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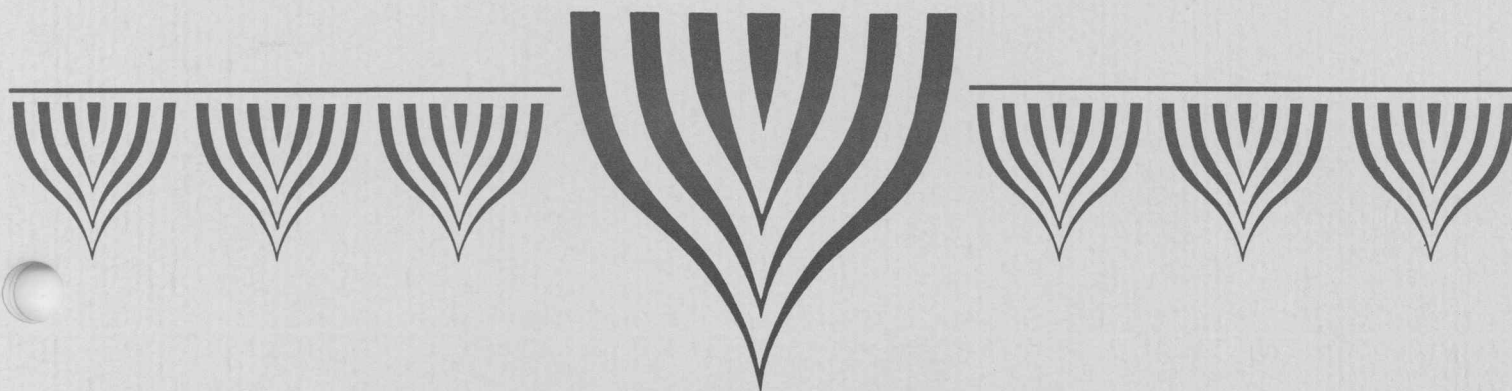
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# PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

60th General Assembly  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations  
November 2-6, 1989  
New Orleans, Louisiana



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## The Covenant of the Generations

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I am deeply grateful to Allan Goldman for his gracious introduction. His words are pleasing to the ear. But an honest self-reckoning compels me to confess that I do not really deserve all this praise. Too much of what is credited to me is truly the accomplishment of others: my colleagues of the Union staff, the members of our national committees and commissions, all the leaders – both lay and professional – of our vibrant religious community each of whose principal components is represented on this dais. I accept Allan's words, then, as descriptive not of my attainments but rather of our collective accomplishments.

Allan himself deserves much credit for what he is: a highly capable Chairman of our Board. The challenges facing him were formidable. He was the youngest in our history to be elected to this office. He was the first from the Far West, requiring that distance and time zones be spanned continuously for effective control. Moreover his predecessors had set the highest possible standards of leadership. Think of them for a moment, if you will; their names are still honored in our midst: Chuck Rothschild, and Donald Day, and Matthew Ross -- giants of the spirit all.

Allan has met his challenges well. He brings rich talents to his endeavors: a well-trained, retentive mind, a quick wit, the ability to articulate his thoughts precisely and, this above all, a driving determination to steer our movement forward, never to allow it to drift. He deserves our admiration and applause.

My very best wishes, also, to Dolores Wilkenfeld and Ellie Schwartz, leaders of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, whose delegates have come here, in joint convention with us, for Sisterhood's 37th biennial gathering. Dolores now completes her final years of office as NFTS President. She too deserves to be commended for her manifold contributions toward the advancement of our work. She led the women of Reform Judaism with dignity and strength.

Lastly, I want to express our deep felt gratitude to the many men and women comprising the Local Arrangements Committee for everything they have done and will yet do to make us feel at home. They faced a Herculean task. We are here in unprecedented number – the largest Assembly on the North American Jewish scene. The energetic and effective chairlady Betty Zivitz, assisted by Larry Jackofsky, our Council Director, was able to assemble a veritable army of volunteers who labored for nearly two years now for our coming. And we do appreciate their many deeds of human kindness.

Like thanks must go to our National Convention Committee under Iris Franco Vanek and Mark Levy, and especially to Arthur Grant, who coordinated the multitudinous details of this complex venture. The fruitage of all their labor is rich, indeed. This bodes well to be a memorable convention, stimulating in content and setting alike.

Let me also, in this context, publicly acknowledge my indebtedness to Edith J. Miller, my trusted associate, who has served our Union with devotion for many decades now. I could not possibly function without her.

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And so we are gathered in this jewel of a city whose reputation is one of allure and excitement. This very Southern city of New Orleans is not as far removed from the Jewish experience, both negative and positive, as one might think.

From here, after all, the slaves of African descent were marketed to the entire South—from here a whole people was forced to “harsh labor with mortar and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field.” Here, too, healthier forms of commerce yielded the kind of cosmopolitanism that could enable this city, like the Jewish people to grow through historical misfortune and ruin to renew its stature in our own era.

At every step Jews were involved in that growth. New Orleans was home to Judah Touro, America’s greatest philanthropist of his day, from whose bequest was founded Touro infirmary, which grew into the Hebrew Hospital of New Orleans, one of the South’s outstanding health care institutions. More contemporary Jewish contributions to New Orleans can be seen in Tulane University, Audubon Park and Zoo, and the recently dedicated Woldenberg Riverfront Park.

New Orleans, in kind, has proved to be a secure home for three Reform Temples, each over one hundred years old. In this city, a Jew has owned a church; a rabbi once left services to ride as a volunteer on a fire engine, and a native who was cousin twice removed of Heinrich Heine became Princess Alice of Monaco. New Orleans might even have a Jewish Mayor soon, in Donald Mintz, who cut his political teeth when he successfully ran for the presidency of NFTY. Yes, we are well at home, gathering in this place we, the reconstituted people of the Covenant, at home in the reconstituted American South.

Ours has been no small contribution to that process of renewal in the South, during the decades of the civil rights struggle and continuing unto this day. One text proof of that commitment has been the inclusion, today, of the name of Mickey Leland among those for whom we said Kaddish. The Congressman was one who creatively engaged the American Jewish community and drew forth the best that we had to give. The Congressman was closely associated with our Religious Action Center. The disadvantaged black youngsters whom he sent on an African-Israel experience year after year, used our Kibbutzim, Yahel and Lotan, as their base. He was deeply committed to the security of the Jewish State. And he had a visceral concern for the Black Jews of Ethiopia. Indeed, the mission that cost him his life, was undertaken, at least in part, to advance their well-being. It is fitting then, that we include Leland’s name amongst those others whom we deeply mourn, especially those who were taken from us since last we convened: Earl Morse, past Chairman of our Board, a proud Jew, a faithful servant of this Union all his life; and Annette Daum of our Executive Staff, who guided our interfaith activities with ability and devotion.

May we honor their memory by continuing to pursue our own missions of Jewish continuity and human betterment.

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This week’s Torah portion, *parshat noach*, tells the story of the great flood that engulfed the world in the long ago.

It has always seemed odd to me and odd it seemed to the rabbis of old – that this man Noah, who alone is “righteous in his generation,” can hear word of the impending destruction of all living things without uttering a word of protest or shedding a tear of sorrow. Perhaps this is why the medieval interpreter of the Torah, the great Rashi, proclaimed Noah to be of “insufficient faith.” So, at least, the Hassidic master Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev interpreted Rashi to mean. Noah failed to recognize his own saintliness, his own ability to reverse God’s decree. He “walked with God” – but only with God, said Levi Yitzchak. Noah did not walk with his fellow human beings, or serve as a bridge between them and their God.

It was only “after the flood,” so we read in an earlier *midrash*,

“when Noah opened the ark and looked out and saw that the earth was desolate as, forests and gardens uprooted, corpses visible everywhere...no grass, no vegetation...the earth a wasteland. Only then did he cry out in pain and sorrow... (only then) did he understand that he had sinned, because he thought only of himself and his household, while all else perished by fire and water!”

Only then did Noah erect an altar unto God, to make sacrifices of atonement. And God forgave him, and promised never again to destroy the earth; and set a bow in the sky as a token of the covenant between Him and the earth.

The Book of Genesis itself takes a dramatic shift, following the story of the flood, a shift from mythology to history. It launches its narrative over God’s rainbow and finds Abraham: Abraham who has the compassion to argue with his God over the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham who has the vision to launch a new religion, to bring forth a new people, to establish a renewed Covenant.

Our challenge, as Reform Jews in 1989, is to develop our faith to exceed the “insufficient faith” of Noah. Our challenge is to cross over from flood to renewal, to realize that it is within our power to avert the evil decree, to know, with a certainty and out of the fullness of our faith, that we stand but at the foot of the rainbow, and not its ending, and that there is a future before us and for humankind.

### **Our Celebration CCAR Centennial, NFTY at Fifty, Outreach at Ten**

Like Noah we have marked the holy place of our disembarkation, America, by constructing an altar here: an institutional life that enables our creative best to rise up in unified purpose. At its base is our Central Conference of American Rabbis, now in its centennial year. What a century it was – the most awesome, the most momentous in Jewish life since the *churban* of the Second Temple. We have been transplanted and dismantled. We have been destroyed and reborn.

It was the Reform rabbinate – prodded by Stephen S. Wise and Abba Hillel Silver – that succeeded in transforming Zionism from a historical footnote into a stirring chronicle of statehood.

It was the Reform rabbinate, as institutionalized by Isaac Mayer Wise, that set the pattern for rabbinic training, congregational cooperation and rabbinical networking for all Jewish movements in North America.

Again, it was the Reform rabbinate that insisted on the empowerment of women in the religious life, and that engaged and prodded us to engage in social action, impelled by the quest not for power or ideology, but for holiness.

It was the Reform rabbinate and its prodigious collective Jewish scholarship that kept us as a movement within Judaism that permitted us to adjust to the changes of Jewish life only within the framework of our historic tradition. And then they reinforced this ideological nexus by goading Reform Jews to regain and retain their sense of Jewish peoplehood.

And think of what the Reform rabbis did and do for us, not collectively, but individually, each in his own community. We are bound to them by tears of sorrow and joy alike. They "carry our burdens," and they "sing our songs."

What bears special mention on this anniversary is the Reform rabbinate's contribution to the UAHC itself. For the Union is not only a lay body. It is a *congregational* body in which all Temple professionals have equal voice. Most of our programmatic task forces and commissions are joint bodies, often involving the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion too, and our affiliates as well: Social Action, Education, Religious Living, Outreach and many more. There is no aspect of our work that is untouched by the creative endeavors of the rabbinate. Such unity is not the rule in other Jewish religious streams in American Judaism, and likely is the true source of our strength and ever growing vitality.

We congratulate our Conference and its leadership, Sam Karff and Joe Glaser – as well as Dick Scheuer and Fred Gottschalk, the lay and professional heads of our seminary, on whose shoulders the awesome responsibility of rabbinic preparation rests. Let all rabbis assembled here rise now, so that we may give you the acclaim you so richly deserve.

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Our vitality is further assured by another massive stone in our institutional altar, the North American Federation of Temple Youth. NFTY was founded during the last week in December of 1939, and quickly grew to become a most creative affiliate. Tens of thousands of our young people have participated in its activities, and their lives were transformed by the experience.

Wherever I go on this continent of ours I find NFTY alumni. They are our rabbis and cantors and educators and administrators. They are the lay leaders of our congregations, and their most devoted members. And whenever they speak of their NFTY years, a dreamlike, wistful gleam illuminates their faces.

NFTY spawned many programs of great worth: junior youth groups, and activities for its alumni on campus; the Eisendrath International Student Exchange program; Bible tours and Archaeological digs in Israel, NFTY Mitzva Corps bringing religious action to life in Puerto Rico and Mexico and in the ghettos of America. A group of NFTY song and dance leaders even toured Russia this past summer, to help rekindle the Jewish spark among Soviet Jews.

To this day, the Reform movement sends more teenagers on summer programs to Israel than does

any other youth movement in the world. Indeed, without NFTY, there would be no Kibbutz Yahel and Lotan and no Mitzpe Har Halutz in the Galilee; these very settlements lend primary credibility to Israel's Progressive Movement.

Most notable of all, NFTY brought the Union's Camp Program into being and it remains the most effective vehicle for the transmission of Judaism at our command. By a magic all their own, our camps make Judaism come to life in the hearts of our children, they make it true for them, truer than mere preachment, truer than vague recollection, much truer, indeed, than pride in a heritage that is mere hearsay and not a true possession.

Rabbi Allan Smith leads our national youth program directing a staff exceeding one hundred in number, and he does so exceedingly well. But even he will agree, that while many must be credited for this half-century of maturation, two must be singled out for special mention: the first an institution, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, the women of Reform Judaism who nurtured NFTY from its very beginnings.

The second is a Rabbi, Samuel Cook, creative genius, master-builder, ever confident in the capacity of youth to grow in spirit. His own singular soul became and will remain the flaming soul of NFTY. Incidentally, it was Ellie Schwartz, Sam's long time associate during NFTY's formative years, who cooked up that alphabet soup - - SOFTY and CAFTY and NEFTY and PAFTY, etc. - - that has become NFTY's trademark. That's good cooking, Cajun style!

To be sure now, we cannot, dare not rest on our laurels. If anything, the task is even greater, certainly more complex. The family patterns of today's youth are more diverse, competing interests more compelling. At any rate, soon there will be many more young people about, now that the babies of the baby-boomers are growing up fast.

There is a need, then, for renewed attention to youth work on a congregational level: We should reach out to our young people at an even earlier age, by developing a network of Junior youth groups; and strive to hold them to a later age, while they are on campus. Innovative program patterns must be designed to attract those who stand at the periphery of our work and remain uninvolved.

And this above all: there is a need for role models, for rabbis and cantors and educators and committed lay leaders willing to spend quality time with our young people, ready to come regularly to their conclaves and conventions and camps, determined to amplify the heartbeat of our precious heritage loud enough to let it be heard above the noisy rhythms of modern life. Then will our "sons and daughters prophesy," even as we, of the older generation, will go on dreaming our dreams.

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Our institutional altar is incomplete, as is our acknowledgment of anniversaries. until I salute our Outreach program now in its tenth year. If there is a single innovation in present day Reform Judaism for which I would like to be remembered, it is this! It is an innovation that has transformed Jewish attitudes, that has opened the community's eyes and ears and hearts to those Jews for whom the love of mate and the love of their people once seemed mutually exclusive.



Indeed, virtually every Jewish denomination and organization in North America has accepted the fundamentals of our approach, renouncing the wagging finger or the pounding fist for the open hand, in fulfillment of the Talmudic injunction that bids us always be "soft as a reed and not as hard as a cedar." "It is because of this quality," taught Rabbi Elazar the son of Rabbi Shimon, "that reeds have been privileged to be selected as pens with which Torah scrolls, Tefillin and Mezuzot are written." Yes, by being flexible and not hard, we are creating Torahs and mezuzot. By being responsive and not resistant, we are turning dire fears into inspiring hope.

Good and timely as my notion might have been it would have died aborning had not others seized it and engaged in the toilsome task of its implementation. Many deserve credit for the success of this endeavor: lay leaders, rabbis, educators, administrators, numerous members of our congregations and of the Union's staff. The present chairman of the Outreach Commission, Mel Merians, belongs to this honored companionship as does David Belin who preceded him in office. So does Bernie Rapoport, who provided us with the initial means, no less than \$1, 000, 000, to launch this effort.

Of course, Lydia Kukoff stands at the center of it all. She is the prime mover of our labors in this sphere, architect and artisan alike, so much so that the words Kukoff and Outreach have become virtually synonymous; when you think of the one, the other spontaneously springs to mind. We cannot possibly praise her enough.

So very much has been accomplished in but a decade.

- \* Conversion curricula were revised to represent Judaism as an emotional and not just intellectual reality.

- \* Congregations were stimulated to integrate Jews-by-choice more effectively into their synagogal lives, to break the sense of isolation and alienation that is spurred by the absence of a more genuine communal support.

- \* Many varied programs were designed and refined to reach unaffiliated interfaith couples with unconverted spouses.

- \* The children of such couples are now the focus of our concern. Imaginatively conceived programs have been devised, as you will hear.

- \* A special Outreach curriculum was constructed to sharpen the sensitivity of teachers to the needs of students who have non-Jewish relatives.

Outreach has brought us one other boon – not anticipated at first. It has compelled us to look at ourselves: to ask ourselves as born Jews some very fundamental questions: Who are we...what do we really believe...what must we know and feel and do when we claim the name Jew? And once we grapple with such questions, an inner transformation takes place.

None of our outreach programs was instituted in a casual manner. Every idea was scrutinized with care, every program fully tested, and only then carefully extended. The custodians of Outreach have been uncanny in their ability to match inspiration with perspiration, to render concrete activities out of gossamer notions.

A perfect case in point is Rabbi Steven Foster's imaginative and marvelously successful Stepping Stones project, in Denver. Steve's idea was simple, as all great ideas are. Why not offer a time-limited,

tuition free, separate-track Jewish educational program to children of unaffiliated mixed-married couples?

Well, he did, enlisting the cooperation of his Temple's leadership and the Allied Jewish Federation. It is a two year program, open to children from kindergarten through senior high school at no cost to them. Sessions are held Sunday afternoons throughout the school year. A special curriculum was prepared by the Union, founded on respect for the non-Jewish parent of these children, yet rich in Jewish content. A weekly program for parents is also offered, giving *them* an opportunity to clarify their family goals and to learn more about Judaism and about the Jewish people.

Stepping Stones has been a spectacularly successful experiment. Each year twenty-five percent of the parents who enroll their children do affiliate; there are virtually no drop outs; several conversions of the non-Jewish partners ensued; and every family felt closer to and more accepted by the Jewish community. It is a program that bears emulating, and I call on our congregations to do so. I earnestly hope, indeed I am confident, that they will.

It is our hope to establish a special endowment fund for this and like purposes: to supplement resources where federations cannot be found to do so, to provide camperships, and scholarships to these young people. Here too we have an angel waiting in the wings. Our newly elected Board member, Bill Daniel, and his lovely wife Lotte have determined to restructure their charitable trust so that it will eventually make two million dollars available for such a fund. The children of the unaffiliated intermarried must not be allowed to fall through our community's cracks; they cannot be lost to the Jewish people forever.

We are not talking about a problem of narrow scope, now; vast numbers are involved. The intermarriage rate for Jews in the 1980s has reached forty percent, with less than half involving a conversion to Judaism. Over 500, 000 – yes more than one half million children – are the products of such marriages. By the year 2000, over fifty percent of children in Jewish religious schools will come from a home in which one of the parents was not born Jewish. Fifty percent of today's Jewish college students are expected to intermarry, and the trend shows no sign of abatement. And while the conversion rate *out* of Judaism remains limited, too often the rule is non-affiliation, and the result an atrophied Jewish identity.

Insufficiency of faith is the problem: but it is not the insufficiency of faith of the intermarried of which I speak. Rather it is the Jewish community's faith that is insufficient, when they cringe passively, like Noah, before the statistical flood. It is our pioneering Outreach effort that reveals a truer faith, faith in the power of Judaism to attract followers, to slake their hunger for the holy, their thirst for the dew of heaven. In the Talmud we are taught that Israel was "exiled among the nations only so that converts be added to them." (Pesachim 87b) And in our Haftarah of this very Sabbath, the prophet Isaiah assures us that our labors will not be in vain: "...Incline your ear and come to me; Hearken and you shall be revived...*goy lo teida tikra*...reach out to those people you did not know...and peoples that did not know you shall run to embrace you."

### Reaching out to the Unaffiliated

"Enlarge the size of your tent," Isaiah further bids in the opening sentences of today's Haftarah.

"Extend the size of your dwelling, do not stint!" Even so must our tent of Outreach be enlarged to enfold not just the intermarried but the many Jews-by-birth who are unaffiliated. *Their* numbers too are legion. As Reform Jews, we may well take pride in our continuing numeric growth; but the bitter fact remains, that there is one segment of the American Jewish community that is growing at an even faster rate than we: the unaffiliated.

It may be hubris for us to say that a lack of synagogue affiliation indicates an utter lack of Jewish identity, as there are many other pathways of identification open to American Jews: philanthropic, communal, literary, political, focusing extensively, though not exclusively on Israel. But the fact remains that synagogue affiliated Jews are Jewishly more involved. They visit Israel more often, devote more volunteer time to other Jewish organizations; they give more to Jewish causes, insist on a better Jewish education for their children; and, of course, they are more likely to participate in communal worship and home observances. Ultimately, the pathways of Jewish identification must lead to a center, a center where Jews can meet and form community. That center, more than ever, is the synagogue.

About a year ago, responding to this problem, the Conference and the Union joined to organize a special Task Force on the Unaffiliated, for the time being to operate under the aegis of the Outreach Commission, but if its work shows sufficient progress, it will stand on its own. Dru Greenwood, is staff director of this Task Force, and she recently pointed out that membership *retention* rather than a disinclination to affiliate is our primary challenge. Unbeknownst to its architects, our Temples are equipped with revolving doors: fully eighty-five to ninety percent of all Jews on this continent will belong to a synagogue at some time in their adult lives, passing in and passing right out again. Our outreach to the unaffiliated must therefore begin with inreach to our own sanctuaries.

Manifold opportunities present themselves to achieve this enlargement:

For instance, our synagogues might provide day care services. Because they are lacking in our communities, too many Jewish parents place their children in non-Jewish centers, and they pay for them. Then why shouldn't temples fill this critical need. What a potential to bring more people into our synagogues! What a "window of opportunity" for Jewish family education!

Or they might open their adult education classes to the entire community. Many are the modern Jews who shy away from worship, yet engage in study, who are willing to glean life-lessons from our tradition though they do not perceive the study of Judaism's classics as a means of encountering the Divine.

Mel Merians had a splendid idea to retain NFTY alumni. "Why not give them special privilege cards" he said, "granting them free membership in any UAHC congregation the world over, while they are in college or pursuing graduate work." The concept is not without its problems, but once overcome, its harvest might be rich, indeed.

The manner in which we collect our synagogue dues bears careful re-examination. Despite our stated devotion to the fair-share principle, our reputation is too often one of exclusivity; the perception persists that belonging to a temple is a luxury beyond the means of most.

I, for one, would like to extend the Stepping Stone concept to embrace all who are unaffiliated, and not just the unaffiliated intermarried. In other words, I want to call on our congregations to suspend those rules which restrict religious school to the children of Temple members and to admit any Jewish

child to our schools, not for an open ended free service, but for one or two years. Don't reject the notion out of hand. It might be a change in our procedures that would reap profits more surely than any other investment. At any rate, there is really no down side risk, here, for in this way, and at the very least, we of the Reform movement will have moved toward the ultimate goal: a Jewish education for every Jewish child in our communities.

The burgeoning of our Day School program will also help toward this end...twenty-two congregations either have or are in the process of developing such schools, requiring that we provide supportive staff in our a national department of education.

Perhaps most important of all, we must continue to adjust our temples' programming, indeed their entire ambience, to reflect the newer realities of Jewish family life: of divorce, of single parenting, of coupling without marriage, and their like. Too much of what we do still assumes the traditional Jewish family structure – mother, father, and child – which has become the minority configuration in the world of today.

These are but some of the means our new task force in concert with our congregations might pursue. Let us be daring in these efforts, willing to err, to stumble, to make mistakes. As a Jewish proverb tells us: "More lovely is an ugly patch than a beautiful hole." Patches, after all, can lead to a patchwork quilt, while holes lead only to emptiness.

When the poet and ghetto fighter Abba Kovner, of blessed memory, first came to Israel, he felt alienated from everyone and everything, he said, until someone asked him: "Would you join us for a minyan, we need a tenth." Kovner immediately joined the worshippers and felt he was no longer alienated. Years later, when he conceived his idea of the Diaspora Museum he designed a corner called "the minyan," with wax figures representative of various Jewish communities. Yet there are only nine and not the required ten figures because, explained Kovner, he wanted to call out to the viewers as others had called out to him: "Come join us, come and be counted, we cannot do without you. We need you as you need us." These are the words we must inscribe on the door posts of our synagogues.

### **Spirit Conveyed by Means of Art**

Let all of us be assured that resolutions passed at these Assemblies do not go unheeded; in one way or another they are acted upon and have an impact on the evolvement of our religious community.

I could demonstrate this to you in countless ways, by setting forth the wide spectrum of our activities, the many-varied colors of this wondrous rainbow that is our Union.

I could tell you about the National Kallah on Spirituality held at Brown University this past summer which engaged one hundred and twenty seven men and women of all ages in intensive prayer and study.

I could tell you about how our Corps of Service, mandated by our Los Angeles Assembly, is ripening; a solid infracture has been established, individuals and couples of all ages have come forward to volunteer their services; projects are under way in Italy, Switzerland and Israel, in Ethiopia and South Africa. Incidentally, I have urged that volunteers be sought for isolated, disadvantaged Jewish

communities, not just abroad but also within the United States and Canada..

Another, even more recent success has been our Rabbinic Aide program, mandated at our Chicago Assembly but two years ago. This past summer fifteen men and women, most of them from small, isolated, congregations without rabbis, joined for two weeks of intensive study and training in practical rabbinics: how to lead services, read from the Torah, write a sermon, conduct various life-cycle rites. *Mirabile dictu*, three of these eager fifteen have now determined to make the rabbinate their life career and have applied for admission to HUC- JIR!

Several of the projects I just mentioned were actuated by Danny Syme whose faithful stewardship serves us well in so many ways. He brings to us a combination of creativity and energy which enhances every aspect of our work.

The UAHC-CCAR Commission on Jewish Music, called into being at our Los Angeles Assembly, has been particularly productive. Ably chaired by Jack Geller and directed by Danny Freeland it has done much to heighten the musical literacy of our congregations. As you know, the Commission is very much present at this Biennial with its wonderful Friday evening program, as well as five workshops for temple leaders in the course of our gathering.

It has been so successful, in fact, that I ask the Commission to expand its purview to include not just music, but other arts as well: drama, dance, sculpture, architecture, even painting. The Zohar tells us that "there are halls in the heavens above that open but to the voice of song." This is true for the other forms of art as well. They too can serve to deepen our sense of the sacred, our awareness of the holy in life.

