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SCHINDLER

CINCINNATI SPEECH

I am delighted to be here, of course,
at this Biennial, in this city, and especially in this
impressive, awe inspiring Temple.

If you promise not to tell it in Gath or in the streets of Ashkelon,
this Council is one of my favorite regions
not just because I have been with you so often,
but because its people are bracing to the spirit.

I have many good friends here and it is good to be reunited with them:
my revered teachers
my colleagues of the rabbinate,
the lay leaders of this Region, guided as they are
by its wise and able President, Bob Chaiken .
He has led this Council with distinction and sensitivity
and we are beholden to him.

Other members of our National Board are with us as well:

Nelson Cohen and Jack Kuhn
Liz Linkon and Jaques Morris
Ted Pellet and Mel Strassner

and Paul Uhlman, who is slated to become your next Present
(Unless, of course, there is some kind of Palace revolt)

I am only sorry that I won't be able to be here for his election and
installation, so let me say now how exceedingly fond I am of him
and how appreciative I am of the many fine qualities of mind
and spirit he brings to our endeavors,

Paul and Bob and the other Board members represent you exceedingly well
in the very highest leadership councils of our Union.

They are the kind of lay leaders we dream to have,
fashioned in the image of Judaism's noblest ideals.

In this context let me say how admiring I am of Steve Pinsky.
He is intelligent, industrious, deeply devoted to his tasks..
Whatever he undertakes to do he does exceedingly well.

I am glad to know him my colleague and it is with a great deal of
pride that I will install him as the full time regional director
of your council, at the conclusion of my commentary tonight.

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

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Now, Steve suggested that I devote my substantive comments
to some of the challenges facing our religious community
as we approach the turn of the millenium.

I am glad to heed him, of course,
but I would like to do so in the framework of our celebrations
of this past year during which world Jewry explored the
contributions of Sepohardic Jewry,
on the occasion of the 500th anniversary
of our expulsion from Spain.

The experience of Spanish Jewry,
at least in the beginning centuries of their golden age
to some respect reflects our own.
They too felt the tension between continuity and community
that we experience.
They too were called upon to live in two worlds,
in the world of Jewish devotion and in the larger world
of which they were a part.

It is a tension illuminated by the core beliefs
of two of their foremost leaders,
Yehuda Halevi and Moses Maimonides
who lived in different centuries,
though their debate was joined.

Yehuda Halevy -- at least so I was taught to understand him --
was drawn essentially by the inner world of the Jew...
He felt his Jewishness intensely.
His feet were planted in the West,
but his heart was always in the East
and he ultimately chose to live there;
indeed, legend has him crushed by a hoseman's foot
just as he reached Jerusalem
though most scholars today believe that he died
before he reached holy soil.

The great RamBam on the other hands was more of a synthesizer,
who believed that we must learn to live in two worlds.

Yes, he was the codifier of Jewish Law, the yad chazakah
but in his most illustrious and enduring work,
the More Nevuchim, the Guide to the Peplexed,
written in Arabic
he sought to bring Judaism into harmony with the
prevailing philosophies of his day.

We too experience this tension, do we not, this tug between two worlds
and these are the questions which perplex us as modern Jews.
:

How intimately a part of the society can we Jews be
without losing our Jewish identity?

Yet how separate can the Jewish community remain without cutting itself
off from that larger society of which we are a part?

If, for the sake of Jewish cohesion, we keep our children confined
in a Jewish environment day in day out seven days a week,
where will they learn to interact with other Americans?

But if, for the sake of interaction, we seek to immerse ourselves in the
larger society,
how will we be able to avoid being swallowed up by it,
totally assimilated by that society?

These are the questions that limnm the vexing dilemma
facing Ameican Jewry.

We are strained, stressed by the tension between liberty and community
between the survival needs of our people
and our need to interact with the community of which we are a part.

* * *

It is a tension which is eased considerably by the fact that we live in a society which is pledged to the principle of pluralism.

Marginally noted, this is a principle of relatively recent vintage. But a generation ago -- certainly when I first came to these shores -- America was conceived to be a "melting pot," E pluribus unum - was the motto of the day - out of many one. The public school was seen as homogenizing agent, and diversity was muted if not discouraged on the ground that it might impair communal unity.

But in the 60s and 70s American social theory was transformed radically; it was a veritable metamorphosis. The differentiating characteristics of America's diverse cultural elements were acknowledged and began to be celebrated. Ethnic neighborhoods were rediscovered. Community control was pressed. Divergent ethnic groups began to insist on their own distinctiveness. Congress even passed an "Ethnic Heritage" law which would have been unthinkable but a generation earlier.

Many students and scholars of the period are convinced that this transformation of social theory was fuelled by the civil rights revolution.

Blacks eventually came to realize that behavior modification would not gain them that fuller acceptance for which they yearned. Their color simply would not wash off and Middle America simply would not look beyond or beneath that color.

Their blackness precluded them forever from being fully integrated
fully mixed in the American melting pot melting pot.
Somehow, room had to be made for those who would forever be "different"

And so a new social vision had to be refined and its motto became:
"black is beautiful."

Soon, Poles and Irish and Italians and Swedes also became "beautiful"
and quickly we too took up the refrain..
and Jewish became beautiful as well.

IN this sense we became the unintended beneficiaries of that very
movement, the civil rights revolution, which we helped to spawn.
By helping others, we helped ourselves.

Be that as it may, pluralism emerged as the dominant American
social doctrine and remains so to this day.

and we Jews have become its most fervent exponents,
precisely because pluralism enables us
to be a part of the larger society,
and yet to stand apart from it.

* * *

The tension between individual liberty and the needs of community
which our convention theme underscores
is further eased by our particular understanding of Judaism.

As Reform Jews we are fully prepared to recast tradition,
refashion it in response to contemporary need knowledge.

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

Note, if you will, that this conception, in no ways,
does violence to the Jewish tradition,
for this is what Judaism always was, an ever changin faith,
before it atrophied amid repressive encounters with Christendom,
before it became encrusted by the codification process
of our Dark Ages.

According to a well-known legend, when Moses wass allowed by God
to visit the Academy of Rabbi Akiba who lived many centuries later,
our Great Lawgiver did not recognize the newer Judaism as his own,
he failed to understand the teachings that Akiba
quoted in his, Moses's name.

This midrash means to teach us that the rabbis of old undestood Judaism
to be an evolving faith, an ever changing faith,
a continuously reforming religion, in the best sense of
that adjective:
a religion not of obeisance, but of a dialogue tempered
by a profound sense of responsibility,
a religion in which halachah was not frozen like ice but
a soluble substance to be mixed with human tears.

To put the matter succinctly, it is modern orthodox literalism
that is inauthentic, that represents a fundamental break w/traditio
Be that as it may, we Reform Jews
do not deem sanctity synonymous with immutability.
We do not equate holiness with a rigid immobility.
For us, the Jewish tradition did not end in 17th Century Poland,
but is an ever evolving faith.

Yes, Reform Judaism speaks to people in a language
that the greatest number of American Jews will hear and understand.
And this is precisely why Reform is the only burgeoning stream of
American Judaism.

Our ranks are continuously swelling,
even while there is a slow but steady erosion within Conservatism,
and American Orthodoxy just about manages to hold its own.

The Union's just completed census establishes
that we have grown by better than 30% in the last two decades.
Over two hundred temples have been added to our roster since 1973
and tens of thousands of families have joined our cumulative
cumulative membership rolls since then.

We have emerged as the overwhelmingly predominant synagogue movement
on the American Jewish scene.

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

Our numeric burgeoning may well excite our ambitions,
but it also challenges us:
to make certain that this numeric growth will be attended
by a commensurate growth in depth,
that an ever increasing number of our congregants
will see and seize Reform Judaism
as a serious religious enterprise.

For if we don't, the enlargement of our numbers will be only transitory,
and our congregants, both new and old,
will enter our synagogues only as a place of temporary sojourn
a service station for life-cycle rites
and not as a permanent abode.

* * *

How can we meet this challenge?

Well, in the first instance we must deepen the Jewish educational
components of our temples,
we must make Jewish study
-- not for children, but for adults as well --

a primary purpose of a congregation's striving.

Every aspect of the congregational program must be bent
to serve this end,
the bulk of its resources applied to it.

Only then will its center hold.

Jewish education is not limited to the classroom .

It must penetrate every other room and activity of

Temple's life:

from committee meetings to conversation within its halls
from social events to the letters and bulletins we send out
all should be seen and seized as means to further the

Jewish educative process.

The Talmud proclaims that each day God regrets the creation
of this world of ours,
and each day a destroying angel is set forth to revert it all
to chaos.

But when God sees young children studying the Torah,
when God sees would-be-sages studying with their masters,
the heavenly rage transforms to compassion,
and the world once again, is spared.

This reprieve is earned not by prayer, mind you, not by deed,
but by study, by the encounter with the text.

We must make torah study a primary focus of our congregational doing
For only in this manner will we gain and retain the faithfulness
of our congregants.

* * *

But Torah study alone does not suffice for the need.

Thought and deed must be conjoined.

To be faithful to the inner world of the Jew

we must help our congregants by precept and example
to bridge the distance between midrash and ma'aseh,
between the mind and the hand.

Our congregants take their temple membership lightly
because we, as the leaders of the synagogue,
take our Judaism too lightly

We are not sufficiently disciplined in our observances.

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

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

We saunter in, we saunter through, we saunter out.

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

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

I know that I have spoken often of this matter before
and I will continue to speak of it with Cato-like regularity
though there is no need to elaborate
Suffice it to say that to be a Jew in one's mind or heart
is simply not enough.

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

The truth -- to be felt by most of us - must put on a garb.
There must be rite, legend, ceremony...visible form.

Only when we as synagogue leaders put on such a garb,
will those who see us also see and seize on Reform Judaism
as a serious and consequentially meaningful religious enterprise.

* * *

Now, our religious community has burgeoned numerically,
not only because we have made change our hallmark,
but also because of our firm and fearless resolve
to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

In the Book of Numbers, Parshat beha'alotecha our teacher Moses
is reported to have proclaimed:

"Would that all the Lord's people were prophets."

