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Schindler:
Yom Kippur 1987
Union Temple, Brooklyn

ONCE AGAIN WE ARE ASSEMBLED IN THE COURTYARD, AT THE ALNIGHT
ON THIS / ONE ONE THE SABBATH OF SABBATH, THIS NINE DAY OF
Once again, it is good to be united with you in worship. THE JEWISH YEAR

My prayers blend with yours, in fullest harmony.
We pray for life, for health, for a renewal of strength.
We pray for still another year of meaningful endeavor.

These days are ^{Somber} sobering, are they not, these Days of Awe,
with their grim reminder of life's evanescence
of time's relentless onward flow.
All about us we see the inexorable periodicity of existence:
birth and death, growth and deterioration, renewal and decay.
It is an ever-pulsating rhythm that none of us can break.

In consonance with this mood, my sermon, this morning will not deal
with events of the day or even Jewish communal concerns.
It will be ^{rather} of a more reflective, perhaps even more personal nature,
for I want to talk to you about immortality,
about life everlasting, ^{עולם הבא}
about the "here" and the "hereafter."

These words may sound strange to the modern ear,
but if the truth be ^{seen} told, everyone of us has an intimate, personal
concern with the question they raise.
Our lips may not have given that question voice,
but our inner ear ^{Assuredly} has heard it.

After all, everyone among us has had relatives or friends who died,
who have reached their horizon and are gone out of sight.
And all of us know that we too will face the same experience,
that we too have a rendezvous with death. /

And so we ask with the liturgical poet:

"Our life is a song to a dance we cannot hear.
Its memory courses through us for a little while,
then seems to cease...Whence the melody and wither
does it go?"

* * *

The philosopher George Santayana came nearest to limning my own belief
in immortality when he alluded to it as the soul's

"invincible surmise."

The phrase is wonderfully curious, for how can a "surmise," *an assumption,*
a belief that lacks evidence, boast of "invincibility?"

I believe I understand Santayana's word-play, now,
in my 61st year of life,

when I have undergone most of my major life passages

-- being a soldier, a husband, a father, a rabbi --

feeling the joys of life and the presence of the angel of death
many, many times.

Truly, it is the least tangible forces of life that I now cherish
as most real and most dear: love, hope, ideas, ideals.

These, the "surmises" of my soul, rather than tangible honors or scars,
are what makes me who I am;

these, the "surmises" of my soul, are what prepare me for the final
life passage by shielding me from fear. //

Now In my case, the ^{*assumption*} ~~"surmise"~~ ^{*a*} of life-hereafter took many years
to gain its force of "invincibility."

As a youth, I was rather cavalier about the matter.

"Death is natural," I thought to myself, without depth or inspiration -- if I thought about it at all.

Like most young people, I was too busy seeking my place in the world to concern myself with the vacating of that place;

I was too embroiled in constructing the future to perceive immortality in the near-at-hand.

Oddly enough, my unconcern about life-after-death persisted even through my army years, although I served during World War II and became altogether accustomed to the sight of lifeless bodies. Perhaps that was the reason for my incuriosity on the subject: wars cheapen life and devalue the loss of it.

Or perhaps I knew that the energy required for sheer physical and mental survival could not be sustained were I even to contemplate the notion

that my life could come to an end;

I therefore sought solace ^{during those war years} not in thoughts of life-after-death,

but in memories of life-before-war and hopes for my personal, living future.

My years of rabbinic study following the war also failed to awaken my concern for the subject of the hereafter.

To be sure, it was an element in my studies

-- in Bible, in Theology, in Jewish Philosophy --

but so it remained, a kind of intellectual exercise that never came to touch the depth of my being.

If anything disbelief was stirred in those years by the contrariety of the views presented by our tradition:

The Bible conceives of life after death as a kind of return of the body and soul to nature.

The Talmud offers some reflections ^{the} on _A enduring nature of the disembodied soul -- but fails to develop these ideas with any fulness.

Maimonides speaks with greater certitude of a lasting life for souls -- but only for the bodiless souls of the righteous, while the souls of the wicked are doomed to perdition. Deathlessness, to the RamBam, is not a quality inherent in the soul: it is the reward bestowed for a life of goodness.

Only Moses Mendelsohn held that all human souls, each individually, are indestructible and deathless.

But the neo-Kantian, Hermann Cohen quickly refuted him, denying the possibility of the individual soul's survival.

Cohen held forth only the promise that individuals survive in the "historic continuity of the people."

Most modern Jewish philosopehers hold with Cohen -- and the circle, back to the Biblical concept of immortality as a "return to nature," is almost complete....

What possible comfort would I find in these disputations, I asked myself when as rabbi I would have to hold the hands of the dying and the bereaved?

What consolation was there in these Jewish speculations for a student who had just completed an undergraduate honors thesis on the evolution of the Nazi war against the Jews, who had just chastened ^{his} ~~his~~ soul with an exhausting contemplation of the depths to which human being can descend.

I found no comfort whatsoever in the thought that the six million live on in some nebulous manner in the rest of the Jewish people and the rest of humankind.

In those days when

~~I~~ contemplating the significance of death, I could go no further than the words from the Apocrypha.

"Remember thy last end/and cease from enmity."

I simply said to myself:

we can't possibly know anything about the other side of death... let's stick with one world at a time and conduct ourselves in this world in such a way that if there is an afterlife with God, we will be worthy of it.

* * *

The death of my beloved father in 1957, in conjunction with my work as a rabbi in homes made sad and still by death, marked an awakening for me to the intuition that death was a portal rather than a sealed wall.

The fulness of life -- of family, of professions, of fatherhood -- was ripe on my vines;

my sense of love for human beings, my sense of belonging to the human race, were greatly heightened by my sharing of these most basic, yet most meaningful, life experiences.

I found the idea that all of this fulness would end in oblivion
to be utterly mad.

How could it be thus, that all which animates life

-- the capacity to know, to create, to love, to dream --

that all of this could be snuffed out like a sputtering^{guttering} candle,
leaving not even a shadow?

Too many of life's own ways --

the reawakening of spring after the death-like winter,

the miracle of birth from the inner space of our bodies,

the constant transformation and exchange of all matter and energy,

the notion of a "curved" universe --

all of these and more testified against the likelihood

that death could mean obliteration rather than transformation.

Thus it was that my "surmise" began to attain its "invincible" force.

Then I began to believe with full^{DEATH} faith that is a gateway
and not an abyss into nothingness.

* * *

But even before then, even in my years of dark and wondering doubt,

there were aspects of immortality of which I could speak

with assurance.

Thus

I was always certain that we live on in the memory of those

who knew us, loved us, and were influenced by our lives.

My father died better than thirty years ago,

yet to this day I think of him on almost a daily basis.

Many of my ideas are stimulated by his specific thoughts and
by his manner of thought

-- the ethical assumptions and creative processes that informed
his intellectual life.

Often I make my decisions by the measure of what my father would have
wanted me to do.

< And whenever I think of him the sense of his continued presence
is stronger than the knowledge of his death.

All of us have that same experience do we not.

And this is why we find the words of our memorial service fraught
with mysterious and majestic meaning.

"In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter
we remember them...

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer
we remember them...

When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them...

When we have joys we yearn to share, we remember them...

< So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now
a part of us, as we remember them..."

* * *

We can also speak with absolute assurance of the

immortality of the human deed.

As the Talmud taught: "We live in deeds not in years."

Shakespeare was wrong.

The good we do is not interred with our bones.

The beauty that we fashion cannot be dimmed by death.

The love we give in life lives on, long after we are gone,

to nourish the lives of those we loved. //

All of you are familiar with the well-known midrash about the

old man who was seen planting a slow bearing fruit-tree.

The passers-by mocked him saying:

"How foolish you are...you are too old...you will never live long enough to eat the fruit of this tree."

And the old man replied,

"All my life I have eaten the fruit of trees planted by generations who preceded me....why should I not plant trees whose fruitage will delight and refresh those who follow me?"

So it is with us, for just as our bones will nourish the earth,

so will ^{our} deeds nourish the future.

* * *

Perhaps the inability of modern men and women to accept the potential

of a life hereafter is rooted in the fact that science and

technology have fostered a sense in us that only that which is

visible ^{by} ~~and~~ of material use is real.

Yet we all experience forces that are invisible and indeterminate

and yet have the power to shape and enchant our lives.

Love is such an invisible force.

It certainly cannot be anatomized, or schematized, or reduced to clearly

identifiable elements.

But its impact is irresistible and it holds the power to transform us.

Music is another such invisible force.

Its source and its nature are mysteries even to the most profound
composers and literate listeners;
and yet its ability to affect reality,
even to help heal the diseased body and mind, is undeniable.

There are those who recognize this reality of the invisible.
And there are those who even while they experience its force,
do not grant it such recognition.

Thus to some people, for instance,

"a primrose by a river's brim, a yellow primrose is to him
and it is nothing more."

Another man has a clearer vision and so he finds

"tongues in trees, books in running brooks, and God in everything."

For the physicist, water is composed of 2 part of hydrogen and
1 part of oxygen.

That is a scientific fact.

But is this all that we can say about water?

Is this the sum and substance of its essence?

Shakespeare, as we just heard, read 'books in brooks,'

and Israel's sweet singer found firm faith

'by still and stilling waters'

Surely their discoveries are as real as are the
scientific formulae of the laboratory.

Aye, there is a world of reality

beyond those worlds perceived by the physical sense alone.

And altogether multitudinous are life's gifts that have no

practical worth but nonetheless are altogether wond'rous:

The earth's green covering of grass.

The blue serenity of sea and sky.

The song of day, the silent wonder of the night.

Petals on the grass and wings in the air.

Oh, how flat, how narrow our world is,

when we measure its gifts by their usefulness alone,

when, in Rilke's happy simile

we take a hold of peacock's feathers to tickle one another
while being oblivious to their essential charm.

Then do the words of prophecy apply to us:

they have eyes but they do not see
they have ears but they do not hear
they do not know
they do not understand
they walk in darkness

No, the human story simply cannot be told

without reference to that mystery and majesty that transcends
all logic and reason.

Only those who open themselves to such a mystery

can transcend the grandeur and terror of their lives

without being blinded by life's grandeur

or crushed by its terror.

Yes, The invisible is real, my friends

We spend the better part, nay, the best part of our lives in the realm
of the invisible .

Then why not affirm that magnificent invincible surmise

that just as ^{goodness abides + truth abides - -} love abides, our souls abide forever too.

One year ago, I was hospitalized, following a severe heart attack.
It was a transforming experience for me.
Some of you will recall my telling you about it last year.

For long days and nights I was in the intensive care unit.
It was not a pleasant place.

My own pains and fears aside, its noises were grating to the ear:
the running feet of doctors and nurses,
the creaking of machines wheeled in for some emergency,
the moans and cries of pain...
and on two occasions during my stay the rattling of death,
and then the weeping of the suddenly bereaved.

About a week after I arrived, I had to have some tests,
but the required machines were located in a building at the
opposite end of the hospital campus.
I had to be wheeled across the courtyard in a gurney, and as we
emerged from our unit the sunlight struck me.
Just that -- that was the apex of my experience -- the warm and
sparkling and brilliant light of the sun.

I looked about me to see whether anyone else was relishing the sun's
golden glow,
but all I saw were women and men and children hurrying to and fro,
nearly all with their eyes fixed on the ground.

I remembered, then, how often I, too, had been indifferent to the
grandeur of each day,
too occupied with trivial and sometimes even base concerns to
respond to the splendor of it all.

"There are those who gain eternity in a lifetime," says the Talmud,
"others gain it in an hour."

I believe I regained my life,
and regained the "invincible surmise" of my soul's immortality,
just in that moment of commonplace insight:
the insight that life is wondrous,
that we dare never ignore its offerings,
that we must seize each of its golden minutes with all our heart
and soul and might.

This, then, is my strongest intimation of immortality:
that the gift of life that surrounds us is boundless;
that each moment of insight is an *eternity*.
~~eternity~~; that the here and the hereafter are one and the same in
the human heart.



Armenians and Jews: Two Peoples
United by Legend and Tragic Fate

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Address
Armenian Martyrs' Day Commemoration
Clark University
April 26th, 1987

It is with a heavy heart that I join you in this place and for this sacred service of remembrance. I speak as a Jew, to mourn for the attempted destruction of a people other than my own. This does not mean that I am neglectful of the tragedy of my own people. Our fates, after all, intertwine, and in their combining serve but to deepen the pain that seizes us, as Armenians and as Jews.

Our binding one to another begins with an ancient legend. As you know, there is a great mountain in the land of Armenia. It is Mt. Ararat, nearly 17,000 feet high, the tallest mountain in the land. Our shared legend holds that the ark of Noah, the ark that preserved all species of life for regeneration in a new world, perched upon that mountain top after the mighty flood. There Noah and his family and all of their charges set foot upon the dry land for the first time in 40 days and 40 nights. And there, at the peak of Mount Ararat, Noah received God's pledge in the form of a rainbow sign that there would be no more wholesale, indiscriminate slaughter of living things -- at least not by the hand of God. Legend holds, too, that the ancient Armenian kingdom was founded by Haik, a descendant of Noah, at Lake Van, less than 200 miles from Mt. Ararat. Thus the mountain of God's rainbow pledge stood over the kingdom of Armenia like a guardian angel, a guarding giant.

Would that legend and not history had shaped the fate of our respective peoples! For history did not deal so kindly with either of us. All too often it was given shape by those who spurned the promise of Ararat's rainbow sign.

