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Hold fast, and let go:  
Understand this paradox, and you stand  
at the very gate of wisdom

## Two Truths to Live By

*Condensed from a speech*

ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

**T**HE ART OF LIVING is to know when to hold fast and when to let go. For life is a paradox: it enjoins us to cling to its many gifts even while it ordains their eventual relinquishment. The rabbis of old put it this way: "A man comes into this world with his fist clenched, but when he dies, his hand is open."

Surely we ought to hold fast to life, for it is wondrous, and full of a beauty that breaks through every pore of God's own earth. We know that this is so, but all too often we

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recognize this truth only in our backward glance when we remember what was and then suddenly realize that it is no more.

We remember a beauty that faded, a love that waned. But we remember with far greater pain that we did not see that beauty when it flowered, that we failed to respond with love to love when it was tendered.

A recent experience re-taught me this truth. I was hospitalized following a severe heart attack and had been in intensive care for several days. It was not a pleasant place.

One morning, I had to have some additional tests. The required machines were located in a building at the opposite end of the hospi-

tal, so I had to be wheeled across the courtyard on a gurney.

As we emerged from our unit, the sunlight hit me. That's all there was to my experience. Just the light of the sun. And yet how beautiful it was—how warming, how sparkling, how brilliant!

I looked to see whether anyone else relished the sun's golden glow, but everyone was hurrying to and fro, most with their eyes fixed on the ground. Then I remembered how often I, too, had been indifferent to the grandeur of each day, too preoccupied with petty and sometimes even mean concerns to respond to the splendor of it all.

The insight gleaned from that experience is really as commonplace as was the experience itself: life's gifts are precious—but we are too heedless of them.

Here then is the first pole of life's paradoxical demands on us: Never be too busy for the wonder and the awe of life. Be reverent before each dawning day. Embrace each hour. Seize each golden minute.

Hold fast to life . . . but not so fast

that you cannot let go. This is the second side of life's coin, the opposite pole of its paradox: we must accept our losses, and learn how to let go.

This is not an easy lesson to learn, especially when we are young and think that the world is ours to command, that whatever we desire with the full force of our passionate being can, nay *will*, be ours. But then life moves along to confront us with realities, and slowly but surely this second truth dawns upon us.

At every stage of life we sustain losses—and grow in the process. We begin our independent lives only when we emerge from the womb and lose its protective shelter. We enter a progression of schools; then we leave our mothers and fathers and our childhood homes. We get married and have children and then have to let them go. We confront the death of our parents and our spouses. We face the gradual or not so gradual waning of our own strength. And ultimately, as the parable of the open and closed hand suggests, we must confront



the inevitability of our own demise, losing ourselves as it were, all that we were or dreamed to be.

But why should we be reconciled to life's contradictory demands? Why fashion things of beauty when beauty is evanescent? Why give our hearts in love when those we love will ultimately be torn from our grasp?

In order to resolve this paradox, we must seek a wider perspective, viewing our lives as through windows that open on eternity. Once we do that, we realize that though our lives are finite, our deeds on earth weave a timeless pattern.

Life is never just a being. It is a becoming, a relentless flowing on. Our parents live on through us, and we will live on through our children. The institutions we build endure, and we will endure through them. The beauty that we fashion cannot be dimmed by death. Our

flesh may perish, our hands will wither, but that which they create in beauty and goodness and truth lives on for all time to come.

Don't spend and waste your lives accumulating objects that will only turn to dust and ashes. Pursue not so much the material as the ideal, for ideals alone invest life with meaning and are of enduring worth.

Add love to a house and you have a home. Add righteousness to a city and you have a community. Add truth to a pile of red brick and you have a school. Add religion to the humblest of edifices and you have a sanctuary. Add justice to the far-flung round of human endeavor and you have civilization. Put them all together, exalt them above their present imperfections, add to them the vision of humankind redeemed, forever free of need and strife, and you have a future lighted with the radiant colors of hope.



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REPRINTED FROM THE MARCH 1988 ISSUE OF READER'S DIGEST  
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2 Pages hope  
this is what you  
want. a Sweet year.  
Edie

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The Milender Lecture  
in Jewish Communal Leadership

Reform Innovations  
and their Impact on Jewish  
Unity

Alexander M. Schindler

Benjamin S. Hornstein Program  
in Jewish Communal Service

Brandeis University  
Waltham, Massachusetts

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February 29, 1988





### **Milender Seminar in Jewish Communal Leadership**

The Milender Seminar in Jewish Communal Leadership is a program which brings an outstanding leader of the American Jewish community to the Brandeis campus to meet with students, faculty and alumni of the Benjamin S. Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service. The seminar is made possible by a gift from Sumner N. Milender of Lincoln, Massachusetts.

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### **The 14th Annual Milender Lecture in Jewish Communal Leadership**

### **Reform Innovations and their Impact on Jewish Unity**

**Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler**  
President  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

**February 29, 1988**



## Reform Innovations and their Impact on Jewish Unity

It is a privilege, which I greatly appreciate, to be here and to participate in this year's Milender Seminar. This is a distinguished lectureship, even as Brandeis is an eminent University. I feel honored to have been chosen for this task, and to join the roster of notable communal leaders who have come here in years past. This is not the first time that I am on this campus, of course. Indeed, I took some courses here in the mid- 50s, and my daughter, Elisa, graduated from this school. Over the years, I have come to this campus to meet and speak with one or another of your student groups. Whenever I am here, I am impressed by the serious academic atmosphere which prevails and by the high quality and spirit of the students who study here.

Now, my very good friend, Bernie Reisman, Director of the Hornstein Program, has asked me to speak on innovations in Reform Judaism and their likely impact on the unity of our people. I assume that by "innovations" he refers to our Outreach effort, Reform Judaism's programmatic response to the vexing problem of intermarriage, as well as to the stance on patrilineal descent which was affirmed by the Central Conference of American Rabbis several years ago. I will refer to these programs in somewhat greater detail in the course of my remarks, but let me say at once that I do not fear – even for a moment – that these innovations threaten to tear the fabric of Jewish life such that by the year 2000 there will no longer be *one* people .



Such alarms have been sounded at every stage in Reform Judaism's unfolding and have always proved to be false. Every one of Reform Judaism's innovations has evoked this apprehension. Indeed, some of our past departures from traditional Judaism were infinitely more serious, more irremediable – from a Halakhic perspective – than are the present day changes. The implementation of these changes has not caused us to become disjoined, we have stayed united, we have remained *one* people.

Secondly, I would remind us that feuding is hardly new to Jewish life. So much of the present-day foreboding is predicated on the erroneous assumption that all was sweetness and light in the past. That before these latest altercations between Orthodoxy and Reform, harmony prevailed, and that there was in the golden and peaceful past, a universal ideological consensus uniting the Jewish world. Of course, that is a gross misreading of Jewish history. At no time did such an ideological consensus obtain. In virtually every era of our people's past, there were sharp ideological disputations which set Jews in opposition to one another – not just on political and social issues – but in the religious realm as well, especially in the latter. Yet, the Jewish world did not fracture.

Remember the conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees? Or the contentions between Saadya Gaon and Ben Meir when their respective followers celebrated Rosh Hashanah and Pesach on different dates? Think of the refusal of the Sephardim to heed the Cherem of Rabbenu Gershon on polygamy. Or recall, how in more recent times the Chasidim opposed the Misnagdim. Both groups opposed

the Maskilim, who split into Zionists left and right, secular and religious, as well as Bundists. And, in every age there have been Halakhic authorities who rejected one another.

Despite all of these conflicts, and many more, the center of the Jewish world held together. Let it be noted, moreover, that some of these conflicts were infinitely more fierce – and even violent – than are today's argumentations. The strife between the Misnagdim and the Chasidim was the most brutal of all. These antagonists did not limit themselves to occasional rhetorical outbursts, as we do today. They attacked one another physically, denounced their opponents to the authorities, and had them imprisoned. Perhaps even more to the point, many times before today, the extremists of one camp refused to give their children permission to marry the sons and daughters of the opposing camp. But cooler heads prevailed, and the Jewish world remained intact.

If such insistence on ethnic exclusivity and ideological purity did not work in the *past* it certainly will not work in *our* day. Our children will insist on making that decision themselves. If two Jews fall in love and wish to marry, they are going to marry. Who will stop them? They will hardly be deterred by the fear of being Halakhically impure, nor will their parents. Most of them will thank their lucky stars that their children have chosen a Jew as a life mate.

In the final analysis, the laity, the people, will shape the terms of communal interaction, and a sane and sensitive rabbinate will respond to its need. Yea, even an Orthodox rabbinate, which, I am confident, will find a Halakhic

remedy as it always has in the past. After all, their reluctance to exclude Jews from the family fellowship of Israel is a motif which permeates the Halakha along with its more restrictive strains.

Time and again through our long and stormy past we have seen the chasm stretch, in both peaceful contemplation and violent conflict, over that most elusive definition of Jewishness: Are we a religion?; A people? Or a nation? Do we constitute a national minority or perhaps a "religious civilization"? Without ever agreeing on one answer, we have nonetheless defined ourselves as one people.

Moreover, we share a living history which is a partner to the Torah in defining Jewish identity. In our own day, for instance, all but the most extreme forces of the right and left – such as the Satmer Chasidim or the fading relics of the American Council for Judaism – have adjusted their perspectives on Jewish life to admit to the influence of history. Thus, the struggle to secure the safety of Israel, or in behalf of Soviet Jewry, or against anti-Semitism, continues to unite us. Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews, yes even the very people who are most fierce in voicing their disagreements on the theological level, nonetheless stand shoulder to shoulder – as brothers and sisters should – when it comes to these and kindred issues.

The fact remains that the evolving historical identity of the Jewish people will continue to grow, for Jewish history, like the Torah, belongs to no one single person or movement, but to all Jews, to all who share the destiny of this people Israel.

This is not to minimize our differences or to discount those divergences of view which obtain between Orthodoxy and non-Orthodoxy, in our day. These differences are real enough. They involve such pivotal issues as religious divorce, conversion and patrilineal descent. Issues which cannot easily be resolved. Indeed, they are not likely ever to be resolved. But if they cannot be resolved, we will simply have to live with them. And we *can* live with them as we have in the past, provided we accord each other mutual respect and refrain from questioning the integrity and intentions of those whose views we do not share.

Please note that I speak here, in the first instance, self-critically. In my volleys with Orthodoxy I have, in the heat of response to what I saw as attack, more than once indulged in the anger of the outcast, using words and evoking images and bitter analogies, which I now regret. I confess too, that there were times when I did not take fully into account the Halakhic difficulties that certain Reform innovations present to Orthodox Jews. I have responded in kind to the intransigence and zeal of Orthodoxy's most extreme spokespersons, using their scorn as an excuse for not truly striving to lessen the pain of others. This is not to say that I retreat from any of the steps taken by Reform Judaism this past decade – only that these steps might have seemed less precipitous and threatening had we achieved a higher level of dialogue in advance of public pronouncement.

However, the Orthodox, for their part, must begin to realize how very deeply their intolerance wounds us. To realize how we feel, for instance, when a leading Halakhic authority rules that a Reform Jew's aliyah is not an aliyah and his



blessing is not a blessing because we don't believe in God and hence God does not hear the prayer of Reform Jews. Does that not have a chilling resonance? And they must understand how deeply pained we are when another 'posek,' still another decisor of the Halakha, ordained, as he did earlier this year, that if a Jew must escape impending disaster and he can find refuge in either a church or a Conservative and Reform synagogue, the church is to be preferred.

*L'ma-an Hashem*, is it fair to ask us to remain silent in the face of all this and much more? Can we really be expected to interpret these things as anything other than an effort to delegitimize us, – to read us all out of the Jewish fold? Oh, I know that Orthodoxy sings the praises of *ahavat Yisrael* as a foremost virtue, and yet these excesses, convey just the opposite message, as does the eloquent silence from the overwhelming majority of Orthodox leaders. What shall we say about the persistent efforts to amend the Law of Return – spearheaded as they are by Chabad, the Lubavitcher movement, and endorsed, at least publicly, by all of mainline Orthodoxy? How are we to read that? We are told such an amendment will affect only a scant few, since only non-Orthodox converts are intended to be excluded, and how many of them choose to go on aliyah? True enough, few of these Jews-by-Choice plan to go on aliyah... today. But was Israel created only for a time such as this? Israel was established as a haven of refuge for all who are potentially victimized because of their Jewishness. The attempt to narrow its definition, therefore, is unacceptable – indeed, it is morally reprehensible. Safe harbor for Jews, the unreserved embrace of K'lal Yisrael for its persecuted

children - - that is what the Law of Return represents. It is a life preserver in a world that asks not, "What kind of a Jew are you?," before drowning us in hatred, intolerance and oppression.

Let me note in this connection that, while I have on occasion been guilty of hyperbole in defending Reform Judaism against the onslaughts of the politicized Orthodox establishment, I have never been guilty of attacking either Orthodox Jews, or Orthodox Judaism per se. Indeed, I deem Orthodoxy essential to Jewish life. I was raised by parents who taught me to respect Orthodoxy and those who practice it. But that Orthodoxy which I was taught to revere, as a young man, manifested a good deal of modesty. It did not lay claim to an all-exclusive authenticity. It did not presume to know with a certainty what the Holy One, blessed be He, demanded and whom He deemed acceptable in His eyes. It did not wear armor in the name of righteousness or wield the sword to trim the beards of other Jews. Religious triumphalism must be banished from our table. Simply put – though not simply achieved – what is required is the emergence and amplification of more Orthodox voices such as those of Yitz Greenberg, Emanuel Rackman and Eliezer Berkowitz. The genius of these men is in building bridges, not citadels of intolerance. We need to see them strengthen their hand, vie more actively for influence, and reach out especially to the Orthodox laity who I believe would welcome the refreshing breeze of dialogue among Jews.

Such a multi-faceted dialogue is possible, – if we accord each other respect and if the "what" and not the "who"

becomes the object of our quest – by which I mean, for example that we will endeavor to determine *what* the requirements for conversion should be, and not *who* is doing the converting. Indeed, many Reform Rabbis do observe the minutiae of Halakha regarding conversion, including *mila* and *tevila*, yet these conversions are nonetheless deemed fraudulent not because of what is done, but only because the officiants do not have an Orthodox ordination.

In his excellent article in last December's issue of *Moment*, that giant of the spirit, Harold Schulweis points to the historic, passionate dialogue between the Houses of Hillel and Shammai as the prime example of respectful Jewish conflict.

"Between the two schools," so Harold reminds us, "a spirit of trust and respect prevailed. Each informed the other when practices contrary to the rulings of the other school were being enacted ... and if ... the House of Hillel was entitled to have the Halakha fixed in agreement with its rulings, that was...due to the kindness and modesty of the House of Hillel. For the House of Hillel studied the arguments of its opponents and even mentioned the words of Shammai before its own." It is in this spirit that I would now like to discuss most briefly two issues which are the cause of much misunderstanding between Orthodoxy and Reform: (1) intermarriage-conversion and (2) patrilineal descent.

On the first issue there is the wide spread impression – indeed, it is a charge frequently levelled against Reform Judaism – that we somehow encourage intermarriage and

that we embrace anyone and everyone as a Jew, without restraint or requirement. This is simply not the truth. It is an unwarranted accusation. Reform Judaism is as unalterably opposed to intermarriage, as are the Orthodox and Conservative religious communities. We oppose such marriages on human grounds: because, as the statistics attest, they are more likely to flounder and end in divorce. But above all, we oppose intermarriage on Jewish religious grounds, because there is the ever present danger of the attenuation of our identity and a decline in our numeric strength. And so, we resist intermarriage.

The full resources and programs of the Reform movement are devoted to building Jewish identity and literacy in the hope of forestalling intermarriage. But the reality is that our best efforts do not suffice, nor do those of the other branches of Judaism. We live in an open society, and intermarriage is the sting which comes to us with the honey of our freedom. More than ever before, our young people go to school and work and live alongside non-Jews. Ultimately many determine to choose them as life-partners – not to escape from being Jews – but simply because they have fallen in love. When this happens, what should our policy be? It is here that Reform Judaism veers from the pattern of the past, for we have determined not to sit shiva over our children. Though persisting in our rejection of intermarriage, we refuse to reject the intermarried. On the contrary we have resolved to love them all the more. We do everything we humanly can to draw them closer to us. We try to involve them in Jewish life and in the life of our community, in the hope of bringing the non-Jewish partner to Judaism, or at least to make certain that the children



issuing from these marriages, our children and their children in turn – l'dor v'dor – will, in fact, be reared as Jews and share the destiny of this people Israel. We believe this is the wiser course. We believe that this course in no way violates the Jewish tradition. We feel that it is in greater harmony with the more compassionate strain of Jewish tradition, as it is exemplified in the Chasidic story of the father who came to his rebbe with the plaint that his son is a wastrel. "What should I do?" asked the father in his despair, and the rebbe enjoined: "Just love him all the more."

Now to the matter of patrilineal descent: I am sure that most of you are familiar with what is involved here, but just in case you are not, let me offer a brief explanation. As you know, for the past fifteen hundred years or so, Jewish identity was determined by the maternal line alone. Halakha, religious law as interpreted by traditional Jews for centuries, ruled that the child of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father is *automatically* Jewish. Whereas, the child of a non-Jewish mother and a Jewish father is *not* regarded as a Jew and must first undergo conversion. The recent decision by the Reform movement on patrilineal descent eliminates the distinction between men and women, between fathers and mothers. It holds, in effect, that insofar as genealogy is a factor in determining Jewishness, that the maternal and the paternal line should be given equal weight. But the Reform Resolution on Jewish identity does not limit itself to genealogy and in this sense Reform Judaism is more stringent than is Orthodoxy. Tradition confers Jewishness automatically if the mother is Jewish. Reform Judaism does not...it sets added requirements. Reform Judaism insists that while the child of either a Jewish father

or a Jewish mother may be considered Jewish, Jewishness must be further confirmed by "acts of identification with the Jewish people" and "the performance of mitzvot."

We are truly 'machmirim,' more stringent than Orthodoxy in this matter of Jewish status, for genealogy alone does not suffice for us to attain it, not even if the mother is Jewish. Something more is needed. Jewishness cannot be transmitted merely through the genes. It must be expressed in some concrete way, through an involvement in Jewish life and the willingness to share the fate of the Jewish people. In this matter, incidentally, Reform Judaism eliminates some peculiar anomalies to which the more traditional approach gave rise. Let me give you a dramatic case in point: Traditional Judaism denies the Jewishness of Ben Gurion's grandson, because his mother was converted to Judaism by a Reform Rabbi. Yet it accords Jewishness to the grandchild of Khrushchev because the mother, Khrushchev's daughter-in-law, was a Jewess. Reform Judaism's more stringent approach overcomes such anomalies, with its insistence that genealogy alone is not enough, even while it broadens the genealogical definition to encompass fathers as well as mothers.

