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"FACING THE FUTURE"

CHRISTIAN JEWISH DIALOGUE

Chicago, November 1990

My task this morning is to help conclude these meetings by discussing how we might "face the future together." With the help of our morning cup of coffee -- without which some of us might hardly face the day, let alone the future -- and with Bishop Griswold's opening prayer to brace our souls, I should be able to begin.

If truth be told, I am ever loath to prognosticate, to speak of the future, mindful of the Chinese proverb which holds that "to prophesy is exceedingly difficult, especially with respect to the future." Yesterday's forecasts are inevitably mocked by today's events, and there simply is no telling what shape the future will take.

Moreover, there is a noise beyond the walls of this room and this lovely hotel that makes talk of the future even more difficult. I speak of the noisy present -- the roaring of a world that is in a state of vast historical change, a world in which opportunity and peril have become near synonymous.

It is a world reverberating with the crash of Communism, the crumbling of the secular religion of Marxism. It is a world in which the forthright preachings of the Jewish prophets -- yes, and the sermon on the mount -- have found renewed relevance greater than the most pervasive "isms" of the past century.

It is a world creeping from beneath the terrible shadow of the mushroom cloud only to find itself broiling beneath the hot sun in a thinning atmosphere.

Indeed, as the dance of death between the superpowers winds down, crises that transcend economic systems and national boundaries are gaining international attention. The search for a solution to such issues as "Whither our planet?," or the AIDS crisis, or the global impoverishment of women and children -- these and like issues bring us face-to-face with questions of personal responsibility and communal responsibility and how we should live in relation to creation. All of these questions and more touch on the very core of our respective religious traditions. They are the very questions that demand our joint response. And over the past several decades, we have demonstrated our ability to speak with one voice and to act in concert on these and like concerns.

I never cease to wonder at the transformation which our respective communities have undergone in their relationship one to another: erstwhile foes become trusted co-workers, indifference and suspicion replaced by mutual respect - - and all this in less than a generation . . . more progress in twenty five years than in all the centuries before!

In many ways, these changes are a tribute to the best values of that blessed land in which we live. I speak especially of that pluralism to which America is so passionately devoted; "e pluribus unum . . . out of many - - one" is our nation's proudest motto. To be sure now, the ideal and the real do not always coincide, in this sphere as in any other: all groups have their share of those who disdain the dialogue, who would rather revile and scorn and hate. . . But since World War II, the gap between the grasp and the reach has been substantially narrowed. The United States has become a genuinely multi-ethnic, multi-religious and increasingly multi-racial society. I mean, where else but in America can you hear a Salvation Army band play Hava Nagila!

But the effectiveness of our dialogue is due to something more than a receptive environment.

It is due, in the first instance, to our willingness to be honest with ourselves, to engage in what Jewish tradition calls a chesban hanefesh, a self-reckoning of the soul.

Every journey to our fellow men and women is a first a journey inward into our own existence. We made this painful inward journey, all of us. Somehow, we mustered the strength to do so, to confront our past and present imperfections, to wrestle with the demons in our own souls, and because we did, we were able to reach out to others and face the future together.

But the effectiveness of our dialogue is due not only to the fact that we were honest with ourselves, but also and above all, to the fact that we have learned to be honest with one another. We do not mince words or feed each other pabulum. We do not say only what we think will please the other to hear, but always the truth as we perceive it. And because this is so, we have been able to withstand the several shocks to Christian Jewish relations during the past few years: the ugliness of the Carmelite convent controversy, the upsetting papal reception of Kurt Waldheim and Yassir Arafat, the trespasses by Jewish fundamentalists in Israel against Orthodox Christian properties and people.

Our readiness to be forthright with one another has given our relationship a force sufficient to weather these tempests, to maintain contact, and to pursue our common agenda despite divergent and even conflicting views and feelings on this or that

particular event or issue. Indeed, here is the ultimate test of dialogue: the ability to face tough dilemmas together, to learn to disagree agreeably, while still preserving mutual respect and good will.

It is in this spirit that I would like to make some brief comments concerning Israel and its role in the Middle East. It is important that we understand each other on this subject, lest this become an issue of contention so sharp that we will all pick up our marbles and go home.

Let me say at once that as a Jew and as a Zionist, I want to see a negotiated settlement to end Israel's occupation of the Westbank and Gaza. I am a dovish public critic of the abridgment of human rights in the territories. I believe that there is a Palestinian people and it deserves human rights and political dignity.

But I also know that Israel is a feisty democracy; that open debate rages in that free land and nowhere else in the Middle East, and that there is a need for Arab counterparts of Israel's Peace Now movement. But there are none. None in the Middle East, none to nurture the trust of the Israelis, none to help them overcome their deep sense of vulnerability.

It is a sense of vulnerability which I myself feel, let it be confessed; for I experience myself at this podium less as a president of a multi-million member religious community, less as a secure citizen of our powerful United States, and more as a German Jewish refugee from Hitlerism, a Jewish survivor on the banks of that long river of European anti-Semitism, to which Christian churches constituted the major tributary. After all, the shoa did not happen in a wilderness or amongst primitive peoples, but in the heart and center of European and Christian civilization. And the slaughter was engineered by leaders of a nation that stood in the van of progress, whose universities were Mecca for seekers after truth, whose poets were world figures, and the symphonies of whose composers are still played wherever orchestras assemble. I studied at these universities, I valued that poetry, I thrilled to that music -- but then came that whirlwind of destruction which decimated my people, among them many I knew and loved.

And so I see in myself how personal and communal vulnerability remain paramount in the Jewish psyche, and on a level that most of our Christian allies cannot comprehend, and because they don't, the depth and concreteness of Jewish devotion to the state of Israel remains a mystery to them.

To be sure now, there is a difference between perception and reality. I fully recognize the disparity between my feelings of personal vulnerability as a Jew, and my knowledge of that actual

- - if tenuous - - historical empowerment that Jews have experienced during the past four decades. No longer are we the meek of the earth, as we were for millennia. Having survived the Nazi genocide, we have now, in the state of Israel gained a degree of secular power, power enough, we pray, to prevent our "meekness" from ever again leading to victimization; power as well to test the conscience of the Jewish people and to test our mettle as peacemakers. And this is precisely why I have made it my task as a religious leader, to help heal the Jewish psyche and to prepare the Jewish people for the challenges of peacemaking.

Those challenges, I might add, have been greatly complicated by the outrages perpetrated upon Kuwait by Iraq, and by the Palestinian willingness to embrace the murderous Saddam Hussein as a would-be liberator. Israel and the Jewish people once again are face-to-face with the implacability and unrelieved historical animosity of its foes - - Saddam Hussein, a liberator indeed! For the PLO, it seems, Zionism is a greater demon than chemical warfare. For the PLO, maximalist dreams have greater currency than maximalist body-counts among Kurds and Iranians and Kuwaites. . . .

And throughout all this, Israel is being instructed to "lay low," so as not to fracture the Arab alliance against Iraq! Lay low, lest the sight of us incite anti-Semitism!

How facile, also, the analysis that the heart of the Middle Eastern problem is the plight of the Palestinians. Solve that and all else will fall into place. What a naive conception this! Even if modern Israel had never been created, re-emerging in history out of the ashes of the holocaust, Iran and Iraq would have slaughtered each other, Arab fratricide would have cannibalized Lebanon, Syria would have butchered Christians and trained their artillery on Palestinian refugee camps there as they did, and Iraq would still be seeking to devour its neighbors.

Jewish vulnerability is likewise at its height in Eastern Europe, where the dissolution of totalitarian "order" has brought forth, among its fruits, the bitter grapes of resurgent anti-Semitism. Where are these masses of Russian Jews to go if not to Israel? All other ports are virtually closed to them. . . . America has a ceiling of 40,000 per annum. And who is ready to receive the hounded and harried black Jews of Ethiopia if not Israel? Note, if you will, and note well, that this was the first time in recorded human history that blacks were taken from one continent to another not in chains but in love!

All this is not to say that Israel is above reproach, it clearly is not. Much has happened there that is sobering: ethnic and religious tensions have dangerously heightened. There has been a devaluation of values among Israelis, more materialistic, more

like the values of the rest of the world; and the reality of conquest has functioned like a chronic disease draining vital resources - - most especially the precious resource of morale. We Jews know all of this, are painfully aware of it. The Israelis know this, too. There are qualms and there are doubts and many self-accusing lines can be and are spoken.

Nor is Israel above the critical judgment of others. We Jews will have to learn that non-Jews, and that includes Christian clergy, have the same right to criticize Israel as we do; and that to automatically equate their criticism with anti-Semitism is religious McCarthyism.

But there is a need for greater balance and understanding, and I implore the Christian churches, which clearly cannot afford to carelessly ruffle the feathers of Islam, neither to vent all of their moral indignation against Israel at a time when its actual and psychological vulnerability is at its height.

Cardinal O'Connor's recent article in Catholic N.Y. reflected such a balance and hence was gratefully received by the Jewish community. The Vatican's willingness to establish formal diplomatic relations with Israel would also be of immense help in allaying Jewish fears and helping to heal the Jewish psyche and to overcome its terrible sense of isolation. The Catholic Church's failure to do so buttresses, in Jewish eyes, the ongoing Arab effort to de-legitimize the Jewish state, to wipe its name off the maps, and off our lips, and eventually off the historical record altogether.

Now, I am reconciled to the fact that we will never see fully eye to eye on this issue. Nor is this the sole contemporary matter to cause tension between our communities - - and others will surely arise. Nonetheless, we will be able to pursue our common agenda, if we continue to be forthright with one another, if we will listen to each other not just with the hearing of the ear, but also, and above all, with a hearing of the heart.

In our search for allies, none of us requires, and we Jews certainly do not look for, ideological congruence, for a full agreement on each and every issue before we join forces. We Jews can, for example, disagree with the Roman Catholic Bishops on abortion and birth control but still work with them full heartedly on such burning issues as nuclear disarmament and economic justice. We can disagree with many of our Protestant colleagues on matters affecting the Middle East, but still join them in the quest to achieve racial harmony and to overcome world hunger. Indeed, we Jews are determined to join with them and anyone else to amplify and pursue these issues with all the resources at our command.

Aye, these issues require the united response of the entire religious community, do they not?

Consider our demeanor as a nation: Here we are, the wealthiest country on earth, yet thirty four million of fellow Americans are living in debasing poverty, fully one-sixth of all children, nearly half of all African-American children - - and they have lost the faith that this is a society which gives a damn for them. Aye, Reaganomics has tightened this nation's belt 'round the neck of the poor.

Here we are, with medical technology and savvy that brings the ailing to our hospitals from all over the world yet fully one-third of our own people are without medical insurance, without the ability to receive care from the hospital and medical professionals of their choice.

Here we are, able to project military force to the farthest reaches of the globe, and yet we are unable to safeguard our own city streets.

Here we are, built to the pinnacle of power and substance by the joined labors of countless immigrants, and yet without the morally committed leadership who could lead us beyond the racism and bigotry that disturb the American dream.

As citizens of the world, moreover, the American record is worse than negligent. We participate unthinkingly or callously in what Father Theodore Hesburg calls our "Systemic Geographical Discrimination." Our population, comprising less than 5% of the world population, consumes 25% of its daily calories and energy. Our children confront the frightening prospect of a glutted market for college graduates, even Ph.D.'s, while Southeast Asian children too often never step foot in a school room. Our people are overfed and overweight, but in South America systemic malnutrition is causing mental retardation on a wholesale scale across a generation of newborns.

We are only the 11th among the developed countries in per capita giving of foreign aid - - and apart from military aid, we are dead last. And then we look with pity and despair upon swollen bellies, the shrunken limbs, the hopeless poverty, and the senseless violence - - look with pity and despair, rather than with a sense of deep personal responsibility and t'shuva, with soul-felt repentance.

Yes, consider our demeanor as a nation. And consider also, if you will, how we live in relation to the world, to this planet earth, 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."

No, it isn't carelessness or callousness which makes us do all this! It is greed, that corrosive material of our time. We too must join hands to counter!

The depletion of the rainforests and the daily extinction of still another species is not a function of the "human condition." It is the work of a specific peasant forced to slash and burn for want of his own land. It is the work of a specific cattle rancher selling meat to the chains, those "fast food" spots that burgeon when a culture becomes too insanely pressured to take pause for a blessing before the meal.

The Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska, or the radioactive disaster zone of Hanford, Washington, or the proliferation of every form of cancer in our society, are not the "price of progress." They are the price of profit, the price of corporate thinking about human values, the price of a materialism so corrosive that it can rupture an oil tanker's hull or a nuclear reactor's containment vessel.

Such so-called "political" or "economic" matters are religious in their essence - - and in their solution. The dichotomy between the "secular" and the "religious" between "activism," and "commandment" is diminishing to the point of irrelevance in our world. And we in the religious community should stand together at the forefront of the struggle to integrate politics and the spirit as we turn this century.

It is true, is it not, that Judaism and Christianity are oblique paths that join us not only in the past, but in the future. The arrival of a redeemer is central to the vision of both faiths, and the preparation of the human race to be worthy of that arrival - - to herald with our works of love - - is central to our respective undertakings. Rabbi Jochanan ben Zaccai, the savior of Judaism at the time of the rebellion against Rome, put this matter well:

"If you hold a seedling in your hand and you hear the people shout, 'The Messiah has come, you must plant the seedling first and then come out to greet the Messiah.'"

In a somewhat like vein, the Great Midrash declares:

"All the calculated dates of redemption have passed, and now the matter depends upon repentance and good deeds."

To all this, I would add only that the very spirit of our times is more responsive to religion's message than it was in the past. An ever increasing number of people are experiencing a void in their inner lives and are longing for something of more during worth. Reason has been dethroned from its pedestal as the ultimate source of salvation. Science is no longer seen as the saving grace of humanity. People everywhere are beginning to sense that scientific rationality, unless in constant dialogue with the spirit of God, serves only to multiply and to enlarge the scope of our sins; that as the spirit within us withers, so does everything we build about us.

