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Eulogy: Herman Snyder
September 8, 1992

With heavy hearts we gather here this day
to bid farewell to a friend,
to take our final leave of Herman Snyder
who meant so very much to all of us.

Holy halls that usually reverberate with festive songs of praise,
today they are filled with the plaintive strains of sorrow,
for a chord is loosed
the silver chain is broken
tender ties of love and friendship have been torn asunder
by relentless death.

This sanctuary has lost its pride and its crown.
Its very soul has been lacerated.
Its heart aches with an unspeakable pain.

To be sure now, Herman lived a long and full life.
He was granted more than those three score years and ten
that destiny alots even to the strongest among us.
Moreover, it was a productive life,
magnificently rich in accomplishment.

Still, his dying is not easy to accept, is it?
He was such a valuable human being.
The feeling persists that he had much more to give
and we to receive.
And so we mourn and stand bereft.

There is precious little that we can say by way of comfort
to Adele, to her children, to their spouses and their children,

Words provide scant balm for wounds as grievous as is theirs.
Still, we can offer them that 'chatzi nechama',

that measure of consolation that comes with the knowledge
that they do not sorrow alone.

Many others feel an aching emptiness this day.

-- look about you and see -- a community mourns --
and I count myself in this companionship of sorrow.

I too am bereft;

I too will miss Herman's presence
and feel the want of his tireless care.

My instinct tells me not to be overly mournful in my comments today,
not to evoke sorrow here, but rather happier memories,
not to make this a solemn service of remembrance

but rather a celebration of Herman's life.

I feel that this is precisely what Herman would want
his final tribute to be.

He was too life affirming to have this hour
dampened and darkened by dirge, by somber strains of sorrow

Still, we cannot fully repress our sadness and only radiate cheer.
Our sense of loss is too great...deepened as it is by the
greatness of that gift that was taken from us.

Tears too are a fitting tribute to Herman,
for what are tears, when all is said and done,
if not remembered smiles.

Herman was a most capable rabbi whose influence extended far beyond these holy halls or even the boundaries of this community.

He served the entire Reform Jewish world with faithfulness and devotion.

Indeed he was a proud Jew who saw Reform Judaism as the primary means to achieve the creative continuity of the Jewish people.

No aspect of our doing, regionally or nationally, was untouched by his creative genius.

He spoke at our conventions,
he taught in our camps,
he labored on countless committees and commissions,
he served in our national leadership councils.

The state and the well-being of the rabbinate was his special concern, and sensing his great care, his colleagues, never an easy lot to please, elected him to high office over and over again.

He was an effective preacher and teacher.

His mind was keen to the end.

Only a year or so ago, he wrote several insightful articles which were published and widely read.

In a word, whatever Herman undertook to do, he did with all his might, ever offering those rich gifts of mind and spirit with which he was so well endowed.

His many attainments notwithstanding,

Herman was essentially a humble man.

He did not bloat with pride, or brook any pretense.

He always stood by his convictions, resolutely pledged to attain them
refusing to swerve from them either to please a friend
or to appease an enemy.

He was also an exceedingly gentle man.

never strident, always restrained.

I never heard him lift his voice in anger or impatience.

He held strong conviction, as I have said.

he knew what he wanted, what he wanted others to be.

But he never bullied.

He preferred to persuade.

He taught ^{primarily} not by precept but rather by example.

Humility, patience, simplicity, truth

-- these elements combined in him in wondrous harmony
which was altogether beautiful to hear, to see, to feel.

This above all, Herman genuinely cared for people...

His reach in this regard was wide

-- his compassion was boundless, his love seamless.

He understood needs of his people.

He shared their joy and He walked with them when they suffered,
yea even into the valley of death,

and then felt their sorrow as his own.

Aye, he understood their anguish well,
for he himself was schooled in suffering,
his own heart had been lacerated when he and Adele
were made to endure that most cruel of all fates,
the death of Joe, their son.

Obviously, the greatest measure of Herman's care was given
to those who stood nearest to him:

the members of his family and foremost

his two daughters, Julie and Jane, their spouses,
and their children, his grandchildren

-- they were the very jewels of his crown.

When you saw Herman with them, you saw him at his finest:

listening to them with patience and care,
giving them encouragement, sound advice,
always wearing his heart on his sleeve.

He reared his children exceedingly well.

He never compelled their life's course.

He gave them the freedom to develop as they chose.

Still, he gave an inner structure to their lives

by imbuing them with the daily disciplines of our tradition
-- the Sabbaths and Festivals and life cycle rites of Judaism --
which enabled them to gain their moorings,
to feel their rootage, to sanctify their space and time.

He liked what they eventually became.

Indeed, he gloried in their attainments.

And of course he felt their love.

And he adored Adele, as she loved him.
She was the true companion of his life and soul.
Together they walked the way of life,
these fifty-eight years
drinking from its one cup
-- when it ran bitter, when it ran sweet --
giving true meaning to the words:
husband, wife, and marriage.

Master teacher, master preacher, a many-sided intellect
-- that was Herman Snyder
and this, above all, a model, an image-ideal,
the "observed of all observers."

He taught us not only as books enable but by example.
And when adversity beset him, he faced it with courage and
with faith, even with gentle humor.
And thus he taught us, not only how to live,
but how to suffer and, finally, how to die.

In all truth, a bright and shining star has been torn
from the firmament of our lives,
and our lives are the darker because of it.

Yet his memory can brighten our way as did his life.
the nishmato tserurah bitsror hachayim

It is good to be in this place, to be a part of this companionship. Here we can listen to the harmony of Jewish life in its fullness, with its many variations blending in harmony. Indeed, our Congress is an arena in which world Jewry can function effectively. It is a mighty stream in which the many currents of Jewish life converge.

As chairman, it is my task to set the theme and to introduce the speaker. In setting the theme of this session, it is important to reassert what we heard last night in several versions, that anti-Semitism is not an isolated disease. It has its tragically unique dimensions, yet it is not totally unrelated to other maladies afflicting humankind; it is one most virulent manifestation of that unreasoned hatred which finds divergent expressions in our world: - the 'ethnic cleansing' that is ravaging Sarajevo - the xenophobia that fuels violence against immigrants in Austria and West Germany - Gypsies threatened in Eastern Europe - A Pat Buchanan whose presidential campaign was unruffled by the snide anti-Semitism of the candidate himself - a former imperial grand wizard of the Klu Klux Klan garnering a majority of white votes in Louisiana.

From the Urals to the Ozarks, so it seems, the toxic waters of racism are rising, and a common effort is required to stem the blood soaked tide. The victims of this unreasoned hatred are all dependent on one another. If we do not stand united, we will surely fall. In our most recent past, Blacks and Jews came together in the recognition of a shared fate. We recoiled again the stench of bigotry and resolved to resist it together. Together we forged a Black-Jewish alliance that demanded racial justice, an end to discrimination at lunch counters and in the voting booth, in public schools and public accommodations. Together we changed the course of American history.

It is tempting to dwell on those earlier days, when our quotient of mutual pain was far higher than our quotient of mutual distrust. Nostalgia is comforting, it eases the spirit does it not?

Certainly it is more comforting to remember the quality of leadership offered by a Bayard Rustin, than to attend to the words of a Farrakahn or Jeffries.

Surely it is more inspiriting to recall the sight of a Martin Luther King flanked by Rabbis Abraham Joshua Heschel and Maurice Eisendrath, walking at the head of tens of thousands of civil rights marchers, than it is to think about the death of a Yankel Rosenbaum and the cries of "Hitler was right" in Crown Heights.

But nostalgia goes lighter on our Jewish consciences too, let us admit it, for it is easier to remember that we Jews had everything to gain from toppling the barricades of discrimination in America than it is to confront the fact that our gains have wedded to many of us to the status quo in which we care more about tranquility shattered than justice denied.

It is easier on our conscience to recall brave Jewish participation at the frontlines of the civil rights movement than it is to confess our failure effectively to challenge the Reagan-Bush policy of urban neglect.