You see, so much of our present-day reluctance to believe in God is due to that paradox with which Jewish theological thinking confronts us: that God, though totally other and unknowable, nonetheless makes Himself known. "Thou canst not see My face," so Moses is told atop Sinai, standing in the cleft of the rock. "But I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

Unknowable, yet known through its traces; invisible, and yet real. The paradox is vexing, perplexing.

Like the rest of humankind, we are creatures in bondage to our eyes. Only seeing is believing, we say; only the visible is fact. But the invisible world has a reality all its own, and its force may well be more intense than is the force of the world that is seen.

Consider the world of the invisible, if you will.

Ideas, for example...they are impalpable. Thoughts are free...no one can seize them. Yet ideas can seize us and they hold the power to transform our lives. Ideals too are of such a kind. They are intangible, yet what is life without them? Take truth from a school and you reduce it to a rubble of red bricks. Take religion from a sanctuary, and it becomes just an ordinary hall. Take justice from the far-flung round of human endeavor, and civilization reverts into a jungle.

Love, - - love, wondrous, luminous love; it is also invisible. We can see its expressions, to be sure: the caress, the kiss. But no one has ever seen love itself. It certainly cannot be anatomized, or schematized, or reduced to clearly identifiable elements. Yet how powerful a force love is! It can evoke our willing sacrifice, inspire us to the noblest of deeds.



Music, too is of such a kind; all forms of art are that: dance, sculpture, painting, architecture, "Music in space," Schelling called them. They may be discernible in outer form but in their innermost essence. The sources and nature of art are a mystery even to those who create it. Yet art has the power to heal us. It can make the spirit soar, for art *is* spirit from the realm of the unseen, conveyed by means of matter.

Let our Music Commission expand its scope, then. Let its purview encompass all the arts. Let their inspiring power be felt throughout our movement.

### **Including Gay and Lesbian Jews**

Yes, our resolutions express our resolve to act. There is one realm, however, in which our resolutions have been forthright, but our actions considerably less so. I speak now of the plea of gay and lesbian Jews for fuller acceptance in our midst.

I know that I raise a subject which will make many here feel uncomfortable, but this is precisely why I must raise it. Our discomfort is a measure of our continuing prejudice. I do not exclude myself from this harsh decree, for in thinking about what I would say on this subject, I had to wrestle with demons in the depths of my own being, demons I never acknowledged were there. Let us admit it, then: that in spite of past declarations urging the contrary, the singling out of homosexuality from the whole human constellation as a loathsome affliction remains a widespread sentiment in our midst.

True enough, over fifteen years ago, we admitted the first synagogue with an outreach to gay and lesbian Jews into the UAHC, and we have added three since. Gay men and lesbians by the hundreds who had felt themselves alienated from Judaism have joined these congregations and have added their strength and commitment to our religious community. But in most mainstream congregations, we have not extended our embrace to include gay and lesbian Jews. We have not acknowledged their presence in the midst of our synagogues. We have not dispelled the myth of the "corrupting homosexual" of the counselor or teacher who would fashion children in his or her sexual image. And we have not consciously included gay and lesbian parents as part of the Jewish family circle.

To be sure, many of us feel pity for gays and lesbians, and we agree, intellectually, that it is a grievous wrong to stigmatize them, to ostracize them, to hold them in moral disdain. But something more than a grasp of the mind is required; there is a need for a grasp of the heart. Something different from pity is called for; we need, as a community, to cross those boundaries of Otherness, those fringed boundries where compassion gives way to identification.

Indeed, we have not affirmed that we *all* are family. We speak of "them" and "us," as though gay men and women were descended from a distant planet. If those who have studied these matters are correct, one half million of our fellow Jews, no less than one hundred thousand Reform Jews, are gay. They are our fellow congregants, our friends and committee members and yes, our leaders both professional and lay. Whether we know it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not, some of them are our sisters and brothers, our daughters and our sons.

In our denial, in our failure to see one another as one family indeed, as one holy body—we forget Jewish history, we opt for amnesia. We who were beaten in the streets of Berlin cannot turn away from

the plague of gay-bashing. We who were marranos in Madrid, who clung to the closet of assimilation and conversion in order to live without molestation, we cannot deny the demand for gay and lesbian visibility!

I know full well what our literal tradition has to say on the subject. Yet built within it is the possibility of change, once advancing knowledge enlarges our understanding. There was a time – so our colleague Gene Mihaly instructed us –when deaf-mutes were considered mentally incompetent, and, hence, denied the right to participate in the religious life. But no less an authority than Maimonides was prepared to lift this restriction when deaf-mutes give evidence of a capacity to learn; he codified the flexibility provided by the Talmudic sages themselves. Similarly, the Bible enjoins us to sequester lepers, to isolate them. Like AIDS patients today, they were not only shunned but told that they suffer only because they sinned. Yet few indeed are the *poskim*, the Halachic decisors, of today who would enforce the Biblical ostracism of lepers. Then why are *we*, and especially we Reform Jews, not willing to set aside the halachic despatches of homosexuality in order to reflect equally *our* newer knowledge.

In any event, the Torah has many strands; seen singly, they do not reveal the whole; the tapestry must be seen in all its wondrous fullness. There is one text, but there are others, and beyond them, there is their interpretation which is never fixed but ever in flux. Yes, there is the reproving God who visited His wrath upon the men of Sodom; but there is also the loving God who enjoins us not to “stand idly by while our neighbor perishes.” Our Torah has many faces, but the most authentic is the one that reflects its heart.

Our Rabbinic Conference, through its Committee on Homosexuality, which has yet to render a final report – has called on the Union to embark on a “movement-wide program of heightened awareness and study.” Very well! I support its summons to do so, hence my commentary on the subject. I endorse the notion of dialogue and education in regard to sensitive issues. But education in a vacuum is not enough. Ultimately, there must be a policy enunciated by which the many gay and lesbian Jews of our community can know that they are accepted on terms of visibility, not invisibility. Ultimately, they must know that we place no limits on their communal or spiritual aspirations.

In all of this, I am working to make the Reform Jewish community a home: a place where loneliness and suffering and exile ends; a place that leaves it to God to validate relationships and demands of us only that these relationships be worthy in His eyes; a place where we can search, together, through the written Torah and the Torah of life, to find those affirmations for which we yearn.

## Concerning Substance Abuse, and Abortion

Let me now touch briefly on two matters which really enter Al Vorspan’s domain, and we eagerly expect his Social Action keynote scheduled for tomorrow morning. He always sharpens our sense of what is right and wrong. He is certainly the first among equals on the Union’s staff, immensely admired by us all.

My first comment is prompted by a report from Allan Smith, the able head of our youth and camping division that during the summer just past, substance abuse, - particularly of alcohol - proved to be a more pervasive problem than ever before. It was controlled, of course, but it *had* to be con-

trolled. And there's the rub. This flies in the face of those "denial myths from the shtetl past," to which we cling, that Jews never become drunkards. They do, and their children do.

Much the same must be said of narcotics. A recent report by the National Center of Drug Abuse concluded that "Jewish students constitute one of the most 'at risk' college groups...that they have consistently higher risk rates." Not long ago, the National Cocaine Hotline conducted a poll of randomly chosen callers and identified eighteen percent as Jewish - eighteen percent in a population that constitutes less than three percent of the general public. Those are grim statistics and we had better face them. We'd best stand at the mirror and see ourselves, transform ourselves, rather than smash the glass in self-denial.

The resolution on substance abuse that has been put before you at this gathering is significant in its acknowledgment of our problem, though much more needs to be done to fashion a solution.

I also call on our Task Force on Youth Suicide to lead our efforts in this realm. This problem is properly within its purview. After all, so many of the self-inflicted deaths among adolescents are drug-related, even as the causes of suicide and substance abuse are akin: a loathing of the self, a fear of the world. Hopefully, our task force will provide our young people with life-affirming alternatives that can compete with the death-defying thrills of narcotics and alcohol.

In this context, a few words concerning the Bush administration's strategy in the war against drugs. We admire the President's insistence on tackling America's drug problem head on. Just the same, the scourge of drugs cannot be curbed solely or even primarily by cops, judges and jail houses. "Get tough" preachments are no substitute for a responsible social and economic analysis of the drug epidemic. Hardening the hearts of the public toward drug users, and indeed toward the suffering inner-city communities that have been disemboweled by crack addiction, can only lead to a heightened plague.

\* \* \*

A few words on the subject of reproductive rights for women. Our past resolutions still hold with respect to their thrust. For decades now we called for freedom of choice, and we have resolved continuously since then to oppose the constant effort to restrict, endanger or overturn abortion rights.

I found only one problem in reviewing our past resolutions: the last, resolved as it was after the Roe v. Wade decision, sang hymns of praise for the Supreme Court and its then majority.

Perhaps we need a new resolution to reflect our reservations concerning some of the more recent majority opinions of the Supreme Court. Not for a generation has there been a week of court decisions as debilitating and morally hypocritical as the week before Independence Day, 1989, during which a majority of the justices in one breath declared minors and mental incompetents to be reasonable targets for capital punishment, and in another breath lowered the curtain of privacy that rightfully surround a pregnant woman so that state legislatures could take a pot-shot at her. Simultaneously, affirmative action programs were gutted, and the wall of church-state separation battered with a menorah that was, said the court, not really of any great religious significance.

A few weeks ago, I chanced to be with Floyd Abrams, perhaps the country's foremost authority on

the First Amendment. Some of you will recall his successful defense of the New York Times in the Pentagon Papers case. Floyd told me: "Alex, the Reagan counter-revolution isn't over - it has just begun. We had better be on our guard."

In any event, now is the time, to translate our past resolutions into action. I call on the women of Reform Judaism to lead us in this crusade and to galvanize the forces required for a state by state campaign. It is a battle that can be won. Recent events in Florida and Washington, may well signal a change in the political tide.

### **Toward Peace in the Middle East**

But now let me turn to Israel, and the process toward peace in the Middle East. It is a process that has been stagnant too long, and threatens to collapse like an old swaying bridge in a hurricane.

Two years ago, at our Chicago gathering, we declared the status quo in the West Bank and in Gaza to be untenable, that something had to give. Two months later the intifada began.

Throughout these bitter months I have consistently held to the view that the effort to repress this rebellion by force would only serve to deepen mutual hatreds and fears. And I supported every effort to move toward negotiations, even as I resisted any attempt, whatever its source, to impede the process.

Our hopes were always frustrated. The counsel of timidity prevailed. And the intifada became more fierce, both in the struggle to further the rebellion, and in the effort to repress it. Arab hatred has deepened, and so have the fears of the Israelis. The corrupting sense of it all being a trap without escape, has begun to gnaw away at the vestiges of good will.

Neither the PLO leadership nor the Israeli government has really said "yes" to peace, except on its own strict terms. Both sides, in their apparent inability to move forward, reveal dangerous vulnerabilities: Shamir to the right wingers of his party, the PLO to younger, more reckless leaders.

Both sides have their messianic fundamentalists - - the Muslim Hamas movement, the Orthodox Gush Emunim. These are the most dangerous forces, for as Shulamit Aloni recently pointed out: "People who speak in the name of God and hear voices do not compromise. Furthermore, we should bear in mind that the God of the Muslims has more soldiers than the God of the Jews."

There is an urgent need for statesmanship, for a leaders with vision. Opportunities for peace are no less sudden than outbreaks of war, and they require a similar response of strength and courage.

I am afraid that time is not on Israel's side. Two years ago the price of peace was not nearly so high. The Jordanian option was still alive then, while Arafat was slogging in a diplomatic trough rather than riding its crest as he is today. If the slim chance for peace is allowed to pass by again, if the transient evanescent possibility for dialogue is not seized soon the result is likely to be far more terrible than the intifada. Look and see: even now Israel is biting into its own flesh, dividing into ideological factions that vie for power and deface each other's lifestyles.

In this situation, this country has a significant or perhaps crucial - - role to play. The U. S. government should be relentless in the effort to build bridges between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs. No

peace has ever been concluded between Israel and her neighbors without outside mediation.

At its core, Israel is still strong...nor is it devoid of wisdom. This is why I am certain that the peace will eventually come. And when that peace comes - - so Amos Oz has written - -

"when that moment of peace 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 honorably 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."

### New Hope for Russian Jews

My final observations will concern the state of Soviet Jewry, for a new day in their history appears to be dawning. Glasnost, with its loosening of repressive governmental policies, has brought a greater freedom to them, holding out the hope of a Jewish renaissance. And those heavy iron doors barring their exit have opened wide. The trickle of Jewish emigration has become a veritable flood.

It is almost a miracle. Certainly, nowhere has the resiliency of the Covenant of generations been better proved, as each week we hear of new cultural groups, historical associations, Hebrew language classes, the establishment of scores of Jewish libraries - - all the fruit of many Noahs who withstood the crushing weight of a half-century of Soviet repression that sought to grind Jewish literacy and Jewish identity into the dust.

Not all is well, by any manner or means. The list of refuseniks is still long, their hopes for visas thwarted, most of them on the false ground that they once were, years ago, privy to secrets of state. That is a Kafkaesque charade, this toying with people's lives for spurious reasons of security.

Moreover and paradoxically, greater freedom of speech has given license to a greater anti-Semitism. Klu Klux Klan-like associations such as the Pamyat have come out of hiding and now feel free to spew their venom. Ethnic movements have emerged and clamor for freedom...Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Moldavians, and their like. We understand and even sympathize with their desire for greater autonomy. But we cannot forget their specific history of radical anti-Semitism. Nor can we ignore the potential of these movements to turn against the minorities among them. And everywhere in the Soviet Union, let us remember, Jews are a minority

Nonetheless, efforts toward greater democratization within the Soviet Union must be encouraged. Anti-Semitism is an ever present factor, even in democracies. It is *state sponsored* anti-Semitism rather than we must fear and fight. Let us not forget Stalinism: the murder of Jewish poets, the infamous doctor's plot, the wholesale destruction of Jewish culture down to the melting of Hebrew type. The present, with all its faults and failings is infinitely better than the past.

Of course, we must remain on guard. The roots of freedom are still insufficiently vigorous. Will Gorbachev survive? Will the fraying of unity within his land lead him or those who would replace him,



to emulate the the brutal masters of China? No one can say what the future will bring. But for the moment, at least, we can shift from protest to politics.

This is precisely why I have been among those who urged a greater flexibility on Jackson Vanik, even while we continue to pressure the Kremlin to institutionalize its more liberal policies. A window of opportunity has been opened, and we must do everything in our power to keep it from slamming shut.

Now is the time to help build vigorously the Soviet Jewish culture and the movement for emigration into a force so irrepressible that it can withstand even a setback in Soviet policy. We must take advantage of every opening that the new governmental tolerance affords us, with the same ferocity with which we have responded to crisis.

In this context, you will be pleased to learn that the World Union for Progressive Judaism has taken up the task which I proposed to our Chicago Assembly and which you then endorsed, for a Reform Jewish network within the Soviet Union. A Reform rabbi was sent to Russia for a month. A Russian language Progressive Jewish newspaper has been published, for distribution in Russia, as well as among Russian Jewish immigrants in Israel and in the United States. Professional and lay leaders of the World Union visited the USSR recently, and were amazed at the overwhelmingly positive response they received to their presentation of the Reform Jewish alternative - - the only alternative to Lubavitch-style Judaism that many Soviet Jews ever encounter.

The World Union merits more than praise for these efforts. It merits our material support - - for what it does in Russia and Israel and to enable it to do many things it can't do in other lands because it lacks the required resources to do so.

Yet, there is a shadow that has loomed up and darkened our joy at the betterment of the Soviet Jewish condition, and that is the immigration-resettlement problem, a problem of great technical and moral complexity. Russian Jewish immigration to the United States is so large, that the refugee ceiling of fifty thousand from the Soviet Union provided by our immigration laws will soon be reached. This ceiling will push many Jews into a less-than-voluntary aliyah. Yet - and herein lies my ambivalence - - we cannot, in all good conscience, ask for a greater share of available refugees slots; it is most generous as it is, forty percent of the total. There is a qualitative difference in desperation between Soviet Jews and the Vietnamese boat people, or the Chinese political refugees or Salvadorans fleeing from the death squads and the ravaging civil war in that tortured country. Given the limited places for refugees available, how can we demand that *their* chances of finding sanctuary be reduced for the sake of Soviet Jews who do indeed have the alternative of Israel? Yes, we have the right and obligation to press for a dramatic increase in the over-all refugee ceiling, both in the United States and in Canada. But in a world awash with fourteen million refugees, we dare not declare this Ark America to be chiefly ours.

Moreover, while we as Reform Jews are committed to the principle of free choice in Jewish emigration, we are equally committed to the task of nation-building in Zion. The prospect of a massive aliyah by Soviet Jews is to be celebrated and encouraged. It is also to be supported, through support of the State of Israel whose absorption capacities are being sorely tested by lack of sufficient housing and jobs.

In this context, we might as well confess that American Jewry has been intolerably remiss in its outreach to Soviet Jewish immigrants. The result is that most Soviet Jews in the United States have

dropped out of Jewish life entirely and are without contact with the Jewish community.

There are exceptions to our failures, thankfully. Some individual congregations have had remarkable success in effectively integrating substantial numbers of emigres. The UAHC, nationally, has been of some help here, by translating and publishing pamphlets on Reform Judaism and one service from the Gates of Prayer, all this, thanks primarily to a gallant lady, Betty Golomb, who has almost single-handedly coordinated the Union's efforts in this realm.

Let it be admitted, also, that American Jewry has been less than magnanimous in providing the monies or guarantees required for the absorption of Soviet Jews here, in the United States. I refer specifically to the UJA Passage for Freedom Campaign, which is intended to sustain both Israel's absorption machinery and our own, with all sums received to be shared equally between them. But since domestic absorption needs have first call on funds transmitted to the national office by local Federations there has been a serious erosion of sums transferred to Israel. In effect, then, and indirectly, Israel is bearing the cost of absorbing Soviet Jewish immigrants into the United States.

That is a travesty of justice, is it not! What is happening to the claim of Jewish communal self sufficiency of which we always boast? Where is our historical memory as immigrants, our appreciation of the fact that every one of us here in North America has been sustained at some point in history in my case within my own lifetime – by the good works of organized Jewry? *We* received affidavits from total strangers, Jews whose resources were infinitely more slender than are ours. Have we indeed become so selfish as to allow our sense of responsibility for fellow Jews to atrophy? Were we demonstrating a quarter of a million strong in Washington on behalf of flesh and blood Soviet Jews, or simply to achieve some kind of emotional catharsis?

I, therefore, call on every Reform congregation to form or revitalize a Committee on Soviet Jewry that will prod our own membership, and the Jewish community-at-large through local Federations to give or guarantee the resources required for the absorption of Russian Jews both here and in Israel, as well as to engage in a person-to-person effort to integrate Soviet immigrants into American Jewish life.

We cannot be content to quote Scripture only in part, saying: "Let my people go." For what Moses said to Pharaoh was: "Let my people go *that they might serve Me.*"

\* \* \*

Dear friends, our Union is first and foremost a union of hearts - - hearts that shed the light - - light which God collects and places as a rainbow in the sky. Then is our path upon the earth illumined by the sign of the Covenant. Then can we join hands and form a human rainbow, to span and sanctify and to protect this spinning planet we call home.

I can think of no keener symbol of our mission than this sign of the Covenant from the story of Noah. The rainbow, alone among nature's phenomena, is a sight shared by all, yet uniquely experienced by each. The sun, the observer's eye, and the center of the arc must be aligned. *Each of us, in fact, sees his or her own rainbow, even while we share the sight.*

Let us each strive, therefore, to see the rainbow, to "walk with God," as if we alone, like Noah, were

righteous in our generation.

Only together, however, can we find "that sufficiency of faith" to go beyond Noah's dutiful effort to forestall the flood. Only then will we hear "the funeral dirge of the ocean, (and) with its sound...a mingled voice that whispers: 'Despair not!'" (H. W. Longfellow)

Despair not! Not for as long as you can look into the eye of another Jew, and see your own reflection. Come close to each other now. Be confident in your faith, and comfortable enough with it to find an intimacy in our bond of Judaism. For in those reflections that we see in each other's eyes, in those prayers we hear in each others voices, in that yearning for connection we feel in each others touch, that is where God most intimately dwells. We, in our unity, form the portal through which God the Redeemer enters into the world. We, in our mutual discovery, reignite the very sparks of creation, and the Covenant of the generations, as eternal and as lofty as a rainbow, is renewed.

Despair not! So much has been washed away by the floods of history. So many of the hopes that we have had, each of us and collectively, have floated out of grasp and gone under.

Our losses as Jews have been monumental; and our monuments have often proved to be of sand. Yet we have survived.

We have survived the Nazi era when the "earth was filled with lawlessness."

We have survived the Soviet attempt to obliterate our people's identity.

We have survived the relentless military and diplomatic onslaught against Israel.

The Jewish people lives!

And now the rain clouds are parting. Now our hearts must leap to the rainbow; our prayers must soar to God's ears; our sacrifices must rise to God's nostrils. Like Noah, we must till the soil, plant the vineyards for the sake of generations yet to come. And in so doing, we are declaring our survival to be: not merely an ending but only another beginning.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE 60TH UAHC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. I call on this Assembly to thank our Chairman, Allan B. Goldman for the manner in which he has led us in office. He has a "well-trained, retentive mind, a quick wit, the ability to articulate his thoughts precisely," and he is determined "to steer our movement forward, never to allow it to drift."

2. I call on our Assembly and its delegates to express our collective gratitude to all those who brought this convention to be: a) To our host congregations of New Orleans and Baton Rouge, for their gracious hospitality. They faced a Herculean task – "we are here in unprecedented numbers" – and performed it effectively and with devotion. b) To Iris Franco Vanek, her co-chairman, Mark Levy, and to all of the members of our Biennial Program Committee for that rich fare with which they feasted us. They responded fully to the felt needs of our constituency. c) To the "able and effective chairlady, Betty Zivitz," and her army of co-workers on the Local Arrangements Committee who did everything in their power to make us feel at home and to have this convention run smoothly. We are grateful, also, to our area director, Larry Jackofsky, who assisted them in this work. d) To Arthur Grant, the Union's Director of Regions, who single-handedly coordinated the multitudinous details of this convention. He is an efficient administrator and a warm and wonderful Jew.

3. We salute the Central Conference of American Rabbis on the occasion of its centennial celebration. Our Rabbinic conference has done much for us. There is literally no aspect of our doing locally, regionally and nationally, that is "untouched by the creative endeavors of the rabbinate." We are indebted for these its manifold contributions toward the advancement of our sacred tasks. It is thanks primarily to its leadership that we have emerged as the overwhelmingly predominant synagogue movement on the North American Jewish scene.

4. We congratulate the North American Federation of Temple Youth as it marks the fiftieth anniversary of its founding. NFTY alumni are our "rabbis and cantors and educators and administrators...they are the lay leaders of our congregations, and their devoted members." NFTY spawned many activities of great worth, particularly the camping program. But we cannot rest on our laurels, for the task ahead is "even greater, if anything, more complex...the family patterns of today's youth are more diverse, competing interests more compelling. "I therefore

(a) call on our congregations to focus on youth work with renewed vigor, and to make certain that adequate budgetary resources are allocated to it;

(b) I ask them to provide scholarships and camperships so that all young people, and not just the children of the wealthy, will be able to participate in the full range of NFTY national and regional activities.

(c) I urge that we reach out to our young people at an even earlier age, by developing a network of Junior Youth groups; and that we seek to involve youth longer by intensifying our activities on campus;

(d) I request our rabbis and cantors and educators to become more fully involved in the Union's camp and youth program, even as I ask our congregational leadership to encourage them to do so and to deem this participation a part of their ongoing professional task.

5. I congratulate the Outreach Commission and its lay and professional leaders -- particularly Lydia Kukoff who is "the prime mover of our labors in this sphere."

I ask our congregations to accept this Commission's recommendation that the innovative "Stepping Stones to a Jewish Me" program pioneered in Denver be extended through the length and breadth of this land. It is our hope to have no less than a half-score congregations embark on this venture during the coming year. The children of the unaffiliated intermarried "must not be allowed to fall through our community's cracks; they cannot be lost to the Jewish people forever."

6. I urge our member congregations to place the highest priority on reaching unaffiliated Jews, and I ask our recently formed UAHC-CCAR Task Force to develop the means which will enable our Temples to fulfill this mission. I propose the following areas for exploration and implementation:

- (a) the establishment of daycare centers in our synagogues;
- (b) opening the Temple's adult education courses to the entire community and not just to Temple members;
- (c) providing privilege cards to high school graduates giving them free membership in any UAHC congregation while they are in college or pursuing graduate studies;
- (d) a careful re-examination of our dues structure and the manner in which it is administered in order to "dispel the notion that belonging to a temple is a luxury beyond the means of most."
- (e) suspending those rules which restrict religious school to children of Temple members and to admit any Jewish child to our classes, "not for an open-ended free service, but for one or two years;"
- (f) adjusting our Temples' programming to the "newer realities of Jewish family life: of divorce, of single parenting, of coupling without marriage, and the like . . . the traditional Jewish family structure - mother, father and child -- has become the minority configuration in the world today."

7. I endorse the "Resolution on Jewish Literacy" passed by the Commission on Jewish Education urging that "all meetings convened on behalf of Reform Judaism in North America . . . be programmed in such a way as to afford the maximum time for *torah lishma*," and that our leadership on every level "demonstrate a continuing commitment to Jewish education."

8. Taking note of the burgeoning day school movement in our religious community -- some 22 such schools either have been or are in the process of formation -- I urge the UAHC to provide



supportive staff in our Department of Jewish Education as one of our highest priorities. "Part time Jewish education simply does not suffice for the need. It will not create the cadre of Jewish informed and Jewishly motivated young leaders we require to remain a vital, vibrant movement within Judaism."

9. I ask that our Corps of Service, mandated by the Los Angeles Biennial four years ago, be empowered to seek volunteers for "isolated, disadvantaged Jewish communities not just abroad, but also within the United States and Canada.

10. Similarly, I ask your authority to extend the scope of our Joint Commission on Jewish Music to encompass not just music but other forms of art as well: drama, dance, sculpture, even painting. "Art can make the spirit soar, for art *is* spirit from the realm of the unseen, conveyed by means of matter."