Thus does the yearning for the sacred grow in our day. We all of us can feel it. The very air we breathe is tense, a wind blows through space, and the tree-tops are astir. Men and women are restless, but not with the restlessness of those who have lost their way in the world and have surrendered to despair, but rather with the hopeful questing of those who want to find a new way and are determined to reach it. It is a searching after newer and truer values, for deeper, more personal meaning, and for a sense of human community that can enlarge the joy of our achievements and lend consolation to our sorrows.

These men and these women are in the grip of a great hunger which, like all "great hungers feeds on itself, growing on what it gets, growing still more on what it fails to get." The prophet Amos spoke of such a hunger when he said:

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

Can you find a more vivid limning of the very body and spirit of our age? Can you paint a more vivid portraiture of the Great Hunger that has seized us? Never before, in recent history, has there been a greater yearning for those ideas and ideals which our synagogue and churches enshrine. Never before has the lack of these ideals so imperilled our very existence.

Let us therefore build our faith structures and strengthen their core!

Let us therefore, Christian and Jew, bestir our members to the task of repairing our hideously fractured world!

Let us lead them to seek the Holy, for they will find God wherever they seek God in truth!

And this above all, let us recapture our own faith, faith that supreme creative function of the human mind. Faith which cries YES in defiance of a thousand voices crying NO, which sustains

love where others hate, which hopes where others despair, which upholds human decency where others yield to an untamed savagery. Yes, that faith which by a magic all its own raises all things out of their native dust and exalts them to the empyrean or lasting worth.

Kein vehi ratzon thus may it be God's will.



The Spiritual Dynamics of "Tikkun Olam"
NFTB Biennial, November 11, 1990
Washington, D.C.

Thank you, Richard, for your all-too-kind introduction.

Thank you even more for your many years of service to Brotherhood and
to the Reform Jewish community.

Your good work has served to advance our common sacred cause,
and we have every reason to be grateful to you.

My congratulations to Alvin Corwin, your newly elected President.
He is no stranger to me, of course...

and what I know and feel concerning him
bodes well for the future of NFTB -- and the Union too.

Let me also seize this moment to express my appreciation of Lewis
Eisenberg.

I like him much, and I admire the many fine qualities of mind and heart
he brings to his endeavors

He is intelligent, industrious, committed,

eager to build NFTB and to bend its doing to be an ever more
effective instrument in the strengthening of
our congregations and our national movement.

May he -- and Brotherhood be successful in these endeavors,
so that we may continue to exalt your name,

I say "continue" to praise you, for although you have determined
to unveil yourself at this convention as a "New" Brotherhood,
your past dedications to our religious community have been
many and substantial.

Quite the contrary, over the years you have made manifold contributions toward the advancement of our work

-- and on every level of our doing.

I am especially grateful for your generous support of our College program,

for your embrace of our efforts to serve the Jewish educational needs of physically and emotionally disadvantaged and for your more recently initiated Corps of Volunteers which seeks to enable our congregants to make Reform Judaism a more serious and meaningful enterprise in their lives.

NFTB pioneered adult Jewish education in our movement.

You were the very first to recognize the need for leadership development; indeed, NFTB has been the seedbed for the nurturing of leadership. Some of our finest congregational and national leaders sprang from your ranks.

I dare not even specify lest I exclude.

Suffice it to say, that their names are honored in our annals and and continue to be remembered in our midst.

Of course your proudest achievement is the Jewish Chautauqua Society.

You were the very first to reach out to the Christian community on the American Jewish scene,

the very first to engage in an organized dialogue with them.

And in the process you created an altogether remarkable educational vehicle, JCS,

the most extensive Jewish educational program of its kind in North America, if not in the world.

Generations of Christian college students have gained a greater appreciation of Jews and Judaism because of this endeavor. And countless generations of Jewish men and women on campus have deepened their knowledge of our spiritual legacy. You have enabled Judaism to come to life in their hearts, to make it true for them, truer than mere preachment, truer than vague recollection, much truer indeed than pride in a heritage which is mere hearsay and not a true possession!

Today of course there are departments of Jewish study at most of our major universities.

But you were the first; you cut the path for the rest.

You were trail blazers,

~~You paved the way for the Lord.~~

"Hol Hakavod," ^Q ~~so they say in Israel.~~

All honor to you and to your work! Thus may it continue.

Now my assigned theme for today is "The Spiritual Dynamics of Tikkun Olam"

-- and I'll be damned if I know what that means!

The word "spiritual" -- though I use it --

is still something of enigma to me.

And if that is a mystery, how can I dissect it,

and analyze it in its parts?

I do know what Tikkun Olam means though,

and I suppose after two days of lectures on variations of this theme, you know its meaning too.

"To repair a fractured world"

^{THIS} It is ^a ~~our~~ leitmotif, a dominant theme in our self-definition as Jews, and especially as Reform Jews.

From its very inception, Reform Judaism has been committed to the notion that the pursuit of justice for all is the one of our quintessential tasks..

This is why the Union maintains a national Commission on Social Action, which encourages and provides a wide range of programmatic support for synagogal activities in this realm.

We have created and continue to sustain a Religious Action Center here in Washington.

[You have heard from its professional leaders, David Sapestein and Lynn Landsberg, and their skilled and devoted associates, and so you have some conception of the Center's worth and the scope of its work.]

Our Center trains temple professionals and lay leaders in this discipline.

It provides our vast constituency with a stream of information concerning issues on the national agenda that demand our response. It bestirs our congregants to political action, in the endeavor to weave the values of Judaism into fabric of this land.

We nurture Black-Jewish relations in a variety of meaningful ways.

We reach out to other groupings as well: to the Hispanic community,
to Catholics and Protestants and Moslems,
to men and women of divergent faiths and even conflicting
theologies,
ever forging coalitions of decency to reach common ends:
to open the eyes of the blind,
to loosen the fetters of the bound
to bring light to those who live in darkness.

Why do we do all this? — ^{QUESTION} THIS I SUPPOSE MY ASSIGNED TITLE BIDS ME
ANSWER — THIS THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL ACTION
JUST Why do we engage in ^{the} work of social action?

To some extent, let it be confessed, we are moved by an enlightened
self interest:

if we don't feel the pain of others

others are not likely to feel our pain

and to stand by our side when we are in need.

More important, we do so in response to the teachings of our faith
which over and again reminds us that as Jews we have not just
ritual but also ethical obligations,
that it does not suffice for us to pray and keep the sabbath
and celebrate the festivals and observe the life cycle rites
of our faith,
but that we must be principled in our personal conduct
and ever seek the peace of the community in which we live.

Even so does the prophet Isaiah exhort us:

"Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom;
give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah...
who has required this from you to trample my courts?
...your New Moons and Sabbaths, and appointed feasts my soul
hateth...I am weary to bear them...for I cannot endure iniquity
along with the solemn assembly...When you spread forth
your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you, yea, when you 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 my eyes...Cease to do evil, learn to do good...
seek justice,,,rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless,
plead for the widow..."

Thus does Isaiah assert the primacy of the ethical in Judaism.

^{OUR FAITH}
In ~~Judaism~~, the morality and religion are inextricably intertwined.
^{AND THIS IS WHY}
Thus, religious action lends a completeness,

a wholeness to our enterprise.

Without it, we would be but a truncated faith.

It certainly 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.
For us, there is no schizophrenic division between the "real world"
and the world of Jewish devotion;
we 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.

But why, you might ask, must ethics be linked to Judaism,
to any religion, for that matter?

Can we not be good for the sake of goodness?

Can we not be moral for morality's sake?

Why must we connect human behavior with divine command?

World history provides us with an answer, for it tells us
of countless reform movements which themselves became corrupt;
of revolutions that were supposed to free men,
but enslaved them instead;
of freedom that abused freedom.

Can we forget the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution
or the farmers slaughtered in the Russian Revolution?

Intentions were good but results were bad

-- because men decided for themselves

what is right and what was wrong...

Ethics without religion is like a cut flower.

Since it has no roots it has no staying power.

Neither does it reproduce itself...

Only a prophetic religion transmits ethics from generation to generation

One must become emotionally attached to ethical behavior.

This is the meaning of Israel's clarion call:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and might."

The love of righteousness comes only with religion.

It is, in fact, the love of God.

To the truly believing Jew, ethics and religion are inseparable.

This, then, is why the Union, why Reform Judaism engages in the work
of social action.

And this is why NFTB, too, should engage itself ever more intensively
in this work,

in its national program, as well as on a congregational level.

After all, it is the foremost task of the synagogue to remind us of
those values which the world makes us forget.

Within its 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, *does it not?*

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

Consider our demeanor as a nation:

Here we are, the wealthiest country on earth;

yet thirty four million of fellow Americans

are living in debasing poverty,

fully one-sixth of all children,

nearly half of all African-American children

-- and they have lost the faith that this is a society which
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and yet without the morally committed leadership, ^{leaders} who could

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It is greed, that corrosive materialism of our time which

we too must counter!

The depletion of the rainforests and the daily extinction of still

another species is not a function of the "human condition."

It is the work of a specific peasant forced to slash and burn

for want of his own land.

It is the work of a specific cattle rancher selling meat to the
chains,

those "fast food" spots that burgeon when a culture becomes

too insanely pressured

to take pause for a blessing before the meal.

The Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska,
or the radioactive disaster zone of Hanford, Washington,
or the proliferation of every form of cancer in our society,
are not the "price of progress."
They are the price of profit,
the price of corporate thinking about human values,
the price of a materialism so corrosive that it can rupture an
oil tanker's hull or a nuclear reactor's containment vessel.
Such so-called "political" or "economic" matters are religious
in their essence -- and in their solution.
The dichotomy between the "secular" and the "religious"
between "activism," and "commandment"
is diminishing to the point of irrelevance in our world.
And we should stand in the forefront of the struggle
to integrate politics and the spirit as we turn this century.
Now, in our concern for the well-being of humankind
we dare not neglect the needs of the Jewish people
Hillel's famous trystich may enshrine the words:
"If I am only for myself, what am I"
But he begins his admonition with the command:
"in eyn ani li, mi li...if I am not for myself who will be for me?!"
The work of social action encompasses Jews as well,
and indeed, the Union's Social Action Commission and its
Religious Action Center have always been in the vanguard of
the struggle to secure our people's safety.

Wherever there is a Jewish community in need,

our help must be forthcoming

Wherever there is a single Jew in danger

-- in whatever continent or country or the remotest corner of our
far-flung world --

there must we find him,

there must we reach out to him,

offring our hands and hearts our very lives.

Never more must it be said of us

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.

This matter applies especially, to our brothers and sisters in Israel.

That modern Jewish state which emerged out of the ashes of the holocaust
is at the gravest risk just now.

Its diplomatic and military situation has been greatly imperilled
by the ^{OUTRAGES} ~~outrageous~~ perpetrated upon Kuwait by Iraq
and by the Palestinian willigness to embrace the murderous
Saddam Hussein as would-be liberator.

Israel and the Jewish people once again are face to face with the
unrelieved animosity of their foes.

Saddam Hussein, a liberator indeed!

For the PLO, it seems, Zionism is a greater demon than chemical warfare.

For the PLO, maximallist ^{dreams} ~~reams~~ have greater currency than maximalist
body counts among Kurds and Iranians and Kuwaitis.

And throughout all this, Israel is being instructed to "lay low,"
so as not to fracture the Arab alliance against Iraq!
Lay low, lest the sight of us incite anti-Semitism!

Jewish vulnerability is likewise at its height in Eastern Europe,
where the dissolution of totalitarian "order" has brought forth
among its fruit, the bitter grapes of resurgent anti-Semitism.

Where are ^{EMBATTLED} these masses of Russian Jews to go to Israel.

One million of ^{he} them have now indicated a desire to flee these
dangers.

All other ports are virtually closed to them...

America has a ceiling of 40,000 per annum *for refugees from Eastern Europe*
And who is ready to receive the hooded and harried black Jews of
Ethiopia, if not Israel?

Note, if you will, and note well, that this is the first time
in all of human history that blacks are taken from one
continent to another not in chains but in love.

Nor is anti-Semitism limited to Eastern Europe, alas...

It has made its re-appearance in the free countries
of the world as well -- and that includes the United States.
During the past year there have been a score incidents involving
the defacement of Reform synagogues and cemeteries.

^fWestern anti-semitism can also be perceived
in that relentless, ruthless double standard
by which the Western media have come to judge Israel.

Most of the world points an accusing finger only at Israel, as if
Israel alone were responsible for the plight of the Palestinians.
and that this plight is at the heart of the Middle Eastern problem.

What nonsense this!

Even if modern Israel had never been created,

Iran and Iraq would have slaughtered each other,

Arab fratricide would have cannibalized Lebanon

Syria would have butchered Christians

and trained their artillery on Palestinian refugee camps,

as they did!"

and Iraq would have devoured its neighbors -

Ah, but the world says: we expect more from Israel...

We judge it by a higher standard,

by the standards of Western morality!

Well, how did and does the West behave:

when the British were in charge of Palestine,
entire villages were razed...
more than 3000 Palestinians were killed
in 1939...109 were hanged....

French conduct during the Algerian war was marked
by indiscriminate violence and systematic use of torture.

and what about Venezuela...
only a year ago when economic riots broke out in that land
300 civilians were killed in one week

and in democratic India...
when the Sikhs rebelled in the Golden Temple and 300 of them
were killed in ONE DAY.

Charles Krauthammer put it well:

6
"the conscious deployment of a double standard
directed at the Jewish State and no other State in the world
the willingness to condemn the Jewish state for things
others are not condemned for
this is not a higher standard.
It is a discriminatory standard.
And discrimination against Jews has a name too.
The word for it is anti-Semitism."

All this is not to say that Israel is above reproach,
It does not absolve us or Israel from moral responsibility.
The Palestinian problem cannot be ignored.
The settlements policy requires strictest scrutiny from this
perspective.

And even understanding Israel's desperate need to defend herself
against terrorism,
we are under no obligation as American Jews to put our 'hechsher'
on excessive force applied to keep a restive Arab
population in check.

Aye. we still have a long ways to go before Israel becomes the
pattern of our ideal vision.

We know this...The Israelis know this too.

There are qualms and there are doubts, and many self-accusing lines
need to be spoken.

But we speak these line ourselves about ourselves.