Aye, it is easier to make an equation between Black-Jewish suffering based on our burning memories, than it is to reckon with the truth of the vast difference today between American Jewish empowerment and material well-being on the one hand and the ongoing disempowerment and poverty endured by black Americans on the other.

Our speaker, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, was active in the glory days of the Black-Jewish alliance which we now so nostalgically recall, and 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 a 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 will be served in rehearsing the litany of our complaints. He knows them. We know them. The wounds will never heal if we keep on re-opening them. There is a need for a new beginning. 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 efforts over the past six years to repair the breach.

He has been speaking of 'secure borders' for Israel, and he has openly 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 months he was tireless in his efforts to gain freedom for Syrian Jews --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.

He has repeatedly denounced the singling out of Israel for obloquy because of its trade with South Africa.

He has consistently called for improved relations with the Jewish community, telling coalitional leaders that Blacks and Jews must play a key role in any joint effort to rebuild America's cities.

Most significantly so, he has stood his ground against those in his own community who accuse him of selling out because of these things.

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

Justice demands otherwise. Let us therefore enter into today's dialogue openly, sensitively, and candidly. Let us not nurse our wounds and translate difference into a grievance. Let us not turn 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 meet today on the very edge of a historic turning point -
- in Europe, in Israel, in America, in the world. At such a moment, we must look beyond the hurts and grievances to the desperate needs we share for tikkun olam, for the repairing of our fractured world!

This above all, let us remember that our commonalities exceed our differences by far. For you see, the fear of common enemies does not mark the boundary of our necessary alliance. In addition to our common nightmares, we Blacks and Jews dream common dreams. We share a vision of a just and open and generous society. We agree that it is the foremost task of governments to protect the weak and the stranger, to achieve social and economic and political justice. We are both committed to the need for change, in our country, in the world. We see our common dream not in the valley of the status quo, but on Martin Luther King's mountain top.

It is with this understanding that we will listen to our speaker. He 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 other Americans, as a leader of political, intellectual and moral power on the great and vexing issues of our time.

I present to you, the Reverend Jesse Jackson.

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Introduction of Jesse Jackson
World Jewish Congress
Brussels, Belgium
July 7, 1992

EULOGIES FOR DR. MAURY LEIBOVITZ

By

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

and

Albert Vorspan



Greenwich Reform Temple
Greenwich, Connecticut

June 3, 1992

OPENING REMARKS

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

With heavy hearts we gather here to say farewell to Maury Leibovitz who meant so very much to all of us, whose care sustained us, whose zest for life inspired us, whose buoyancy and spiritedness filled our own days and lives with laughter and with love. It is altogether fitting and proper that our words of final tribute be spoken in this place. After all, this is Maury's synagogue. This is where he was stirred to the depths of his being when a cello - - his favorite instrument - - intoned the Kol Nidre's solemn strains.

Perhaps more to the point, Maury was a man of radiant faith, not in the conventional conception of the word, to be sure, but in a much more profound sense: I speak of that faith which is the inverse of despair, the faith in our direction, our justice, our future the faith in the ability of the Jew, nay of every human being, to endure the struggle and to prevail.

Our hearts go out to McLeod and Brian and Joshua and Shaun. They feel the loss most keenly, yet there is precious little that we can say to them. Words bring but scant comfort at a time like this. But perhaps the knowledge that there are others who share their sorrow will bring them at least a chatzi nechama, a half measure of consolation. There are many such others who mourn today, and I count myself in this companionship of sorrow. I, too, am bereft; I, too, will miss Maury's presence and feel the want of his tireless care.

No, words do not come easy at a time like this, they never, ever do. How can one encapsulate a man's life in just a few words. His attainments, his passions, his dread and his dreams, these

cannot be embodied in mere language, and certainly in Maury's case, they were too grand for that. Still, we must give voice to our feeling. So at this service of remembrance, we will hear from one of Maury's fellow craftsmen, the artist, LeRoy Nieman. Then some tender lines of remembrance written by his son Josh, but giving voice to the feelings of Brian and Shaun as well; those three sons whom Maury loved with an abounding love, in whose accomplishments he took such extraordinary pride, a poem recited by Brian, and finally, after a brief cello interlude, we will hear a more extensive eulogy by Maury's cousin and constant friend, Al Vorspan.

Maury's life, in so very many ways, was a constant quest for the sacred, for spirituality. He was haunted by a hunger for the holy. He always responded with wonderment to the essential mystery of life. Unlike most of humankind, Maury was not a creature in bondage to his eyes, among those who insist that only seeing is believing, that only the visible is fact. He sought, rather, to penetrate the world of the unseen. He recognized that the invisible world has a reality all its own, and that its force may well be more intense than is the force of the world that is seen. This, in a sense, is what his love of art in every form was all about: music, dance, painting, sculpture, landscape architecture. He fathomed and felt their power to heal us, to make the spirit soar. He understood that art is spirit from the realm of the unseen, conveyed by means of matter.

So it is altogether fitting and proper that take leave of Maury within these holy halls. And what a difficult leave-taking it is. He was such a rare and precious human being. His death leaves us all bereft. It diminishes our strength. A star has been torn from the firmament of our lives, and our lives are the darker because of it.

Eulogy by Albert Vorspan

Maury always wanted me to speak here at Rabbi Lennick's temple so he could see me without having to travel so far. Well, I don't think this is exactly what either of us had in mind.

Maury and I grew up together in St. Paul, Minnesota. We were first cousins, along with Ruth Parkhouse and Leonard Cohen, who are with us today. Maury became one of my very dearest friends in all the world. Shirley and I had grown so close to Maury and McLeod and the boys that the void, for us, as for you, is aching and vast.

Maury was perhaps the most extraordinary person I ever knew. I personally could never quite go with Maury in his faith in the transmigration of the human soul. I am still not convinced in general, but about Maury himself I have absolutely no doubt. There is no conceivable way that fierce energy, that powerful consciousness, that driving force of nature could possibly be stilled or even dimmed. His lust for life, his invincible will, his reverence for the life of the spirit, must transcend all barriers. He is probably already out there organizing a Special Seder for the elderly, or painting another canvas, or checking on the progress of the gardens, organizing a reunion of family members, saying Alla Kalla and certainly doing a review of this event. I can almost hear him: "Al, don't dwell on the negatives." And even if that is a sentimental conceit, conjured up to comfort us in our sorrows, at the very least Maury Leibovitz will be present within us caring and speaking and roaring with laughter in our memories; and those memories will resonate in our hearts, for the rest of our days.

Maury not only taught us about the art of living -- fully, and passionately -- but he even taught us about dying. For the past 18 months, he was living on borrowed time. He knew it. It would have been natural to retreat from life, to focus all energies on personal survival, to idle the motor. Not Maury. He and his beloved McLeod plunged into plans to enhance their Greenwich home with wondrous and resplendent gardens. He gave of himself to JASA and last month inspired 175 seniors at a special Passover Seder he funded, revving up their tired motors with his own youthful power, even though he was older than many of them, exhorting them to shout with him in chorus: Live with dignity, live with joy! He practiced what he preached, to the last moment.

A creator and benefactor of the UAHC Committee on Substance Abuse, he presided over one of the most exhilarating conferences any of us ever attended - a Colloquium on Substance Abuse and Judaism, on

a golden day at his home last month. While some of us there talked about techniques of recovery, Maury was the rabbi, whose own life was the sermon, searching in Jewish traditions for the spiritual meaning of recovery and renewal.

For me, a stick-in-the mud who stayed in one job for 40 years, the number of varied careers of Maury Leibovitz is awe-inspiring. A tremendously successful certified public accountant, as a young man with his own burgeoning firm in Beverly Hills, he apparently got bored with success, feeling, in the words of his friend and teacher, Dr Perry London: "that accounting was the source of a good living but it was not necessarily enough to live for." So he went to Zurich and became a Jungian psychologist, with its ceaseless search for meaning. Coming back to California - he gained admission to Graduate school, despite some official resistance that at the age of 46 he was too old for a PhD. He graduated with all A's and all honors in January, 1968.