11. Endorsing the summons of the CCAR Committee on Homosexuality, I ask the Union to embark on a "movement-wide program of heightened awareness and study" to achieve the fuller acceptance of gay and lesbian Jews in our midst. Our Union of congregations must be a place "where loneliness and suffering and exile ends."

12. I ask this Assembly's assent to my request that the Task Force on Youth Suicide take the problems of substance abuse also under its purview. "Many of the self-inflicted deaths among adolescents are drug-related, even as the causes of suicide and substance abuse are akin: a loathing of the self and a fear of the world."

13. I call on this Assembly to reiterate its conviction that peace in the Middle East can only be achieved by political means, that the use of force only serves to deepen mutual hatreds and fears, and that the Bush Administration be relentless in its efforts to build bridges between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs. "Opportunities for peace are no less sudden than outbreaks of war and they require a similar response of strength and courage."

14. I call on every Reform congregation to form or revitalize a Committee on Soviet Jewry, to prod our synagogue members, and the Jewish community-at-large through local federations, to give or guarantee the resources required for the absorption of Russian Jews both here and in Israel, and to engage in a person-to-person effort to integrate Soviet immigrants into the life of our synagogues.

Schindler: State of the Union Message  
November 4, 1989, New Orleans, La.

I am deeply grateful to Allan Goldman for his gracious introduction.  
His words are pleasing to the ear.

But an honest self-reckoning compels me to confess that I do not  
really deserve all this praise.

Too much of what is credited to me is truly the accomplishment  
of others:

my colleagues of the Union staff,  
the members of our national committees and commissions,  
all the leaders -- both lay and professional -- of our vibrant  
religious community each of whose principal components  
is represented on this dais.

I accept Allan's words, then, as descriptive not of my attainments  
but rather of our collective accomplishments.

Allan himself deserves much credit for what he is:

a highly capable Chairman of our Board.

The challenges facing him were formidable.

He was the youngest in our history to be elected to this office.

He was the first from the Far West, requiring that distance and time  
zones be spanned continuously for effective control.

Moreover his predecessors had set the highest possible standards  
of leadership.

Think of them for a moment, if you will;

their names are still honored in our midst:

Chuck Rothschild, and Donald Day, and Matthew Ross

-- giants of the spirit all.

Allan has met his challenges well.

He brings rich talents to his endeavors:

a well-trained, retentive mind,

a quick wit,

the ability to articulate his thoughts precisely

and, this above all,

a driving determination to steer our movement forward,

never to allow it to drift.

He deserves our admiration and applause.

My very best wishes, also, to Dolores Wilkenfeld and Ellie Schwartz,

leaders of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods,

whose delegates have come here, in joint convention with us,

for Sisterhood's 37th biennial gathering.

Dolores now completes her final years of office as NFTS President.

She too deserves to be commended for her manifold contributions

toward the advancement of our work.

She led the women of Reform Judaism with dignity and strength.

Lastly, I want to express our deepfelt gratitude to the many men and

women comprising the Local Arrangements Committee

for everything they have done and will yet do yet do

to make us feel at home.

They faced a Herculean task.

We are here in unprecedented number --

the largest Assembly on the North American Jewish scene.

The energetic and effective chairlady Betty Zivitz,  
assisted by Larry Jackofsky, our Council Director,  
was able to assemble a veritable army of volunteers  
who labored for nearly two years now for our coming.  
And we do appreciate their many deeds of human kindness.

Like thanks must go to our National Convention Committee under  
Iris Franco Vanek and Mark Levy, and especially to Arthur Grant,  
who coordinated the multitudinous details of this complex venture.  
The fruitage of all their labor is rich, indeed.  
This bodes well to be a memorable convention,  
stimulating in content and setting alike.

\* \* \*

And so we are gathered in this jewel of a city  
whose reputation is one of allure and excitement.  
This very Southern city of New Orleans is not as far removed  
from the Jewish experience, both negative and positive,  
as one might think.

From here, after all, the slaves of African descent were marketed to the  
entire South --

from here a whole people was forced to "harsh labor with mortar  
and bricks and with all sorts of tasks in the field."

Here, too, healthier forms of commerce yielded the kind of  
cosmopolitanism that could enable this city, like the Jewish people  
to grow through historical misfortune and ruin  
to renew its stature in our own era.

At every step Jews were involved in that growth.

New Orleans was home to Judah Touro, America's greatest philanthropist  
of his day,

from whose bequest was founded Touro infirmary,

which grew into the Hebrew Hospital of New Orleans

one of the South's outstanding health care institutions.

More contemporary Jewish contributions to New Orleans

can be seen in Tulane University, Audobon Park and Zoo,

and the recently dedicated Woldenberg Riverfront Park.

New Orleans, in kind, has proved to be a secure home for three Reform  
Temples, each over one hundred years old.

In this city, a Jew has owned a church;

a rabbi once left services to ride as a volunteer on a fire engine,

and a native who was cousin twice removed of Heinrich Heine

became Princess Alice of Monaco.

Yes, we are well at home, gathering in this place

-- we, the reconstituted people of the Covenant, at home in the  
reconstituted American South.

Ours has been no small contribution to that process of renewal in the  
South, during the decades of the civil rights struggle and  
continuing unto this day.

One textproof of that commitment has been the inclusion, tonight, of the  
name of Mickey Leland among those for whom we said Kaddish.

The Congressman was one who creatively engaged the American Jewish  
community and drew forth the best that we had to give.

The Congressman was closely associated with our Religious Action Center. The disadvantaged black youngsters whom he sent on an African-Israel experience year after year, used our Kibbutzim, Yahel and Lotan, as their base.

He was deeply committed to the security of the Jewish State. And he had a visceral concern for the Black Jews of Ethiopia. Indeed, the mission that cost him his life, was undertaken, at least in part, to advance their well-being.

It is fitting then, that we include Leland's name amongst those others whom we deeply mourn, especially those who were taken from us since last we convened: Earl Morse, past Chairman of our Board, a proud Jew, a faithful servant of this Union all his life; and Anette Daum of our Executive Staff, who guided our interfaith activities with ability and devotion.

May we honor their memory by continuing to pursue our own missions of Jewish continuity and human betterment.

\* \* \*

This week's Torah portion, parshat noach, tells the story of the great flood that engulfed the world in the long ago.

It has always seemed odd to me -- and odd it seemed to the rabbis of old -- that this man Noah, who alone is "righteous in his generation," can hear word of the impending destruction of all living things without uttering a word of protest or shedding a tear of sorrow.



Perhaps this is why the medieval interpreter of the Torah,  
the great Rashi, proclaimed Noah to be of "insufficient faith."  
So, at least, the Hassidic master Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev  
interpreted Rashi to mean.  
Noah failed to recognize his own saintliness, his own ability  
to reverse God's decree.  
He "walked with God" -- but only with God, said Levi Yitzchak.  
Noah did not walk with his fellow human beings,  
or serve as a bridge between them and their God.

It was only "after the flood," so we read in earlier midrashim,  
"when Noah opened the ark and looked out and saw that the earth  
was desolate, forests and gardens uprooted, corpses visible  
everywhere...no grass, no vegetation...the earth a wasteland.  
Only then did he cry out in pain and sorrow...(only then)  
did he understand that he had sinned, because he thought  
only of himself and his household, while all else perished  
by fire and water!"

Only then did Noah erect an altar unto God, to make sacrifices of  
atonement.  
And God forgave him, and promised never again to destroy the earth;  
and set a bow in the sky as a token of the covenant between  
Him and the earth.

The Book of Genesis itself takes a dramatic shift, following the story  
of the flood, a shift from mythology to history.

It launches its narrative over God's rainbow and finds Abraham:  
Abraham who has the compassion to argue with his God over the  
destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah,  
Abraham who has the vision to launch a new religion,  
to bring forth a new people,  
to establish a renewed Covenant.

Our challenge, as Reform Jews in 1989, is to develop our faith  
to exceed the "insufficient faith" of Noah.

Our challenge is to cross over from flood to renewal,  
to realize that it is within our power to avert the evil decree  
to know, with a certainty and out of the fullness of our faith,  
that we stand but at the foot of the rainbow, and not its ending,  
and that there is a future before us and for humankind.

**Our Celebrations**  
**CCAR Centennial, NFTY at Fifty, Outreach at Ten**

Like Noah we have marked the holy place of our disembarkation, America,  
by constructing an altar here: an institutional life that enables our  
creative best to rise up in unified purpose.

At its base is our Central Conference of American Rabbis, now in its  
centennial year.

What a century it was -- the most awesome, the most momentous  
in Jewish life since the churban of the Second Temple.

We have been transplanted and dismantled.

We have been destroyed and reborn.

It was the Reform rabbinate -- prodded by Stephen S. Wise and Abba Hilel  
Silver -- that succeeded in transforming Zionism from a historical  
footnote into a stirring chronicle of statehood.

It was the Reform rabbinate, as institutionalized by Isaac Mayer Wise,  
that set the pattern for rabbinic training, congregational  
cooperation and rabbinical networking for all Jewish movements  
in North America.

Again, it was the Reform Rabbinate that insisted on the empowerment of women in the religious life,  
and that engaged and prodded us to engage in social action,  
impelled by the quest not for power or ideology, but for holiness.

It was the Reform Rabbinate and its prodigious collective Jewish scholarship that kept us as a movement within Judaism  
that permitted us to adjust to the changes of Jewish life  
only within the framework of our historic tradition,  
And then they reinforced this ideological nexus by goading Reform  
Jews to regain and retain their sense of Jewish peoplehood.

And think of what the reform rabbis did and do for us,  
not collectively, but individually, each in his own community,  
each in his own community.

We are bound to them by tears of sorrow and joy alike.  
They "carry our burdens," and they "sing our songs."

What bears special mention on this anniversary is the Reform rabbinate's  
contribution to the UAHC itself.

For the Union is not only a lay body.

It is a congregational body in which all Temple professionals  
have equal voice.

Most of our programmatic task forces and commissions are joint bodies,  
often involvingg the Hebrew Union Coolege too, and our  
affiliates as well:

Social Action, Education, Worship, Outreach and many more  
There is no aspect of our work that is untouched by the creative  
endeavors of the rabbinate.

Such unity is not the rule in other Jewish religious streams  
in American Judaism,  
and likely is the true source of our strength and ever growing  
vitality.

We congratulate our Conference and its leadership, Sam Karff and  
Joe Glaser -- as well as Dick Scheuer and Fred Gottschalk,  
the lay and preofessional heads of our seminary, on whose shoulders  
the awesome responsibility of rabbinnic prapARATION rests.  
Let all rabbis assembled here rise now, so that we may give you  
the acclaim you so richly deserve.

\* \* \*

Our vitality is further assured by another massive stone in our  
institutional altar, the North American Federation of Temple Youth.  
NFTY was founded during the last week in December of 1939,  
and quickly grew to become a most creative affiliate.  
Tens of thousands of our young people have participated  
in its activities,  
and their lives were transformed by the experience.

Wherever I go on this continent of ours I find NFTY alumni.  
They are our rabbis and cantors and educators and administrators.  
They are the lay leaders of our congregations, and their most devoted  
members.

And whenever they speak of their NFTY years, a dreamlike, wistful  
gleam illuminates their faces.

NFTY spawned many programs of great worth:

junior youth groups, and activities for its alumni on campus;  
the Eisendrath International Student Exchange program;  
Bible tours and Archaeological digs in Israel,  
NFTY Mitzva Corps bringing religious action to life  
in Puerto Rico and Mexico and in the ghettos of America.  
A group of NFTY song and dance leaders even toured Russia  
this past summer,  
to help rekindle the Jewish spark among Soviet Jews.

To this day, the Reform movement sends more teenagers on summer programs  
to Israel than does any other youth movement in the world.  
Indeed, without NFTY, there would be no Kibbutz Yahel and Lotan  
and no Mitzpe Har Halutz in the Galilee;  
these very settlements lend primary credibility  
to Israel's Progressive movement.

Most notable of all, NFTY brought the Union's Camp Program into being  
and it remains the most effective vehicle for the transmission  
of Judaism at our command.

By a magic all their own, our camps make Judaism come to life  
in the hearts of our children, they make it true for them,  
truer than mere preachment, truer than vague recollection,  
much truer, indeed, than pride in a heritage that is mere hearsay  
and not a true possession.

Rabbi Alan Smith leads our national youth program  
directing a staff exceeding one hundred in number,  
and he does so exceedingly well.

But even he will agree, that while many must be credited for this half-century of maturation, two must be singled out for special mention: the first an institution,

the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods,  
the women of Reform Judaism who nurtured NFTY from  
its very beginnings.

The second is a Rabbi, Samuel Cook, creative genius, master-builder,  
ever confident in the capacity of youth to grow in spirit.  
His own singular soul became and will remain the flaming soul of NFTY.

Incidentally, it was Ellie Schwartz,

Sam's long time associate during NFTY's formative years,  
who cooked up that alphabet soup

-- SOFTY AND CAFTY AND NEFTY AND PAFTY --

that has become NFTY's trademark.

That's good cooking, Cajun style!

To be sure now, we cannot, dare not rest on our laurels.  
If anything, the task is even greater, certainly more complex.  
The family patterns of today's youth are more diverse,  
competing interests more compelling.

At any rate, soon there will be many more young people about,  
now that the babies of the baby-boomers are growing up fast.

There is a need, then, for renewed attention to youth work on a  
congregational level:



We should reach out to our young people at an even earlier age,  
by developing a network of Junior youth groups;  
and strive to hold them to a later age, while they are on campus.  
Innovative program patterns must be designed to attract those who  
stand at the periphery of our work and remain uninvolved.

And this above all: there is a need for role models,  
for rabbis and cantors and educators and committed lay leaders  
willing to spend quality time with our young people,  
ready to come to their conclaves and conventions and camps,  
determined to amplify the heartbeat of our precious heritage  
loud enough to let it be heard above the noisy rhythms  
of modern life.

Then will our "sons and daughters prophesy," even as we,  
of the older generation, will go on dreaming our dreams.

\* \* \*

Our institutional altar is incomplete,  
as is our acknowledgment of anniversaries.  
until I salute our Outreach program now in its tenth year.  
If there is a single innovation in present day Reform Judaism  
for which I would like to be remembered, it is this!  
It is an innovation that has transformed Jewish attitudes,  
that has opened the community's eyes and ears and hearts  
to those Jews for whom the love of mate and the love of their  
people once seemed mutually exclusive.

Indeed, virtually every Jewish denomination and organization  
in North America has accepted the fundamentals of our approach,  
renouncing the wagging finger or the pounding fist for the  
open hand,  
in fulfillment of the Talmudic injunction that bids us always be  
"soft as a reed and not as hard as a cedar."  
"It is because of this quality," taught Rabbi Elazar the son of  
Rabbi Shimon, "that reeds have been privileged to be selected  
as pens with which Torah scrolls, Tefillin and Mezuzot are  
written."

Yes, by being flexible and not hard, we are creating Torahs and mezuzot.  
By being responsive and not resistant, we are turning dire fears  
into inspiriting hope.

Good and timely as my notion might have been  
it would have died aborning had not others seized it  
and engaged in the toilsome task of its implementation.  
Many deserve credit for the success of this endeavor:  
lay leaders, rabbis, educators, administrators,  
numerous members of our congregations and of the Union's staff.  
The present chairman of the Outreach Commission, Mel Merians,  
belongs to this honored companionship.

So does Bernie Rapoport, who provided us with the initial means,  
no less than \$1,000,000, to launch this effort.

Of course, Lydia Kukoff stands at the center of it all.  
She is the prime mover of our labors in this sphere,  
architect and artisan alike,

so much so that the words Kukoff and Outreach  
have become virtually synonymous;  
when you think of the one,  
the other spontaneously springs to mind.

We cannot possibly praise her enough.

So very much has been accomplished in but a decade.

\* Conversion curricula were revised to represent Judaism as an emotional  
and not just intellectual reality.

\* Congregations were stimulated to integrate Jews-by-choice  
more effectively into their synagogal lives,  
to break the sense of isolation and alienation that is spurred by  
the absence of a more genuine communal support.

\* Many varied programs were designed and refined to reach unaffiliated  
interfaith couples with unconverted spouses.

\* The children of such couples are now the focus of our concern.

Imaginatively conceived programs have been devised, as you will hear

\* A special Outreach curriculum was constructed to sharpen the  
sensitivity of teachers to the needs of students who have  
non-Jewish relatives.

Outreach has brought us one other boon -- not anticipated at first.  
It has compelled us to look at ourselves:

to ask ourselves as born Jews some very fundamental questions:

Who are we...what do we really believe...what must we know and feel  
and do when we claim the name Jew?

And once we grapple with such questions,  
an inner transformation takes place.

None of our outreach programs was instituted in a casual manner.  
Every idea was scrutinized with care,  
every program fully tested, and only then carefully extended.  
The custodians of Outreach have been uncanny in their ability to match  
inspiration with perspiration,  
to render concrete activities out of gossamer notions.

A perfect case in point is Rabbi Stephen Foster's imaginative and  
marveously successful Stepping Stones project, in Denver.  
Steve's idea was simple, as all great ideas are.  
Why not offer a time-limited, tuition free, separate-track Jewish  
educational program to children of unaffiliated mixed-  
married couples?

Well, he did, enlisting the cooperation of his Temple's leadership  
and the Allied Jewish Federation.

It is a two year program, open to children from kindergarten through  
senior high school at no cost to them.

Sessions are held Sunday afternoons throughout the school year.  
A special curriculum was prepared by the Union, founded on respect  
for the non-Jewish parent of these children,  
yet rich in Jewish content.

A weekly program for parents is also offered,  
giving them an opportunity to clarify their family goals  
and to learn more about Judaism and about the Jewish people.

Stepping Stones has been a spectacularly successful experiment.  
Each year 25% of the parents who enroll their children do affiliate.;  
there are virtually no drop outs;  
several conversions of the non-Jewish partners ensued;  
and every family felt closer to and more accepted by the  
Jewish community.

It is a program that bears emulating,  
and I call on our congregations to do so.  
I earnestly hope, indeed I am confident, that they will.

It is our hope to establish a special endowment fund for this and like  
purposes:  
to supplement resources where federations cannot be found to do so,  
to provide camperships, and scholarship to these young people.  
Here too we have an angel waiting in the wings.  
Our newly elected Board member, Bill Daniel, and his lovely wife Lottie  
have determined to restructure their charitable trust so that it  
will eventually make two million dollars available for such  
a fund.

The children of the unaffiliated intermarried must not be allowed  
to fall through our community's cracks;  
they cannot be lost to the Jewish people forever.

We are not talking about a problem of narrow scope, now;  
vast numbers are involved.

The intermarriage rate for Jews in the 1980s has reached forty percent,  
with less than half involving a conversion to Judaism.

Over 500,000 -- yes more than one half million children --  
are the products of such marriages.

By the year 2000, over fifty percent of children in Jewish religious  
schools will come from a home in which one of the parents  
was not born Jewish.

Fifty per cent of today's Jewish college students are expected to  
intermarry, and the trend shows no sign of abatement.

And while the conversion rate out of Judaism remains limited,  
too often the rule is non-affiliation,  
and the result an atrophied Jewish identity.

Insufficiency of faith is the problem: but it is not the insufficiency  
of faith of the intermarried of which I speak.

Rather it is the Jewish community's faith that is insufficient, when  
they cringe passively, like Noah, before the statistical flood.

It is our pioneering outreach effort that reveals a truer faith,  
faith in the power of Judaism to attract followers,  
to slake their hunger for the holy,  
their thirst for for the dew of heaven.

In the Talmud we are taught that Israel was "exiled among the nations  
only so that converts be added to them." (Pesachim 87b)

And in our Haftarah of this very Sabbath, the prophet Isaiah assures us  
that our labors will not be in vain:

"...Incline your ear and come to me; Hearken and you shall be  
revived...goy lo teida tikra...reach out to those people  
you did not know...and peoples that did not know you shall run  
to embrace you."



## Reaching out to the Unaffiliated

"Enlarge the size of your tent," Isaiah further bids in the opening sentences of today's haftarah.

"Extend the size of your dwelling, Do not stint!"

Even so must our tent of outreach be enlarged to enfold not just the intermarried but the many Jews-by-birth who are unaffiliated. Their number too are legion.

As Reform Jews, we may well take pride in our continuing numeric growth; but the bitter fact remains, that there is one segment of the American Jewish community that is growing at an even faster rate than we: the unaffiliated.

It may be hubris for us to say that a lack of synagogue affiliation indicates an utter lack of Jewish identity, as there are many other pathways of identification open to American Jews: philanthropic, communal, literary, political, focusing extensively, though not exclusively on Israel.

But the fact remains that synagogue affiliated Jews are Jewishly more involved.

They visit Israel more often, devote more volunteer time to other Jewish organizations;

they give more to Jewish causes, insist on a better Jewish education for their children;

and, of course, they are more likely to participate in communal worship and home observances.

Ultimately, the pathways of Jewish identification must lead to a center, a center where Jews can meet and form community.

That center, more than ever, is the synagogue.

About a year ago, responding to this problem, the Conference and the Union joined to organize a special Task Force on the Unaffiliated, for the time being to operate under the aegis of the Outreach Commission, but if its work shows sufficient progress, it will stand on its own.

Dru Greenwood, is staff director of this Taskforce, and she recently pointed out that membership retention rather than a disinclination to affiliate is our primary challenge.

Unbeknownst to its architects, our Temples are equipped with revolving doors:

fully 85-90% of all Jews on this continent will belong to a synagogue at some time in their adult lives, passing in and passing right out again.

Our outreach must therefore begin with inreach to our own sanctuaries.

Manifold opportunities present themselves to achieve this enlargement:

For instance, our synagogues might provide daycare services.

Because they are lacking in our communities, too many Jewish parents place their children in non-Jewish centers, and they pay for them.

Then why shouldn't temples fill this critical need.

What a potential to bring more people into our synagogues!

What a "window of opportunity" for Jewish family education!

Free adult education is another avenue that might pursue to our advantage.

Many are the modern Jews who shy away from worship, yet engage in study,

who are willing to glean life-lessons from our tradition

though they do not perceive the study of Judaism's classics  
as a means of encountering the divine.

"Today's uninvolved college student is tomorrows unaffiliated Jew,"

Jan Epstein, Chairman of our College Youth Committee

is wont to say, and she is absolutely right.

Mel Merians came up with a wonderful notion to help stem this bleeding.

Why not give our high school graduates special privilege cards

giving them free membership in any UAHC congregation the world

over, while they are in college or doing graduate work.

while

The concept is not without its problems, but once overcome,

its harvest might be rich, indeed.

The manner in which we collect our synagogue dues bears careful

re-examination.

Despite our stated devotion to the fair-share principle,

our reputation is too often one of exclusivity;

the perception persists that belonging to a temple is a luxury

beyond the means of most.

I, for one, would like to extend the Stepping Stone concept to embrace

all who are unaffiliated,

and not just the unaffiliated intermarried.

In other words, I want to call on our congregations to suspend those

rules which restrict religious school to the children of Temple

members and to admit any Jewish child to our schools,

not for an open ended free service, but for one or two years.

Don't reject the notion out of hand.

It might be a change in our procedures that would reap profits  
more surely than any other investment.

At any rate, there is really no downside risk, here,

for in this way, and at the very least, we of the Reform movement  
will have moved toward the ultimate goal:

a Jewish education for every Jewish child in our communities.

The burgeoning of our Day School program will also help toward

this end...22 congregations either have or are in the process of  
developing such schools, requiring that we provide supportive  
staff in our national department of education.

Perhaps most important of all, we must continue to adjust our

temples' programming, indeed their entire ambience,  
to reflect the newer realities of Jewish family life:  
of divorce, of single parenting,  
of coupling without marriage, and their like.

Too much of what we do still assumes the traditional Jewish family  
structure -- mother, father, and child -- which has become  
the minority configuration in the world of today.

These are but some of the means our new taskforce in concert with  
our congregations might pursue.

Let us be daring in these efforts,

willing to err, to stumble, to make mistakes.

As a Jewish proverb tells us:

"More lovely is an ugly patch than a beautiful hole."

Patches, after all, can lead to a patchwork quilt,  
while holes lead only to emptiness.

When the poet and ghetto fighter Abba Kovner, of blessed memory, first came to Israel, he felt alienated from everyone and everything, he said, until someone asked him:

"Would you join us for a minyan, we need a tenth."

Kovner immediately joined the worshippers and felt he was no longer alienated.

Years later, when he conceived his idea of the Diaspora Museum he designed a corner called "the minyan," with wax figures representative of various Jewish communities. Yet there are only nine and not the required ten figures because, explained Kovner, he wanted to call out to the viewers as others had called out to him:

"Come join us, come and be counted, we cannot do without you.

We need you as you need us."

These are the words we must inscribe on the doorposts of our synagogues.

### Spirit Conveyed by Means of Art

Let all of us be assured that resolutions passed at these Assemblies do not go unheeded;  
in one way or another they are acted upon and have an impact  
on the evolvement of our religious community.

I could demonstrate this to you in countless ways, by setting forth  
the wide spectrum of our activities, the many-varied colors  
of this wondrous rainbow that is our Union.

I could tell you about the National Kallah on Spirituality  
held at Brown University this past summer which engaged  
120 men and women of all ages in intensive prayer and study.

I could tell you about how our Corps of Service, mandated by our  
Los Angeles Assembly, is ripening;  
a solid infracture has been established,  
sixty individuals and couples of all ages have come forward to  
volunteer their services;  
projects are under way in Italy, Switzerland and Israel,  
in Ethiopia and South Africa.

Incidentally, I have urged that volunteers be sought for isolated,  
disadvantaged Jewish communities, not just abroad  
but also within the United States and Canada..

Another, even more recent success has been our para-rabbinnic program,  
mandated at our Chicago Assembly but two years ago.

This past summer fourteen men and women,  
most of them from small, isolated, congregations without rabbis,  
joined for two weeks of intensive study and training in practical  
rabbinitics:

how to lead services, read from the Torah,  
write a sermon, conduct a various life-cycle rites.

Mirabile dictu, three of these eager fourteen have now determined  
to make the rabbinate their life career and have applied  
for admission to HUC!