Let the leaders of no other nations speak them, especially not the
leaders of the Arab world.

Let them be silent for all time to come.

Let them not dare to raise one hand in accusation.

Their hands are drenched in blood comingled with oil.

Come to think of it, let them do what they want.

We will continue to do what we have always done,

dreaming our dreams, laboring for their fulfillment.

We are not about to collapse under the weight of pernicious libel
ot contemptible verbal abuse.

We have suffered far worse and survived.

And so despite the schemings and maledictions of our enemies,

we will continue to extend our stake in Israel

and to defend Jewish rights wherever they are threatened

even while we will continue the work of tikkun olam,

of healing our hideously fractured world,

for therein lies our salvation,

even as it is ^{the} ~~our~~ quintessential task

of those who take pride in calling themselves
Jews.

we will extend our stake in Israel.

~~Yes, we Reform Jews too.~~

~~We will not yield.~~

~~We will stay.~~

~~And we will build.~~

Schindler: Rosh Hashana
Union Temple, Brooklyn.
Rosh Hashana 5750

Once again, my friends we are gathered here at this turning hour
of the year.

Once again, the shrill sharp sounds of the shofar shake us from our
complacency with their demand for a cheshbon hanefesh
for a self-reckoning of the soul.

Once again, we respond as did our forbears through countless generations

How quickly the year has gone by.

Life is a mist...silvery...tremulous;

It appears for a time, then swiftly lifts
and all that is left is memory.

It is good to be here...to feel your presence...

to draw the strength which flows from this companionship.

Yet there is a sorrow intermingling with the joy of our renewed embrace.

Too many who were with us last year are here no more.

They have reached their horizon and are gone out of sight.

We miss them....We lament their passing...

But there is the solace

-- feeble at first but growing stronger in time --

which comes with the gift of memory..

"So long as we live they too shall live,

for they are now a part of us as we remember them."

Now, as those of you who have worshipped here over the years know,
I have made it my habit to devote at least one of my
two high holy day sermons each year to 'inyane d'yoma,'
to events of the day.

My sermon on Yom Kippur, God willing, will be of a more reflective
nature -- unless, of course, some other crisis erupts.

Today, I want to give you a Jewish perspective,
or rather my perspective, of three events
that affected the life of our people during the year just past:
the rescue of Russian Jewry, German Unification,
and, last but not least, the crisis in the Persian Gulf.

I begin with Russian Jewry, and in my musings concerning their
dramatic and massive exodus it occurred to me, that
in all of Jewish history, there have been no more than
ten or so dates that will be remembered as long as there are
Jews to remember them.

Most generations of Jews have lived and have died without ever
witnessing the decisive turns of Jewish history.

Yet within the lifetime of our generation,
those clouds parted not once but twice
and we have seen the turning with our own eyes.

First was the Kingdom of the Night, the Shoah.

Then was the rebirth of the Republic of Hope.

And now there is the Reunion,

the great homecoming of hundreds upon hundreds of thousands
of Jews from the Soviet Union.

For the Jews of Israel the new freedom means the renewal of a dream
that some had supposed was obsolete,
the chance to refresh the authentic purposes of the
Jewish national home.

There are 14 million refugees awash in the world.

Most of them have no place to go.

But the Soviet Jews do have an option.

They can go to Israel.

This is the purpose for which the state was created and which justifies
our every effort to secure its future..

For the Soviet Jews, the new freedom means at last the chance
to build a life far from the quickening curse of anti-Semitism.
Glasnost may have given a greater freedom to the Russian people;
but it also gave license to racists who now feel free to spew
their venom.

Glasnost may have opened the political process.

But after nearly a century of iron, tyrannical rule, there is no
political opposition in most of the Eastern European countries.

The only available challenge to the communist party comes from
ethnic groups: the Lithuanians, the Latvians, the Estonians,
and their like,
and all of them, without exception, have histories of endemic
Jew hatred.

In consequence the nature of the present immigration from Russia
is different from that of the 70s and 80s.

The earlier Soviet immigrants were positively motivated.

They were Zionists.

They wanted to be free to lead Jewish lives.

Today's aliyah is motivated by fright.

It is an escape from looming danger.

But freedom is not free.

To bring masses of Soviet Jews to Israel means to provide housing
schools, jobs.

That task is monumental.

60% of the new arrivals are professionals.

Among the first 100,000 to arrive were

- 150 world class scientists,
- 1,200 mathematicians and physicists
- 6,750 engineers of various kinds
- 1,300 nurses
- 3,000 doctors
- 1,320 dentists

How is Israel to absorb all these, and the 1/4 of a million Russian Jews
expected next year.

Her unemployment rate exceeded 10% even before the influx.

And how is Israel to fund all this absorption.

Fully 50% of its present operating budget is required
for debt service.

Plainly it is our task, as American Jews, to provide the resources that
will translate the dream of freedom into the reality of reunion.

It is unthinkable that the Jewish people will allow this glorious
opportunity to shrivel,
that we will allow ourselves to be remembered
as the generation that had history in its grasp
-- and then let go of it.

For that is what is here at stake:

together it has been given us to write a new chapter of Jewish
history,
to make possible a new beginning,
to bring new life to our people and our dream,
-- the dream of freedom, of peace, of home.

In this Book of Life, it is we who must inscribe our name.

* * *

A brief word about German unification.

About a week ago, a reporter from LeMonde called me from Paris,
to ask me how American Jews are reacting to these developments
and I told him that the response was mixed,
almost generational in its nature.

My mother, who lived through two world wars in her-life time
is certain that history is about to repeat itself,
that a reunited and economically powerfil Germany poses
threat to world peace.

My children, on the other hands, were struck by the the wonder of it all
relieved by the realization that the tearing down of the walls
spelt an end to the hazardous superpower confrontation.

I found myself, and still do, somewhere in the middle between these two views, even as I am of the middle generation.

Intellectually, I am able to accept the inevitability of German unification,

but emotionally I shuddered when I watched TV as the Berlin wall was torn down and I saw the German Parliamentarians in Bonn rising to a man to sing their German national anthem with zeal and zest.

The words were new, but the melody was old and I remembered the earlier version:

"Deutschland, Deutschland Ueber alles, ueber alles in der Welt."

Germany, Germany, supreme in all the world.

It is the singing of this song that made me shiver.

Still, I am somewhat relieved by the knowledge

that the newly united Germany will not be neutral,
that it will be firmly anchored in the European community,
as well as in NATO.

Only that can provide restraint upon its power.

German or you see, neutralism would have been only the first stage of German nationalism.

WWII and the 45 years since then may have eliminated Germany's imperial urges;

yet left to itself, to its excitement about itself,
and to its almost chilling economic force,

Germany would almost certainly have recovered some of its previous pre-Adenauer notions about its manifest destiny.

History suggests that German power cannot be restrained by a balance of other powers.

That always led to war.

And there are, in any event, no other powers in Europe to act as balance

No, Europe itself must be the balance

But it cannot be that balance without its relationship to American power.

That is the critical point, and this is why I am satisfied that the united Germany will not be neutral but firmly anchored in the European community and NATO.

* * *

And now to the crisis in the Persian Gulf,
and what a sharp reversal in mood it has been
since last we were assembled.

Indeed, our Jewish year began with hope:
walls crumbled, as I have said;
the deadly clutch in which the superpowers were locked had loosened
and the threat of a nuclear holocaust seemed to recede.

But only for a time.

The guns of August changed all that.

Their thunder reminded us that aggression still menaces humankind
and that free nations must be ready to resist it.

If anything, the peril is greater than it was before the older world
balance turned.

Saddam Hussein commands a powerful military machine.

His weaponry is replete with conventional and not-so-conventional arms and he has demonstrated his readiness to wield them.

The world simply will not be safe so long as Iraq has the kind of military arsenal that Hussein has built up.

Just think of what our quandary would be today had not Israel disrupted Iraq's quest for nuclear capability ten years ago.

The civilized world, led by the United States

must, therefore, seek more than Hussein's withdrawal from Kuwait, or even his toppling from power.

It must do what it can to contain Iraq's terrifying military capability. That goal makes a diplomatic solution more remote, and the outbreak of war more likely.

Israel, of course, is at special risk.

Just as anti-Semitism was the cement that bound the Nazi conspiracy, so does the Iraqi leader seek to unite the Arab world with his anti-Israel rhetoric, his calls for a holy war.

Israel is further imperiled by the projected sale of American arms to Saudi Arabia -- 20 billion dollars of sophisticated weaponry -- a sale of unprecedented magnitude.

America asserts that it will not fuel the arms race, especially in the Middle East.

Does the Saudi arms sale serve such an end?

America has always promised Israel that it would maintain her qualitative edge.

How can it possibly do so after such a massive sale.

And who is the guarantee that these technologically superior arms will not fall into more radical Arab hands than are the Saudis of today! It has happened before

- the AWACS sent to the Shah subsequently became available to Khumeini --
- American state-of-the art tanks and planes sold to Kuwait are now in the hands of Hussein's storm troopers.

Israel is at risk militarily, but there is also a diplomatic risk to the Jewish State now that the U.S. has access to bases in ME countries other than Israel.

Israel has been asked to keep a low profile,

whilst America draws closer to other Arab states.

That conveys the notion to one and all that Israel

is a hindrance and not a help, a burden rather than an asset.

That is a flawed analysis, to be sure.

But the present diplomatic constellation is scarcely favorable.

A weakening of US Israel ties could well ensue.

Either way, Israel stands to lose:

if America wins, it will be inclined to reward the cooperative Arab States...

but if America fails to win, that is to say, if it buys some face saving compromise, Israel will have to face Iraqi power by itself.

All these are long term dangers, of course.

From the more immediate perspective, some of the tension marring US Israel relations of late have been relieved.

Israel's intelligence proved more astute than our own.
Her widely ignored warnings about Iraq's aggressive designs
were validated,

even as was her strategic analysis that the Palestinian issue
cannot be resolved apart from a wider accord with the
Arab nations.

Here, incidentally, is the one shaft of light

in an otherwise gloomy sky:

that the menace of Iraqi militancy and the awareness of their
own vulnerability will impel some more of the Arab states
to join Egypt in reaching an understanding,
if not de jure then at least de facto, with Israel.

Logic and reason call for a regional alliance embracing the Saudis,
Jordan, Egypt, even Syria, and Israel

-- if only the Middle East were more amenable to logic and reason.
But the opportunity, the other side of the coin of crisis,
is indisputably there.

A requisite for such an accord is Israel's readiness to reach an
agreement with the Palestinians.

The Palestinian issue simply will not go away,
and the longer the strife persists,

the more intractable its resolution becomes.

I know full that the peace process once initiated will perforce
result in a territorial compromise.

Still, I favor it, not just on moral but also on more pragmatic grounds.

The maintaining of the status quo by force is dangerous
from a security point of view.

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

Israeli Artabs, once the most patriotic of citizens have been
radicalized, and they will remain a timebomb inside Israel
so long as this issue is unresolved.

The enemy is in the land.

It is rather like a boat.

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

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

It is noteworthy to mention in this context that that infamous
double standard by which the world judges Israel is
operative once again.

Saddam Hussein sets the tune.

"How can the Western World insist that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait,
even while it countenance Israeli occupation of the Westbank."

So bellows Hussein, and, alas, the Pat Buchanans and Evans and Novaks
of America re-echo his absurd analogies.

It is an outrageous analogy.

The two situations are not at all alike.

Iraq invaded and raped Kuwait in a naked act of aggression.

Israel did not invade the Westbank in 1967.

Quite the contrary.

It pleaded with King Hussein to stay his hand,
but duped by Nasser, Jordan's legions invaded Israel and lost
the Westbank in consequence.

Israel's seizure of the Westbank is analogous rather to Poland's
occupation and annexation of German territories,
Germany invaded Poland in 39 as you will recall.
The Soviet army threw the Nazis back and in the process
Poland occupied a portion of East Germany..

Now, is anyone in the free world demanding that these territories
be retruned to Germany?

Of course not! Quite the oppsoite is true!

Cahncellor Kohl had to abjure any claims to those Polish-held
once German lands before the Allies would give him the green light
to unify the two Germanys.

Ah, the double standard,

but when confronted with this charge the world always says:
we expect so much more from Israel...
we hold it to a a higher standard...

Unfortunately, it is a standard far higher than that to which
the rest of the world adheres and that includes the Western
civilized nations.

When the British were in charge of Palestine, entire villages were razed
more than 3000 Palestinians were killed
in 1939 alone over 109 were hanged....
and now Prime Minister Thatcher denounces Israel
for deporting political activists.

French conduct during the Algerian war was marked for its
indiscriminate violence and systematic use of torture.

And the Algerian rebels did not have it in their charter to conquer
France as do the Palestinians Israel.

Charles Krauthammer put it well

"The conscious deployment of a double standard
directed at the Jewish State and no other State in the world
the willingness to condemn the Jewish state for things
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Israel from moral responsibility.

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The settlements policy requires strictest scrutiny from this
perspective.

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need to be spoken.

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We are not about to collapse under the weight of pernicious libel
ot contemptible verbal abuse.

We have suffered far worse and survived.

And so agaiunst the schemings and the maledicions of our enemies,
we will extend our stake in Israel.

Yes, we Reform Jews too.

We will not yield.

We will stay.

And we will build.



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER • UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
PRESIDENT 838 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021 (212) 249-0100

In Memory of Rabbi Byron T. Rubenstein

1916 - 1990

I am writing these lines from Jerusalem. Byron loved this city, this land, this people.

I regret that time and distance do not permit me to be at Temple Israel, and to join in this final tribute to our rabbi, my dear friend, to whom I felt bound soul to soul as David was to Jonathan.

Our hearts go out to Sue and their children. They loved Byron deeply. They were wonderful to him in life. They have the comfort which comes from the knowledge that Byron knew this to the last moment and that their love was fully requited. They also can draw a measure of consolation from our assurance that their pain is shared by many, many others, by all who knew and loved him too.

Byron was an extraordinary rabbi. He was endowed with a keen mind, a quick wit, and a caring heart. He was always able to transmit his ideas beautifully articulated in the spoken word and the written word, too, for he was a poet of the soul. This above all, Byron was what he wanted us all to be - a proud Jew, a champion of justice, and an altogether decent human being.