All the Lord's people -- aye, says Reform Judaism!

All the Lord's people including women.

All the Lord's people -- including gay and lesbian Jews.

All the Lord's people, including families in all of their
new constellations.

All the Lord's people, including the intermarried, and Jews-by-choice,
yes, and the hearing-impaired and the wheelchair bound
and the disabled in body and spirit.

Their needs are also numbered among our responsibilities,
and their energies too need to be tapped.

This too is a grave and great challenge confronting us:

we must make our temple programming reflective of this diversity
and fully responsive to it.

Let me focus if you will, on but one,

but the fastest growing of these diverse constituencies of ours:
the intermarried and their children.

This will be my concluding if extended commentary on our subject.

My thoughts are prompted by the National Jewish Population Survey
which so jolted and traumatized American Jewry.

You are familiar with the sobering facts:

Since 1985 there has been a dramatic increase
in the rate of intermarriage -- which now exceeds 50%...
that is to say one out of two of our children chooses a non-Jew
as a life-mate.

In numeric terms, this means that as the year 5753 begins,
no less than 600,000 American Jews are married to non-Jews.
More serious still, there is a higher rate of conversion out of Judaism
than in,
And only about one third of all the many children issuing from these
interfaith marriages
-- and there are over one million of them --
are being reared as Jews.

Responding to this growing challenge as it developed over the past
decades, the Reform movement launched a cluster of program
which go by the name of Outreach.

You are fully familiar with our efforts in this realms
and I am proud of them.

We do not allow this crisis to dispirit us.

We have seen and seized it rather as an opportunity
to turn the threat of a serious drain on our numeric strength
into a promising source for our enlargement.

I have no doubt that we embarked on the proper course,
when we launched outreach now nearly thirteen years ago.

True enough, the statistics on intermarriage have scarcely improved over these years.

But we are not to be scapegoated for their ever rising rate.

Outreach was not designed to reverse the tide of intermarriage.

It was designed, rather, to retain the intermarried for Judaism, to gather and keep them within the fold.

We should be credited, therefore, for doing our share to staunch the bleeding and to infuse new blood into the body Jewish.

Note, if you will, that we are the only stream of Judaism on the American Jewish scene that is swelling in numbers.

There is one respect, however, in which our outreach endeavor requires revision:

We need to intensify our efforts to gain converts, both before and after marriage.

We need to move away from the "neutral," non-proselyting stance that has hitherto informed our outreach effort, and our desire to welcome converts should be made explicit rather than only implicit in our work.

Please don't misunderstand me here:

I do not suggest that we somehow slow or even reverse our outreach programming, or make the intermarried -- including their non-Jewish partners -- uncomfortable or unwelcome...chalilah v'chass heaven forbid.

But I do believe that we must make the non-Jewish partners of our children understand that we are not indifferent to them and that we are eager to embrace them as fuller members of our religious community.

When our colleague, Charles Sherman of Tulsa Oklahomo, made precisely such an appeal, during last year's Kol Nidre sermon, a half-score of the non Jewish spouses of his congregants came to him during the following weeks and began the more formal process of conversion.

When asked why they had not come before, they told Rabbi Sherman:

"Because nobody ever asked us to become Jewish."

Why don't we ask?

Why are we so hesitant?

Are we ashamed?

Must one really be a madman to choose Judaism?

Let us shuffle off our insecurities!

Let us recapture our self-esteem!

Let us demonstrate our confidence in those worths which our faith enshrines!

We need to affirm our Judaism frankly, freely, proudly,

and without fear that it will offend the non-Jewish spouses.

Quite the contrary, it can only enhance their regard for Judaism.

for if we lack in missionary zeal, they are bound to surmise that we have no message at all,

or, at any rate, that we do not prize it.

You might be interested to know in this context

that fully 10% of those who are enrolled in our Intro to Judaism courses throughout the land determine to become Jews even though they are not presently married or engaged to a Jew.

According to the recent National Jewish Population survey,
hundreds convert to Judaism annually, men and women
who choose their Judaism on religious grounds alone,
who were reared in other religions or in none,
whose thirst for a meaningful faith was quenched by Judaism.

Yes, people do choose Judaism on religious grounds alone.
I don't know why so many Jews are surprised that this is so.
They think that choosing to be Jewish is a symptom of some kind
of abnormality.

Some years ago, the Union prepared a video tape of interview
with several Jews-by-Choice.

Among them was a couple, neither of whom was born a Jew
and who chose Judaism together.

When they were asked to relate what experience in the conversion process
was most disturbing, most painful to them,
John, the husband, answered:

"I was most troubled when my Jewish friends said to me:
Are you crazy? You needed this, to become a Jew?
And I began to wonder...if they don't know it's there,
maybe it isn't there!"

"If they don't know it's there, maybe it isn't there."

Here is the essential challenge, for in lacking a mission
we are suspect of also lacking the message.

But we do have a message, my friends.

Let us not doubt nor fail to proclaim it.

We have so very much to offer: Judaism celebrates life and not death.

It insists on the freedom and the capacity of the individual
to determine his fate.

Judaism is a religion of hope and not of despair;
it holds that society and humankind perfectible.

It allows, nay even encourages freedom of thought
the right of the exploring mind to question tradition,
yea even the justice of God.

Moreover, we offer something more than a disembodied faith system.
We are a people of faith, a caring community of Jews.

In other words, we have an enormous amount of wisdom and experience,
of warmth and of love, to offer to this troubled world.

And we Jews ought to be proud to speak about it,
frankly, freely, and with dignity.

Let us therefore reach out.

Let us be guided by the law which teaches us that the mizva of
self-preservation exceeds all others in its consequence!

Let us not be among those who in their pain and confusion
respond to the fear of self-extinction by declaring
casualties before the fact;

who respond to the suffering of the past by living in the past;
who react to the long-drawn isolation of our people
with an isolationism of their own.

And let us above all recall and act on those lofty passages
from the Tenach and the Chazal, from Bible and Commentary
that define Jewish "chosenness"

not as exclusive but as exemplary
not as separatist but as representative
not as closed but as open
not as rejecting but as all-embracing and compassionate.

NAKEL MIHEYODCHA LI EVED, LEHAKEEM ET SHIVTEI YAAKOV

"It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the offspring of Israel
I will also give thee for a light unto the nations.
That my salvation may be unto the ends of the earth."



140th Anniversary
Temple Ohev Sholom
Harrisburg, Pa.

I thank you for your all too kind introduction, Jeffrey.

Wish my wife were with me...

she has a way of putting me in my proper place.

Although the best put down I ever received happened to me in Israel

(Yarmulke story)

Your hyperboles to the contrary notwithstanding,

I am grateful to you Jeffrey and I reciprocate your sentiments
of regard with a full heart.

This is really the first time that I encountered Jeffrey,

but I heard a good many things concerning him,

all of them good,

and you have every reason to be pleased

that he is your spiritual leader.

I am happy that Chuck Mintz is here too.

Him I know well.

After all, we were school mates together,

and then colleagues on the Union staff

We made an agreement with each other, before I ascended the pulpit.

He said: "If you don't tell, I won't tell;" So I won't tell!

And yet there is precious little that I can tell you about him

that you do not know so much better yourself.

After all, your relationship spans the years.

It is cemented by tears of joy and of sorrow alike.

It is altogether remarkeable what you have accomplished here.
A rich and meaningful program in a beautiful sanctuary
And a continuing reaching out from this place to the larger
community of which you are a part.

You have every reason to be pleased and proud
And we have every reason to praise your name.

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

140 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.

140 years ago...

We can imagine how they felt, your fathers and your mothers
the doubts that seized them
the dreams that stirred them on.

Well, they conquered doubt and built and they built well,
with wisdom and with strength
and so did those who followed after them,
their children and their childrens children even unto this day.

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.

Too many in this bounteous land of ours are out of work and out of hope
and they have lost the faith that this is a society that
gives a damn for them.

Or consider what we do with our world --

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...

Aye, the synagogue is needed to be a moral force in our lives.
It must ever remind us of those values which the world makes us forget.
For only if we emerge from this place as better human beings,
as better people
will our prayers have been answered.

* * *

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

Chayim Nachman Bialik called in the "mystic fount"
from which our forbears drew the fortitude
to face the vicissitudes of their lives as Jews.

In our own country the cause of social concord was scarcely served during the recent presidential campaign.

You all remember Buchanan's divisive speech:

The election, he said, "is about more than who gets what... it is about who we are."

But here's the rub: who you are is what Pat Buchanan says you should be. Distrust differences...Revile people who are gay...

Dismiss the aspirations of women.

Reduce the answers to the problems of our cities to force.

Let your fears and your hatred be your guide.

And, above all, invoke God's name to justify all this malice.

"There is a religious war going on in America," he asserted.

And if you agree with him you are blessed.

And if you don't you are damned.

Pat Robertson re-echoed these sentiments at the Convention, and in a subsequent Iowa address waxed even more hyperbolic.

In a factious, eristic peroration he urged Iowans to defeat the equal rights amendment on the grounds that it

"encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians."
[quote unquote]

As Anna Quindlen put it in her column: What? No cannibalism?

But having said all this, I can bring you the good news

that in America, at least, anti-Semitism per se,

as isolated from other manifestations of bigotry in our land has actually been marginalized.

But the synagogue must serve one more purpose still:
It must evoke a sense of the sacred.
It must enhance our capacity to respond with wonderment
to the essential mystery of life.

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

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

Alas, the voice from out of the whirlwind or from the burning bush
finds but few listening ears in our time.

By and large in our day we are not given to amazement and to wonder
as blandly we walk the way of life untouched by its essential magic

The temper of our times does not allow us to hear...

our proneness to consider as real only things perceived by the
physical sense

things that can be touched and felt and measured and weighed
and our tendency to ascribe a worth only to things that are of use
that can be bought and sold, and are of practical worth.

But there is a world of reality which cannot be perceived
by the physical senses alone

It is an invisible world if you will, but its force is often
more intense than is the force of the world that is seen.

Aye, there is a world of reality

beyond those worlds perceived by the physical sense alone.

And altogether multitudinous are life's gifts that have no

practical worth but nonetheless are altogether wond'rous:

The earth's green covering of grass.