Several of the projects I just mentioned were actuated by Danny Syme  
whose faithful stewardship serves us well in so many ways.

The UAHC-CCAR Commission on Jewish Music,  
called into being at our Los Angeles Assembly,  
has been particularly productive.

Able chaired by Jack Geller and directed by Danny Fiedlander it has done  
much to heighten the musical literacy of our synagogues.

As you know, the Commission is very much present at this Biennial  
with its wonderful Friday evening program, as well as five  
workshops for temple leaders in the course of our gathering.

It has been so successful, in fact, that I ask the Commission to  
expand its purview to include not just music, but other arts  
as well: drama, dance, sculpture, architecture, even painting.

The Zohar tells us that "there are halls in the heavens above  
that open but to the voice of song."

This is true for the other forms of art as well.

They too can serve to deepen our sense of the sacred,  
our awareness of the holy in life.

You see, so much of our present-day reluctance to believe in God  
is due to that paradox with which Jewish theological  
thinking confronts us:

that God, though totally other and unknowable,  
nonetheless makes himself known.

"Thou canst not see My face,"

so Moses is told atop Sinai, standing in the cleft of the rock.

"But I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

Unknowable, yet known through its traces;

invisible, and yet real.

The paradox is vexing, perplexing.

Like the rest of humankind, we are creatures in bondage to our eyes.

Only seeing is believing, we say; only the visible is fact.

But the invisible world has a reality all its own,

and its force may well be more intense than is the force  
of the world that is seen.

Consider the world of the invisible, if you will.

Ideas, for example...they are impalpable.

Thoughts are free...no one can seize them.

Yet ideas can seize us and they hold the power to transform our lives.

Ideals too are of such a kind.

They are are intangible, yet what is life without them?

Take truth from a school and you reduce it to a rubble of red bricks.

Take religion from a sanctuary, and it becomes just an ordinary hall.

Take justice from the far-flung round of human endeavor,

and civilization reverts into a jungle.

Love, -- love, wondrous, luminous love; it is also invisible.

We can see its expressions, to be sure: the caress, the kiss.

But no one has ever seen love itself.

It certainly cannot be anatomized, or schematized,

or reduced to clearly identifiable elements.

Yet how powerful a force love is!

It can evoke our willing sacrifice, inspire us to the noblest of deeds.

Music, too is of such a kind; all forms of art are that:

"Music in space," Schelling called them.

They may be discernible in outer form but not in their innermost essence

The sources and nature of art are a mystery even to those who create it.

Yet art has the power to heal us.

It can make the spirit soar,

for art is spirit from the realm of the unseen,

conveyed by means of matter.

Let our Music Commission expand its scope, then.

Let its purview encompass all the arts.

Let their inspiriting power be felt throughout our movement.

### Including Gay and Lesbian Jews

Yes, our resolutions express our resolve to act.

There is one realm, however, in which our resolutions have been

forthright, but our actions considerably less so.

I speak now of the plea of gay and lesbian Jews for fuller

acceptance in our midst.

I know that I raise a subject which will make many here feel

uncomfortable, but this is precisely why I must raise it.

Our discomfort is a measure of our continuing prejudice.

I do not exclude myself from this harsh decree,

for in thinking about what I would say today,

I had to wrestle with demons in the depths of my own being,

demons I never acknowledged were there.

Let us admit it, then: that in spite of past declaration urging  
the contrary, the singling out of homosexuality from the whole  
human constellations as a loathsome affliction  
remains a widespread sentiment in our midst.

True enough, over fifteen years ago, we admitted the first synagogue  
with an outreach to gay and lesbian Jews into the UAHC,  
and we have added three since.

Gay men and lesbians by the hundred who had felt themselves alienated  
from Judaism have joined these congregations and have added  
their strength and commitment to our religious community.

But in most mainstream congregations, we have not extended our embrace  
to include gay and lesbian Jews.

We have not acknowledged their presence in the midst of our  
synagogues.

We have not dispelled the myth of the "corrupting" homosexual,  
of the counselor or teacher who would fashion children  
in his or her sexual image.

And we have not consciously included gay and lesbian parents as  
part of the Jewish family circle.

To be sure, many of us feel pity for gays and lesbians, and we agree,  
intellectually, that it is a grievous wrong to stigmatize them,  
to ostracize them, to hold them in moral disdain.

But something more than a grasp of the mind is required;  
there is a need for a grasp of the heart.

Something different from pity is called for;

we need, as a community, to cross those boundaries of Otherness,  
where compassion gives way to identification.

Indeed, we have not affirmed that we all are family.

We speak of "them" and "us," as though gay men and women were descended from a distant planet.

If those who have studied these matters are correct,

100,000 Reform Jews, one half million of our fellow Jews, are gay. They are our fellow congregants, our friends and committee members -- and yes, our leaders both professional and lay.

Whether we know it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not, some of them are our sisters and brothers, our daughters and our sons.

In our denial, in our failure to see one another as one family -- indeed, as one holy body --

we forget Jewish history, we opt for amnesia.

We who were beaten in the streets of Berlin cannot turn away from the plague of gay-bashing.

We who were marranos in Madrid, who clung to the closet of assimilation and conversion in order to live without molestation, we cannot deny the demand for gay and lesbian visibility!

I know full well what our literal tradition has to say on the subject. Yet built within it is the possibility of change, once advancing knowledge enlarges our understanding.

There was a time -- so our colleague Gene Mihaly instructed us -- when deaf-mutes were considered mentally incompetent, and, hence, denied the right to participate in the religious life.

But no less an authority than Maimonides was prepared to lift this restriction when deaf-mutes give evidence of a capacity to learn.

Similarly, the Bible enjoins us to sequester lepers, never to get near them, "not nearer than a hundred cubits," one Talmudic master insisted.

Not unlike AIDS patients today, they were not only shunned but told that they suffer only because they sinned.

Yet few indeed are the poskim, the Halachic decisors, of today who would enforce the Biblical ostracism of lepers.

Then why are we not willing to set aside the halachic despisals of homosexuality in order to reflect equally our newer knowledge.

The Torah has many strands; seen singly, they do not reveal the whole; the tapestry must be seen in all its wondrous fullness.

There is one text, but there are others,  
and beyond them, there is their intepretation  
which is never fixed but ever in flux.

Yes, there is the reprovng God who visted his wrath  
upon the men of Sodom;  
but there is also the loving God who enjoins us not to  
"stand idly by while our neighbor perishes."

Our Torah has many faces, but the most authentic is the one  
that reflects its heart.

Our Rabbinic Conference, through its Committee on Homosexuality,  
-- which has yet to render a final report --  
has called on the Union to embark on a "movement-wide  
program of heightened awareness and study."

Very well!

I support its summons to do so, hence my commentary on the  
subject.



I endorse the notion of dialogue and education in regard to sensitive issues.

But education in a vacuum is not enough.

Ultimately, there must be a policy enunciated by which the many gay and lesbian Jews of our community can know that they are accepted on terms of visibility, not invisibility.

Ultimately, they must know that we place no limits on their communal or spiritual aspirations.

In all of this, I am working to make the Reform Jewish community a home:  
a place where loneliness and suffering and exile ends;  
a place that leaves it to God to validate relationships  
and demands of us only that these relationships be worthy  
in his eyes;  
a place where we can search, together,  
through the written Torah and the Torah of life,  
to find those affirmations for which we yearn.

#### **Concerning Substance Abuse, and Abortion**

Let me now touch briefly on two matters which really enter Al Vorspan's domain, and we eagerly expect his Social Action keynote scheduled for tomorrow morning.

He always sharpens our sense of what is right and wrong.  
He is certainly the first among equals on the Union's staff,  
immensely admired by us all.

My first comment is prompted by a report from Allan Smith,  
the able head of our youth and camping division  
that during the summer just past, substance abuse,  
-- particularly of alcohol --  
proved to be a more pervasive problem than ever before.  
This flies in the face of those "denial myths from the shtetl past,"  
to which we cling, that Jews never become drunkards.  
They do, and their children do.  
  
Much the same must be said of narcotics.  
A recent report by the National Center of drug abuse concluded  
that "Jewish students constitute one of the most 'at risk'  
college groups...that they have consistently higher risk rates."  
Not long ago, the National Cocaine Hotline conducted a poll of  
randomly chosen callers and identified 18% as Jewish -  
eighteen percent in a population that constitutes  
less than three percent of the general public.  
Those are grim statistics and we had better face them.  
We'd best stand at the mirror and see ourselves, transform ourselves,  
rather than smash the glass in self-denial.  
  
The resolution on substance abuse that has been put before you  
at this gathering is significant in its acknowledgment of our  
problem though much more needs be done to fashion a  
solution.  
I call on our Task Force on Youth Suicide to lead our efforts  
in this realm.

This problem is properly within its purview.

After all, so many of the self-inflicted deaths among adolescents are drug-related, even as the causes of suicide and substance abuse are akin: a loathing of the self, a fear of the world.  
a loathing of the self.

Hopefully, our taskforce will provide our young people with life-affirming alternatives that can compete with the death-defying thrills of narcotics and alcohol.

In this context, a few words concerning the Bush administration's strategy in the war against drugs.

We admire the President's insistence on tackling America's drug problem head on.

Just the same, the scourge of drugs cannot be curbed solely or even primarily by cops, judges and jailhouses.

"Get tough" preachments are no substitute for a responsible social and economic analysis of the drug epidemic.

Hardening the hearts of the public toward drug users, and indeed toward the suffering inner-city communities that have been disemboweled by crack addiction, can only lead to a heightened plague.

\* \* \*

A few words on the subject of reproductive right for women.

Our past resolutions still hold with respect to their thrust.

Six years before Roe v. Wade was established

we called for freedom of choice on the issue of abortion, and we have resolved continuously since then to oppose

the constant effort to restrict, endanger or overturn abortion rights.

Perhaps we need a new resolution to reflect our reservations concerning  
some of the recent majority opinions of the Supreme Court.  
Not for a generation has there been a week of court decisions as  
debilitating and morally hypocritical as the week before  
Independence Day, 1989,  
during which a majority of the justices in one breath declared  
minors and mental incompetents to be reasonable targets  
for capital punishment,  
and in another breath lowered the curtain of privacy  
that rightfully surround a pregnant woman so that  
state legislatures could take a pot-shot at her.  
Simultaneously, affirmative action programs were gutted,  
and the wall of church-state separation battered with a menorah  
that was, said the court,  
not really of any great religious significance.

The Webster decision has been rendered.  
Now is the time, to translate our past resolutions into action.  
I call on the women of Reform Judaism to lead us in this  
crusade and to galvanize the forces required for a  
state by state campaign  
It is a battle that can be won.  
Recent events in Florida and Washington,  
may well signal a change in the political tide.

## Toward Peace in the Middle East

But now let me turn to Israel, and the process toward peace  
in the Middle East.

It is a process that has been stagnant too long,  
and threatens to collapse like an old swaying bridge in a hurricane

Two years ago, at our Chicago gathering, we declared the status quo  
in the West Bank and in Gaza to be untenable, that something had  
to give.

Two months later the intifada began.

Throughout these bitter months I have consistently held to the view  
that the effort to repress this rebellion by force  
would only serve to deepen mutual hatreds and fears.

And I supported every effort to move toward negotiations,  
even as I resisted any attempt, whatever its source,  
to impede the process.

Our hopes were always frustrated.

The counsel of timidity prevailed.

And the intifada became more fierce, both in the struggle to further  
the rebellion, and in the effort to repress it.

Palestinian moderates or innocents simply in disfavor with their  
neighbors have become principal targets --  
assassinated by their fellow Arabs.

Arab hatred has deepened, and so have the fears of the Israelis.

The corrupting sense of it all being a trap without escape,  
has begun to gnaw away at the vestiges of goodwill  
between Arab and Jew..

Neither the PLO leadership nor the Israeli government

has really said "yes" to peace, except on its own strict terms.  
Both sides, in their apparent inability to move forward,  
reveal dangerous vulnerabilities:

Shamir to the right wingers of his party,  
the PLO to younger, more reckless leaders.

Both sides have their messianic fundamentalists

-- the Muslim Hamas movement, the Orthodox Gush Emunim.

These are the most dangerous forces, for as Shulamit Aloni recently  
pointed out:

"People who speak in the name of God and hear voices do not  
compromise. Furthermore, we should bear in mind that the God  
of the Muslims has more soldiers than the God of the Jews."

There is an urgent need for statesmen, for a leaders with vision.  
Opportunities for peace are no less sudden than outbreaks of war,  
and they require a similar response of strength and courage.

I am afraid that time is not on Israel's side.

Two years ago the price of peace was not nearly so high.

The Jordanian option was still alive then,

while Arafat was slogging in a diplomatic trough

rather than riding its crest as he is today.

If the slim chance for peace is allowed to pass by again,

if the transcient evanescent possibility for dialogue

is not seized soon

the result is likely to be far more terrible than the intifada.



Look and see: even now Israel is biting into its own flesh,  
dividing into ideological bands that vie for power  
and deface each other's lifestyles.

In this situation, this country has a significant  
or perhaps crucial -- role to play.

The U.S. government should be relentless in the effort to build bridges  
between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs.

No peace has ever been concluded between Israel and her neighbors  
without outside mediation.

At its core, Israel is still strong...nor is it devoid of wisdom.

This is why I am certain that the peace will eventually come.

And when that peace comes -- so Amos Oz has writtten --

"when that moment of peace 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 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 our  
faces when the day of peace comes -- a peace that will extend  
from Baghdad to Khartoum and from Beit Alpha to Karnei Shomron."

#### **New Hope for Russian Jews**

My final observations will concern the state of Soviet Jewry,  
for a new day in their history appears to be dawning.  
Glasnost, with its loosening of repressive governmental policies,  
has brought a greater freedom to them,  
holding out the hope of a Jewish renaissance.  
And those heavy iron doors barring their exit have opened wide.,  
The trickle of Jewish emigration has become a veritable flood.

It is almost a miracle.

Certainly, nowhere has the resiliency of the Covenant of generations  
been better proved,

as each week we hear of new cultural groups,

historical associations, Hebrew language classes,

the establishment of scores of Jewish libraries.

-- all the fruit of many Noahs who withstood the crushing weight  
of a half-century of Soviet repression that sought to grind  
Jewish literacy and Jewish identity into the dust.

Not all is well, by any manner or means.

The list of refuseniks is still long, their hopes for visas thwarted,  
most of them on the false ground that they once were,  
years ago, privy to secrets of state.

That is a Kafkaesque charade, this toying with people's lives  
for spurious reasons of security.

Moreover and paradoxically, greater freedom of speech has given  
license to a greater anti-Semitism.

Klu Klux Klan-like association such as the Pamyat have come out of  
hiding and now feel free to spew their venom.

Ethnic movements have emerged and clamor for freedom...

Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Moldavians, and their like.

We understand and even sympathize with their desire for greater autonomy  
But we cannot forget their specific history of radical anti-Semitism.  
Nor can we ignore the potential of these movements to turn against the  
minorities among them.

And everywhere in the Soviet Union, let us remember, Jews are a minority

Nonetheless, efforts toward greater democratization within the  
Soviet Union must be encouraged.

Anti-Semitism is an ever present factor, even in democracies.

It is state sponsored anti-Semitism rather  
that we must fear and fight.

Let us not forget Stalinism: the murder of Jewish poets,  
the infamous doctor's plot,  
the wholesale destruction of Jewish culture down to the melting  
of Hebrew type.

The present, with all its faults and failings  
is infinitely better than the past.

Of course, we must remain on guard.

The roots of freedom are still insufficiently vigorous.

Will Gorbachev survive?

Will the fraying of unity within his land lead him to emulate the  
the brutal masters of China?

No one can say what the future will bring.

But for the moment, at least, we can shift from protest to politics.

This is precisely why I have been among those who urged a greater  
flexibility on Jackson Vanik,  
even while we continue to pressure the Kremlin to  
institutionalize its more liberal policies.

A window of opportunity has been opened, and we must do everything  
in our power to keep it from slamming shut.

Now is the time to help build vigorously the Soviet Jewish culture  
and the movement for emigration into a force so irrepressible  
that it can withstand even a setback in Soviet policy.  
We must take advantage of every opening that the new governmental  
tolerance affords us,  
with the same ferocity with which we have responded to crisis.

In this context, you will be pleased to learn that the World Union  
for Progressive Judaism has taken up the task which I proposed  
to our Chicago Assembly and which you then endorsed,  
for a Reform Jewish network within the Soviet Union.

A Reform Rabbi was sent to Russia for a month.

A Russian language Progressive Jewish newspaper has been published,  
for distribution in Russia, as well as among Russian Jewish  
immigrants in Israel and in the United States.

Professional and lay leaders of the World Union visited the USSR  
recently, and were amazed at the overwhelmingly positive response  
they received to their presentation of the Reform  
Jewish alternative  
-- the only alternative to Lubavitch-style Judaism  
that many Soviet Jews ever encounter.

The World Union merits more than praise for these efforts.  
It merits our material support - for what it does in Russia and Israel  
and to enable it to do many things it can't do in other lands  
because it lacks the required resources to do so.

Yet, there is a shadow that has loomed up and darkened our joy  
at the betterment of the Soviet Jewish condition,  
and that is the immigration-resettlement problem,  
a problem of great technical and moral complexity.  
Russian Jewish immigration to the United States is so large,  
that the refugee ceiling of 50,000 from the Soviet Union  
provided by our immigration laws will soon be exhausted.  
This ceiling will push many Jews into a less-than-voluntary aliyah.  
Yet -- and herein lies my ambivalence --  
we cannot, in all good conscience,  
ask for a greater share of available refugees slots;  
it is most generous as it is, 40% of the total.  
There is a qualitative difference in desperation  
between Soviet Jews and the Vietnamese boat people,  
or the Chinese political refugees  
or Salvadorans fleeing from the death squads and the ravaging  
civil war in that tortured country.  
Given the limited places for refugees available,  
how can we demand that their chances of finding sanctuary  
be reduced for the sake of Soviet Jews  
who do indeed have the alternative of Israel?  
Yes, we have the right and obligation to press for a dramatic  
increase in the over-all refugee ceiling,  
both in the United States and in Canada.  
But in a world awash with fourteen million refugees,  
we dare not declare this Ark America to be chiefly ours.

Moreover, while we as Reform Jews are committed to the principle of free choice in Jewish emigration, we are equally committed to the task of nation-building in Zion. The prospect of a massive aliyah by Soviet Jews is to be celebrated and encouraged.

It is also to be supported, through support of the State of Israel whose absorption capacities are being sorely tested by lack of housing and jobs.

In this context, we might as well confess that American Jewry has been intolerably remiss in its outreach to Soviet Jewish immigrants. The result is that most Soviet Jews in the United States have dropped out of Jewish life entirely and are without contact with the Jewish community.

There are exceptions to our failures, thankfully.

Some individual congregations have had remarkable success in effectively integrating substantial numbers of emigres.

The UAHC, nationally, has has been of some help here, by translating and publishing pamphlets on Reform Judaism and one service from the Gates of Prayer, -- all this, thanks primarily to a gallant lady, Betty Golomb, who has almost single-handedly coordinated the Union's efforts in this realm.

Let it be admitted, also, that American Jewry has been less than magnanimous in providing the monies or guarantees required for the absorption of Soviet Jews here, in the United States.



I refer specifically to UJA Passage for Freedom Campaign, which is  
intended to sustain both Israel's absorption machinery and our own  
with all sums received to be shared equally.

But since domestic absorption needs have first call on funds transmitted  
there has been a serious erosion of sums transferred to Israel.  
In effect, then, and indirectly, Israel is bearing the cost  
of absorbing Soviet Jewish immigrants into the United States.

That is a travesty of justice, is it not!

What is happening to the claim of Jewish communal self sufficiency  
of which we always boast?

Where is our historical memory as immigrants, our appreciation of the  
fact that every one of us here in North America has been  
sustained at some point in history  
-- in my case within my own lifetime --  
by the good works of organized Jewry?

We received affidavits from total strangers, Jews whose  
resources were infinitely more slender than are ours.

Have we indeed become so selfish as to allow our sense of responsibility  
for fellow Jews to atrophy?

Were we demonstrating a quarter of a million strong in Washington  
on behalf of flesh and blood Soviet Jews,  
or simply to achieve some kind of emotional catharsis?

I, therefore, call on every Reform congregation to form or revitalize  
a Committee on Soviet Jewry that will prod our own membership,  
and the Jewish community-at-large through local Federations

to give or guarantee the resources required for the  
absorption of Russian Jews both here and in Israel,  
as well as to engage in a person-to-person effort  
to integrate Soviet immigrants into Americann Jewish life.

We cannot be content to quote Scripture only in part, saying:

"Let my people go."

For what Moses said to Pharaoh was: "Let my people go that they  
might serve Me.

\* \* \*

Dear friends, our Union is first and foremost a union of hearts  
-- hearts that shed the light --  
light which God collects and places as a rainbow in the sky.  
Then is our path upon the earth illumined by the sign of the Covenant.  
Then can we join hands and form a human rainbow, to span and sanctify  
and to protect this spinning planet we call home.

I can think of no keener symbol of our mission that this sign of  
the Covenant from the story of Noah.  
The rainbow, alone among nature's phenomena, is a sight shared by all,  
yet uniquely experienced by each.  
The sun, the observer' eye, and the center of the arc must be aligned.  
Each of us, in fact, sees his or her own rainbow,  
even while we share the sight.

Let us each strive, therefore, to see the rainbow, to "walk with God,"  
as if we alone, like Noah, were righteous in our generation.

Only together, however, can we find "that sufficiency of faith"  
to go beyond Noah's dutiful effort.

to forestall the flood,

Only then will we hear "the funeral dirge of the ocean, (and) with  
its sound...a mingled voice that whispers: 'Despair not!'"  
(H.W.Longfellow)

Despair not!

Not for as long as you can look into the eye of another Jew,  
and see your own reflection.

Come close to each other now.

Be confident in your faith, and comfortable enough with it  
to find an intimacy in our bond of Judaism.

For in those reflections that we see in each other's eyes,  
in those prayers we hear in each others voices,  
in that yearning for connection we feel in each others touch,  
that is where God most intimately dwells.

We, in our unity, form the portal through which God the Redeemer  
enters into the world.

We, in our mutual discovery, reignite the very sparks of creation,  
and the Covenant of the generations,  
as eternal and as lofty as a rainbow, is renewed.

Despair not!

So much has been washed away by the floods of history.

So many of the hopes that we have had, each of us and collectively,  
have floated out of grasp and gone under.

Our losses as Jews have been monumental;

and our monuments have often proved to be of sand.

Yet we have survived.

We have survived the Nazi era when the "earth was filled with lawlessness."

We have survived the Soviet attempt to obliterate our people's identity.

We have survived the relentless military and dipomatic onslaught against Israel.

The Jewish people lives!

And now the rainclouds are parting.

Now our hearts must leap to the rainbow;

our prayers must soar to God's ears;

our sacrfices must rise to God's nostrils.

Like Noah, we must till the soil, plant the vineyards

for the sake of generations yet to come.

And in so doing, we are declaring our survival to be:

not merely an ending but only a beginning.

*Ans Speech*

*LA Letter*

Banquet of Celebration, Beverly Hills Hotel, June 13, 1989  
~~June 13, 1989~~

Thank you for your warm introduction, Allan,

I am afraid that you have been living with rabbis too long  
and have caught their penchant for hyperbole.

A young chassidic boy once put me in my more proper place...  
(Yarmulke story)

Your exaggerations to the contrary notwithstanding, Allan,  
I appreciate your warm words.

I only hope that you know and feel that your sentiments  
of regard and of affection are reciprocated with a full heart.  
Incidentally, I trust that the members of this community recognize your  
extraordinary attainment.

Allan is not only the youngest, but also the first from the western  
half of our continent to have been elected to the highest office  
of the Reform Jewish community.

That should be a source of pride for all who are assembled here tonight.

I want to thank all those who made this evening possible.

Foremost among them is our dinner chairman Bruce Corwin.

He labored zestfully to make this evening be,

and its success is a tribute to his great skill and spirit.

Incidentally, Bruce's father Sherril, of blessed memory'

was among the early lay leaders, one of the first presidents  
of the Pacific Southwest Council of the UAHC

He too was a builder of Reform Judaism in Los Angeles.

And how wonderful it is that Dorothy Corwin is here to see

that ~~and~~ Sherril's and her spiritual legacy

continues to be nurtured through their children.



Bruce did have many helping hands, not the least among them was

Lenny Thal, Rabbi Lennard Thal,

the impish, irresistible, irreplaceable Director of this Council.

I appreciate his great worth, and I am proud to call him colleague<sup>v</sup> and to have him call me friend.

Thanks to all of you for coming here.

It is gracious of you to do so, and to lend us your strength.

In recompense, I can give you the assurance that the cause which your presence advances is exceedingly worthwhile.

That quartet of rabbis, that pride of rabbis whom we have chosen to honor tonight -- Bauman and Beerman and Lewis and Wolf -- they know that that.

They neither craved nor relish such open flattery.

They responded favorably to our pleadings

only because they saw this evening as a means of furthering a cause that has been central to their lives of public service the nurturing of our people's spiritual being the sustaining of the synagogue, and the strengthening of its supportive institutions.

They never saw their efforts limited by the walls of their own temples or even by the boundaries of this city.

They recognized that the individual synagogue requires the strength that flows only from a wider fellowship of congregations,

And so they committed their temples' resources to our Union

and they themselves served us heart and soul and might, regionally and nationally, and in virtually every aspect of our doing.

As A MATTER OF FACT - 3 of the 4 CONGREGATIONS WERE  
FOUNDED BY ALFRED WOLF WHOSE HE SERVED  
AS COUNCIL -



THIS IS TOWARDS FOUR

Thanks to ~~them~~ and others like them, the Union of American Hebrew  
Congregations has become the most influential force on the  
American Jewish scene.

Our innovative programmatic projections have had a lasting impact  
on the community as a whole:

We have a youth and camping movement which serves thousands  
of young people every year.

It is our most precious resource, for it provides us and our  
great seminary the Hebrew Union College  
with our rabbis and teachers and lay leaders  
for the present and the future.