Then in 1972, he went to Knoedler and started still another major career. And if running a leading art gallery in New York City were not challenging enough, he recently began painting on his own. He painted with zest and boldness. The day before he died, while Carole Anne and Carlos, were planting the new garden, Maury sat on a chair like a Toscanini, orchestrating everything, calling out: "more blue! more yellow!" That evening he painted his last canvas - describing it as his best work. He left us on a high. So many careers, so prolific, so creative. A Renaissance man. Indestructible.

I know some of the things that made Maury so unique a person. His life was colored by memories of an impoverished childhood, where he lost his father at an early age, and where he and his newspaper route had to help support a struggling family. He transmuted that experience into becoming, with cousin Ruthie, the galvanizing force that held our far-ranging Swidelsky family-circle together, with its many re-unions, usually with Maury presiding and cheer-leading.

With his immediate family, his sons, Brian, Josh and Shaun - he was bonded so deeply that he was in constant telephone conversation with each of them. Mutual love, raucous humor, and simple delight and pride, joined them all at the hip. When that feisty crew which then included Mark olav ha-shalom, toured China together, it must have been the most tumultuous event since the original Gang of Four! Brian says he was the emperor, we were the princes.

To quote Perry again "Maury early found out that poor is not good for you. But he found out, too, that Jewish is also not so good for you if your people are homeless and despised and others are trying to kill them. He recovered from poverty, but never from

Jewishness, which has been a major motif of his life." It took 3000 years to make a Jew like Maury, and that imprint is eternal.

Did you ever know somebody who walked down the street, passed a senior citizens facility, and strolled in and said what do you need, maybe I can teach, how can I help? From that came his involvement with JASA, his sponsorship of the remarkable Legacy program to validate the lives of older people, and his sponsorship of the Mayerhoff Institute.

Did you ever know anybody who intervened so positively in so many lives? As one example of so many, in a letter dated May 8, Marc Kaminsky thanked him for enabling him to complete the work of the late Barbara Mayerhoff, the superb anthropologist. Marc wrote:

"If, many years from now, in some Legacies Project of the future, I am asked 'to tell a story of something that happened that changed the direction of your life,' I will speak of you ... and how ... you entered my life and opened the gates to a more useful life for me."

Maury took delight in meeting people, greeting strangers on the beach or at the next table at the restaurant, and ending up with new friends. He met Armand Hammer at such a restaurant encounter. When he visited us in Hillsdale, he took a walk on our country road, and passed our taciturn neighboring farmers who are notorious for their non-communicativeness. We watched, astonished, as he said, "Hi there, I'm Maury Leibovitz. How long have you been farming? Where did your parents come from? How can you tell one cow from the other? Do they have names?" They did and Maury ended up on the side of the road, in an engaging conversation with four farmers and seven cows. "You should have your neighbors over for lox and bagels," he instructed us. We will.

Maury had the money and the opportunity to rest on his laurels. To Maury, that would not be resting but rusting. He preferred to pour out his energies, to share his blessings and good fortune. He embodied the Passover theme: "to know the hearts of the stranger."

But despite all this, Maury had more than his share of grief. I know of few people since Job who have suffered the anguish and the tragedy which Maury endured. To bury two children goes beyond human suffering. Jewish tradition says only a person whose heart has been broken can be a whole person. Maury transformed his suffering into personal growth and deeper compassion for others. A less thoughtful or more selfish person would have hugged his pain to his bosom and told the world to kiss off. Not Maury. He triumphed, defying the laws of gravity. He injected sparkle and laughter and

mid-summer festivities and touches of color and elegance and spontaneity into the lives of each of us. With the tender love and devotion lavished upon him by Carole Anne and the excitement of family gatherings with his beloved sons, and the unique support system provided by Carlos and Louisa, who became a warm part of the family network, and the embracing friendship of all of us, Maury seemed to give and to experience more happiness in the last years of his life than ever before.

The blanket of roses covering Maury is McLeod's personal gift of love; but the years they shared was the greatest gift of all, a work of art. He looked out the window Sunday morning, surveyed the newly-planted garden and said to Carole Anne, "What a beautiful view! A beautiful day!"

Each of us in this room had been enriched because Maury touched our lives with beauty and joy. His memory will be a blessing and a glorious garden forever.



Closing Comments
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Nitparda hachavila . . . a cord is loosed, the silver chain is broken, tender ties of love and friendship have been torn asunder by relentless death. Let me confess, or rather assert with a pride, that I go along much further than does Al with Maury's faith in the transmigration of the human soul. This, or other concepts of immortality, may not be demonstrable by sensory experience. Nonetheless, we can hold them to be true and valid from inferential evidence. If those rich gifts of mind and spirit with which Maury was endowed all end at the grave, God is a terrible wastrel. To have given so much and to destroy it all is an irrational act. The universe is too orderly for that. And so I believe with the great Chassidic master, Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, that "death is only a matter of going from one room to another, and ultimately to the most beautiful room of all."

Both Al and I fully, fervently agree, of course, that our deeds on earth weave a pattern that is timeless. Our parents live on through us, and we will live on through our children. The institutions we build endure, and we will endure through them. Shakespeare was wrong; the good is not interred with our bones. The beauty that we fashion cannot be dimmed by death. The love we give in life lives on long after we are gone, to bless the lives of others. When Chanayo ben Teradyon, noblest of Jewish martyrs, was burned at the stake, wrapped in a Scroll of the Law, his pupils who witnessed his terrible agony cried out: "Our master, our teacher, what seest thou?" He replied: "I see the parchment burning, but the letters of the Law, they soar on high."

And so it is with Maury. His eyes may have dimmed, they have, alas, his hands are withered, but that which they created in beauty and goodness and truth, lives on for all time to come.

Beyond the immortality of the deed, there is the immortality of memory. Ki ahava aza mivmavet - love is stronger than death. It endures. It can bridge that fearsome chasm which separates the living from the dead. Even as we think of Maury, the sense of his continuing presence is greater than the knowledge of his death. So long as we live he, too, shall live, for he is now a part of us as we remember him.

Maury assuredly believed in that. Whenever there was an experience which he treasured and shared with others he was wont to say: "Freeze this moment in your memory . . . remember it always." There are many such moments imbedded in our memories, as we say Shalom to Maury . . . a 'shalom' which means not just good-bye, but hello as well; it is not a final parting but merely a momentary farewell until soul touches soul once again.



150th ANNIVERSARY FRIDAY
CONGREGATION OHABEI SHALOM

SERMON BY RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER



Brookline, Massachusetts
May 29, 1992

I am grateful for your warm introduction Emily, albeit I am embarrassed by its extravagance, at least the better part of me is embarrassed. I hope you know that I reciprocate your sentiments of affection and regard with a full heart.

I like your rabbi, I admire those rich gifts of mind and spirit she brings to her endeavors: intelligence, imagination, industry, and above all her menshlichkeit, her essential humanity. Surely it is this quality above all others - - the great warmth of her human approach - - which has enabled her to take a congregation that has been buffeted by adverse demographic forces for many years and breathe into it the breath of new life which promises to restore it to its former glory.

I am glad that Rabbi Paul Menitoff, the Union's regional director is here as well as Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn. Their presence here tonight, as indeed does mine, symbolizes that your anniversary is of significance not just to the sons and daughters of Ohabei Shalom, but to our nation-wide family of congregations too.

When you were founded, we were but a small religious community, we Reform Jews, a handful of Temples, several thousand families scattered throughout the land. Today, we are a mighty movement, over 860 Temples strong, a vital, vibrant religious community whose strength ultimately derives from this very place.

