when we take counsel together and meet to express our common concern. That is why we are beholden to those who planned this program and brought it to be. They offer opportunity to demonstrate the truth of a promise inherent in the saying of the Rimanover Rebbe, "Paam vofaam Hakodosh boruch hu menasseh Yisroel bilrushim acherim." At various times the Holy One blessed be He garbs Israel in different garments, "Paam bilvush seh ufaam bilvush zeh." At times in this kind of garment and at times in another kind of garment. "Avol hanekudch Hajuhudis Tomid nishores." Ober dos pintele Yid...it remains, it flames, and it is not consumed!

community to community, and vary also with time and changing conditions; the smaller the population, the greater the need for consolidation. Wherever possible such coordination should be effected within ideological groupings. Where these lines must be crossed, distinctive needs should be met and distinctive orientations respected.

This caution is applicable especially in the realm of teacher recruitment and training which almost everywhere calls for the pooling of community-wide resources. Bureau leaders' complaints that congregational schools are refractory to close cooperation are often true, alas; but it is equally true that community teacher training schools too often fail to heed the needs of the Reform Jewish community. This failure is not only a viola-

tion of the community concept, it makes for poor education; a teacher who does not share the commitments of the school which he serves only babbles, he does not really teach.

Close cooperation is vital to progress in Jewish education, and an effort should be made to come to grips with problems precipitated by the interaction of community forces. These problems are capable of resolution once agency and temple leaders make אול בונות their watchword, valuing every effort, great or small, to further their cause. No institutional loyalties or ideological divergences should be permitted to obscure the essential unity of our striving.

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

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WE ALIKE - IN MORE THAN IN OUR PAIN ASSERTION OF OUR ESSENTIAL KINSHP NO EMPTY DREAM - NO VAIN 11EUS10 I AM GLAD TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE DELIBERATIONS IF ONLY POBLICIX THAT IT

BUREAU-CONGREGATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Jewish Education Committee of New York prepares to enter the twenty-fifth year of its existence. Its anniversary-on which we congratulate our sister institution and its capable leadership-gives us occasion to make some comments concerning the function of communal agencies for Jewish education, especially as they relate to temple religious schools.

To begin with, we can assert Reform Jewry's devotion to the ideal of communal unity. to which we aspire. It is articulated as our guiding principle, affirmed in our prayers, posited as a fundamental goal of our religious education effort. We cannot countenance the isolation of the temple school from the community-wide program of Jewish education. To do so is to deny what we profess, to negate in practice what we teach.

Wherever the relationship between the Bureau and the temple school is firm, the temple school is stronger because of it. Hopefully, the converse is also true and these relationships-which now

exist in many cities-have strengthened the wider community effort. Indeed, this must be so, for Gresham's law has its parallel in education: bad schools drive good schools out of circulation. This is one of many reasons why the community agency for education can ill afford to be parochial in its concern, serving one program alone and disdaining to serve those schools whose objectives do not conform to that program in all respects. As a central body, the Bureau's purview must be as broad as possible, encompassing schools of divergent ideologies and advancing Jewish education generally by helping each school to raise its standards of achievement.

The quest for the evolution of a single school system under community auspices appears futile, at least for now. Most efforts to do so have been abortive, and institutional narcissism (the congregations' reluctance to "yield" the education of their children to the community), is not alone responsible for this failure. Ideological diversities

(continued on inside back cover)

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AMERICAN JEWISH A R C H I V E S

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Address before
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AMERICAN JEWISH

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our children to the larger community, to extend their reach of heart and mind to encompass all of Israel.

What can we do?

We can begin by teaching Judaism in our schools, teaching it, moreover, not as some kind of denominational possession, but as a shared possession to which variant interpretations have a vital relation. And when we speak of our difference — in faith and form — we can describe these differences as they really are, we can approach them, examine them — teacher and student both — in an atmosphere of respectful inquiry. We can bring our children into contact with one another crossing denominational barriers for communal programs of education and for united activity arising to advance our common cause. Surely more than ideas are involved in our problem. People are involved. The sense of communion is sustained by encounter. We can bring our teachers and educators into more frequent association with one another. We can teach them together, in areas where no ideological divergence is at stake. We might exchange our teachers for a time to broaden their perspective and the perspective of those they teach. We can support communal agencies and programs which seek sincerely to serve us all.

We can do more than that. We might ourselves communalize with some segments of the congregational school program... on a secondary level perhaps ... so that together then we might have the kind of intensive religious high schools which we singly do not have. Or at least we can begin this process by avoiding needless, wateful duplication where none is justified by cooperating with one another in areal vital to our work: in the recruitment of teachers, in the development of educational tools, in the publication of our texts, in the realm of experimentation and research. In this and like manner we can teach our children a love for the community of Israel not just by precept, but by example.

Even as we are doing now, when we take counsel together and meet to express our common concern. That is why we are beholden to those who planned this program and

brought it to be. They offer opportunity to demonstrate the truth of a promise inherent in the saying of the Rimanover Rebbe, "Paam vofaam Hakodosh boruch hu menasseh Yisroel bilrushim acherim." At various times the Holy One blessed be He garbs Israel in different garments, "Paam bilvush seh ufasm bilvush zeh." At times in this kind of garment and at times in another kind of garment. "Avol hanekudoh Hajuhudis Tomid nishores." Ober dos pintele Yid ... it remains, it flames, and it is not consumed!



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