The Union is the world's largest publishers of Jewish texts  
in the English language.

our books have been translated into Hebrew for use in Israel,  
and into Russian to further Jewish revival in the Soviet Union.

We produce films for Jewish educational TV.

We have a half-score affiliates - NFTS and NFTB, NATA and NATE,  
and the ACC and ARZA -- all of them major organizations in their  
own right.

We maintain a Religious Action Center in Washington,

It is a veritable beehive of activity, the vortex of a network  
of coalitions through which we express our religious convictions  
in the national arena.

We even support an extensive overseas youth program.

We send more youngsters to Israel per annum than any other grouping in north America -- and that includes all the Zionist youth groups. This year we will even have a group of 40 talented boys and girls touring the Soviet Union, to teach Hebrew songs and dances to young Russian Jews -- in Kiev and Leningrad and Moscow.

All this, and ever so much more, is the fruitage of the creative endeavor of many congregations working together through our union of congregations.

Our movements numeric enlargement in and of itself is astounding.

We represent well nearly 850 congregations now, and our combined rolls have long since passed the million and a half member mark.

In the last decade alone our membership has swelled by 25%

that is to say that tens of thousands of new households have joined our nation-wide family since the mid-seventies.

And if Jewish sociologists are to be believed, our growth rate will accelerate even more during the years ahead,

for their studies show that the fifth generation of American Jews inclines to identify itself almost exclusively with Reform.

Now this enlargement of our ranks flies in the face of a general decline of religious affiliation within American Jewry.

The ranks of the unaffiliated are rapidly increasing.

Conservatism is steadily contracting.

Orthodoxy has made some headway in urban centers.

It may have bottomed out.



But the fact remains that it has toppled from its once high state as America's most populous synagogues movement, down to where only about ten to twelve percent of American Jews now identify themselves with that more traditional stream of Judaism.

Only Reform Judaism has held its own, is growing. We have emerged as the overwhelmingly predominant synagogues movement on the U.S. Jewish scene.

Interestingly enough, this burgeoning of American Jewry's liberal wing also flies in the face of what is happening in America generally. It denies a maxim of Jewish historiography which holds that patterns of the general community are usually replicated within the Jewish community.

"Wie es Christelt es sich, so Juedelt es sich,"

Heinrich Graetz, that pre-eminent Jewish historian used to say. "Whatever happens among Christians, happens among Jews." And so it was, even when Jews were isolated in their medieval ghettos. When for instance, in the early 18th century pietism emerged among European Protestants, a like movement, Chassidism, came forth among Jews.

Not so today.

True enough, there has been an over-all resurgence of religion in America, <sup>but</sup> it is manifested primarily in the fundamental sector -- among baptists, evangelicals and their like, -- whilst the liberal Christian groupings have dramatically declined.

In present day Jewish America, however,  
the trend is in the opposite direction;  
liberalism rather than orthodoxy is leading the religious revival.

We might do well to ponder the reasons for this reversal in form,  
for this surging of Reform Jewish strength,  
for those reasons that assured our enlargement in the past,  
are likely to secure our future as well.

The first of these factors, assuredly, is our capacity to reform,  
our readiness to change when present need demands.

We conceive of Judaism as a dynamic and not a static faith.

Reform has always been on the cutting edge of Jewish life,  
for we see Judaism as a living faith, as a flowering plant,  
as it were  
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.

A second factor fueling our growth is our insistence on the unrestricted  
equality of women and men.

We have sought and will continue to seek the full participation of women  
in the religious life,  
and we stand ready for the transformation  
that this participation brings.

Social activism is another hallmark of Reform,

our loyalty to the prophetic spirit of Judaism.

Our religious action program also is a major source of our growth,

even as its attainments give substance to our reason for being.

For you see, religious action lends a completeness, a wholeness to

our total enterprise.

Without it, we would be but a truncated faith.

It helps us skirt a current self-contradiction,

for we live in a time when the revival of religion has,

paradoxically, led to a narrowing of ethical consciousness.

Religious moralists peek into our bedroom windows without paying

attention to the homeless who are huddled at their feet.

Religious censors drive Anne Frank and E.L. Doctorow from library

bookshelves,

but fail to address the problems of illiteracy and the failure

of public education in our country.

Religious zealots decry abortion as "genocide" and equal rights for

women as "anti-family,"

yet they oppose the reassigning of monies from the bloated military

budget to meet the needs of desperate American families.

ONLY THIS P.M. - PASS.

Amid all this compulsive narrowing of religious concerns,

Reform Judaism's Social Action program is a solid wedge

holding open the door of the Jewish conscience.

It is an amplifier through which the voices of the prophets still echo,

drowning out the ritualistic obsessions of the priests.



The word "outreach" comprises the last and to some extent  
the most important 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.

In this realm, our accomplishments have been incandescent.  
We have transformed American Jewry's mindscape.

The subject of intermarriage is no longer taboo,  
and the concept of outreach, even conversionary outreach,  
is no longer a heresy within the American Jewish community.

We have taken the discussion of intermarriage out of the house  
of mourning and into the house of study  
-- indeed, into the sanctuary itself.

Without condoning intermarriage, we have recognized its reality  
and have begun to grapple with it.

hob nit kaym moire wen du host nit kayn andered breyre,

-- holds a yiddish proverb --

"Don't be afraid if, when you have no other choice."

Thus we have counselled, and the Jewish community listened.

These then are the four factors I perceive as having contributed to our  
present-day numeric enlargement:

the perception of Judaism as a living faith,  
our insistence on the full equality of men and women in the  
religious life  
our social activism,  
and our determination to be inclusive rather than exclusive,



These four themes have been dominant in one way or another  
in the lives and attainments of each of this night's honorees.  
We selected them from amongst others who might have been chosen,  
because they each served their congregation and this community  
for no less than forty years

Forty years of ceaseless, creative labor in the service of our people.  
Forty years -- it is life-span of a generation.

Forty years -- forty --

that is an oft recurring number<sup>6</sup> in our literary tradition,  
that number '40.'

forty days before the rainbow sign signalled the end  
of Noah's flood;

forty years of our people's wandering in the desert  
from Egypt to the Promised Land.

and, most applicable to tonight's event, those 40 days and nights  
that Moses spent on Sinai's heights communing with his God  
whence he descended with the tablets of the Law,  
<sup>+ gave us</sup>  
~~with out~~ Torah.

We marked that numinous event just a few days ago, last Friday,  
when Jews all over the world celebrated Shevuot,  
the Festival of the Giving of the Law.

It is a festival thematically linked to a second, Simchat Torah,  
the ~~of~~ Festival of Rejoicing in the Law.

Elie Wiesel, great chronicler of the holocaust, tells how this second  
feast was celebrated one year in the death-camp of Auschwitz.

In happened one Simchat Torah there, inside that "kingdom of the night."  
Several hundred Jews gathered in one of the barracks

to celebrate this joyous feasst.

"In the shadow of shadows? Yes -- even there.

On the threshold 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 you religious school?"

"Yes," replied to boy, "I do?"

"Really" said the man, "And do you remember our affiirmation of  
faith, the sh'ma yisrael,"

"Of course, I remember the sh'ma," answered the young man,  
and 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."



Aye, 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."

We Jews live in difficult times, my friends,

and even more difficult days lie ahead for us.

And we will continue to sing and celebrate as did 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 and its supportive institutions,  
the Union, the College.

We do so also by celebrating the lives and attainments of its builders.  
Foremost among them are the four rabbis we acclaim tonight,

Morton Bauman, Leonard Beerman, Albert Lewis and Alfred Wolf.

We honor them not just with the service of the lips,

but by sustaining that cause which is central to their  
lives of communal service.

I call on

INSTALLATION

OF

RABBI LEIGH LERNER

TEMPLE EMANU-EL-BETH SHOLOM

MONTREAL, QUEBEC, CANADA

JUNE 12, 1989

ADDRESS BY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

PRESIDENT, UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

I thank you for your warm introduction Alfred. You know, of course, that your affection is reciprocated with a full and grateful heart.

Although I am a stranger to many of you, this congregation is no stranger to me. I have come here often in the course of my ministry, I have come to know many congregants, and many are now my close friends.

Tradition enjoins us never to specify lest we exclude. So let me limit comments to those among you who presently serve on our national Board...Jewel Poch, Bernie Isaacs and Alfred Miller. Bernie is a veteran, a wonderful human being, and as industrious a man as we have in our foremost leadership ranks. He is decent and devoted and he never refuses an obligation, however great its demands. He represents this congregation with honor. Jewel is new to our Board, but I am confident that she too will serve with distinction.

As for Alfie Miller, well, he is Alfie, irrepressible in every way. If the truth be told, he did me dirt. One of the reasons I came here originally was to honor him and his lovely Marge next Monday evening. Then, lo and behold, and without checking with me he turned the Monday function topsy turvy by deleting himself from the honors list and adding my name in his stead. Still, he deserves to be honored. He is one of the pillars of the Reform movement, here in Canada, and throughout the North American continent.

You know what he has accomplished here... his leadership of this congregation, his supervision of the rebuilding of this sanctuary after it was destroyed in a disastrous fire, his single handed guidance in the construction of a neighboring synagogue, Rodef Sholom, his effectuation the merger between Temple Emanu-El and Beth Sholom and on and on through a long list of worthy deeds that are altogether admirable.

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Of course the best part of Alfie is his companion of life, his Marge. The fact that he gained and retained the love of a beautiful and gracious woman such as she provides ultimate proof that he can't be all bad.

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In a word, we have a perfect shidduch here, a perfect match between rabbi and congregation. And all we need to do is offer the prayerful hope that the beautiful promise of this installation hour will be fulfilled during the year and years ahead.

Now, an installation service should not be devoted to words of praise alone, mere sentiment melts away, taught the rabbis, whilst a truth taught remains engraved upon the mind forever. On an occasion such as this, it is my task to charge the rabbi as well as the congregation with their common tasks, tasks which flow from the ideas and ideals which the synagogue enshrines.



The first of these ideals assuredly is the moral mandate. It is a foremost task of your rabbi to remind you of those values which the world makes us forget. Within these sacred walls we must always be confronted with the ideal and summoned to measure ourselves against it. Its doors must always be open wide, so that those who require sanctuary will feel free to enter. Its windows must never be shut so tight that humanity's weeping will go unheard.

Our age needs such a reminder. It urgently requires the prod of religion's moral mandate.

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These are some of the many issues which must be raised in this sanctuary and issues of personal conduct as well, for witness the moral malaise that afflicts our generation. Greed is its hallmark, and ideals are relegated to the realm of the subjective, the relative, and assigned but scant value. Yet consider the truer worth of these moral ideals:

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And thus it is Leigh's task to make certain that this synagogue, as its second name Beth Sholom implies, will remain a moral force in our personal and communal lives. It must remind us of those values which the world makes us forget. For only if we emerge from this place as better human beings, as better

people, will our prayers have been answered.

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There is a second great purpose for which this sanctuary was built. It was meant to be a communal home for the Jewish people, the source of our strength to live as Jews.

This is a purpose the synagogue served throughout the ages. It was our home when we had no other home, our land when we were wanderers over the face of the earth. The synagogue enabled us to speak the proud language of our faith even while we were compelled to voice the babble of many peoples.

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Edie - Please retype & send to Montreal  
whoever requested it

A.M. Schindler: Installation of  
Rabbi Leigh Lerner  
Montreal, Canada June 2, 1989

Yarmulke Story

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As for Alfie Miller, well, he is Alfie, irrepressible in every way. If the truth be told, he did me dirt.

One of the reasons I came here was to honor him and his lovely Marjorie

Next Monday evening,

when, lo and behold, and without checking with me he turned the function topsy turvy by deleting himself for the honors list and adding my name in his stead.

That was nice and bespoke a essential modesty I never suspected.

*Reviews*  
Still, he ~~deserves~~ to be honored.

He is one of the pillars of the Reform movement, here in Canada  
~~sustaining the Reform Jewish community in this country~~ and  
throughout the North American continent.

*P* You know what he has accomplished here...

his leadership of this congregation, —

his supervision of the rebuilding of this sanctuary

after it was destroyed in a disastrous fire, —

his single handed *guidance* leadership in the construction of a neighboring

synagogue, Rodef Shalom, —

his effectuation the merger between *Tempel* Emanuel ~~El~~ and Beth Shalom

and on and on through a long list of worthy deeds ~~and~~

~~accomplishments~~ that are altogether admirable.

*P* On a national level he has served us in countless capacities

and on virtually every level of our doing.

*I* In the realm of synagogue research, outreach, education, —

wherever there is a need he is there

and what ever he undertakes to do, he does with all his heart

and soul and might.

*Just what*  
*A* He is the kind of lay leader we dream to have, fashioned in the

image of Judaism's noblest ideals.

*P* Of course the best part of Alfie is his companion of life,

his Marge.

The fact *that* he gained and retained the love of a woman such as

she provides ultimate proof that he can't be all bad.



Q Why do I spend so much time praising Alfie and Marg and Bernie  
in a service dedicated to the installation of your new  
of ~~you new~~ rabbi?

Because lay ~~leader~~ <sup>lee</sup> such as these reflect the kind of congregation ~~which~~  
inherits now.

This is a superb congregation <sup>leghis</sup> the fulfillment of a rabbi's dream.

Its congregants will respond <sup>to</sup> to best whenever the best is sought.

You are fortunate to have been chosen their leader

R On the other hand, you ought to know that <sup>the congregation of Beth Shalom Insurance</sup> you are fortunate indeed in  
the choice of your rabbi.

He is much admired in the rabinate for those many qualities of mind and  
spirit he brings to his endeavors,  
his intelligence, his industry, his integrity,  
his ability to transmit his ideals forcefully articulated in the  
written and the spoken word and in the manner of his life.

His <sup>achievements</sup> ~~accomplishments~~ in his ~~former~~ community <sup>in ST PAUL</sup> are quite extraordinary.  
Rare like this kind of respect.

He led his Temple faithfully, building it into that superb  
congregation which it is.

His work in the realm of outreach and religious <sup>u</sup> action were  
noteworthy.

R Moreover, he became a widely recognized leader in the larger community,  
in St. Paul, where he <sup>was involved in</sup> many institutions of human care such  
as the United Way.

He even became <sup>campaign</sup> Chair of ~~the United Fund~~ <sup>St. Paul's Combined Federation</sup> ~~United Fund~~ <sup>OTFA</sup>

So be forewarned, <sup>^</sup> he will persuade you to support this Temple  
materially and in a manner in which it deserves.

I was especially impressed, as must <sup>have been</sup> you <sup>of</sup> by the fact <sup>of</sup> that he has already gained a measure of proficiency in French and that he is determined to master that language <sup>as</sup> as soon as possible. This will enable him to reach <sup>out</sup> to the larger <sup>community</sup> congregation of Montreal, especially its <sup>Sephardic</sup> Sephardic community, and will doubtless add to your congregations strength, even as it will propel <sup>to</sup> him, into the <sup>to</sup> foremost leadership circles of Montreal.

In a word, we have a perfect shidduch here, — a perfect match between rabbi and congregation. And all we need to is offer the prayerful hope that the beautiful promise of this installation hour will be fulfilled during the <sup>year</sup> year and years ahead.

Now, an installation service should not be devoted to words of praise alone, — mere sentiment melts away, taught the rabbis, whilst <sup>a</sup> a truth taught remains engraved upon the <sup>mind</sup> mind forever. On an occasion <sup>such</sup> such as this, it is my task to charge the rabbi as well as the congregation with their common tasks, tasks which flow from the ideas and ideals which the synagogue enshrines.

The first of these ideals assuredly is the moral mandate. It is a foremost task of your rabbi to remind <sup>you</sup> us of those values which the world makes us forget.

Within these sacred walls we must always be confronted with the ideal  
and summoned to measure ourselves against it.

Its doors must always be open wide, so that those who require sanctuary  
will feel free to enter.

Its windows must never be shut so tight that humanity's weeping  
will go unheard.

R Our age needs such a reminder.

It urgently requires the prod of religion's moral mandate.

IP Consider, only ~~what~~ what we do with our world, —  
how we take God's handiwork and despoil it,  
the sweet air He gave us to breathe  
and the fresh water with which He blessed us,  
the fertile green which delights the eye.

Instead of acknowledging and making proper use of all these gifts,  
we poison them, we tear apart the ozone, we carbonize the oxygen  
we acidify the refreshing rain, as we plunge the world  
headlong into a nuclear saturnalia of burnt flesh and maimed  
bodies and torn limbs and the whole dark butchery without a soul.

IP These are some of the many issues which must be raised in this sanctuary  
and issues of personal conduct as well, for witness  
the moral malaise that afflicts our generation.

Greed is its hallmark, and ideals are relegated to the realm of the  
subjective, the relative, and assigned but scant value.

Yet consider the truer worth of these moral ideals:

 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.

 And thus it is Leigh's task to make certain that this synagogue  
as its second name Beth Shalom implies,  
will remain a moral force in our personal and communal lives.  
It must remind us of those values which the world makes us forget.  
For only if we emerge from this place as better human beings,  
as better people,  
will our prayers have been answered.

→ \* \* \*

 There is a second great purpose for which this sanctuary was built.  
It was meant to be a communal home for the Jewish people,  
the source of our strength to live as Jews.

 This is a purpose the synagogue served throughout the ages.  
It was our home when we had no other home,  
our land when we were wanderers over the face of the earth.  
The synagogue enabled us to speak the proud language of our faith  
even while we were compelled to voice the bable of many peoples.

R Beaten down and crushed by tyrant's rage  
our fathers and mothers came into the synagogue,  
and straightened their backs and held their heads high,  
for within the sacred walls of the synagogue they felt free.  
There they felt themselves to be what indeed they were:  
princes of God,  
proud scions of God's people.

R It is a purpose that the synagogue must continue to fulfill,  
for as we look at the not so distant horizons of Jewish life  
many a danger cloud can be perceived,  
and we will need the synagogue as a source of strength for our  
collective continuity.

R Israel and the quest for her security will continue to pre-occupy us.  
This has been a particularly painful year in this regard.  
~~and all of us are ambivalent.~~

On the one hand we know that the status quo is untenable  
that a refractory population cannot be kept in check without the  
force that comes from the barrel of a gun.  
that the exercise of this force merely intensifies hatreds  
and makes the attainment of peace even more remote.  
and that in any event, peace is not just an abstraction,  
that it must be pursued in concrete ways and cannot be  
sequestered from the pursuit of justice for all  
-- Palestinians as well as Jews.



On the other hand, we recognize that the fear of the Israelis is valid,  
and so we too are afraid,  
afraid that the Palestinians say Westbank and Gaza  
but really mean Haifa and Tel Aviv;  
afraid that they have not foresworn their determination to drive  
the Jews into the Mediterranean Sea;  
afraid that Arafat is merely dissembling,  
that he has neither the will nor the powers to shackle those  
violent forces which he himself unleashed  
or with which he is allied.

Just before I left my apartment to <sup>fly</sup> ~~come~~ here, <sup>Minister</sup> ~~Misha~~ Arens phoned  
~~at home~~  
me to express his concerns.

It is an embattled nation, our Israel, -- not always in the <sup>R</sup>ight to be  
sure, but fully deserving of our strength.

<sup>P</sup> But not just Israel, the security of Jews all over the world  
will continue to evoke our concern as American Jews.

Auschwitz is only one generation behind us,

but anti-Semitism is becoming respectable once again.

Often <sup>it</sup> comes in the guise of an anti-Zionism.

More often now it bares its own ugly face of Jew-hatred.

There have been too many incidents during the year just past

<sup>syn</sup>agogues defaced, cemeteries desecrated, sacred scrolls  
profaned.

And their number is not decreasing.



P And so we will need the synagogue as a source of strength for  
our collective continuity.

And Leigh Lerner must be a generating force in this effort.

We must gird our loins~~s~~ to serve our brother~~s~~ and our sisters  
wherever they may be.

P Wherever there is a Jewish community which is embattled,  
our help ~~will~~<sup>must</sup> be forthcoming.

Wherever there is a single Jew in danger,  
in whatever country or contient<sup>N</sup> or the remotest corner of  
our far flung world,  
there will we find him<sup>o</sup>.

There will we reach out to him, offering our hands, our hearts, our life.

Never more will it be said:

that we had eyes but did not see,

that we had ears but did not hear,

that we had mouths, but that we failed to speak.

TP ~~The way of the mind. The way of the deed...~~  
~~FINALLY, SURELY MOST IMPORTANT, <sup>the</sup> NAME EMANUEL IMPLIES~~  
~~And one more way still: the way of the spirit, of intent, of will...~~  
~~the direction which we give to mind and hand.~~  
~~LEIGH MUST FIND A WAY TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR WAY TO GOD,~~  
~~TO AWAKEN THE SENSE OF THE SACRED WITHIN YOU.~~  
~~I speak now of that sense of reverence which must animate our thinking~~  
~~and our doing and without which there is no faith.~~

R Those whose approach to religion is primarily intellectual  
may well disagree, but there is no Judaism where there is not  
also the numinous, a consciousness of the holy.

Our faith demands kavanah leading to devekus, - (?)

a sense of reverence which flames into a cleaving, into a  
commitment, into a full-hearted response to the divine command,  
Yea, even as that of Abraham when he ascended Moriah,  
or that of Moses when he saw his vision of the burning bush,  
or that of Israel's children when they stood 'round Sinai  
and having seen the lightning  
and heard the thunder and the voice of God as did their teacher  
Moses, they proclaimed:

hayom hazeh ra-eenu kee elohim yedaber im adam  
"We see this day that God reveals himself to man."

R Come now, you will say, you are a Reform rabbi.  
Do you really believe all this?  
Do you really believe that God revealed Himself to Moses,  
that the children of Israel really heard ~~his~~ voice?  
Why that is believing in miracles, in supernatural events,  
which we moderns cannot possibly accept.  
And yet, my friends, it does not matter does it,  
whether we read this text in its literal sense or merely as an  
interpretive account,  
for in either case the essential truth remains the same.  
Our forbears had a direct experience of God.

II Whatever it was that really happened,  
they knew for certain that God revealed Himself to them.  
They knew it with a knowledge of the heart,  
a knowledge greater than the knowledge of the mind,  
transcending logic or reason or the testimony of witnesses.

They knew it as the artist knows beauty though he cannot see it.

They sensed it as men and women sense love

though they cannot touch that love with their fingers

and yet their lives are completely transformed by such a love.

Oh, how empty, how shallow our own faith often is compared to theirs!  
To be sure now, we have our synagogues and we attend them sporadically.  
We cherish the principles of our faith and pray the world to keep them.  
We recognize those ties which bind us to the world community of

our people,

and we support our fellow Jews wherever they may be.

Why we even believe in God, some of us do, in an intellectual sort  
of way, and so we call ourselves Jews.

But something is missing, my friends,

something which makes the difference between cold, conventional  
religion and its vital transforming reality.

That something our forbears discovered,

and we, we need discover it too.

We need to desperately,

for while routine religion suffices to sustain our lighter hours,  
once life runs out into its depths

why, then, we need a different ~~sort~~ faith.

When death takes those we love,  
when our children slip through our arms,  
when dread disease makes waste our strength,  
when we think or even say:

now I have reached the bottom of the morass,  
now I can sink no deeper, — and yet we sink deeper.

Why, then, we need a deeper faith.

Then we need the kind of faith that led the Psalmist to exclaim:

gami ki elech beqey tsalmoves lo iro ro ki ato imodi  
"Yea, thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of  
death, I will fear no evil, for Thou, Thou art with me."

*H* <sup>THREE</sup> ~~ARE YOUR THREE LEIGH.~~  
These, then, ~~are the three dimensions of being we must bring to bear~~  
~~MAY YOU FIND THE WISDOM + THE STRENGTH TO~~  
~~in our quest for God.~~  
~~PULFILL them.~~  
~~the searching mind,~~  
~~the heeding hand~~  
~~the sensing spirit.~~

~~See attached sheet~~

See attached sheet.

BLESSING  
(Adapted from 1989 Ordination Service)

We call on God to bless you, as our teachers once blessed us, and their teachers once blessed them; for you and we and they are linked in an unbroken chain from Sinai until now. Know then with what love we charge you: to go forth into the world, to sing ~~the~~ the Jewish song of centuries, and to tell the endless tale of an endless people called to service.

Love the people whom you meet no less than you love God, for every single soul reflects the glory of its Maker, and every man and woman may be someone you can touch, with the healing hand of wisdom, or an aged prophetic echo of our past. Build a life that is a mirror in which others see reflected the will to reach heaven, and be what God intended.

Go into the world, then and raise up students in Torah, God's blueprint for creation, that some day you may know the joy that we do, as we give you our blessing.

— Rabbi Aryeh M. Schindler



KEEPER OF THE FLAME AWARD

TO

GILBERT TILLES

PRESENTATION

BY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

PRESIDENT

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

MAY 20, 1989

Once again, I rise to speak in praise of a leader of Temple Beth El of Great Neck. I suppose the designer of this week-end's program knew that I would have to be reminded thrice to know the difference between Beth El and Emanuel.

At any rate, it is my present, altogether pleasant task to present the Keeper of the Flame Award to the honorary vice chairman of our Board, Gilbert Tilles.

You will recall that the Union conceived this award as a means of fulfilling the formost mandate of our faith, which bids us to transmit its values. Orthodox Judaism, as we know, has the written text as the primary source of its authority. Tradition dictates, and it is the task of the individual to heed its summons. Reform Judaism rejects this notion and has made autonomy its hallmark, granting individuals considerable license in the religious life. They are called upon to interact with tradition, but tradition is given only a vote but not a veto.

Lacking a revealed text backed by the force of divine authority, Reform is compelled to rely essentially on the persuasive powers of teachers to transmit Judaism's message. But teachers teach better by example than they do by precept. Students internalize their values primarily by identification with the ego ideal. They follow the leader who is rather than the leader who only persuades with his lips.

barzel b'varzel yachad  
iron sharpeneth iron

A knife can best be honed against the edge of another knife. The words of MISHLE are reechoed in the words of a modern master:

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. Emerson

It is for this very reason that the Board of Trustees of our Union of American Hebrew Congregations resolved to choose, each year, one individual from our vast and vibrant constituency, a man or woman, whom we could hold up as our image ideal, whose commitment to Reform Judaism, the Jewish people, and the community-at-large exemplifies our highest values. Gilbert Tilles is only the second in our history to be thus selected.