This broadened definition, does not represent as complete a break with tradition, as it might first appear. In fact, in the early days of our history as a people, Judaism followed the paternal rather than the maternal line. In other words, there was a time in Jewish life when children were considered Jewish only because their fathers were Jewish, though their mothers were not. Look at the Torah and see. The genealogical tables of the Bible are overwhelmingly



patrilineal; it was the *male* line that determined descent and status. In matters of inheritance the paternal line alone was followed. Perhaps even more to the point, throughout the *Tanach*, the Jewishness of the children of non-Jewish mothers is never questioned. Solomon married many foreign wives, and the child of one of them, Rehoboam, succeeded him to the throne. Moses married Zipporah, the daughter of a Midianite priest, yet her children were considered Jews, following the line of their father. Joseph married Asenath, the daughter of a Priest of On. She certainly was not a Jewess, yet her children were reckoned as Jews because their father Joseph was a Jew. Indeed, unto this day, every male child of Israel is blessed with the blessing that he be like unto Ephraim and Menasseh, and this, even though the mother of Joseph's sons was the daughter of a priest who worshipped the sun in a heathen shrine at Heliopolis near Cairo.

In rabbinic literature, evidence of the patrilineal tradition continues to be manifest. It invokes the God of our *fathers* in prayer. It rules that we be summoned to the Torah by our *father's* name. It reminds us that we live by *zechut avot*, by the merit of our *fathers* alone. And when a non-Jew is converted to Judaism, Halakha ordains that he or she be designated as the son or daughter of *Avraham avinu*, of Abraham our *father*. Most significant of all, both the Torah and rabbinic law hold the male line absolutely dominant in matters affecting the priesthood. Whether one is a *Cohen* or a *Levi* depends on the father's priestly claim not the mother's. Well, if the father is good enough to bequeath the priestly status, why isn't he good enough to bequeath Jewishness? Be that as it may, at some time in our history

a shift from the paternal to the maternal took place. Scholars do not know precisely when or why, but a majority assume that the change took place in an evil time, when the Jewish community was under a tyrant's heel and many Jewish women were raped. It was then that a compassionate law ruled that even though there is some doubt about who fathered the child, the mother's Jewish identity sufficed to allow the community to embrace her offspring. If sociological factors altered our ideological stance once, it can be allowed do so again.

There are contemporary concerns which prompted the Reform rabbinate to act as it did. The first is rooted in the fact that most intermarriages take place between Jewish men and non-Jewish women. In cases of divorce, the father's right to determine the continuing Jewishness of his offspring had to be secured. Secondly, we could not ignore the sensitivity of the many children of inter-marriages who were reared and live as Jews but who, barring declaration on our part that they are fully Jewish, were bound to feel that they are somehow less than Jewish.

Jewish sociologists estimate that there are no less than 300,000 mixed marriages in the United States today, with twice as many children, and the number of both is growing in geometric progression. How do you think these children feel, though they were reared and live as Jews, when they hear that only the child of a Jewish mother is Jewish? When they are grown up, some of them find the strength to speak of their silent pain. Thus, several years ago, I received the following letter from a young woman named Adrienne Gorman, the daughter of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish

mother.

"When I read your speech, I realize how deeply the subject of Jewish identity has wounded me...and how successfully I had covered over the wound through the years. I was raised to be aware that some part of me was Jewish, and that with that birthright came the responsibility to remember the six million victims of the Holocaust – to remember them not as a detached humanitarian who, on principle, abhors extermination, but on a far more fundamental level, where the soul of the witness resides. I can't recall when I first came to understand that my sort of allegiance was to be considered nothing more than a sympathizer's or when I tried to answer for myself the question of what choice I would make if Hitler came again, this time using the Halakhic definition of a Jew in rounding up his candidates for the ovens and the camps. But at some point over the years I did decide that where my father's faith – or more precisely, his heritage – was an issue, I would without reservation take my stand as a Jew. Thus, I effectively bestowed on myself all of the deficits of being a member of an oppressed group with none of the benefits of that community. Jews consider me an non-Jew, non-Jews consider me a Jew...and with a despair tinged with as much humor as I could muster, I began to think of myself as nothing at all."

How could we fail to respond to such a person? Why should we demand that she undergo a formal conversion? Why should we not say to the Adriannes of this world: By God, you are a Jew. You are the daughter of a Jewish parent. You have resolved to share our fate. You are therefore flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone. You are in all truth what you consider yourself to be – a Jew.

I, for one, am glad that the Reform rabbinate has taken its step. The denial of such a declaration has caused far too many people far too much suffering. And so, I am happy that we have finally offered them recognition.

I do not expect what I have said to persuade anyone. I merely want to explain our motivations, and demonstrate the earnestness of our concerns. Reform Judaism does not make changes in order to offend other Jews. Nor, do we make changes in order to make ourselves more palatable to others and to enlarge our numbers. Our changes, including the patrilineal resolution, are born of necessity and conviction. They are entirely worthy of our essential character and history as a Jewish religious movement.

Only one more commentary in this connection: It may seem 'chutzpedik' but I do not mean this in any pejorative sense. I do devoutly wish that the 'poskim' of our time, the Orthodox decisors of the Law, were just a little bit more daring in Halakhic creativity – more responsive to the human needs of men and women – Jews living in a changing world. Maybe then, Reform Judaism wouldn't have to be quite so daring and innovative in its own decisions, and the two movements would be infinitely more congruent. But,



above all do I wish that ever more Orthodox rabbis and lay leaders would be prepared to admit what is manifestly true: that the Torah is capable of more than one interpretation, and that of its many faces, the most authentic is the one that reflects not only its wisdom but its heart.

Let me end as I began with the assertion of our essential unity which has persisted and will continue to persist, please God, despite our divergences. We have allowed for such diversity even in times when we were endangered and embattled. Shall we not do so today when we are so very much more secure? We have become a people who need not hunker down into conformity for survival's sake. We can afford to proliferate and to evolve. Indeed, we must, if we are to survive and grow in creative continuity. Let us therefore view those words which denote us in our many-splendored diversity – words like Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, secular, and what not – let us regard those qualifying words for what they really are: adjectives and not nouns. The noun is Jew.

**Woz mi zennen zennen mir ... ober yiden zennen mir.** Whatever we may be, we may be, but this above all, we are, we are Jews.

RABBI SCHINDLER'S CLOSING REMARKS TO  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Sunday, June 12, 1988

I must share this with you. A few years ago we instituted a program, and this definitely was not my idea; it emanated from the dean of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion on the West coast, Lou Barth. Lou Barth feels that we as a Reform Jewish community ought to be self sufficient when it comes to our rituals. In the past we've always drawn on Orthodox functionaries, and in my own family in the past had an Orthodox mohel. I must tell you when this Orthodox mohel officiated, even though I understood most of what was going on, the rest of the people there were totally disinterested, the mohel went in a corner, mumbled something, and before you knew it, it was over.

This time, for my grandchild, we took one of the Reform certified mohelim and I tell you this time it was a magnificent experience. Really, he explained what was going on, he had a special service which included the parents, the grandparents, the friends, it was a beautiful ceremony.

This particular Reform Jewish Mohel already performed 200 to 300 circumcisions. If Dan Schechter is in the room, the Mohel told me that most of the Jewish parents in our congregations have dispensed with circumcision as a ritual, they usually do it before they leave the hospital, they have a baby, and they do it and if there's one mitzvah that's important to Judaism, it is the mitzvah of circumcision, which makes one a member of the covenant, so they try desperately. Right now this program is on the East Coast, on the West Coast we're going to try to do it as quickly as possible and extend it. It is my own determination to do so, since I have had my experience, and I'm grateful to Lou for doing this, for lead-



ing us along this way.

One of the tasks I have here is to announce changes in the staff, and other staff matters. You ought to know that one of our staff members has resigned, I refer to Rabbi Daniel Bridge, who is assistant director to the Pacific Southwest Council. He will undertake a Hillel directorship at the University of Washington in Seattle. He was wonderful for us, he did an extraordinary job. We genuinely regret not having him.

We are pleased to announce that named to succeed Dan Bridge is Rabbi Janet Ross Marder, who has come to national attention because of the superb way in which she has served as Rabbi of Beth Chaim Chadashim of Los Angeles for several years. She's really an extraordinary young woman, a person of sensitivity and feeling and ability.

A third person, Rabbi Lynne Landsberg, becomes the assistant director of the Emily and Kivie Kaplan Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. She's a very talented rabbi, has served congregations in Thornton, Virginia and Harrisonburg, Virginia. Before that, she was assistant rabbi at Central Synagogue in New York. We are adding two women rabbis to our staff, that pleases me much, it will be helpful in altering the stereotype of "Rabbis as men only" in our constituency when we add these women to the staff.

Last but not least, I am very, very happy in this realm to announce that in accordance with the provisions of the ten year plan approved by the Board and because he has fulfilled there provisions magnificently and has performed his duties efficiently, that I have determined to grant Arthur Grant tenure.

I keep calling him Norman, because of his wonderful father Norman was a member of this Board of Trustees.

This gives me occasion, of course, to do what to some extent Allan has already done, first of all, to thank Edie, she is my right hand in many ways, and the secret is finally out, you heard that magnificent D'var Torah which she gave on Shabbat morning, she's the one that writes all my speeches, for which Rhea takes claim.

Then of course I want to thank Danny Syme. Danny is really extraordinary, he has fulfilled everything that I've asked him to do with precision, with finesse, with a diplomatic skill. I don't assign easy tasks for him, I usually assign those which are ticklish. As the Union's Biennial in Chicago, I proposed the para-rabbinic program and then said: "Dan, you get to it, you translate it, and he was able to do it. Even as the success of the Jewish Peace Corps, which really might grow into something very powerful and very good for our religious community for the Jewish people all over the world, is a reality because of what he did and not because I proposed it.

And last but not least, I want to applaud and express my friendship and appreciation to Al for everything he does, for everything that he is. I must and will tell you that I have to assume ultimate responsibility for the article in the New York Times. I will tell you what happened. Al showed me what he had written, I was deeply moved by it, he said he might want to put it in some publication. We discussed publications and I said maybe The New York Times. He said no, no, not really, He was thinking of something more like Moment or Tikkun.

Anyway that evening I had dinner with Max Frankel of The New York Times and we got to talking about the Israel situation.



I casually mentioned that I had read this article which moved me deeply and Max Frankel said, "Have you ever considered The New York Times?"

I said, "Well, it's a very powerful piece which requires a more thoughtful instrument like the New Yorker," and then he said, "I want the damn thing tomorrow morning on my desk."

We had it there and now I'm not so sure that Al is grateful for my having done that. You ought to know one thing, for some reason this wasn't mentioned, Al has gotten many, many attacks, obviously. You heard two of those yesterday, it's what you normally get, you really do. He's been torn apart in this morning's New York Times, as another example. You even get more than verbal attacks, you get threats; thus because my picture was associated with Al's article, at some meeting they threatened to send out a crew to tear out my lawn. As Rhea said, they don't realize we don't have a lawn. And our life has been threatened, but that goes with it.

Still, most of the letters that we have received have been encouraging. I 'm now speaking about Al, and one of the first days, a total stranger wrote and enclosed in that letter a \$10,000 check to be used for the Social Action program of the Union. So it isn't all bad.

In any event, oh, we've got to wish him mazal tov, too, because on the weekend his daughter is going to be married, so thank you for what you are, Al.

Now, a comment about the Board Meeting. Whenever there's a Board Meeting, a veritable eddy of emotion swells within me, and every Board meeting has it ebbs and it flows, its peaks and it's valleys. This particular Board meeting had some extraordinary peaks. As a matter of fact, I think yesterday was one of the great days in the history of our Board Meetings.

We began with a beautiful Sisterhood movie on Friday night, Saturday morning's debate was really on a high level and quite extraordinary. Then came this 80 year old man, Isadore Millstone, Is Millstone, giving this magnificent stirring statement, then the brilliant presentation by our Nobel Prize winner, Bernard Lown, which hopefully will stir us to action, then Dan Schechter's excellent D'var Torah.

The diversity of our effective programs which were displayed all day long and the superb nature of our leadership, and last but not least, the manner in which these meetings were conducted by our chairman, with dispatch, with effectiveness, with a touch of humor, we all expected a great deal from him, and it is quite clear that he has exceeded all our expectations and we owe him a great thanks.

Now, only three concluding remarks, all pertaining to one of the two themes which were interwoven at this particular meeting. I refer, of course, to the present problem in Israel.

Fact number one, or statement number one is this: I think it was really articulated last night during the debate and everybody was missing it from the resolution and everybody assumed it, that what we are saying in criticism of Israel does not lessen our devotion to Israel. That does not indicate that we have become indifferent to its fate and in any sense have turned our back on Israel. As I said before even though we vigorously oppose a given policy, nonetheless our love for Israel has always transcended policy and party and personality to embrace an entire people.

We will allow none of its shortcomings to alienate us from Israel. After all, as Lenny Fein once put it, we're not Israel's cheerleaders, we are her family and family devotion demands reproof and not just approbation. None of the warts



and bruises on the face that we once idealized as perfect will cause us to turn away.

Comment two as far as Israel is concerned: We face a tragedy, really, because it's not a question of right versus wrong, you know, the whitehats versus the blackhats. We see a conflict of two rights, a struggle of right against right, not a struggle of right against wrong. It's a tragedy of classic Greek dimensions. On the one hand, you have an authentic Palestinian uprising born of despair. On the other hand, you have a desperate reaction of the Israelis, equally authentic, born of their real fear that they are vulnerable, that their very survival is at stake. In such a case, it is impossible and even indecent to pass an easy judgment. All one can really do is cry, cry for two people who feel themselves condemned to eternal mutual enmity.

Which brings us to my final point, then, that the situation is not hopeless, not at all. The problem is not intractable, but the dilemma can be resolved, and in my judgment there is only one way, and we have indicated that in our resolution, and that is to have third party or third parties step forward to bring the antagonists to the peace table. It's worth remembering in this context, that not a single agreement has been reached between Israel and her neighbors without such international mediation of one form or another. Israel's War of Independence was brought to an end through the mediating efforts of the United Nations. That's what Ralph Bunche got the Peace Prize for many, many years ago in '48 and '49. The Sinai I and II agreements were negotiated by Kissinger. Then there was Camp David and the peace agreement which was strong enough to survive the Sadat assassination as well as the Lebanese.

I am convinced, I know for certainty that ultimately the parties will come to the peace table, and , and I quote now the words of Amos Oz, who spoke these lines when he addressed the World Union for the dedication of the Hebrew Union College Library, or when he received an honorary doctorate. He said:

When the peace comes, when that blessed moment arrives, we ought to mark its arrival with a huge monument in memory of blindness, stupidity and folly, for in the end, Israel will get something that she could have obtained on better terms ten and perhaps even twenty years ago, and the Palestinians will finally get only a part of what they could have achieved peacefully and honorably more than 40 years earlier, but for their fanaticism and wickedness. Only the thousands of dead will get nothing, except our wreaths, and perhaps the spit of those who have died will be on all of our faces when the day of peace comes, a peace that will extend from Baghdad to Khaurtoun, from Beit Alpha to Karnei Shomron.

Let us conclude our magnificent meeting with a prayer that the relentless cycle of mutual destruction will come to its end soon, that harmony will hallow the land and its capital, Jerusalem, that holy city where waiting for God was born, where the expectation for everlasting peace came into being. Amen.



September

1988



# LAFAYETTE

ALUMNI QUARTERLY



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*Lafayette Alumni Quarterly*  
(USPS 301-300) is published  
quarterly by Lafayette College,  
1 Markle Hall,  
Easton, Pennsylvania, 18042.  
Second Class postage paid at  
Easton, PA 18042 and at  
additional mailing offices.  
(Postmaster: Send address changes  
to Lafayette College, Office of  
Alumni Affairs, 307 Markle Hall,  
Easton, PA 18042.)  
All ideas expressed in the  
*Lafayette Alumni Quarterly*  
are those of the authors  
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# LAFAYETTE

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Volume 59, Number 4  
Summer 1988

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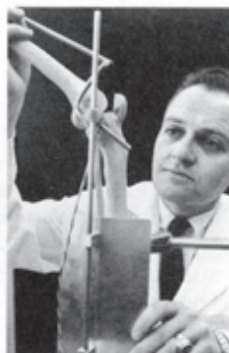


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Cover illustration by Thomas D. Kraemer



# THE LAST PAGE

## An Appreciation of the Gifts of Life

by Alexander M. Schindler

I appreciate the privilege to be here and to participate in the joyous ceremonies of this commencement hour. Joyous because it is in the nature of a release. Some of you may even think of it as a release from a kind of prison. George Bernard Shaw called college even "more cruel than a prison" for, as he put it, "In a prison, at least, you are not forced to read books written by the wardens." The passing years will mellow your judgment, as they did mine, once you begin to reap the abundant harvest planted in your minds and hearts within these hallowed halls.

In musing about what I was to say to you, it occurred to me that for all the fine words that attend our most significant life ceremonies, there is nearly always a hand gesture that marks the actual moment of transformation and passage. At a wedding it is the exchange of rings. At a funeral it is the first handful of dirt thrown upon the casket; mourning truly begins with that gesture of finality. At birth it is the slap on the behind that brings forth the newborn's first, gasping cry.

And at a college graduation?

Only when the sheepskin is handed to you, followed by a handshake—only then will you all sigh and cheer and no longer secretly fear that some computer somewhere has made a mistake that will force you to repeat your English composition course. Graduation has genuinely occurred when you walk the aisle back to your seat, clutching that diploma in your hand.

My musings about hand gestures

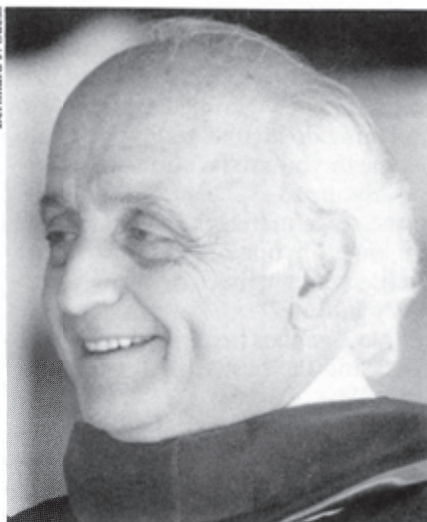
led me to remember an ancient rabbinic saying which sharpens a paradox of life that merits being brought to your awareness at this hour. I speak of life's self-contradictory demand which enjoins us to cling to its many gifts even while it ordains their eventual relinquishment. The rabbis of old put it this way: "A man comes into this world with his fist clenched, but when he dies, his hand is open." We begin by grasping. Ultimately we must renounce. And the art of living is to know when to hold fast and when to let go.

Surely we ought to hold fast to life, for it is wondrous, full of a grandeur and a worth, full of a beauty that breaks through every pore of God's own earth. We know that this is so, but all too often we recognize this truth only in our backward glance—when we remember what was and then suddenly realize that it is no more. We remember a beauty that faded, a love that waned. But we remember with far greater pain that we did not see that beauty when it flowered, that we failed to respond with love to love when it was tendered.

A recent experience re-taught me this truth. As a matter of fact, it occurred just two years ago. I was scheduled to speak at Lafayette, but couldn't because I was hospitalized following a rather severe heart attack. I was in an intensive care unit for long days and nights. It was not a pleasant place. My own pains and fears aside, its noises were not restful to the ear: the running feet of doctors and nurses; the creaking of machines wheeled in for some emergency; moans and groans and cries of pain; and on two occasions during those days, the dances and 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

Bernhard J. Suss



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

campus. I had to be wheeled across the courtyard in a gurney. And as I emerged from my building—the sunlight hit me. That's all there was to my experience. Just the light of the sun. And yet how beautiful it was—how warming, how sparkling, how brilliant. Then I looked about me to see whether anyone else relished the sun's golden glow. But men and women and children were hurrying to and fro, most of them with their eyes fixed on the ground, seemingly heedless of all the glory about them. And then I remembered how often I too had been indifferent to the grandeur of each day, too preoccupied with petty and sometimes even mean concerns to respond to the splendor of it all.