Over the years, you have sustained us not only materially, but by providing us with a strong leadership, both lay and professional, and in virtually every aspect of our doing. I will never forget Clay Kudish of your congregation, who was elected to one of the highest offices our movement has to offer; and I am glad that Liz

is with us tonight; and then there is Alex Zimmer, spirited singer of synagogue song, who has done so much to lift the level of Reform Judaism's musical liturgical literacy. Cantor Solomon too, is a creative talent and we expect much from him. Then of course, there was, and is, Albert Goldstein. His name is written large in the annals of Reform Judaism. He was and remains a bright and shining star in the firmament of our religious community. Yes, this moment is of meaning not just for you, but for all of us. You are a strong and precious link in that golden chain of faith which binds us one unto another in sacred union.

It is altogether remarkable what you have accomplished here. Your magnificent sanctuary. Your rich and meaningful program always at the cutting edge, and the 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.

150 years ago, then, this congregation was founded, its physical and spiritual foundations laid. 150 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. 150 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 children's 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 your hands.

What you do here in sustaining this congregation is of critical

consequence for our people. The synagogue quite simply is the heartland, the vital center of Judaism. All other Jewish institutions mobilize and utilize Jews in behalf of the community, only the synagogue creates Jews. It is in the synagogue where the individual soul and the community are joined. it is in the synagogue where modernity and eternity cross-fertilize, where the seeds of the Jewish future are sown. It is the synagogue where the covenant is recreated and renewed in every generation. It is our task to buttress this bastion of our creative continuity and we can do so best when we make certain that its program will be true to those purposes for which this sanctuary was built and which it presumably enshrines.

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The first of these assuredly is to help us in our quest for God, to evoke our sense of the sacred, to enhance our capacity to respond with wonderment to the essential mystery of life. there is a great yearning for such inwardness in our day. A pervasive hunger for the holy. An ever increasing number of people are experiencing a void in their inner lives and are longing for something of more during worth. We all of us can feel it, can we not? Reason has been dethroned from its pedestal as the ultimate source of salvation. Science is no longer seen as the saving grace of humankind. People everywhere are beginning to sense that the future of humankind cannot be entrusted to the mindscape of a scientific rationality; that as the spirit within us withers, so does everything we build about us; that in the final analysis, the state of the single soul is the state of the universe.

We have come to recognize the wisdom of Chesterton's counsel:

"The trouble when people stop believing in God
is not that they thereafter believe in nothing;
it is because thereafter they believe in everything."

The realm of the absolute is never empty, (so taught our teacher Gene Mihaly). The void is too easily filled with false gods of an unbridled ethnocentrism, of racial chauvinism, of anthropopatheism, the arrogant assumption that we are God, that we humans are all powerful.

"Only God is God," we proclaim seven times over at the conclusion of our Yom Kippur liturgy. "Adonai Hu Haelohim - - God is God, there is none else." This is the historic witness of the Jew which rejects every form of idol and commits us - - and our synagogues - - to the eternal quest.

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. Chaim Nachman Bialik expressed this thought most poignantly in words which merit to be rehearsed on an occasion such as this.

"Im yeshet nafhecha lada-at" he wrote, "if thou wouldst know."

"If thou wouldst know the mystic fount
from whence thy forbears drew the strength and fortitude
to meet grim death with joy and bare the neck
to every sharpened blade and lifted axe
and saintlike die with shema yisrael on their lips.

If thou wouldst know the mystic fount
from whence thy wretched brethren drew in evil days
divine condolence, patience, fealty,

and iron strength to bear relentless toil
with shoulders stooped to bear a loathsome life
and endlessly to suffer and endure.

If thou wouldst know the mother merciful
who saved her lost sons tears with eagerness
and steadied lovingly his faltering steps.

If thou wouldst know, O humble brother mine,
go to the House of Prayer
Thy heart will tell thee then
that thy feet tread the marge of our life fount
that thine eyes view the treasure of our soul."

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

Many people think or even say that we Jews are overly sensitive, even paranoid on the subject of our safety. Yet where will we find reassurance? How can we feel at ease when recent studies report a global rise in anti-Semitism. Denials of the Holocaust, the refurbished iconization of erstwhile Hitler puppets such as Antonescu in Romania and Father Tizo in Slovakia, the proliferation of neo-fascist and extremist right wing parties in every corner of the globe, a Mussolini running for office on her grandfather's platform in Italy and carrying the day! All over Europe, Jewish cemeteries have been desecrated, synagogues defaced, acts of violence, even murder, several such incidents recorded every single day now - - and all this only one generation after Auschwitz.

How can we feel secure when a recent poll showed that 30% of the Germans of today believe that Jews and not the Nazis are in no small measure to blame for the Holocaust, because of what they

did or failed to do. The victims are now deemed guilty and not the killers. How are our fears allayed when even in our own country anti-Semitic incidents have seen an alarming rise during the year just past. When a David Duke, who wears a swastika as a halo if not a breastplate, nonetheless gathers a majority of the white votes in Louisiana's senatorial election. Or when a Pat Buchanan, whom even Bill Buckley has assessed to have indulged in anti-Semitic rhetoric, stumps our economically troubled America inciting passions of xenophobia and selfishness and yet nets one-third of the Republican Primary vote. Aye, or when the presidential pulpit is abused to impugn our political influence, and the Secretary of State is said to have muttered unmentionable words about us.

Nor are our fears allayed by the trauma of having the public classrooms and college campuses, those erstwhile primary unifying forces in our land, become a combat zone for competing interests battling over multi-culturalism, by having the Martin Luther Kings and Bayard Rustins supplanted by purveyors of hate like Sharpton and Jeffries, or by the fact that our country's failure fully to implement the civil rights revolution particularly in the economic sphere is producing an explosive African-American nihilism, with no small portion of anti-Semitism for fuel.

So we will need the synagogue as a source of strength for our collective continuity. Within the sheltering walls of this Temple you will have to find that inner force that flows only from the companionship of fellow Jews.

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There is one last great purpose which this synagogue must ever strive to fulfill. It is this purpose, above all others, which your forbears had in mind when they called this Temple Ohabei Shalom, for it is the foremost task of a synagogue to remind us of those values that the world inclines us forget. The doors of this Temple must always be open wide, so that those who require sanctuary will feel free to enter. Its windows must never be shut so tight that humanity's weeping will go unheard.

There is much weeping out there, in the world, especially in the inner cities of our land. I just returned from Los Angeles, a city battered by the destructiveness of but three weeks ago. This destructiveness, this frenzy, was the outcome of lives beaten down by police batons and jackboots, yes; but it was also the consequence of those heavy, hammer-like blows that long predate the outrages against Rodney King: the unrelenting blows of unemployment enveloping whole neighborhoods; the unrelenting blows of failure and neglect and addiction, and suspicion, and racism, all of them spawning despair . . . the unrelenting blows of a rampant violence within urban ghettos, whites against blacks, blacks against Koreans, and most often blacks against their very own. These blows are as harsh and as evident as anything shown on that 81-second videotape with which America must now reckon. Eric Fromm was discerning when he wrote: "destructiveness is the outcome of un-lived lives."

As a religious community it is clearly our obligation, and we have done so, to condemn the action of those who protested the King verdict through lawlessness and violence in the streets. Shooting and beating innocent bystanders, setting fires to buildings and cars and looting stores is not a solution to injustice. It is not an answer to police brutality. It is not a way out of poverty and despair. An unbridled mob is the voice of madness, not the voice of the people.

But at the same time, it is our solemn duty to insist that there be an extensive national program for aid to the cities that will address the pain and the frustration and bitterness that are destroying the lives of the many millions who live there. They, too, are the victims of violence, as I have said, a violence whose impact may not be as immediate as are firebombs in the street, and yet they are just as fatal. I speak of the violence that poisons relations between people, because their skin has different colors. 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, that stifles all their hope. It is this slower-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 erupt not just in the inner cities, but in suburbia too, not just in Crown Heights, but also in Shaker Heights, not just in Brooklyn, but also in Brookline.

This above all, then, we must resist with persistence any tendency in the Jewish community to turn inward, to be concerned only with the safety of our own people. No, we cannot, will not, allow these dreadful events, nor that resurgent world-wide anti-Semitism of which I spoke, to frighten us into a reactive isolationism, to lead us to say: "everyone else is out for himself, so let's dig in our own garden, no one else will fend for us." Separatism is bad for Jews. We need friends to prevail, now as in the past.