Gil's life assuredly embodies those ideas and ideals to which we ascribe the name of our faith.

He is a past president of his own congregation, and it was under his stewardship that its magnificent new sanctuary was built.

He advanced the cause of Reform Judaism in countless ways, and on every level of our doing, regionally and nationally. Indeed, I first encountered him when I was a young rabbi in Worcester, Massachusetts, when he, then a leader of the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, was a driving force in the effort to build the Camp of Living Judaism in Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

On the national scene, there is virtually no aspect of our work that is untouched by his productive labors: youth and camping, education, synagogue management, you name it somewhere along the line you will find traces of involvement. His custodianship of our fiscal affairs has been exemplary. For a while he served as our treasurer. He has been a long-time chairman of our Endowment and Trust Fund Committee. And, he conducted the tasks with an exemplary fiduciary responsibility.

To be sure, his success in this arena comes as no surprise. After all, he was preeminently successful in his profession: an innovator of note, a creative genius in his field. Many of you may know this, but he developed the first regional shopping center in the Northeast, and many others and industrial park developments since.



The bottom line is never the all-exclusive goal of his commercial endeavors. This is why the American Institute of Architects gave him its coveted Preservation of the Environment Award.

He has devoted himself to the Jewish people on the American and world scenes. And, he has consistently sought to further the well-being of that larger community of which he is a part. His creation and sustention of the Tilles Center of the Performing Arts is but one example of the wider scope of his concerns. In short order, and under his programmatic guidance, it has emerged as one of the great cultural centers of our nation.

But all of these things describe only the attainments of the public man. The inner man, what man is, is altogether admirable. Granted he does his damndest to hide it. The first time I met him he growled and I ran for cover, but I soon learned that he is very much like the sabra, the cactus plant of the Israel he loves, prickly without but all softness within. He proclaims himself to be a dyed-in-the-wool conservative, but when issues have to be resolved, he invariably comes down on the side of compassion. He is the first to criticize, but he can also accept admonition. He is quick to anger, but he is also ready to understand and forgive.

There never was a better friend. He was ever that to me, and to many others as well. His public generosity is exceeded by countless private beneficences, hidden deeds of human kindness, known only to giver and receiver yet all the more precious for their tender privacy.

This is no hyperbole, no rabbinic exaggeration. He's no saint, to be sure, just a man — but what a man! You want further proof? Well, Rose loves him. And to have gained and retained the love of a woman such as she is ultimate evidence of his essential worth.

Gilbert, on behalf of our far-flung constituency, those who are here and those who are not assembled with us this night, I present you with this menorah, our Keeper of the Flame Award. The Reform Jewish community delights to honor you. You have our deepest thanks for what you did, for what you are. May you and your gracious Rose be granted many more years of life, health, and creative endeavor, for your sake and for the sake of the advancement of our mutual sacred cause.

#2

In Honor of Gilbert Tilles

— Alexander M. Schneider

R

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**47th ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES**

**New York Federation of  
Reform Synagogues**

**“SHAPING JUDAISM  
FOR TOMORROW”**

*The Reform Synagogue's Challenge*

*Keynote Address by*

**RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER, President  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations**



איחוד  
ליהדות  
מתקדמת  
באמריקה

April 15, 1989

Jewish Community Center  
of White Plains, N.Y.



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Your exaggerations to the contrary notwithstanding, I am grateful for your warm words of welcome, Florette. It was as gracious an introduction as I have ever received.

I am delighted to be here at this Assembly of Delegates, I always am. This is one of my favorite regions, not just because it is so close to home but because its people are bracing to the spirit. I have many good friends here and it is good to be reunited with them: my colleagues of the rabbinate, the lay leaders of the NYFRS, guided by its wise and able President, David Sampliner, and those other members of our National Board who are with us this day. Last, but not in the least, there are Allen Kaplan and Bernie Zlotowitz, who are really responsible for everything good that happens here. I am proud to have them as members of the Union staff and I embrace them as brothers of the spirit.

It is good to be with *all* of you, men and women from many places but of one faith bound together by a mutual sacred task. We are here to learn from one another, to share experiences and thoughts and feelings, and this above all: to gain that inner strength which flows only from the companionship of kindred and aspiring souls.

Bernie asked me to speak about the Judaism of tomorrow and to delineate some of those challenges which the Synagogue faces. I am glad to do so, of course, although I generally avoid prognostication, mindful of the Chinese proverb which holds that "to prophesy is exceedingly difficult, especially with respect to the future." Yesterday's forecasts are mocked by today's events and there really is no telling what the future will bring.

Let me begin by talking about the state of Reform Judaism today, and here the news is exceedingly good—at least from a quantitative point of view. Our family of congregations now exceeds 800 Temples, and in the past decade alone, our membership rolls have burgeoned by better than 25%. Obviously there are some contractions here and there, due to a shifting in the population from the North to the South, from the East to the West, but the over-all increase is sturdy. Thousands of households have been added to our Temple rosters in the past ten to fifteen years—well over one hundred and fifty, nearly two hundred thousand men,

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women and children. And if Jewish sociologists are to be believed, our growth rate will accelerate even more during the years ahead, for their studies show that the fifth generation of American Jews inclines to identify itself almost exclusively with Reform.

This enlargement of our ranks comes in the face of a general decline in religious affiliation within the American Jewish community. There has been a slow and steady erosion within Conservatism. And while there appears to be some gaining among the Orthodox in urban centers, this recovery must be seen against the virtual crumbling of Orthodoxy from its once high state as America's most populous synagogue movement, down to where only about ten to twelve percent of American Jews now identify themselves with that more traditional stream of Judaism.

To be sure now, there is a somewhat greater visibility of Orthodoxy nowadays. People are not as reluctant as they were once to display the signs of their Jewishness: their peyot and tsitsit, their stars of David and Chai pendants. Nonetheless, all available studies attest that Orthodoxy has suffered a precipitous decline over this century, and that Reform Judaism has emerged as the eminently predominant synagogue movement on the U.S. Jewish scene.

Interestingly enough, this burgeoning of American Jewry's liberal wing flies in the face of what is happening in America generally. It denies a maxim of Jewish historiography which holds that patterns of the general community are usually replicated within the Jewish community. "*Wie es Christelt es sich, so Juedelt es sich*," Heinrich Graetz, that preeminent Jewish historian used to say: "*Whatever happens among Christians, happens among Jews*." And so it was, even when Jews were isolated in their medieval ghettos. When, for instance, in the early 18th century pietism emerged among European Protestants, a like movement, Chassidism, came forth among Jews.

Not so today. True enough, there has been a resurgence of religion in America generally. In the sixties, the "God is Dead" theology prevailed; today religion departments are flourishing even in institutions where once an *odium theologicum*, a disdain of matters theological, reigned. Twenty years ago, the great Harvard

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scholar, Harvey Cox wrote a book entitled "*The Secular City*." His most recent work bears the name: "*Religion in the Secular City*." Still, the rise of religion within American Christendom is primarily in the fundamentalist sector, whilst the liberal groupings have declined in strength. In the present-day American Jewish community, however, the trend is in the opposite direction; liberalism rather than orthodoxy is leading the religious revival.

We might do well to ponder the reasons for Reform Judaism's present-day growth, for in effect these reasons constitute the heart of the challenge for the Reform Synagogue of tomorrow. Those principles which assured our enlargement in the past, are likely to secure our future as well.

The first of these principles is inherent in the adjective Reform. I speak now of our capacity to change, of our conception of Judaism as a dynamic and not a static faith. Reform has always been on the cutting edge of Jewish life, and we must continue to be so. Let us not be frightened by those who counsel us to retreat from some of our innovations lest we break Jewish unity. That alarm was sounded incessantly during the recent "Who Is a Jew" controversy. We were told by many, here and in Israel, that Reform is at fault, that our stances on such issues as outreach and patrilineality led to efforts to change the Law of Return. That's bosh and nonsense, of course. The Conservative movement did not adopt the principle of patrilineality—not yet anyway, though I am convinced it will within the decade. But Jews-by-choice accepted by Conservative rabbis were not excluded from the proposed Law of Return amendment. In any event, there have been over forty legislative efforts to amend this Law, and thirty-eight of these attempts were made *before* our Central Conference adopted the Resolution on Patrilineal Descent. A retreat on this or any other issue will not gain us the acceptance of Orthodoxy. Only total surrender will have such an effect in that arena.

Don't misunderstand me. I do not oppose the reintroduction of more traditional practices in Reform Jewish observance patterns. I respect tradition and incline toward the emotive, deeming a hyper-rationalism too sterile for a vibrant religious life. But I favor the introduction of these traditions for their intrinsic worth and not

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because their observance might or might not make us more acceptable to others. Adaptive change is alien to the spirit of Reform. It substitutes political for religious judgments and thus does violence to our essential nature.

Let us not become sycophants, truckling for favor by becoming what we are not, it will not avail us. We will only demean ourselves and lose our distinctive character. Our forebears did not forge Reform Judaism to have us trade it in for a tinsel imitation of Orthodoxy. We owe halacha a vote and not a veto. And we owe ourselves that self-respect and integrity which holds fast to our finest values and our most cherished beliefs.

This then is the first challenge to the Reform Synagogue: to uphold and to 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 second principle which animated our religious community from its very beginnings is the 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. We have made substantial progress in this realm, bringing our grasp ever closer to our reach. Currently, nearly one out of every two of our Temple presidents is a woman. Women educators and administrators and cantors have gained full acceptance. For nearly a score years now we have been ordaining women as well as men for the rabbinate. They have been well received and they serve us exceedingly well. Obstacles to their advancement persist, however. Old stereotypes don't die that fast. Some congregations—especially the larger congregations—still refuse even to interview women rabbis, not for assistantships, to be sure, but for the senior post. This is a grievous wrong. Unless we open all our pulpits to women and remove all obstacles to their advancement, their ordination will remain but a symbolic recognition. This, then, is the second challenge to our religious community, to make certain that our family of congregations will be and remain an equal opportunity employer.

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Social activism is another hallmark of Reform, our loyalty to the prophetic spirit of Judaism. Our Religious Action Commission and its Center in Washington have served to restore to the Jewish fold numerous idealists, young and old, whose prophetic yearnings had no Jewish expression, who knew only the language of universalist activism. It is a major source of our numerical growth, even as its attainments give substance to our reason for being. For you see, religious action lends a completeness, a wholeness to our total enterprise. Without it, we would be but a truncated faith. It helps us skirt a current self-contradiction, for we live in a time when the revival of religion has, paradoxically, led to a narrowing of ethical consciousness. Religious moralists peek into our bedroom windows without paying attention to the homeless who are huddled at their feet. Religious censors drive Anne Frank and E.L. Doctorow from library bookshelves, but fail to address the problems of illiteracy and the failure of public education in our country. Religious zealots decry abortion as "genocide" and equal rights for women as "anti-family," yet they oppose the reassigning of monies from the bloated military budget to meet the needs of desperate American families. Amid all this compulsive narrowing of religious concerns, Reform Judaism's Social Action program is a solid wedge holding open the door of the Jewish conscience. It is an amplifier through which the voices of the prophets still echo, drowning out the ritualistic obsessions of the priests.

Here then is the third challenge to the synagogue of today and tomorrow: 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.

The word "outreach" comprises the last and to some extent the most important of Reform Judaism's present-day burgeoning. Rather than cloaking ourselves in an exclusive chosenness, we have declared ourselves open to those who would choose us. In this realm, our accomplishments have been incandescent. Our performance cannot be measured solely by the many innovative programs that we developed nor even by the number of individuals we have helped, and regained for our people. It must be



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measured by the impact which we have had on the larger American Jewish community.

Indeed, our successes here have been stunning. We have transformed American Jewry's mindscape. The subject of intermarriage is no longer taboo, and the concept of outreach, even conversionary outreach, is no longer a heresy within the American Jewish community. We have taken the discussion of intermarriage out of the house of mourning and into the house of study—indeed, into the sanctuary itself. Without condoning intermarriage, we have recognized its reality and have begun to grapple with it.

*hob nit kayn moire wen du host nit kayn andere breyre,*  
—holds a Yiddish proverb—

*“Don’t be afraid when you have no other choice.”*

Thus we have counselled, and the Jewish community listened.

Indeed, not long ago, the last bastion of opposition to the Outreach idea began to topple. Rav Soloveitchik, the most respected voice of mainline Orthodoxy, in a recently published *Hadoar* interview, voiced what he himself described as an opinion of revolutionary significance, one that would surely draw the ire and fire of his own traditional colleagues. And this is what he said:

*“Regarding the plague of intermarriage, from which the Orthodox have not been saved, it is necessary to do what the Reform Jews are doing—with, of course, an Orthodox content.”*

And so everybody is doing it—the Conservatives, the Reconstructionists, Liberal Orthodox groupings, communal organizations, fund raising agencies—all have accepted our fundamental approach, each in his own way, nonetheless joined in a kind of Jewish patchwork quilt of outreach which has forever altered the landscape and the mindscape of American Jewry.

But our task is not yet over, and the challenge to the Reform Synagogue remains. Our present undertakings urgently demand extension and intensification. If the truth be told, we have barely scratched the surface. There is much soil beneath that remains to be tilled.

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Our many efforts to the contrary notwithstanding, the perception persists that the Jewish community is a closed society. Too many intermarried couples still feel abandoned by the Jewish community. Too many still feel the sting of rejection. Far too many of their children are reared in a manner in which two religious traditions are blurred together so that neither comes into focus. Moreover, the Reform synagogue's outreach should not be limited to the intermarried, but to the many born Jews who are unaffiliated. We may well take pride in our numeric growth, but the bitter fact remains that there is one segment of the American Jewish community which is growing at an even faster rate than we are: the unaffiliated Jews, those who are not identified with either Orthodoxy or Conservatism or Reform, those who eschew even a communal identification with our people and who are Jews in name alone.

Thus, for instance, recent studies suggest that of those dropping out of Conservatism, 5% become Orthodox, 14% join Reform congregations, while fully 81% opt out of Jewish life entirely. And so the need to go about the task of our enlargement with an even greater determination, to seek new members, to build new congregations, to regain the unaffiliated for our synagogues and our cause.

I expect to make some recommendations in this realm at our forthcoming Biennial. For instance, I would like to call on our congregations to suspend those rules which restrict religious school to the children of Temple members and to admit the children of the unaffiliated, not for an open-ended free service, but for one or two years. Don't reject this proposal out of hand. Think about it if you will. It might be a change in our procedures that would reap profits more surely than any other investment.

These then are the reasons I perceive as having contributed to our numeric growth: the perception of Judaism as a living faith, our insistence on the full equality of men and women in the religious life, our social activism, and lastly, our determination to be inclusive rather than exclusive, ever to reach out.

To all this I want to add only one other brief word, we must do everything in our power to make certain that our congregants will

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see and seize Reform as a serious religious enterprise and not just a name devoid of meaning and obligation. What purpose outreach, pray tell, if those who enter find nothing within?

But our Judaism is more than that, and only when we make it so, when we make of it a serious religious enterprise will we find our Judaism to be a sustaining faith. Only then will it give us what we in our age so desperately need: a sense of the sacred, a rebirth of our capacity for wonderment.

Aye, there is a growing yearning for the sacred in our day, is there not? 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 description of the very body and spirit of our age? Can you paint a more vivid portrait 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.

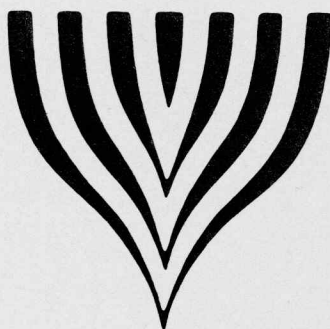
Let us, therefore, recognize that Reform Judaism is a fateful religious pursuit. Let us not ask easy questions or offer facile answers. Let us, rather, make demands on ourselves and our fellow congregants too. Let us ever as Reform Jews provide a Judaism that is a spur and a prod and a relentless provocation!

JEWISH COMMUNITY SERVICE  
IN SUPPORT OF PEOPLE WITH AIDS

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AIDS Committee, Union of American Hebrew  
Congregations Pacific Southwest Council

*Address*  
*Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler*



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Leo Baeck Temple  
Los Angeles, California

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March 12, 1989  
8 Adar II 5749

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**W**ith heavy hearts we gather in this sanctuary, summoned by a sacred service of remembrance.

Not that we really need an *hazkarah* lest we forget. We need no reminders. We remember too well. Memories come . . . to interrupt our sleep . . . to still our laughter . . . to fill our silence with the voices of the past.

An entire generation of young people going to waste . . . their abilities and their possibilities, what they were and what they might have been . . . all going, gone. It is a calamity . . . a disaster . . . a terrible defeat for civilization and for life.

How can we respond to these haunting memories, this hurtful knowledge except with silence? It must be that, it always will be that—silence. Words offer scant balm for wounds so deep. They cannot penetrate that immense isolation to which AIDS consigns so many of those who suffer it. How can mere words help those who must conserve each ounce of strength, devote every waking moment to the struggle for their own survival?

And, who am I to speak—I who know really nothing about AIDS? What authority do I claim, I who am untouched by its pain? How can my words sound anything but abstract if not banal to those whose lungs are strangled by disease, whose souls are crushed by the threat of death or abandonment?

Aye, our speech is stifled by darkness. Our experience is of a kind that has no tongue. We offer only silence—and that solidarity conveyed by our caring presence.

\* \* \*

Humankind has been laid waste by many a plague: the Black Death . . . tuberculosis . . . leprosy. Still, AIDS is the most dreadful epidemic of them all. For it has stirred demons in the depth of our collective soul, and of a kind we had long thought extinct.

It has spawned a secondary scourge as deadly in its own way as the primary affliction: a wave of hysteria whose symptoms include prejudice, ostracism, and violence. AIDS sufferers already threatened by death, are victimized a second time: they are tormented, thrown out of jobs, too often spurned by family and friends. It all reminds me of the bubonic plague—so Barbara Tuchman instructed us—when parents left their own children to die in the gutter for fear that they themselves would be infected.



Rejection is not the universal fate of AIDS patients, to be sure. There are thousands of exemplary partners who care for those they love and parents who care for their sons and daughters until their last breath is drawn, providing them with everything they could possibly need, most especially the need for a tender presence. Only thus, is the nightmare of abandonment pierced by the light of love.

Yet too often, even in such cases, the fact of illness is kept within a close circle, because this dreadful disease has spawned not just a secondary but a tertiary scourge: stigmatization; the contumely of those who are convinced that they are healthy because they are more deserving, because they lead a more virtuous life. This third scourge is the branding of victims as guilty, as having brought calamity on their own heads, because of what they did and how they live.

Alas, this third disease too often infects the victims as well. Their self-image mirrors society's distaste for them, and so they begin to hate themselves, convinced that they are somehow morally or physically inferior. And so they give up the ghost.

Doubtlessly, this is why so many parents of people with AIDS hide this grim fact from their friends and neighbors. It would mark their children as belonging to a sub-culture rejected by society. They themselves might be shunned by their friends, become the objects of obloquy. Some parents even try to keep the cause of death secret, pleading with the doctors to list some other illness on the death certificate; this, possibly also, because too many funeral homes refuse to embalm the remains of AIDS victims and insist on cremating them instead. It is a fearsome tragedy!

\* \* \*

But let us focus on our own community: Janet Marder is disturbingly correct in her assessment here. In convening this assembly she wrote:

*"The Jewish community continues to deny the existence of AIDS in our midst, and Jewish families and individuals who do suffer from AIDS continue to hide from their community."*

That is true, is it not? Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome has revealed a deficiency in our Jewish community's own immune system: that we are not so immune to prejudice, that we are not so immune to the general human propensity for blinding our eyes to hurtful truth: that we are not so immune to the very process of stigmatization by which we as Jews have been shunned and persecuted and massacred.

Yes, some Jews have responded to the AIDS crisis. Yes, our Union of Congregations has published educational materials and established na-

tional and regional committees to sensitize our constituents, to spur them to speak out against the hatred attached to the AIDS crisis, against the scapegoating of those who are suffering most acutely. Yes, as individuals, some of us have been deeply, sacrificially involved; I am thinking particularly of the many Jewish nurses and doctors and other caregivers who have devoted their lives to people with AIDS.

Still, we have not as a community crossed the boundaries of Otherness—the fringed boundaries at which compassion gives way to identification. We have not extended our embrace to include gay and lesbian Jews. We have not acknowledged their presence in the midst of our synagogues, nor consciously included gay and lesbian parents as part of the Jewish family circle. Indeed, we have not affirmed that we *all* are family: that people with AIDS and their friends and their relatives and their lovers are *our* sons, *our* sisters, *our* neighbors, *our* fellow Jews.

In our denial, in our failure to see one another as one family—indeed, as one holy people—we exile ourselves from Jewish history, we opt for amnesia. We who were beaten in the streets of Berlin cannot turn away from the plague of gay-bashing. We who were Marranos in Madrid, who clung to the closet of assimilation and conversion in order to live without molestation, we cannot deny the demand for gay and lesbian visibility!

The Star of David has emerged as the most visible sign of Jewishness. Curiously enough, it is not the oldest or most venerable symbol of our people. While archeologists have discovered some ancient stones bearing this emblem, it did not become commonplace until more modern times. Indeed, rabbinic literature, in all its variety and vastness, makes absolutely no mention of it. There is a more recent event that has irrevocably rendered the Magen David as the preeminent Jewish sign. It was the *shoah*, the Holocaust, the martyrdom of six million Jews. It was the Nazis who stitched the six-pointed star to our hearts as a badge of shame, a mark of death. And, it was our own partisans and Zionist pioneers who reconverted it into a badge of pride and life.

Today, as we meet to remember those who have died of AIDS, to speak of their suffering and our own, there is another meaning that we can attach to the Magen David. It is an interpretation that any Jewish child with a crayon can tell you: that the Star of David contains, within it, the triangle.

For those of us here who would, a generation ago, have been wearing the pink triangle as a badge of shame and a mark of death; for those of us here who today wear it as a badge of honor and resistance and identity: it is time to complete the outline of your Jewish star.

For those of us who have been willingly blind to the geometry of Jewish life, who would keep invisible the presence of the triangle within

the Shield of David: it is time to complete the outline of our Jewish star.

\* \* \*

Let me not camouflage my own omissions with the omissions of the larger community. Let me confess my own failure of courage and of will. . . that in thinking about what I was to say today I had to wrestle with demons in the depths of my own being, demons I never thought were there.

I, a leader of this movement for Reform Judaism; I, a refugee from Hitler's Germany, I will no longer be content to speak in the first person plural declaring that "we have dealt perversely." Instead, I declare myself your ally today, and ally to all those whose Star of David needs completion.

I declare myself a mourner for all those who have died of AIDS, most of them young, in the fullness of life and self-discovery.

I declare myself a rabbi for *all* Jews, at every moment of life, not only for heterosexual Jews, or for gay Jews only at their funerals.

I declare myself a consoler for those who have passed through the valley of the shadow of death, accompanying friends and loved ones on their last painful journey.

I declare myself a compatriot of those who are living with AIDS, living more fully than many of us who take God's gifts of life for granted. I, too, know the experience of looking on death's face, personally, as a heart patient, and, historically, as a Jew. I have felt the intense love of every shred of God's creation that fills the soul after the dread of the extinguishing moment has passed.

I declare myself the compassionate ally of every person heterosexual and homosexual, Jew and non-Jew, who is wrestling with the shame, the confusion, the fear, the endless torment involved in the inner struggle for sexual identity. It is a struggle that includes, but also goes beyond, civil liberties. It is, when all is said and done, a struggle for the integrity of selfhood.

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In such a way, I see myself as heeding the precepts of Torah, that Torah which is revealed not by focusing narrowly on a particular passage but rather on what permeates the whole, and that is compassion. This is our tradition's over-arching purpose: to love God, to love our neighbor, to love the stranger, even as we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thus we read in tractate Sanhedrin:

*TORAH B'HATCHILA V'SOFA GEMILUT CHASADEEM*

*"The beginning and the end of Torah are deeds of loving kindness."*

To be sure now, the Torah has many and divergent strands, but seen singly, they do not reveal the whole: the tapestry must be seen in all its wondrous fullness. There is the single text, but there are others, and beyond them, there is their interpretation which is never fixed but ever in flux. Yes, there is the reproving God who visited his wrath upon the men of Sodom; but there is also the loving God who enjoins us not to "stand idly by while our neighbor perishes." Indeed, the Torah has many faces, but the most authentic is the one that reflects its heart.

In the Talmud, again in tractate Sanhedrin, it is written—

*The sages wondered:*

*"Where shall we look for the Messiah? Will he come to us on clouds of glory robed in majesty and crowned with light?"*

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi put this question to no less an authority than the prophet Elijah himself.

*"Where shall I find the Messiah?" he asked, and the prophet replied: "At the gate of the city."*

*"But how shall I recognize him?"*

*"He sits among the lepers."*

Rabbi Joshua was startled and exclaimed:

*"Among the lepers? What is he doing there?"*

*"He changes their bandages," Elijah replied.*

*"He changes their bandages one by one."*

*[Free Translation by Kenneth Roseman]*

As individuals, we still have much to fear, much to reckon with. But let us not add to our loneliness and our suffering by believing that God does not recognize us and our relationships. Let us rather exalt our relationships so that they be worthy of God's gaze. Let us learn that God's image is reflected in each and every face. Let us not add to our heart-ache by separating or by letting ourselves be separated from the Jewish people. As Jews, together, let us search through the Torah, the written Torah and the Torah of life, to find those affirmations for which we yearn.

\* \* \*

This is a service of remembrance. It is also a service of healing and hope.



Of this I am certain, the day of healing will come. Even as I wrote these lines, within the last two weeks, two promising medical developments were reported. There is a Jonas Salk somewhere even now, engaged in serious research, who will discover or design those human anti-bodies that will sweep the ravaging virus from off the face of the earth. We pray for that day to arrive within the life time of everyone in this synagogue.