The insight gleaned from that experience is really as commonplace as was the experience itself: life's gifts are precious—but we are too heedless of them.

Thornton Wilder makes this point in one of his magnificent creations, his immortal *Our Town*. In this play, a young woman who died in childbirth is allowed to return to earth for just one day. She chooses her sixteenth birthday as the day she would like to re-live. But as she comes upon the scene so familiar to her, she finds that everyone is far too busy to relish the day's wonder. And so she cries out: "Mamma, Pappa, let's look at one another while yet we may." But nobody looks and nobody listens and all of the business of life goes on. Saddened by it all, she begs to be taken back. These are her words of farewell.

*Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, who fled to the United States as a refugee from Nazi Germany, is president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. He received an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from the College during Commencement, and delivered the Baccalaureate address, from which this article is adapted.*



"Good-bye Momma, good-bye Pappa, good-bye Grovers Corners. Good-bye to clocks ticking, and hot coffee and newly ironed dresses . . . and lying down and getting up again. On earth you are far too wonderful for anyone to realize you." She turns to the stage manager and asks: "Tell me, does anyone on earth ever realize life while he lives it . . . every, every minute?"

"No," replies he, "maybe the poets and the saints, maybe they do some."

And then she speaks her final words: "That's all human beings are: blind people. . . ."

Is this not the malady that afflicts us? We are blind, blind to so much of the beauty which abounds in our world. We walk about in a cloud of ignorance. We trample on the feelings of those who love us. We spend and waste time as though we had a million years to live—always at the mercy of one self-centered passion after another. How heedless we often are of our good until it is too late. Like birds whose beauty is concealed until their plumes are spread against the sky, our blessings brighten only as they take their flight.

Here then is the first pole of life's paradoxical demands on us: life is precious, it is ineffably dear. Never be too busy for the wonder and the awe of it. Be reverent before each dawning day. Embrace each hour. Seize each golden minute. Cling to life with all your soul and might. Hold fast to life. Hold fast to life . . . but not so fast that you cannot let go.

This is the second side of life's coin, the opposite pole of its paradox: we must accept our losses, we must learn how to renounce, how to let go. This is not an easy lesson to learn and to internalize, especially when we are young. For when we are young we think that the world is ours to command, that whatever we desire with the full force of our passionate being can, nay, will be ours. Ah, but then life moves along to confront us with its grim realities, and slowly but surely this second truth dawns upon us: life not only offers us gifts, it also makes us suffer losses—and we must learn to accept them.

In a sense, I suppose, this very

moment in your lives involves a loss. A contemporary humorist once described college as a place "that keeps you warm between high school and an early marriage." Well, you now must leave the warmth of this place, its security, to go out into a colder world and embark on a life of your own. This will not be the first loss you have suffered or will suffer. At every stage of our life we sustain losses—and grow in the process. We begin our independent lives once we emerge from the womb and lose its protective shelter. Then we leave our mothers and fathers and our childhood homes. We enter a progression of schools and leave them. We get married and have children and then have to let them go, even as, in a sense, your parents are letting you go today. We confront the death of our parents and our spouses. We renounce our childhood dreams and accept the fact that life will not allow us to realize them. We face the gradual or not so gradual waning of our own strength. And ultimately we confront the inevitability of our own demise, losing ourselves and all that we were or dreamed to be.

Life is never just a being. It is always a becoming, a relentless flowing on. We move through the various stages of life, as Shakespeare had it, each with its entrances and its exits: the infant becomes the boy, the boy the man, and there simply is no turning back.

Our parable of the open and closed hand confronts us with life's contrary, oxymoronic demands. First we were enjoined to cling to life, to appreciate its every gift. Then we are told to learn how to renounce these gifts, each and every one of them. How can we do both, and at the very same time? More importantly, why should we do them? Why fashion things of beauty when beauty is evanescent. Why give our hearts in love when those we love ultimately will be torn from our grasp.

In order to resolve this paradox, we must gain a wider perspective, reaching beyond ourselves in time both past and future, viewing our lives as through windows open on eternity. Once we do that we realize that though our lives are finite, our deeds on earth do weave a pattern that is timeless.

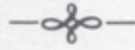
Shakespeare was wrong. The good is not interred with our lives. The beauty that we fashion cannot be dimmed by death. The love we give in life lives on long after we are gone, to bless the lives of others. When Chanayo ben Teradyon, noblest of Jewish martyrs, was wrapped in a Scroll of the Law and burned at the stake, his pupils who witnessed his terrible agony cried out: "Our master, our teacher, what seest thou?" He replied: "I see the parchment burning, but the letters of the Law, they soar on high." Even so it is with us. Our flesh may perish, our hands will wither, but that which they create in beauty and goodness and truth lives on for all time to come.

If my baccalaureate address must have its message, then let it be this: don't spend and waste your lives accumulating objects that only will turn to dust and ashes. Pursue not so much the material but rather the ideal, for ideals alone invest life with meaning and are of enduring worth. Look about you and see: add love to a house and you have a home. Add righteousness to a city and you have a community. Add truth to a pile of red brick and you have a school. Add religion to the humblest of edifices and you have a sanctuary. Add art and imagination to a series of spires and arches and you have a cathedral. Add justice to the far flung round of human endeavor and you have civilization. Put them all together, exalt them above their present imperfections, add to them the vision of humankind redeemed—forever free of need and strife—and you have the Temple of the Future: the kind of future we dream you to have—a future lighted with the radiant colors of hope.

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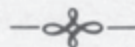
*The Last Page is a feature for opinions, commentaries, first person accounts, or reminiscences relating to life at Lafayette, general educational issues, and current events. Manuscripts under 1,000 words are preferred. Publication is based solely on the editor's decision. Please send submissions, including a self-addressed, stamped envelope, to Editor, Lafayette Alumni Quarterly, 1 Mar-  
kle Hall, Easton, Pennsylvania 18042.*





# **“DAY SCHOOLS—A VITAL OPTION FOR THE REFORM JEWISH COMMUNITY”**

Address by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler  
Founding Meeting, Council of Reform Jewish Day Schools  
Temple Israel, Boston, Mass.  
March 20, 1988





**I**t is a privilege which I greatly appreciate to be here and to participate in the deliberations of these days. This is an historic occasion, this founding Conference of the Council of Reform Jewish Day Schools. It is an event which will be remembered with pride, once a new generation of scholars will write about our religious community's continuing unfoldment. Indeed, chances are that our historians of the future will be products of the very schools that are the objects of this Council's concern.

I want to applaud you therefore, all of you who are doing the pioneering work in full-time Reform Jewish education, the plowing and the planting, the tending and the weeding, which have brought us this weekend to our first harvest meal here in Boston. With visionary selflessness, you have been planting the arbor of Jewish life for our future as an act of continuity with our Jewish past. For this, I applaud you.

In all fairness, I suppose, it should be noted that you are not primal pioneers in the sense that you create *ex nihilo*. The option of full-time Jewish education has a venerable history among us. Indeed, Isaac Mayer Wise was a fervent proponent of the day school idea and he labored to maintain such a school in his own synagogue. His eminent colleague and co-worker Max Lilienthal established a like school in New York—he even called it the Hebrew Union School—and he managed to enroll nearly 300 students. Through the middle of the 19th century, virtually all communities in which German Jews settled opened all-day Jewish schools for their children.

In our own century, Emanuel Gamoran persistently advocated the idea, and our Commission on Jewish Education—under both Solomon Freehof and Roland Gittelsohn—gave sanction to his views. I myself, when I was the Union's Director of Education and subsequently, gave frequent public voice to my conviction that only a full-time setting can provide our students sufficient opportunity to be fully schooled in their heritage.

But the day schools of Reform Judaism's founding years did not survive the 19th century, and the more recent exhortations of Reform Judaism's leadership did not go much beyond rhetoric. It was you who mustered the courage and the perseverance to bridge the gap between *midrash* and *ma-aseh*, between the mind and the hand.



And so you are true trailbreakers. Along with our pioneering Reform kibbutzniks in Israel, along with our social action interns in Washington, along with that lusty band of those who are determined to deepen the spiritual dimensions of our religious community—you are the avant-garde of Reform Judaism, which, in turn, is the avant-garde of Jewish life today. We are a wheel revolving around a spiritual hub, gathering momentum and membership. And you are at the perimeters of that wheel, who actually make contact with the ground and move us along.



**Y**our work is essential to our continuity. Part-time Jewish education simply does not suffice for the need. It will not create that cadre of Jewishly informed and motivated young leaders we require to remain a vital, vibrant movement within Judaism.

Look at the unvarnished reality and see: most of the young people whom we encounter in our schools and camps and youth groups are Jewishly disadvantaged.

Their growth as Jews has been stunted by the assimilation of the past two generations of American Jews and its accompanying embarrassment and uncertainty. Their Jewish maturing has been stunted also by our own movement's readiness to develop a social conscience in our children and be content to call that "Jewish identity," our willingness to sum up the whole Torah, as did Hillel, with words about kindness to our neighbors, but without adding his injunction to "go and study." Our children's Jewish identities have been injured, worst of all—as we have all been injured, so very deeply—by the destruction of our European roots, a Jewish disaster for generations that were slaughtered and for future generations too.

These wounds to the spirit cannot be bound with the band-aid of a part-time Jewish education. That requires a more extensive and intensive educational effort. It demands the bracing cure of full-time Jewish study, at the very least for those whom we intend to be our future leaders. Without it, without such an option for full-time Jewish study, the reality of injury and stunted Jewish identity will not change—and our movement will suffer because of it.

Even now, we suffer a shortage of rabbis that is seriously affecting our congregational life. How could it be otherwise, when we set up barriers of omission in our children's lives that only the most soaring and determined spirit can overcome? What other religious community subjects itself to such 'stringent' requirements for its seminaries: that the applicant have little or no prior training, that he must begin his advanced studies by turning to the primers of Jewish education, that he must have previously demonstrated intense devotion to Jewish life by swimming upstream, unassisted, against all the forces that have been eroding the banks of American Judaism for two centuries? That is a description of the average entering student at the Hebrew Union College, its rabbinic and cantorial departments, as well as its graduate Schools of Jewish Education and Communal Service.

A continuation of the status quo will plunge our movement into a crisis of both lay and professional leadership. That is why we need Reform Jewish Day Schools.





Nonetheless, there are many good people in our midst who resist the momentum toward full-time Reform Jewish education. They fear that we are separating our children from our neighbors and from the democratizing spirit of the public school system. They are afraid that we will undermine that process of public education to which we American Jews have contributed so greatly and from which we have derived immeasurable benefit. In a word, they worry that we will become sectarian, tribal, that we will betray our universalist concerns, that when we establish day schools we are flirting most dangerously, with re-ghettoization.

These fears are groundless. To begin with, the founders of our nation never granted public education a monopoly, an all-exclusive responsibility for the rearing of America's youth; they rather encouraged the development of a parallel private school system for those parents who did not want their children homogenized, who wanted them to have a special education to meet their special interests and talents and needs.

Indeed, some of the most striking advances in educational theory and practice were pioneered in the private rather than the public sector of America's educational system. Thus, Frances W. Parker, who along with John Dewey, was primarily responsible for those pedagogic innovations that came to be known as progressive education, laid its groundwork not in Boston's public school system but rather at a private school in nearby Quincy, Massachusetts. In like manner, so I am confident, our liberal Jewish day schools will develop educational techniques and materials of boon to every kind of Jewish education.

Be that as it may, the American system of government does not obligate its citizens to go to public school, nor is there any evidence whatsoever that private school graduates lack integration into the general community. Quite the opposite is true. Study after study attests to that. The graduates of parochial schools move with ease into the mainstream of American life. What more compelling evidence of such integrative capacity than to be elected President of these United States? Well, most of our Presidents were the beneficiaries of private schooling rather than of public education.

Those who fear that day schools will isolate and ghettoize our children may well themselves be operating under the burden of a ghetto mentality, a mentality that fears Jewish particularism as a handicap, an obstacle to mainstreaming in America.

That may have been true for the children of the immigrant generation, but it is scarcely true for our children today. Is there any endeavor that is beyond the realm of possibility for them as Jews in contemporary America? Are there any trivia from the mainstream culture of which they are ignorant? Have they failed to absorb any of the pap that they are fed on television day in, day out?

No, our children do not suffer from a lack of Americanization, a lack of social awareness, a lack of precocious knowledge about the world. What our children suffer from is a lack of Jewish literacy, a lack of affirmative Jewish identity, a lack of Jewish substance. And that is what we intend to provide, and indeed are providing so abundantly in our liberal Jewish day schools.





**H**ow will our day schools differ from those of orthodoxy? Precisely in the manner in which *Reform* differs from the other streams within Judaism.

To begin with, and from our very beginnings as a religious movement, we have insisted on an unrestricted equality between women and men. We seek the full participation of women in the religious life, and we stand ready for the transformation that that participation will bring. In like manner will *our* day schools reject the notion that an intensive Jewish education is the primary preserve of men and so we will recruit young women for our schools, resolutely refusing to consign their education to a second- or third-class status.

The word "outreach" comprises another element of Reform Judaism present-day burgeoning. Rather than cloaking ourselves in an exclusive chosenness, we have declared ourselves open to those who would choose us. Virtually all orthodox day schools, and too many communal Jewish day schools bar their doors to the children of intermarried couples, even though their non-Jewish parents are ready to rear them Jewishly. We will refuse to set up such barriers. On the contrary, we will vigorously support the efforts of the intermarried to provide their children with rich Jewish experiences—experiences that will evolve into deeply imbedded memories to mold their adult identities.

Social activism is another hallmark of Reform, our loyalty to the prophetic spirit of Judaism. This component of our literary tradition must receive its proper place in the curriculum of the Liberal Jewish day school. We want to rear a generation of Jews for whom there is no schizophrenic division between the "real world" and the world of Jewish devotion: who understand and are motivated to act on the understanding that *tikkun olam*, the search for justice and mercy in this world, is indeed the quest of Judaism.

Lastly, but not in the least, our Liberal day schools will transmit Reform's unique and passionate recognition of Judaism as a living faith. For us, Judaism is a flowering plant: not merely a tangle of roots, but an organism that draws nourishment from those roots; not only a bare stem, but a firm and flexible stem full of sprouts and buds; not only a flower fast to wilt and fade, but a plant that flourishes anew in each generation.

The curriculum of the Liberal Jewish day school will also be innovative. It will move away from compartmentalization toward the integration of Jewish and general studies: Jewish history taught as a thread in the study of world history; profound religious questions not shelved, but confronted in social studies and even science classes. This curricular goal will challenge your creative talents as does no other, since available educational materials of this kind are virtually non-existent.

The Jewish life for which we are preparing our young people is one of integration and high energy. They will be leaders, they will be professionals, they will be thinkers, they will be doers. Our goal is to provide them with the tools of leadership, of professionalism, of thinking, of doing—while providing them also with the nurturing strength of Judaism, of a genuinely embraced Judaism, to help buoy and shelter them in a merciless world.

We want to furnish them with a Jewish calendar and clock as an alternative to the rat race. We want to give them the gift of Shabbat as a constant reminder that there is more to life than things and activities; that there is a here and now as well as a future; that there is a contentment to enjoy as well as an ambition to reach for. We want to provide a Judaic context for their sense of goodness, of justice, of humanity, of the sacredness of life—so that when they experience those moments of acute consciousness, of challenge and of joy, they will not feel alone, but will think, “Oh yes, I remember. . .” They will experience those moments of reverence and of passion as their share of a millennia-old tradition of people striving for those very feelings. They will experience their own divine madness as part of a collective will for redemption.

## AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**T**his is the product for which we strive in our Liberal Jewish day schools, and we will reap such a harvest if we and the teachers whom we select are not just Jewishly knowledgeable and pedagogically skilled. They must also be committed to those standards we seek to transmit. They themselves must embody the ideals we strive to nurture in those who are entrusted in our care. For when all is said and done, our students internalize their values primarily through identification with the ego ideal. They follow the mentor who is and not just the teacher who persuades with his lips.

*Barzel b'varzel vachad.* “Iron sharpeneth iron.” A knife can best be honed against the edge of another knife.

The words of *Mishle* are re-echoed in the sentiments of a modern philosopher-poet:

“He who teaches as books enable only babbles. . .not any pretender, not any liar, not any slave can teach. . .but only he can teach who has. . .he only can create who is. . .courage, wisdom, piety, love—they can teach.” (Emerson)

May we be teachers of such a kind. Then we will rise above mere professionalism to artistry. For teachers at their very best are artists. They are artists of the spirit. They fashion beauty not in silver nor in gold, but in the living soul of the human being. And surely such a person, who can take an earth-bound creature and work out in him the divine image will, one day, rise higher by his work than any artist-genius who ever lived and wrought upon the earth. For there is no material like human nature. And there is no dignity like working in it. And there is no grandeur like success in such a working.



There  
in those days...

Abba Hillel Silver  
Hillel Silver

In the pre-Holocaust, pre-State of Israel Jewish world of less than a half century ago, the American Jewish scene was blessed with the presence of rabbinical giants whose stature was a reflection both of their individual abilities and of the relative powerlessness of their community. Rabbis Stephen S. Wise and Abba Hillel Silver, in particular, were the last of a species of inspired leaders who, with tremendously persuasive eloquence and moral intensity, tried to influence the American Establishment in ways that the American Jewish community as a whole now strives for with extensive lobbying, philanthropy, and electoral and organizational effort. The rabbis had their counterparts among giants in the world of business (Warburg, Schiff, Seligman), of trade unionism (Gompers, Hillman, Dubinsky), of politics and the judiciary (Brandeis, Morgenthau, Frankfurter) -- but it was the rabbinical titans alone whose success at organizing the American Jewish community and mobilizing its latent political power made their own role in the Jewish world obsolete. Like the Biblical antediluvians, they would become "the heroes of old, the men of renown" of a bygone era.

Perhaps this explains why it has taken until now, over twenty-five years after the death of Abba Hillel Silver, for his first biography to be published. Despite the man's powerful personality, despite his famous oratory talent, his wide-ranging

intellect and his much-vaunted political skills, Silver's personal career was subordinated to the world-historical cause of redeeming the Jewish people from the genocidal crimes of Nazism by assuring the establishment of the State of Israel. His and his Zionist compatriots' success meant their replacement in the historical spotlight by the leaders of the new Jewish state; it meant, too, their replacement by Federations and lay organizations as the main wielders of American Jewish communal influence.

Moreover, the backdrop to Silver's period of greatest leadership was the Holocaust -- the annihilation of European Jewry in a shockingly brief period. Against such a backdrop, none but the martyrs of resistance seem of adequate stature. At best, the heroism of American Zionist leadership is obscured for us by the kind of raw, rude, contentious politics in which they participated as midwives to the diplomatic birthing of the state of Israel. At worst, American Jewry of the period is viewed as impotent, or even as criminally culpable, in its inability to halt or even slacken the genocidal onslaught. Indeed, it has become fashionable to charge the American Zionist leadership with ignoring or sacrificing rescue efforts in order to focus on building the Yishuv in Palestine and transforming it into a state. (The American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust, formed in September, 1981 with Arthur Goldberg as chair and torn by internal dissension within the year, did little to modify this perception.)