The blue serenity of sea and sky.

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

Petals on the grass and wings in the air.

Oh, how flat, how narrow our world is,

when we measure its gifts by their usefulness alone,

when, in Rilke's happy simile

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

Then do the words of prophecy apply to us:

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

No, the human story simply cannot be told

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

Only those who open themselves to such a mystery

can transcend the grandeur and terror of their lives

without being blinded by life's grandeur

or crushed by its terror.

Only when we open ourselves to such a mystery,

will we find our Judaism to be a sustaining faith and not a
dry-as-dust religion.

Then the time will come when the wood and the stone and the mortar
of this sanctuary will be held sacred because your hands
have touched them

And many years hence, men and women will behold the beauty and
the worthy substance of them and they will say:

"See, this our fathers and our mothers built for uas."

ken yehi ratzon... thus may it be God's will.



AMS: Dvar Torah - UJA - December 1992

As is customary, I draw my text from the Torah portion of the week: parshat vayetze, which we will be reading this week.

The narrative is familiar to all of you...

it is one of the more memorable of passages in scripture, how Jacob leaves his father's home to journey to Haran.

Enroute, he rests for the night, lays his head on some stones to sleep and dreams his dream of the stairway reaching to the heavens with angels ascending and descending thereon.

God appears to him in this dream and blesses him in almost the identical words with which God had blessed Abraham before:

"your seed will be as numerous as the dust of the earth... and all the families of the earth will be blessed by you."

God promises continuity to the children of Jacob surnamed Israel, but he also sets their task: to be a blessing to humankind.

It is a task which is increasingly difficult to fulfill nowadays as the events of the world incline us to turn inward, to care for ourselves alone.

Look about you and see:

from the Urals to the Ozarks the toxic waters of racism are rising ethnicity is running amok, everyone is out only for himself, so why should we care a fig about others.

Our sense of self-centeredness is further fuelled by the knowledge that anti-Semitism is the customary consequence, indeed, the most common and virulent manifestation of that unreasoned hatred which finds so many expressions in our world. Thus it always was, and thus it is in our day.

Some months ago, Marvin Lender and I
attended an international conference on Anti-Semitism
an the attending delegates reported a global rise
of that age-old great hatred.
They spoke of wide spread denials of the holocaust,
of the refurbished iconization of erstwhile Hitler puppets
such as Atonescu in Romania and Father Tizo in Slovakia...
and of the proliferation of facist and extremist parties
in many places.

All over Europe, so they reported, Jewish cemeteries
have been desecrated, synagoges defaced,
acts of violence perpetrated, even murder,
several such incidents recorded every single day now.
In Germany, rightist acts of violence have had a five-fold increase
over the prior year
and an ever increasing number of Germany's youth
are turning to the Neo Nazis...

[Marginally noted, I don't know why they keep on calling them neo-Nazis
They are the same old Nazis...malicious...ruthlesscold-blooded killers!]

Only two days ago, Israel's cabinet denounced the ugliness of what
is happening in Germany
Indeed, a recent poll showed that over 30%
of the Germans of today believe that Jews and not the Nazis
are largely to blame for the holocaust,
because of what they did or fail to do.

In other words, the victims are now to be deemed guilty
and not the murderers.
-- and all this, only one generation ofter Auschwitz.

Little wonder, then, that there is a tendency among Jews to turn inward
and re-echoing the sentiments of Israel's radical right to say:
Everyone is against us.
We are surrounded by enemies, so what's the use.
Let's dig in our own garden...
Let's go it alone...no one else will fend for us.

But this simply is not so...Our history gives lie to this contention.
We Jews never achieved freedoms by ourselves alone.
We always had friends, allies, decent people who championed our cause.
We broke out of the ghetto walls only because many other enlightened
forces in Europe amplified and fought to realize
our demands for equal status.
We would not have achieved the high state we presently enjoy
here in this land were it not for the Bill of Rights,
which was neither crafted nor realized by Jews.
And the State of Israel would not have been established
had not a majority of the world's peoples recognized the
moral rightness of our cause

Our history drives home this lesson, over and again.

Separatism is bad for Jews ...

We need friends in order to prevail.

But we cannot gain or retain such friends if we fend for ourselves
alone.

If we do not feel the pain of others, they will not feel our pain.

If we stand aloof from their causes and concerns,

we can scarcely expect them to stand at our side.

But far more important than this consideration of an enlightened self-interest, is the awareness of our solemn duty as Jews to care not just for our fellow Jews but for all of human kind.

Even so does our Torah portion remind us: Be a blessing!

We Jews are not just another ethnic group or another pressure bloc.

Our survival in the past has been for a higher purpose,

and our survival must continue to have meaning today.

If we kiss the world good-bye and separate ourselves from humankind our survival -- and the struggle to maintain it -- is valueless.

To be a Jew is to be something more a surviving endangered species.

To be a Jew is to be a goad to the conscience of humankind,

to bear a heart of flesh and blood and not of stone...

To be a Jew is to be part of the civilizing and humanizing force

of the universe...

To be a Jew is to defy despair though the Messiah tarry...

To be a Jew, as God told Abraham and Jacob thousands of years ago,

is to be part of a great and enduring people, YES,

but also to be a blessing to all human kind."

As is customary, I draw my ~~text~~ from the Torah portion of the week: parshat Vayetze, which we will be reading this week.

HP The narrative is familiar to all of you...

it is one of the more memorable of passages in scripture, how Jacob leaves his father's home to journey to Haran.

Enroute, he rests for the night, lays his head on some stones to sleep and dreams his dream of the stairway reaching to the heavens with angels ascending and descending thereon.

God appears to him in this dream and blesses him in almost the identical words with which God had blessed Abaraham before:

"your seed will be as numerous as the dust of the earth... and all the families of the earth will be blessed by you."

God promises continuity to the children of Jacob surnamed Israel, but he also sets their task: to be a blessing to humankind.

HP It is a task which is increasingly difficult to fulfill nowadays as the events of the world incline us to turn inward, to care for ourselves alone.

Look about you and see:

from the Urals to the Ozarks the toxic waters of racism are rising ethnicity is running amok, everyone is out only for himself, so why should we care a fig about others.

Our sense of self-centeredness is further fuelled by the knowledge that anti-Semitism is the customary consequence, indeed, the most common and virulent manifestation of that unreasoned hatred which finds so many expressions in our world.

Thus it always was, and thus it is in our day.



Some months ago, Marvin Lender and I

attended an international conference on Anti-Semitism
and the attending delegates reported a global rise
of that age-old great hatred.

They spoke of wide spread denials of the holocaust,
of the refurbished iconization of erstwhile Hitler puppets
such as Atnonescu in Romania and Father Tizo in Slovakia...
and of the proliferation of facist and extremist parties
in many places.

All over Europe, so they reported, Jewish cemeteries
have been desecrated, synagoges defaced,
acts of violence perpetrated, even murder,
several such incidents recorded every single day now.

In Germany, rightist acts of violence have had a five-fold increase
over the prior year
and an ever increasing number of Germany's youth
are turning to the Neo Nazis...

[Marginally noted, I don't know why they keep on calling them neo-Nazis
They are the same old Nazis...malicious...ruthlesscold-blooded killers!]

Only two days ago, Israel's cabinet denounced the ugliness of what
is happening in Germany
Indeed, a recent poll showed that over 30%

of the Germans of today believe that Jews and not the Nazis
are largely to blame for the holocaust,
because of what they did or fail to do.

In other words, the victims are now to be deemed guilty
and not the murderers.

-- and all this, only one generation after Auschwitz.

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and re-echoing the sentiments of Israel's radical right to say:
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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

New York Federation
of Reform Synagogues

ARCHIVES

50th Assembly of Delegates

Kutsher's Country Club
November 7, 1992



Presidential Address

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

NYFRS Assembly of Delegates, November 7, 1992

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

* * *

You do well to mark the 50th Anniversary of this Assembly, for you have accomplished much in the half century of your collective being. This Federation was born in a time of great trial for our people. Your first assembly was held in the Spring of 1942... not long after that infamous Wansee conference at which the masters of the master race resolved to put an end to us, to execute our final solution. Your founding delegates did not know yet of our enemies' full and formal resolve to extirpate the Jews. But they did know or at least sense that the axes were lifted and the pyres piled high for the burning. And so they saw the formation of this Federation as an act of spiritual resistance against the ruthless and barbarous forces of Nazism.

This Federation's accomplishments over the years fully justified these hopes. The founders and those who continued their work even unto this generation to build new congregations, to unify them, and thereby to buttress our synagogues and to burnish our faith. Think only of the Eisner Camp, that most precious and effective vehicle for the transmission of Judaism at our command. Look and see: it has helped us to reproduce our membership and leadership and it continues to secure our future.

reached Jerusalem. The great RamBam on the other hand insisted that we must learn to live in two worlds. Yes, he was the codifier of Jewish Law too, but in his most illustrious and enduring work, the More Nevuchim, the Guide to the Perplexed, he sought to bring Judaism into harmony with the prevailing philosophy of his day.

We too experience this tension, do we not, this tug between two worlds: How intimately a part of the society can we Jews be without losing our Jewish identity? Yet how separate can the Jewish community remain without cutting itself off from that larger society of which we are a part?

If, for the sake of Jewish cohesion, we keep our children confined in a Jewish environment, day in day out, seven days a week, where will they learn to interact with other Americans? But if, for the sake of interaction, we seek to immerse ourselves in the larger society, how will we be able to avoid being swallowed up by it, totally assimilated by that society?

These are the questions that limn the perplexing dilemma facing American Jewry. We are strained, stressed by the tension between liberty and community, between the survival needs of our people and our need to interact with the community of which we are a part.

* * *

It is a tension which is eased considerably by the fact that we live in a society which is pledged to the principle of pluralism.

Marginally noted, this is a principle of relatively recent vintage. But a generation ago — certainly when I first came to these shores — America was conceived to be a "melting pot," E pluribus unum —was the motto of the day - out of many one. The public school was seen as homogenizing agent, and diversity was muted, if not

* * *

The tension between individual liberty and the needs of community which our convention theme underscores is further eased by our particular understanding of Judaism.