Statistics tell us that soon we may be less than 2% of the population. Yet we have battles to wage - - on behalf of Israel,

and Soviet Jewry, and the separation of church and state. How, pray tell, can a mere 2% wage and win these battles without allies. But we will not find or retain allies, if we focus only on our own interests and show but scant regard for needs of others. 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.

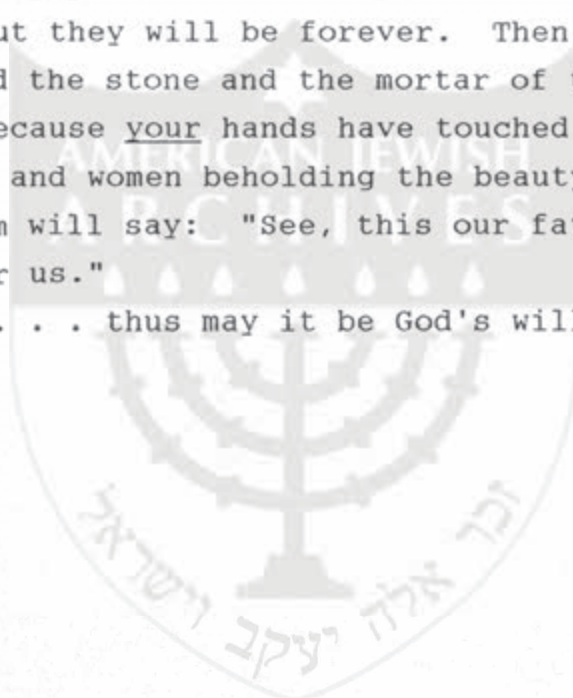
"It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the offspring of Israel. I will also give thee for a light unto the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to loosen the fetters of the bound, to bring to the light of day those who dwell in darkness."

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 than 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 forces of the universe. To be a Jew is to defy despair though the Messiah tarry. To be a Jew, as God told Abraham 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.

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These, then, are the purposes for which this sanctuary was built and whose pursuit alone justifies the effort to assure its survival. This synagogue must be a force for good in human life, a source of strength for the Jewish people. It must be a place where men and women can find the companionship of kindred and aspiring souls in their quest for God. Pursue these purposes, these dreams, this quest! Then will the future of Ohabei Shalom be as glorious as was its past. Then also will the celebrations of this anniversary year be not for present use nor for present delight alone, but they will be forever. Then the time will come when the wood and the stone and the mortar of this sanctuary will be held sacred because your hands have touched them. And many years hence, men and women beholding the beauty and the worthy substance of them will say: "See, this our fathers and our mothers built for us."

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



AN APPRECIATION OF MARK UVEELER, Z.L.

by

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler



MEMORIAL FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CULTURE

Madrid, Spain

May 1992

Now I come to the piece de resistance of this evening. It is a highlight of our entire Board Meeting: the naming of our special doctoral program in memory of Mark Uveeler, z.l.

Mark was the founding director of our Foundation. Indeed, the post of Executive Vice President was especially created for him. Ours is a force which he nourished. Ours is an influence which he primarily nurtured. We but build on those foundations which he established with so much loving care, and so we have ample reason to be grateful to him and to honor his good work by making certain that his name will forever be remembered in our midst.

Needless to say, he did not come to this post ex nihilo. Mark's Jewish commitments long preceded his appointment to the Foundation Post. Even in his younger years in Poland he was involved in Jewish affairs. He coordinated Poland's Jewish theatres, headed its union and was active in the labor movement. After he retired, he settled in Israel and rendered full time service on a fully voluntary basis to such vital institutions as Yad Vashem and Hebrew University.

But it is for his work in our Foundation that he will always be remembered. The reconstruction of destroyed Jewish communities, the rebirthing of the Jewish culture, the Jewish civilization which was ground to the dust by our Sonim, that was the central passion of his life, a passion which he then infused into that institution which was entrusted to his care.

Mark embodied qualities, excellences which are rarely, if ever, found in the same person. He had the soul of a poet and the

meticulousness of a corporate executive. He combined the fervor of the Eastern European Jew with the efficiency and self discipline of the Yeke.

He certainly was an honorable man. Mark cared about the truth as he perceived it. He refused to diverge from it, either to please a friend or to appease an enemy. Nor did he have any of the imperiousness, the contumely, the pompousness which others in high office too often assume. He was always cordial, approachable, unaffectedly kind.

I valued him above all for this: that he was ohav visrael in the richest sense of that word. He loved all Jews, whatever their color or ethnic origin or ideological bent. He also relived their historic faith, not their religious faith so much, but rather that faith which is the inverse of despair which was infused into the very fibre of our being, "mixed with our blood" from our very beginnings, the faith in our direction, our justice, our future, the faith in the ability of the Jew to endure the struggle and to prevail.

In sum, he was a true hero, for he could always be counted on ethically, morally and humanly, and in this manner he became larger than himself. Aye, he was a great Jew. His name is vividly, indelibly etched on the pages of our people's history.

I was drawn to him from the moment I met him . . . not just because of his Jewishness and his abilities, but also for his *menshlichkeit*, the essential warmth of his human approach. He was intelligent, steadfast, a loyal friend. He was always a delight to be with, because he delighted so in life. He was there to share laughter, to engage in serious conversation or just to be with, for he was one of those singular people with whom one could be silent and still communicate.

I believe we chose a perfect instrument to honor Mark's memory by selecting from our many doctoral candidates the very best, to provide them with the largest possible grant our resources will permit and who will henceforth forever be known as the Mark Uveeler Scholarship.

Allow me to say just one more word: I kept speaking of Mark . . . when I spoke my words of praise. But I meant his lovely wife, Luba, too. She deserves to be honored in her own right, for she too is endowed with rare qualities of mind and spirit; she was Professor of Hebrew at Rutgers University; she authored a Hebrew text that is still widely used; she commands seven languages; she spends her time now helping the elderly and immigrants without recompense. But she was also Mark's ezer k'negdo, sharing his work and dream. Oh, how Mark loved her, with an abounding love. Together they walked the way of life, these many years. Drinking from its one cup, when it ran bitter, when it ran sweet. Giving true meaning to the words: husband, wife, and friend. In honoring Mark, we honor her as well.

Why don't you come forward, Luba, and receive those plaudits which are your due and above all, the due of the life-work of that man whom you loved and whom you helped to attain that greatness for which we have chosen to honor him.

INSTALLATION OF CHARLES J. ROTHSCHILD, JR.

AS

PRESIDENT, UNITED JEWISH COMMUNITY OF BERGEN COUNTY



May 4, 1992
Temple Emeth
Teaneck, NJ

Installing Officer:
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

It is good to be here and to participate in these ceremonies which mark the installation of Chuck Rothschild as the President of the United Jewish Community of Bergen County. Chuck is a good friend of mine . . . you know that . . . I mean, why else would I brave the George Washington Bridge during rush hour to be here tonight.

Come to think of it, Jim Young was also a factor in my decision making process. I first encountered him when CJF sent him to Wilkes-Barre to help rescue that Jewish community after its disastrous flood. My respect for him was born then, and it has not diminished over the years.

You are fortunate to have such a team as your leaders, and since it is manifestly true that a community receives the kind of leadership which it deserves, these words of praise are not just for Chuck and Jim, but for all the members of this community.

The installation of Chuck Rothschild as the President of your Federation pleases me much. I like to think of his ascendance to this position as a harbinger of growth, even in these times of battened down budgets -- for the growth of which I speak is not merely in numbers and dollars, but in the cohesiveness of our efforts on behalf of Jewish continuity.

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 established that the overwhelming proportion of American Jewish leaders are, in fact, synagogue affiliated, that they attend worship with a measure of regularity, that their children are involved in Jewish youth groups and summer camps and a goodly proportion 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.