The greatness of Abba Hillel Silver and his allies (and rivals) has thus been eclipsed by both their successes and their failures. That these occurred in a dramatically different historical context than our own seems hard for young observers, especially, to appreciate, so radical has been the improvement of Jewish fortunes



since the Holocaust and so qualitative a change in Jewish life has been wrought by the existence of Israel.\*

Consider, therefore, the environment in which Abba Hillel Silver labored:

In the late 1930s and '40s, American Jewry, equipped with far less than its present capacity for self-defense, faced an environment peopled by anti-Semitic organizations and individuals: the German-American Bund, the Silver Shirts, the Christian Front, the Black Legion, the Christian Crusaders, the Ku Klux Klan, and over a hundred others; the Rev. Charles Coughlin, General George Van Horn Mosely, Gerald L.K. Smith, aviator and American hero Charles Lindbergh, and many more. Most of these emerged as overnight sensations in response to Hitler's ascension in Germany. None took root (except, perhaps, the obdurate KKK) to do lasting damage to the pluralistic culture of our country. Nonetheless, though in calmer times such stewards of nativism, fascism and anti-Semitism might have been dismissed, American Jewry could hardly be so glib in the face of the startling rise of the once-ridiculed Adolf Hitler to totalitarian power in Germany.

Pre-war Nazism had cast a global penumbra of anti-Semitism. When in the late '30s the American Jewish Committee and other human-relations agencies began conducting public opinion surveys, they uncovered a reservoir of ill-will against American Jewry. In 14 polls between March, 1938 and February, 1946, one-third to

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\* Despite these dramatic changes, the experience of helplessness in the face of slaughter and indifference lingers in Jewish self-perceptions. Notwithstanding the efforts of Jewish religious and secular leaders to help develop a sustaining, positive sense of American Jewish identification -- and despite the bestselling assurances of my friend Charles Silberman that Jews can be "certain" of their place in America (*A Certain People*) -- it is the anti-Semitic past with which Rabbi Silver struggled, rather than the promising future he helped to create, that seems to most powerfully bind the community together.

one-half of the respondents considered Jews "too powerful" -- with the proportion of those who subscribed to this idea *growing* into a majority during and immediately after the war. Of this hostile sector, 20% said in 1938 that they would "drive Jews out of the U.S." to reduce this mythical Jewish power. Over 60% of people polled in March, 1938 believed that the "persecution of Jews in Europe has been their own fault," entirely or partly. Consistently during the war years, Americans named Jews as a "menace to America" as often or nearly as often as they named Germans and Japanese.

Many of these opinions fluctuated wildly from poll to poll, revealing more of an American susceptibility to anti-Semitism than a commitment to it. Discrimination against Jews did consistently reveal itself in the fields of housing, employment and education, and outright physical attacks upon Jews did occur in urban centers during the war years. Anti-Semitism was nevertheless rootless in America, which at best had a tolerant spirit and at worst an ample supply of alternative scapegoats.

When it came to rescue efforts on behalf of the Jewish victims of Hitlerism, however, other ingredients of American malaise combined with anti-Semitism to create enormous obstacles. David S. Wyman points to these in his authoritative work, *The Abandonment of the Jews, America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*: how the Great Depression's 30% unemployment rate greatly empowered the anti-immigration arguments of restrictionist legislators (1939 saw no less than 60 bills introduced in Congress to further shrink the xenophobic quota system installed during the 1920s); how the wartime boom failed to alter such sentiments, for Americans were fearful that the boom would bust in peace time; how the leading opponents to immigration at the grassroots scale were such groups



as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the American Coalition of Patriotic Societies, itself representing 115 organizations with a combined membership of 2.5 million. So extreme was opposition to immigration that in a survey taken in early 1939, 66% of the American public opposed a one-time exception to quota limits in order to allow 10,000 refugee *children* to enter the U.S.! "The tendency in Congress," writes Wyman, "was clear, and it frightened the leadership of several refugee-aid and social-service organizations. ... (T)hey were convinced by Fall, 1943 that a rising tide of public opinion, along with the anti-refugee mood in Congress, endangered the entire quota system." Such activists were able to save the quotas from drastic curtailment or elimination, but they could not "succeed in widening America's virtually closed doors during the war, even to the extent of increasing the tiny percentage of the quotas that was being made available."

Conceivably, a true mass movement in favor of rescue might have moved Franklin Delano Roosevelt to override the Congress, the State Department, the War Department and all the other forces of obstinate opposition. But the Jewish community on its own had no such ability. Lonely we were, without support from the trade union movement (of which Rabbi Silver himself was a champion, resigning in 1921 from the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce to protest its open-shop policies, and becoming a key player in Ohio's pioneering unemployment insurance movement in the '30s), without a civil rights movement to mobilize, without the many alliances that have been key to Jewish advancement, and general social progress, in the post-War era.

In short, Jewish leadership was helplessly isolated in its

rescue efforts. The genocidal reality of Nazi anti-Semitism had loomed up too suddenly out of the historical continuum of anti-Jewish persecution. It was too much of a moral horror, a crime before God, to be fully grasped. When, at last, the carefully placed Nazi decoys and concealments were whisked away, some two million Jews had already been slaughtered; the factories of death were speeding up production; America was reeling from the shock of Japanese treachery and military prowess; American Jewish leadership was paralyzed. The opportunity truly to make a difference -- before the consolidation of Nazi power in Germany, certainly before the conquest of Poland, the nation that became a virtual killing field for Jews -- had long passed. Even the American Jewish boycott of German goods, initiated by Abba Hillel Silver and Samuel Untermyer in 1933, had been sharply opposed as "provocative" by most mainstream German and American Jewish leaders.

Searching the horizon for even a glimmering of light, Silver and his compatriots found hope and purpose in the possibility of establishing a Jewish national presence in Palestine. The fulfilment of the Zionist vision, said Rabbi Silver, was "the inescapable logic of events." "From the infested, typhus-ridden Ghetto of Warsaw, from the death-block of Nazi-occupied lands where myriads of our people are awaiting execution by the slow or the quick method, from a hundred concentration camps which befoul the map of Europe, from the pitiful ranks of our wandering hosts over the entire face of the earth, comes the cry: 'Enough; there must be a final end to all this, a sure and certain end!'"

First among the obstacles to that "sure and certain end" was the British government's White Paper of 1939, which limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to 75,000 over the course of five years.



It was a policy that squeezed Jews, even those who had managed to become illegal refugees, into Hitler's death trap -- yet at the 21st World Zionist Congress in Geneva (August, 1939), Chaim Weizman advocated a policy of cautious compromise with Great Britain in order to preserve unity against the Nazis, and Abba Hillel Silver, in one of his first appearances on the world Zionist scene, spoke in support of Weizmann's approach.

This would mark the last time that Silver would advocate Zionist dependency upon the powers-that-be. ("The tragic problems of the Jewish people in the world today cannot be solved by chiefs of government or prominent officials sending us Rosh Hashanah greetings!") Courted by Weizmann and others to commit himself to Zionist politicking, Silver became a dynamo of militant Zionism. Within three years he would electrify the Biltmore Conference in New York with an historic speech urging -- and winning, under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion -- an unequivocal demand for the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. By 1943 Silver had control of the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs and turned it into a remarkable powerhouse of lobbying and agitation.

Throughout, Silver's strategy was to mobilize the Jewish rank-and-file and build widespread popular support for the establishment of a Jewish state. "The most effective representation in a democracy is through organized public opinion," he argued. "...We have nothing to lose now but our illusions. We have a new life to build for our people!" Distrustful of the Roosevelt administration, he insisted upon political independence for himself and for Zionism. (Silver was a registered Republican, but supported candidates of both major parties for high public office; he opposed Roosevelt's third term as president as a violation of "a tradition

which reflects the political wisdom of the American people, a custom which is even more powerful than a law...indicat(ing) that free government is not dependent on any one man, however good and able he may be."). This strategy brought Silver into a head-on collision with Nahum Goldmann and especially with Stephen S. Wise, who advocated use of the channels of influence that Wise himself had established over a forty-year span of public service and Zionist activism.

Their furious factional fights, and the general inability of American Jewry to quickly join ranks to strive for rescue and post-war statehood, have also been the object of retrospective criticism. Hitlerism, after all, did not distinguish among Jews. Zionist or anti-Zionist, communist or capitalist, Orthodox or Reform, German or Eastern European -- none of these differences were visible among those who stood before open graves or gas chambers. How, then, could Jewish leadership in America (or in Palestine -- or in the Warsaw Ghetto itself!) allow ideological or even stylistic differences to slow their resistance to the Nazi holocaust and their efforts to reclaim a Jewish national presence in Palestine?

Here, too, we must leaven our judgments about the key actors by recalling their historical context, most especially the statelessness of the Jewish people. Israel has since supplied a focus for unified pride and unified concern in the Jewish world (as well as a new forum for fierce Jewish in-fighting); there are few but the most ideological Jews who today would call themselves "anti-Zionist." During the first half of our century, however, it was the Zionists who were considered "ideological" by mainstream Jews of every stripe. Zionism was a small, minority movement.



Silver's own Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform) was on the record as anti-Zionist until 1937 -- and both rabbinic and lay battles over Jewish nationalism wracked the Reform movement right through the war years. Likewise were the Conservative and Orthodox branches of Judaism (including most Chasidic sects) opposed to what they regarded as a pseudo-Messianic, dangerously secular pipe dream -- while the influential American Jewish Committee and the not-to-be discounted Jewish Left, socialist and communist, were decidedly against Jewish nationalism, preferring other political destinies for the Jewish people.

History overruled them all, as the Zionist cause was pushed to the fore, morally and politically, in the name of Jewish survival. "What is really driving us toward Palestine," Silver would ask in the spring of 1943, as chair of the United Palestine Appeal, "and why is our movement irresistible? Our sages say that two Arks led the Children of Israel through the wilderness and on to the Promised Land: the Ark wherein lay the body of Joseph, and the Ark of the Covenant. Two Arks! An Ark of death and an Ark of faith!" It was too late, he argued with his fellow Jews, "to wage anew those interesting ideologic battles of a generation ago, the generation which preceded the Balfour Declaration." The "vast ghostly company" of murdered Jews "all the way back to the universal holocaust in the days of Chmielnicki...give us no rest...admonish us against all vain illusions and false hopes. It is their innocent blood which will not be covered up, until out of their martyrdom a new life is born -- the free and redeemed life of their people."

In their lifelong and visionary Zionism, Stephen S. Wise and Abba Hillel Silver were exceptional and united. Perhaps it would be more accurate to view their rivalry as a functional partnership.

Together they hitched their dream of Israel to the great draught horse America. Silver the militant swept Great Britain and other obstacles out of its path; Wise the diplomat fed, groomed and encouraged the beast (and helped other, non-Zionist Jews to hop onto the wagon). Eventually the mighty horse did its labor. Then other Jewish leaders took over the reins.

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Rabbi Silver's Zionist commitments were unwavering from boyhood and pre-dated his involvement with Reform Judaism by nearly a decade. When, in 1911, eighteen-year-old Abba Hillel Silver opted for rabbinical training (and general college studies) in Cincinnati at Hebrew Union College, the stronghold of Reform Judaism, his fellows in the Dr. Herzl Zion Club, of which Silver had been president since becoming bar mitzvah, must have been appalled. The radical eight-plank Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 was still very much binding upon Reform Judaism, and its fifth plank was pronouncedly anti-Zionist: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine nor a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state." The historical forces that would eventually move Reform Judaism to redefine itself ("to recognize and reassert the spiritual and ethnic community of Israel and take sympathetic cognizance of the Palestine that is being built," in the words of Rabbi Abraham Feldman of Hartford, 1937) were not yet fully in place. Instead, the movement was the captive of its past, of its revolutionary period of anti-Orthodox rationalism and rejectionism. Reform's sense of itself as a missionary, "universal" faith was so incompatible with national aspirations that Rabbi David Einhorn



(1809-1879), the radical Reformer of Baltimore's Har Sinai who was eventually driven from his pulpit for his anti-slavery views, could seriously urge the observance of Tish Ab'av, traditionally a day of mourning for the destruction of the Jerusalem Temples and the initiation of the Jewish Exile, as a day of celebration!

Silver not only remained impervious to the anti-Zionism within the Reform movement -- he indelibly impressed his Zionist faith upon the movement as a whole. The process took three decades, and many played a role in it -- not least the almost three million Eastern European Jews who immigrated to the U.S. between 1881 and 1920, reducing German Jewry, who were most strongly attached to Classical Reform, to a small minority (at the time of the Pittsburgh Platform, only 300,000 Jews had lived in America, many from Germany). These immigrants' process of Americanization, including their movement away from the strictures and visible trappings of Orthodoxy, and Reform's process of redefinition, including a moving away from its rather cold intellectualism and reserved style of worship (and its eventual institutional transplantation from Cincinnati to New York, the teeming center of American Jewish life), were mutually reinforcing evolvments. Likewise did Eastern European Jewish self-consciousness as a "national minority," a people within peoples, pave the road to Reform acceptance of Zionist sentiments.

Abba Hillel Silver argued this point in a momentous 1935 debate before the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) in Chicago, in which he urged the abandonment of Plank 5 of the Pittsburgh Platform. "It is idle," he said, "... to talk of our people as no longer a nation but a religious community, in the face of the fact that millions of Jews are today recognized by the law of nations as

national minorities in Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, millions more as a distinct nationality in Soviet Russia...and hundreds of thousands in Palestine where a Jewish homeland is being created under the terms of a mandate of the League of Nations which recognizes not only the national existence of the Jewish people but its historic claim to a national home. It is not only idle today to repeat the 'religious community' shibboleth of the early Reformers but also quite fantastic....

"Should we not rather regard it as providential that in these days when formal religion is losing its hold upon great numbers of our people and when this loss threatens to undermine our existence as a people, that the national and racial sentiment has been rekindled among many of them so that they wish to remain Jews and to link up their destiny with the destiny of Israel in some if not in all of the spheres of its creative life?"

Silver's opponent in the debate was Rabbi Samuel Schulman of New York, a powerful and venerated speaker at age 71. A classical Reformer, Schulman nonetheless complained to the CCAR of the lack of "mystic passion" and the excess of "self-satisfied rationalistic pride" in Reform Judaism and called for greater Jewish distinctiveness and ritual observance in the movement "as a discipline and a hallowing and purifying influence in our lives." He conceded that "perhaps we are beginning a new chapter in Jewish history and are ready for a new synthesis; that while we need above all clarity of thought, moral courage, freedom and fearlessness in uncompromisingly upholding our own idea, yet history may determine that the best of what we have given to the world as the modern anti-nationalist party in Israel and the good that may be indirectly contributed by the nationalist revival in Israel, may



come to be harmonized. For both Herbert Spencer and Hegel tell us that that is the law of history." Dialectics aside, however, Schulman maintained that "the particular character of Israel as a community is to reject ordinary nationality and to be what it is, a religious community.... The home of a group whose essence is loyalty to the universal God is and ought to be all over the world."

Rabbi Silver, in turn, was upholding not the strictly secular nationalism that dominated in Palestine; rather, he spoke for what his ally Rabbi Barnett Brickner termed (in the discussion that followed the debate), "spiritual Zionism...a synthesis by which all that is spiritually creative in the Jewish people shall be released." Silver did not reject the messianic universalism or missionary purpose of Reform Judaism, only refused to see either as a substitute for Jewish nationalism. He urged "the sense of classic harmony in Jewish life...the total program of Jewish life and destiny -- the religious and moral values, the universal concepts, the mandate of mission, as well as the *Jewish people itself*, and all its national aspirations." This was indeed the Zionism of the Eastern European immigrants, the "folk" from whom the Lithuanian-born Rabbi Silver drew his personal and political strength. Most would never bestir themselves to make *aliyah* to the Jewish state, but would come to see Israel as their spiritual homeland, the main repository of the Jewish values and the main preserver of their Jewish identities.

In their breadth of understanding about the meaning of Judaism and Jewish peoplehood in the modern world, Rabbis Schulman and Silver did not stand at polar opposites. Still, they incarnated, by virtue of their age, descent and demeanor, opposing tendencies

within Reform Judaism: the one a noble conservatism that feared Zionism's potential to diminish permanently the prophetic, universal character of Judaism, the other a militant realism that viewed the flesh-and-blood fact of Jewish suffering as alterable only through a national restoration in Palestine. That Rabbi Silver had the impetus of history on his side was revealed in his rhetorical strategy: he spoke concisely and rather impersonally, with ample biblical references that were of greater historical than theological importance. By contrast, Schulman's presentation was considerably lengthier, pious, and at times almost bitterly personal. The discussion among the rabbis in attendance, moreover, centered exclusively on Rabbi Silver's paper. Clearly the day, and the future, were his.

Two years later, new Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism were adopted by the CCAR in Columbus, Ohio. Principle 5 (which aroused such passions that the entire document was nearly tabled) declared Judaism to be "the soul of which Israel is the body," and went on to affirm "the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes," as holding "the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. *We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life*" [italics added]. The declaration was hardly Zionist -- it carefully declared Palestine a center, not the center of Jewish life -- but it ended the isolation of Reform Judaism from the mainstream of American Jewry who were increasingly devoted to Jewish efforts in Palestine. "If the younger men of the Central Conference want it [the Guiding Principles]," declared Rabbi David Philipson, who fifty years



before had attended the convocation that adopted the Pittsburgh Platform, "I will move its adoption." In truth, that task had been performed two years earlier by Abba Hillel Silver.

Just as he spoke within the Reform movement as a Zionist, so did Rabbi Silver speak within the Zionist movement (and beyond) as a *rabbi*: as a teacher and preacher, deeply committed to his own prestigious synagogue, where he served for nearly half a century, and to the synagogue in general as the central institution of Jewish life. His convictions derived from the core of Judaism as he understood the tradition -- and deep was his understanding, for he literally steeped himself in the *Tanach*, so much so that Scriptural passages became part of his internal vocabulary and patterns of communication. Rabbi Silver didn't merely cite verse in his oratory; the Torah spoke through him. Rabbi Silver wasn't merely rabbinical in his political style; his politics proceeded from his identity as a rabbi.

In 1925 and '26 Henry Hurwitz's *Menorah Journal*, the most influential Jewish publication of its day, ran a series of articles highly critical of organized Judaism. Elliot E. Cohen launched a savage attack against the synagogue and the rabbinate ("The Age of Brass"), while Horace Kallen, the secular prophet of "cultural pluralism" and himself a Zionist, urged better Jewish education but *without* religious renewal -- a "Hebraism" that would go beyond a religion-centered Judaism. Kallen called Judaism "a small part of the total fullness of the life of the Jewish people."

Silver launched an angry counterattack, "Why Do the Heathen Rage?," which editor Hurwitz first requested and then suppressed (the piece was consigned to publication in four issues of the

*Jewish Tribune*). In it, Rabbi Silver defended the modern rabbinate and synagogue against the intellectuals who sought to supplant religious institutions with secular alternatives. The reformer of Reform presented a vigorous defense of the mission idea of Reform Judaism as an inspirational ideal that prompted Jews to global action and preserved an essential value of Judaism. Twenty years later, well after the *Menorah Journal's* demise, he would repeat his defense before the 40th Biennial of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in Boston (November 14-17, 1948):

To the thoughtful Jews it is becoming increasingly clear that there are no substitutes in Jewish life for religion. Neither philanthropy nor culture nor nationalism is adequate for the stress and challenge of our lives. All these interests can and must find their rightful place within the general pattern of Judaism. But the pattern must be of Judaism, the Judaism of the priest, the prophet, the saint, the mystic and the rabbi; the Judaism which speaks of God, and the worship of God, and the commandments of God and the quest for God.