As Reform Jews we are fully prepared to recast tradition, refashion it in response to contemporary need knowledge. We conceive of Judaism as a dynamic and not a static faith.

Note, if you will, that this conception, in no way, does violence to the Jewish tradition, for this is what Judaism always was, an ever changing faith, before it atrophied amid repressive encounters with Christendom, before it became encrusted by the codification process of our Dark Ages.

According to a well-known legend, when Moses was allowed by the Holy One, Blessed be He, to visit the Academy of Rabbi Akiba who lived many centuries later, our Great Lawgiver did not recognize the newer Judaism as his own, he failed to understand the teachings that Akiba quoted in his, Moses's name.

This midrash means to teach us that the rabbis of old understood Judaism to be an evolving faith, an ever changing faith, a continuously reforming religion, in the best sense of that adjective: a religion not of obeisance, but of a dialogue tempered by a profound sense of responsibility, a religion in which halachah was not frozen like ice but a soluble substance to be mixed with human tears.

To put the matter succinctly, it is modern orthodox literalism that is unauthentic, that represents a fundamental break with tradition. Reform Judaism, in its ideal conception, is palpably truer to that tradition.

We in Reform do not deem sanctity synonymous with immutability. We do not equate holiness with a rigid immobility. For us, the Jewish tradition did not end in

Well, in the first instance, we must deepen the Jewish educational components of our temples, we must make Jewish study -- not for children, but for adults as well -- a primary purpose of a congregation's striving. Every aspect of the congregational program must be bent to serve this end, the bulk of its resources applied to it. Only then will its center hold.

In this context, I have a modest proposal to make; I have made it before, I believe, but no one, to my knowledge has taken me up on it: Why not take a leaf from the Lubavitcher Chassidim. [After all, we have taken abuse from them, we might as well learn from them too]. They have refined the tradition of "daf yomi" which enjoins each Jew to study some page of the Talmud each day. They rather select a particular page, from the Talmud or from Chassidic literature, which becomes the assignment of the day, as it were, and which is studied on the very same day by every Lubavitcher Chassid in the world. This custom serves not only as a stimulus to study, but as a unifying force as well.

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

Admittedly, this is a modest suggestion.

But I believe that it would energize the congregation's educative process and make it more cohesive. It would help us to understand, and act on the understanding that Jewish education is not limited to the classroom, that it must penetrate every other room and activity of Temple's life: from committee meetings to conversation within its

place where easy answers are given and few if any questions asked, that we need do little if anything at all and we can still call ourselves Jews.

I know that I have spoken often of this matter before, and I will continue to speak of it with Cato-like regularity, though there is no need to elaborate.

Suffice it to say, that to be a Jew in one's mind or heart is simply not enough. The pure idea can serve only a few rare individuals, theologians, philosophers if you will.

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

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

Only when we as synagogue leaders put on such a garb, will those who see us also see and seize on Reform Judaism as a serious and consequentially meaningful religious enterprise.

Now, our religious community has burgeoned numerically, not only because we have made change our hallmark, but also because of our firm and fearless resolve to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

In the Book of Numbers, Parshat beha'alotecha our teacher Moses is reported to have proclaimed: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets."

All the Lord's people -- aye, says Reform Judaism!

All the Lord's people including women.

All the Lord's people -- including gay and lesbian Jews.

All the Lord's people, including families in all of their new constellations.

All the Lord's people, including the intermarried, and Jews-by-choice, yes, and the hearing-impaired, and the wheelchair bound, and the disabled in body and spirit.

Their needs are also numbered among our responsibilities, and their energies too need

But we are not to be scapegoated for their ever rising rate. Outreach was not designed to reverse the tide of intermarriage. It was designed, rather, to retain the intermarried for Judaism, to gather and keep them within the fold. We should be credited, therefore, for doing our share to staunch the bleeding and to infuse new blood into the body Jewish. Note, if you will, that we are the only stream of Judaism on the American Jewish scene that is swelling in numbers.

There is one respect, however, in which our Outreach endeavor requires revision: We need to intensify our efforts to gain converts, both before and after marriage.

All studies agree that conversionary marriages are infinitely more stable Jewishly and in every other way; These couples lead more palpably Jewish lives, and their children receive a sounder Jewish rearing.

And so we need to move away from the "neutral," non-proselyting stance that has hitherto informed our Outreach effort, and our desire to welcome converts should be made explicit rather than only implicit in our work.

Everyone must be involved in this effort, if it is to succeed, rabbis, cantors, educators, lay leaders, and above all parents. We must lose no opportunity to persuade our children either to marry Jews or to urge their non-Jewish partners to opt for Judaism.

Please don't misunderstand me here: I do not suggest that we somehow slow or even reverse our Outreach programming, or make the intermarried -- including their non-Jewish partners -- uncomfortable or unwelcome...God forbid! But I do believe that we must make the non-Jewish partners of our children understand that we are not indifferent to them and that we are eager to embrace them as fuller members of our

faith was quenched by Judaism.

Yes, people do choose Judaism on religious grounds alone. I don't know why so many Jews are surprised that this is so. They think that choosing to be Jewish is a symptom of some kind of abnormality.

Some years ago, the Union prepared a video tape of interviews with several Jews-by-Choice. Among them was a couple, neither of whom was born a Jew and who chose Judaism together. When they were asked to relate what experience in the conversion process was most disturbing, most painful to them, John, the husband, answered: "I was most troubled when my Jewish friends said to me: Are you crazy? You needed this, to become a Jew? And I began to wonder...if they don't know it's there, maybe it isn't there!"

"If they don't know it's there, maybe it isn't there."

Here is the essential challenge, for in lacking a mission we are suspect of also lacking the message.

But we do have a message, my friends. Let us not doubt nor fail to proclaim it. We have so very much to offer: Judaism celebrates life and not death. It insists on the freedom and the capacity of the individual to determine his fate. Judaism is a religion of hope and not of despair; it holds society and humankind perfectible. It allows, nay, even encourages freedom of thought, the right of the exploring mind to question tradition, yea, even the justice of God. Moreover, we offer something more than a disembodied faith system. We are a people of faith, a caring community of Jews. In other words, we have an enormous amount of wisdom and experience, of warmth and of love to offer to this troubled world. And we Jews ought to be proud to speak about it, frankly, freely, and with dignity.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler's Introduction of Jesse Jackson
U.A.H.C. Board Meeting

Ritz Carlton Hotel, Palm Beach, Florida
December 12, 1992

(Introductory . . . greetings to Board telling them how important their contribution to our work is. . . . Thanks to their efforts, our movement has burgeoned.. . . etc. Then:)

Those decisions which we have collectively reached at our semi annual meetings have also made a difference. They have given new direction to our movement and left their lasting mark. Outreach, Religious Commitment, Yad Tikvah, the renewal of intergroup coalitions - - all these, and other programmatic themes were first sounded at our board meetings and they have become dominant in the symphony of the Union's work.

The subject before us this morning is also of considerable consequence, for we will be focusing on the problem of America's cities. Surely this is one of the most critical of issues facing our nation, and the leaders of Reform Judaism's Social Action Commission have resolved to place this matter high on our agenda.

Our tradition enjoins us to make such a commitment. "seek the peace of the city in which you live . . . for only in its peace will you find peace . . . ," Thundered Jeremiah. Commenting on this scriptural passage, a Talmudic master bade us "never to pray in a house where there are no windows." Let the windows of your sanctuaries be kept open, he added, so that humanity's weeping will always be heard by those who worship within.

There is much weeping out there in the world, is there not, especially in the inner cities of our land. The millions who live there are the victims of violence, they all of them are -- a violence whose impact may not be as immediate as are riots in the streets, and yet are just as fatal. I speak of the violence that poisons relations between people because their skin has a different color. I speak of the violence that destroys children by hunger, and by schools with no books, and homes with no heat. I speak of the violence that robs the jobless of their sense of self worth and stifles all their hope.

It is this slow acting, but no less lethal, violence which our society needs to confront. For if we don't, why then the violence of the streets will erupt with a growing frequency and destructiveness. It will rage not just in Los Angeles, but also in Palm Springs, not just in Crown Heights, but also in Shaker Heights. "Seek the peace of the city in which you live, for only in its peace will you find peace."

As a religious community it is our clear obligation to help in this realm, to do what we can, and to prod the leaders of our nation to address the pain and frustration and bitterness that are destroying the lives of millions. We have invited the Reverend Jesse Jackson to help us find the way to do so because he feels this pain more deeply than many others, and he has labored mightily to allay it. We invited him for one more reason still: because we are convinced that the alliance between Blacks and Jews in America is quintessential for our common purposes, and we, on our part, are determined to re-forge this alliance. Our speaker, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, was active in the glory days of the Black/Jewish alliance which we now so nostalgically recall. As a Martin Luther King aide, he was a key player in that coalition of decency in which Blacks and Jews were such indispensable partners. But times and events have led us to

view him as having contributed to those tensions that now divide our communities, even as he has the unique potential to be a bridge between us.

This changing perception comes as no news to him. He hears our complaints wherever and whenever he encounters us in the public arena. Little purpose is served in rehearsing the litany of these complaints. The wounds will never heal if we keep on re-opening them. We can't remain mired in the past, but must move forward.

Jesse Jackson, on his part, has certainly endeavored to do so, but honesty compels us to admit that we, on our part, have failed to respond to, or even acknowledge his many efforts to repair the breach.

He has been speaking of "secure borders" for Israel and he forcefully supported the Camp David Accords, and all the approaches embodied in it.

He confronted Gorbachev in Geneva on the issue of Soviet Jewry.

He was ready to travel to Syria to intercede for the Israeli MIA's . Indeed, during the past year, he was tireless in his efforts to gain freedom for Syrian Jewry - - and he made no fanfare about it. He did it because it was right.

To protest the Bitburg obscenity, he visited concentration camps and since then he has spoken eloquently on the unique meaning of the Holocaust.

In Brussels, earlier this year, at an International Conference on Anti-Semitism, he delivered a powerful speech aimed clearly at a reconciliation with the Jewish community. I was there, and heard

his impassioned plea. He praised Zionism as a "liberation movement" and called on Jews and Blacks to renew their joint fight against racism.