Let us walk in his way. This will be our finest tribute. For we cannot honor our rabbi by weeping or wailing or watering his grave with our tears. We will honor him best when we live as he desired, when we cherish causes he sustained, when we continue to embrace those whom he loved in life.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

July 6, 1990
13 Tammuz 5750

*This
is case someone
asks for it.*

Kelman Sh'loshim
Park Avenue Synagogue
August 1, 1990

~~With heavy hearts we gather here this day
to bid still another word of farewell to Wolfe Kelman
who meant so very much to all of us.
Holy halls once again are filled with the plaintive strains of sorrow,
for a chord is loosed
the silver chain is broken
tender ties of love and friendship have been torn asunder
by relentless death.~~

Jewish tradition was wise in ordaining the custom of sh'loshim.
It gives those of us who for good reason, could not be here for
Wolfe's funeral ^{the chance} to show that we really care.
It gives all of us an opportunity to give renewed expression to
our grief, which has not lessened with the passing days.

Wolfe was entirely too young when he died.

His was an uncommonly productive life,

~~magnificently~~ rich in accomplishment.

He was a proud Jew, a valuable human being.

The feeling persists that he had so much more to give
and we to receive.

And so we continue mourn and we stand bereft.

Our hearts go out to Jackie, to Abby and Nami and Levi,
to all the other members of their close-knit family.

There is an emptiness, a yawning void at the center
of their lives now, and there is precious little
that we can say to ease their pain.

Still, we can offer them that 'chatzi nechama',
that measure of consolation that comes with the knowledge
that they do not sorrow alone.

Many others feel an aching emptiness this day.
After all, Wolfe was one of the leaders of our generation.
And so an entire community's soul has been lacerated.
His death is widely felt.
It blights the whole of the house of Israel.

I admired Wolfe for ^{his} many fine qualities of heart and mind,
foremost among them, for the ample scope of his learning..

He was well versed in our literary tradition,

in all of its disparate strands.

Yet he carried that knowledge lightly.

There was no contumely about him

He did not look down on those who knew less.

He tried to lift them up to higher levels of understanding.

This is precisely what made him such a good teacher.

He respected those he taught.

He mesmerized the young and not so young.

With hands in motion and eyes dancing,

he was the consummate master, blending the talents of maggid
and rebbe.

Thus, he gave us that which by a teacher must be held most dear,
disciples, those who are willing to follow his way,
look at his children and see!

I admired Wolfe also for his essential liberalism,
his refusal to cling to any fixed ideas,
his ability to see the perspective of others,
and to respect their right to those perspectives,
even when his conclusions diverged from theirs.

This is what made him such a good leader
-- of Boards, and Commissions, of a movement, of our community.
He always found a way to bridge divergences however sharp,
and to move the work forward.

I never heard him speak ill of another.
Somehow his understanding was wide enough to embrace even
those who sought to stifle him.

This above all, did I admire in Wolfe:
His ahavat yisrael, his abounding love for the Jewish people.
He cared for us whatever the label by which we chose
to define ourselves:
orthodox, conservative, reform
chossid, misnagid,
nationalist, secularist , what have you.

Somehow, he recognized the essential Jewishness within us
and gathered us all in his warm embrace.

Teacher, preacher, good friend, leader of his people,
soul and center of his own family
-- that was Wolfe Kelman.

And this too, a model, an image-ideal,
the "observed of all observers."

He taught us not only as books enable but by example.
When adversity beset him, he faced it with courage and
with faith, even with gentle humor.

And thus he taught us, not only how to live,
but how to suffer and, finally, how to die.

In all truth, a bright and shining star has been torn
from the firmament of our lives,
and our lives are the darker because of it.
May his memory brighten our way as did his life.

Schindler:Roth Tribute
June 15, 1990

It is a privilege which I greatly appreciate to participate
in the solemn and yet joyous ceremonies of this evening
which serve as a tribute to Harry Roth on the eve of his
retirement from the active leadership of Eamnuel Congregation.

There is good reason for me to be here,
After all, I officiated at his installation, in 1962.
For once, in my life, I did something right.
Of course, it wasn't I who did anything.
It was Harry who did it all, with Lillian at his side.
Chai years, eighteen years of service --
to this community, and to the Jewish people.
An altogether remarkable attainment.
Kol Hakavod...all honor to him.

It would be presumptuous of me to tell you what the impact
Harry had on this congregation and the lives of its members.
That you know so much better yourself.
After all, it is a relationship which not only spanned the decades
but also plumbed the depths of being,
cemented as it was by tears of joy and sorrow alike.

I dare say that many varied scenes flash before your minds eyes
even now and Harry is central to them all,

Harry as teacher,
Harry as exemplar,
Harry as a prod to the conscience,
Harry as a consoler, a healer of bruised souls.
His countless deeds of lovingkindness
many of them hidden, known only to giver and receiver
and all the more precious for their tender privacy
cannot ever be encompassed by words
certainly by no words of mine.

They belong to the realm of the infinite where only unspoken feelings
-- soaring songs without words -- abide.

Harry never saw his responsibilities limited by the walls
of this congregation.

He continuously reached out, to serve the larger community
of which this congregation is a part.

He labored for countless institutions of human love in Lawrence.

He reached out to all in need:

the sick, the homeless, the lonely...

he heard their crying and he responded.

The great Chassidic master, Mosh Leib of Sassov once said:

a peasant taught me the true meaning of love...

I heard him talking, in an inn, drinking with a companion,

and the peasant turned to him and said:

etc

Harry was a true friend to the sons and daughters of this congregation,
and to many others as well,
men and women of other races and creeds,
of differing and even divergent theologies,
it did not matter...

Harry felt their pain.

He was their friend.

Always he brought many rich gifts of mind and spirit to his endeavors:
intelligence,
industry,
integrity,
yes, this above all, integrity.

He is, what he wants others to be.

He taught not just by precept, but by example too.

This is precisely why he was and is so effective,
for most people internalize their values by identification
with the ego ideal.

They follow the teacher who is, not just the one who
who only persuades with his lips.

Barzel b'varzel yochad...

Iron sharpeneth iron...

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

The words of mishle, of the books of proverbs are re-echoed in the
in the poetry of a more modern spiritual guide,
in fact one who lived not far from here...

I speak of Emerson, and this is what he wrote:

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

Now, I keep speaking of Harry, but of course I mean Lillian as well,
for the two are really one.

She is a true 'ezer k'negdo,' his soul mate, his companion of the
spirit.

Together Harry and Lillian walked the way of life these many
years,

always in perfect harmony with one another,
drinking from one cup of life

--when it ran bitter, when it ran sweet --
giving true meaning to the words: husband, wife, and marriage.

May they both be granted many more years of life and joy,
and above all of creative activity --
not just for their sake, but for the sake of that cause
which binds us in sacred union.

Now the rabbis of old had a saying that an occasion such as this
should not be devoted to words of praise alone.

Mere sentiment melts away, they taught

whilst a truth conveyed remains engraved on the mind forever.

In casting about for a subject appropriate for an occasion such as this
I finally determined to speak to you about Israel.

It is the land to which our lives as Jews are pledged.

It is a land which always allured your rabbi.

Did he not lead more missions to Israel, than any other rabbi
in this country.

In any event, this subject is uppermost in my mind these days,
as it must be in yours, and we might as well confront it.

The last several months have been particularly painful,
in this regard, have they not?

the breakup of the unity government...it's abject failure
to move the country forward

the undignified haggling for political power...

Peres promising money and mistries ot woe the orthodox

Shamir putting 1,8 million dollars into escrow to
secure the support of Moday and his liberals

A senile old rabbi -- a single voice within a miniscule
party - aborting Labor's efforts to form a gvt

He in turn aided by a Rabbi from Brooklyn
who refuses to set his foot in Israel
yet still presumes to dictate its destiny

Religious Parties that do not even recognize the Jewish state
but nonetheless are willing to accept its beneficences,
parties who reject political dialogue
even while their sons are sitting in yeshivas,
exempt from army service should a war break out

Oh yes, David Levy and Shamir surreptitiously channeling
government funds to help extremists settle in the Christian
part of the Old City...

That was a provocative act which served only to add wood
to the axes of Israel's enemies and make enemies of her
friends

And so we American Jews are greatly discomfited.

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.

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

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

That should be so for all of us.

Indeed, we have no right or reason to turn our back on Israel.

It has fulfilled our expectations in ample measure

and we have no just cause for alienation.

Remember, if you will, those several reasons why Israel was created.

It came into being soon after World War II and Jews fought for its

establishment impelled essentially by a threefold dream.

To begin with we wanted a state of our own,

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

After all, our millenia-long persecution had just reached the apex of

its unfoldment when Hitler carried out his final solution and 1/3rd

of our people were butchered in his charnel houses.

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

That particular dream was fulfilled was it not?

Israel has become a thriving state

in which Jews have become the masters of their destiny

They can defend Jewish lives and rights within and sometimes even

without its boundaries:

remember Entebbe, if you will!

Roumania...Russian Jewry movement...

Soviet Union ... Jews in remote Centers ... Israelis there

The second reason impelling the struggle for Israel's establishment was

the Jewish people's need for a haven of refuge.

We were, after all the first boat people.

Hounded and harried over the face of the earth, all ports were
shut to us...no one would let us enter.

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

This vision too was fulfilled, in more than ample measure.

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

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

The story of their rescue is heroic.

Members of the Mossad stole into that Marxist dictatorship and
little carried our Jewish brethren and sisters to safety.

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

In like manner who is making all those arrangement to bring the Russian
Jews out...

when Russia refused rto implement its promise of direct flight
someone had to find new routes of exist...

well 11 new such routes have beenestablished...

by the Israeli....and they are with the Russian Jews
guarding them, caring from them from the moment of their
departure to the arrival in Israel

Now the third dream impelling the Jewish people to establish Israel
was the most impossible dream of all.

We hoped for the creation of a state that would be the fulfillment
of our ideal vision,

a society whose every deed is measured by the yardstick of an
exemplary justice,

a swordless state where the use of force would be eschewed.

Our third dream has not come to full realization.

Much has happened that is sobering:

ethnic and religious tensions have dangerously heightened;

there has been a devaluation of values among Israelis,

rest of the world;

and the reality of conquest has functioned like a chronic disease

draining vital resources -- most especially the precious

resource of morale.

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

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

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

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

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

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

No one was happy that this was so...

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

[Golda Meir statement...]

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

Two and a half out of three dreams,
Two hits and a walk...not bad in any man's league.

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

No, we need not turn our back, or hang our heads in embarrassment,
especially once we compare Israel's moral temperature
with that of other nations in the world and Middle East.

Most of the world points an accusing finger only at Israel, as if Israel alone were responsible for the plight of the Palestinians. it was not -- the Arab nations states are equally indeffernet to their fate...what drives them is not their love for the Palestinians, but their hatred of the Jews.

Remember that Hussein and Assad alone combined to kill tens of thousand tens of thousands of Palestinians. Even now Syruian guns are trained against them in the Lebanon.

Ah but world says: we expect more from Israel...

We judge it by the stabndards of the West...

How did the West behave:

when the British were in charge of Palestine,
entire villages were razed...
more than 3000 Palestinians were killed
in 1939...109 were hanged....

French conduct during the Algerian war was marked for its
indiscriminate violence and systematic use of torture.

and what about Venezuela...
only a year ago when economic riots broke out in that land
300 civilians were killed in one week

and in democratic India...
when the Sikhs rebelled in the Golden Temple and 300 of them
were killed in ONE DAY.

Charles Krauthammer put it well

"he conscious deployment of a doubkle standard
directed at the Jewish State and no other State in the world
the willingness to condemn the Jewish state for things
others are not condemned for
this is not a higher standard.
It is a discriminatory standard.
And discrimination against Jews has a name too.
The word for it is anti-Semitism."

All this, as we have already indicated, does not absolve us or
Israel from moral responsibility.

The Palestinian problem cannot be ignored.

The settlements policy requires strictest scrutiny from this
perspective.

And even understanding Israel's desperate need to defend herself
against terrorism,

we are under no obligation as American Jews to put our 'hechsher'
on excessive force applied to keep a restive Arab
population in check.

Aye. we still have a long ways to go before Israel becomes the
pattern of our ideal vision.

We know this...The Israelis know this too.

There are qualms and there are doubts, and many self-accusing lines
need to be spoken.

But we speak these line ourselves about ourselves.

Let the leaders of no other nations speak them, especially not the
leaders of the Arab world.

Let them be silent for all time to come.

Let them not dare to raise one hand in accusation.

Their hands are drenched in blood comingled with oil.

Come to think of it, let them do what they want.

We will continue to do what we have always done,
dreaming our dreams, laboring for their fulfillment.

We are not about to collapse under the weight of pernicious libel
ot contemptioble verbal abuse.

We have suffered far worse and survived.

And so agaiunst the schemings and the maledicions of our enemies,
we will extend our stake in Israel.

Yes, we Reform Jews too.

We will not yield.

We will stay.

And we will build.

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

HAMILTON COLLEGE, CLINTON, NY

MAY 19, 1990

It is a privilege which I greatly appreciate, to be here and to participate in the joyous ceremonies of this commencement hour. Joyous because it is in the nature of a release, some of you may even think of this moment as a release from a kind of prison. George Bernard Shaw called it that, a prison even "more cruel than a prison," for, as he put it,

"In a prison, at least, you are not forced to read books written by the wardens."

The passing years will mellow your judgment, as it did mine, once you begin to reap the abundant harvest planted in your minds and hearts within these hallowed halls. In any event, I take great pride in the fact that by granting me an honorary degree, the President, my good friend, Hank Payne, and the faculty of this school have made me your fellow alumnus.

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

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

My musings about hand gestures led me to remember an ancient rabbinic saying which sharpens a paradox of life that merits being brought to your awareness at this hour. I speak of life's self-contradictory demand which enjoins us to cling to its many gifts even while it ordains their eventual relinquishment. The rabbis of old put it this way:

"A man comes into this world with his fist clenched,
but when he dies, his hand is open."