All this should not be surprising, though it flies in the face of conventional wisdom. After all, the synagogue is the heartland of Judaism. All other Jewish institutions mobilize and utilize Jews in behalf of the community . . . only the synagogue creates Jews. It is the House of Assembly which joins the individual soul to the community. It is the House of Worship where modernity and eternity cross-fertilize, where the seeds of the Jewish future are sown. It is the House of Study where the covenant is recreated and renewed in every generation.

During Chuck's years at the helm of the Reform movement, Reform Judaism experience a burst of such growth: numerically yes, but in our spiritual and organizational cohesiveness as well. The gap between the "real" world and the world of Jewish devotion was bridged to tens of thousands of families; Judaism became more pervasive in their daily lives, a seamless web of significance, concern, and identity.

The time is ripe for similar bonds to be established between our Jewish Federations and our synagogue movements: bonds of interdependence and mutual support. Our so-called secular and religious communities have been apart these decades in a cordial but distant relationship. This is not fully true here - but it is certainly true on a national level. The newer realities of American Jewry, however, indicate the need for building wide and strong bridges between these parallel streams of Jewish life.

These new realities are reflected in the Federation's own National Jewish Population study which 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 more wholesome from a communal perspective; their Jewish feelings are so much more impassioned.

If Federation seeks to assure Jewish continuity, therefore, it can best do so by supporting specific synagogue programs even at the risk of enduring some of our interdenominational 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 then and therefore resort to the "lowest common denominator Judaism" of too many communal schools 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 trust that affiliation per se means empowerment for the Jewish community as a whole?

These and other beginning points of Federation involvement with synagogue life should stand high on the agenda of leaders such as Chuck Rothschild, leaders who stand in both worlds. Through their creative and diligent efforts, I am confident that 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, our faith.

If you can help us along this way, Chuck, to a greater cohesiveness as a community, why then when the end of your tenure as President arrives, we will be able to look back on this moment of your installation and say: behold, what we did then, it was exceedingly good.

Please step forward Chuck, and let the members of this congregation and community rise, as we give you our blessing.



RABBI ALEXANDER SCHINDLER'S BOARD SERMON
AMERICAN JEWISH
TEMPLE ISRAEL
ARCHIVES
Minneapolis



May 15, 1992

I am grateful for your warm introduction, albeit I am embarrassed by its extravagance. . . at least the better part of me is embarrassed. The truth of the matter is that I don't like introductions. As a matter of fact, generally speaking, as I travel around the country, I don't even introduce myself as a rabbi. This is not to say that I am ashamed that I am a rabbi, but when you tell people that you are a rabbi, they tend to ask you the same questions or they complain about their rabbi . . . and who wants that? So I developed a kind of protective response. When people ask me what I do, I make up a profession at the spur of the moment . . . and that tends to be quite challenging, especially when I choose a profession my travel companions know something about.

Extravagant though your words were, Chuck, I am nonetheless grateful for the graciousness of your reception. Surely you know that your sentiments of regard and affection are reciprocated with a full heart. As some of you may know, Rabbi Mintz was once a member of the Union's staff, and later on in his rabbinic career, I was his assistant. I helped him out during the High Holydays when he held the senior post at Union Temple in Brooklyn. You are fortunate to have him as your interim rabbi.

This is not the first time that I occupy this pulpit. Over the years of my ministry, I have come here often; have come to know many members of this great congregation and many are now my very good friends. I dare not even specify lest I exclude, but let me acknowledge by name at least Lois Rose, who currently serves in our highest leadership councils. . . and does so exceedingly well. Burton Joseph has distinguished himself as a member of our College-Institute Board and has made signal contributions toward the advancement of our mutual sacred cause. They are the kind of lay leaders we dream to have, fashioned in the image of Judaism's highest ideals. Max Shapiro was a school mate of mine, and I

continue to value him as a friend.

So I do not feel a stranger here. This is a place endeared to me by memory and by affection. I am exceedingly grateful to the leaders of this congregation for inviting our National Board to this their communal home for Shabbat dinner and worship. We came here to be in closer contact with the members of our congregational family, to hear from you, to learn from you, but also to give you an opportunity to get to know us just a little bit better.

The UAHC is the oldest institution of its kind in North America. It was established 120 years ago, by Isaac Meyer Wise, who charged us with a three fold task:

1. To enlarge the Reform movement by establishing new congregations here and throughout the world.
2. To give our movement ideological and programmatic cohesion, enabling our member congregation to determine those directions which we then jointly pursue.
3. And, lastly and foremost, to furnish our member congregations with resources required for their effective functioning, but which they alone cannot provide.

The Union has been true to this mission. Under its aegis, the Reform Jewish community has emerged as the predominant synagogue movement on the American Jewish scene. We number 856 congregations now, and our cumulative rolls have long since passed the million member mark. We are a burgeoning, blossoming movement, crackling with creativity. Our manner of summoning Jews to Judaism is affirmative and contemporary, based on far more than a 'survival' consciousness.

The largest percentage of children attending Jewish religious schools in America are enrolled in Reform religious schools. We have a youth and camping movement which serves tens of thousands of young people every year and of which we are justly proud because its ranks continue to provide us with our rabbis and teachers and leaders for the present and the future. We are the largest publishers of Jewish text books on the American scene. In your pews you will find one of our proudest creations, our Torah Commentary.

Our Ida and Howard Wilkoff Department of Synagogue Management provides an amplitude of resources to facilitate the temples' administrative and fiscal tasks. Our innovative and nurturing Outreach ventures have transformed the mindscape of the American Jewry and brought the issue of intermarriage out of the house of mourning and into the house of study - - indeed, into the house of prayer itself.

We maintain a Religious Action Center in Washington, a veritable beehive of activity, and the vortex of a network of coalitions through which we endeavor to express our religious convictions in the national arena. We even sustain a considerable overseas program, especially in Israel, where we conduct extensive youth activities and where, over the years, we settled two kibbutzim - - Lotan joining Yahel in the Aravah - - and one Mitzpeh in the Galil.

Further, we spawned a half-score affiliates - - NFTS and NFTB, NATA and NATE, and the ACC and PARDES and ARZA - - most of them major organizations in their own right . . . serving the needs of our professional leadership or of a particular interest of groupings within our family of congregations.

Time does not allow my commentary to encompass the Union's endeavors. It is only prismatic. It reflects only a few

surfaces of our multifaceted doing, only some of our numerous, endless efforts seeking to strengthen our member congregations.

Indeed, here is the goal of all our striving on a national level, as it is your goal on a community level: to buttress the synagogue, and to sustain it as the pivotal institution in Jewish life. For this is precisely what the synagogue was and continues to be: the mainstay of our collective continuity, the indispensable element of our people's survival.

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Would that everyone in the Jewish community were to recognize it as such. I refer now particularly to the relatively low rung which synagogues hold on our larger community's philanthropic scale. American Jews who presently provide an extraordinarily generous stream of funds to Israel and to communal agencies, as they properly should; the saving of life must be our first concern. But, by and large, the synagogues and their supportive institutions are left to languish in limbo. They are given no priority at all on the scale of Jewish communal philanthropic endeavor.

Yet 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. 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.

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But the synagogue is 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. 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. . . ."

"Others may get along without God," - added Martin Buber - "But if a Jew should attempt such a course he shall perish at his own hand. If the Jew stops believing in the might of God's spirit & himself as its artisan on earth, his existence will come to a speedy and inglorious end."

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

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 us to the depths of our being if we approach it only casually 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 mindset 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. 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 teaching of faith, nonetheless confronts us with a like seeming paradox. Chemists 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 the 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 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 an 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 wondrous:

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

This, then, is the two-fold task which summons us: as individual congregations and in our collectivity, our Union: 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. May we be true to this task. Then

will we gain the kind of faith that sustains us, that lifts us above the mundane and the dry-as-dust, and we will be able to claim the name Reform Jew with just and confident pride.