In any event, we must never surrender to despair. That word has no place in the Jewish lexicon! We Jews hope. . . we remember and we hope. . . we hope not just when hope comes easy, but when earthly reason defies all hope. Then especially do we hope. We hope until hope creates out of its own wreckage that good which it contemplates.

Let us therefore remember, and let us always hope.

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Yom Kippur morning  
Union Temple, 1989

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.

Again, we are gathered here,

persumably prepared to discharge this 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 our tradition will continue,

to demonstrate for all to see that the evil design of those

who sought to destroy us has been frustrated,

that even Hitler was denied his final victory.

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, for this is the day of God.

We come here in response to a summons "as exalting and as enduring  
as the everlasting hills: Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

We invoke God as the master of our destiny, and ask

that He will inscribe us in the book of life for blessing.

Over and again, during this solemn service, do we assert

that we yearn to be at one again with God,

that we need to feel His nearness.

that we are utterly lost without Him at our center.

"This is the day of God...(so we pray)

what are we as we stand in your presence...

a leaf in the storm...

a fleeting moment in the tide of time...

a whisper lost in the vastness of creation...

Help us to find you, God...

Renew our spirit...

Rekindle within us the faith

that will dispel the darkness of our doubt and confusion."

If this be the quintessential theme of our day,  
why, then, I had best address it in my sermon  
even though I know that my words will fall short of the need.

Can anyone speak of God?

Dare anyone speak for Him?

But I do not propose to formulate a credal statement,  
well-disciplined from a theological perspective.  
All I really want to do is to share some reflections,  
currents of thought that flow more from the soul  
than from the mind,  
and in the hope that my musings will help others  
in their spiritual quest.

\* \* \*

Now, the first of these reflections arises from the realization  
that God-talk is rare among us,  
that most moderns tend to avoid the subject altogether.  
The sense of the sacred just doesn't reach us in the rough and tumble  
of our daily lives...  
not often anyway, though there are times when it does...

But even then we don't talk about it.

We are too embarrassed to do so.

Victor Frankl has noted that "people will talk shamelessly about  
their innermost sexual life and fanatasy,"  
but that they hesitate to share their religious experience.

"It is too personal," he wrote. "It is ineffable."

And that is manifestly so.

But here, in the stillness of this place and hour, we overcome  
our timidity and invoke the name of God without reluctance.

Here, His presence draws us near and we sense it:

when we pray,

when we listen to the majestic music of our liturgy,

and especially in moments of quiet reflection.

Then do we recognize our need to be drawn to

and to draw upon the sacred.

Then do we acknowledge that the quest for God is an essential

part of our life's striving and that it sets our task as Jews.

The Hebrew word for 'holy' is kadosh,

as in kiddush or kaddish or kedusha.

Literally translated the word means sequestered, secluded, set-apart.

It seems that we can find God best when we turn inward or away

from the world of every-day life,

-- even as Moses saw his vision of the burning bush,

not in the marketplace but while tending his father-in-law's sheep

in the wilderness of Horeb.

\* \* \*

Which leads me directly to the second of my musings:

To find the holy, we must consciously will to do so,

we must open ourselves to receive it.

When Moses saw his vision of the bush that burned but was not consumed,

he was not alone.

Presumably there were other shepherds there who must have seen

the self same bush -- but they ignored it.

Moses did not and so he, and not the others, heard the voice of God.

This is a p'shat, a literal interpretation,

The Biblical text is quite straightforward on this point, just listen:

"And Moses said: ~I will turn aside now and see this great sight why the bush is not burnt.' And only when the Lord saw that Moses turned aside to see did He call to him out of the midst of the bush saying: 'Moses, Moses,' draw not nearer, take off your shoes, for the place whereon you stand, it is holy."

The experience of the holy begins with a readiness to perceive it.

You cannot sense the grandeur of nature if you look at a sunrise through sleepy eyes.

You cannot expect a worship service to stir you to the depths of your being if you approach it casually, with a yawn, as it were.

There is a prior need for kavanah, for intent, for a conscious determination to be so stirred.

\* \* \*

Now the fact that we experience the sacred most frequently in public worship or in private meditation led the rabbis to conclude that religious observance is the best way of achieving at-one-ness with God.

In other words, kavana, that intent to pursue the sacred of which we just spoke, needs be coupled with the performance of mitzvot, of of religious acts, if our pursuit of the sacred is to be productive.

Usually, we think that lack of belief is an impediment to piety, that unless we accept God without doubt and reservation we cannot really pray or observe.

Not so, taught the rabbis.



The faith-deed relationship is not fixed eternally in one direction. The former is not, of necessity, the pre-condition of the latter. Often, so teaches Judaism, the deed is father to the thought; In going out to meet the commandment, we may find the One who commands.

Modern Jewish existentialists take up a like refrain.

They bid us take a 'leap of action' rather than a 'leap of faith.'

Israel's clarion call naaseh v'nishma is interpreted to mean:

in doing we perceive.

What is the Jewish way to God, they ask.

It is not the way of ascending the ladder of speculation.

It is not the triumphant outcome of an assault on the riddles  
of the universe.

Nor is it a gift which we receive in return for intellectual surrender.

By living as Jews, we attain our faith as Jews.

We do not have faith in deeds.

We attain faith by means of deeds.

To all this one need only add that when Judaism speaks of mitzvot,  
it does not limit itself to the performance of rites.

The word mitzva encompasses the ethical deed as well

Our teachers did not believe that holiness can be found in  
the privacy of the personal religious life alone.

And so they insisted that while the quest for holiness may well  
begin with the self and within the self it must not end there.

There is an equal if not greater need to turn outward,  
to move about our broken world

and to engage in the effort to repair it.

The primacy of the ethical mandate is incontestably established  
by the prophets:

"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...

Aye...mitzva means ever so much more than ritual observance.

It comprehends the ethical deed as well.

Only when we observe the mitzvot in this wider, fuller sense  
do we enter the pathway to spirituality.

Thus, Leo Baeck taught:

"Commandment and mystery are inextricably intertwined...our  
deeds open up the gate through which the floods of the divine  
surge into human life."

\* \* \*

The last of my ruminations concerning the godly focuses on a perplexing  
paradox in Jewish theological thinking which holds  
that God, though unknowable, nonetheless makes Himself known.

God is wholly other -- we are taught.

He is completely different from us.

He cannot be grasped by ordinary modes of thought and perception.

We cannot, should not even conjure up His image.

We must not describe Him, or, following Maimonides,

we can describe Him only by means of negations,

by saying what He is not.

And attributes ascribed to God by Biblical poets are but metaphor.

But at the same time we are taught that though unknowable,  
God reveals Himself in countless ways.

So Moses was told atop Sinai when he stood in the cleft of the rock:

"Thou canst not see My face,

but I will make all my goodness pass before Thee."

Even so can we behold God's goodness "in the realm of nature  
and in the varied experiences of our lives."

You remember those heaven soaring words of our liturgy:

"When justice burns like a flaming fire within us...  
when love evokes willing sacrifice from us...when,  
to the last full measure of selfless devotion,  
we proclaim our belief in the ultimate triumph of truth  
and righteousness...then (does God) you live within our hearts  
and we behold (His) presence."

Unknowable, yet known...

Modern science confronts us with a like seeming paradox.

Physicists, in their endeavor to study the nature of matter,  
developed a device called a cloud chamber.

Cloud chambers allow the observer to see paths traced by particles  
resulting from nuclear reactions.

The actual particles, however, remain unobservable.

They have never been seen, might never be seen,  
with naked eye or instruments however well-refined.

Here too then, a leap of faith is required,  
a scientific leap of faith, if you will,  
to acknowledge the existence of a particle that can be  
known only through its traces.

Unknowable, yet known through its traces.

Invisible, but real, nonetheless.

This paradox may account for much of our present-day reluctance  
to reclaim and proclaim our spiritual identity as Jews.

Like the rest of humankind, we are creatures in bondage to our eyes.  
Only seeing is believing, we say; only the visible is fact.

We also tend to value primarily things that are of use,  
that have their practical application,  
that can be measured and weighed and, above all, bought and sold.

But the invisible world has a reality all its own,  
and its force may well be more intense than is the force  
of the world that is seen.

Consider the world of the invisible, if you will.

Ideas, for example.

They are impalpable.

No one can see or seize them.

Yet ideas can seize us and they hold the power to transform our lives.

Ideals too are of such a kind.

They are are intangible, yet what is life without them?

Take truth from a school and you reduce it to a rubble of red bricks.

Take religion from a sanctuary, and it becomes an ordinary auditorium.

Take justice from the far-flung round of human endeavor,  
and civilization reverts into a jungle.

Music is such invisible force, every form of art is that:

dance, sculpture, painting, architecture,

-- "music in space." Schelling called them.

They may be discernible in outer form but not in their innermost essence

The sources and nature of art are a mystery even to those who create it.

Yet art has the power to heal us.

It can make the spirit soar,

for art is spirit from the realm of the unseen,

conveyed by means of matter.

And then there is love which is also an invisible force.

We can see its expressions, to be sure: the caress, the kiss.

But no one has ever seen love itself.

It certainly cannot be anatomized, or schematized,

or reduced to clearly identifiable elements.

Yet how powerful a force love is!

It can evoke our willing sacrifice, inspire us to the noblest of deeds.

Aye, there is a world of reality

beyond those worlds perceived by the physical sense alone.

And altogether multitudinous are life's gifts that have no

practical worth but nonetheless are altogether wond'rous:

The earth's green covering of grass.

The blue serenity of sea and sky.

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

Petals on the grass and wings in the air.

Oh, how flat, how narrow our world is,

when we measure its gifts by their usefulness alone,

when, in Rilke's happy simile

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



Then do the words of prophecy apply to us:

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

No, the human story simply cannot be told

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

Only those who open themselves to such a mystery

can transcend the grandeur and terror of their lives  
without being blinded by life's grandeur  
or crushed by its terror.

\* \* \*

These, then, are some of my reflections on this day of awe,  
currents of thought that flow more from soul than from mind,  
offered in the hope that they will help others  
in their quest for God.

It is a quest we dare not eschew.

It is, when all is said and done, the life-task of the Jew.

It is our mission, our historic calling,

"Who is a Jew" - asked Leo Baeck - "He is a man who experiences  
himself in the direction of God...He is a man who directs himself  
toward God in such a way that no part of his life is without  
this center, without this contact..."

To pursue the quest for God, to strive to know Him, to seek to serve Him

-- this is the duty that defines us as the covenant people.

On this great and holy day, then, we pray to Him who is enthroned  
above our praises:  
help us to find our way to you, God...  
Renew our spirit...  
Rekindle within us the faith  
that will dispel the darkness of our doubt and confusion.

We need the strength which flows from such a faith,  
the kind of faith which will enable us  
to heal isolation with community;  
to bind sorrow with comfort,  
rejection with acceptance,  
separation with inclusion;  
to reawaken our sense of reverence toward Creation,  
toward that Tent of Meeting on which we live,  
lest we trample holiness into dust.

Help us to gain such a faith.

Then will the promise inherent in this holy hour be fulfilled.

Amen...thus may it be...Amen.

THE SHALOM CENTER

BRIT HADOROT PEACE AWARD

To

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

PRESIDENT, UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

MAY 31, 1989

NEW YORK, NY

I am deeply moved that this presentation was made by young people. That was a splendid idea. After all, they and the securing of their future is what this evening is really all about.

I am proud that by virtue of this award my name is linked to that of its donors, the Liss. It is a name which has become synonymous with creative philanthropy. Indeed, the List family is an enabling force for countless worthy causes, the Shalom Center, only one, but not the least among them.

Your introduction, Al, was delightful, even as it was gilded. You've spent a good part of your life in the company of rabbis, and clearly were infected by their penchant for hyperbole.

My sense of lamentably lacking in merit is deepened when I think of those who were honored before me -- Carl Sagan, Elie Wiesel, Robert and Betty Lifton -- or even as I look about and see the many veterans of this work, men and women who spent a life-time in the trenches, who did infinitely more than give an occasional speech or urge the passage of a resolution.

My acceptance of this award is therefore not a matter of personal honor or achievement. I stand before you only as a representative: of the mothers and fathers whose dreams for their children have been hemmed in by fears of annihilation, of the poor who see their own communities become bleak wasteland while military budgets have swelled our national deficit to bursting. I stand here as surrogate for the young whose idealism has been soured by the fatalism that even in peacetime is the fallout of nuclear weaponry; and for the Jewish people whose suffering at Auschwitz has become the metaphor for the fate of the human race if nuclear frenzy continues unchecked. I stand before you as anyone involved in peace activities must: as a humble participant in a calling of global and cosmic dimensions that summons every rational, responsible member of the human race.

No issue arouses an international perspective as does the specter of the Bomb. Just the same, we Jews have a special place in the struggle to avert this monstrous evil. The metaphors of Judaism and our Jewish historical awareness give us such a unique voice.

Last week's Torah portion, Bechukotai, provides such a metaphor. Setting forth God's blessings and curses for obedience and disobedience the passage begins with the admonition: "You shall make no idols for yourselves." Our history has made us understand the validity of this forewarning. It has made us aware of the extended meaning of idolatry and the destruction that proceeds from it. We certainly remember how the idol worshipping Nazis tried to shatter the rainbow sign of the Covenant, taking its colors and pinning them to the hearts of their victims: yellow for Jews, red for communists, brown for gypsies, pink for homosexuals, purple for Jehova's Witnesses, and on and on through the spectrum of murdered souls.

Our history has also taught us that our fate is the barometer of the world's well-being, that our suffering increases when conflict rages, and that our pain is eased only when harmony prevails in the world.

This matter applies with special force to the interaction between the superpowers: whenever Soviet-American relations are strained, Jewish rights are constricted; when they ease, our rights are enlarged.

Soon after World War II, when the superpowers were still in alignment and not yet on a full collision course, the state of Israel was born, and the battered remnants of the Jewish people were given a bridge on which to cross over from genocide to survival. But as soon as Soviet-American tensions flared, and the window of opportunity was slammed shut, the "window of vulnerability" was opened.

You remember that phrase "window of vulnerability." It referred to the alleged disparity between the holocaust capacities of the Soviet Union and the holocaust capacities of the United States. Many frightening phrases flew through that window: Alexander Haig's remarks about "nuclear warning shots," mind-boggling discourse about "limited nuclear war," fundamentalist Christian proclamations about the impending Armageddon and even efforts to speed its coming.

And what happened to the Jews during this period of heated rhetoric and over-heated military budgets? Russia trampled on the culture of its Jews; the rolls of refuseniks and prisoners of Zion swelled; and the Soviet Union became the staunch ally of Israel's most ferocious enemies.



Today, we are again witnessing an oasis moment in the desert of diplomacy. The Soviet Union is wrestling with its own soul, and in the United States the wanton arrogance of the early Reagan years is behind us and the promise of a "gentler, kinder" spirit has been held forth. Only two days ago, in Brussels, President Bush answered the arms reduction initiatives by Mr. Gorbachev by making some dramatic proposals of his own, calling for the reduction of U.S. troops in Europe, for the lowering of the level of tanks, artillery, planes and other conventional weaponry -- and to do all this sooner than Mr. Gorbachev suggested. What a splendid form of competition between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.!

The "window of opportunity" is open again, open for Jews as well. Russian Jewish immigration has turned into a veritable flood-tide. Opportunities for the enhancement of Soviet Jewish culture now beckon. And the Soviet government has begun a process which will inexorably lead to full diplomatic relations with Israel. There is even some indication of Russia's willingness to play the role of conciliator rather than agitator in the Middle East.

This is a time of vindication for those of us who have insisted all along that the struggle for peace cannot negate our protest against Soviet anti-Semitism, even while the struggle against Soviet anti-Semitism must not deter us from our efforts to gain East-West cooperation.

As I said before the World Jewish Congress in January of 1985, in an address in Vienna that was republished widely, to my delight and amazement, throughout Eastern Europe: "Protest and peace are the twin pillars of East-West relations. Topple either and the whole structure falls. If we swallow our protest for the sake of peace... then the frail peace will be overturned by the writhings of the injustice itself. But if we abandon peace in the name of protest -- by becoming cold-war warriors and urging an acceleration of the arms race -- why, then, our protest corrodes into an immoral threat."

Yes, we can feel vindicated -- yet we must remain ever vigilant, Despite Mikhail Gorbachev's far-reaching rhetoric, and despite the very concrete steps the Soviet Union has undertaken -- the test bans, the withdrawals from Afghanistan, and the like -- Soviet self-searching is still only a fragile emotion that could easily crumble under stress and bring the

Stalinists to power once again. And despite Ronald Reagan's end-of-term transformation into a dove, and despite George Bush's less ideological, more pragmatic orientation, there are powerful forces in our land, forces with a vested interest in maintaining profligate military spending, and filled with fear or loathing or greed to justify it. These forces are well hidden from public scrutiny. They are not subject to elections every two or four or six years.

There is, moreover, the ever increasing danger of global nuclear proliferation. No longer is the superpower wrestling match the only act on stage. No longer can the bloody wars that rage around the globe be viewed merely as regional or local wars.

There are forces afoot on this planet of ours who will gladly bring the world down for the sake of heaven, who exalt martyrdom as the highest virtue, who obliterate the distinction between civilian and military targets, whose unholy frenzy blinds them to the difference between a new-born infant and a five-star general, so long as both are of the enemy race, the alien religion, the reviled nationality.

In the minds of such as these, nuclear arms are not deterrents; they are opportunities for power or vengeance or extortion. In the minds of such as these, nuclear war is not unthinkable, it is a fond fantasy, a development devoutly to be desired. In the minds of such as these, the threat of wholesale destruction is but a higher glory.

We see, then, that there is no way to bottle up the demon of the Bomb without U.S.-Soviet cooperation on an unprecedented level. Nor will superpower arms-agreements alone avert the evil decree unless we end the proliferation of nuclear weaponry. Nor will we assure against proliferation, unless we restrain those of our own and among our allies who sell the materials and the technology required for the manufacture of deadly weapons to terrorist nations. Nor will we check these madmen unless we address the economic inequities that ravage the globe.

In short, the quest for peace cannot be piecemeal -- though every small step away from the brink is to be encouraged and applauded. The nuclear menace, the menace of total war, apocalyptic in its proportions, demands solutions likewise rooted in a sense of totality.

It requires mentioning that it is not with the Bomb alone that we must concern ourselves. There is a growing and palpable swell in the production and use of chemical weapons. Here is another fruitful area for Russian-American cooperation.

Be that as it may, the "window of opportunity" afforded by the advent of a new hopeful era in U.S.-Soviet relations must therefore be wedged open ever wider. For the nuclear age, which has merged us all into one single quest for survival, must be made to yield to a New Age in which the Force of Life, rather than the mushroom-shaped, skull-shaped shadow of death becomes the driving power of our unification.

\* \* \*

The tasks before us therefore are clear. And let me begin with the more parochial goals and then widen the focus. In the first instance, we must seize the present opportunity to build a Soviet Jewish culture force so powerful that it can even withstand a setback in Soviet policy. We must take advantage of every opening that the emerging U.S.-Soviet relationship affords us, responding to this opportunity with the same energy and the same devotion with which we have responded to crisis.

In line with this matter, I think it time to ask for a temporary waiver of the Jackson-Vanek amendment in hope of strengthening glasnost and perestroika by the barriers to Soviet-U.S. trade. I do not want to pre-empt the Jewish community's present consideration of this issue, and will feel bound by its discipline. Still, I do not hesitate to assert my personal views on this subject. After all, a waiver of Jackson-Vanek was always held forth as the quid pro quo for an increased Soviet Jewish emigration. We have that, in abundant measure, and we have no right, in all justice, to increase the ante in mid-game.

In any event, where there is economic tension, there is political scapegoating; where there is political repression, there is need of an official "enemy." Today, as ever, the rules of anti-Semitism obtain. It is, therefore, in our self-interest to hope that the Gorbachev experiment succeeds in the Soviet Union -- and to do what we can here to help it succeed.

And now, to widen the focus of our concerns from the parochial to the universal, it is time for us as Jews, and as Americans, strongly to support and encourage every effort by the Bush Administration to respond creatively and positively to Soviet initiatives, as indeed he did last Sunday in his NATO address, and to advance still further steps in that direction.

We might begin by advocating the removal of nuclear missiles from West Germany. That's scarcely such a radical proposal. No less a hawk than Richard Perle, the former Assistant Secretary of Defense under Ronald Reagan, now says: "We don't need land based missiles in Europe...we would be better off," he says, "if both sides had no short range missiles."

Certainly, we should insist that our country cut off from its markets any friends or allies who sell terror weapons to terrorists, and to make absolutely certain that we are not in that trade in any way ourselves.

Finally, it is time too to take advantage of public disaffection with the military establishment -- a disaffection prompted by scandal and waste and unseemly greed -- once and for all to derail Star Wars and bring the Pentagon to heel before the democratic process.

\* \* \*

Yet greatest of all is our potential as Jews, the sons and daughters of prophets, to project a vision:

\* a vision of a world in which U.S.-Soviet cooperation brings about healing of our ailing earth, an earth sickening under the shadow of the mushroom cloud but sickening too from oil spills and ozone depletion, from all the deadly by-products of our blind materialism.

\* a vision of Jerusalem where no weapons are carried, no children are made into refugees, no vine tree is uprooted.

\* a vision of a world free from the obscene danse macabre in which superpowers engaged, a world free from the idolatry that makes our "skies like iron and our earth like copper" that lays "our cities to ruin and our sanctuaries desolate."  
Bechukotai

It is our task to project such vision, for it was a Jew, Albert Einstein, who ushered in the nuclear age by uncovering the mysteries of energy and matter -- mysteries that truly resemble, at their core, religious mysteries.

Confronted by the spectre of Hitler and the Nazi holocaust, Einstein then urged the creation of the atomic bomb.

He spent the last years of his life searching for a "unified field theory" and working for world peace. Both endeavors, he knew, were mandated by his earlier discoveries.

It is our task, today, as a people, to help complete the quest of this great Jew, for a unified world theory one that would indeed shed a magnificent light, the light of the rainbow, on the mysteries of existence.

As a international people, we are already in the forefront of this search.

As experts in survival, we have so very much to teach.

As members of the human race, like our neighbors at home and abroad, we really have no other choice.



Have Sagan retype  
regular

Shalom Center Award Dinner  
New York, N. Y.  
May 31, 1989

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~~(varmlike story)~~

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or even as I look about and see the many veterans of this work,  
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they are opportunities for power or vengeance or extortion.

In the minds of such as these,  
nuclear war is not unthinkable,  
it is ~~is~~ a fond fantasy,  
a development devoutly to be desired.

In the minds of such as these,  
the threat of wholesale destruction is but a higher glory.

P Be that as it may, the "window of opportunity" afforded  
by the advent of a new hopeful era in U.S.-Soviet relations  
must therefore be wedged open ever wider.

For the nuclear age,

which has merged us all into one single quest for survival,  
must be made to yield to a New Age in which the Force of Life,  
rather than the mushroom-shaped, skull-shaped shadow of death  
becomes the driving power of our unification.

\*-----\*                      X                      X                      X

P The tasks before us therefore are clear.  
And let me begin with the more parochial goals and then widen the focus.  
In the first instance, we must seize the present opportunity  
to build Soviet Jewish culture force so powerful  
that it can even withstand a setback in Soviet policy.  
We must take advantage of every opening that the emerging U.S.-Soviet  
relationship affords us,  
responding to this opportunity with the same energy and  
the same devotion with which we have responded to crisis.

P In line with this matter, I think it time to ask for a temporary  
waiver of the Jackson-Vanek amendment  
in the hope of strengthening glasnost and perestroyka  
by the barriers to Soviet-U.S. trade.  
I do not want to pre-empt the Jewish community's present consideration  
of this issue, and will feel bound by its discipline.

*[Handwritten mark]* Still, I do not hesitate to assert my personal views on this subject.

After all, a waiver of Jackson-Vanek was always held forth as the  
quid pro quo for an increase Soviet Jewish emigration.

We have that, in abundant measure, and we have no right,  
in all justice, to increase the ante in mid-game.

*P* In any event, where there is economic tension, there is political  
~~scapegoating~~ *scapegoating*;

where there is political repression, there is need of an official  
"enemy."

Today, as ever, the rules of anti-Semitism obtain.

It is, therefore, in our self-interest to hope that the Gorbachev  
experiment succeeds in the Soviet Union

-- and to do what we can here to help it succeed.

*P* And now, to widen the focus of our concerns from the parochial  
to the universal,  
it is time for us as Jews, and as Americans,  
strongly to support and encourage every effort by the Bush  
Administration to respond creatively and positively  
to Soviet initiatives,  
as indeed he did last Sunday in his NATO address,  
and to advance still further steps in that direction.



Ⓟ We might begin by advocating the removal of nuclear missiles  
from West Germany.

That's scarcely such a radical proposal.

No less a hawk than Richard Perle,

the former Assistant Secretary of Defense under Ronald Reagan,  
now says:

"We don't need land based missiles in Europe...we would be  
better off," he says, "if both sides had no short range missiles."

Ⓟ Certainly, we should insist that our country cut off from its markets  
any friends or allies who sell terror weapons to terrorists,  
and to make absolutely certain that we are not in that trade  
in any way ourselves.

Ⓟ Finally, it is time too to take advantage of public disaffection  
with the military establishment  
-- a disaffection prompted by scandal and waste and unseemly greed --  
once and for all to derail Star Wars  
and bring the Pentagon to heel before the democratic process.

\* — \* \*

\*

\*

\*

Ⓟ Yet greatest of all is our potential as Jews, the sons and daughters  
of prophets, to project a vision:

\* a vision of a world in which U.S.-Soviet cooperation brings  
about healing of our ailing earth,  
an earth sickening under the shadow of the mushroom cloud  
but sickeing too from oil spills and ozone depletion,  
from all the deadly by-products of our blind materialism.

\* a vision of Jerusalem where no weapons are carried,  
no children are made into refugees,  
no vine tree is uprooted.

\* a vision of a world capable of ending the paralysis that leaves  
millions homeless and starving.