We begin by grasping, ultimately we must renounce, and the art of living is to know when to hold fast and when to let go.

* * * *

Surely we ought to hold fast to life, for it is wondrous, full of a grandeur and of worth, full of a beauty that breaks through every pore of God's own earth. We know that this is so, that life is passing wonderful. But all too often we recognize this truth only in our backward glance when we remember what was, and then suddenly realize that it is no more. We remember a beauty that faded, a love that waned. But we remember with far greater

pain that we did not see that beauty when it flowered, that we failed to respond with love to love when it was tendered.

A recent experience re-taught me this truth. It happened a week or so after I was hospitalized following a rather severe heart-attack. I had been in the intensive care unit for long days and nights. It was not a pleasant place. My own pains and fears aside, its noises were not restful to the ear: the running feet of doctors and nurses, the creaking of machines wheeled in for some emergency, and moans and groans and cries of pain, and on two occasions during those days, the dances and the rattling of death, and then the weeping of the suddenly bereaved.

About a week after I arrived, I had to have some tests, but the required machines were located in a building at the opposite end of the hospital campus. So I had to be wheeled across the courtyard on a gurney. As we emerged from our unit - - the sunlight hit me.

That's all there was to my experience. Just the light of the sun. And yet how beautiful it was - - how warming, how sparkling, how brilliant! And then I looked about me to see whether anyone else relished the sun's golden glow. But men and women and children were hurrying to and fro, most of them with their eyes fixed on the ground seemingly heedless of all the glory about them.

Then I remembered how often I, too, had been indifferent to the grandeur of each day, too preoccupied with petty and sometimes even mean concerns to respond to the splendor of it all. The insight gleaned from that experience is really as commonplace as was the experience itself: life's gifts are precious - but we are too heedless of them.

Thornton Wilder makes this point in one of his magnificent creations, his immortal "Our Town." In this play - - as many of you will recall - - a young woman who died in childbirth is allowed to return to earth for just one day. She chooses her sixteenth birthday as the day she would like to re-live. But as she comes upon the scene so familiar to her, she finds that everyone is far too busy to relish the day's wonder. And she cries out:

"Momma, Pappa, lets look at one another while yet we may."
But nobody looks and nobody listens, and all of the business of life goes on.

Saddened by it all, she begs to be taken back, and these are her words of farewell.

"Good-bye Momma, good-bye Pappa, good-bye Grovers Corners.
Good-bye to clocks ticking, and hot coffee and newly ironed dresses . . .
and lying down and getting up again.

On earth you are far too wonderful for anyone to realize you."

She turns to the stage manager and asks:

"Tell me, does anyone on earth ever realize life while he lives it . . . every, every minute?"

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

And then she speaks her final words:

"That's all human beings are, blind people . . . "

Is not this the malady that afflicts us. We are blind - blind to so much of the beauty which abounds in our world. We walk about in a cloud of ignorance. We trample on the feelings of those who love us. We spend and waste time as though we had a million years to live, always at the mercy of one self-centered passion after another.

How heedless we often are of our good until it is too late. Like birds whose beauty is concealed until their plumes are spread against the sky, our blessings brighten only as they take their flight.

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

Cling to life with all your soul and might, while yet ye may.
Hold fast to life while yet ye may.

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

This is not as easy a lesson to learn and to internalize, especially when we are young, for when we are young we think that the world is ours to command, that whatever we desire with the full force of our passionate being can, nay will be ours. Ah, but then life moves along to confront us with its grim realities, and slowly but surely this second truth dawns upon us. Life not only offers us gifts, it also makes us suffer losses and we must learn to accept them.

In a sense, I suppose, this very moment in your lives involves a loss. a contemporary humorist once described college as a place
"that keeps you warm between high school and an early marriage."

Well, you must leave the warmth of this place, its security, to go out into a colder world, and embark on a life of your own.

Nor will this be the first loss you suffered or will suffer. At every stage of our life we sustain losses - - and grow in the

process. Why we even begin our independent lives only once we emerge from the womb and lose its protective shelter. Then we leave our mothers and fathers and our childhood homes. We enter a progression of schools and leave them. We get married and have children and then have to let them go, even as, in a sense, your parents are losing you today. We confront the death of our parents and our spouses. We must renounce our childhood dreams and accept the fact that life will not allow us to realize them. We must face the gradual or not so gradual waning of our own strength. And ultimately we must confront the inevitability of our own demise, losing ourselves as it were, all that we were or dreamed to be.

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

When Rabbi Bunam, renowned Chassidic master, was lying on his death bed, his wife wept bitterly, whereupon he reproached her saying: "Don't you know that life is given to us merely that we might learn how to die." Life is the great teacher in the art of renunciation. To heed this truth is not only just and right. It is the very gate of wisdom.

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

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

Shakespeare was wrong. The good is not interred with our bones. The beauty that we fashion cannot be dimmed by death. The love we give in life lives on long after we are gone, to bless the lives of others. When Chanayo ben Teradyon, noblest of Jewish martyrs, was burned at the stake wrapped in a Scroll of the Law, his pupils who witnessed his terrible agony 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 is with us. Our flesh may perish, our hands will wither, but that which they create in beauty and goodness and truth, lives on for all time to come.

If my baccalaureate address must have its message, then let it be this:

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

Look about you and see:

Add love to a house and you have a home.

Add righteousness to a city and you have a community.

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

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

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

Add justice to the far flung round of human endeavor and you have civilization.

Put them all together, exalt them above their present imperfections, add to them the vision of humankind redeemed, forever free of need and strife, and you have the Temple of the Future, the kind of future we dream you to have - - a future lighted with the radiant colors of hope.

file

Joint Brotherhood Meeting
Temple Emanuel - Central Synagogue
May 10, 1990

It is good to be here, at this dinner which united the Brotherhoods
of Central Synagogue and Temple Emanuel.

Brotherhoods play an important role, both locally and nationally.

On a congregational level, they offer an opportunity for the
development and exercise of leadership

and they contribute greatly toward the sustenance of an infinite
variety of Temple Program.

Nationally, they have gained just praise and renown for their

sponsorship and support of the Jewish Chautauqua Society

our country's largest university of Jewish studies,

which brings knowledge of Jews and Judaism to Jews

and non-Jews in countless communities

through the length and breadth of this great land

and thus it was one of the strong forces which helped American Jewry

gain its present high state on the American scene.

Brotherhoods merit support...their work merits high praise indeed.

I appreciate the presence of my colleagues of the rabbinate here...etc.

Now Mr. Schrank, in his letter of invitation,

suggested that I talk to you about the Future of Reform Judaism.

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, 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 despite some slight increase in urban centers, and certainly a
greater visibility, demographic studies show that no more
ten to twelve percent of American Jews
now identify themselves with that more traditional stream
of Judaism.

Nonetheles, all available studies both national and communal attest that Reform Judaism has emerged as as the eminently predominant synagogue movment 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 comunity 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 gehttoes.

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 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,
willing to innovate and to adjust tradition to contemporary life.

Now, this does not mean that we forget about the past,
that we reject it in its entirety.

Were we to do so, we would become but a sect,
a religious community outside the framework of Judaism.

In making our decision for the present we must begin with the past,
we must enter into a dialogue with tradition,
preserve it whenever we can
but when changes in contemporary life make it necessary,
we have the daring to depart from the past.

In other words, we accord halacha a vote, but not a veto.

Now, this process of a dialogue with tradition demands that we be
something more than just admirers of Judaism's literary tradition.
We must have more than just a passing acquaintance with its substance.
This is why Jewish education must remain a priority of a
synagogue's concern.

And why I am glad that so many Reform congregations throughout the land
have undertaken to develop day schools in their temples
or communities.

Let us admit it:

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

Look at the unvarnished reality and see:

most of the young people whom we encounter in our religious schools
and camps and youth groups are Jewishly disadvantaged.

Their growth as Jews has been stunted by the assimilation of the
past two generations of American Jews and its accompanying
embarrassment and uncertainty,
Their Jewish maturing has been stunted also by our own movement's
readiness to develop a social conscience in our children and be
content to call that "Jewish identity,"
our willigness to sum up the whole Torah, as did Hillel,
with words about kindness to our neighbors,
but without adding his injunction to "go and study."

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

Be that as it may, Reform Judaism's conception of Judaism as a
dynamic faith demands that we be knowledgable Jews
and rear our children to be yodei sefer,
that we make them familar with our literary tradition.

There is an concomitant challenge inherent in all this:

It is the steeting of our determination to contine the process
of change,

our steadfast refusal to be frightened by those who counsel us
to retreat from some of our recent innovation

such as the outreach to the intermarried,

and the principle of patrilineality,

lest by retaining these changes we endanger Jewish unity.

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
hyoper-rationalism too sterile for a vibrant religious life.

But I favor the introduction of these traditions for their intrinsic
worth and not 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 forbears 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.

These then are the first two challenges to the Reform Synagogue:

to immerse ourselves in the teachings of the past, even as we
uphold and 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 another challenge to our religious community,
to make certain that our family of congregations will be and
remain an equal opportunity employer.

Social activism is another hallmark of Reform,
our loyalty to the prophetic spirit of Judaism.

Our far flung religious action program, locally, regionally and nationally
has 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.
Social Action 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 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 individuals we have helped,
and regained for our people.
It must be measured by the impact which we have had on the larger
American Jewish community.

Indeed, our success 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 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.

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.

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.

These then, my friends, are the reasons I perceive as having contribute
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
that our congregants will 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 limning of the very body and spirit
of our age?

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

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

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!

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Commencement Address
Hamilton College, *Clermont N.Y.*
May 19, 1990

R It is a privilege which I greatly appreciate to be here and to participate in the joyous ceremonies of this commencement hour, joyous because it is in the nature of a release, some of you may even think of this moment as a release from a kind of prison.

George Bernard Shaw called ^{it that, a prison} college even "more cruel than a prison" for, as he put it,

"In a prison, at least, you are not forced to read books written by the warders."

The passing years will mellow your judgment, as it did mine, once you begin to reap the abundant harvest planted in your minds and hearts within these hallowed halls.

In any event, I take great pride in the fact that by granting me ^{MY GOOD FRIEND HANK PAYNE} and honorary degree, the President and Faculty of this school have made me your fellow alumnus. *HANK PAYNE*

R In musing about what I was to say to you, it occurred to me that for all the fine words that attend our most significant life ceremonies, there is nearly always a hand gesture that marks the actual moment of transformation and passage.

At a wedding it is the exchange of rings.

At a funeral it is the first handful of dirt thrown upon the casket; mourning truly begins with that gesture of finality.

At birth it is the slap on the behind that brings forth the newborn's first, gasping cry.

R And at a college graduation?

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

R My musings about hand gestures led me to remember an ancient rabbinic
saying which sharpens a paradox of life that merits being
brought to your awareness at this hour.

I speak of life's self-contradictory demand which enjoins us to cling
to its many gifts even while it ordains their eventual
relinquishment.

The rabbis of old put it this way:

"a man comes into this world with his fist clenched,
but when he dies, his hand is open."

We begin by grasping, ultimately we must renounce,
and the art of living is to know
when to hold fast and when to let go.

* * *

R Surely we ought to hold fast to life, for it is wondrous,
full of a grandeur and a worth,
full of a beauty that breaks through every pore of God's
own earth.

We know that this is so, that life is passing wonderful,
but all too often we recognize this truth only in our backward
glance when we remember what was and then suddenly
realize that it is no more.
We remember a beauty that faded, a love that waned.
But we remember with far greater pain
that we did not see that beauty when it flowered,
that we failed to respond with love to love when it was tendered.

R A recent experience re-taught me this truth.
It happened a week or so after I was hospitalized following a rather
severe heart-attack.

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

My own pains and fears aside, its noises were not restful to the ear:
the running feet of doctors and nurses,
the creaking of machines wheeled in for some emergency,
and moans and groans and cries of pain,
and on two occasions during those days the dances and the rattling
of death, and then the weeping of the suddenly bereaved.

R About a week after I arrived, I had to have some tests,
but the required machines were located in a building at
the opposite end of the hospital campus
and so I had to be wheeled ~~ac~~ross the courtyard on a gurney.
And as we emerged from our unit -- the sunlight hit me.

Q That's all there was to my experience.

Just the light of the sun.

And yet how beautiful it was -- how warming, how sparkling,
how brilliant!

And then I looked about me to see whether anyone else
relished the sun's golden glow,
but men and women and children were hurrying to and fro,
most of them with their eyes fixed on the ground
seemingly heedless of all the glory about them.

R And then I remembered how often I too had been indifferent to the
grandeur of each day,
too preoccupied with petty and sometimes even mean concerns
to respond to the splendor of it all.

The insight gleaned from that experience is really as commonplace
as was the experience itself:

life's gifts are precious - but we are too heedless of them.

U Thornton Wilder makes this point in one of his magnificent creations,
his immortal "Our Town."

In this play -- as many of you will recall --

a young woman who died in childbirth is allowed to return to
earth for just one day.

She chooses her sixteenth birthday as the day she would like to re-live
But as she comes upon the scene so familiar to her she finds that
everyone is far too busy to relish the day's wonder.

And so she cries out:

"Momma, Pappa, lets look at one another while yet we may."

But nobody looks and nobody listens and all of the business of life goes on.

Saddened by it all, she begs to be taken back and these are her words of farewell.

"Good-bye Momma, good-bye Pappa, good-bye Grovers Corners
Good-bye to clocks ticking, and hot coffee and newly
ironed dresses...
and lying down and getting up again.
On earth you are far too wonderful for anyone to realize you."

She turns to the stage manager and asks:

"Tell me, does anyone on earth ever realize life while he lives it...every, every minute?"

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

And then she speaks her final words:

"That's all human beings are, blind people..."

Is not this the malady that afflicts us.

We are blind,

blind to so much of the beauty which abounds in our world.

We walk about in a cloud of ignorance.

We trample on the feelings of those who love us.

We spend and waste time as though we had a million years to live
always at the mercy of one self-centered passion after another.

How heedless we often are of our good until it is too late.

Like birds whose beauty is concealed until their
plumes are spread against the sky
our blessings brighten only as they take their flight.

Here then is the first pole of life's paradoxical demands on us:

Life is precious, it is ineffably dear.