The knowledge of our kindred fate was first conveyed to me when I was but twelve or thirteen years of age and my father gave me a copy of Franz Werfel's The Forty Days of Musa Dagh. That was in the mid 1930's, on the eve of the Jewish holocaust. Werfel was a Jew. Perhaps he had foreboding of the evil that was to be. Perhaps he wrote of the present as much as he did of the past. Be that as it may, Franz Werfel became the world's foremost interpreter of the Armenian struggle against Turkey and of the colossal crime of genocide that was its aftermath.

The Armenians were the first in this terrible 20th Century to experience the man made flood that we have come to call genocide.

Genocide: The deliberate murder of one and a half million Armenians by their Turkish rulers in brutal massacres -- 200,000 slaughtered from 1894-1896 alone at the behest of Sultan Abdul Hamid II -- and then in mass exile one million or more turned to ash by the sun of the Mesopotamian desert into which they were ruthlessly driven by the Young Turks in 1915. Genocide: the methodical slaying of a whole people, not fully successful in those earlier years for lack of adequate technology and insufficient time to complete the monstrous deed.

Who else but I, a Jew, should be here to remember those unspeakable years? Who else but I, a Jew, should be here on this day we call Yom Hashoa dedicated to the remembrance of the six million Jews who were turned to ashes less than thirty years later by the more technologically efficient Nazis?

We Jews and we Armenians are brethren in pain. We have been made into a single family by our martyrdom, our long passage through darkness, betrayal and anguish. We have been made kin by our suffering, by a torment so intense that it leaves us speechless. Those memories we share are haunting, hurting, are they not? They still make us stagger. The pavement sinks under the feet, the walls spin 'round, the world reels. We cannot stop it even if we would. We cannot pluck the remembrance of all this carnage from us, its anguish pierced too deep. The bitterness has eaten into our sinews, dissolved our flesh into festering sores, reduced the very spirit of our lives to sparkless, blackened ashes.

And our response to all these aching memories is silence. It must be that, it always will be that -- a silence. For our speech has been stifled by darkness and our suffering is of a kind that has no tongue. Our shared martyrology is one long stillness, an endless silent scream reaching to the heavens -- where God was silent too.

And yet we must speak, for we are the spokesmen of the dead. It is our duty to be their witnesses. After all, the generations come and go. Memory fades. People forget. And there are those who have determined to wipe its slate to make it seem as if these things had never been. But these things have been. They really happened.

Throughout the centuries, thousands of Armenians were forcibly converted to Islam, even as thousands of Jews faced forcible conversion to Christianity. In the mid-1890s, two hundred thousand Armenians were killed in slaughtering riots; only twenty years thereafter, a like number of Ukrainian Jews were butchered in pogroms. In 1915, one million Armenians were driven from their homes to die in the desert; but one generation thereafter, six million Jews were driven from their homes to perish in the charnel houses of the Nazis.

We must speak of these things -- and meet, and write -- however faltering our tongue and unavailing our speech. For we are the spokesmen of the dead, the exiled, the coerced. It is our duty testify in their behalf, ever to remind the world that it was not God, but brutal men, who betrayed the rainbow sign of Ararat.

These then are the things that bind Armenian and Jew together: an ancient legend, cruel experience, and the solemn, sacred duty to bear witness to genocide.

Are ~~these~~[§] any lessons to be gleaned from all this sorrow and sadness?

In a way I find it loathsome even to ask such a question, to speak of the "lessons" of genocide, for to do so is to attribute purpose to acts that were grotesquely purposeless, acts of naked savagery, of twisted paranoia and grim bureaucratic inhumaneness. And yet it is that very purposelessness, that monstrous human capacity to butcher without need, to wade through rivers of blood without so much as a redeeming sense of destination or direction which impels us to seek explanation, to scour us yet again with stinging memories.

For we are seeking to affirm our faith in our own species, lest we utterly despair of the human race and, thus, of ourselves. We are seeking to share in the compassion that God felt when he placed the rainbow in the sky. Therefore, we infer certain lessons from the suffering we have endured; and by so doing, we convert the mystery of suffering into a revelation.

First and foremost we ~~have~~^{have} learned, each of us, to resist, at earliest warning, any and all threats to our respective communities. "If I am not for myself," taught the Hebrew sage Hillel, "who will be for me?" Thus, wherever there is a single Armenian in danger, in whatever country or continent or the remotest corner of our far flung world, there must you find him, there must you reach out to him, offering you hand, your heart, your life. Never must it be said of you: that you had eyes but did not see, that you had ears but did not hear, that you had mouths but that you failed to speak.

Remember also that not only physical threat but the threat of assimilation endangers a people: the loss of homeland, of language, the loss of cultural identity. The Armenian language, for instance, is the only surviving language of the Thracian branch of Indo-European language; it is unique in the world, and like any endangered species, it warrants preservation. Likewise, the polychromes of Armenian art, the genius of Armenian architecture, the grandeur of the Armenian church -- all of these need cultivation and nurturing, in the Armenian diaspora, in the Armenian Republic of Russia, in that unacknowledged Armenia of Turkey, -- indeed, wherever Armenians live.

Here in America, Armenians, like Jews, have found and made new lives. And as a Jew who loves Israel, I am proud that in holy Jerusalem, in the old city, not far from the Western Wall, there lives a small but vibrant Armenian community, with its Church of St. James, its Gulbenkian Library, its magnificent choir and its schools. There, in that peaceful enclave, Israelis and Armenians live in amity and brotherhood, just as they do in New York and in Detroit, and indeed, here in Worcester.

History has placed upon the Armenian people wherever they live the burden of physical as well as spiritual survival. Survival: it is the best defense, the sole revenge, the only worthy response to those who hacked with bloody sabers at the very roots of the Armenian culture.

The Armenian who neglects his cultural legacy does the work of the pashas, just as surely as the Jew who disdains his spiritual legacy hands Hitler a posthumous victory. The individual Armenian must be more than an individual today, even in our modern world of individualism. He or she emerges whole, authentic, only when identified with the cause of the Armenian people.

There is a second truth which emerges from the experience of our anguish, and it is this: that we are not alone to have been afflicted, that other peoples too have suffered grievous wrong, that we are bound to one another, all humans are, in an unbroken unity of pain.

I have been told that an international human rights association has determined that since the end of World War II there have been eleven other instances of race extermination which can properly be labelled as genocide. Think of the horrors of Cambodia, of Indochina's killing fields, think of Afghanistan and Ethiopia -- and on and on. Numerous and fearsome are the roads that lead ~~in~~ to the abyss of human evil.

A Yiddish proverb encapsulates this truth: "a velt brent brider nit nor unzer shtetl." An entire world is aflame, not just our village. What is needed, therefore, is a bucket brigade to save the world, and not just to douse the blazing roofs of our own hamlets.

None of us lives alone...Armenians don't...Jews don't. Our mission involves other peoples too. The Jewish sage Hillel may have counselled: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" But then he quickly added: "But if I am only for myself, what am I?"

Armenian unity by itself could not stem the genocide of 1915. Nor can Armenian survival today and by itself stem that blood-tide of fire that threatens us in the latter part of this awesome century of blood.

We simply dare not define our group identities in parochial terms alone. Was it not that very ~~my~~ nearsightedness, and the arrogance that it bred, that led Germany to its feverish fantasies of a master race? Was it not precisely this parochialism run amok that led Turkey to its barbaric sense of "national security?"

The philosopher George Santayana taught: "When you believe in absurdities, you can commit atrocities." Surely the commonest absurdity that human beings have believed is that of their superiority over others. Surely, it is that absurdity which has led us into a century of savagery.

Surely that selfsame absurdity now threatens to turn the whole globe into the Mesopotamian desert, into the charnel houses of Auschwitz.

Our survival depends upon our ability to develop an alternative understanding: the understanding that we are, each of us and all of us, like the sons and daughters of Noah emerging from the ark on Mount Ararat. We are, each of us and all of us, anxiously scanning the sky for the rainbow sign, for the reassurance that a life of peace and growth and meaning can be ours. We are, each of us and all of us, confronting the challenge of God's rainbow: a challenge to recognize and act upon the awareness of our common humanity, to work together to ease the suffering of all peoples, to open the eyes of the blind, to bind the wounds of the afflicted, to loosen the fetters of the bound wherever they might be imprisoned.

For what is the rainbow, after all? It is every color of the earth combined into one great spectrum. It is mist, invisible, until light and liquid fashion it into visible, iridescent shape -- an arch that binds the world from horizon to horizon. It is a metaphor made physical. It is the earth's arbor. It is the arch of God.

Our two peoples, Jews and Armenians, are witness to what happens when the rainbow buckles and pieces of the sky collapse. We Jews and Armenians are primary color bands in the spectrum of suffering humanity. We must therefore hold our heads high, wear our colors, speak our languages, let ourselves be seen by all.

And when the gaze of humanity is upon us, we must bid them look back in time and see the monstrosities that gave birth to our modernity.

We must bid them to look into their own hearts and see the internal bleeding that is draining us of our very humanity.

We must bid them look at one another, whatever be their nationality or color or creed, and say: "You are the bone of my bone, the flesh of my flesh, for one God has created us all."

This then is the two-fold truth that was forged on the anvil of our peoples' suffering: the universal and the particular are inextricably intertwined within us; we dare not deny the claims of either. If we repudiate our Jewishness or our Armenian heritage for the sake of a greater humanity, we will inevitably betray humanity in the end. But if we repudiate humanity and serve only ourselves, we will betray those ideas and ideals which alone give meaning to our people's survival.

These, then, are the thoughts that stir within us as we recall with loving remembrance our martyrs, all of those who perished through the cruelty of the oppressor. Not punished for any individual guilt, but indiscriminately, men and women...the aged and the young...the learned and the simple...were driven in multitudes along the road of pain and pitiless death. They lie in nameless graves. Their places of everlasting sleep are not known to us. Yet we will not forget them. We take them into our hearts and give them a place beside the treasured memories of our own beloved.

May their remembrance give us the strength to turn from death to life, to love where others hate, to hope where others despair, to bring order to chaos and reason to the madness of our days. In a word, the speed the fulfillment of the promise of lasting life made by God to humankind, on that fateful day -- when He arched His wondrous rainbow over the lofty peaks of Mount Ararat.



Alexander M. Schindler
Armenian Martyrs' Day Commemoration
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April 26th, 1987

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and for this sacred service of remembrance.

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This does not mean that I am neglectful of the tragedy of my
own people.

Our ^{after all} fates intertwine,

and in their combining serve but to deepen the pain that
seizes us, as Armenians and as Jews.

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It is Mt. Ararat, nearly 17,000 feet high, the tallest mountain
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the ark that preserved all species of life for regeneration
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perched upon that mountain top after the mighty flood.

There Noah and his family and all of their charges set foot upon the
dry land for the first time in 40 days and 40 nights.

And there, at the peak of Mount Ararat, Noah received God's pledge
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Legend holds, too, that the ancient Armenian kingdom was founded
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Thus the mountain of God's rainbow pledge stood over the kingdom of
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* * *

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respective peoples!

For history did not deal so kindly with either of us.

All too often it was given shape by those who spurned the promise
of Ararat's rainbow sign.

The knowledge of our kindred fate was first conveyed to me
when I was but twelve or thirteen years of age
and my father gave me a copy of Franz Werfel's

The Forty Days of Musa Dagh.

That was in the mid 1930s, on the eve of the Jewish holocaust.
Werfel was a Jew.

Perhaps he had foreboding of the evil that was to be.

Perhaps he wrote of the present as much as he did of the past.

Be that as it may, Franz Werfel became the world's foremost interpreter
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Armenians

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Who else but I, a Jew, should be here on this day we call Yom Hashoa dedicated to the remembrance of the six million Jews who were turned to ashes less than thirty years later by the more technologically efficient Nazis?

We Jews and we Armenians are brethren in pain.

We have been made into a single family by our martyrdom, our long passage through darkness, betrayal and anguish. We have been made kin by our suffering, by a torment so intense that it leaves us speechless.

Those memories we share are haunting, hurting, are they not?

They still make us stagger.

The pavement sinks under the feet,

the walls spin 'round

the ~~wor~~ld reels.

We cannot stop it even if we would.

We cannot pluck the remembrance of all this carnage from us,

its anguish pierced too deep.

The bitterness has eaten into our sinews,

dissolved our flesh into festering sores,

reduced the very spirit of our lives to sparkless, blackened ashes.

P And our response to all these aching memories is silence.

It must be that, it always will be that -- a silence.

For our speech has been stifled by darkness

and our suffering is of a kind that has no tongue.

Our shared martyrology is one long stillness,

an endless silent scream reaching to the heavens

-- where God was silent too.

P And yet we must speak, for we are the spokesmen of the dead.

It is our duty to be their witnesses.

After all, the generations come and go.

Memory fades.

People forget.

And there are those who have determined to wipe its slate

to make it seem as if these things had never been.

But these things have been.

They really happened.

Throughout the centuries, thousands of Armenians were forcibly converted to Islam, even as thousands of Jews faced forcible conversion to Christianity.

In the mid-1890s, two hundred thousand Armenians were killed in slaughtering riots;

only twenty years thereafter, a like number of Ukrainian Jews were butchered in pogroms.

In 1915, one million Armenians were driven from their homes to die in the desert;

but one generation thereafter, six million Jews were driven from their homes to perish in the charnel houses of the Nazis.