UAHC Board Meeting
Minneapolis, MN
May, 1992

Because it was determined quite recently that I share with you my thoughts concerning the recent problems in Los Angeles, I really did not have the time required for a well reasoned and polished presentation. I don't like to speak extemporaneously, spontaneously. I don't even like to listen to extemporaneous talks. Spontaneous speeches are seldom worth the paper they are written on. Accordingly, my talk tonight will not be a well burnished speech, but rather a running commentary, a compressed summary of my reactions to those dreadful events that transpired in Los Angeles but two weeks ago. Esther Saritsky actually set that theme for us in her deeply moving d'var Torah this morning. She said that all of us are rabbis and then went on to prove it. I would have been proud to have written and delivered such a speech. Kol ha-kavod, Esther . . . you were and are wonderful.

Now let me begin my own commentary with a quotation from Erich Fromm: "Destructiveness," he wrote, "destructiveness is the outcome of unlived lives." The destructiveness that beset Los Angeles was the outcome of lives beaten down by police batons and jackboots, yes; but it was also the consequence of those heavy, hammer-like blows that long predate the outrages against Rodney King: the unrelenting blows of unemployment enveloping whole neighborhoods; the unrelenting blows of failure and neglect and addiction, and suspicion, and racism. The unrelenting blows of a rampant violence within urban ghettos, whites against blacks, blacks against Koreans, and most often blacks against their very own. These blows are as harsh and as evident as anything shown on that 81 second videotape with which America must now reckon. Eric Fromm was prescient, foreseeing even as he was discerning when he wrote: "Destructiveness is the outcome of unlived lives."

Now, the President's men place the blame for these riots on the welfare programs generated by Democrats in the 60's and the 70's.

What cynicism this! What hypocrisy! Republicans bear an equal if not a greater share of the burden and the blame. There simply is no denying it. The economic policies conceived and effected by President Reagan were flagrantly unjust. They helped the rich at the expense of the poor. They widened the gap between the haves and the have-nots in our land. Indeed, that gap has become a yawning chasm. A recent study sponsored by the administration itself shows that 1% of the population has an accumulated wealth greater than that of all other Americans. 1% of our fellow citizens have more money than the rest of us put together. Tax cuts advantaged primarily the wealthy. The defense budget bloated, the national debt soared, only entitlements were slashed: welfare benefits, food stamp programs, aid to families with dependent children, medicaid, education and student assistance, preventive medicine programs, legal aid - - all and more fell to the axe of the supply siders, those exponents of the plutocratic theory which holds that when you give more money to the rich, it will quickly trickle down to the poor. Well, it didn't and it never will! Reaganomics proved to be a gift to the wealthy, nothing other. It tightened this nation's belt around the necks of the poor.

Now I do not suggest that the welfare programs that were truncated or eliminated were all of them of equal worth. Nor do I say that they are inviolable, that they are sacred. But these programs filled human needs - - and human needs are sacred. To millions of the disadvantaged in our society, the programs that fell victim to Reaganomics gave hope, opportunity and, indeed, life itself. They offered a chance to share in the American dream and in the bounty of God's earth; they provided a safety net, ensured survival, and proffered the prospect of betterment. And that is what any government, especially the American government is supposed to be all about.

Nor do I deem the Democrats to be blameless in all of this. Democrats and Republicans both share a burden of guilt. Both political parties ignored the blight of the inner cities until violence erupted . . . only then did anyone react, alas. Both political parties contributed to this problem, because of their failure to speak with candor, their penchant for telling the voters what they think we like to hear, their ever readiness to distort the truth for political gain. As Senator Bradley so courageously put it the other day:

"Republicans have played the race card in a divisive way - - remember Willie Horton - - and Democrats have suffocated discussion of self-destructive behavior among minority groupings in a cloak of silence and denial. The result is that yet another generation has been lost. We cannot afford to wait longer. It is time for candor, time for truth, time for action."

As a religious community, of course, - - and we have said so publicly in a statement signed by our Chairman, - - we cannot condone the actions of those who protested the King verdict through lawlessness and violence in the streets. Shooting and beating innocent bystanders, setting fires to buildings and cars and looting stores is not a solution to injustice . . . it is not an answer to police brutality . . . it is not a way out of poverty and despair. An unbridled mob is the voice of madness, not the voice of the people. Mindless mayhem and murder degrade the entire nation. Worst of all, they claim the hapless and helpless as first and primary victims. That's what happened in Los Angeles, did it not? The ghetto dwellers suffered more than anyone else.

Unfortunately, the King verdict cannot be reversed. But there remains the recourse of lawful protest and the remedy of Federal

law. President Bush has urged our Justice Department to do just that, to institute legal action against the police officers involved for violating the civil rights of Rodney King. That is good and proper.

But above all, there is a burning need for a national program of assistance to our cities that will address the pain and the frustration and bitterness that are destroying the lives of the many millions who live there. They, too, are the victims of violence, as I have said. A violence whose impact is not as immediate as are explosions in the street; yet they are just as fatal. I speak of the violence that poisons relations between people because their skin has different colors. I speak of 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, that stifles all their hope. It is this slower-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 erupt not just in the inner cities, but in suburbia too, not just in Watts and Crown Heights, but also in Beverly Hills and Shaker Heights.

What impact do these events have on the American Jewish community? They well might intensify our already growing tendency to turn inward. When a people is beset by fear, the likely consequence is a reactive isolationism. "Everyone is out for himself," people think or even say, "so let's do the same . . . let's dig in our own garden, let's go it alone, no one else will fend for us."

I am glad, therefore, exceedingly proud of the fact that thus far at least, the Reform Jewish community has not yielded to the lure of an unbridled ethnocentrism. We determined, rather, to

reverse the insular preoccupation of American Jews, to bestir ourselves to a greater universalism, to recapture our lofty tradition which bids us care for the stranger in our midst and ever to seek the peace of the community in which we live.

By all reports, the Reform congregations of Los Angeles have played a leadership role in the effort to heal their community, collecting clothing and food, delivering them through the churches of the inner city. A Reform Rabbi, Harvey Fields, presently leads a commission in behalf of the entire Los Angeles Jewish community, which has established working ties with blacks and Korean and Hispanic communities, to see what else can be done to help them and to serve as a mediating force between these often hostile factions. David Saperstein and the speaker we wanted with us are both where we would want them to be: in Washington and participating in today's March to Save our Cities and to Save our Children.

Separatism is bad for Jews. We need friends to prevail, now as in the past. Statistics tell us that soon we may be less than 2% of the population. Yet we have battles to wage -- on behalf of Israel, Soviet Jewry, and the separation of church and state. How, pray tell, can a mere 2% wage and win these battles without allies. But we will not find or retain allies if we focus only on our own interests and show but scant regard for the needs of others.

But 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 humankind.

"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,

to open the eyes of the blind, to loosen the fetters of the bound, to bring to the light of day those who dwell in darkness."

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. Al Vorspan once cleverly and movingly wrote:

"If, in order to survive I must become a bald-headed Meir Kahane . . . If , in order to survive I must kiss the world good-bye and separate myself from humankind . . . If I must emulate the violence, the callousness, the bigotry and narrowness of my opponents . . . then survival is not worth the candle for me."

He is absolutely right, of course.

"To be a Jew," he said, "is to be something more than a survived 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 thousands of years ago, is to be part of a great and enduring people, YES, but also to be a blessing to all humankind."

to file ✓

Banquet of Celebration, Century Plaza Hotel, May 19, 1992

-- Alexander M. Schindler

Thank you for your gracious introduction, Janet.

I reciprocate your sentiments fully.

I admire your rich gifts of mind and spirit,
adorned as they are by a sparkling wit.

When I say, as I often do, that the empowerment of women in Judaism
has enriched us all,

has brought a new creative energy to our people,

it is a Janet Marder that I have in mind.

I am proud that she is my colleague and I value her as a friend.

Now, convention dictates that after dinner speakers begin their remarks
with a joke, with some witty story which will put the
audience into a happy frame of mind.

Alas, I have come here so often...and my meager stock of stories
is virtually depleted...