Never be too busy for the wonder and the awe of it.

Be reverent before each dawning day.

Embrace each hour.

Seize each golden minute.

Cling to life with all your soul and might while yet ye may.

Hold fast to life while yet ye may.

Hold fast to life...but not so fast that you cannot let go.

This is the second side of life's coin,

the opposite pole of its paradox:

we must accept our losses, we must learn how to renounce,

how to let go.

This is not as easy a lesson to learn and to internalize,

especially when we are young,

for when we are young we think that the world is ours to

command,

that whatever we desire with the full force of our passionate

being can, nay will be ours.

Ah, but then life moves along to confront us with its grim

realities and slowly but surely this second truth dawns upon us:

Life not only offers us gifts.

It also makes us suffer losses and we must learn to accept them.

P In a sense, I suppose, this very moment in your lives involves a loss.

A contemporary humorist once described college as a place "that keeps you warm between high school and an early marriage." Well, you must leave the warmth of this place, its security to go out into a colder world, and embark on ^a life of your own.

R Nor will this be the first loss you suffered or will suffer. At every stage of our life we sustain losses -- and grow in the process.

Why we even begin our independent lives only once we emerge from the womb and lose its protective shelter.

Then we leave our mothers and fathers and our childhood homes.

We enter a progression of schools and and leave them.

We get married and have children and then have to let them go, even as, in a sense, your parents are losing you today.

We confront the death of our parents and our spouses.

We must renounce our childhood dreams and accept the fact that life will not allow us to realize them.

We must face the gradual or not so gradual waning of our own strength.

And ultimately we must confront the inevitablity of our own demise, losing ourselves as it were, all that we were or dreamed to be.

R Life is never just a being.

It is always a becoming, a relentless flowing on.

We move through the various stages of life, as Shakespeare had it, each with its entrances and its exits, the infant becomes the boy, the boy the man, and there simply is no turning back.

R When Rabbi Bunam, renowned Chassidic master, was lying on his death bed, his wife wept bitterly, whereupon he reproached her saying:
Don't you know that life is given to us merely that we might learn how to die.

Life is the great teacher in the art of renunciation.

To heed this truth is not only just and right.

It is the very gate of wisdom.

R Our parable of the open and closed hand confront's us with life's contrary, oxymoronic demands:

First we were enjoined to cling to life, to appreciate its every gift. Then we are told: learn how to renounce ~~th~~se gifts, yea each end every one of them.

How can we do both, and at the very same time?

More important, why should we do it.

Why fashion things of beauty when beauty is evanescent.

Why give our hearts in love when those we love will ultimately be torn from our grasp.

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

The instiutions we build endure, and we will endure through them. w

Shakespeare was wrong.

The good is not interred with our ^{bones} ~~lives~~.

The beauty that we fashion cannot be dimmed by death.

The love we give in life lives on long after we are gone,
to bless the lives of others.

When Chanayo ben Teradyon, noblest of Jewish martyrs,
was burned at the stake wrapped in a Scroll of the Law
his pupils who witnessed his terrible agony 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 is with us.

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

If my baccalaureate address must have its message,
then let it be this:

Don't spend and waste your lives accumulating objects that will
only turn to dust and ashes.

Pursue not so much the material but rather the ideal,
for ideals alone invest life with meaning
and are of 'during worth.

R Look about you and see:

Add love to a house and you have a home.

Add righteousness to a city and you have a community.

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

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

Add art and imagination to a series of spires and arches
and you have a cath^ledral.

Add justice to the far flung round of human endeavor
and you have civilization.

R Put them all together,

exalt them above their present imperfections,

add to them the vision of humankind redeemed,

forever free of need and strife,

and you have the Temple of the Future,

the kind of future we dream you to have

-- a future lighted with the radiant colors of hope.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS BY
RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

TEREZIN-VERDI REQUIEM

Carnegie Hall, New York

April 26, 1990

Last Sunday, by Presidential decree, our country marked Holocaust Remembrance Day, and in many communities throughout the land, indeed throughout the world, ceremonies and services were held to commemorate the world's worst genocide. Tonight's performance of the Verdi Requiem is another element of this endeavor: to bear witness and to awaken memory.

Not that we really need a memorial 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. These memories are haunting, hurting. They still make us stagger. The numbers that the Nazis tattooed on the arms of their victims are seared into our soul. We cannot easily scrub them off. Their bitterness has eaten into our sinews, dissolved our flesh into festering sores, reduced the very spirit of our lives to sparkless, blackened ashes.

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

Tonight, we recall a particularly painful moment of that martyrology: the 46th anniversary of the Verdi Requiem performed by the inmates of Terezin - Theresienstadt - a concentration camp in Nazi occupied Czechoslovakia.

Terezin was not a death camp, merely a station along the way. Of the 140,000 Jews who passed through its gates, some 90,000 were transported with deliberate speed to Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen and Treblinka. Yet 30,000 Jews perished in that place itself - - of disease and starvation and torture. And 14,000 of the victims were children under the age of 15.

No, the number of its victims did not mark Terezin as a unique component of the Nazi death machine. It was, rather, the fraud that was perpetrated there, the deception, that fiendish cunning with which the Nazis sought to cloak their crimes. For this was the concentration camp to which they brought foreign observers sent to Germany to probe the veracity of reports concerning the persecution of Jews. The most distinguished of these delegations - - a Committee of Danish and Swedish neutrals sent by the International Red Cross - - arrived on June 23, 1944 and were hosted by no less a luminary than Adolf Eichmann himself.

To prepare for the occasion, Camp Commandant Karl Rahm and his staff produced a massive charade, a perverted theater piece, in which the entire camp was the set, and the entire suffering population the cast. The Red Cross visitors were shown spotless communal kitchens, and brightly furnished apartments. They toured clean streets and saw busy street cafes; they encountered children in playgrounds and spoke with contented passersby along the way. To cap it all, they heard a performance of Giuseppe Verdi's awesome and majestic Requiem, conducted by a 39-year-old pianist and maestro, Rafael Schaechter, and featuring four outstanding soloists and a chorus of 150.

The visitors could not know, nor were they told, that while they were rehearsing for the Requiem during the prior year, Schaechter's chorus had twice been decimated through mass transportation to the death camps.

They could not know that Schaechter himself, along with virtually all the singers and musicians would soon meet the same fate.

They could not know that the rich community of Czechoslovak Jewish musicians who had passed through Terezin, who produced their choral works, their chamber music recitals, their performances of Rigoletto and Tosca, their string orchestra and their original ghetto compositions - - had created it all against a background of relentless oppression and murder.

No, the visitors knew only what they saw: A Potemkin village of cultured contentment created to deceive. What a ghastly mockery all this: to whitewash the slaughterhouse. . . to drown out Jewish death cries with Jewish chamber music . . . to pacify the world with a puppet show.

Few survived to bear witness to these dread events. But three of the survivors are with us tonight. Two members of the original chorus who performed the Requiem in 1944 - - Marianne May and Otto Wolf, and Fredric Terna, who, together with his fellow inmates, sat in the audience that hideous night.

Why don't you stand - - to bear silent witness.

In their very own bones, these three felt the pain expressed in the words of the chorus:

quem patronum rogaturus, cum vix justus sit securus

"What patron shall I entreat when even the just need mercy?"
We salute them as heroes - those who survived, and those who, alas, did not survive - the poets of Terezin . . . the painters of Terezin . . . the artists of Terezin . . . the children of Terezin, who "never saw another butterfly."

They all were heroes, for they clung to humanity in the innermost circle of hell. Their creations were the blades of living grass thrusting through layers upon layers of suffocating pavement. Their artistry was the work of human beings struggling for sanity and survival and redemptive hope in the most hopeless of circumstances. And thus they all prevailed.

Let us listen to their music and remember these martyrs and heroes. And may memory and music, together, give us the strength to turn from the tattoo of death to the tasks of life. To love where others hate. To hope where others despair. And to search in our own lives for that God who, on that night, forty-six years ago, managed to leap from fingertip to fingertip, voice to voice, and gaze to gaze, igniting human beings with a sense of holiness even at the very point of their extinguishment.

Let us then listen to these solemn, sacred melodies and let us remember . . .

fee

Schindler: 25th Anniversary
Temple Beth Elohim
Wellesley, Mass.

I am deeply grateful to Howard Wilkoff for his generous
if overly extravagant introduction.

I really do not deserve all this praise.

It is I rather who should praise him for his manifold
contributions to our mutual sacred cause.

You know full well what he did for this congregation and I can
sacracely enlarge on what you know so much better yourself.

But you should know also that his contributions to Reform Judaism on
a national level have been altogether extraordinary.

His stewardship of our national maintenance program has been exemplary.

Virtually singlehandedly he has doubled the contributions

which sustain us and in the process -- mirabile dictu --

he has won us countless friends.

I could go on and on, extolling those gifts of mind and spirit

he brings to our work,

but I am here not to honor him, but rather to mark your anniversary.

Suffice it to say, that he has emerged as one of the great leaders

of Reform Judaism in America

and we all of us are grateful to you for sharing him with us.

I also want to thank your rabbni for inviting me here

to share your comunal simcha.

He is an exceedingly able young rabbi

respected by colleagues and congre alike etc

Your are exceedinly fortunate to be thus led.

Of course it is manifestly true that community receives
kind of leadership which it deserves
and so my words in appreciation of Howard and of your rabbi
apply not to them but to all the sons and daughters
of this holy congregation.

It is good to be here then,
good to behold and to participate in the joyous and yet solemn
ceremonies of this hour which mark the 25th Anniversary
of Beth Elohim.

What you have accomplished here is of no small consequence
and you have every reason to be pleased and proud.

25 years ago, then, this congregation was founded
its physical and spiritual foundations laid.

25 years ago...

In the stillness of the night one can almost hear
the rushing of the waves of time,
their relentless pounding against eternity's shores.

25 years ago...

We can imagine how they felt, those of you who were among the
founders of Beth Elohim

the doubts that seized you
the dreams that stirred you on.

Well, you conquered doubt and built and you built well,
with wisdom and with strength
and so did those who followed you.

Not everyone who was with you then is here, alas.

They have reached their horizon and are gone out of sight.

These holy halls are their memorial

even as they are a tribute to those who continue their work.

Blessed be their memory,

altogether blessed be the work of yourf hands.

Now your rabbis and program chairpersons suggested

that I focus my talk this day not so much on the past

but rather on the future,

that I tell you not what happened but what is about to happen

that I explore what "the next 25 yeras in American Judaism"

will be like.

I am reluctant to do so, mindful of the Chinese dictum which holds

"that to prophesy is exceedingly difficult, especially with

respect to the future.

Nonetheless I will heed the injunctions of your leadership,

I am amenable by my essntial nature.

Besides, we approaching the end of the calendar year,

and December is a traditional time for prognostications.

Here goes, then. Prediction number one:

"American Jews will continue to flourish on the American scene. Their numbers will not decline, but increase. And Reform Judaism will emerge as the overwhelmingly predominant synagogue movement o the American scene."

Had I made such a prediction years ago, I would have been
laughed out of court,
for twenty years ago virtually everyone predicted our eventual
decline as a community.

The Cassandras held sway;
everyone, or so it seems, foresaw our doom.

Jewish nationalists were certain that the American diaspora
will soon wither away along with all the other communities
of our exile.

American Jewish sociologists doleful re-echoed their forewarnings
and even the media took up the sad refrain.

You may recall that both Look and Life featured pieces
that spoke of the "Vanishing American Jew"
and predicted that by the year 2000 we would be less
than half a million strong.

Well, we are but fourteen years from that millenium
and we remain better than ten times that number.

Our death notices were premature;
night has not drawn the curtain over our communal lives.

The Reform Movement has particular reason to be proud of its response
to this demographic crisis.

Intermarriage was thought to be striking a lethal blow
to our collective continuity,
but we refused to bow to the inevitable and thereby helped to
transform the crisis into an opportunity for renewed growth.

Indeed, the rate of conversion to Judaism has tripled over the past years,

and an ever increasing proportion of the children issuing from interfaith marriages are being reared as Jews.

Our open-door policy,

our outreach to the intermarried,

our decision on Patrilineal descent

our efforts to address the actual needs of our community

-- all these have helped significantly to capitalize upon changing trends

and to turn the tide of erosion into a current toward a significant renewal.

A second supposed cause of our demise

--the much bemoaned declining Jewish birthrate --

has also proved to be chimerical.

Projections of a zero pupulation growth and worse were speculative

and failed to take into account that Jewish couples today

are aimply having their children later in life.

Those appearing to be childless or one-child couples in the 1970s

have become as fecund as Jewish couples of an earlier generation.

In fact recent evidence of a higher birthrate among the better educated

suggests that the Jewish birthrate too may even be slightly higher than that of the general population.

Whatever the reasons, our Jewish numerical strength has not suffered the ominous decline that had been forecast.

As far as our Reform movement is concerned,

there has actually been substantial growth these past decades, and not only because most of the intermarried and converted are choosing to join our religious community.

Since 1973, nearly one hundred and fifty new congregations have been added to our roster -- from 650 to 800 temples -- and the combined total membership of our congregations has burgeoned by some twenty-five percent, to some 1.3 million men women and young people.

More encouraging still, there is an increasingly pronounced trend toward Reform in the younger generation.

It began with the second generation of American Jews when Conservative Judaism still held a clear edge of 50% against 33% for Reform.

Among third generation Jews, Reform has gained a slight plurality of 41% versus 40%, whilst Orthodoxy dropped from 11% to 3% in this particular grouping.

The current toward Reform flows most perceptibly in the fourth generation of America's Jews -- so all of the recent demographic studies indicate.

These then are the facts which lead me to prognosticate that the American Jewish community will continue to flourish in the future and that the next 25 years will witness an even greater enlargement of Reform Judaism .

Prediction #2.

"The next twenty-five years will witness a more determined nurturing of our inner life. Jewish education will receive a greater emphasis - there will be many more day schools within the Reform movement, as a case in point; worship attendance will increase; and there will be a greater heedfulness of Jewish observances in Jewish homes and Jewish lives."