We must speak of these things -- and meet, and write --

however faltering our tongue and unavailing our speech.

For we are the spokesmen of the dead, the exiled, the coerced.

It is our duty testify in their behalf,

ever to remind the world that it was not God, but brutal men,

who betrayed the rainbow sign of Ararat.

These then are the things that bind Armenian and Jew together:

an ancient legend,

cruel experience,

and the solemn, sacred duty to bear witness to genocide.

* * *

P Are there any lessons to be gleaned from all this sorrow and sadness?

P In a way I find it loathsome even to ask such a question,
to speak of the "lessons" of genocide,
for to do so is to attribute purpose to acts that were
grotesquely purposeless,
acts of naked savagery,
of twisted paranoia and grim bureaucratic inhumaneness.

And yet it is that very purposelessness,
that monstrous human capacity to butcher without need,
to wade through rivers of blood without so much as a redeeming
sense of destination or direction
which impels us to seek explanation,
to scour us yet again with stinging memories.

P For we are seeking to affirm our faith in our own species,
lest we utterly despair of the human race and, thus, of ourselves.
We are seeking to share in the compassion that God felt
when he placed the rainbow in the sky.
Therefore we infer certain lessons from the suffering we have endured;
and by so doing, we convert the mystery of suffering
into a revelation.

P First and foremost we have learned, each of us, to resist, at earliest
warning, any and all threats to our respective communities.
"If I am not for myself," taught the Hebrew sage Hillel,
"who will be for me?"

Thus, wherever there is a single Armenian in danger,
in whatever country or continent or the remotest corner of
our far flung world,
there must you find him,
there must you reach out to him,
offering your hand, your heart, your life.

Never must it be said of you:

that you had eyes but did not see,
that you had ears but did not hear,
that you had mouths but that you failed to speak.

Remember also that not only physical threat but the threat of
assimilation endangers a people:

the loss of homeland,
of language,
the loss of cultural identity.

The Armenian language, for instance, is the only surviving language
of the Thracian branch of Indo-European languages;

it is *unique* in the world, and like any endangered species,
it warrants preservation.

Likewise, the polychromes of Armenian art,
the genius of Armenian architecture,
the grandeur of the Armenian church

-- all of these need cultivation and nurturing,
in the Armenian diaspora,
in the Armenian Republic of Russia,
in that unacknowledged Armenia of Turkey,
-- indeed, wherever Armenians live.

P Here in America, Armeans, like Jews, have found and made new lives.

And as a Jew who loves Israel, I am proud that in holy Jerusalem,

in the old city, not far from the Western Wall,

there lives a small but vibrant Armenian community,

with its Church of St. James,

its Gulbenkian Library,

its magnificent choir and its schools.

There, in that peaceful enclave, Israelis and Armenians live

in amity and brotherhood,

just as they do in New York and in Detroit,

and indeed, here in Worcester.

P History has placed upon the Armenian people wherever they live

the burden of physical as well as spiritual survival.

Survival: it is the best defense, the sole revenge,

the only worthy response to those who hacked with

bloody sabers at the very roots of the Armenian culture.

P The Armean who neglects his cultural legacy does the work of

the pashas

just as surely as the Jew who disdains his spiritual legacy

hands Hitler a posthumous victory.

The individual Armenian must be more than an individual today,

even in our modern world of individualism.

He or she emerges whole, authentic, only when identified with the

cause of the Armenian people.

* * *

P There is a second truth which emerges from the experience of our anguish, and it is this:

that we are not alone to have been afflicted,
that other peoples too have suffered grievous wrong,
that we are bound to one another, all humans are,
in an unbroken unity of pain.

P I have been told that an international human rights association has determined that since the end of World War II there have been eleven other instances of race extermination which can properly be labelled as genocide.

Think of the horrors of Cambodia, of Indochina's killing fields, think of Afghanistan and Ethiopia -- and on and on.

Numerous and fearsome are the roads that lead into the abyss of human evil.

P A Yiddish proverb encapsulates this truth:

"a velt brent brider nit nor unzer shtetl."

An entire world is aflame, not just our villages.

What is needed, therefore, is a bucket brigade to save the world, and not just to douse the blazing roofs of our own hamlets.

P None of us lives alone...Armenians ^{NIPAS} don't...Jews don't.

Our mission involves other peoples too.

The Jewish sage Hillel may have counselled:

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"

But then he quickly added:

"But if I am only for myself, what am I?"

Armenian unity by itself could not stem the genocide of 1915.

Nor can Armenian survival today and by itself stem that bloodtide of fire that threatens us in the latter part of this awesome century of blood.

We simply dare not define our group identities in parochial terms alone.

Was it not that very nearsightedness, and the arrogance that it bred, that led Germany to its feverish fantasies of a master race? Was it not precisely this parochialism run amok that led Turkey to its barbaric sense of "national security"?

The philosopher George Santayana taught:

"When you believe in absurdities, you can commit atrocities."

Surely the commonest absurdity that human beings have believed is that of ^{their} ~~the~~ superiority ~~of individuals or groups~~ over others. Surely, it is that absurdity which has led us into a century of savagery.

Surely that selfsame absurdity now threatens to turn the whole globe into the Mesopotamian desert, into the charnel houses of Auschwitz.

P Our survival depends upon our ability to develop an alternative understanding:

the understanding that we are, each of us and all of us,

like the sons and daughters of Noah emerging from the ark
on Mount Ararat.

We are, each of us and all of us, anxiously scanning the sky
for the rainbow sign,

*f*or the reassurance that a life of peace and growth and meaning
can be ours.

We are, each of us and all of us, confronting the challenge of
God's rainbow:

a challenge to recognize and act upon the awareness of our
common humanity,

to work together to ease the suffering of all peoples)

to open the eyes of the blind,

to bind the wounds of the afflicted,

to loosen the fetters of the bound

wherever they might be imprisoned.

P For what is the rainbow, after all?

It is every color of the earth combined into one great spectrum.

It is mist, invisible, until light and liquid fashion it into
visible, iridescent shape

-- an arch that binds the world from horizon to horizon.

It is a metaphor made physical.

It is the earth's arbor.

It is the arch of God.

Our two peoples, Jews and Armenians, are witness to what happens
when the rainbow buckles and pieces of the sky collapse.

We Jews and Armenians are primary color bands in the spectrum
of suffering humanity.

We must therefore hold our heads high,
wear our colors,
speak our languages,
let ourselves be seen by all.

And when the gaze of humanity is upon us,
we must bid them look back in time and see the monstrosities
that gave birth to our modernity.

We must bid them to look into their own hearts and see the internal
bleeding that is draining us of our very humanity.

We must bid them look at one another,
whatever be their nationality or color or creed,
and say:
"You are the bone of my bone, the flesh of my flesh,
for one God has created us all."

This, then is the two-fold truth that ^{was}~~is~~ forged on the anvil of our
peoples' suffering:

the universal and the particular are inextricably intertwined
within us;

we dare not deny the claims of either.

If we repudiate our Jewishness or our Armenian heritage
for the sake of a greater humanity,
we will inevitably betray humanity in the end.
But if we repudiate humanity and serve only ourselves,
we will betray those ideas and ideals which alone give
meaning to our people's survival.

* * *

R These, then, are the thoughts that stir within us
as we recall with loving remembrance our martyrs,
all those who perished through the cruelty of the oppressor.
Not punished for any individual guilt, but indiscriminately,
men and women...
the aged and the young...
the learned and the simple...
were driven in multitudes along the road of pain and
pitiless death.
They lie in nameless graves.
Their places of everlasting sleep are not known to us.
Yet we will not forget them.
We take them into our hearts and give them a place beside
the treasured memories of our own beloved.

May their remembrance give us the strength

to turn from death to life,

to love where others hate

to hope where others despair

to bring ^{order} ~~beauty~~ to chaos and

and reason to the madness of our days.

In a word, to speed the fulfillment of that promise of lasting life

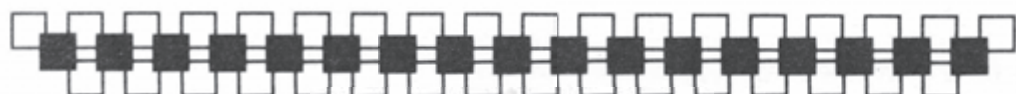
made by God to humankind, *on that fateful day*

--when he arched his wondrous rainbow

over the lofty peaks of Mount Ararat.



The Nuclear Debate



Some Jewish Perspectives



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
IPPNW World Congress
Moscow
May, 1987

I am greatly privileged today, to be speaking to an organization of scientists, healers, modern miracle workers, whose genius is no less defined by their compassion than by their intellect. Albert Einstein, a paradigm of the socially conscious scientist, and an inspiration to us all, said in 1931 that "*true human progress is based less on the inventive mind than on the conscience of men . . .*" This international association of Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War has invested Einstein's statement with new and potent meaning.

I would be remiss were I not to express my indebtedness to Bernie Lown. Not only is he your co-president and hence responsible for inviting me. He is also my cardiologist and it is thanks only to his skills that I am able to stand before you today. He literally willed me to this place. If the truth be told, though, my wife is somewhat puzzled by the fact that when I come to Bernie's office we spend more time talking about the state of the world than we do about the condition of my cardiovascular system. She is even more puzzled by the fact that no matter what we talk about, the consulting fee remains the same. Still, I owe my life to him and I appreciate his healing powers even as I value his friendship.

As you know, I have been asked to bring some Jewish perspectives to the issue before us, the nuclear delusion, that great moral issue of our time that exceeds all others in its consequence. Of course, I am not the first son of Israel to offer public testimony on the critical need for arms control:

v'chit'tu charbotam l'itim v'chanitotehem l'mazmerot

And they shall beat their swords into plowshares

and their spears into pruning hooks;

nation shall not lift up sword against nation

neither shall they learn war anymore.

Isaiah's words have been handed down to us like precious gems by countless generations who yearned for peace. But the sparkle of Isaiah's words has been ignored in every generation by rulers who, with a different glint in their eyes, opted for war.

Our historians tell us that in the millenia of recorded human history we can find no more than 128 years, all told, when there was no war some place on this earth of ours. Peace, it appears, is but a bit of white space between the long and black chapters of human history, only a brief interlude between wars presumably for the purpose of enemy identification. 128 years of *shalom*, of peace . . . contrasted to 5,000 years of war. 5,000 years of maimed bodies and burned flesh and widows' tears and broken spirits and the whole dark butchery without a soul. The pattern is not merely repetitive; it spirals in ever-widening circles. Our generation ignores Isaiah's vision of peace at infinitely greater peril than did our forbears. They risked only individual lives, or at worst, whole cities and cultures. We, on the other hand, risk humankind in its totality and all of civilization.

No longer can we speak of swords and plowshares. The word "war" itself is inadequate to convey that apocalyptic genocide and ecocide that a nuclear conflict will bring. The word "weapon" is delusional in this context. We are totally lacking in a vocabulary adequate to describe the landscape of a nuclear holocaust. Therefore, we speak of the nuclear arms race either in the dehumanized language of throw-weights, kilotons, and game theory—the kind of language that helps produce what Robert J. Lifton has called a "psychic numbing." Or we speak in analogies, in that language of poetry and religion that calls forth our survival instincts, our sense of being human, with a past and with a future, our sense of outrage at the notion of obliterating that past and bringing to nought that future.

I, and my distinguished colleagues on this podium are here to speak in this language of analogy lest the language of statistics, the language of diplomacy, the language of business-as-usual be the only language heard in Moscow and Washington and Geneva. We are here to speak in the language of prayer, for surely there is no feeling, thinking human being who is not, in whatever way he or she finds suitable and conceivable, praying for the redemption of the human race.

Now many here are bound to think or even say, that religion, in your case Judaism, rabbi, even in its ideal conception, is not coterminous with pacifism—and that is manifestly true. The pursuit of peace at any and every price was never an all-exclusive element of Jewish religious teaching. Isaiah's peace-evoking melodies do have their counterpoint in our tradition. More militant melodies can also be heard. Some wars were considered just, especially wars of self-defense, or when war was the only recourse to extirpate evil. God is called not just the author of peace, but also *ish milchama* the Lord of War. The very prophets who portrayed the vision of peace in its most glowing colors also denounced those who cry "peace, peace, when there is no peace." And the visionary Joel ironically inverts Isaiah's words when, living in an evil time, he cautions the nations to re-transform their plowshares into swords and their pruninghooks into spears.

But note and note well, that while Judaism at times considers armed conflict as just, the Bible and the Talmud severely circumscribed the use of force with regulations that sought to limit war's ravagings.

- * War is justified only as a last resort, and after every conceivable peaceful alternative to the use of force had been exhausted.
- * Painstaking care had to be taken to protect the civilian population; thus, for instance, when siege was laid to a city only three of its sides were allowed to be surrounded, in order to give escape to those who would flee to save their lives.
- * Damage to the environment was to be avoided at all costs; thus we read in Deuteronomy:

*"when you besiege a city...you must not destroy its trees
wielding the axe against them. You may eat of them, but you
must not cut them down...they cannot withdraw before you or
surrender."*

In other words, even in the midst of the battle one must shun the needless destruction of the environment in order to be certain that life could and would continue once the fighting is over.