\* a vision of a world free from the obscene danse macabre in which  
superpowers engaged,  
a world free from the idolatry that makes our  
"skies like iron and our earth like copper"  
that lays "our cities to ruin and our sanctuaries desolate."  
(Bechukotai)

It is our task to project such visions, for it was a Jew,  
Albert Einstein, who ushered in the nuclear age  
by uncovering the mysteries of energy and matter  
-- mysteries that truly resemble, at their core, religious  
mysteries.

Confronted by the spectre of Hitler and the Nazi holocaust,  
Einstein then urged the creation of the atomic bomb.

He spent the last years of his life searching for a "unified field  
theory" and working for world peace.

Both endeavors, he knew, were mandated by his earlier discoveries.

P It is our task, today, as a people,  
to help complete the quest of this great Jew,  
for a unified world theory  
one that would indeed shed a magnificent light,  
the light of the rainbow,  
on the mysteries of existence.

P As an international people, we are already in the forefront of this  
search.

P As experts in survival, we have so very much to teach.

P As members of the human race, like our neighbors at home and abroad,  
we really have no other choice.

— Rabb. Alexander S. Sander

JEWISH COMMUNITY SERVICE IN SUPPORT OF PEOPLE WITH AIDS

AIDS COMMITTEE, UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS  
PACIFIC SOUTHWEST COUNCIL

ADDRESS

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

LEO BAECK TEMPLE  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

MARCH 12, 1989  
8 ADAR II 5749

With heavy hearts we gather in this sanctuary, summoned by a sacred service of remembrance.

Not that we really need an hazkarah lest we forget. We need no reminders. We remember too well. Memories come...to interrupt our sleep...to still our laughter...to fill our silence with the voices of the past.

An entire generation of young people going to waste...their abilities and their possibilities, what they were and what they might have been...all going, gone. It is a calamity... a disaster...a terrible defeat for civilization and for life.

How can we respond to these haunting memories, this hurtful knowledge except with silence? It must be that, it always will be that -- silence. Words offer scant balm for wounds so deep. They cannot penetrate that immense isolation to which AIDS consigns so many of those who suffer it. How can mere words help those who must conserve each ounce of strength, devote every waking moment to the struggle for their own survival.

And, who am I to speak -- I who know really nothing about AIDS? What authority do I claim, I who am untouched by its pain? How can my words sound anything but abstract if not banal to those whose lungs are strangled by disease, whose souls are crushed by the threat of death or abandonment?

Aye, our speech is stifled by darkness. Our experience is of a kind that has no tongue. We offer only silence -- and that solidarity conveyed by our caring presence.

\* \* \*

Humankind has been laid waste by many a plague: the Black Death ...tuberculosis...leprosy. Still, AIDS is the most dreadful epidemic of them all. For it has stirred demons in the depth of our collective soul, and of a kind we had long thought extinct.

It has spawned a secondary scourge as deadly in its own way as the primary affliction: a wave of hysteria whose symptoms include prejudice, ostracism, and violence. AIDS sufferers already threatened by death, are victimized a second time: they are tormented, thrown out of jobs, too often spurned by family and friends. It all reminds me of the bubonic plague -- so Barbara Tuchman instructed us -- when parents left their own children to die in the gutter for fear that they themselves would be infected.



Rejection is not the universal fate of AIDS patients, to be sure. There are thousands of exemplary partners who care for those they love and parents who care for their sons and daughters until their last breath is drawn, providing them with everything they could possibly need, most especially the need for a tender presence. Only thus, is the nightmare of abandonment pierced by the light of love.

Yet too often, even in such cases, the fact of illness is kept within a close circle, because this dreadful disease has spawned not just a secondary but a tertiary scourge: stigmatization; the contumely of those who are convinced that they are healthy because they are more deserving, because they lead a more virtuous life. This third scourge is the branding of victims as guilty, as having brought calamity on their own heads, because of what they did and how they live.

Alas, this third disease too often infects the victims as well. Their self-image mirrors society's distaste for them, and so they begin to hate themselves, convinced that they are somehow morally or physically inferior. And so they give up the ghost.

Doubtlessly, this is why so many parents of people with AIDS hide this grim fact from their friends and neighbors. It would mark their children as belonging to a sub-culture rejected by society. They themselves might be shunned by their friends, become the objects of obloquy. Some parents even try to keep the cause of death secret, pleading with the doctors to list some other illness on the death certificate; this, possibly also, because too many funeral homes refuse to embalm the remains of AIDS victims and insist on cremating them instead. It is a fearsome tragedy!

\* \* \*

But let us focus on our own community: Janet Marder is disturbingly correct in her assessment here. In convening this assembly she wrote:

"The Jewish community continues to deny the existence of AIDS in our midst, and Jewish families and individuals who do suffer from AIDS continue to hide from their community."

That is true, is it not? Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome has revealed a deficiency in our Jewish community's own immune system: that we are not so immune to prejudice, that we are not so immune to the general human propensity for blinding our

eyes to hurtful truth: that we are not so immune to the very process of stigmatization by which we as Jews have been shunned and persecuted and massacred.

Yes, some Jews have responded to the AIDS crisis. Yes, our Union of Congregations has published educational materials and established national and regional committees to sensitize our constituents, to spur them to speak out against the hatred attached to the AIDS crisis, against the scapegoating of those who are suffering most acutely. Yes, as individuals, some of us have been deeply, sacrificially involved; I am thinking particularly of the many Jewish nurses and doctors and other caregivers who have devoted their lives to peoples with AIDS.

Still, we have not as a community crossed the boundaries of Otherness -- the fringed boundaries at which compassion gives way to identification. We have not extended our embrace to include gay and lesbian Jews. We have not acknowledged their presence in the midst of our synagogues, nor consciously included gay and lesbian parents as part of the Jewish family circle. Indeed, we have not affirmed that we all are family: that people with AIDS and their friends and their relatives and their lovers are our sons, our sisters, our neighbors, our fellow Jews.

In our denial, in our failure to see one another as one family -- indeed, as one holy people -- we exile ourselves from Jewish history, we opt for amnesia. We who were beaten in the streets of Berlin cannot turn away from the plague of gay-bashing. We who were Marranos in Madrid, who clung to the closet of assimilation and conversion in order to live without molestation, we cannot deny the demand for gay and lesbian visibility!

The Star of David has emerged as the most visible sign of Jewishness. Curiously enough, it is not the oldest or most venerable symbol of our people. While archeologists have discovered some ancient stones bearing this emblem, it did not become commonplace until more modern times. Indeed, rabbinic literature, in all its variety and vastness, makes absolutely no mention of it. There is a more recent event that has irrevocably rendered the Magen-David as the preeminent Jewish sign. It was the shoah, the Holocaust, the martyrdom of six million Jews. It was the Nazis who stitched the six-pointed star to our hearts as a badge of shame, a mark of death. And, it was our own partisans and Zionist pioneers who reconverted it into a badge of pride and life.

Today, as we meet to remember those who have died of AIDS, to speak of their suffering and our own, there is another meaning that we can attach to the Magen David. It is an interpretation that any Jewish child with a crayon can tell you: that the Star of David contains, within it, the triangle.

For those of us here who would, a generation ago, have been wearing the pink triangle as a badge of shame and a mark of death; for those of us here who today wear it as a badge of honor and resistance and identity: it is time to complete the outline of your Jewish star.

For those of us who have been willingly blind to the geometry of Jewish life, who would keep invisible the presence of the triangle within the Shield of David: it is time to complete the outline of our Jewish star.

\* \* \*

Let me not camouflage my own omissions with the omissions of the larger community. Let me confess my own failure of courage and of will ... that in thinking about what I was to say today I had to wrestle with demons in the depths of my own being, demons I never thought were there.

I, a leader of this movement for Reform Judaism; I, a refugee from Hitler's Germany, I will no longer be content to speak in the first person plural declaring that "we have dealt perversely." Instead, I declare myself your ally today, and ally to all those whose Star of David needs completion.

I declare myself a mourner for all those who have died of AIDS, most of them young, in the fullness of life and self-discovery.

I declare myself a rabbi for all Jews, at every moment of life, not only for heterosexual Jews, or for gay Jews only at their funerals.

I declare myself a consoler for those who have passed through the valley of the shadow of death, accompanying friends and loved ones on their last painful journey.

I declare myself a compatriot of those how are living with AIDS, living more fully than many of us who take God's gifts of life for granted. I, too, know the experience of looking on death's face, personally, as a heart patient, and, historically, as a Jew. I have felt the intense love of every shred of God's creation that fills the soul after the dread of the extinguishing moment has passed.

I declare myself the compassionate ally of every person heterosexual and homosexual, Jew and non-Jew, who is wrestling with the shame, the confusion, the fear, the endless torment involved in the inner struggle for sexual identity. It is a struggle that includes, but also goes beyond, civil liberties. It is, when all is said and done, a struggle for the integrity of selfhood.

\* \* \*

In such a way, I see myself as heeding the precepts of Torah that Torah which is revealed not by focusing narrowly on a particular passage but rather on what permeates the whole, and that is compassion. This is our tradition's overarching purpose: to love God, to love our neighbor, to love the stranger, even as we were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thus we read in tractate Sanhedrin:

TORAH B'HATCHILA V'SOFA GEMILUT CHASADEEM  
"The beginning and the end of Torah are  
deeds of loving kindness."

To be sure now, the Torah has many and divergent strands, but seen singly, they do not reveal the whole: the tapestry must be seen in all its wondrous fullness. There is the single text, but there are others, and beyond them, there is their interpretation which is never fixed but ever in flux. Yes, there is the reproving God who visited his wrath upon the men of Sodom; but there is also the loving God who enjoins us not to "stand idly by while our neighbor perishes." Indeed, the Torah has many faces, but the most authentic is the one that reflects its heart.

In the Talmud, again in tractate Sanhedrin, it is written --

The sages wondered:  
"Where shall we look for the Messiah? will he  
come to us on clouds of glory robed in majesty  
and crowned with light?"

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi put this question to no less an authority than the prophet Elijah himself.

"Where shall I find the Messiah?" he asked, and  
the prophet replied: "At the gate of the city."  
"But how shall I recognize him?"  
"He sits among the lepers."

Rabbi Joshua was startled and exclaimed:

"Among the lepers? What is he doing there?"



"He changes their bandages," Elijah replied.  
"He changes their bandages one by one."

[Free Translation by Kenneth Roseman]

As individuals, we still have much to fear, much to reckon with. But let us not add to our loneliness and our suffering by believing that God does not recognize us and our relationships. Let us rather exalt our relationships so that they be worthy of God's gaze. Let us learn that God's image is reflected in each and every face. Let us not add to our heartache by separating or by letting ourselves be separated from the Jewish people. As Jews, together, let us search through the Torah, the written Torah and the Torah of life, to find those affirmations for which we yearn.

\* \* \*

This is a service of remembrance. It is also a service of healing and hope.

Of this I am certain, the day of healing will come. Even as I wrote these lines, within the last two weeks, two promising medical developments were reported. There is a Jonas Salk somewhere even now, engaged in serious research, who will discover or design those human anti-bodies that will sweep the ravaging virus from off the face of the earth. We pray for that day to arrive within the life time of everyone in this synagogue.

In any event, we must never surrender to despair. That word has no place in the Jewish lexicon! We Jews hope...we remember and we hope...we hope not just when hope comes easy, but when earthly reason defies all hope. Then especially do we hope. We hope until hope creates out of its own wreckage that good which it contemplates.

Let us therefore remember, and let us always hope.



April 13, 1989  
Clark University

Remembering Frances Hiatt

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

I am grateful to Jack Hiatt for asking me to participate in this dedicatory event, to share this moment of deep meaning in his life, and to re-evoke, to freshen memories of an altogether remarkable woman. Frances Hiatt was precisely that: a shining example of how life should be lived.

I remember her well, though many seasons have come and gone since our lives last touched. How could it be otherwise? She certainly was not of a lamblike nature, passive, supine, and hence forgettable. She was a veritable lioness. There was a power which swelled from within her, leaving its lasting mark on all whose lives were intertwined with hers however fleetingly.

Without doubt, she had a firm-set will. The very way she walked conveyed that message, never leisurely, always determined, heading straight to the mark. Once she had her mind fixed on a course, she was relentless in its pursuit; there was no deflecting or checking her. She had a fixity of purpose, and because she did, she molded the world to herself.

She was straight as an arrow in her judgment of others, impatient with slovenliness, coldly disdainful of the counterfeit, yet she never demanded of others what she did not demand of herself. I think that Frances was of Eastern-European descent; but she manifested those qualities usually associated with German Jews: self-discipline, self-command, self-domination. Once she assumed a responsibility she fulfilled it to the nth degree. She always did her homework. She prepared with care. She studied. She thought. And only then did she commend and pursue a course of action. She conquered twice by conquering herself in victory.

So far, I have drawn a portrait that is rather stern, almost severe. But that is only its surface. Once you penetrated that, you found a softness underneath, a tender care -- very much like those sabras, those cactus plants of that Israel she loved, prickly without but luscious sweetness within.

At the very core of her being there was compassion. She was essentially good and kind. She cared for people. She was determined to help them in their need. Just think of those institutions which called forth her most intense involvement:

Worcester's Visiting Nurse Association and City Hospital, both of which she served and ultimately led with distinction. She nurtured these institutions with an uncommon devotion precisely because of her concern for those who are most in need: the solitary souls, the lost souls, the disabled in body and in spirit.

Let it be noted and remembered also, that these public benefices properly acknowledged and acclaimed were equalled if not exceeded by many individual acts of human kindness known only to giver and receiver and all the more precious for their tender privacy. I know of an elderly, lonely woman, not one of the 'pnai ha-ir,' of the very important people of the city, but rather one of the poor, the disadvantaged, on whom Frances lavished special attention visiting her regularly, talking with her, walking with her, giving her cheer. And there were many more...

Frances cared for those who suffer most likely because she was schooled in suffering herself. But she did not allow adversity to defeat her. She surmounted it by reaching out, by helping others. She was a gutsy lady, Frances was, and nothing in human life is as commendable as courage.

There certainly was no more faithful friend than Frances. Once she embraced you as such, she shunned no pain -- even to the death -- to stand in your stead.

Clearly, she cared most for those who stood nearest: her children, her grandchildren, her sister, and above all her Jack. Had God only granted a longer life, they would have celebrated their 50th anniversary but months ago. Together the two walked the way of life, drinking from its cup, when it ran bitter, when it ran sweet, giving true meaning to the words: husband, wife, and marriage.

This too I remember about Frances: She had a well-refined sense of the fitness of things. Everything had to be just so, in the proper place, in perfect harmony.

She loved good music. She appreciated fine art. Her home was tastefully appointed. Beautiful paintings adorned its walls, matchless sculptures filled its spaces. Many of these works were on Jewish themes, reflecting her appreciation of her heritage. It was a blending of the arts with her people's tradition, a singular integration of aesthetic values and Jewish values.

Perhaps it was this yearning for wholeness which led her to withdraw from her friends and even from her family to some extent during the last few months of her life. She did not want anyone to see the ravages of her illness, to see her less than whole, to know her less than perfect.

In the Jerusalem Talmud, Tractate Sh'kalim, it is written:

EYN OUSIM N'FASHOT LAZADIKIM, DIVREYHEN HEYN,  
HEYN, ZICHRONOM

One need not erect monuments in memory of the  
righteous. Their own words and deeds are their  
monuments.

Still, it is wonderful, is it not, that Jacob Hiatt is able to amplify his soul-mate's good deeds, to make her name known to those who were not privileged to know her, and to do so by erecting not monuments of stone but living memorials: scholarships that enable countless young people to stretch their minds, a museum wing which awakens their sense of beauty, a lovely park in Jerusalem which gives rest to the weary, and now this school: the Frances Hiatt School of Psychology which gives further expression to their joint commitment to discover and develop the latent potentiality of young men and young women.

There is a Talmudic epitaph that is reserved only for those who are endowed with a special talent in the art of living, who bequeath a rich spiritual legacy to humankind. It reads as follows:

CHAVAL AL D'OVDIN V'LO MISHTAKCHIN

Alas for those who are gone and cannot be replaced.

Francis Hiatt is gone and cannot be replaced. But her memory continues to be a benediction!

april 13, 1989  
Clark University

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Rabbi Alfarouk Schindler

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TO RAB  
4/17/89

Schindler: Dedication of Sanctuary  
Temple Beth David, Westwood, Mass.  
April 9, 1989

Your extravagant exaggerations to the contrary notwithstanding,

I am grateful to you, Hank, for your warm words of introduction.  
As you know, as you must feel, your sentiments of affection and  
regard are reciprocated with a full and grateful heart.

I like Henry Zoob.

I respect those rare qualities of mind and heart he brings to

his endeavors:

his intelligence,

his industry,

his integrity,

and this, above all, his sensitivity, his essential humaneness

his ability to transmit his ideals not just in the written and  
the spoken word, but in the manner of his life.

I really need not tell you all this.

You know it so much better yourself.

After all, your relationship spans the years.

It has been cemented by tears of joy and of sorrow alike.

But I can tell you that his influence is felt far beyond these  
sacred walls.

Many others, in our vast and vibrant national family of congregations,  
know of his work and appreciate his worth.

We are especially grateful to him for being a prime mover in the  
creation of the Rashi School, whose graduates will doubtlessly  
provide our religious community with its future leadership.



This community, this congregation is a place endeared to me by memory  
and by affection.

As you have heard, and as some among you will recall,

I helped in the founding of this congregation  
I was your first rabbi, as it were, and those were exciting days,  
days of hope, of unbounded expectation.

There is one incident of that time which is forever etched in my memory.  
You had purchased a church, as I recall it, and set about the task of  
reconverting it into your first permanent sanctuary.

I came in one afternoon, just to see how work was progressing,  
and found an elderly man, standing on a ladder, busy driving  
nails into the wall to keep new wood panelling in place.

He identified himself as Moe Rimmelman, told me that he was a carpenter  
by trade, and that instead of going on vacation  
he took the money he would have spent on a trip  
to purchase the panelling  
and the time allotted to rest from his labors to affix it.

"I talked it over with my wife," he said, "and we decided that doing  
this is also restful -- it brings rest to the soul."

This is the spirit which animated this congregation from its very  
beginnings, and it is doubtlessly this kind of spirit which enabled  
you to surmount adversity and phoenix-like  
rebuild your new sanctuary out of the ashes of the old.

When you rabbi officiated at the burial of your three scorched Torah scrolls, he reminded you of a midrash which bears retelling, about Chanina ben Teradyon, noblest of Jewish martyrs,

who was burned at the stake wrapped in a Scroll of the Law  
When his pupils witnessed his terrible agony, they cried out:

"Our master, our teacher, what seest thou,"

and he replied:

"I see the parchment burning, but the letters of the law,  
they soar on high."

Even so it was with you,

the sons and daughters of this holy congregation.

Your sacred scrolls were scorched and had to be buried,  
your sanctuary left smoldering.

But the spirit which they enshrined remained alive in your hearts,  
and you mustered the strength to build anew.

What you have wrought here -- rabbi and congregation together --  
behold, it is exceedingly good.

This is an altogether beautiful new sanctuary,  
a blossoming in stone,  
music in space.

The lines are clean.

Everything is well-proportioned.

It is a place which makes the spirit soar.

I am reminded of something Heinrich Heine once said.

Standing before the cathedral of Amien his friend asked him,

why don't we build something like that nowadays,

and Heine replied:

"Men in those days had convictions, we have only opinions.  
and it requires something more than an opinion to build  
a cathedral."

This sanctuary, in all its glory, bears testimony to the

strength of your convictions.

It also bears testimony to the convictions of the many who stood by your  
side.

I refer now to that coalition of decency which was forged in this

community -- by sundry civic and religious groups,

men and women of divergent theologies, but of one faith,

faith in that God who is the creator of us all.

But an anniversary is not just a time for the backward glance.

It is a time, also, to look ahead.

It is not just a time for recollection,

but also a time for rededication,

for a refocusing on those ideas and ideals for which this

sanctuary was build and which it presumably enshrines.

These purposes are familiar to you.

Your rabbis have articulated them over the years.

and you have demonstrated your understanding of them.

The first of these ideals assuredly is the moral mandate.

It is a foremost task of the synagogue to remind us of

those values which the world makes us forget.

Within these sacred walls we must always be confronted with the ideal

and summoned to measure ourselves against it.

Its doors must always be open wide, so that those who require sanctuary

will feel free to enter.

Its windows must never be shut so tight that humanity's weeping

will go unheard.

Our age needs such a reminder.

It urgently requires the prod of religion's moral mandate.

Consider our communal conduct, for a moment, our demeanor as a nation.

Here we are, the wealthiest country on earth, yet poverty abounds

and the ranks of the disadvantaged are swelling.

Too many in this bounteous land of ours are out of work and out of hope

and they have lost the faith that this is a society that

gives a damn for them.

Or consider what we do with our world -- just read the newspapers of the

day and see: how we take God's handiwork and despoil it,

the sweet air He gave us to breathe

and the fresh water with which he blessed us

the fertile green which delights the eye.

Instead of scknowledging and making proper use of all these gifts,

we poison them...we tear apart the ozone...we carbonize the oxygen

we acidify the refreshing rain...as we plunge the world

headlong into a nuclear saturnalia of burnt flesh & maimed

bodies & torn limbs & the whole dark butchery without a soul.

And thus it is that the synagogue must be a moral force in our  
personal and communal lives.

It must remind us of those values which the world makes us forget.  
For only if we emerge from this place as better human beings,  
as better people  
will our prayers have been answered.

There is a second great purpose for which this sanctuary was built.  
It was meant to be a communal home for the Jewish people,  
the source of our strength to live as Jews.

This is a purpose the synagogue served throughout the ages,  
It was our home when we had no other home,

our land when we were wanderers over the face of the earth.  
The synagogue enabled us to speak the proud language of our faith  
even while we were compelled to voice the bable of many peoples.  
Beaten down and crushed by tyrant's rage

our fathers and mothers came into the synagogue,  
and straightened their backs and held their heads high,  
for within the sacred walls of the synagogue they felt free.

There they felt themselves to be what indeed they were:  
princes of God,  
proud scions of God's people.

It is a purpose that the synagogue must continue to fulfill,  
for as we look at the not so distant horizons of Jewish life  
many a danger cloud can be perceived,  
and we will need the synagogue as a source of strength for our  
collective continuity.



Israel and the quest for her security will continue to pre-occupy us.  
This has been a particularly painful year in this regard  
and all of us are filled with foreboding,  
and all of us are ambivalent.

On the one hand we know that the status quo is untenable  
that a refractory population cannot be kept in check without the  
force that comes from the barrel of a gun.  
that the exercise of this force merely intensifies hatreds  
and makes the attainment of peace even more remote.  
and that in any event, peace is not just an abstraction,  
that it must be pursued in concrete ways and cannot be  
sequestered from the pursuit of justice for all  
-- Palestinians as well as Jews.

On the other hand, we recognize that the fear of the Israelis is valid,  
and so we too are afraid,  
afraid that the Palestinians say Westbank and Gaza  
but really mean Haifa and Tel Aviv;  
afraid that they have not foresworn their determination to drive  
the Jews into the Mediterranean Sea;  
afraid that Arafat is merely dissembling,  
that he has neither the will nor the power to shackle those  
violent forces which he himself unleashed  
or with which he is allied.

And in back of it all, there loom those arms merchants,  
leaders of nations presumably pledged to pursue pathways of peace,  
who persist in selling sophisticated weaponry  
to confrontation states...

the latest, the Soviet Union, conveying long flight capacity  
to that purveyor of international terrorism, Quadafi.

It is ominous, portentous, frightening!

But not just Israel, the security of Jews all over the world  
will continue to evoke our concern as American Jews.

Auschwitz is only one generation behind us,  
but anti-Semitism is becoming respectable once again,  
witness what happened in this place,  
and this was not an isolated incident.

And so we will need the synagogue as a source of strength for  
our collective continuity.

Within the sheltering walls of Beth Hillel  
you will have to find that inner force that flows  
only from the companionship of fellow Jews.

But the synagogue must serve one more purpose still:  
It must evoke a sense of the sacred.  
It must enhance our capacity to respond with wonderment  
to the essential mystery of life.

I speak now 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!

Alas, the voice from out of the whirlwind or from the burning bush  
finds but few listening ears in our time.

By and large in our day we are not given to amazement and to wonder  
as blandly we walk the way of life untouched by its essential magic

The temper of our times does not allow us to hear...

our proneness to consider as real only things perceived by the  
physical sense

things that can be touched and felt and measured and weighed  
and our tendency to ascribe a worth only to things that are of use  
that can be bought and sold, and are of practical worth.

Yet there is a world of reality beyond that world perceived  
by the physical senses alone

and some among us are blessed with the capacity to preceive that realm.

To one man, for instance,

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

Another man has a clearer vision and so he finds

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

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

That is a scientific fact.

But is this all that we can say about water?

Is this the sum and substance of its essence?

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

and Israel's sweet singer found firm faith

'by still and stilling waters'

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

Aye, there is a world of reality

beyond those worlds perceived by the physical sense alone.

And altogether multitudinous are life's gifts that have no

practical worth but nonetheless are altogether wond'rous:

The earth's green covering of grass.

The blue serenity of sea and sky.

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

Petals on the grass and wings in the air.

Oh, how flat, how narrow our world is,

when we measure its gifts by their usefulness alone,

when, in Rilke's happy simile

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

Then do the words of prophecy apply to us:

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

No, the human story simply cannot be told

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

Only those who open themselves to such a mystery

can transcend the grandeur and terror of their lives  
without being blinded by life's grandeur  
or crushed by its terror.

These, then, are the purposes for which this sanctuary was built

and whose pursuit alone justifies the effort to assure its survival

This synagogue must be a force for good in human life,

a source of strength for the Jewish people.

And it must be a place where men and women can find the companionship

of kindred and aspiring souls in their quest for God.

Pursue these purposes, these dreams, this quest!

Then will the future of Temple Beth Hillel be as glorious  
as was its past.

Then also will the celebration of this dedicatory hour be

not for present use nor for present delight alone,  
but they will be forever.

Then the time will come when the wood and the stone and the mortar

of this sanctuary will be held sacred because your hands  
have touched them

And many years hence, men and women will behold the beauty and

the worthy substance of them and they will say:

"See, this our fathers and our mothers built for us."

ken yehi ratzon... thus may it be God's will.