Since then, and even before, he repeatedly delivered this self same message of reconciliation with Cato-like regularity and intensity and not just to Jewish audiences, but whenever and wherever he speaks, and especially to his own people even when there is not a single Jew among his listeners.

All of this and more is widely reported by the Black media. But it is scarcely mentioned in the Jewish or Israeli press. His many efforts to reach out to us were too often met with suspicion and silence.

But justice demands otherwise. Let us, therefore, enter into today's dialogue openly, sensitively, and candidly. Let us not nurse our wounds and translate every difference into a grievance, every controversy into combat, every disagreement into a bloodletting. Jews can't afford it, Blacks can't afford it. America and the world can't afford it. Only our common enemies, the enemies of freedom, rejoice when Blacks and Jews square off against each other.

We live at a time when racial and religious and ethnic differences are growing, when "ethnic cleansing" is ravaging the former Yugoslavia, and xenophobia fuels violence against foreigners in Germany. When gypsies are hounded in Eastern Europe, and the fires of homophobia and racism are stoked for political gain in our own land.

In such an hour, we must look beyond the hurts and grievances of the past. Blacks and Jews need each other not only because we have common enemies, but because of our common dreams. Together, we share a vision of a just and open and generous society.

together we identify with the weak and the stranger. Together we hold that it is the foremost task of government to achieve social, economic and political justice.

Our speaker is an eloquent spokesman for our shared vision, a man who has done much to make it a reality. He is the most widely acknowledged leader of America's Black community, a staunch defender of his people's rights and dignity. But more, transcending race, he has earned the respect of millions of Americans as a leader of political, intellectual and moral power on the great and vexing issues of our time. I present to you.



1992

Save this

REMARKS BY RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER
AT OUR SYNAGOGUE-FEDERATION RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

Let me begin by asserting that I consider the alliance between the synagogue community and the Federation community essential in our common quest to achieve Jewish continuity.

It will come as no surprise to anyone that I regard the synagogue as the pivotal institution in Jewish life. It was that historically and it continues to be that today. It is the indispensable element of our people's survival.

Consider this if you will:

Who is responsible for teaching our children to be Jews? The synagogue - our financially pressed, overburdened, short staffed synagogues! Who will assure that there will be a Jewishly educated, Jewishly committed, generation 20 years from now? Who will provide the teachers and the rabbis and the scholars for that generation? Who will assure those many other communal and national Jewish organizations a reservoir of Jews on which they will be able to draw for their membership a score years hence? Who will provide the State of Israel with a continuing corps of understanding Jews? The answer in every case, of course, is the synagogue. It has to be the synagogue - the synagogue and those camps and seminaries and the multitude of educational efforts that they sustain.

The synagogue is where Jews are made, where the individual soul and the community are joined. It is the place where modernity and eternity cross fertilize, where the seeds of the Jewish identity are sown. All other institutions in Jewish life are created by Jews. Only the synagogue creates Jews, child by child, family, by family, minyan by minyan.

The Federation's own National Jewish Population Study - which so shocked our community - reveals how much more deeply committed synagogue affiliated Jews are than those who belong to no congregation. Their attachment to Israel is more intense, their attitude toward intermarriage is more wholesome from a communal point of view, their Jewish feelings are so much more impassioned.

And this above all, synagogue affiliated Jews are infinitely more likely to assume the mantle of Jewish communal leadership. A recent broad based AJC study establishes that the overwhelming proportion of American Jewish leaders are, in fact, synagogue affiliated, that they attend worship service with a measure of regularity, that their children are involved in Jewish youth groups and summer camps and that a goodly portion even attend day schools - - all far higher than the national average of all Jews. Let there be no doubt about it; it is the synagogue affiliated Jews who consistently emerge as the guardians of the Jewish future.

I conclude from all this that the Federation-Synagogue partnership concerning which we speak, is not only a desideratum, but a necessity and that we must bend every effort to achieve it. The Federations have the material resources, synagogues have the human resources, and both are needed to secure our future.

Why hasn't this partnership been achieved before? Possibly because the Federation community was primarily engaged in the task of community building and as such saw the synagogue community with its diverse interpretations of Judaism as a divisive force.

Thus, for example, much Federation support went into CLAL, whose primary task it is to secure communal cohesion. Yet I, for one, do not see Jewish unity as a serious problem confronting American Jews. Our disputations, such as they are, are almost solely limited to the professional class -- rabbi versus rabbi -- and have not truly inflamed the passions of our people. Jewish unity is not really a problem; Jewish continuity is!

If the Federations want to assure Jewish continuity, therefore, they can best do so by supporting specific synagogue programs, even at the risk of enduring some of our inter-denominational frays. Such frays are simply the price paid for our passion and that very passion is vital to the success of our efforts. It is this subjective passion, and only this passion, which can make Judaism come to life in the hearts of our children.

Why be fearful of this passion and therefore resort to the "lowest common denominator Judaism" of too many communal schools, community centers and camps and Israel adventures? Why invest in a pale version of what the synagogue movements have already built? Why not instead offer Federation scholarships for synagogue camps and Israel trips and Outreach programs, and other suitable points of Jewish connection - - allowing each family to choose its affiliation, in the trust that affiliation per se means empowerment for the Jewish community as a whole.

Synagogue leaders, on the other hand, were hesitant to enter into a partnership with Federations because they did not like to be accountable for anyone else. I reject this notion categorically. We ought not to be afraid of "accountability" because in the final analysis we have to be accountable to ourselves. If the application of this principle results in the attainment of higher standards and the more effective distribution of available resources - - as it is bound to do - - then we ought to embrace it.

The notion of a partnership assumes a shared financial responsibility and we must be fully prepared to meet it. Synagogues must bear their fair share of the costs involved in Federation supported projects, and they must be accountable for the expenditure of funds as well as the quality of the programs

these funds sustain - - albeit such standards of excellence should be jointly established with full respect for the integrity of each of the religious streams.

I welcome Federation's resolve to make Jewish education central to its mission. Still, I must confess that I am somewhat disturbed by the initial directions taken by community inspired funds for education (e.g. the Mandell Commission, the Pincus Fund) which place a premium on day school education and see it as the primary, if not the sole guarantor of Jewish continuity.

This is not to say that I am opposed to full time Jewish education. Quite the contrary, those of you who are a part of our own religious community know that I have been the fervent exponent of day schools and I take pride in the fact that we have now a budding chain of such schools all over the land. Full-time Jewish education is absolutely essential to the attainment of an educated leadership.

Just the same, I regard the informal education endeavors of our youth groups and our camps of equal, if not of greater worth. Indeed, as I travel from community to community - which I do not unlike Satan, wandering to and fro across this land - I find evidence of the importance of experiential education. Wherever I go, I hear people saying to me "I became a rabbi, or I became an

educator, or I became the Cantor, or I became the community leader, or I made certain that my children have a Jewish education even though I entered into intermarriage because I attended one of the Union's camps - that experience was a turning point in my life." This should be no surprise, for you see in the informal setting of our camps, we have not only more time for instruction, but we can also create the kind of environment which is reflective of our ideals, of our very best. In this manner we can reach not only the minds of our charges, but also their hearts. We can plant the seeds of Jewish devotion within them and in this manner make Judaism come to life in their souls. We can 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.

There is absolutely no evidence that those who enjoy full time Jewish schooling are immune to alienation. Indeed, the National Jewish Population Study shows that a dramatic increase in the intermarriage rate of those whose Jewish education was received primarily in a Jewish day school, rising from 18% in first marriages to 29% in second marriages in the last 10 years. Alas, the type of Jewish education one receives has no statistically significant impact on the rate of intermarriage. Indeed, the doyen, the spiritual leadership of modern mainline Orthodoxy, in a Hadoar interview some years ago - Harav Soloveitchek declared, "my Orthodox colleagues may criticize me for saying this, but insofar as the plague of intermarriage is concerned which has not

passed over the houses of the Orthodox, I am afraid we will have do what the Reformers are doing, albeit in an Orthodox context." In other words, full time education doesn't inure us to the problems we modern Jews face in having to live in two worlds, and I, for one, place equal, if not greater, worth on the effectiveness of informal education in our common quest to secure Jewish continuity.

Unfortunately, I could not be with you this morning and so I don't know everything that was discussed, but I see that Barry Shrage is here today, spoke earlier, and he likely repeated what he said to our Board some time ago, to wit: "In this evolving partnership, we ought not to use a scattershot approach, but establish clear priorities." As far as I am concerned, they are the following:

1. Early childhood education - - day camps, nursery schools, day care centers, and the like. Ignatius Loyola's dictum still applies: "Give me a child before the age of 6 and you can have him for the rest of his life." You can't put leaven in the dough once it comes out of the oven. There is no doubt about it, early life experiences are essential in the development of Jewish identity.

2. Jewish camping - and let me repeat in this context what I said earlier, that passion is an important ingredient for the effectiveness in securing Jewish continuity. I am told that

Federation sponsored community camps are not doing so well and I have a strong suspicion that this is so because they are lacking in an intensive Jewish component. That component passionately conveyed is ever present in our synagogue's camps, and that is why the Union's camps are filled to the overflowing.

Unfortunately, camps are not cheap and scholarship funds would be of immense value. There is no reason why this kind of valuable Jewish educational experiences should be the possession only of those who can afford it.

3. Israel experiences. Here too, I want to note that not all of these programs are of equal worth. Here too, there is a need for careful planning for a focusing on the Jewish education component. Not all Israel trips are of equal worth. Some are merely tours, insufficiently staffed with qualified guides who understand what we are about.

4. Outreach to the intermarried. The NJP survey mandates a cooperative endeavor in this realm and we in the Reform movement have developed an expertise in it. Let us face the facts: The factors leading to intermarriage are so many and persuasive that even our best efforts in the realm of education are not going to prevent intermarriage. Again, I believe in Jewish education. I believe in expending our resources to implant Jewish identity. Still, we have to deal with the reality that our best efforts do not suffice, nor do those of the other branches of Judaism. It

is an open society and intermarriage is the sting which comes to us with the honey of our freedom. More than ever before, our young people go to school and work and live alongside non-Jews. Ultimately, many determine to choose them as life partners - - not to escape from being Jews, but simply because they have fallen in love.