None of these and like injunctions can conceivably be heeded in a nuclear conflict. Talk of "preserving the environment" in the midst of such a war! It would but destroy the very capacity of our natural environment for sustaining life. Demonstrate concern for the life of non-combatants? Hardly possible! Nuclear weaponry violates this principle as does no other. Other weapons injure civilians by happenstance or carelessness or callous neglect. Nuclear bombs do so by their very nature. Radio active waste carried by the winds will spew their poison on lands and peoples far removed from the battle zone. In a word, the superpowers cannot make war against each other without also waging war against the whole of the human race, never mind the fact that their own peoples would be made to suffer the ultimate punishment because of the presumed or real sins of their rulers. Nuclear war is but a slaughter of innocents. Concepts like "just" and "unjust wars" lose all their meaning in such a conflict, yea even wars fought in self-defense. What gain such a war if the lives and values to be defended are destroyed along with the aggressor! Judaism teaches us to reverence the past and its attainments. Nuclear conflict would obliterate it all, the full fruitage of humanity's past: music, art, learning, literature, the mastery of nature, the painfully acquired power to heal, all of it would be reduced to a nothingness, to deadly dust and ashes.

What I am really trying to say is that the two seemingly divergent strands of the Jewish tradition—the pursuit of peace and the readiness to go to war—are not really as far apart and oxymoronic as they appear to be. And insofar as the nuclear debate is concerned, the two strands actually converge on the common ground of a nuclear pacifism. Because nuclear warfare is not warfare. It is the Shoah, the holocaust. It is the shattering of the covenant, the rending of the fabric of creation. It is the grossest version of human sacrifice—the rejection of which marked Judaism, from its beginnings, as a religious advance.

* * *

The collective Jewish experience, no less than its spiritual legacy, undergird the quest for nuclear disarmament. Samuel Pizar put the matter well:

"From where if not from Jews will come the warning that a new combination of technology and brutality can transform the planet into a crematorium. . . . From where if not from Auschwitz, the bloodiest killing ground of all time, will come the hope that co-existence between so-called 'hereditary enemies' is possible and must be realized."

I speak now of the slaughtering of six million Jews by the Nazis, whose cold, efficient murder machine gave rise to a singularly Jewish apocalyptic vision. I call upon the experience of those too-few thousands of concentration camp survivors who were liberated from this vision of the end of the world—liberated by the combined efforts of the East and the West, of the Soviet Union and the United States, and, in particular, by the heroic sacrifice of the Russian people.

The victims of Nazism are with us today, and they speak in a prophetic voice. They stand beneath the mushroom cloud and warn the world:

"This," they say, "is the product of apathy, and nationalism, and illusions of racial superiority and world dominion. This is the smoke of the Auschwitz chimneys that is now billowing across the entire earth. Learn from us, the chosen, slaughtered people, or you will become what we are: wisps of smoke, ashes in blackened, barren soil."

Arthur Waskow—a contemporary Jewish thinker and peace activist is quite right when he calls each nuclear bomb "A Portable Auschwitz."

I speak now as a Jew, and as a Jew, I cannot in all good conscience, ignore our differences as a people with the leaders of our host country. I refer, of course, to their severe strictures on the right of emigration and to their trampling on the culture of Jews denying them as the means—the books, the schools, the teachers and the languages—required for its sustenance. There have been some changes in tone of late for which we are grateful and which promise some betterment, but until the promise becomes reality, we will protest these injustices—and many others as well—in the realm of human rights. But having given voice to our protest, we will not fall into the trap of joining the shrill voices of those who wish to sink Russia and America ever more deeply into incendiary rhetoric and reciprocal military confrontation. That will scarcely serve our purposes.

Protest and peace are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, they are twin pillars of the East-West relationship. Topple either, and the whole structure falls. If we swallow our protest for the sake of peace—for the sake, perhaps, of not offending the governments of our Eastern European delegates—then the frail peace will be overturned by the writhings of the injustice itself. But if we abandon the peace in the name of protest—by becoming cold-war war-

riors and urging an acceleration of the arms race—then the protest corrodes into an immoral threat.

* * *

Alas, it appears that metaphor and remembrance are not enough. The world *does* remember Auschwitz; we know of it as history, and we retain the images of chimneys, the ovens, the human skeletons. And the world *does* remember Hiroshima; we know of it as history, and we retain the images of the mushroom cloud and human shadows burned into pavement. Still, we fail to dismantle the death machines, only stockpile them higher than our memories. We *hear* the sounds of the past, but we do not *listen* to them. We memorialize history, but we do not wrestle with it. For wrestling with history means wrestling with ourselves—and this of all of life's demands seems most beyond the capacity of governments and those in power.

The situation between the two superpowers greatly resembles the confrontation between Jacob and Esau, Jacob who could embrace his brother only after his night of wrestling with his conscience. Each of the superpowers arrogantly considers itself to be Jacob: the one worthy of Isaac's blessing, the one capable of carrying the values of the present into the future. And each considers the other one to be Esau: the hunter, the predator, the hairy one that would sell his principles for a bowl of porridge.

The world watches now as these great powers attempt negotiations—and we pray for their success, for a new reprieve, a slowing of the doomsday clock. Yet until the United States and the Soviet Union engage in a wrestling with their own angels, with their own ideals, there can be no genuine end to the obscenity that we know as the arms race. Until the American and Soviet negotiators come to the summit not as powerbrokers but as penitents—not as Jacob the swaggering man of wealth, but as Israel, the limping one, alone on the riverbank without his possessions—until then the feat of Esau will rule our lives and the world.

- * until *glasnost* becomes a way of life rather than an extraordinary experiment within the Soviet Union.
- * until the policy makers of the United States realize that the heavens are themselves a canopy of peace over our earth
- * until the Soviet peoples inner strength rather than the military might of their government is what is proudly displayed in the May Day Parade . . .
- * until the US government understands that national security cannot be attained by being first among the countries of the world in arms sales, even while we are *only* fifteenth in literacy, sixteenth in doctor-patient ratio, eighteenth in life expectancy and nineteenth in

infant mortality . . .

Until such a political and spiritual depth is attained, Jacob and Esau will not cross the river to embrace. They will stand on either bank glowering. They may manage to achieve a safer balance of terror but let us not be so mad and so foolish as to call such a state *shalom*, peace.

There is a pertinent tale told in the literature of the Jewish people, a parable attributed to Reb Nachman the Bratzlaver Tsaddik. It tells of a country isolated from the world by surrounding mountains. One year, come harvest time, the people came to their king with the dreadful news that those who had eaten of the new harvest had turned stark raving mad. "*What shall we do, Oh King,*" they cried out. "*If we don't eat of the new wheat, we will starve to death, but if we do eat of it, we will go mad.*" The king considered this fearsome dilemma for many days and finally, with heavy heart, he rendered this judgment: "*Since there is no other food available we will have to eat of the new harvest; but let us at least remember that we are mad.*" Even so it is with us. Since there is as yet no alternative to reducing the balance of terror in our world, let us move on and negotiate that reduction, but let us at least remember that we are mad. For the greatest madness is that which forgets itself, that which treats this new harvest of weaponry as it would treat all others. The greatest madness is that which believes in the possibility of "nuclear superiority," as if such a superiority will somehow redeem either of our shattered civilizations following a nuclear exchange, or spare the eco systems from the poisons of apolitical radiation.

Now some will say to me, perhaps even today, that as a rabbi I am no expert on national defense or nuclear weaponry. My answer is that there is no human being alive who deserves to be entrusted with so-called "expertise" on the subject of the end of the world. *That* is the subject that we are discussing, and any effort to downgrade it to less apocalyptic dimensions is an outrage and an incredible conceit. We are standing at a crossroad of human history and our first task is to recognize that fact. These are scarcely ordinary times. These are extra-ordinary times in which all of humanity is summoned to the task of human survival. These are times in which spiritual and material reality merge, in which all the faces of the human race merge. It is a merger brought about not, alas, by the hand of God or of a messianic presence, but by the mushroom-shaped, skull-shaped shadow of death.

In darkness we merge. The "chosenness" of the Jew becomes the yoke of all human beings. Our Jewish consciousness becomes a global consciousness. Our Jewish prophets become voices of pain, anger, fear and vision that speak not only to Israel, but to the entire world. And we become, each of us, a rabbi and a nuclear arms expert. We must become precisely that, for such a sense of responsibility is the only alternative we have to the final anonymity that the Bomb, if we permit it, will bring.

I opened my remarks with words from Albert Einstein. It is one of the great ironies of history that this man of peace this brilliant scientist, this Jewish refugee from Hitler's Germany, should have become the one we now associate with the development of the atomic bomb. Einstein ushered in the nuclear age by uncovering the mysteries of energy and matter—mysteries that truly resemble, at their core, religious mysteries. But in thinking of Einstein, let us remember, too, that he spent the fuller part of his life searching for a “unified field theory” and working for world peace. Both endeavors, he knew, were mandated by his earlier discoveries.

It is our task, today, to complete the quest of this great Jewish humanitarian—to search for a *unified world* theory one that would shed a magnificent light, the light of God's rainbow, on the mysteries of existence. Let it not be the bomb that breaks our boundaries forevermore. Let it rather be the revelation of our common humanity.



"The Nuclear Debate -
Some Jewish Perspectives"
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
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Therefore, we speak of the nuclear arms race either in the dehumanized language of throw-weights, kilotons, and game theory -- the kind of language that helps produce what Robert J. Lifton has called a "psychic numbing."

Or we speak in analogies, in that language of poetry and religion; that calls forth our survival instincts, our sense of being human, with a past and with a future, our sense of outrage at the notion of obliterating that past and bring^{ing} to nought that future.

I, and my distinguished colleagues on this podium are here to speak in this language of analogy lest the language of statistics, the language of diplomacy, the language of business-as-usual be the only language heard in Moscow and Washington and Geneva. We are here to speak in the language of prayer, for surely there is no feeling, thinking human being who is not, in whatever way he or she finds suitable and conceivable, praying for the redemption of the human race.

* * *

Now many here are bound to think or even say, that religion, in your case Judaism, rabbi, even in its ideal conception, is not coterminous with pacifism -- and that is manifestly true.

The pursuit of peace at any and every price was never an all-exclusive element of Jewish religious teaching.

Isaiah's peace-evoking melodies do have their counterpoint in our tradition.

More militant melodies can also be heard.

Some wars were considered just, especially wars of self-defense, or when war was the only recourse to extirpate evil.

God is called not just the author of peace, but also ish milchama the Lord of War.

The very prophets who portrayed the vision of peace in its most glowing colors also denounced those who cry

"peace, peace, when there is no peace."

And the visionary Joel ironically inverts Isaiah's words when, living in an evil time, he cautions the nations to re-transform their ploughshares into swords and their pruninghooks into spears.

But note and note well, that while Judaism at times considers armed conflict as just, the Bible and the Talmud severely circumscribed the use of force with regulations that sought to limit war's ravagings.

- * War is justified only as a last resort, and after every conceivable peaceful alternative to the use of force had been exhausted.
- * Painstaking care had to be taken to protect the civilian population; thus, for instance, when siege was laid to a city only three of its sides were allowed to be surrounded, in order to give escape to those who would flee to save their lives.

* Damage to the environment was to be avoided at all costs;

thus we read in Deuteronomy:

"when you besiege a city...you must not destroy its trees wielding the axe against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down...they cannot withdraw before you or surrender."

In other words, even in the midst of the battle one must shun the needless destruction of the environment in order to be certain that life could and would continue once the fighting is over.

None of these and like injunctions can conceivably be heeded in a nuclear conflict.

Talk of "preserving the environment" in the midst of such a war! It would but destroy the very capacity of our natural environment for sustaining life.

Demonstrate concern for the life of non-combatants? Hardly possible! Nuclear weaponry violates this principle as does no other. Other weapons injure civilians by happenstance or carelessness or callous neglect.

Nuclear bombs do so by their very nature.

Radio active waste carried by the winds will spew their poison on lands and peoples far removed from the battle zone.

In a word, the superpowers cannot make war against each other without also waging war against the whole of the human race, never mind the fact that their own peoples would be made to suffer the ultimate punishment because of the presumed or real sins of their rulers.

Nuclear war is but a slaughter of innocents.

Concepts like "just" and "unjust wars" lose all their meaning in
such a conflict,
yea even wars fought in self-defense.

What gain such a war if the lives and values to be defended are
destroyed along with the agressor!

Judaism teaches us to reverence the past and its attainments.

Nuclear conflict would obliterate it all,
the full fruitage of humanity's past:

music, art, learning, literature, the mastery of nature,
the painfully acquired power to heal,
all of it would be reduced to a nothingness,
to deadly dust and ashes.

What I am really trying to say is that the two seemingly divergent
strands of the Jewish tradition
-- the pursuit of peace and the readiness to go to war --
are not really as far apart and oxymoronic as they appear to be.
And insofar as the nuclear debate is concerned, the two strands
actually converge on the common ground of a nuclear pacifism.
Because nuclear warfare is not warfare.

It is the Shoah, the holocaust.

It is the shattering of the covenant, the rending of the fabric
of creation.

It is the grossest version of human sacrifice

-- the rejection of which marked Judaism, from its beginnings,
as a religious advance.

* * *

The collective Jewish experience, no less than its spiritual legacy,
undergird the quest for nuclear disarmament.

Samuel Pizar put the matter well:

"From where if not from Jews will come ^{and brutality} the warning
that a new combination of technology can transform the
planet into a crematorium...From where if not from ~~the~~ Schwirz, the
bloodiest killing ground of all time will come the hope
that co-existence between so-called 'hereditary enemies'
is possible and must be realized."