Here too my prediction is at sharp variance with the pognostications of the immediate past

for even as our numeric waning was predicted

so did the Cassandra of yesteryear insist that there would be

a steady attenuation of our identity,

that assimilation would steadily increase

and that we would be left with but a saving remnant.

That too hasn't happened, has it?

The past decades have brought no substantial erosion

of over-all Jewish cohesion on the American scene.

On the contrary, there is evidence of a a persistent and even

resurgent Jewish self-awareness.

Success has not spoiled us.

Our climb up America's social and economic ladder has not

caused us to dissimulate our Jewishness.

We are politically self-aware, with an agenda all our own,

and a distinctive view of the larger national agenda.

We remain supportive of Jewish causes.

The pushka of old may have been replaced by Section 501-C-3
of the Internal Revenue Code,
but tsedaka -- tax-exempt or not --
endures as a given in Jewish life.

Our ennoblement of education continues to distinguish us;
indeed there has been a veritable explosion of Jewish
studies programs on a university level.

And of course there is a good deal of social bonding
among American Jews.

Family ties continue to be strong.

Occupational choices tend to be similar.

Distinct residential patterns can still be perceived.

There is consistent Jewish networking and interaction.

Is all of this enough as the underpinning of a Jewish identification?

Is it sufficient to sustain Jewish continuity?

Are there no difficulties at the core of our culture that
require attending?

Let us narrow our focus on Reform.

Our external success is indeed remarkable.

Yet an honest self-appraisal compels us to confess
that problems of internal development do beset us.

Thus, while our membership numbers are up,
the quality of affiliation in burgeoning Reform
is nothing to boast about, let us admit it.
For most of us that synagogue affiliation is only marginal,
it is mere form without sufficient substance.

As liberal Jews, we assert our autonomy, we insist on the right
to choose.

But all too often we choose nothing at all,
or choosing something we observe it only haphazardly.

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

We thereby give substance to the perception
that Reform Judaism is but a religion of convenience,
that we wear the covenant as adornment
on our outer garment alone,
that this is a place where easy answers are given and
few if any questions asked,
in a word, that we need commit or do little if anything at all,
yet we still can call ourselves Jews.

But attitudes are changing in Reform.

And our leadership is determined to do something about it.

And our constituency has indicated its readiness to respond.

Indeed changes are taking place already.

I suppose we are in harmony with the spirit of the present day
which has taken a decided turn toward a greater inwardness.

The spirit of our times is infinitely more
congenial to religion than it was in the past.

An ever increasing number of people are experiencing a void in
their inner lives and are longing for something of more enduring worth

That is so, is it not?

There is a great yearning for inwardness in our day.

We all of us can feel it, there is a pervasive hunger for the holy.
Reason has been dethroned from its pedestal as the ultimate source
of salvation.

Science is no longer seen as the saving grace of humanity.

People everywhere are beginning to sense that the future of humankind
cannot be entrusted to the mindscape of a scientific rationality
that as the spirit within us withers,
so does everything we build about us,
that in the final analysis the state of the single soul
is the state of the universe.

This is why I remain firm in my prediction that the
next twenty-five years will witness a more determined nurturing
of our inner life as Jews with increased worship attendance
and home observance and the greater intensification
of Jewish education.

Now lest you think that I have gone stark raving mad
that I might be on pot
that there is is even something un-Jewish about all of this
up-beat news,

let my third-prediction be this:

The next twenty five years will bring us our full share
of tsures.

Israel and the quest for her security will continue to pre-occupy us.
so long as we are alive, I'm afraid.

The dream of an Irsael secure and at peace remains but a dream.

Lebanon did not becoem the second Arab nation to come to terms with
Israel

And Hussein cannot find the courage or a cover to come to the
peace table.

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

The Great Hatred of the Jew did not come to an end
with the end of WWII.

It only went into hiding for a while,
and now it is beginning to wax and ravage once again.

Once again, and but one generation after Auschwitz,
Jews are imprisoned -- as they are in Russia --
for no reason other than because they are Jews.

And on hijacked cruiseships and skyjacked planes
Jews are once again selected for special treatment
and the base assassins bullet.

Alas, even in this precious land of ours, this blessed America
we hear discordant noises....

the foul-mouthed fulminations of a Farakkhan
poisoning the air-waves
and re-echoing in our nation's arenas

where tens of thousands hail and heil his rantings.

It is an abomination -- and frightening.

But we will survive, let there be no doubt about it,
even as we survived in the past, over and over again.

Twenty years ago Look Magazine spoke of the vanishing American Jew
Well, Look magazine vanished but we live.

Not soon thereafter Life magazine also p[redicted our eventual
demise

Life survives in but a truncated form.

whilst the American eqwsh community cxontinues to grow in strength.

I hold in my hand a coin which was minted in the days when
our ancient homeland was conmquered by the Roman centurions.

On its face the following words are inscribed:

Judea est perdita...Judea is destroyued...

the Jewish people is no more.

Well Rome fell and remained fallen, but the Jewish people did not.
and here I am, two millenia later, a rabbi,

the leader of a large and ever-growing religious community
marking the 25th anniversary of a vital vibrant congregation
whose sons and daughters this day rededicate themselves
to secure the future of the Jewish people.

Schindler: Irv Husin Eulogy
Temple Israel of Jamaica
September 16, 1990

With heavy hearts we gather here this day

to bid farewell to a friend,

to take our final leave of Irv Husin

who meant so very much to all of us.

It was always a joy to be with him and Bernice when the two together
and he was alive.

But now our laughter has turned to tears, our joy to a bitter sorrow,
for his voice is stilled
and his luminescent eyes are closed forever.

To be sure now, Irvin lived a long and full life.

He was granted more than the four-score years that Scripture
allots to the strong.

Nor did advancing age ravage him as it does so many others;
he was alert of mind and spirit to the very end.

Still, his dying is not easy to accept, is it?

He was such a precious human being.

The feeling persists that he had much more to give
and we to receive.

And so we mourn and stand bereft.

Your rabbis count themselves in this companionship of sorrow.

We do more today than give voice to the complaints of others.

We too are sorrow-stricken; our friend is no more.

We too will miss his presence and feel the want of his tireless care.

* * *

How fitting it is that Irv's final tribute be held
right here in this place.

After all, this is the matrix from which he sprang.
This synagogue was his spiritual womb.

He loved Temple Israel.

He gloried in its past and ceaselessly strove to secure its future.
He worshipped here with regularity.

And he did everything he humanly could
to add to this Temple's outer strength and inner beauty.

But much more than institutional pride was involved in all this.
It touched rather on Irv's commitments, on his deep-rooted beliefs.
He was a son of the synagogue in the sense that his actions were
motivated largely by the awareness of his Jewishness
and its demands.

Judaism was his vital force.

It was the source that gave his life its vitality
and essential direction.

An inspiriting force as strong as was Irv's needed an even wider
arena for expression,
and he found it when he became active in the UAHC.

He served the NY Federation of Reform Synagogues,
eventually was chosen its President..

He became a member of our national Board, its Executive Committee
and ultimately his peers elected him vice-chairman,
therby projecting him into the foremost leadership ranks
of our vast and vast and vibrant religious community..

His leadership of America's Reform movement
was intelligent and gentle.

He never raised his voice in anger.

He always spoke with a quiet dignity.

But you always knew where he stood.

When a wrong had to be made right, he was there.

When a just cause needed fending, you could count on him.

He was as decent as sensitive a human being as I ever met.

Always, he was moved by a compassion that stirred within him
and which he felt as emanating from the deepest well-springs
of our faith.

I speak of Irvin, but I mean Bernice as well..

She was always at his side...encouraging him,
with a word, a nod, a smile.

I don't remember it otherwise.

Together they walked the way of life these many years,
drinking from its one cup
when it ran bitter, when it ran sweet...
giving true meaning to the words: husband, wife, and marriage.

And now he is no more,

and because he was what he was and is no more we weep,
weep over motionless form and unresponsive clay,
weep because a bright and shining star has been torn
from the firmament of our lives,
and our lives are the darker because of it.

Yet his memory can brighten our way as he did throughout his life.
He always taught us so very much,
even in his latter years which he met
with so much wisdom and grace.

Then he taught us that growing old is a bad habit
which a busy man has no time to form;

that nobody grows old merely by living a number of years;
that people grow old only when they give up
their idealism and their hope.

He taught us that whilst the passing years may wrinkle a man's face,
only cynicism and alieanation can wrinkle his soul.

Irvin's face was smooth till the very end
and so was his soul.

May it ever be bound up in the bond of everlasting life.

Amen.

THE DREAM, AGAIN

In all of Jewish history, there have been no more than ten or so dates that will be remembered as long as there are Jews to remember things. Most generations of Jews have lived and have died without ever witnessing the decisive turns of Jewish history except through the clouds of memory. Yet, within the lifetime of our own generation, those clouds have parted not once, but twice, and we have seen the turning with our own eyes.

First was the Kingdom of Night, then was the rebirth of the Republic of Hope.

And now there is the Reunion, the great homecoming of hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Soviet Union, yesterday's trickle becomes today's flow, tomorrow's flood.

Through the tumultuous years of modern Israel's brief history, there have been moments of pure vindication, moments when all complexity has disappeared and the elemental reason for a Jewish State has stood in stark and pure relief. The mass immigration in the late 1940s and early 1950s, from the displaced persons' camps of Europe and from North Africa; years later, Operation Moses, the rescue of Ethiopian Jews; now, Operation Exodus, perhaps as many as a million and a half Soviet Jews ingathered, welcomed.

For the Soviet Jews themselves, the new freedom means, at last, the chance to build a life far from the quickening curse of anti-Semitism.

For the Jews of Israel, the new freedom means the renewal of a dream that some had supposed was obsolete, the chance to refresh the authentic purposes of a Jewish national home.

And for us, for the Jews of North America, there is an essential role to play in the fulfillment of this new chapter of our people's dream. Two years ago, a quarter of a million of us gathered in Washington to speak for the freedom of our people. That freedom is now ours to enable.

But freedom is not free. To bring masses of Soviet Jews to Israel means to provide housing, schools, jobs, lest the invitation to a new life prove a cruel and bitter hoax, lest the reunion sour. Here are Jews, eager to come; here is a nation eager to receive them. But they cannot come and they will not if there is nowhere for them to live, to learn, to work.

Plainly, it is our task to provide the resources that will translate the dream of freedom into the reality of reunion. As plainly, we want and mean to be more than passive financiers as that translation is written into our people's history. We want and mean to be partners with the Soviet Jews and partners with the Israelis, going beyond the raising of dollars and the signing of checks to helping ensure that every dollar that is spent is spent responsibly, efficiently, effectively.

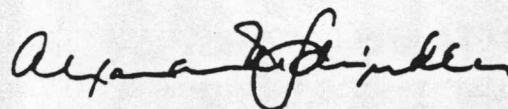
It is unthinkable that the Jewish people will allow this glorious opportunity to shrivel, that we will allow ourselves to be remembered as the generation that had history in its grasp --- and let go of it.

Nor is our shared opportunity limited to the wonders of reunion. The restoration of the early vision of Israel's purpose is inherently a restoration of a vision of peace, as well. The people of Israel know that chronic violence and war not only inhibit immigration, but also exhaust the energies and the treasure of the nation, the energies and the treasure that must now be turned to the sacred task of absorption.

We call attention to the danger of seeking to use this new opportunity for political purposes. The homecoming of our people transcends politics -- but politics can poison it. Soviet Jews are not "settlement-fodder," nor ought Operation Exodus be a cover for the pursuit of ideological goals. The absorption of Soviet Jews must not become a pawn in the debate over a Greater Israel; if those who enter the partnership with enthusiasm are led to conclude that their efforts are being exploited by partisans of one view or another, their enthusiasm will surely wane.

Above all, we call on each and every American Jew, in all our congregations throughout the land, working through our local federations, to join in this partnership in reunion, to lend hand and heart and pocketbook so that we may together enter history. For that is what is here at stake. Together, it has been given us to write a new chapter, to make possible a new beginning, to bring new life to our people and to our dream --- the dream of freedom, of peace, of home.

In this book of life, it is we who must inscribe our names.



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

10/ the C.C. failure
to do so but then
in front eyes, the
ongoing effort
to de-legitimizing the
I

14/ It is greed
that Corrosive
materials of our
time

"Facing the Future"
Christian Jewish Dialogue
Chicago, November ,1990

R My task this morning is to help conclude these meetings by discussing
how we might "face the future together."

With the help of our morning cup of coffee

-- without which some of us might hardly face the day, let alone
the future --

and with Bishop Griswold's opening prayer to brace our souls,

I should be able to begin.

R If truth be told, I am ever loath to prognosticate,

to speak of the future,

mindful of the Chinese proverb which holds that

"to prophesy is exceedingly difficult, especially with respect
to the future."

Yesterday's forecasts are inevitably mocked by today's events,

and there simply is no telling what shape the future will take.

R Moreover, there is a noise beyond the walls of this room

and this lovely hotel that makes talk of the future even
more difficult.

I speak of the noisy present

-- the roaring of a world that is in a state of vast historical
change,

a world in which opportunity and peril have become near synonymous.

R It is a world reverberating with the crash of communism,
the crumbling of the secular religion of Marxism.

It is a world in which the forthright preachings of the Jewish prophets
-- yes, and the sermon on the mount --
have found renewed relevance
greater than the most persuasive "isms" of the past century.

R It is a world creeping from beneath the terrible shadow of the mushroom
cloud
only to find itself broiling beneath the hot sun in a thinning
atmosphere.

R Indeed, as the dance of death between the superpowers winds down,
crises that transcend economic systems and national boundaries
are gaining international attention.

The search for a solution to such issues as "Whither our planet?,"
or the AIDS crisis,
or the global impoverishment of women and children
-- these and like issues bring us face-to-face with questions
of personal responsibility
and communal responsibility
and how we should live in relation to creation.

All of these questions and more touch on the very core of our respective
religious traditions.

They are the very questions that demand our joint response.

And over the past several decades, we have demonstrated our ability
to speak with one voice and to act in concert on these and
like concerns.