There have been many false prophets of ersatz Judaism in our midst who have frequently misled our people. There were professional social workers, for example, who announced that a full complement of scientifically administered hospitals and orphanages and other social agencies were a sufficient "vade mecum" for the Jewish people, and that the synagogue and religious schools were quite unnecessary....There were certain educators who resented the intrusion of religion in their ultra-scientific curricula. Judaism, they said, was not a religion, but a way of life--that is to say, their way of life... non-religious or anti-religious. Jewish education should, according to them, not be religious at all, only nationalistic or linguistic....

There were those Jewish spokesmen who offered Jewish nationalism as a substitute for Judaism, forgetting that nationalism as such, unredeemed by a moral vision and responsibility, had sadly fragmentized our world, provincialized its peoples and is driving nations madly from one disaster to another...

This holistic sense of Judaism and Jewish life has become the



hallmark of Reform Judaism in the post-war years as we take on the dual challenge of being both broad and deep, flexible and rooted, as a modern religious movement. For Abba Hillel Silver, such an approach was the hallmark of his career. As Harold P. Manson wrote in 1949: "No real understanding of Dr. Silver--the man and the leader--is possible without an appreciation of the fact that he is first and foremost *Rabbi Silver*, a person of deep spiritual convictions and a profound scholar....He regards his pulpit in Cleveland, Ohio, with the reverence and devotion of one for whom there can be no greater calling in life. If we bear this fact in mind, many things which at first glance appear mystifying become crystal clear: why he underwent the physical discomfort of spending many days of each week on trains and planes, commuting between New York and Cleveland or Washington and Cleveland\* -- this over a period of six years -- in order to be back in his pulpit on the Sabbath; why, even in the midst of the most severe crises in his political life, he could be found at The Temple happily engaged in teaching a class of children...

"When we view Dr. Silver in the light of his dedication to the spiritual essence of Judaism, we are better able to understand his unshakable faith that the Zionist cause would triumph, no matter what the obstacles, as well as the quality akin to mysticism which is present even in his most 'political' utterances -- a quality

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\* A good deal of this commuting time may have been devoted to homiletic preparation: Rabbi Silver once told me that his average sermon, which was usually more than an hour in length and drew some two thousand listeners to The Temple each Sunday, required two days of thinking and writing and one day of memorization and practicing delivery. His famed eloquence, reflected in the title of this biography, was the result of inspiration and charisma, no doubt -- his height and stature, his bushy hair reaching up towards the heavens, and his penetrating bass voice all contributed to the effect -- but the true undergirdings of his power as an orator were arduous effort, concentration, scholarship and rehearsal.

which some regarded as a contradiction of his basic character, but which those close to him understood to be the true expression of that character."

Yet even Harold Manson, who authored "Abba Hillel Silver -- An Appreciation" in the 1963 *Festschrift* produced to honor Rabbi Silver's 70th birthday, would say in a 1971 interview that for Rabbi Silver "(t)here was really no grey area, nothing in between, in political or personal decisions. It was really 'entweder oder' kinderlach, you want me, I'm here. You don't want me, I'm not here." In the schismatic Jewish world in which Abba Hillel Silver wielded his tremendous influence, he was often regarded as ruthless and militant, an avid polemicist, a general who thrived on the battlefield and defined his compatriots in reductionist terms as allies or foes. Perhaps this was a reaction to his patrician manner, his egotism, his impermeable privacy; but perhaps, too, there is, among his detractors, an element of "murmuring against Moses," the biblical figure to whom Rabbi Silver bore significant resemblance, and about whom he wrote his last book, *Moses and the Original Torah* (1961).

For like Moses, Abba Hillel Silver had to be called to leadership, to the responsibility of nation-building. Though a lifelong Zionist, he eschewed the infighting that was the day to day reality of Zionism until he was summoned by other Jewish leaders -- including those whom he eclipsed or demolished in later years.

Like Moses, he was revered more than loved -- a leader aloof from the people yet embodying their most precious hopes.

Like Moses, he undertook a multiplicity of roles that demanded incredible endurance and spiritual discipline.



Like Moses, he helped make tangible the dream of Land for the people of Israel and then surrendered the mantle of leadership to practical men, administrators and warriors.

And like the great liberator and teacher of the Torah, Abba Hillel Silver possessed a panoramic, inclusive vision of Judaism and the Jewish people that was unique among his more nearsighted contemporaries. While the theories and plans of others were being swept away by the storm winds of history that so radically altered the Jewish landscape in our time, Silver stood upon the rock of 35 centuries of Jewish reality and saw through the tempest to the future.

"(T)here is clearly visible in Judaism," he wrote in his most enduring book, *Where Judaism Differed*, "a steady and dominant coherence, a self-consistency, which links together all its stages of change and development and gives it structure and unity of tone and character. It possesses the unity not of a system but of a symphony. In their total and continuous integration, the key ideas -- unity, freedom, and compassion -- came to be sufficiently distinctive and impressive as to be unmistakable."

Let his words, as ever, speak for themselves: Abba Hillel Silver's own life could not be better described.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler  
President, Union of American  
Hebrew Congregations



by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

November 17, 1988  
8 Kislev 5749



Bloody, polluted waters. A vast, sudden increase in the numbers of pests and parasites. Skin diseases and other lingering ailments. Failed crops in a poisoned land. Darkness that blackens the day. A dying generation of children.

These are the plagues that devastated the Land of Egypt, the land that "knew not Joseph," knew not the pathways of righteousness, but engaged for four centuries in the ruthless enslavement of the Hebrew people. Ever since, the awful scope of Egypt's suffering has been a source of amazement and deep faith for Jews ( a faith that invokes compassion, as the Haggadah bids us to spill from our glasses a drop of wine for each plague, to spill from our hearts some portion of our joy). Who but an Almighty God, our ancestors held, could foster such a disruption of the laws of nature?

Alas, we have learned over the past two decades that our own technology, when misapplied with Pharaonic arrogance, is perfectly capable of wreaking devastation on a scale parallel to the plagues that afflicted Egypt. We have seen the water we drink and the air we breathe poisoned by toxic chemicals. We have seen our lakes made unlivable by acid rain. We have seen our beaches turned into sewage dumps, our dumps turned into disaster areas. We have noted the extinction of one species of life each day, through the decimation of fragile ecosystems, most especially the rainforests that cover only 7% of the globe but harbor over 50% of the life forms on our planet.

We have seen the continuing proliferation of radioactive wastes that, unbelievably, will continue to poison the earth for hundreds of generations.

For what purpose, these defacements, of the environment? Are we, at least, feeding the starving children of Africa by slashing and burning the Amazon Basin? In fact, cattle-grazing to produce fast-food hamburgers accounts for some 15% of the rain-forest loss; lumber to produce disposable diapers accounts for another chunk; subsistence agriculture, forced by social inequities and cash-crop economies, is the main culprit. In other words, idolatry, rather than necessity, is at the root of our environmental crisis: the mindless attachment to plastic conveniences, to disposable goods, to things and more things, which blinds us to one another and to the sacred world in which we live. Idolatry: a consciousness not essentially different from that of the Egyptians, who ruthlessly exploited Hebrew slave labor to build the "garrison cities of Pithom and Raamses," monuments of power, nothing more; a consciousness that calls forth the plagues.

"Remove your sandals from your feet," God commands Moses from the burning bus, "for the place on which you stand is holy ground." Recognition of this holiness was the first requisite development in Moses' character that would enable him to become the Liberator of Israel. Likewise for us: the environmental crisis presents us with a challenge that is essentially religious, not merely scientific (indeed our scientists, like the magicians of Pharaoh's court, seem increasingly helpless to offset the havoc), for we are speaking not merely of technological tricks but of a dramatic redefining of our relationship to the earth itself.

The seed of that redefinition can be found in our Jewish tradition, in a variety of midrashic and halachic teachings about the ecology. Two very basic ethical principles loom large in our classic literature: that of tza-ar ba-alei chayim, "the pain of living creatures," and bal tashshit, "do not destroy." The latter,



especially, was so expanded by the rabbis beyond its biblical source (Deut. 20:19-20) that it came to refer to any wasteful consumption. Environmental abuse is alien to Judaism in that it violates the essential insight that all creation is a sacred embodiment of God's creative power.

Still, there is great need for the insights of Judaism to be elaborated into a modern idiom that each of us can personalize, and from which both Judaism and the environment would benefit. Or if, for example, the harvest holiday of Sukkot were infused with the language of environmentalism and linked with social action efforts, many urban Jews (for whom the idea of living in an open booth is laughable, given the elaborate locks on their doors) might make it their business to revivify the flagging holiday in their communities.

Instead, most of us confine our response to the ecological crisis to the realm of individual choice -- not to eat this or that, not to use some product or another -- in isolation from one another and from our Judaism. We suffer our tumors, our bronchial problems, our birth defects, our infertility -- "the bread of our affliction" -- in a similar, devastating fashion.

Instead, let us make of our tables one table this Pesakh. Let us utilize the memory of slavery in Egypt to fashion a Jewish response to the degradation of God's Creation. Let us speak of the idolatry of "the narrow place," then and now, and our need to wean ourselves from it, then and now -- to rediscover our own sense of wilderness where we can "sacrifice to the Lord our God." Let us remember that our Liberation is incomplete, never complete, always in need of renewal, like creation itself. And when we open our doors to the Prophet Elijah, let us be thankful for the stirring of life that we sense outside our doors -- the Springtime that reminds us: "It is not too late. The bush still burns."

## WHY THE NAZIS NEEDED KRISTALLNACHT

By Alexander M. Schindler

The grim reality of Kristallnacht is widely known: In Germany during the night of November 9-10, 1938, the Nazi regime unleashed a pogrom whose frenzy had not been equalled in the previous 2,000-year history of Jewish oppression. It marked the beginning of the Holocaust.

In virtually every city and hamlet of the German Reich, including recently-annexed Austria, SS bands roamed the streets, firebombing synagogues, demolishing Jewish-owned shops, rousting Jews from their beds and beating them.

During that night, 20,000 Jews were placed in "protective custody"; half of them were shipped to Buchenwald and Dachau, where many perished. Rocks were hurled through windows of virtually every home and business, every synagogue and community institution belonging to Jews or the Jewish community. The value of the glass destroyed that night exceeded seven million Reichsmarks, and thus that fearsome night acquired its lasting name -- Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass.

What is not so well known are the economic factors that motivated those actions; the hatred that stoked German anti-Semitism was also laced with greed. For in its scope and timing, Kristallnacht was also designed to serve as a screen for expropriating Jewish properties, and to speed the elimination of Jews from Germany's economy,

Early in 1938 a fiscal crisis faced Hitler's Reich. To conceal Germany's huge rearmament, which had begun only months after Hitler came to power in 1933, Finance Minister Hjalmar Schacht devised a plan under which a dummy corporation would serve as a funnel for the bills of exchange drawn by the government -- in effect, I.O.U.'s -- to pay for the weapons that German munitions makers were producing for the state.

The dummy corporation was given the name Metallurgische Forschungsgesellschaft (Metallurgical Research Institute)--Mefo for short. Its purpose was to accept the government's bills of exchange and issue in turn its own paper -- known as Mefo-Wechsel -- to commercial banks as security for payments the banks were making to arms producers. The Mefo-Wechsel were not included in the financial statements of the



Reichsbank, nor did they appear anywhere in the government's budget -- thus assuring secrecy about the nature and extent of Germany's rearming.

By 1938, some 12 billion Reichsmarks worth of Mefo-Wechsel were outstanding. As arms production rose, so did the tendering of Mefo-Wechsel to the Reichsbank. Funds were desperately needed to meet the commercial banks' demands for payment.

Fearing inflation, the German Treasury was loath to print more marks. Tax revenues alone were insufficient to pay off the old bills, let alone new ones that were coming due periodically. At the same time, cutting back on military production was unthinkable as Hitler kept demanding the further fueling of his war machine.

There was, however, another solution: Take the money from the Jews.

In late April of 1938, the government ordered an inventory of Jewish holdings. Every Jewish possession, from real estate to bird cages, was carefully catalogued. The trap against the Jews was ready to be sprung.

On the morning of November 7, 1938, Herszel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old German Jewish youth living in Paris who had just received a letter from his father telling of his expulsion from Germany to Poland, walked into the German embassy in Paris, pulled out a pistol and fired five times at Ernst vom Rath, the embassy's Third Secretary. Two bullets struck the German official; he died at 4:30 p.m. the following day.

The assassination of vom Rath gave Hitler the excuse he had been seeking. German mobs, incited by Nazi stormtroopers, launched their assault. More than 100 Jewish houses of worship were set ablaze. Seventy-six were totally demolished. Sacred scrolls, prayerbooks and religious articles were cast into the streets to be consumed by bonfires.

Everywhere in Germany and Austria the windows of Jewish-owned stores were smashed and Jewish homes were broken into. Wealthy Jews, whose properties had been identified and recorded by the Nazis during the April inventory, were arrested and held for ransom.

In the wake of Kristallnacht, most Jewish-owned property was "Aryanized" -- seized outright or obtained under forced sale. The main concern of Hermann Goering, overseer of the Nazi Four Year Plan responsible for arms production, was that the properties taken from the Jews be turned over to the Reich. "Aryanization of Jewish property,"

he declared, "is not to be confused with charity to incompetent Nazis." Storm troopers caught looting were, in fact, imprisoned.

Much of the property destroyed during Kristallnacht had been insured. But German insurance companies were ordered by the government to indemnify the state rather than the Jewish owners for the vast property damage. Since the German insurance companies had co-insured with foreign companies like Lloyds of London, this windfall provided the Reich with desperately needed foreign exchange.

When the German mobs grew exhausted, it was the Jews who were ordered to clear the ruins of their synagogues and community centers and schools, and to pay for the work of removal -- the broken glass, the torn Torah curtains, the ashes of prayerbooks and prayer benches. Then, after the clean-up, came an order to the Jews of Germany to pay a fine of one billion Reichsmarks "for their hostile attitude toward the German people and the Reich." Not long after, Goering could boast to his Fueher that "the very critical situation of the Reich Exchequer" had been cleared up.

In attacking not only the homes and businesses of Jews but also Jewish houses of worship, the Nazis showed they understood something we sometimes forget -- that the synagogue is the soul of Jewry, the source of our communal strength. Half a century later the world needs to be reminded of the night the Holocaust began. Anti-Semitic acts frighteningly reminiscent of the Nazi era are being reported -- Hitler-like statements in Chicago, a synagogue torching and Torah desecration in Brooklyn, swastikas and cemetery vandalism in many places. The hatred that nearly destroyed the Jewish people -- and Europe -- survives in the dark corners of some hearts, even today.

That is why Jewish congregations everywhere will hold special commemorative services on the evening of November 9 -- the 50th anniversary of Kristallnacht. On that night, Jewish houses of worship everywhere will keep their lights ablaze until dawn -- as a symbol of the Nazis' failure to achieve their "final solution," as an act of defiance to those who would renew Hitler's evil purpose, as a proclamation that the Jewish people lives, and will live.

X

X

X

10/10/88

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, was born in Munich, Germany and came to the United States as a child with his parents in 1938.



TRIBUTE DINNER

HONORING

YITZHAK HAMLIN

AMERICAN JEWISH  
REMARKS OF  
ARCHIVES

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER



April 27, 1988  
New York, NY

I am not fully grateful to Bernice for asking me to speak some words of tribute here tonight. To be sure, when the invitations for the dinner were first circulated, I accepted with alacrity. But I meant merely by my presence to express my affection and regard for Itz. But to speak is entirely another matter. I find it difficult to express my feelings for a friend, and Itz is that. In the final analysis, my regard for him belongs to that realm of the infinite which cannot be encompassed in the final form of language.

I responded warmly to him, from the very first moment I met him, and our subsequent encounters merely served to confirm my initial intuitive perception. He is a rare and precious human being; intelligent, steadfast, a man of honor. He is always a delight to be with; to share laughter, to engage in serious thought, or just to be with, for he is one of those singular people with whom one can be silent and still communicate.

Itz is a realist. His years of service to the Jewish community have taught him to tell the counterfeit from the true. Still, he is not wearied by it all. He has not become a cynic. He clings to his ideals. He remains the dreamer. And this is precisely what makes him a Jew, is it not? For we are essentially a people of intrinsic dreamers... and that is why we survived.

Yes he is a Jew, with every fibre of his being. He is an ohav Yisrael in the fullest meaning of that term. He loves Israel the State and people with an abounding love. He fully identifies his individual fate with the fate of our collective being. All his energies are bent toward securing our creative continuity. Israel's pain is his pain. Her victory his gladness.

It is said that a community receives the kind of leadership which it deserves. The correlary of this maxim is equally true: an organization gets the kind of executive director it deserves. The World Zionist Organization has attained a position of pre-eminence in American Jewish life principally because we had the kind of professional leader we merited.



He led us from our very beginnings. Indeed, the post of Executive Vice-Chairman was specifically created for him. Ours, therefore, is a force which he nourished. Ours is an influence which he primarily nurtured. He is a servant of the Jewish people sans peer. And so, we have ample reason to be grateful to him, to thank him publicly to recognize his manifold contributions toward the advancement of our work.

Someone once said that the only true retirement is that of the heart. Our work will always be a part of Itzik's heart and he of ours. Moreover, Itz will continue to serve as our consultant. This celebration, then, is untouched by the sorrow of an irrevocable parting. It holds but the promise of greater things that are yet to be. Let us be joyful, then, and give thanks for the past, even as we give voice to our prayerful hope that he and Helen will be granted many more years of life and health and creative endeavors.

Ken yehi ratzon



Eda!

Please type this  
up neatly &

Send To Service

"enclosed, per your  
request..."



Itzik

~~Yitz~~ Hamlin...Farewell Dinner  
New York, N. Y., April 27, 1988

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WHEN JEWISH PEOPLE ARE

112  
113

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ken yehi ratzon

Schindler:Chamberlin Lecture  
Lewis & Clark College  
Portland, Oregon, May 18, 1988

[Acknowledge Intro of Manny Rose and Presence of Dr. Stuart and Rabbi Stempler]

It is a delight to be here, and to speak to this assemblage.

Let me confess to a measure of awe which fills me in this place.

After all, I am only a preacher

and preachers are far more at home in the pulpit  
than they are on the lecture platform of a university,  
especially when that university is as great and as  
illustrious as is Lewis and Clark.

I am also flattered to have my name associated with that of Mark  
Chamberlain in whose honor this lectureship was established  
It is clear from what I have heard concerning him

that he was a extra-ordinary spirit, a man of great worth,  
fashioned in the image of those ideas and ideals that  
permeate and inspire Judaism and Christianity alike.

Now I have been asked to address the present crisis in the Middle East,  
the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis  
from a moral, a religious perspective.

This is not an easy assignment,

for it requires a capacity for a self-reckoning  
and that is the most difficult reckoning of all.

It is easy to cast blame on others and in this instance  
there are many others who can be charged with blame.