I speak now of the slaughtering of six million Jews by the Nazis,
whose cold, efficient murder machine gave rise to
a singularly Jewish apocalyptic vision.

I call upon the experience of those too-few thousands of
concentration camp survivors who were liberated from this
vision of the end of the world --
liberated by the combined efforts of the East and the West,
of the Soviet Union and the United States,
and, in particular, by the heroic sacrifice of the
Russian people.

The victims ~~and survivors~~ of Nazism are with us today,
and they speak in a prophetic voice.

They stand beneath the mushroom cloud and warn the world:

"This," they say, "is the product of apathy, and nationalism,
and illusions of racial superiority and world dominion.
This is the smoke of the Auschwitz chimneys that is now
billowing across the entire earth.
Learn from us, the chosen, slaughtered people, or you will
become what we are:
wisps of smoke, ashes in blackened, barren soil."

ARTUR WASKOW - A CONTEMPORARY JEWISH THINKER AND
PEACE ACTIVIST IS QUITE RIGHT WHEN HE CALLS EACH
NUCLEAR BOMB "A PORTABLE AUSCHWITZ."

I SPEAK NOW AS A JEW, AND AS A JEW, I CANNOT

~~I cannot, in this context and~~ in all good conscience, ignore our bill

^{differences}

~~of particulars~~ ^{with} as a people against the leaders of our host country.

I refer, of course, to their severe strictures on the right of

emigration

and to their trampling on the culture of Jews denying them the

means -- the books, the schools, the teachers and the languages --

required for its sustenance.

There has been some change ~~in tone~~ of late for which we are grateful
and which promises some betterment, but until promise becomes reality
we ^{will} protest these injustices -- and many others as well -- in the realm of human rights

But having given voice to our protest, ~~AND THIS IS THE ESSENTIAL POINT~~

we will not fall into the trap of joining the shrill voices

of those who wish to sink Russia and America ever more deeply

into incendiary rhetoric and reciprocal military confrontation.

That will scarcely serve our purposes.

Protest and peace are not mutually exclusive.

Indeed, they are twin pillars of the East-West relationship.

Topple either, and the whole structure falls.

If we swallow our protest for the sake of peace

-- for the sake, perhaps, of not offending the governments

of our Eastern European delegates --

then the frail peace will be overturned by the writhings of the

injustice itself.

But if we abandon the peace in the name of protest -- by becoming

cold-war warriors and urging an acceleration of the arms race --

then the protest corrodes into an immoral threat.

* * *

Alas, it appears that metaphor and remembrance are not enough.

The world does remember Auschwitz;

we know of it as history,

and we retain the images of chimneys, the ovens, the human
skeletons.

And the world does remember Hiroshima;

we know of it as history,

and we retain the images of the mushroom cloud and human
shadows burned into pavement.

Still, we fail to dismantle the death machines,

only stockpile them higher than our memories.

We hear the sounds of the past, but we do not listen to them.

We memorialize history, but we do not wrestle with it.

For wrestling with history means wrestling with ourselves

-- and this of all of life's demands seems most beyond the
capacity of governments and those in power.

The situation between the two superpowers greatly resembles the
aconfontation between Jacob and Esau,

Jacob who could embrace his brother only after his night of
wrestling with his conscience.

Each of the superpowers arrogantly considers itself to be Jacob:

the one worthy of Isaac's blessing,

the one capable of carrying the values of the present into
the future.

And each considers the other one to be Esau:

the hunter, the predator, the hairy one that would sell his
principles for a bowl of porridge.

The world watches now as these great powers attempt negotiations

- and we pray for their success,

for a new reprieve, a slowing of the doomsday clock.

Yet until the United States and the Soviet Union engage in a

wrestling with their own angels, with their own ideals,

there can be no genuine end to the obscenity that we know as

the arms race.

Until the American and Soviet negotiators come to the summit not as

powerbrokers but as penitents,

-- not as Jacob the swaggering man of wealth, but as Israel,

the limping one, alone on the riverbank without his

possessions --

until then the fear of Esau will rule our lives and the world.

- * until glasnost becomes a way of life rather than an extraordinary experiment within the Soviet Union.
- * until the policy makers of the United States realize that the heavens are themselves a canopy of peace over our earth
- * until the Soviet peoples inner strength rather than the military might of their government ~~until the spiritual might rather than the armed might of the Soviet Union~~ is what is proudly displayed in the May Day Parade...
- * until the US government understands that national security cannot be attained by being first among the countries of the world in arms sales, even while we are only fifteenth in literacy, sixteenth in doctor-patient ratio, eighteenth in life expectancy and nineteenth in infant mortality...

Until such a political and spiritual depth is attained,

Jacob and Esau will not cross the river to embrace.

They will stand on either bank glowering.

They may manage to achieve a safer balance of terror but let us not be

so mad and so foolish as to call such a state shalom, peace.

There is a pertinent tale told in the literature of the Jewish people,
a parable attributed to Reb Nachman the Bratzlaver Tsaddik.

It tells of a country isolated from the world by surrounding mountains.
One year, come harvest time, the people came to their king with the
dreadful news that those who had eaten of the new harvest had
turned stark raving mad.

"What shall we do, Oh King," they cried out.

"If we don't eat of the new wheat, we will starve to death,
but if we do eat of it, we will go mad."

The king considered this fearsome dilemma for many days and finally,
with heavy heart, he rendered this judgment:

"Since there is no other food available we will have to eat of the
new harvest; but let us at least remember that we are mad."

Even so it is with us.

Since there is as yet no alternative to reducing the balance of
terror in our world,
let us move on and negotiate that reduction,
but let us at least remember that we are mad.

For the greatest madness is that which forgets itself,
that which treats this new harvest of weaponry as it would
treat all others.

The greatest madness is that which believes in the possibility of
"nuclear superiority", as if such a such a superiority will
somehow redeem either of our shattered civilizations
following a nuclear exchange,
or spare the eco systems from the poisons of a political radiation.

Now some will say to me, perhaps even today, that as a rabbi

I am no expert on national defense or nuclear weaponry.

My answer is that there is no human being alive who deserves to be entrusted with so-called "expertise" on the subject of the end of the world.

That is the subject that we are discussing,

and any effort to downgrade it to less apocalyptic dimensions is an outrage and an incredible conceit.

We are standing at a crossroad of human history

and our first task is to recognize that fact.

These are scarcely ordinary times.

These are extra-ordinary times in which all of humanity is summoned to the task of human survival.

These are times in which spiritual and material reality merge, in which all the faces of the human race merge.

It is a merger brought about not, alas, by the hand of God or of a messianic presence,

but by the mushroom-shaped, skull-shaped shadow of death.

In darkness we merge.

The "chosenness" of the Jew becomes the yoke of all human beings.

Our Jewish consciousness becomes a global consciousness.

Our Jewish prophets become voices of pain, anger, fear and vision that speak not only to Israel, but to the entire world.

And we become, each of us, a rabbi and a nuclear arms expert.

We must become precisely that, for such a sense of responsibility is the only alternative we have to the final anonymity that the Bomb, if we permit it, will bring.

* * *

I opened my remarks with words from Albert Einstein.

It is one of the great ironies of history that this man of peace
this brilliant scientist,
this Jewish refugee from Hitler's Germany,
should have become the one we now associate with the
development of the atomic bomb.

Einstein ushered in the nuclear age by uncovering the mysteries
of energy and matter
-- mysteries that truly resemble, at their core, religious
mysteries.

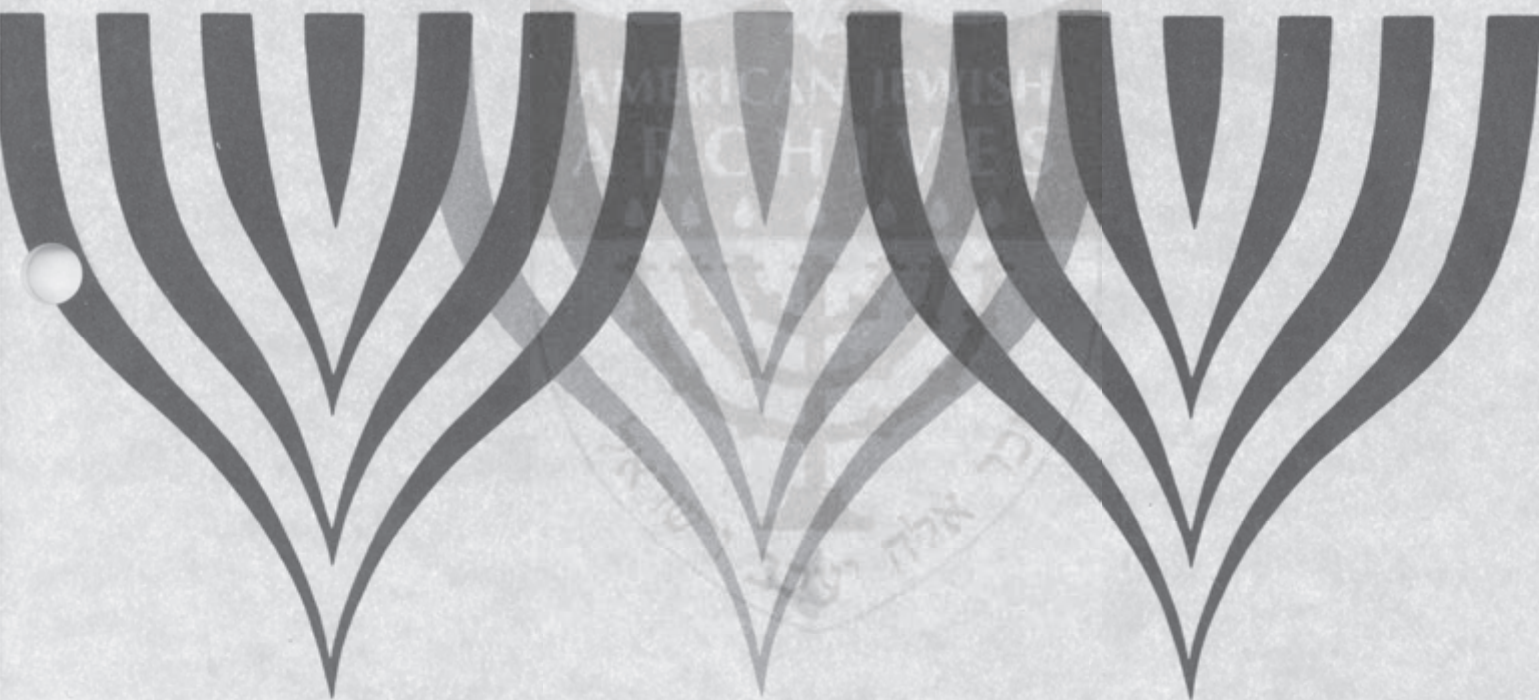
But in thinking of Einstein, let us remember, too,
that he spent the fuller part of his life searching for a
"unified field theory" and working for world peace.
Both endeavors, he knew, were mandated by his earlier discoveries.

It is our task, today, to complete the quest of this great Jewish
humanitarian
-- to search for a unified world theory
one that would shed a magnificent light,
the light of God's rainbow,
on the mysteries of existence.

Let it not be the bomb that breaks our boundaries forevermore.
Let it rather be the revelation of our common humanity.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

59th General Assembly
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
October 29—November 3, 1987
Chicago, Illinois



A WORLD IN TRANSITION—
REFORM JUDAISM IN ACTION

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

I seize this rostrum first, contrary to usual practice, to speak words in praise of our Chairman. This is the last Biennial to be led by Charles J. Rothschild Jr. He has held this highest office for four full years now. Indeed, he has served our Union and the Reform Jewish community for the better part of his adult life. He was President of his Temple, Emeth of Teaneck, N.J. He was at the helm of our New Jersey Council of Reform Congregations. He served on numerous national committees and commissions of crucial consequence to our work. In a word, he earned his spurs. And once he became our national chairman, he grew even more in stature to become an altogether extraordinary leader of our movement, winning the regard of all who came to know him.

His predecessors in office set high standards for him. He maintained and advanced them. Certainly no prior chairman, to my knowledge, gave more time, or involved himself so deeply in the minute and voluminous detail of our work, as did Chuck. Talk of "hands-on" leadership, he was its exemplar. His expectations were high, his demands always exacting. And our Union is the stronger because of it.

Chuck, in behalf of your large and grateful constituency, I present you with this magnificently illuminated *Megilah*, the Scroll of Esther. One of the protagonists of this Biblical Book, as you know, is Mordecai who led his people with dignity and with devotion, as you have. May this gift ever remind you of our abiding love for you and for your gracious Margery.

* * *

It is good to be here for this the 59th General Assembly of our Union, and, perhaps even more important, for this the 75th Anniversary Assembly of NFTS. We salute our affiliate on this joyful and notable occasion. I say "affiliate," but Sisterhood is much more than that. It is our full and equal partner, an essential element of our communal being. As I have acknowledged often before, many of our finest attainments as a religious community were nurtured by Sisterhood. We are what we are — a vital, vibrant force in American Jewish life — because NFTS gave us shape and strength. Our congratulations, to you, Dolores and Ellie and all those you lead. We are in your lasting debt.

I have but one regret in this connection, that I must make note that illness prevents the presence of Jane Evans in our midst. This is the first Joint Biennial this First Lady of Reform Judaism will have missed in her over fifty years of active, glorious service to our family of congregations. We wish her a "refuah sh'lemah," a complete and speedy recovery. I certainly feel the want of her and so do we all.