Shall we abandon these people? Shall we sit shiva over them? We of the Reform movement have resolved not to do so. Though persisting in our rejection of intermarriage, we refuse to reject the intermarried. On the contrary, we have resolved to love them all the more. We do everything we humanly can to draw them closer to us. We try to involve them in Jewish life and in the life of our community in the hope of bringing the non-Jewish partner to Judaism, or at least to make certain that the children issuing from these marriages, our children and their children's children in turn, will in fact be reared as Jews and share the destiny of the Jewish people.

These, then, are some of the priorities which I see for our common venture.

Let me conclude as I began, by reasserting my conviction that the partnership between the synagogue and Federation communities is not only desirable, but essential. I am confident that once we engage in a joint creative and diligent effort, we will bring to

new heights our 3000 year old identity as a religious-national culture, united in our commitment to the land of Israel and the people of Israel, and the Torah of Israel - - united in our dreams, our fate, and our faith.



Schindler: Sharon Kleinbaum Installation
Congregation Beth Simchat Torah
September 11, 1992



I am grateful for your warm introduction, Irving

It is good to be here and to participate in your communal simcha.

In these ceremonies which mark the installation
of Sharon Kleinbaum as your first full-time Rabbi.

This is a joyous occasion, to be sure,

but is also a moment filled with trembling awe,
a moment fraught with far-reaching consequence
for rabbi and congregation alike.

P Sharon is no stranger to me, as you may know.

We were colleagues on the Union staff.

She was the Director of Congregational Relations of Reform Judaism's

Religious Action Center in Washington,

for the past several years,

and even before that served us in various capacities

both here and in Israel,

and she served us exceedingly well.

P We will miss her greatly, for her gifts of the spirit are rich.

She is blessed with a first rate mind and cultivates it assiduously;

few of her peers are so well and widely read.

She is a gifted teacher, well able to transmit her ideas and ideals
in the written and the spoken word.

Her integrity is unbending, enabling her to teach also

not just by precept but by example, by the manner of her life..

She is a natural leader, spurring others to follow her way,

not by demanding or commanding, but with a quiet strength.

And this above all, she is essentially decent, humane, caring;

harboring a soul-felt fellow feeling

for all forms of human existence.

P I am told that it took you nearly two years to screen the candidates
for this post and to make your selection.

You did not labor in vain -- the treasure is well worth the effort.

You are fortunate to have found Sharon Kleinbaum,

to have her now as your spiritual leader.

D But, then, Sharon too is fortunate,
for by all accounts this congregation is also a find,
rare and remarkable in its complexion.
You do not expect your rabbi to serve as surrogate for your
religious aspirations,
to pray for you, to study for you,
to perform Judaism's rites in your stead
You give force to these aspirations yourself,
by participating fully in the religious life.

B You are unique in one other respect as well,
in that you embrace in your community all streams of
contemporary Judaism:
orthodox, conservative, reconstructionist, reform
they all find their place in your communal home.
You understand and act upon the understanding that those words
which denote our divergent approaches to Judaism are
but adjectives and that the unifying noun is Jew.
Woz mir zeinen senned mir ober yidn zennen mir...
What ever we may be, we may be, but this above all,
we are Jews.

H In this respect too, Sharon, given the diversity of her background
and experience, is uniquely prepared to serve you.
She comes from a traditional home,
received her religious schooling in a conservative synagogue
attended the Reconstructionist seminary
and served Reform Jewish institutions.
It is almost as if her service to this community was pre-ordained.

R We have a perfect match, here, an ideal nuptial bond,
uniting as it does an unusual rabbi with a unique congregation.
All we need do is to express the prayerful hope
that the beautiful promise of this installation hour
will indeed be fulfilled, during the months and years ahead.

R And if my installation message must have its cohortative aspects,
then let it be this:
Let this congregation value its admirably gifted new rabbi,
ever drawing from her that which she is capable of giving.
And may you, Sharon, together with those you love,
give your utmost to the sons and daughters of
this holy congregation,
knowing with full assurance that they will respond
to the best, whenever the best is given and demanded.

* * *

R Now, an occasion such as this should not be devoted to 'inyanei, d'yoma,
to matters of temporal concern,
especially during these days before our holiest season
when our souls, like the trees of autumn, prepare for new growth
by discarding the weight of the past year.

R But our Jewish season of renewal is paralleled this year
by the American presidential campaign,
the excesses of which compel me to turn my remarks
at least briefly to the political sphere.

R I refer now especially to the reshaping of the concept of 'family values' by the Buchanan-Robertson axis of the Republican party, a concept substantially embraced by the incumbent administration in its effort to win re-election.

You remember Buchanan's abhorrent convention speech, and Pat Robertson inflammatory peroration during which he opined that the Equal Rights amendment

"encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians."

(Quote unquote)

AS ANN BUCHANAN PUT IT THE OTHER DAY: "WHAT, NO CANNIBALISM?"

R The 'values' the Buchanans of our world hold forth as 'family values' are nothing short of their transvaluation, their debasement, their perversion!

Their 'values' seek to cover up pain, to hide poverty, to wish away heartbreak in our land.

Their 'values' are "values" of a Disneyland America that wears a smile-button as its badge and declares as alien any one whose countenance suggests a more subtle emotion.

Their 'values' have been proffered throughout American history as codewords for racism, anti-Semitism, misogyny and xenophobia, and this year a not so new twist, homophobia,

Gay people have come to the fore as the demon, the alien, the scapegoat.

R More ominous than the vulgarity of Buchanan and Robertson is the sickening silence of our country's elected leaders, who should have repudiated these rantings at once as polarizing, inflammatory, incitements to violence.

Their silence shames them, and threatens the liberties of all Americans.

R We cannot condone all this...not as Americans,
and especially not as Jews,
certainly not as historically conscious Jews,
for we have seen it all before:

...seen the effort to drive us into hiding,
or make us alien because we are different.

...seen the effort to shatter the rainbow of culture and creed,
race and gender, and sexual preference that spans the sky

...seen the effort to define all men and women by a single aspect
of their being
so that it is the Jew, the black, the gay, the lesbian, the
foreigner that identifies us,
rather than the whole human being who, like all human beings,
was made in the Divine Image.

Aye, we have seen it all before!

R No, we cannot condone it, because we are a community
that understands true family values as a quest, not a dogma:
a quest to build new relationships that offer love, pride,
self-respect;
a quest to conceive and bear or adopt children against all odds;
a quest to bring dignity to our dying loved ones,
despite the discrimination that pursues them even to their
deathbeds if not beyond;
a quest to bring understanding to our families,
despite the temptation to keep on hiding
and thereby to deny the integrity of selfhood.

R I use the plural pronoun "we" based on a simple fact,
a fact that any Jewish child with a crayon can tell you:
that the star of David contains within it the triangle.
Based on that essential geometry, all of us who are assembled
here this night, are indeed one community, one people,
bound to one another by indissoluble bonds of kinship.

H As the new year comes and we pray for the renewal of our days and ways,
let us pray also that America will renew its covenant
with the best and not the worst in its heritage
as our country turns toward its new beginning.

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R But let me return to the leitmotif of my installation message
to the less temporal and more enduring themes
befitting this awe-filled hour in which the sons and daughters
of Bet Simchat Torah enter into a covenant with
with their new rabbi.

R The tasks facing Sharon Kleinbaum are many and consequential.
And the first of these assuredly is to strengthen and sustain
that institution which has been entrusted to her care.
This is her first and foremost task:
to strengthen the synagogue,
to sustain it as the pivotal institution in Jewish life.

R The synagogue is precisely that:
the magic ingredient of Judaism's wondrous endurance.
It is the indispensable element of our people's survival.

R Consider this, if you will.

Who is responsible for teaching our children to be Jews?

The synagogue -- our financially pressed, over-burdened, short-staffed synagogues!

Who will assure that there will be a Jewishly educated, Jewishly committed generation twenty years from now?

Who will provide the teachers and the rabbis and the scholars for that generation?

Who will assure those many other communal and national Jewish organizations a reservoir of Jews on which they will be able to draw for their membership a score years hence?

Who will provide the State of Israel with a continuing corps of understanding Jews?

The answer in every case, of course is the synagogue.

It has to be the synagogue -- the synagogue and those camps and seminaries and multitudinous educational efforts that they sustain.

H The synagogue is where Jews are made, where the individual soul and the community are joined.

It is the place where modernity and eternity cross-fertilize, where the seeds of the Jewish identity are sown.

All other institutions in Jewish life are created by Jews.

Only the synagogue creates Jews -- child by child, family by family, minyan by minyan.

* * *

R But the synagogue will be a force for continuity only so long as
it is true to its essential mission, and that is to enable
the individual Jew to pursue the quest for God.

R It is a quest we dare not eschew.

It is, when all is said and done, the life-task of the Jew.

It is our mission, our historic calling,

"Who is a Jew" - asked Leo Baeck - "He is someone who experiences
himself in the direction of God...He is a human being who directs
himself toward God in such a way that no part of his life is
without this center, without this contact..."

To pursue the quest for God, to strive to know God, to seek to serve God,

-- this is the duty that defines us as the covenant people.

R This process begins when we open ourselves to experience the holy.

We cannot sense the grandeur of nature if we look at a sunrise
through sleepy eyes.

We cannot expect a worship service to stir you to the depths of our
being if we approach it only causally in a commonplace manner.

There is a prior need for kavanah, for an intention,
a conscious determination to be so stirred.

R Perhaps our reluctance to open ourselves to the experience of the holy
is impeded by that overly rigid mind-set of modernity
which insists that all postulates be demonstrable
and experienced by the senses.

R It is a mindset which is mystified by that paradox
in Jewish theological thought which holds
that God, though unknowable, nonetheless makes Himself known.

God is wholly other -- we are taught.

He is completely different from us.

He cannot be grasped by ordinary modes of thought and perception.

We cannot, should not even conjure up His image.

We must not describe Him, or, following Maimonides,

we can describe Him only by means of negations,

by saying what He is not.