But it is infinitely more difficult to say: we too have transgressed,  
we too have missed opportunities to bring about a peaceful  
resolution of this tragic strife.



My task is made all the more difficult because as a Jew

I love Israel, and with a passion.

I am pledged to secure its safety and I am proud of what it has accomplished in the few decades of its being.

Israel presently celebrates its 40th anniversary,

and we can well 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.

Israel came into being soon after World War II and Jews fought for its  
creation impelled essentially by a threefold dream.

To begin with we wanted a state of our own,

where we would not be subjected to the will and whim of others.

After all, our millenia-long persecution had just reached the apex of  
its unfoldment when Hitler carried out his final solution and 1/3rd  
of our people were butchered in his charnel houses.

And so we longed for a nation in which we could determine our own fate.

Secondly, we needed a haven of refuge.

We were, after all the first boat people.

Hounded and harried over the face of the earth, all ports were  
shut to us.

No one would let us enter.

And so we needed a state which Jews could enter without quotas,  
without restrictive barriers,  
without ever elusive entry permits.

The third dream was the most impossible dream of all.

We hoped for the creation of a state that would be the fulfillment  
of our ideal vision,  
a society whose every deed is measured by the yardstick of  
exemplary justice,  
a swordless state where the use of force would be eschewed.

[Leonard Fein legend]

Be that as it may, this was the three-fold dream that impelled our  
striving to create Israel

And our vision has been fulfilled in two respects at least,  
nay even exceeded it.

Imprimis, Israel has become a thriving state

in which Jews have become the masters of their destiny

They can defend Jewish lives and rights within and sometimes even  
without its boundaries:

remember Entebbe, if you will!



Israel has also become the one and only state that Jews can enter without a visa...

all Jews can immigrate, whatever their national origin or race. Think of Operation Moses, the recent absorption of the Falashas, the ingathering of the persecuted Jews of Ethiopia. The story of their rescue is heroic.

Young Israelis stole into this Marxist dictatorship on foot and guided and sometimes even carried the endangered brothers and sisters to safety and freedom.

Indeed, this was the first time in all of human history when blacks were taken from one continent to another not in chains but in love.

Our third dream has not come to full realization, and in this respect our anniversary 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.

And perhaps most painful of all, Israel has had to resort to force in order to survive.

Is there a doubt in any one's mind that this is so?

At the very moment of their birth, the fledgling state was invaded by the armies of five Arab states.

Had the Jews turned the other cheek they would have all drowned in the Mediterranean sea.

Had they not retained and refined their military strength they would have had like fate in '57, and '67, and 1973, in fact every single year and day since their birth.

No one was happy that this was so...

not the Jews of the World, certainly not the Israelis who had to spill the blood of their sons to survive.

[Golda Meir statement...]

[Bratslaver Chassidim story]

And so the Jews were compelled to resort to force, even though its use disfigured our prophetic vision.

The last several months have been particularly traumatic in this regard. I refer to the Palestinian uprising and Israel's response to it. As you probably know I criticized its initial response in a cable to President Herzog, calling it an offense to the Jewish spirit and a violation of every principle of human decency.

Let me say at once, that I do not and never have questioned Israel's need and responsibility to restore order in the territories. I merely questioned the means by which this order was being restored. And I reacted not only to the many painful scenes we saw on television and read in our newspapers, but even more to Israel's policy as enunciated by its leadership: "The first priority is to use force, might, beatings."



I persist in the conviction that such actions are self-defeating  
and counterproductive.

Beatings breed only rage and intensify hatred.

Current events, now into their fifth month -- indeed, we cannot  
see their end -- only reinforces my firm belief that this is so.

Again, Israelis have every right to kill armed enemies  
but not -- except when their own lives are in danger --  
demonstrators who throw rocks.

Nor can they smash the bones of Palestinian Arabs in order to  
"put the fear of death" into them.

A government that opts for such a policy runs the danger of losing  
far more than control.

It may preserve the boundaries of the greater Israel,  
but in the process it "violates the boundaries of Judaism." (Oz)

As a matter of fact, it won't even preserve the boundaries of Israel.  
Putting morality and Jewish ideals aside for a moment,  
the maintaining of the status quo by force is dangerous  
even from a security point of view.

How can Israel possibly defend herself with a million and three-quarter  
Arabs within her own borders.

The enemy is in the land.

It is rather like a boat.

It is better to have the water outside the boat than in the boat.

The Westbank and Gaza are a danger to Israel only when they are inside  
of Israel.

To all this one must add that the Palestinians are justly aggrieved. Israelis rightly claim that the Arabs in the administered territories are better off economically, educationally, even politically, than most of their co-patriots who live in other Arab lands.

Still, by every other measure except the relative, their condition is miserable.

And this above all, they lack political dignity.

They can't vote.

They can't get elected.

They are shoved around by the bureaucrats and by the soldiers.

They don't have passports.

They don't have flags.

And dignity is more important in the Arab culture than is economy.

[Israel's responsibility for this...Shamir's "grasshoppers" and the Chief Sephardic Rabbi Mordecai Eliahu recently said: "We lifted them out of the dirt and they aren't even grateful"]

The status quo is untenable from the moral and the realpolitical point of view and there is only one way to change it, not by the exercise of force, but rather by beginning the process of political accommodation as soon as humanly possible.

As Defense Minister Rabin recently said:

"Israel with all her might cannot impose her will in a way that will be considered a solution,"

"The burden for the solution," he said, "rests ultimately not on the military but on the political establishment. ."



Which brings me full square to my second point,

that while the Palestinians of the Westbank are genuinely aggrieved and have been denied political dignity, the responsibility for their plight rests not with Israel alone, not by any manner or means.

They are victimized also by Arab and PLO leaders who have consistently chosen violent rejection over peaceful accomodation.

They have been exploited by the rest of the Arab world including oil-rich sheikdoms who tirelessly decry the plight of the Palestinians even as they refuse to admit them into their societies or at least supply economic aid that could avert the fearsome conditions that breed today's hate, anger and desperation.

The political solution has eluded the grasp of Israel and the Palestinians alike primarily because of Arab intransigence because of their resolute refusal to accept Israel's rightful place as a sovereign state in the Middle East.

The Arab leaders rejected the Partition plan of the United Nations. Five Arab armies, as indicated, invaded the fledgling state unde the Arab League whose Secretary Gebneral Azzam Pasha declared that there was to be a

"a war of extermination and momenteous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades."

The War of 1967 was forced on Israel by Egypt and Syria and a greedy Jordan thus actuating an occupation the Israelis certainly did not seek.

In fact, the Israelis did their utmost to keep Jordan out of the fray, assuring Hussein that they would not violate his borders. But the "gutsy" little king -- acting on Nasser's warrant that Egypt had succeeded in shooting the Israeli air-force out of the sky -- jumped in while the getting was good.

It was then that he lost the Westbank which incidentally he, the Hashemite King, had seized by force 19 years earlier. And during those 19 years he granted the Palestinians no state of their own, and in 1970 he exiled the PLO and killed thousands of its members -- even as Syria trained its artillery on the Palestinian refugee camps when Assad's troops first entered Lebanon.

Immediately after the six day war Israel declared its willingness to trade territories for peace. Israel was headed by a unity government then -- which included in its cabinet Menachem Begin -- But its offer to withdraw was met with the three "no's" of Khartoum: "no negotiations, no recognition, no peace."

So much for the Arab states.

As for the PLO, its leadership has consistently chosen terror over political accomodation.

The PLO Covenant still calls for the total extermination of Israel. Hussein negotiated with Arafat for better than a year, in an effort to bring him to the peace table, but after reaching an agreement the PLO Executive vetoed it, even as they allowed non of the Palestinians to meet with Schultz on his recent mission.



When "Peace Now" the Israeli Peace party, calls on the Israeli government to be forthcoming on the Palestinian question the Premier and his allies have a ready reply:

"Where is the Palestinian Peace Now movement?

And they have a point.

Most of the Palestinians who have championed compromise with Israel have been silenced by the bullets of the PLO.

The Israeli's therefore have a right to be afraid, afraid that the Palestinians say Westbank, but really mean Haifa and Tel Aviv, that they have not forsworn their determination to drive the Jews into the Mediterranean sea.

What we behold therefore in looking at the present crisis is not a struggle of right against wrong but rather a struggle of right against right a tragedy of classic Greek dimensions

On the one hand you have an authentic Palestinian uprising, born of despair.

On the other hand, you have the desperate reaction of the Israelis born of their real fear they are vulnerable, that their very survival is at stake.

In such a case it is impossible and even indecent to pass judgment. All one can really do is cry, cry for two peoples who feel themselves condemned to eternal mutual enmity.

It is an enmity that is mutually destructive.

The Talmudic tractate Sanhedrin provides the appropriate caution:

"he who takes vengeance destroys his own house"

In fact there is no act of retribution or repression that does not come back to haunt the one who inflicted it.

So it has been between Arab and Jew since the time of Abraham,

when the half-brothers Ishmael and Isaac were separated.

Ishmael suffers exile and near death until he is saved by God's hand.

And Abraham, having reluctantly endangered the life of one son

is then obligated to offer up the life of the other Isaac

-- who likewise is saved by God's hand.

Though years separate these incidents of near sacrifice, their linkage

is undeniable, and the lesson, like the Torah, is alive:

that to this day the destinies of Jews and Palestinians are intertwined.

Is it all hopeless, then?

Is the problem intractable?

Can such a fearsome dilemma be resolved?

There is only one way, and that is to have a third party step forward to bring the antagonists to the peace table.

It is worth remembering, in this context, that not a single agreement has been reached between Israel and her neighbors without international mediation.



Israel's War of Independence was brought to an end through the efforts of Ralph Bunche and the UN

The Sinai I and II agreements were negotiated by Henry Kissinger.

And then there was Camp David and a peace with Egypt that was strong enough to survive Sadat's assassination and the Lebanese War.

I was with Secretary of State Schultz only a week ago yesterday.

He intends to go back to the Middle East, as you know,

following his trip to Geneva and Moscow.

He is not optimistic,

but he has not given up hope.

He is stiff-necked in his quest for peace.

I admire him and wish him God's speed -- we all should.

I know one thing with a certainty.

Ultimately the parties will come to the peace table.

And, in the words of the Israeli poet Amos Oz,

when that blessed moment comes,

"...we ought to mark...(its arrival with a huge monument in memory of blindness, stupidity and folly. For in the end, Israel will get something that she could have obtained on better terms ten and perhaps even twenty years ago. And the Palestinians will finally get only a part of what they could have achieved peacefully and honourably more than forty years earlier but for their fanaticism and wickedness. Only the thousands of dead will get nothing. Except our wreaths. And perhaps the spit of those who have died will be on all our faces when the day of peace comes -- a peace that will extend from Baghdad to Khartoum and from Beit Alpha to Karnei Shomron."

I hope that you will not draw the inference from anything I have said that my devotion to Israel has lessened because of these things, that I am indifferent to its fate and have turned my back, God forbid.

As are many Israelis -- half of the government and people in fact -- I am vigorously opposed to a certain policy, but my love for Israel has always transcended policy and party and personality to embrace an entire people.

We will allow none of its shortcomings to alienate us from Israel. After all, we are not Israel's cheerleaders, we are her family, and family devotion demands reproof and not just approbation. None of the warts and bruises on the face we once idealized as perfect will cause us to turn away.

One other ethical issue must be brought forward in this context, and that is the moral mandate not to sequester our concern never to reserve it for some and to deny it to others.

Some years ago, the philosopher Walter Kaufman of Princeton coined a useful phrase "selective compassion" which is relevant to this point.

"It is surprising," he tells us, "how selective international compassion has been since 1945. For instance, when the State of Punjab was partitioned between India and Pakistan, the Moslems of Pakistan summarily ejected two and a half million Sikhs from their territory. They were literally forced out, compelled to leave their lands, their homes, virtually all their possessions."

And what has happened to these two and one half million Sikhs?



Pakistan did not offer them any compensation.

Neither did any of the other Moslem countries, nor the rest of the world

No United Nations Relief Fund was established.

Nor did any of the world's leaders nor any international forum insist

that there can be no lasting peace in Asia

until the Sikhs are either reabsorbed into Pakistan

or compensated by her.

"Compassion," concluded the Princeton Philosopher,

"is influenced by fashion."

Compassion influenced by fashion.

One feels it for the West Bank Arabs, but not for the Arabs in most of

the Arab countries who are far worse off in almost every esy

than are the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and Gaza.

One certainly does not feel any compassion in the world

for Jews in Arab and Moslem lands

or for Jews who were forced from Arab lands

-- and there are nearly one million of those.

What a tragic commentary on human nature.

Compassion subject to the whims of fashion.

This too and once again:

Let us not be too quick to assign moral responsibility.

It is shared by many.

This is not a time to look at the Arab Israeli conflict  
and gloat like a voyeur rendering ready verdicts.  
It is rather a time to weep,  
weep for two peoples who feel that they are compelled  
to fight each other forever.

It is a time also to pray, that the relentless cycle of  
mutual destruction will come to its end  
that harmony will hallow that land and its caiptol Jerusalem,  
that holy city where waiting for God was born  
where the expectation for everlasting peace came into being







**“DAY SCHOOLS—A VITAL OPTION  
FOR THE  
REFORM JEWISH COMMUNITY”**

Address by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler  
Founding Meeting, Council of Reform Jewish Day Schools  
Temple Israel, Boston, Mass.  
March 20, 1988





**I**t is a privilege which I greatly appreciate to be here and to participate in the deliberations of these days. This is an historic occasion, this founding Conference of the Council of Reform Jewish Day Schools. It is an event which will be remembered with pride, once a new generation of scholars will write about our religious community's continuing unfoldment. Indeed, chances are that our historians of the future will be products of the very schools that are the objects of this Council's concern.

I want to applaud you therefore, all of you who are doing the pioneering work in full-time Reform Jewish education, the plowing and the planting, the tending and the weeding, which have brought us this weekend to our first harvest meal here in Boston. With visionary selflessness, you have been planting the arbor of Jewish life for our future as an act of continuity with our Jewish past. For this, I applaud you.

In all fairness, I suppose, it should be noted that you are not primal pioneers in the sense that you create *ex nihilo*. The option of full-time Jewish education has a venerable history among us. Indeed, Isaac Mayer Wise was a fervent proponent of the day school idea and he labored to maintain such a school in his own synagogue. His eminent colleague and co-worker Max Lilienthal established a like school in New York—he even called it the Hebrew Union School—and he managed to enroll nearly 300 students. Through the middle of the 19th century, virtually all communities in which German Jews settled opened all-day Jewish schools for their children.

In our own century, Emanuel Gamoran persistently advocated the idea, and our Commission on Jewish Education—under both Solomon Freehof and Roland Gittelsohn—gave sanction to his views. I myself, when I was the Union's Director of Education and subsequently, gave frequent public voice to my conviction that only a full-time setting can provide our students sufficient opportunity to be fully schooled in their heritage.

But the day schools of Reform Judaism's founding years did not survive the 19th century, and the more recent exhortations of Reform Judaism's leadership did not go much beyond rhetoric. It was you who mustered the courage and the perseverance to bridge the gap between *midrash* and *ma-aseh*, between the mind and the hand.





Nonetheless, there are many good people in our midst who resist the momentum toward full-time Reform Jewish education. They fear that we are separating our children from our neighbors and from the democratizing spirit of the public school system. They are afraid that we will undermine that process of public education to which we American Jews have contributed so greatly and from which we have derived immeasurable benefit. In a word, they worry that we will become sectarian, tribal, that we will betray our universalist concerns, that when we establish day schools we are flirting most dangerously, with re-ghettoization.

These fears are groundless. To begin with, the founders of our nation never granted public education a monopoly, an all-exclusive responsibility for the rearing of America's youth; they rather encouraged the development of a parallel private school system for those parents who did not want their children homogenized, who wanted them to have a special education to meet their special interests and talents and needs.

Indeed, some of the most striking advances in educational theory and practice were pioneered in the private rather than the public sector of America's educational system. Thus, Frances W. Parker, who along with John Dewey, was primarily responsible for those pedagogic innovations that came to be known as progressive education, laid its groundwork not in Boston's public school system but rather at a private school in nearby Quincy, Massachusetts. In like manner, so I am confident, our liberal Jewish day schools will develop educational techniques and materials of boon to every kind of Jewish education.

Be that as it may, the American system of government does not obligate its citizens to go to public school, nor is there any evidence whatsoever that private school graduates lack integration into the general community. Quite the opposite is true. Study after study attests to that. The graduates of parochial schools move with ease into the mainstream of American life. What more compelling evidence of such integrative capacity than to be elected President of these United States? Well, most of our Presidents were the beneficiaries of private schooling rather than of public education.

Those who fear that day schools will isolate and ghettoize our children may well themselves be operating under the burden of a ghetto mentality, a mentality that fears Jewish particularism as a handicap, an obstacle to mainstreaming in America.

That may have been true for the children of the immigrant generation, but it is scarcely true for our children today. Is there any endeavor that is beyond the realm of possibility for them as Jews in contemporary America? Are there any trivia from the mainstream culture of which they are ignorant? Have they failed to absorb any of the pap that they are fed on television day in, day out?

No, our children do not suffer from a lack of Americanization, a lack of social awareness, a lack of precocious knowledge about the world. What our children suffer from is a lack of Jewish literacy, a lack of affirmative Jewish identity, a lack of Jewish substance. And that is what we intend to provide, and indeed are providing so abundantly in our liberal Jewish day schools.



The Jewish life for which we are preparing our young people is one of integration and high energy. They will be leaders, they will be professionals, they will be thinkers, they will be doers. Our goal is to provide them with the tools of leadership, of professionalism, of thinking, of doing—while providing them also with the nurturing strength of Judaism, of a genuinely embraced Judaism, to help buoy and shelter them in a merciless world.

We want to furnish them with a Jewish calendar and clock as an alternative to the rat race. We want to give them the gift of Shabbat as a constant reminder that there is more to life than things and activities; that there is a here and now as well as a future; that there is a contentment to enjoy as well as an ambition to reach for. We want to provide a Judaic context for their sense of goodness, of justice, of humanity, of the sacredness of life—so that when they experience those moments of acute consciousness, of challenge and of joy, they will not feel alone, but will think, “Oh yes, I remember . . .” They will experience those moments of reverence and of passion as their share of a millennia-old tradition of people striving for those very feelings. They will experience their own divine madness as part of a collective will for redemption.

## AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

This is the product for which we strive in our Liberal Jewish day schools, and we will reap such a harvest if we and the teachers whom we select are not just Jewishly knowledgeable and pedagogically skilled. They must also be committed to those standards we seek to transmit. They themselves must embody the ideals we strive to nurture in those who are entrusted in our care. For when all is said and done, our students internalize their values primarily through identification with the ego ideal. They follow the mentor who is and not just the teacher who persuades with his lips.

*Barzel b'varzel vachad.* “Iron sharpeneth iron.” A knife can best be honed against the edge of another knife.

The words of *Mishle* are re-echoed in the sentiments of a modern philosopher-poet:

“He who teaches as books enable only babbles . . . not any pretender, not any liar, not any slave can teach . . . but only he can teach who has . . . he only can create who is . . . courage, wisdom, piety, love—they can teach.” (Emerson)

May we be teachers of such a kind. Then we will rise above mere professionalism to artistry. For teachers at their very best are artists. They are artists of the spirit. They fashion beauty not in silver nor in gold, but in the living soul of the human being. And surely such a person, who can take an earth-bound creature and work out in him the divine image will, one day, rise higher by his work than any artist-genius who ever lived and wrought upon the earth. For there is no material like human nature. And there is no dignity like working in it. And there is no grandeur like success in such a working.