I also miss Emil Baar, Past and Honorary Chairman of our Board, who went the way of all earth just a few weeks after our last convention. What a leader he was: soft spoken yet firm, gentle yet commanding, small in size yet a giant of the spirit. We will rarely see his like! So long as we live he too will live, for he remains a part of us.

I begin my state of our Union address with the assertion that we "stand at a crossroads." In doing so, I risk an encounter with that nemesis of all speakers, the cliché. But in the case of our Biennial, the phrase has multiple uses.

To begin with, this great city in which we have gathered together — in comfort and conviviality, thanks to that army of resourceful volunteers led by Iris Franco and Arthur Grant, by Zelda Wise, Richard Rhodes and Alan Bregman — has been known as the crossroads between the American east and the American west since its founding as a trading post two centuries ago. Chicago is our largest railhub and busiest air center, a port of entry from all directions of the map. It is an ethnic crossroads as well, home to as many groups as inhabit our immigrant-enriched United States. And historically, Chicago is the crossroads leading from the pre-nuclear to our nuclear world for it is in this city that the first nuclear chain-reaction was set off in 1942.

Chicago has been a turning point for the Union as well, for it was here that our camping movement was born. Olin-Sang-Ruby spawned eight other Camps for Living Judaism throughout the land, and their force in the molding our children's Jewish identities is immeasurable. There isn't a congregation in this country without a rabbi or cantor or educator or lay leader who, in one way or another, has not been inspired by this precious and glorious, gift a gift that has been redoubled, now, and extended into the future by a \$500,000 legacy from the Foundation of Elsie and Philip Sang, thanks to the good offices of our honorary Board member, Bernie Sang.

Our gathering occurs at a crossroads in time as well as in space for we celebrate a confluence of several anniversaries: not just Sisterhood's 75th, but also ARZA's 10th, the Religious Action Center's 25th, the 200th Anniversary of the Constitution with its precious Bill of Rights, and last, but not in the least, the 40th Anniversary of the State of Israel.

Our Torah brings us this Shabbat to a crossroads we well. An individual, a not-young man named Abram, lives in a place called Haran, — the name itself means "crossroads." He has heard the voice of God summoning him to "go forth." *Lech Lecha M'artzecha* — leave your native land and your father's house and go to the land that I will show you.

Go forth. Leave behind your comforts and assumptions. Go forth. Not merely to defeat your adversaries but to fulfill a vision. Go forth, though alone, and trust in God — in the knowledge that the caring human spirit, the spirit that thirsts for justice and mercy, will always find strength and make the proper choices.

Abraham heeds God's call. Standing at his turning point, he takes the never travelled path, and when he does, his life makes all the difference.

Abraham's choice encumbers his descendants. We too must be conscious of the many crossroads we encounter 'long life's way. We too must be aware of the rhythms and stirrings of the Jewish calendar: how each moment of pause, of blessing, of prayer, is a moment at the crossroads, between regret and resolve, between compulsion and choice. The Torah's injunction to "choose life" implies this never-ending journey from crossroads to crossroads, for "choosing life" occurs not only at junctures of crisis; it applies not only to matters of war and peace. It is our mandate to make the right choices and to respond with compassion to all the small and great summonings that beckon us at every waking moment of our lives.

Jews and the Ethical Crisis

I want to talk about the so-called smaller summonings for a moment, not the massive social and economic problems of our world but rather the more personal ethical choices we are called upon to make. Events of the day compel me to do so, for the present-day plague of ethical nihilism has scarcely passed us by.

Oddly enough, I have never felt compelled to touch upon this matter in the course of my fifteen years as your President. My longiloquent Biennial messages have sounded many themes, but never this. Yet the ethical crisis of our time, the pervasive breakdown of accepted norms of conduct, has jarred me to the realization that we need something more than a task force on liturgical music, or an outreach program for inter-married couples, or even a heightened sense of Shabbat; that before we can properly speak of "going forth" and "reaching out," we had best undergo a refresher course in the alef-beit of Jewish morality and ethics.

People credit me for conceiving and crystallizing the idea of "outreach." In fact, Judaism had such a program eons before I came on the scene. *Lech-Lecha* states it quite clearly, as God reaches out to Abraham, and bonds him to the Covenant through the ritual of circumcision. "Walk in my way," says the Lord, "and be blameless." That was Judaism's original outreach program. It consisted of exemplary moral conduct that might provoke others to say: If this is how they are, this is something I covet and want to be.

But how far from "blameless" have we become? The piteous fact is that the casual question that Jews ask about people in the news, "Is he Jewish?" is nowadays asked more often with worry than with pride. The grievous fact is that of late Jews are being named more often as indicated public officials and business men than as Nobel Prize winners.

Some may argue defensively that only one or two of the Jews caught up in the recent notoriety have significant ties to the Jewish community. Such an argument makes a virtue of our ineffectiveness! Besides, some of this ethical decay has contaminated our very own community's bone and marrow.

The drug-and-drink, pleasure-and-oblivion culture is alive and well in many Jewish homes . . . the epidemic of divorce and of legally intact but spiritually failed marriages afflicts us too . . . the tides of abuse, of exploitation, of prejudice . . . the quest for instant gratification . . . the furious frenzy of greed . . . *all* these plagues include as participants — or should we say as victims — an unseemly number of Jews.

Now, I know full well that this lawlessness and corruption is wide-spread in our land and touches every level of our society. Look and see: not even the holier-than-thou TV evangelists are impervious to the moral malaise of our age!

Still, we must ask: What has happened to our once profoundly ethical Jewish community? What are the sources of our degradation and shame? Leonard Fein, whom we have been proud to receive straight from the offices of Moment Magazine into our Religious Action Center as Scholar-in-Residence, posed the question with astringent bluntness: "For better or for worse," he said, "we Jews have through most our time imagined ourselves to be a morally advantaged people . . . our reassurance derived from our belief that if bad things keep happening to us, we must be good people."

So, asks Reb Fein. "Was there truth in Jewish self advertising? Or are we just another people to be added to the list of those whom power has corrupted."

I ask our pertinent Committees and Commissions to make certain that the alef-beit of Jewish morality is, in fact, transmitted effectively in our programs of formal and informal education. Perhaps we ought to consider the setting of standards beyond the financial as a requisite for synagogue leaders, so that they can serve as exemplars. Certainly this matter of Personal and Business Ethics ought to be higher on our collective agenda. The consideration of social issues alone, or even Jewish communal problems, does not suffice to heed *Lech-Lecha's* demand that we "go forth."

We must find a way to recover the Jewish sense of *noblesse oblige*. We must return to the prototype of our outreach effort that bade us win adherents not by precept, but by example. And we must recapture that ethical self-esteem that led to Rabbi Stephen Wise's proud reply to an American lady who tried to impress him with the information that one of her ancestors had witnessed the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Wise held his leonine head high and majestically rejoined: "My ancestors, madam, were present at the giving of the Ten Commandments."

Our Religious Action Center at Twenty-Five

There is one institution that most assuredly does continue to remind us of our ethical ancestry and of those values that the world would make us forget. I am speaking of course, of our Religious Action Center in Washington. It was launched 25 years ago thanks to the compelling moral vision of Maurice N. Eisendrath, and the eager generosity of the incomparable Kivie Kaplan. It was fired and forged into an institution by our prophetic and courageous Al Vorspan, who will be deservedly honored with the MNE Bearer of Light Award at this convention. It has been refined, strengthened and assured a future by a series of capable Center Directors, now culminating in the noetic and effervescent leadership of David Saperstein. And the Center has been renewed again and again by the creative energies of lay leaders, presently Harris Gilbert, and the volunteers, the trainees, and the interns — and many people throughout our far flung constituency for whom the Religious Action Center represents the very incarnation of Judaism-in-action.

The achievements of the Center have been towering and interpenetrating. It has amplified our voices in the highest councils of government. It is respected in Washington for its combination of idealism and effectiveness, for being solidly in tune with its grassroot, deeply committed to coalitional activism, and loyal to an ethical framework of uncompromising integrity.

The Center and its work has also served to restore to the Jewish fold numerous idealists, young and old, whose prophetic yearnings had no Jewish expression, who knew only the language of universalist activism. The Center has thus become a leading, if unsung, component of Reform Jewish Outreach. It is a major source of our numerical growth, even as its attainments give substance to our reason for being.

For you see, religious action lends a completeness, a wholeness to our total enterprise. Without it, we would be but a truncated faith.

It helps us skirt a current self-contradiction, for we live in a time when the revival of religion has, paradoxically, led to a narrowing of ethical consciousness. Religious moralists peek into our bedroom windows without paying attention to the homeless who are huddled at their feet. Religious censors drive Anne Frank and E. L. Doctorow from library bookshelves, but fail to address the problems of illiteracy and the failure of public education in our country. Religious zealots decry abortion as "genocide" and equal rights for women as "anti-family," yet they oppose the reassigning of monies from the bloated military budget to meet the needs of desperate American families.

A like religious myopia afflicts Jewish fundamentalism. True enough, Orthodoxy affirms all the 613 *mitzvot* and they include both ethical and ritual commandments. But the former, being common to all men, are seen as more universal, more assimilating, somehow not sufficiently "Jewish" — and so the punctilious observance of rituals rather than ethical behavior becomes the touchstone of piety. Rarely if ever, for instance, does Israel's Orthodox Rabbinic establishment speak out on the economic and social ills afflicting their society. They deem it more important to warn that the *mitzva* of hearkening to the sound of the shofar is not observed when a *tekiah* is heard in a Reform or Conservative synagogue.

Amid all this compulsive narrowing of religious concerns, our Religious Action Center is a solid wedge holding open the door of the Jewish conscience. It is an amplifier through which the voices of the prophets still echo, drowning out the ritualistic obsessions of the priests. In this sense, it is a single issue institution. Its single issue is righteousness for all peoples.

Let us make certain that its influence is deepened, by probing ever more effectively the Jewish rootage of our social activism, and by continuing to extend its scope to encompass not only Reform but all the other branches of Judaism.

Of Popes and Coalitions

One of the pivotal, urgent tasks of our Social Action Commission is to keep the door to coalition wide open. My recent journey to Rome, Castel Gondolfo, and subsequently Miami, was in the service of this purpose.

Many of you received my detailed report of the mission and so I need not retell it all now. Suffice is to say that it was, in my judgment, a success. The dialogue between Catholics and Jews was restored. Indeed, it was substantially advanced.

Not everyone was happy with the results of course. There were even some critics among Catholics. Thus one Conservative Italian Catholic publication blazoned forth with the headline: "The Pope Surrenders to the Jews!"

As for the Jewish critics, it would appear that they expected nothing less than a formal apology for the Waldheim debacle and the promise of full diplomatic relations with Israel.

Such expectations were and are politically naive. It was remarkable enough that the Vatican responded to our demand for a meeting prior to Miami and of such a frank and open nature. And why should the Vatican herald its decision to restore relations with Israel to a delegation of American Jews? That is more properly proffered directly to Israel's political leadership, is it not?

These expectations are also politically short-sighted. They blithely ignore the fact that there are 51 million Catholics in America who would have been deeply offended had we boycotted the Miami meetings, — and justly so, because the American Catholic hierarchy, and lay leadership for that matter, was vigorous in representing our complaints to the Vatican.

Not only principle, but self interest too dictates that we preserve the Catholic-Jewish dialogue. Too much progress has been made in this sphere over the years — more progress in two decades than in the preceding two millenia. It would be folly to allow one incident, however reprehensible and painful, to retard if not to end such a fruitful exchange.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES Soviet Jewry and Nuclear Madness

The spirit of reconciliation to which we are pledged, appears to be radiating in wider circles. It does seem that we are witnessing a sudden, rare outbreak of sanity in the world — as if humanity has peered at one too many disasters — and is now recoiling and reconsidering its fate.

The suffering countries of Central America are engaged in an unprecedented joint effort to compromise among themselves for peace. The governments of Eastern and Western Europe are quietly, steadily improving relations. The industrialized West is beginning to absorb the fact that the Third World simply cannot pay off its crushing debt burden and ways are proposed to relieve it.

And further to mark this interlude, we now have the promise of a nuclear arms treaty that will significantly ease the strangling tension with which the superpowers have engaged in their dance of death. It is a promise that was deferred somewhat by last week's Schultz-Gorbachev encounter, but the basic elements of the agreement, negotiated in Geneva, are still in place and can be signed even without a summit.

Of course, we applaud this and all other efforts to slow the doomsday clock, to erase from our sight that obscenity we call the arms race. But let us not be so naive as to adorn such minimal efforts with the word *Shalom*, peace. An outburst of lucidity does not cure a diseased mind — it only holds out the hope that there is a cure.

For the greatest madness is that which forgets itself, that which treats this new harvest of weaponry as it would treat all others.

The greatest madness is that which believes in the possibility of "nuclear superiority", as if such a superiority will somehow redeem either of our shattered civilizations following a nuclear exchange, or spare the earth's eco systems from the poisons of apolitical radiation.

Arthur Waskow, the Jewish peace activist, is quite right when he calls each nuclear bomb "A Portable Auschwitz." Nuclear warfare is not warfare. It is the Shoah, the holocaust, the shattering of the covenant, the rending of the fabric of creation. It is the grossest version of human sacrifice — the rejection of which marked Judaism, from the time of Abraham, a religion of advance.

There is only one cure for all of this madness, and that is to dispel the delusion that nuclear deterrence promotes peace and to insist on the ultimate abolition of all nuclear weaponry.