And attributes ascribed to God by Biblical poets are but metaphor.

P But at the same time we are taught that though unknowable,

God reveals Himself in countless ways.

So Moses was told atop Sinai when he stood in the cleft of the rock:

"Thou canst not see My face,

but I will make all my goodness pass before Thee."

Even so can we behold God's goodness "in the realm of nature

and in the varied experiences of our lives."

P You remember those heaven soaring words of our liturgy:

"When justice burns like a flaming fire within us...
when love evokes willing sacrifice from us...when,
to the last full measure of selfless devotion,
we proclaim our belief in the ultimate triumph of truth
and righteousness...then (does God) you live within our hearts
and we behold (His) presence."

Unknowable, yet known...how enigmatic...how paradoxical...

P Yet strangely enough, modern science ~~of~~ whose teachings we accept
with greater ease than we do the teachings of faith,
nonetheless confronts us with a like seeming paradox.

R Chemists, for instance, routinely accept the reality of certain gases by their effect alone, even though these gases themselves have never been isolated or seen.

Physicists, in their endeavor to study the nature of matter, developed a device called a cloud chamber.

Cloud chambers allow the observer to see paths traced by particles resulting from nuclear reactions.

The actual particles, however, remain unobservable.

They have never been seen, might never be seen, with naked eye or instruments however well-refined.

Here too then, a leap of faith is required, a scientific leap of faith, if you will, to acknowledge the existence of a particle that can be known only through its traces.

R Unknowable, yet known through its traces.
Invisible, but real, nonetheless.

R This paradox may account for much of our present-day reluctance to reclaim and proclaim our spiritual identity as Jews.
Like the rest of humankind, we are creatures in bondage to our eyes.
Only seeing is believing, we say; only the visible is fact.
We also tend to value primarily things that are of use, that have their practical application, that can be measured and weighed and, above all, bought and sold.

R But the invisible world has a reality all its own, and its force may well be more intense than is the force of the world that is seen.

Consider the world of the invisible, if you will:

P Ideas, for example. They are impalpable. No one can see or seize them. Yet ideas can seize us and they hold the power to transform our lives.

P Ideals too are of such a kind.

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

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

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

Take justice from the far-flung round of human endeavor,
and civilization reverts into a jungle.

P Music is such invisible force, every form of art is that:
dance, sculpture, painting, architecture,
-- "music in space." Schelling called them.

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

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

Yet art has the power to heal us.

It can make the spirit soar,

for art is spirit from the realm of the unseen,
conveyed by means of matter.

P Ah, and then there is love which is also an invisible force.

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

But no one has ever seen love itself.

It certainly cannot be anatomized, or schematized,
or reduced to clearly identifiable elements.

Yet how powerful a force love is!

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

P Aye, there is a world of reality
beyond those worlds perceived by the physical sense alone.
And altogether multitudinous are life's gifts that have no
practical worth but nonetheless are altogether wond'rous:
The earth's green covering of grass.
The blue serenity of sea and sky.
The song of day, the silent wonder of the night.
Petals on the grass and wings in the air.

Oh, how flat, how narrow our world is,
when we measure its gifts by their usefulness alone,
when, in Rilke's happy simile
"we take a hold of peacock's feathers to tickle one another
while being oblivious to their essential charm."

Then do the words of prophecy apply to us:

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

P No, the human story simply cannot be told
without reference to that mystery and majesty that transcends
all logic and reason.

Only those who open themselves to such a mystery
can transcend the grandeur and terror of their lives
without being blinded by life's grandeur
or crushed by its terror.

P Only when we open ourselves to such a mystery,
will we find our Judaism to be a sustaining faith and not a
dry-as-dust religion.

R And it is precisely this kind of faith that we so desperately need.
for while routine religion suffices to sustain our lighter hours,
once life runs out into its depths
why, then, we need a different faith.

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

now I have reached the bottom of the morass

now I can sink no deeper

...and yet we sink deeper

Why, then, we need a deeper faith.

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

gami ki elech begey tsalmoves lo iro ro ki ato imodi

"Yea, thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of
death, I will fear no evil, for Thou, Thou art with me."

R This then is two-fold mandate inherent in this hour
To strengthen the synagogue in its outer form,

to buttress it materially,

but also to make certain that this will always be a place

in which men and women can find the companionship of kindred

and aspiring souls in their quest for God.

P It is in the hope that he will enable us to fulfill this two-fold
mandate that we offer to Sharon K. our blessings and our prayers..

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

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

Assume your new tasks, then, and raise up students in Torah, the Torah that is God's blueprint for creation, that some day you may know the joy that we do, as we give you our blessing.

④ Please come to the open ark, Sharon,

and as I ask God's blessing on you,

I would like you to be joined by the past presidents of this congregation, those who have led its sons and daughters so devotedly and effectively for so many years.

Schindler: Sharon Kleinbaum Installation
Congregation Beth Simchat Torah
September 11, 1992

I am grateful for your warm introduction, Irving
albeit I am embarrassed by its extravagance...
at least the better part of me is embarrassed,
though my ego isn't...

Yet there is no danger that my ego will be overly inflated
by words such as these.

My wife is always with me and she is both capable and always willing
to put me in my proper place.

Good as she is in deflating my ego, she was outdone by a young
chassidic boy whom I encountered near the Western Wall
in Jerusalem some years ago...

A few among you have probably heard me tell this story...

it is my favorite and I like retelling it:

(Yarmulke Story)

Extravagant though your words were, Irving, I am nonetheless grateful
for the graciousness of your reception.

It is good to be here and to participate in your communal simcha
in these ceremonies which mark the installation
of Sharon Kleinbaum as your first full-time Rabbi.

This is a joyous occasion, to be sure,
but it is also moment filled with trembling awe,
a moment fraught with far-reaching consequence
for rabbi and congregation alike.

Sharon is no stranger to me, as you may know.

We were colleagues on the Union staff.

She was the Director of Congregational Relations of Reform Judaism's

Religious Action Center in Washington,

for the past several years,

and even before that served us in various capacities

both here and in Israel,

and she served us exceedingly well.

We will miss her greatly, for her gifts of the spirit are rich.

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not just by precept but by example, by the manner of her life..

She is a natural leader, spurring others to follow her way,

not by demanding or commanding, but with a quiet strength.

And this above all, she is essentially decent, humane, caring;

harboring a soul-felt fellow feeling

for all forms of human existence.

I am told that it took you nearly two years to screen the candidates

for this post and to make your selection.

You did not labor in vain -- the treasure is well worth the effort.

You are fortunate to have found Sharon Kleinbaum,

to have her now as your spiritual leader.

But, then, Sharon too is fortunate,
for by all accounts this congregation is also a find,
rare and remarkable in its complexion.
You do not expect your rabbi to serve as surrogate for your
religious aspirations,
to pray for you, to study for you,
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You give force to these aspirations yourself,
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You are unique in one other respect as well,
in that you embrace in your community all streams of
contemporary Judaism:
orthodox, conservative, reconstructionist, reform
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Woz mir zeinen senned mir ober yidn zennen mir...
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we are Jews.

In this respect too, Sharon, given the diversity of her background
and experience, is uniquely prepared to serve you.
She comes from a traditional home,
received her religious schooling in a conservative synagogue
attended the Reconstructionist seminary
and served Reform Jewish institutions.
It is almost as if her service to this community was pre-ordained.

We have a perfect match, here, an ideal nuptial bond,
uniting as it does an unusual rabbi with a unique congregation.
All we need do is to express the prayerful hope
that the beautiful promise of this installation hour
will indeed be fulfilled, during the months and years ahead.

And if my installation message must have its cohortative aspects,
then let it be this:

Let this congregation value its admirably gifted new rabbi,
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when our souls, like the trees of autumn, prepare for new growth
by discarding the weight of the past year.

But our Jewish season of renewal is paralleled this year
by the American presidential campaign,
the excesses of which compel me to turn my remarks
at least briefly to the political sphere.

I refer now especially to the reshaping of the concept of 'family values' by the Buchanan-Robertson axis of the Republican party, a concept substantially embraced by the incumbent administration in its effort to win re-election.

You remember Buchanan's abhorrent convention speech, and Pat Robertson inflammatory peroration during which he opined that the Equal Rights amendment "encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." (Quote unquote)

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for we have seen it all before:

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a fact that any Jewish child with a crayon can tell you:
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It is our mission, our historic calling,

"Who is a Jew" - asked Leo Baeck - "He is someone who experiences
himself in the direction of God...He is a human being who directs
himself toward God in such a way that no part of his life is
without this center, without this contact..."

To pursue the quest for God, to strive to know God, to seek to serve God,
-- this is the duty that defines us as the covenant people.

This process begins when we open ourselves to experience the holy.
We cannot sense the grandeur of nature if we look at a sunrise
through sleepy eyes.

We cannot expect a worship service to stir you to the depths of our
being if we approach it only causally in a commonplace manner.
There is a prior need for kavanah, for an intention,
a conscious determination to be so stirred.

Perhaps our reluctance to open ourselves to the experience of the holy
is impeded by that overly rigid mind-set of modernity
which insists that all postulates be demonstrable
and experienced by the senses.

It is a mindset which is mystified by that paradox
in Jewish theological thought which holds
that God, though unknowable, nonetheless makes Himself known.

God is wholly other -- we are taught.

He is completely different from us.

He cannot be grasped by ordinary modes of thought and perception.

We cannot, should not even conjure up His image.

We must not describe Him, or, following Maimonides,

we can describe Him only by means of negations,

by saying what He is not.

And attributes ascribed to God by Biblical poets are but metaphor.

But at the same time we are taught that though unknowable,

God reveals Himself in countless ways.

So Moses was told atop Sinai when he stood in the cleft of the rock:

"Thou canst not see My face,

but I will make all my goodness pass before Thee."

Even so can we behold God's goodness "in the realm of nature

and in the varied experiences of our lives."

You remember those heaven soaring words of our liturgy:

"When justice burns like a flaming fire within us...
when love evokes willing sacrifice from us...when,
to the last full measure of selfless devotion,
we proclaim our belief in the ultimate triumph of truth
and righteousness...then (does God) you live within our hearts
and we behold (His) presence."