SCHINDLER  
Yom Kippur, 1988  
Union Temple

Once again, my friends, we have reached this holiest day in the  
calendar year of the Jew.

Again we convene in this sanctuary to perform the rites and  
to voice the prayers of our Atonement Day.

How swiftly the months have slipped by.

It seems only yesterday that we were gathered here,  
a full year before us then....

a year without end...

But day followed day, in rapid, relentless progression.

The year did end, and we are here again.

Time flies...The older we get the swifter its pace seems to be.

When we were young, most of us wanted time to pass more quickly,  
we were impatient for life to proceed.

Not any more.

Now we want to stay time's speedy flow, if only we could.

Aye, time flies...

Yet ponder this: is it really time that flies?

Is not time, like space, an aspect of infinity?

It was, it is, it will remain.

It mocks all of our efforts to encompass it,

with our feeble instruments, our clocks and calendars

with their petty markings of hours and of seasons.

No, time does not fly.

We fly.

Our journey through time is a flight, and it is speedily gone.

And so, we are gathered here again

persumably prepared to discharge this holy day's demand

for a cheshbon hanefesh, for a self-reckoning of the soul.

I say "persumably" because I suspect that many of us are here

impelled by an admixture other reasons:

to feel a part of the Jewish community...

to be stirred by the liturgical music...

to glean those insights contained in our prayerbook...

Others are here to honor their parents' wish or memory

or to abate their terrible loneliness by reaching out to others

Still other may be here determined to do what Jews have always

done,

to assure that tradition will continue,

to demonstrate for all to see that Hitler has been denied

his final victory to heed that 11th Commandment of which

Rabbi Dreyfus reminded us last night.

Now, none of these reasons are flawed.

All of them are altogether worthy.

They fully justify our coming here.

For the synagogue service is the expression of the soul of a people,

a living people.

In the synagogue we meet as Jews...

and Jews have human as well as spiritual needs.

All of them warrant to be served.



Still, none of these reasons, however worthy, go to the heart of what this great day is all about:

sin and repentance, confession and reconciliation.

These are the dominant themes of the Yom Kippur symphony.

Not once, but thrice on this Day of Awe do we beseech:

Our God and God of our forebears...Let our prayers come before Thee...Turn not away from our supplication, for we are not so presumptuous and stiffnecked as to say, that we are wholly righteous and have not sinned...

CHATANU, AVINU, PASHANU

For verily, we have sinned.. we have transgressed... we have dealt preversely...

Such words of contrition ring strange to the modern ear, do they not?

Modernity has made light of the conception that they encapsulate,

the notion that each of us is individually accountable for his actions.

Einstein created the modern age, with his Theory of Relativity

but all too quickly, and he was the first to decry it, relativity became confounded with relativism

It gave birth to the mistaken belief that because time and space are relative, there are no other absolutes:

of good and evil, of knowledge, and above all of value.

Marx and Freud fed this false belief further when they taught

that the world is not what it seems,

that our senses, whose empirical perceptions shape our ideas of human behavior in society, are not to be trusted,

Their analyses combined to undermine, in different ways, that highly developed sense of personal responsibility and of duty toward a settled and objectively true moral code which stands at

the very center of Judaism.

And thus it was, that anarchy was loosed upon the world:

two global wars in one generation...

their fearsome aftermaths: Auschwitz, Hiroshima...

and the slaughter of innocents continues...

Perhaps, one day, these things will shock humanity into a returning.

We hope so.

At any rate, Yom Kippur bids us to speed such a turning,

-- and to begin the process by examining and changing  
our own individual ways.

Confession, it is said, is good for the soul.

It may be good for the body as well.

A recent study, reported in the New England Journal of Medicine,

suggests that people who confess actually live longer.

Apparently, the baring of the soul provides a merciful release

for inner pressures

pressures of guilt that blighten our days and cut them short.

Our tradition agrees: Confession is the key to the gates of repentance.

and beyond these gates lies healing balm for hearts

bruised by the knowledge of sin:

atonement...reconciliation...peace...

God's pardon and with it the pardon that comes harder still

the forgiveness wherewith we forgive ourselves

the restoring our our self-image

the renewal of our self-respect.



The rewards of repentance are many,  
but its road is toilsome to traverse  
Exacting demands are made of those who seek to walk its way  
scrupulous self-judgment...the cognition of guilt...  
and a determined assertion of the will  
Without such disciplines, atonement will forever ellude us  
and the gates of repentance stay sealed

\* \* \*

Self-recognition is the first demand of repentance:  
the ability to acknowledge transgression,  
the willingness to say when we have sinned that we have sinned,  
the strength to speak this truth not only communion with others  
and to God  
but to the self as well.

It is a demand which is not easily met.  
Just think of those lengths to which we go in order to escape it.  
we rationalize,  
we justify,  
we give ourselves the benefit of every conceivable doubt  
-- all in order to keep the hateful truth about ourselves disguised,  
"Deceitful is the heart above all things and it is desperately weak."  
Jeremiah spoke those words, and he knew us well.  
He knew our weakness for self-deception.  
Long before psychiatry, he knew that people will lie  
to make the wrong seem right and evil good.

Even when on occasion we speak the truth about ourselves,  
we find a way of softening our self description.

We euphemize...we find gentle words to explain what we do  
even while we use a clearer, harsher language  
when we talk about the conduct of others.

It would be far better were we to detail our own actions in less  
ambiguous more specific ways.

When, for instance, we assert what is contrary to the truth,  
let us not say that "we equivocated" or that we "skirted the truth"  
let us rather simply say that "we lied."

We may not like it,  
but that is exactly what is needed to touch the moral sense  
and to initiate change.

Or when we have departed from rectitude in our dealings with others,  
let us not say that "we took advantage" of the situation.

That is a round about way of putting it.

Let us rather say, quite simply, that "we cheated."

That is a very direct word.

It springs straight from the conscience, as an arrow flies whizzing  
from the string straight to the center of the target.

Do such words grate harshly on the ear?

Do they set the teeth on edge?

Nevertheless, it is better that we should employ them,  
and we should come, each of us, to this determination:

"I will always describe my own conduct  
by those clear-faced rough-tongued words that my enemies would use  
when they want to sting me to the quick."



Repentance begins with self-recognition.

Therefore, when someone cheats, he should call it cheating.

When he does shoddy and shabby things, for shoddy and shabby reasons  
he should say so.

When he is greedy, he should call it greed.

When he is burning with the fever of ambition,

he should say that ambition's fever is burning within him  
Whatever it is, he should call it by its honest name  
and not justify it on the basis that it is something else.

In all respects a person should make a true reckoning with himself.

When he gets ready to sell out his idealism, let him say to himself:

"I am about to sell out my idealism."

And if you say that a person who speaks thus to himself is not likely  
to sell out his idealism,  
that is precisely why he should say it.

Call wrong a wrong and you are half-way to resisting it.

Call an evil intention, evil, and it will cease to be an intention.

This is why there is something more at stake than the resolution of  
an inner conflict when we recognize ourselves.

It is the beginning of a transformation.

And that is why we are pray on this Repentance Day:

We have sinned...we have transgressed...we have dealt perversly.  
Perhaps the singular pronoun would be even more efficacious as  
a confessional.

CHATATI...AVITI...PASHATI

I have sinned...I have transgressed...I have dealt perversly.

Which brings me full square to the second demand of repentance:  
not just to acknowledge our actions but also to accept  
individual responsibility for them.

By and large, in our time,

we do not like to bear the weight of such an accountability.  
When things go well, well that's another matter.  
Then we are quick to claim credit, to boast of our skills and wit.  
But not when things go wrong.

Then we may grudgingly take the first step to repentance  
by admitting that we did wrong, but quickly add  
-- and here we fail to take the necessary second step --  
that we were caught in a web not of our own spinning,  
that others are primarily responsible for what we did.

Again, this is the fruitage of modern relativism which holds  
that while society can be held collectively guilty,  
in creating the conditions that make crime and vice inevitable,  
personal guilt-feelings are but an illusion to be dispelled.  
And so we moderns sneer at the ways of our ancestors  
who offered sacrifices to atone for their sins.  
But we too look for someone or for something else  
to bear the burden of our guilt.

I say "something," for our favorite scapegoats are impersonal:  
our environment, both psychological and sociological,  
our economic circumstance,  
the social circle in which we move,  
the social system under which we live;



And of course we blame our parents -- above all do we blame them --  
for what they did or failed to do  
yea, even for those genes they bequeathed to us  
all of which combine to have made us what we are.

We seem recognize no autonomous power within us.  
We attribute sin not to a failure of the will within  
but rather to the failing of forces entirely external.  
And the sinner, we say, can find his atonement  
not so much through a self-reckoning of the soul in a House of God  
but rather on a psychiatrist's couch  
where the evil of his past experience can be uncovered  
where he can learn to live with his sins,  
and to accept himself for what he is.

Now, all of this is not to say that the world about us does not influence  
us a great deal.

Its forces do mold our doing to a considerable degree.  
The rabbis knew this too and they enjoined us never to "judge a  
fellow human being until we put ourselves in his place."

AL TADIN ET CHAVERCHA AD SHETAGIA BIMKOMO

That is to say, that we should never condemn others until we can  
actually feel those circumstances that brought them low.

And so we do well when we use our knowledge of the  
interaction of society and the individual  
to understand others, to forgive them, and to go about  
correcting those aspect of society that incline us all to evil.

But when we use this knowledge as a kind of scapegoat  
when we employ it not to forgive others but to forgive ourselves  
too readily  
why, then, we comit a grieveous wrong  
for once again we will be busy doing everything  
except what needs be done -- the task of inner transformation.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could solve all our problems  
by stretching out on a couch .  
and while a patient father substitute is listening  
pour out the doleful story of all our woes.

Alas for our all too tender egos!  
Alas for our neurotic world!  
Alas for our faded dreams and disillusioned wishful thinking!  
Alas for the whole wretched business of living,  
and, especially, alas for us!

Is this the picture?  
Is this the 'unterste shure' the bottom line of human kind?  
Or can we break out of our plush-lined prison of self-pity  
and allow conscience to take it proper place?  
Can we say quite simply and plainly that we do wrong  
even though we know the right and that therefore we are sinners?  
And this above all, can we acknowledge the freedom and the power  
of the will within us?

We have such a will  
Indeed. it is the will that makes us human.  
It is the will that marks us alive.



For life is never the creature of circumstance.

Indeed, in the whole universe and everything that is,

life alone, life by its very nature,

is the antagonist of circumstance.

Inanimate things all drift.

Water flows to the sea by the path of least resistance.

But life climbs the mountains, conquers the wilderness,

and reaches for the very sky.

If there is one thing that is utterly clear about the nature of life,

is that it was meant to master circumstance,

At the human level it is meant to master even its own circumstances --

the obstacles within as well as the barriers without.

The spirit conquers all things when the spirit wills it,

and no excuse remains when we fail to live as we wish.

It is our recognition of this truth that gives the observance

of these days their hopeful tone

for on Yom Kippur we are given the opportunity to see clearly

not only what we are but also what we might become;

We climb a spiritual mountaintop, as it were,

to behold not merely the depths in the topography of the soul

but also those heights that are within our grasp to reach

And so we recite our confessional not in a mood of despair

but in the hope that the gifts of repentance will be ours

once we meet its demands

when we confess our wrong and acknowledge our power to correct it.

IM CHATO-ECHEM KASHONIM KASHELEG YALBINU

Thou your sins be as scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow

Every sinner can be a saint, every Jacob can become an Israel  
if only he wrestle with his God.

This is the beautiful promise of our faith and this its mandate:  
that we seek within ourselves and see within others be it ever so hidder  
the spark divine that hallows and exalts the dust that is man.

There is such a spark within us and we all of us know it.  
When it smolders, our lives are dark and bitter

our eyes grow leaden-eyed and the soul shrivels.

But when that spark leaps to life,

once it bursts into a bright and burning flame,

why, then, our life is transformed

Then do we taste its wine and hear the soft voice of its yearning

Then do we see spring and summer

and the petals on the grass and wings in the air.

Then do we fully experience friendship and beauty and love.

And then we also know beyond all question

that no alternative to such a life is worth considering

that in those few short years we spend on earth,

it is folly to do anything less.

Let us therefore resolve to live the kind of lives we dream to live  
and are fully capable of living,

lives large and generous, bold and adventurous.

lives great in the scope of their thought and desire

audacious as an act of faith...magnanimous in forgiveness,

smilingly triumphant over set-back and over disaster.

My we and and those we love be inscribed for such a life.

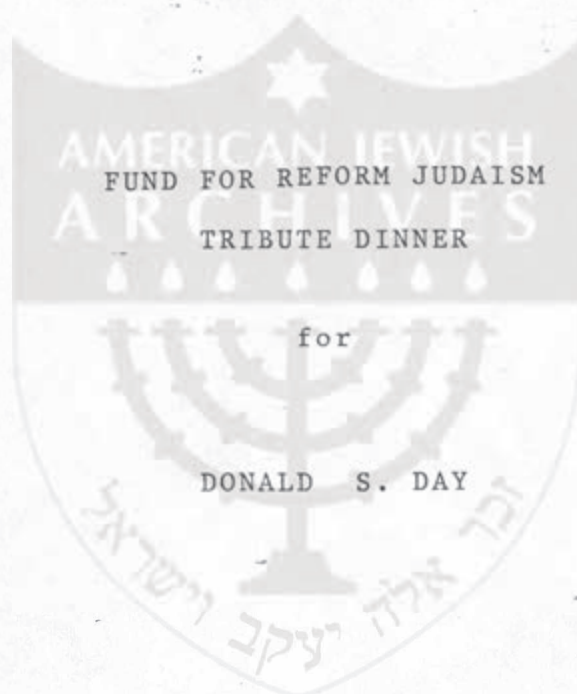
AMEN



ADDRESS

by

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER



Grand Hyatt Hotel  
Buffalo, New York

April 14, 1988

It is good to be here, and to participate in the celebration of this night, this dinner which enables us to give public expression to our affection and regard for Donald Day. We are deeply grateful to him for allowing us to do so. He neither craved nor relishes such open flattery. And he responded favorably to our pleadings only because he saw this evening as a means of further advancing a cause that has been central to his life of public service: the nurturing of our people's spiritual life, the sustaining of the synagogue, and the strengthening of its supportive institutions.

Someone once said that honor is the kind of thing that comes to you when you've outlived all your critics. Not so in Donald's case! He has been praised the better part of his life, and his honor was purchased dearly by the many deeds he did.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we convene in this place. After all, this is the matrix from which Don came forth. This community gave him that opportunity for service that ultimately propelled him to national, nay even to international leadership. And what a leadership it was, and is: intelligent, imaginative, vigorous!

Don was Reform Judaism's mentor and master, a leader sans peer, diligent and wise, zealously devoted to our work. He articulated our needs and advocated our cause with a stately eloquence.

Not a few among you here today attended those Union Biennial Assemblies he chaired. If you did, you surely felt the high regard in which he is held by our vast constituency. It is something more than mere regard. It is akin to a genuine love.

I certainly approach him in such a way, for he proved a constant friend to me, frank, caring, supportive. I will lastingly be grateful for his kindness.

Our religious community prospered under Don's stewardship. Our numbers burgeoned. Some 55 new congregations were added to our roster during the years of his service in office. We represent 800 congregations now, and their cumulative membership rolls have long since passed the million and a half mark. We have emerged as the predominant synagogue movement on the American Jewish scene.

Even as he enlarged our numeric strength, so did he fortify our inner life. He nourished existing programs and prodded us to pursue newer programmatic directions.



Thus the years of Don's tenure saw the institutionalization of the Outreach effort, Reform Judaism's endeavor to deal with the problem of intermarriage in a positive manner. An Institute of Jewish Educational Television was created and several superb films were produced under its aegis. Our college and Youth programs were vastly expanded. A new training program temple leadership was developed. And in Israel, a second Reform Jewish Kibbutz-Lotan- was founded, joining Yahel in the Arava. This is an altogether remarkable record of attainment of which Don and you and indeed we all can justly be proud.

There is another programmatic effort which was initiated under Don's guidance. I single it out for special mention, because it is of utmost consequence to the future of our religious community. It is a counterpoint of the Outreach effort and might well be called the inreach program. It summons Reform Jews to a greater religious commitment, to give much more substance to that identity which they claim.

Don himself addressed this need in a speech delivered to our national Board of Trustees. He correctly points out that we Reform Jews are not sufficiently disciplined in our observances. As Liberal Jews, we assert our autonomy, we insist on the right to choose. But all too often we choose nothing at all. Or choosing something, we observe it only haphazardly. We saunter in, we saunter through, we saunter out.

A movement that makes no demands on its adherents, warned Don, will earn no commitments. He challenged us, therefore, to counter the trend toward minimalism to elevate the role of Judaism in our personal and communal lives, to create a collective framework for the reborn spirituality of our times.

As you can see, we have more than sufficient reasons to honor Don Day, for what he accomplished and for all that he is.

We are reassured by the knowledge that Don will continue to serve us. Not only has he continued to be active in our national councils. He has just been elected President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, responsible for the advancement of our cause in many lands, but especially in Israel.

This celebration, then, is untouched by the sorrow of an irrevocable parting. It holds but the promise of greater things that are yet to be. Let us be joyful, then, and give thanks for the past, even as we give voice to our prayerful hope that the beautiful promise of this hour will be fulfilled, and that Don will be granted many more years of life and health and creative endeavor.



I speak of Don, but I mean not only Don but Edie as well. I never think of one without the thinking of the other too. The two are intertwined in my thoughts, as they are in life, ideal helpmeets one to the other. What a gracious lady she is, beautiful in countenance and deed, walking with a dignity that reflects her inner strength, her resilience, her spunk. The highest tribute that I can pay to Don is to note that he won the love of a woman such as this, and that he is altogether worthy of that love.

\* \* \* \*

At first flush it might seem ill-timed that this dinner be held on this of all nights. After all, this is the eve of Yom Hashoa, of Holocaust Remembrance Day, the day on which we are enjoined to remember our millions who were marched into the abyss. How can we celebrate when we remember Auschwitz?

And yet...and yet...how better to mark this day than to honor a man who is the very symbol of our determination as a people to resist and to survive our enemies by putting on the armor of faith, by buttressing those strongholds -- the synagogues and its supportive institutions -- those fortresses that have enabled us to withstand the fury and the suffering of the centuries.

How can we give thanks when we remember Auschwitz? Yet even there our people sang, did they not? They sang: I believe in redemption...Ani Ma-amin. And yet again they sang:

Zog nit kainmol as du geist dem letzten veig,  
Ven himlen blayene varshteln bloie teig...

Never ever say you walk the final way,  
Because the darkened heavens hide the blue  
of day,  
The time we've longed for will at last draw near.  
And our steps, as drums will sound, that we are here.

Aye, even there -- in the innermost circle of hell -- our people sang and celebrated.

They celebrated the Jewish holidays, even the most festive among them. There are many accounts which establish this fact, but the most dramatic account I know of is told by Elie Wiesel. He describes an event that took place in an extermination camp, one year on Simchat Torah, the festival of the giving of the Law, Jews are enjoined to mark this day by rejoicing, by dancing in their synagogues, Torah scrolls held in embrace.