Frankly, I am embarrassed by the fact that we who pride ourselves of courage in these spheres, are lagging behind the National Conference of Catholic Bishops who, better than four years ago, forthrightly dealt with this matter. I therefore call on the Social Action Commission immediately to initiate the process which will enable our movement to take its stance on this fundamental dilemma of our day.

It is high time that we decry the folly of nuclear deterrence, and clamor for the universal abolition of nuclear arms. By the year 2000, Jewish children born before our next Biennial will be B'nai Mitzva. We can offer them no more precious gift.

* * *

A brief comment now about the Gorbachev phenomenon, and his policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. As I told our Board after I returned from Moscow last May, these newer political doctrines of "openness" and "economic reconstruction" have had a limited and sometimes contradictory effect on Soviet Jews.

Virtually all prisoners of Zion have been released. Indeed one of these heroes, Natan Sharansky, will be addressing our closing session on Monday night. Many other refuseniks have been given permission to leave and hopefully, the gates of emigration will open even wider. On the other hand, anti-Semitism in the USSR has increased considerably as reactionary forces are flooding the newly opened communication channels with their poison.

Beyond these contradictions, however, the most significant issue of Soviet Jewish life is the one we speak of least: and that is the severe restraints upon Jewish identity, and the sharp pressures of assimilation that are placed upon the vast majority of Jews who will opt to remain in the Soviet Union no matter how liberal emigration policies might become. Jewish education is obtainable in the Soviet Union only at great risk. Iosif Begun, freed last February, has again been denied the right to teach Hebrew, the very "crime" for which he was imprisoned. Religious and cultural resources are next to nil.

Yes, there have been recent concessions to Judaism and Jews, — a few rabbis trained in Hungary, one kosher take-out restaurant, the publication of a Yiddish dictionary, and, mirabile dictu, only a few weeks ago, the opening of a modest Jewish library for non-refuseniks in a Moscow apartment. But such glacial progress will scarcely assure the survival of Jewish consciousness in the Soviet Union. Inter-marriage, assimilation, all of the erosive forces with which we contend here in North America, are eating away at the vestiges of Jewish culture and Judaism in the Soviet Union. Add to these ingredients the ugly commonplace of anti-Semitism, and you have what can only be called a forced assimilation.

I profoundly believe that a liberal version of Judaism could improve the prospects of Jewish survival in the USSR, even as Reform has played a preserving role on these shores, and throughout the world.

I tested these waters on my recent visit, as did Bella and Dick Hirsch, who travelled through Russia even while I was there. I concluded that while it would be virtually impossible to encourage the formation of a national movement of Reform Judaism in a society that bars national religious organizations, there is still a great deal we can do to encourage the development of a network of activist Jewish families in the liberal tradition. Such a network could use our educational and liturgical materials. Such a network could in turn "spread the word" along remarkably subtle and effective communication channels that seem almost telepathic in the face of Soviet repression.

On a grassroots level, Reform Jews have done much for the cause of Soviet Jewry. On a national level, alas, the burden has been borne essentially by one gallant lady, Betty Golomb. We require a vastly expanded effort in this realm. Hence, I call for the formation of a special movement-wide Task Force that would address every aspect of the Soviet Jewish situation. It would press for emigration and for the religious rights of Soviet Jews. It would prepare the translation of liberal Jewish educational and liturgical texts into Russian. And it would establish and provide services to a network of liberal Jews in the USSR. The time has come for our Reform movement to play a role of husbandry beyond mere protest — to tend to the fragile shoots of a Jewish consciousness that are seeking desperately to survive in a harsh and often cruel environment.

Reform Judaism in Israel

Even as we have an opportunity to scatter seedlings of Reform on a new continent, so are we obligated to nurse and prune the sturdier plants of Reform Judaism in Israel.

Exciting and encouraging developments have taken place since last we gathered in convention.

- Our sister organization, the Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion and the World Union for Progressive Judaism, have substantially completed their educational center in Jerusalem, and it is altogether beautiful.
- Our indigineous Israeli lay and rabbinic leadership is gaining in strength and independence — an essential foundation that must be built upon if Reform in Israel is to be something more than a *shtetle* for Olim from Western countries.
- The seeds of an Israeli counterpart of our Religious Action Center have been planted. As it blossoms, it will become a leading presence in efforts to preserve and expand civil liberties, women's rights, pluralism and democracy in *Eretz Israel*.
- And ARZA celebrated its 10th Anniversary by securing substantial Jewish Agency grants for our Israel Progressive movement, even as, together with KADIMA, its Canadian counterpart, it led us to a smashing victory in the WZO elections.

Our heartfelt congratulations to Eric Yoffie and Chuck Kroloff and to the many men and women whose earnest efforts made all this be.

But there is one sobering aspect of our Reform presence in Israel that demands immediate attention. Our three Reform settlements, Har Halutz, Yahel, and Lotan, in whose founding and development the Union played a pivotal role are struggling to survive, thrive, and grow. Recent heavy budget cuts made by the Israeli government to set its economy right have, among a tangle of other factors, produced an agricultural crisis in Israel. Many moshavim have actually been abandoned. Older kibbutzim are drowning in debt. We cannot permit these storms of misfortune to swamp our pioneers.

They are the sons and daughters of our congregations, our children who, like Abraham, decided to "go forth." They chose Israel as the land in which to live their Jewish lives and carry on our work. They could have chosen the comforts of Tel-Aviv or the beauty of Jerusalem. Yet they settled instead in the sparsely populated desert of the Arava and on a barren hill-top among the slim Jewish majority of the Galilee — choices that patriotically serve Israel's true settlement priorities.

But now our pioneers need help. They need recruits. They need homes, houses to replace trailers, to lend a sense of permanence. They need industries to supplement farming, to provide job opportunities, to knit together the community in economic enterprise. They need our professional guidance and solidarity.

I therefore call today for the formation of a movement-wide Committee on Rural Settlement to be led by ARZA that will mobilize attention and assistance for our pioneers. Our settlers are the cornerstone of Reform Judaism's healing presence in Israel. They are the hands with which our dreams are built. If you believe as I do that Reform Judaism has a profound contribution to make to the Jewish State — renewing idealism in a land hardened by danger, restoring a humane religious voice to a land made deaf by the shrill sounds of religious fanaticism — then let us all join together in liberating the energies of our settlers who are the forerunners, the messengers of Reform Judaism in Israel.

Israel at 40 and the Quest for Peace

The struggles of our pioneers should also serve to renew our regard for Israel, now as it prepares to mark its 40th anniversary.

We marvel at the wonders of that amazing land: the prodigious achievements of construction, agriculture, and industry; the miraculous regeneration and relocation of our people from all around the world; the creation of a democratic oasis in a harsh landscape of dictatorships and fundamentalism; the weaving of a whole Jewish tapestry from countless threads of language and culture; all of this in the face of continuing warfare and external threat, all of this in a political wilderness, — and all of this at a dizzying pace.

This appreciation should inform *all* evaluation of the Jewish state during this anniversary year. True, our retrospective does not yield an undiluted joy. Much has happened that is sobering: ethnic and religious tensions have dangerously heightened; there has been a devaluation of values among Israelis, more materialistic, more like the values of the rest of the world; and the reality of conquest has functioned like a chronic disease draining vital resources — most especially the precious resource of morale.

Yet we will allow none of these shortcomings to alienate us from Israel. After all, we are not Israel's encomiasts, but her family and family devotion involves reproof and not just approbation. None of the warts and bruises upon the face that we once idealized as being without fault, will cause us to turn away. Indeed, we were wrong to make an idol of the state. Our expectations were unrealistic. We hoped for the fulfillment of our ideal vision, we harbored the dream that a Jewish state though living in a world whose calculus is force would nonetheless be able to measure its every action by the touchstone of an absolute justice. Israel did not grasp that reach, but in countless other ways it has exceeded our longings.

* * *

The kinship solidarity of which I spoke should not mean silence at the dinner table — particularly not when a most crucial argument is raging within our family, like the one that is raging now. The argument, is between those who hold the status quo of occupation to be the wiser course, who believe that time is on Israel's side, and those who would actively pursue the quest for some appropriate international modality that would enable direct negotiations to begin as soon as possible.

I thought long and hard before I decided to place so contentious an issue before you. Essentially two questions confronted me: First, do we have a right to participate in this debate at all? And second, if we do, what should our counsel be?

Obviously, I answered the first question in the affirmative, else I would already have moved on to a different theme. I believe unswervingly that we owe Israel the truth as we see it. We do not serve her cause when we censor or sanitize or stifle our views — or submit to the attempts of others to censor them. Israel is the possession, the treasure and the burden of all the Jewish people. And that gives us both the right and the responsibility to speak up.

Golda Meir had a refreshing way of putting it. In an interview soon after the Yom Kippur war she said the following: "We want to hear nice things about ourselves, but we must also hear the truth. The Arabs, the United Nations, the anti-Semites — *their* criticism we ignore. But American Jews are 'mishpacha,' they are our family, and from them we expect not only praise, but criticism as well. They should not only support us, that is understood; it is equally important that they help us see what is wrong and how it can be corrected." Thus, Golda over twenty years ago. And thus also every Prime Minister of Israel since her time.

Moreover, our fate and Israel's are inextricably intertwined. What happens there affects us all — for better or for worse. I manifestly agree that in matters touching on state security, *the final decision must rest with Israel* whose people live under the gun. But I also believe that it is our obligation to make ourselves clear about the great issues, all fundamental matters that have their impact on Israel's future and hence on our future too.

On the question of substance, I believe that the quest for an international umbrella as defined and limited by the Peres-Hussein agreements, courts a lesser risk than stagnation. Under these written agreements the radical PLO is excluded from the Jordanian delegation. All prospective conveners must first agree to recognize Israel.

They must understand that their sole purpose is to legitimize direct negotiations between Jordan and Israel. And they are barred from intervening in these direct talks or imposing a settlement without the consent of all parties.

These terms cannot compel Israel to accept unsafe conditions. All Israel need do, were a potentially harmful intervention made, is to leave the table. That may risk opprobrium, but not security.

What then are the objections to these proposals? It cannot be their international character, or even Russia's involvement that alarms Israeli rightwingers and their American supporters. After all, there hasn't been a single agreement reached between Israel and any of her neighbors without international mediation, from Rhodes on through Sinai and up to Camp David. The real concerns of the "demurrers" are rooted elsewhere. They but "mask a reluctance to contemplate *any* territorial compromise, even though they know that this is the sine qua non of any serious negotiations . . ." (The New Republic) There's the rub!

Note that I am not endorsing a specific modality to provide Hussein with his cover — merely that some international cover be sought forthwith. In any event, the prolongation of the status quo in Judea and Samaria and Gaza exposes Israel to infinitely greater risk than does any international umbrella for direct negotiations. The status quo sows the seeds of endless conflict. It corrodes the Jewish and democratic character of the State. It is a demographic time-bomb ticking away at Israel's vital center and threatening to shatter its being.

How so?

Because sooner or later this will produce an Arab majority in Israel making Israel if not an Arab then at best a bi-national state, much like Lebanon of old, with the balance of power shifting precariously between Moslem and Jew. And if Israel tries to extricate itself from this dilemma by either repressing the Arabs or driving them out, Israel's Jewish and democratic nature will be disfigured, and the Zionist dream betrayed.

The status quo is indeed a two-headed monster, hard to restrain, impossible to muzzle, and if either head manages to bite, its venom in Israel's bloodstream could be fatal. Bitten by one set of fangs, Israel would preserve democracy at the expense of its Jewish majority. Bitten by the other set of fangs, Israel would become a repressive society, far from anything we would want to call Jewish.

I therefore call upon this Assembly, first to reaffirm the right and the responsibility of Jews wherever they live to participate in the great moral debates of Israel. Further, I ask this Assembly to reject the status quo in Judea and Samaria and Gaza as potentially disastrous to Israel's essential character and its moral stature and to call on Israel's government relentlessly to pursue all avenues to peace — including international participation — that will permit those direct negotiations that all Israelis desire.

Opportunities for peace are no less sudden than outbreaks of war — and they require a similar response of commitment and courage. It is not enough to love peace or to wait for peace to come. Israel must actively seek peace, the peace that will give it its truest security.

Challenges Confronting the Synagogue

Once again, you have heard me calling for the expansion of the range of Reform Jewish activities, a sure sign of our movement's health. It is burgeoning; the number of our congregations is steadily growing, and so are our cumulative membership roles. Sociologists, moreover assure us, that the younger generation of American Jews overwhelmingly identify themselves as Reform. We have become the guarantors of the American Jewish future.

We must therefore be responsible enough to guarantee our own future. In fact, when we subject ourselves to a careful checkup, there are symptoms of strain and stress that require attention.

The first of these is in the financial realm, so we are informed by our congregational presidents, our regional directors, and by the long-range planning study prepared under the energetic guidance of Lenny Thal and our Chairman-nominee, Allan Goldman. Congregational budgets are hard-pressed, and new funds are difficult to come by. Sometimes, poor fiscal planning is the cause, but more fundamentally, our synagogues seem unable to obtain their fair share of the community's resources. Our claim for such a greater share is compelling, and we should not be ashamed to assert it.

After all, who is responsible for our children to be Jews? The synagogue — our financially pressed, overburdened, and short staffed synagogues! Who will assure that there will be a Jewishly committed generation two decades hence? Who will provide the teachers and the rabbis and the scholars for that generation? Who will assure those other communal and national Jewish organizations a reservoir of Jews on which they will be able to draw for their membership a score years hence? Who will provide the State of Israel with a continuing corps of understanding Jews? The answer in every case, of course is the synagogue — the synagogues and those camps and seminaries and multitudinous educational and outreach endeavors that they sustain.