Unknowable, yet known...how enigmatic...how paradoxical...

Yet strangely enough, modern science of whose teachings we accept

with greater ease than we do the teachings of faith,

nonetheless confronts us with a like seeming paradox.

Chemists, for instance, routinely accept the reality of certain gases by their effect alone, even though these gases themselves have never been isolated or seen.

Physicists, in their endeavor to study the nature of matter, developed a device called a cloud chamber.

Cloud chambers allow the observer to see paths traced by particles resulting from nuclear reactions.

The actual particles, however, remain unobservable.

They have never been seen, might never be seen, with naked eye or instruments however well-refined.

Here too then, a leap of faith is required, a scientific leap of faith, if you will, to acknowledge the existence of a particle that can be known only through its traces.

Unknowable, yet known through its traces.

Invisible, but real, nonetheless.

This paradox may account for much of our present-day reluctance to reclaim and proclaim our spiritual identity as Jews.

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

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

We also tend to value primarily things that are of use, that have their practical application, that can be measured and weighed and, above all, bought and sold.

But the invisible world has a reality all its own, and its force may well be more intense than is the force of the world that is seen.

Consider the world of the invisible, if you will:

Ideas, for example. They are impalpable. No one can see or seize them. Yet ideas can seize us and they hold the power to transform our lives.

Ideals too are of such a kind.

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

Take truth from a school and you reduce it to a rubble of red bricks.
Take religion from a sanctuary, and it becomes an ordinary auditorium.
Take justice from the far-flung round of human endeavor,
and civilization reverts into a jungle.

Music is such invisible force, every form of art is that:

dance, sculpture, painting, architecture,
-- "music in space." Schelling called them.

They may be discernible in outer form but not in their innermost essence
The sources and nature of art are a mystery even to those who create it.
Yet art has the power to heal us.

It can make the spirit soar,

for art is spirit from the realm of the unseen,
conveyed by means of matter.

Ah, and then there is love which is also an invisible force.

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

But no one has ever seen love itself.

It certainly cannot be anatomized, or schematized,
or reduced to clearly identifiable elements.

Yet how powerful a force love is!

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

Aye, there is a world of reality

beyond those worlds perceived by the physical sense alone.

And altogether multitudinous are life's gifts that have no

practical worth but nonetheless are altogether wond'rous:

The earth's green covering of grass.

The blue serenity of sea and sky.

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

Petals on the grass and wings in the air.

Oh, how flat, how narrow our world is,

when we measure its gifts by their usefulness alone,

when, in Rilke's happy simile

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

Then do the words of prophecy apply to us:

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

No, the human story simply cannot be told

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

Only those who open themselves to such a mystery

can transcend the grandeur and terror of their lives

without being blinded by life's grandeur

or crushed by its terror.

Only when we open ourselves to such a mystery,

will we find our Judaism to be a sustaining faith and not a
dry-as-dust religion.

And it is precisely this kind of faith that we so desperately need.
for while routine religion suffices to sustain our lighter hours,
once life runs out into its depths

why, then, we need a different faith.

When death takes those we love,

when our children slip through our arms,

when dread disease makes waste our strength,

when we think or even say

now I have reached the bottom of the morass

now I can sink no deeper

...and yet we sink deeper

Why, then, we need a deeper faith.

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

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

This then is two-fold mandate inherent in this hour

To strengthen the synagogue in its outer form,

to buttress it materially,

but also to make certain that this will always be a place

in which men and women can find the companionship of kindred

and aspiring souls in their quest for God.

It is in the hope that he will enable us to fulfill this two-fold

mandate that we offer to Sharon K. our blessings and our prayers..

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

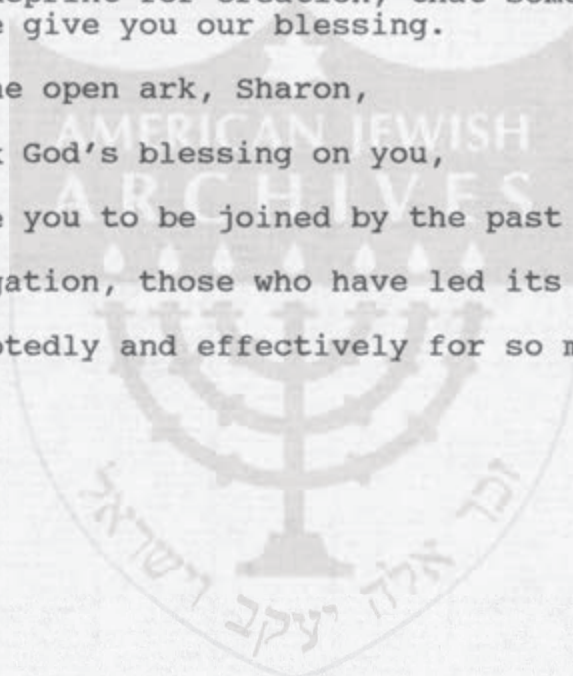
Love the people whom you meet no less than you love God, for every single soul reflect the glory of its Maker, and every man and woman may be someone you can touch, with the healing hand of wisdom, or an aged prophetic echo of our past. Build a life that is a mirror in which others see reflected the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

Assume your new tasks, then, and raise up students in Torah, the Torah that is God's blueprint for creation, that some day you may know the joy that we do, as we give you our blessing.

Please come to the open ark, Sharon,

and as I ask God's blessing on you,

I would like you to be joined by the past presidents of this congregation, those who have led its sons and daughters so devotedly and effectively for so many years.



DEDICATION
OF THE
WILLIAM AND LOTTIE DANIEL DEPARTMENT OF OUTREACH

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

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

UAHC House of Living Judaism
New York, NY
Sunday, 9/20/92

It is a privilege which I greatly appreciate, to be here and to speak at this singular event which marks the naming of our Outreach Department in honor of William and Lottie Daniel.

Outreach is a most significant aspect of our work as a religious community. Indeed, it has become one of the pillars on which the UAHC rests, joining our Departments of Education and Worship and Religious Action as one of the corner stones of our doing, nationally, regionally and locally.

I want to thank all of you who are assembled here today for participating in the work of this Commission. What you undertake to do, behold, it is exceedingly good, it is a holy work.

Outreach will be an essential aspect of our doing for many years to come. The rate of intermarriage will scarcely decrease, indeed, the widely publicized National Jewish Population Survey indicates a dramatic increase in that rate - - to 52% with a higher conversion out of Judaism than conversions in, and, alas, only a third of the children of interfaith marriages are being reared as Jews.

Let me note at once that all this does not mean that our Outreach program is ineffective or flawed in its conception - quite the opposite. We are not to be scapegoated for the high rate of

intermarriage. Outreach was not designed to reverse the tide of intermarriage, it was designed, rather, to retain the intermarried for Judaism, to guard and to keep them within the fold. We should be credited therefore, with doing our share to staunch the bleeding and to infuse new blood into the Jewish body. Note, if you will, that we are the only stream of Judaism on the American Jewish scene that is swelling in numbers.

And so Outreach will continue to be an essential element of our program and this is why I am deeply grateful to Bill Daniel for securing the future of our work. As you know, he has made a testamentary pledge of two million dollars to secure the future of this program, and as an expression of our gratitude to him, we have determined to name our Outreach Department in his and Lottie's honor.

By adding their names, we elevate the image of our efforts in this realm, for Bill's and Lottie's lives embody the loftiest ideals of the Jewish people.

A native of Hamburg, Bill fled Nazi Germany in the 1930's, and made a new life on these shores. He came here virtually penniless, but in short order he rose to prominence in the world of business and finance. He sits as President and Chairman of the Board of the Behr Iron and Steel Corporation, and he became a widely recognized and honored leader of his industry.

In the early 70's, he and Lottie lived for some years in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and since 1975, they have made Santa Barbara, California their home.

Wherever Bill lived, he served the Jewish community. In Rockford, he was President of Temple Beth-El and also founded and led the Rockford Jewish Community Council. In Santa Fe he chaired the United Jewish Appeal drive and in Santa Barbara he is one of the mainstays of Congregation B'nai B'rith.

Bill also took his place on the national and international Jewish scene. He serves on the Union's Board of Trustees and several of its key committees and he is also a member of the Board of Governors of the World Union for Progressive Judaism and was a major factor in creating our beautiful new synagogue in Tel Aviv appropriately named Beit Daniel. This is a veritable jewel in the crown of our Israel Movement.

But Bill did not limit his concern to the Jewish community. He understood full well that we Jews must never be content to dig only in our own garden, that we have an obligation to the larger community in which we live.

Thus, he was a Trustee of Rockford College, and later on of St. John's University of New Mexico. In Santa Barbara he continues to be active in civic affairs, serving as the Commissioner of its Juvenile Crime Prevention Commission.

Both Bill and Lottie have a well refined sense of beauty. Before fire destroyed their home, they had a valuable art collection which reflected their exquisite taste. For a time, Bill served as a Trustee of New Mexico's renowned Museum of Fine Arts.

Bill is an avid equestrian, he rides the hills of Santa Barbara regularly, at times accompanied by Evelyn Shlensky, the Chairman of our Social Action Commission. He obviously delights in nature's charms: the sweeping vales, the woods, the verdant meadows and the purling streams.

Above all, Bill has a keen sense of the ethical, of what is right and wrong. He believes that we Jews must live in such a way that all of those who see us will say of us that the prophets of Israel and their ideals of morality and justice live in these people.

In a word, he is what our forbears described as "zaidene neshome", a soul as precious as fine silk.

I have been speaking of Bill, but of course I mean Lottie too. She has been his soul mate these many years, a full and supportive partner in all of his quests. I regret that she could not be with us this day, but we think of her with affection even as we evoke her name.

My friends, you know very well how much Outreach means to me personally. I have often said that if I want to be remembered for one achievement as President of the Union, it is the institutionalization of the Outreach endeavor.

Well, I am exceedingly pleased and proud that this work, so important to me, will be graced and enhanced by the Daniel name.

I dedicate this Department in Bill and Lottie's honor with the prayerful hope that they will be granted many more years of life and health and creative endeavor.

Alexander M. Schindler