R I never cease to wonder at the transformation which our respective communities have undergone in their relationship one to another: erstwhile foes become trusted co-workers, indifference and suspicion replaced by mutual respect -- and all this in less than a generation... more progress in twenty five years than in all the centuries before!

R In many ways, these changes are a tribute to the best values of that blessed land in which we live.

I speak especially of that pluralism to which America is so passionately devoted; "e pluribus unum...out of many--one" is our nation's proudest motto.

To be sure now, the ideal and the real do not always coincide, in this sphere as in any other:

all groups have their share of those who disdain the dialogue who would rather revile and scorn and hate...

But since World War II, the gap between the grasp and the reach has been substantially narrowed.

The United States has become a genuinely multiethnic, multireligious and increasingly multiracial society.

I mean, where else but in America can you hear a Salvation Army band play hava nagila!

R
L But the effectiveness of our dialogue is due to something more than a receptive environment.

R It is due, in the first instance, to our willingness to be honest with ourselves, to engage in what Jewish tradition calls a chesban hanefesh, a self-reckoning of the soul.

Rabbi Bunam taught:

'Our wise men say, "Seek peace in your place." That is to say, than you cannot seek peace elsewhere than within yourself, and until you have found it there...only when someone has found peace within himself can he go on to seek it throughout the world."]

Rabbi Bunam was right.

Every journey to our fellow men and women is first a journey inward into our own existence.

We made this painful inward-journey, all of us.

Somehow, we mustered the strength to do so,
to confront our past and present imperfections,
to wrestle with the demons in our own souls,
and because we did, we were able to reach out to others
and face the future together.

But the effectiveness of our dialogue is due not only to the fact that we were honest with ourselves, but also and above all to the fact that we have learned to be honest with one another.

We do not mince words or feed each other pabulum.

We do not say only what we think will please the other to hear, but always the truth as we perceive it.

And because this is so, we have been able to withstand the several shocks to Christian Jewish relations during the past few years: the ugliness of the Carmelite convent controversy, the upsetting papal reception of Kurt Waldheim and Yassir Arafat, the trespasses by Jewish fundamentalists in Israel against Orthodox Christian properties and people.

R Our readiness to be forthright with one another has given our relationship a force sufficient to weather these tempests, to maintain contact, and to pursue our common agenda despite divergent and even conflicting views and feelings on this or that particular event or issue.

Indeed, here is the ultimate test of dialogue:

the ability to face tough dilemmas together,
to learn to disagree agreeably,
while still preserving mutual respect and good will.

* * *

R It is in this spirit that I would like to make some brief comments concerning Israel and its role in the Middle East.

It is important that we understand each other on this subject, lest this become an issue of contention so sharp that we will all pick up our marbles and go home.

R Let me say at once that as a Jew and as a Zionist, I want to see a negotiated settlement to end Israel's occupation of the Westbank and Gaza.

I am a dovish public critic of the abridgment of human rights in the territories.

I believe that there is a Palestinian people and it deserves human rights and political dignity

R But I also know that Israel is a feisty democracy

that open debate rages in that free land and nowhere else
in the Middle East,

and that there is a need for Arab counterparts of Israel's

Peace Now movement but there are none, NONE IN THE

MIDDLE EAST,
none to nurture the trust of the Israelis,

none to help them overcome their deep sense of vulnerability.

R It is a sense of vulnerability which I myself feel, let it be confessed;

for I experience myself at this podium less as a president

of a multi-million member religious community,

less as a secure citizen of our powerful United States,

and more as a German Jewish refugee from Hitlerism,

a Jewish survivor on the banks of that long river of European

anti-Semitism, to which Christian churches constituted

the major tributary.

After all, the shoa did not happen in ^{a wilderness} ~~the wilds of Africa~~

or amongst primitive peoples,

but in the heart and center of European and Christian civilization.

And the slaughter was engineered by leaders of a nation that stood

in the van of progress,

whose universities were Mecca for seekers after truth,

whose poets were world figures,

and the symphonies of whose composers are still played

wherever orchestras assemble.

I studied at these universities, I valued that poetry, I thrilled

to that music -- but then came that whirlwind of destruction

which decimated my people, among them many I knew and loved.

P And so I see in myself how personal and communal vulnerability remain paramount in the Jewish psyche, and on a level that most of our Christian allies cannot comprehend, and because they don't, the depth and concreteness of Jewish devotion to the state of Israel remains a mystery to them.

R To be sure, now, there is a difference between perception and reality. I fully recognize the disparity between my feelings of personal vulnerability as a Jew, and my knowledge of that actual -- if tenuous -- historical empowerment that Jews have experienced during the past four decades.

No longer are we the meek of the earth, as we were for millenia. Having survived the Nazi genocide, we have now, in the State of Israel gained a degree of secular power, power enough, we pray, to prevent our "meekness" from ever again leading to victimization; power as well to test the conscience of the Jewish people and to test our mettle as peacemakers.

And this is precisely why I have made it my task as a religious leader, to help heal the Jewish psyche and to prepare the Jewish people for the challenges of peacemaking.

R Those challenges, I might add, have been greatly complicated by the outrages perpetrated upon Kuwait by Iraq, and by the Palestinian willingness to embrace the murderous Saddam Hussein as a would-be liberator.

Israel and the Jewish people once again are face-to-face with the
implacability and unrelieved historical animosity of its foes
-- Saddam Hussein, a liberator indeed!

For the PLO, it seems, Zionism is a greater demon than chemical warfare.
For the PLO, maximalist dreams have greater currency than
maximalist body-counts among Kurds and Iranians and Kuwaites...

H And throughout all this, Israel is being instructed to "lay low,"
so as not to fracture the Arab alliance against Iraq!
Lay low, lest the sight of us incite anti-Semitism!

R How facile, also, the analysis that the heart of the Middle Eastern
problem is the plight of the Palestinians.

Solve that and all else will fall into place.

What a naive conception this!

Even if modern Israel had never been created,
re-emerging in history out of the ashes of the holocaust,
Iran and Iraq would have slaughtered each other,
Arab fratricide would have cannibalized Lebanon,
Syria would have butchered Christians and trained their
artillery on Palestinian refugee camps there as they did,
and Iraq would still be seeking to devour its neighbors.

R Jewish vulnerability is likewise at its height in Eastern Europe,
where the dissolution of totalitarian "order" has brought forth,
among its fruits, the bitter grapes of resurgent anti-Semitism,
Where are these masses of Russian Jews to go if not to Israel?
All other ports are virtually closed to them...
America has a ceiling of 40,000 per annum.

And who is ready to receive the hounded and harried black Jews of Ethiopia if not Israel?

Note, if you will, and note well, that this was the first time in recorded human history that blacks were taken from one continent to another not in chains but in love!

P All this is not to say that Israel is above reproach, it clearly is not.

Much has happened there that is sobering:

ethnic and religious tensions have dangerously heightened; there has been a devaluation of values among Israelis, more materialistic, more like the values of the rest of the world;

and the reality of conquest has functioned like a chronic disease draining vital resources -- most especially the precious resource of morale.

We Jews know all of this, are painfully aware of it.

The Israelis knows this, too.

There are qualms and there are doubts and many self-accusing lines can be and are spoken.

P Nor is Israel above the critical judgment of others.

We Jews will have to learn that non-Jews, and that includes Christian clergy, have the same right to criticize Israel as we do; and that to automatically equate their criticism with anti-Semitism is religious McCarthyism.

P But there is a need for greater balance and understanding,
and I implore the Christian churches,
which clearly cannot afford to carelessly ruffle the feathers
of Islam,
neither to vent all of their moral indignation against Israel
at a time when its actual and psychological vulnerability
is at its height.

P Cardinal O'Connor's recent article in Catholic N.Y. reflected such
a balance and hence was gratefully received.
by the Jewish community.

(The Vatican's willingness to establish formal diplomatic relations
with Israel would also be of immense help in allaying Jewish fears
and helping to heal the Jewish psyche and
to overcome its terrible sense of isolation.

The Catholic Church's failure

The Catholic Church's failure to do so, in spite of
the ongoing Arab effort to delegitimize the Jewish state,
to wipe its name off the maps, and of our lips,
and eventually off the historical record altogether.

* * *

P Now, I am reconciled to the fact that we will never see fully eye
to eye on this issue.

Nor is this the sole contemporary matter to cause tension
between our communities -- and others will surely arise.

Nonetheless, we will be able to pursue our common agenda,
if we continue to be forthright with one another
if we will listen to each other not just with the hearing
of the ear,
but also, and above all, with a hearing of the heart.

R In our search for allies, none of us requires,
and we Jews certainly do not look for, ideological congruence,
for a full agreement on each and every issue
before we join forces.

We Jews can, for example, disagree with the Roman Catholic Bishops
on abortion and birth control
but still work with them full heartedly on such
burning issues as nuclear disarmament and economic justice.

We can disagree with many of our Protestant colleagues
on matters affecting the Middle East
but still join them in the quest to achieve racial harmony
and to overcome world hunger.

Indeed, we Jews are determined to join with them and anyone else
to amplify and pursue these issues
with all the resources at our command.

R Aye, these issues require the united response of the entire religious
community, do they not?

A C Consider our demeanor as a nation:

Here we are, the wealthiest country on earth,
yet thirty four million of fellow Americans
are living in debasing poverty,
fully one-sixth of all children,
nearly half of all African-American children
-- and they have lost the faith that this is a society which
gives a damn for them.

Aye, Reaganomics has tightened this nation's belt
'round the neck of the poor.

R Here we are, with medical technology and savvy that brings the ailing
to our hospitals from all over the world
yet fully one-third of our own people are without medical insurance
without the ability to receive care from the hospital
and medical professionals of their choice.

R Here we are, able to project military force to the farthest reaches
of the globe
and yet we are unable to safeguard our own city streets.

R Here we are, built to the pinnacle of power and substance by the
joined labors of countless immigrants
and yet without the morally committed leadership who could
lead us beyond the racism and bigotry that disturb the
American dream.

R As citizens of the world, moreover, the American record is worse than negligent.

We participate unthinkingly or callously in what Father Theodore Hesburg calls our "Systemic Geographical Discrimination."

Our population, comprising less than 5% of the world population, consumes 25% of its daily calories and energy.

Our children confront the frightening prospect of a glutted market for college graduates, even Ph.D.'s, while Southeast Asian children too often never step foot in a school room.

Our people are overfed and overweight, but in South America systemic malnutrition is causing mental retardation on a wholesale scale across a generation of newborns.

R We are only the 11th among the developed countries in per capita giving of foreign aid

-- and apart from military aid, we are dead last.

And then we look with pity and despair upon swollen bellies,

the shrunken limbs, the hopeless poverty,

and the senseless violence

-- look with pity and despair, rather than with a sense of deep personal responsibility and

t'shuva, with soul-felt repentance.

P Yes, consider our demeanor as a nation.

And consider also, if you will, how we live in relation to the world,
to this planet earth,
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."

P No, it isn't carelessness or callousness which makes us do all this!
It is greed that convinces us that
we too must join hands to counter!

R The depletion of the rainforests and the daily extinction of still
another species is not a function of the "human condition."
It is the work of a specific peasant forced to slash and burn
for want of his own land.
It is the work of a specific cattle rancher selling meat to the
chains,
those "fast food" spots that burgeon when a culture becomes
too insanely pressured
to take pause for a blessing before the meal.

R The Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska,

or the radioactive disaster zone of Hanford, Washington,
or the proliferation of every form of cancer in our society,
are not the "price of progress."

They are the price of profit,

the price of corporate thinking about human values,
the price of a materialism so corrosive that it can rupture an
oil tanker's hull or a nuclear reactor's containment vessel.

R Such so-called "political" or "economic" matters are religious
in their essence -- and in their solution.

The dichotomy between the "secular" and the "religious"
between "activism," and "commandment"

is diminishing to the point of irrelevance in our world.

And we in the religious community should stand together at the
forefront of the struggle to integrate politics and the spirit
as we turn this century.

* * *

R It is true, is it not, that Judaism and Christianity are oblique paths
that join us not only in the past, but in the future.

The arrival of a redeemer is central to the vision of both faiths,
And the preparation of the human race to be worthy of that arrival
-- to herald with our works of love --
is central to our respective undertakings.

Rabbi Jochanan ben Zaccai,

the savior of Judaism at the time of the rebellion against Rome,
put this matter well:

"If you hold a seedling in your hand and you hear the people shout,
'The Messiah has come, you must plant the seedling first and then
come out to greet the Messiah."

In a somewhat like vein, the Great Midrash declares:

"All the calculated dates of redemption have passed,
and now the matter depends upon repentance and good deeds."

R To all this, I would add only that the very spirit of our times is
more responsive to religion's message than it was in the past.

An ever increasing number of people are experiencing a void in
their inner lives

and are longing for something of more during worth

Reason has been dethroned from its pedestal as the ultimate source
of salvation.

Science is no longer seen as the saving grace of humanity.

People everywhere are beginning to sense that scientific rationality,
unless in constant dialogue with the spirit of God,
serves only to multiply and to enlarge the scope of our sins;
that as the spirit within us withers,
so does everything we build about us.

R Thus does the yearning for the sacred grow in our day.

We all of us can feel it.

The very air we breathe is tense,

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

Men and women are restless,

but not with the restlessness of those who have lost their way
in the world and have surrendered to despair,

but rather with the hopeful questing of those who want
to find a new way and are determined to reach it.

It is a searching after newer and truer values,

for deeper, more personal meaning,

and for a sense of human community that can enlarge the joy
of our achievements and lend consolation to our sorrows.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Never before has the lack of these ideals so imperilled our very
existence.

R Let us therefore build our faith structures and strengthen their core!

R Let us therefore, Christian and Jew, bestir our members
to the task of repairing our hideously fractured world!

R Let us lead them to seek the Holy, for they will find God
wherever they seek God in truth!

R And this above all, let us recapture our own faith,
faith that supreme creative function of the human mind
faith which cries YES in defiance of a thousand voices
crying NO
which sustains love where others hate
which hopes where others despair
which upholds human decency where others yield
to an untamed savagery,
yes, that faith which by a magic all its own
raises all things out of their native dust
and exalts them to the empyrean of lasting worth.

~~ke~~ kein vehi ratzon thus may it be God's will.