I call on our Howard and Ida Wilkoff Department of Synagogue Management to join with our congregational and regional leadership in the hope that together we might be able to resolve this vexing problem of synagogue finances. The goal here must be to increase revenues and not to curtail programs. In fact, to reduce the scope of synagogue activities would be an incredibly short-sighted and unambitious response to our money troubles. We would be like lumbermen who fell a whole forest and neglect to plant new seedlings.

While on this subject, many of you are already aware that Myron Schoen, the founding member of the Management Commission, will retire after thirty years of loyal and groundbreaking service. He has been a remarkably innovative leader who actually created a profession ex nihilo. There was no Department of Synagogue Administration as an independent entity when he came to us, nor was there a professional organization before he helped to create NATA. We owe him immeasurable thanks for his superb work, and we wish him and his lovely Charlotte a pleasant and creative retirement.

A shortfall of money is but one factor imperiling our synagogues. Many of our congregations are also without rabbis and our movement is hard-pressed to relieve this crucial weakness. Young people seem not to be choosing the rabbinate for a profession. Indeed, I thank God for the day when we responded to the fervor of Jewish women and began to ordain them as rabbis, for without their fresh energy and enthusiasm we would be in even more desperate straits.

The problem we face is complex. While rabbinic salaries are not low, the scale is a pyramid and upward mobility is restricted. Other professions are more remunerative. They also seem to earn more respect, both in the world of secular power and within the Jewish community.

The era of towering rabbinic leadership has passed. Now many rabbis move from community to community every few years, much like nomads, or at least like adjunct professors, fretting over job security, and finding themselves torn by conflicting elements within their congregations.

Obviously my words do not apply to all synagogues. The fault for the decline of interest in the rabbinic profession does not rest on one side alone. Many young rabbis are ill-prepared and ill-fitted for the demands of their position, yet their congregants are infinitely patient and gentle.

But clearly a crisis obtains. Nearly a hundred rabbinic positions need to be filled. Therefore the UAHC is prepared to join our Conference and College-Institute as full fledged partners in a great effort of rabbinic recruitment.

We might also explore the possibility of developing a program for the training of para-rabbis. Our creative Conservative colleague, Harold Schulweis, spoke to us of this matter in Toronto, now nearly eight years ago, and in his own congregation he has been able to train a cadre of twenty men and women, who study under Harold's guidance for two full years and then commit themselves to no less than three years of service to their congregation.

They serve in countless ways to help with rabbinic duties where their rabbi is unable to do so. They provide expertise and peer support, teach classes, prepare holiday resources. And they lead worship and preach and give Torah commentaries reflecting their rabbi's depth and adding their own.

This is not just a way temporarily to fill vacant rabbinic places and weather a crisis. This is Adult education at its finest, combining as it does both learning and teaching.

I call on our Commission on Jewish Education together with an appropriate committee of the CCAR to study and implement such a program nationally, and because I deem it so vital to our future, I ask Dan Syme, to coordinate this effort, adding it to the many other weighty matters he discharges so faithfully for our movement.

It is said that nine rabbis cannot make a *minyan*, but ten cobblers, yes. It is time for us to empower our "cobblers" with the knowledge of how to form and lead their *minyanim* and render them into circles of spiritual vigor.

Reaching Out and Reaching Up

To your relief and with thanks for your infinite patience, I come to the final matter I wish to raise with you this day. It is really the heart of the matter, from which all of our concerns and pre-occupations flow. I speak of the need to pursue the holy, for its quest defines our essential task as Jews.

Our numeric burgeoning can excite our hopes and ambitions, but our efforts will sink into nothingness unless we perceive and embrace Judaism as a serious religious enterprise . . . a manner of living . . . an approach to the world that makes demands upon its adherents. We must add meaning to label and substance to form; we must recapture the sense of *totality* in Judaism, the life built upon the performance of *mitzvot*, without surrendering the modern notion of personal autonomy that we have made our hallmark. That word *mitzva* must become habitual in our lives, no longer used only to describe a minor benefaction or our child's 13th birthday. For as Leo Baeck taught: "Our deeds open up the gates through which the floods of the Divine enter human life."

Many among us have already experienced a wondrous deepening of personal religious commitment. We thank them, for their example impels our own gravitation toward a fuller Jewish life. Let us now, at this crossroads, make a movement-wide commitment: to "go forth" from our isolation, across the moats of weariness and scepticism, in order to journey into one another's lives.

This has been my wish, my heartfelt yearning to use my time at this podium and during these days of our Assembly to develop a feeling of at-oneness among us, — what Martin Buber called a sense of "genuine We-ness," a sense that would restore to us the "meaning of every word . . . the intention of the human glance." This weekend we can feel that community: by sitting not only like this, in rows facing front, but in circles facing one another; by praying not only toward the east, towards Jerusalem, but towards each other, towards our expressive faces. There we can find the Divine image, in all of its magnificent diversity, in all of its uncanny oneness. And there we will find ourselves as Jews and as human beings.

Most of the time we are too far apart. We are spread across the land and across the globe. and though we are all rushing together through the cosmos, and though we are all turning together towards the sun, the appearance is that of separation, of boundaries and time zones. We cannot see each other's faces except through the warped lenses of media, and ideology, and political or even religious rhetoric.

But now we are here — *mir zeinen do* — and we know it, for we have jostled, we have felt each other's breath, felt our fingers graze. We have heard each others voices . . . like the laughter . . . the silent weeping . . . And so we reach out to each other by reaching up. We call out to God above, the God that is One, to join us together as one.

"He who existentially knows no Thou, will never succeed in knowing a We," concluded Buber. It is for this earnest reason, that I harp in Cato-like fashion upon the need for us to religiously engage one another and spiritually deepen our movement. Growing numbers will but numbers if we merely *count* them rather than *encounter*

them. And the essential means of encounter available to us, given the human condition, given our multitude, is our shared encounter with God, our shared seeking of the reflected image, our shared language of prayer.

From that moment of shared prayer — Hear, O Israel — proceed all the rest of our programs, our commitments, our purposes. As it is written in the Zohar: When people “in prayer declare the Unity of the Holy One in love and reverence, the walls of earth’s darkness are cleft in twain” — and we discover one another emerging into the light. The we truly feel our “We-ness.” Then we can celebrate it in the here and now. Then we can cling to our at-one-ness with fierce and profound hope.

Our hope is the hope of lonely Abraham, who cries to God about his childlessness, about the threatened termination of his dreams. He is told to look heavenward — to “count the stars if you are able to count them, for so shall your offspring be.” Through his prayer, Abraham glimpses the future — and he will spend the rest of his days struggling to maintain an unobstructed vision, a faith of decency for the human race.

We are here as his inheritors. We are here as the children of Abraham. Our summons is the same. To “go forth” from our inadequacies and fears. To see beyond idolatry in all its subtle forms, the essential holiness that permeates and animates life. To stand together where others are isolated. To wear our Judaism like a girdle of power that multiplies our strength. And while other around us spin in dizzy circles, we shall learn and teach, and re-learn and re-teach, that mystic spiral dance that leads from the human heart to the heavens and back again.

Yes, we are the children of Abraham’s vision. And though we number far fewer than the stars in the sky, we shall be as bright in our luminosity. Then will our children, in the year 2000 and for millenia beyond, look upon our legacy and say: “Here is a lamp to light my way. Here is a pathway through the jungle of life. It is a path with a purpose: a path that I can travel with others; a path that leads to the very heart of life. It is *my* path. It leads to *my* home.”

We are the children of Abraham, a man alone with his prayers, who stood at the crossroads and counted the stars.

We are the children of Abraham, a people united in our prayers, who stand at the crossroads, and count — upon each other.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE 59TH UAHC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. I call on this Assembly to express the indebtedness of our religious community to Charles J. Rothschild, Jr., for his extraordinary record of accomplishment as Chairman of our Board of Trustees. "His expectations were high, his demands always exacting. And our Union is the stronger because of it."

2. I ask that we salute the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods on its 75th Anniversary. NFTS is our "full and equal partner; an essential element of our well being" as a religious community. Many of "our finest attainments," especially in the realm of youth and religious education were "nurtured" by Sisterhood.

3. I call on our Assembly and its delegates to express our collective gratitude to all those who brought this convention to be:

a) To our host congregations and lay leaders for the graciousness of their hospitality, and for strengthening Reform Judaism throughout the land and world by creating and sustaining the first of our many Camps for Living Judaism.

b) To Iris Franco and the members of our Biennial Program Committee for that rich fare with which they feasted us. They responded fully to the felt needs of our constituency.

c) To Zelda Wise, Richard Rhodes and Alan Bregman and their army of co-workers on the Local Arrangements Committee who did everything in their power to make us feel at home and to have this convention run smoothly.

d) To Arthur Grant, the Union's Director of Regions, who single handedly coordinated the multitudinous details of this convention. He is an efficient administrator and a warm and wonderful Jew.

4. I ask our pertinent Committees and Commissions to develop educational materials on personal and business ethics for our schools and camps and programs of adult education. "The consideration of social issues alone, or even Jewish communal problems" does not suffice for the need. We must make certain "that the alef-beit of Jewish morality" is not neglected in our educative processes.

5. I urge you to join me in commending our Religious Action Center for its twenty-five years of creative endeavor. "The achievements of the Center have been towering." Let us make certain that the Center's work continues and that its influence is deepened by probing "ever more effectively" the Jewish rootage of our social activism and by continuing to extend its scope to encompass not only Reform, "but all the other branches of Judaism." Let us also express our delight that the Center's guiding spirit, Albert Vorspan, is to receive the Union's highest award. It was he, above all others, who "fired and forged" the RAC into that vital, vibrant institution it has become.

6. I ask you to direct our Commission on Social Action to initiate the process which will enable the Union to take its stance on the issue of nuclear deterrence. "It is high time that we decry this folly . . . that we clamor for the universal abolition of nuclear arms."

7. I call for the formation of a special movement-wide Task Force, including the World Union for Progressive Judaism, that would address itself "to every aspect of the Soviet Jewish situation," to press for emigration and for the religious rights of Soviet Jews, to prepare the translation of liberal Jewish educational and liturgical texts into Russian, and to establish and provide services to a network of liberal Jews in the USSR. "I profoundly believe that a liberal version of Judaism could improve the prospects of Jewish survival" in the Soviet Union, even as Reform has played "a preserving role" in North America and throughout the world.

8. I ask you to join me in congratulating ARZA on this its 10th Anniversary and to acknowledge the substantial progress it has made by "planting the seeds" of an Israeli counterpart of our Religious Action center, by securing substantial Jewish Agency grants for our Israeli Progressive movement, and by leading us, together with KADIMA its Canadian partner, to a "smashing" victory in the WZO elections.

9. I call for the formation of a movement-wide Committee, to be spear-headed by ARZA, which will "mobilize attention and assistance" for our rural settlements in Israel. "They need industries to supplement farming, to provide job opportunities.

10. I emphatically ask for your reaffirmation of the UAHC position that we have the right and the responsibility to participate in debate and dialogue on the great moral issues facing Israel. We owe Israel the truth as we see it. "We do not serve the cause when we censor or sanitize or stifle our views" — or submit to the attempts of others to censor them.

Further, I ask this Assembly to reject the status quo in Judea and Samaria and Gaza as potentially disastrous to Israel's essential character and its moral stature and to call on Israel's government relentlessly to pursue all avenues to peace — including international participation — that will permit those direct negotiations that all Israelis desire. "It is not enough to love peace or to wait for peace to come. Israel must actively seek peace, the peace that will give it its truest security."

11. I ask you to direct our Joint Commission on Synagogue Management to address the problem of synagogue finances as its first priority. "The goal here must be to increase revenue not to curtail programs. . . our claim for a greater share" of the community's resources is compelling.

12. I call on this Assembly to acknowledge our collective indebtedness to Myron Schoen, who is retiring from office after 30 years of distinguished service. He is the father of the profession of Temple Administration, a devoted servant of the synagogue and of the Jewish people.

13. In the light of the persistent critical problems of the contemporary Jewish family, and because of its good work which requires continuance, I urge that the Task Force on the Jewish Family be established as a standing committee of the UAHC.

14. I call on the UAHC to join with the CCAR and the HUC-JIR in an aggressive program of rabbinic recruitment. "Too many of our congregations are without rabbis," and the problem has reached crisis proportions.

In this context, I call on the Union and the Conference as well as the College-Institute jointly to explore the possibility of developing a program for the training of para-rabbis. "This is not just a way temporarily . . . to weather a crisis. This is adult education at its finest, combining as it does both learning and teaching."

15. I once again call on our entire religious community to perceive and to embrace Judaism as a serious religious enterprise, a manner of living, an approach to the world "that makes demands upon its adherents." I call on our Task Force on Religious Commitment, now merged with our Joint Commission on Worship, to make this the focus of its concerns. "We must recapture the sense of totality in Judaism, a life built upon the performance of *migvot*" yet without at the same time "surrendering the modern notion of personal autonomy that we have made our hallmark." The word *mitzva* must become habitual in our lives.



A large, stylized handwritten signature, likely of Arthur H. Hays Sulzberger, is written across the lower half of the page. The signature is in dark ink and is quite fluid and cursive.