Well on this day and in such a place, inside that "kingdom of the night," several hundred Jews gathered in one of the barracks to celebrate Simchat Torah. "In the shadow of the death chambers? Yes -- even there." But there was no Sefer Torah in the camp,



so how could they arrange the traditional procession, the customary dancing, with the sacred scrolls?

As they were trying to solve their problem, an old man noticed a young boy, standing against the wall, "looking on and dreaming."

The old man turned to him and asked: "Do you remember what you learned in cheder, in your religious school?" "Yes," replied the boy, "I do." "Really" said the man, "And do you remember our affirmation of faith, the sh'ma yisrael," "Of course, I remember much more."

"The sh'ma is enough" shouted the man... And with that he lifted the boy, and embraced him in his arms, and began dancing with him as if he, the boy, were the Torah. "And all joined in. They all danced and sang and cried. They wept, but they sang with fervor. Never before had Jews celebrated Simchat Torah with such a fervor."

Even in such a time and place did our people sing and celebrate. They did not allow their enemies to determine when to celebrate and when not to celebrate, "when to be joyous and when to mourn, when to sing and when to be silent." Even then was this deathless people renewing itself, its life.

Whose faith is equal to Israel's? Whose will to live? "The storm ends. In the sky, a rainbow signals hope and new life. Again, and yet again, there is a song to sing."

And so we too sing and celebrate as we remember our martyrs. As they "drew reasons for hope from their despair" so will we. As they buckled on and burnished the armor of faith so will we.

We do so by sustaining the synagogue, the source of our strength to live as Jews. It always was and is and ever will be.

For who will assure that there will be a Jewishly educated, Jewishly committed generation two decades hence? Who will provide the teachers and the rabbis and the scholars for that generation? Who will guarantee our federations and other communal 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 synagogue and those camps and seminaries and multitudinous educational endeavors that they maintain.

We honor the memory of our martyrs by nourishing the synagogue and its supportive institutions, we do so also by celebrating the lives and achievements of its builders. Foremost among them is a man we acclaim tonight, Donald Day. We honor him not just with the service of the lips, but by championing a cause that is central to his life of communal service.

Donald, on behalf of our far-flung constituency, those who are here and those who are not assembled with us here this night, I present you with this shofar. It finds its proper place in your home, for you and Edie have heard and heeded its summons. Come up here, my friend, and receive your rightful due!





Schindler: Don Day Tribute  
Buffalo, N. Y.  
April 13, 1988

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\* \* \* AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

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I present you with his shofar.

It finds its proper place in your home,

for you and Edie have heard and heeded its summons.

Come up here, my friend, and receive your rightful due!

Schindler: Nate Convention  
Monday, December 26, 1988  
Chicago, Illinois

It is a joy to be reunited with the men and women of NATE.  
This is no hyperbole, no extravagant rabbinic exaggeration.  
I really mean it.

Does not Jeremiah intimate that the love of one's youth  
can never be forgotten.

Well, NATE is that to me: the bride of my youth,  
the love of my espousals.

The Directorate of Reform Judaism's Education was my first national  
responsibility.

And it was that responsibility which led me to come to know and  
value the members of this worthy companionship.

And so it is truly good to be re-united with you,  
to feel your nearness and your caring.

NATE has accomplished much in the now 34 years of its existence.  
You created a new profession, that of Reform Jewish Educator.  
You set its standards and raised its aspirations.

Your members produced manifold texts and educational materials  
for the religious school.

You helped the Union to develop its curricula and you tested their  
effectiveness in the classroom.

You taught the teachers of our students  
and you taught our children too.

And this is where the process of education reaches its consummation:  
when the teacher encounters the student, and the two interact.



This Convention marks a transition in leadership from Bob to Zena.

Both of them are exemplars of NATE at its best:

not just technicians but artists

not just journeymen but sculptors of the soul

They teach not only well, but they themselves excel.

I look forward to installing Zena as your President tonight.

I want to seize this moment to I thank Bob Tornberg

for all his good offices,

to you...

to our entire religious community.

He represented you exceedingly well in our national councils.

By word and deed, he burnished the image of the Reform Jewish educator.

I am grateful to Zena, serving as your convention program chairperson,

for being non-directive in giving me this assignment.

"Be as broad as you will," was the message I received from her.

"Speak of the importance of education...

define the role of the congregation in its furtherance,

touch on Outreach, Social Action, religious commitment,

and be sure to underscore the need not just for the classroom,

but also for the informal approach to the educative

process."

Gottenyu! And all this in less than an hour!

Then why am I grateful to Zena?

Because, in effect, she gave me free reign.

She allowed me to share my thoughts as they perambulate,

to make at least some commentaries at random,

unconstrained by a lecture's expected structural pattern.

Let me begin by restating a commonplace:

Jewish education is the primary purpose of a congregation's striving.

The Sh'ma is the cornerstone of its liturgy, is it not?

The very word "sh'ma" means "listen...learn."

And at the core of this prayer is the commandment to take the

"words which I command thee this day"

and "to teach them diligently unto your children."

Talmud Torah, the study and the teaching of the Torah,

is the transcendent ideal which the synagogue enshrines.

Thus, every aspect of the congregational program must be bent

to serve this end,

the bulk of its resources applied to it.

Only then will its center hold.

Jewish education is not limited to the classroom by any manner or means.

It must penetrate every other room and activity of the Temple's life.

In the sanctuary, prayer and study must be intertwined.

Conversionary programs are of scant value if they involve

merely the imparting of labels lacking substance.

Social action loses all force, if its religious rootage is not probed,

its religious motivations left unexplored.

In a word, all Temple activities:

from committee meetings to conversation within its halls

from social events to the letters and bulletins we send out

all should be seen and seized as means to further the

Jewish educative process.



Nor is the transmission of Judaism the domain of the professional  
teaching staff alone.

All professionals, and lay leaders too, must engage in this process.  
Nolens, volens, they are engaged in it anyway.

Because our children internalize their values primarily by  
identification with the ego ideal, that is to say,  
they take their clue not so much from what people say  
but from what they do.

And so the manner in which we conduct the Temple's affairs,  
how we approach one another,  
how we comport ourselves,  
the kind of people we single out for leadership  
or choose to honor otherwise  
all these and more teach our children a good deal  
about those values which we affirm ourselves  
and which we see our synagogues as enshrining.

Brazel b'varzel yachad -- "iron sharpeneth iron"

A knife can best be honed against the edge of another knife.

The words of Mishle are re-echoed in the sentiments of a modern poet.

"He who teaches as books enable only babbles...  
Not any profane man, not any liar, not any slave can teach...  
but only he can give who has...he only can create who is...  
courage, wisdom, piety, love, they can teach..."

Now teachers -- artists of the soul, I call them -- must have a  
vision of what they want to create,

They must see in their mind's eye the kind of Jew they mean to make,  
even as a Michelangelo saw those shapes buried in the marble  
before he chipped away the restraining stones.

What are the elements which go into the making of the Jewish being?

The first of these, assuredly, is what we have been talking about:  
knowledge.

We want our children to respect intellect and learning,  
and to be yod'ey sefer, to be knowledgeable Jews themselves.

This leads me to the first of my random, though hopefully pertinent  
comments I want to make, and it is this:

We do not deal with sources sufficiently in our educative process.

We learn a good deal about the Bible, about rabbinic literature  
or Jewish philosophy and lore,

But rarely, if ever,

-- beyond the routinized weekly scriptural reading --  
do we focus on the text itself.

Perhaps it is our quest for relevance,

for "hooks" by which we can capture our students' attention,  
that leads us to leave tradition, and in particular the Bible,  
out in the hallway.

This, I believe is a mistake, a missed opportunity.

Why not take a leaf from the Lubavicher Chassidim.

[After all, we have taken abuse from them, we might as well  
learn from them too].

They have refined the tradition of "daf yomi" which enjoins  
each Jew to study some page of the Talmud each day.



They rather select a particular page, from the Talmud or from Chassidic literature, which becomes the assignment of the day, as it were, and which is studied on the very same day by every Lubavicher Chossid in the world.

This custom serves not only as a stimulus to study but as a unifying force as well.

In similar manner, why not let each synagogue choose a passage from the Bible, from the Torah portion perhaps, which then is studied during that week not only in the classrooms or interpreted from the pulpit, but also at every Temple function and every committee meeting in the form of a d'var torah by an individual or in informal group discussion, perhaps even by families in congregants' homes.

Admittedly, this is a modest suggestion. But I believe that it would energize the congregation's educative process and make it more cohesive.

Certainly it would lead us all back to the Torah's text. And it is our obligation, as Reform Jews, to do study it. True enough, we do not allow that text to chain us. But neither are we free to ignore it.

Goethe once wrote:

"The greater the intellectual progress of the ages,  
the more fully will it be possible to employ the Bible,  
not only as the foundation, but as the instrument of  
education."

I believe it is time to view our schools and our synagogues  
not as competing with the "outside world,"  
but as providing a framework of meaning  
-- indeed a refuge --  
for our children.

We should have confidence in the ability of a fully displayed Judaism to  
captivate young minds.

Our challenge is not to disguise Judaism in order to make it digestible,  
but to serve it attractively to some very hungry people,  
young and old.

Be that as it may, knowledge is the first ingredient which goes into  
the making of the Jew.

It is an essential element of our vision of Jewish education.  
But something more is required, for we seek not merely to impart  
knowledge, but also to impel action  
to find a way of bridging the distance between midrash and  
ma-aseh, between the mind and the hand.

We want our charges not only to know Jewish things,  
but also to do Jewishly.

I come here upon a theme which has been my leitmotif for some years now,  
but which I intend to rehearse in Cato-like manner  
until it becomes a commonplace,  
accepted as the norm in thought and in deed.



Reform Judaism is not just a label with which we adorn ourselves.  
If we are to wear this name with pride,  
we must give our religious community authenticating substance.  
True enough, we pride ourself of our openness,  
our determination to be inclusive rather than exclusive.  
Just the same, we are not so open that anything goes.  
Reform Judaism has its definitions  
and not just in the negative sense of what we do not do  
but also in the positive sense of what we are obliged to do  
when we claim the name of Reform Jew.  
Too many in our midst either do not know or refuse to act upon the  
knowledge that this is so.  
As liberal Jews, we assert our autonomy,  
we insist on the right to choose.  
But all too often we choose nothing at all,  
or choosing something we observe it only haphazardly.  
We saunter in, we saunter through, we saunter out.  
As a case in point, there isn't a Reform Jew alive who, when asked,  
would not say that the Sabbath is essential to Judaism,  
that it is our solemn obligation to preserve it.  
Indeed, so we pray in our prayerbooks  
-- and not just the new, the old Union Prayerbook too --  
"Even as Israel has preserved the Sabbath, so has the Sabbath  
preserved Israel."

Yet walk into the typical Reform Synagogue on a Sabbath when there is  
no bar or bat mitzva, and how many people will you find?

Walk into the typical Reform Jewish home on the Sabbath and  
what do you find there?

The candles, well yes, maybe.

The kiddush, rarely.

And where are the books?

Where is the discourse on themes other than the everyday?

How do we use the Sabbath to sanctify our space and time?

And how in heaven's name will the Sabbath preserve us,  
if we do not find even a single way to preserve the Sabbath?

Moreover, as synagogue leaders we make few demands on our constituents  
beyond the financial.

And because we don't, we give substance to the perception  
that Reform Judaism is but a religion of convenience,  
that in Reform anything goes,  
that this is a place where easy answers are given and  
few if any questions asked,  
that we need do little if anything at all and we can still call  
ourselves Jews.

Let me say at once, that this problem of which I speak is not endemic  
Reform.

Orthodoxy and Conservatism both have their fair share of those  
who offer only lip-service and not a service of the heart.

And of course there are numerous Reform Jews who do take their  
Judaism seriously and see it as a purposeful religious pursuit.



But too many in our midst take the lackadaisical approach,  
and our permissiveness exacts its penalty  
especially in the alienation of our young.

Our permissiveness, our lackadaisical approach exacts its penalty  
especially in the alienation of our young.

Consider some of the evidence, if you will:

\* a recent survey of Jewish students on college campuses across  
the United States reveals that Reform Jewish youngsters  
less actively identified with Jewish life than are those  
who come from more traditional homes.

They are not as likely to join Hillel, or to attend services  
with the same measure of regularity as do the others.

They are not as likely to enroll in Jewish studies courses  
but they are more prone to interdate and intermarry.

\* a recent study of Jewish family life demonstrates a dramatic  
relationship between ritual observance and divorce.

The percentage of divorce is lowest among the high observers,  
nearly quadruple in the medium group  
and highest of all among the low observers.

Their divorce rate is nearly 8 times the proportion found  
among the high observers.

\* But one other painful example:

Some years ago we discovered that the various cults.  
the Moonies and the like, attracted a disproportionate number  
of Jewish youngsters,  
some 12% was the figure cited then;  
and a disproportionate number of them identified themselves as  
reform,  
a proportion exceeded only by those who came from unaffiliated  
households.

And what reasons did our children give for their defection:  
that they failed to find the spiritual sustenance they needed  
in our synagogues and homes.  
And so they joined the cults and willingly submitted themselves  
to those disciplines which we were so reluctant  
to impose on them.

(film...on cults...what parents say)

Aye, our permissiveness exacts its penalties in alienation.  
We have a need for a greater discipline in this matter of our  
religious observances

To be a Jew in one's mind or heart is not enough.

The pure idea can serve only a few rare individuals  
theologians, philosophers if you will.

The truth -- to be felt by most of us -- must put on a garb.

There must be rite, legend, ceremony...visible form.



And so we must teach our children not only to know Jewish things,  
but also to do Jewishly.

But doing Jewishly means something more than the observance of rite.

It involves also the refinement of ethical standards in the personal  
and the communal life,

the development of a daily discipline so unflagging

that those who see us and our children will say:

"In all truth, the legacy of Israel's prophets lives on  
in this people."

When the Jewish tradition speaks of Mitzvot,

it does not limit itself to the observances of rite.

It encompasses ethical deeds as well.

Indeed, it assigns them a higher place on the scale of Judaism's values.

Thus we read in Isaiah:

"When you come to appear before me, who has required this  
at your hands to trample my courts...your new moons and  
your appointed seasons my soul hateth...I am weary to bear  
them...And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide  
mine eyes from you...yea, when ye make many prayers,  
I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood...  
Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings  
from before mine eyes...Cease do do evil...learn to do well...  
seek justice..."

Why, Judaism invests even worship, the act of prayer,  
with ethical content.

In any event, this is what the Hebrew word for prayer literally means:

lehitpalel...to judge the self.

When we pray we judge ourselves, we measure ourselves against the ideal.

As a talmudic master taught: when we rise from our prayers

as a better Jew, as a better human being,

then, and then only, is our prayer answered.

God will not answer our prayers, and we will not hear His voice  
when we set aside the problems of the day  
on the pretext that they are for others to solve:  
the politicians, the economists, the diplomats.

From Judaism's perspective, the modern world suffers a spiritual  
malaise not because so many people don't pray  
but rather because too many people go hungry.

Our age makes entirely too light of the ethical ideals.

It relegates them to the realm of the subjective, the relative  
and assigns them but scant worth.

Yet consider their truer worth:

Add love to a house and you have a home.

Add righteousness to a city and you have a community.

Add truth to a pile of red brick and you have a school.

Add art and imagination to a series of spires and arches  
and you have a cathedral.

Add religion to the humblest of edifices and you have a sanctuary.

Add justice to the far-flung round of human endeavor  
and then, and then only, do you have a civilization.

No, and over again "no," Reform is not an "anything goes"  
version of Judaism

Reform Judaism has its definitions

and not just in the negative sense of what we do not do  
but also in the positive sense of what we are obliged to do  
when we claim the name of Reform Jew.



To do Jewishly is the second element which goes into the making  
of the Jew,

into our vision of what Jewish education is all about.

There is a third required element,

and some say it is the most important.

And that is to feel Jewishly.

I speak now not just of a sense of identification with the Jewish  
people -- that is a given.

I speak, rather, of the numinous, of a consciousness of the holy...

Where wast Thou when the foundations of the earth were laid,  
When the morning stars sang together  
And the hosts of heaven shouted for joy?  
Hast Thou commanded the light?  
Hast thou entered the springs of the sea?  
Have the portals of death been opened unto thee?  
Take off thy shoes from off thy feet,  
for the place wheron thou standest, it is holy!

This, above all, this feeling of awe, of the sheer wonder of life  
that we must endeavor to instill and nurture in our children.  
And we must instill and nurture it within ourselves.

We need to, desperately, for there is a growing yearning  
for the sacred in our day.

We all of us can feel it.

The very air we breathe is tense,

a wind blows through space, and the tree-tops are astir.

Men and women are restless,

but not with the restlessness of those who have lost their way  
in the world and have surrendered to despair,  
but rather with the hopeful questing of those who want  
to find a new way and are determined to reach it.

It is a searching after newer and truer values,  
for deeper, more personal meaning.

It is a purposeful adventure of the spirit.

These men and these women are in the grip of a great hunger  
which, like all "great hungers feeds on itself,  
growing on what it gets,  
growing still more on what it fails to get."

The prophet Amos spoke of such a hunger when he said:

"Behold the day cometh saith the Lord God  
that I will set a famine in the land  
not a famine of bread nor a thirst for water,  
but of hearing the words of the Lord."

Can you find a more vivid limning of the very body and spirit  
of our age?

Can you paint a more vivid portraiture of the Great Hunger that  
seized us?

Never before, in recent history, has there been a greater yearning  
for those ideas and ideals which the synagogue enshrines.

These then are the aspects of our vision of what Jewish education is  
all bout,

these the elements that go into the making of the Jew:  
the quest for knowledge  
the leading of a disciplined Jewish life  
and a never-ending search for the sacred, for the godly,  
for the holy in life.



Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., a physician and well-known writer,  
who fathered one of America's most influential Supreme Court  
Justices, once said of education that  
"it should begin at least one hundred years before  
the child's birth."

In the case of Jewish education, we can extend Holmes' century  
into millenia.

Every day in the Jewish classroom, we witness that marvelous  
interaction of the most ancient with the most immediate,  
of the whole culture of Judaism with the single Jewish child.  
It is a transaction  
in which the child grows older and the culture younger  
in which the child gains a past and the culture a future  
in which the child gains a community and the culture a new leader.

Everywhere in Judaism this encounter is marked as a manageable though  
mystical key:

at the core of the sh'ma where we are commanded to teach  
the words of the Torah "diligently to our children;"  
by the title of address by which our leaders were always known,  
yea, even from the time of Moses:

rabbenu, that is our teachers;

and in last week's Torah portion which dwells so heavily upon  
the transmission of blessings and responsibilities,  
from Jacob to his sons and grandsons.

You, then, are our heroes, the heroes of Reform Judaism.

You are the motor force of our continuity.

You are the perimeters at the wheel of Judaism, those

who actually make contact with the ground and move us forward.

Let it be said of you, our Temple educators,

as Jacob says of his greatest son Joseph:

your bows have stayed taut, your arms firm.

May God bless you "with the blessings of heaven above,

blessings of the deep that couches beneath

blessings of the breasts and the womb...

unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills."

Ken yehi ratzon

Thus may it be God's will.