I suppose there is no harm in repeating good stories.

Monty Hall once told me that he does it all the time

"At least half the audience hasn't heard the story before,"
Monty said, "as for those who have, well I'm so good at
telling stories that they laugh all over again."

I'm no Monty Hall, of course, no Jackie Mason.

I mean, if you want a Jackie Mason, pay for a Jackie Mason.

But let me try anyway...

just maybe most of you haven't heard this story before.

[pope...feather]

We owe special thanks are due to Mark and Peachy Levy
who co-chaired this function...

We honored them last year...it was a lovely evening...

and they certainly haven't rested on their laurels since.
Mark ascended to the presidency of this region.
He chaired a never-to-be-forgotten Union Biennial in Baltimore
last November.

He is already deeply involved in planning for our next Biennial.
And Peachy was and is always at his side...his helpmeet in every way...
beautiful in countenance and deed alike.

And now they both toiled faithfully to make this evening be.
Their harvest is rich indeed, more full-sheaved with every passing year.

I join Peachy in saluting our national leadership

-- JIM ABARBANEL + ALAN BELINKOF + BERNIE BRISKIN
BILL DANIEL, JAY GELLER, HARRY HELFT + ESTHER STARITSKY
EVELYN SHLENSKY + MARK LEON

and Alan Goldman, of course, immediate Past Chairman of our Board
and the Chairman of the College's Governors, Stanley Gold.

Their presence bespeaks the importance of this occasion
as well as their ever-readiness to advance our work.

Thank you all for coming here this night.

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

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

* * *

Now, our mood here, tonight, is not quite as light
as it was last year at this event.

On that very eve, a year ago,
the legendary rescue of Ethiopian Jewry commenced
when over 14,000 of our endangered fellow Jews
were rocketed from servitude to freedom
in the span of three short days.

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

A year ago, too, the conflict in the Gulf
had just reached its successful conclusion
and a new world order was in the offing.

The hearts of Americans everywhere swelled with pride and hope.

Not so today, and surely not so in this community,
battered as it has been by the destructiveness
that beset this city only three weeks ago.

This destructiveness, this frenzy, was the outcome of lives beaten down
by police batons and and jackboots, yes;

But it was also the consequence of ~~those~~ heavy, hammer-like blows
that long predate the outrages against Rodney King:

the unrelenting blows of unemployment
enveloping whole neighborhoods;

the unrelenting blows of failure and neglect and addiction,
and suspicion, and racism,
all of them spawning despair...

the unrelenting blows of a rampant violence within urban ghettos,
whites against blacks, blacks against Koreans,
and most often blacks against their very own...

These blows are as harsh and as evident as anything shown

on that 81-second videotape with which America must now reckon.

Eric Fromm was discerning when he wrote:

"Destructiveness is the outcome of unlived lives."

Under such circumstances of pain and crisis

we do not gather in a blithe and lightsome spirit.

Rather have we come together to affirm our community,

to gird ourselves to meet the challenges of faith,
challenges that extend to the streets of Los Angeles,
and well beyond.

For we American Jews have served as "thousand points of light"
in the American firmament

well before Peggy Noonan ever coined the phrase.

And we will continue to serve in such a manner

from the stable base of our united community,
into the 21st century and beyond. //

"Israel's rampart" -- this is how ~~the amorayim~~,

the rabbis of the Talmud, defined the word "community."

It is our bastion, our bulwark, our stronghold, they taught

BUT THEN QUICKLY WARNED THAT

~~"but this rampart, this bastion is too formidable~~

for anyone to buttress alone,"

Fortunately, for tonight's honorees, Terry and Lionel Bell,

they have each other.

Indeed, this couple has stood shoulder to shoulder,
bearing the burdens of Jewish communal leadership for over 40 years
Their contributions to Reform Judaism are immeasurable.
not the least of which are the vital ties
that they have personally established
between our synagogue movement and Federation.
These ties are well exemplified by Terry's recent elevation
to the Presidency of the Jewish Federation Council
and Lionel's recently completed tenure
as President of Wilshire Boulevard Temple, where he has served
as leader and builder for high to 60 years.

Nothing delights me more, in fact,
than to "share" the Bells with Federation, the JCCs Association,
the United Jewish Fund and the many other beneficiaries
of their talent and generosity.

For I see the wide spectrum of their concerns
to be the harbinger of a far greater communal cohesiveness
in our efforts to secure Jewish creative continuity.

The time is ripe for such a greater bonding,
for the intensification of ties between synagogues and federations,
with ties of ever greater interdependence and mutual support.

~~There is an urgent need~~
~~The cordial distance that has hitherto marked relations~~
~~for a dynamic partnership~~
between the so-called "secular" and "religious" Jewish organization
~~must now yield to a new dynamic partnership.~~

It is a partnership rooted in the recognition that the synagogue,
is very simply the heartland, the vital center of Judaism.
All other Jewish institutions mobilize and utilize Jews in behalf of the
community...only the synagogue creates Jews.
It is in the synagogue where the individual soul and the community
are joined.
It is in the synagogue where modernity and eternity cross-fertilize,
where the seeds of the Jewish future are sown.
It is the synagogue where the covenant is recreated and renewed
in every generation.

The Federation's own National Jewish Population Survey affirms
what I am saying.
for it reveals how much more deeply committed synagogue affiliated
Jews are than those who belong to no congregation.
in their attachments to Israel...
in their attitude towards intermarriage,
in the strength of their Jewish commitments.
and above all in their readiness to assume the mantle
of Jewish communal leadership.

~~Most synagogue leaders, even the so-called "secular" Jewish
organizations, the ADLs and AJCs and Federations
do, in fact, belong to a congregation
-- so the CJP study and parallel surveys attest.~~

~~They even attend worship services with a measure of regularity
and make certain that their children receive good Jewish grounding
sending them to synagogue schools and camps and
educational missions to Israel~~

~~It is the synaggogue affiliated Jews primarily who are prepared~~
Terry and Lionel Bell are impressive exemplars of that ^{KIND OF} leadership,
the kind that has bestowed upon Reform Judaism the distinction
and the responsibility
of being the most significant cultivator of North American
Jewish life.

This is why we honor ^{THEM} but also because we genuinely like them
They are warm and caring people, good friends.

a delight to be with, becuae they delight so in life.
We love them not just for their excellences, but even for their foibles
for they make them human.

Lionel: capable, proficient, meticulous in work and attire alike
but too finicky when it comes to foods
and as clumsy an athlete as I ever encountered.

Terry: energetic, self assured, well-informed in many spheres,
^{A WELL REFINED SENSE OF THE BEAUTIFUL}
but also exceedingly strong in her views

As Lionel put it [so blame him not me, Terry]

↳ she is often in error but never in doubt.

-- but that's the stuff of which leadership is made.

I heard a delightful anecdote about their earlier encounters
which understandably did not appear in the multi-media
reveiw of their lives... ^{BUT I WILL DARE TO TELL} ~~so why am I telling it?~~

It seems that when they first met and after a quite a number of dates,
Lionel turned to Terry and said:

"don't you think it's time that we go to bed?"

and Terry replied: "I'm not ready to get married"

So much for changin times...

Now, surely I need not tell you, that Terry and Lionel
did not seek this public tribute.

They neither craved nor relish such open flattery.

They responded favorably to our pleadings

only because they saw this evening as a means of furthering
a cause that has been central to their life of public service.

Those of you who were here last year, and the year before that,
heard me talk about the Union's many-varied programs
that purpose to serve this very end.

We are a burgeoning, blossoming movement, crackling with creativity.

Our manner of summoning Jews to Judaism is affirmative and
contemporary, based on far more than a 'survival' consciousness.

We have a youth and camping movement which serves tens of thousands
of young people every year and of which we are justly proud
because its ranks continue to provide us with our rabbis
and teacher and leaders for the present and the future.

Our department of synagogue management provides an amplitude of
resources to facilitatet the temples' administrative and fiscal tas

Our innovative and nurturing outreach ventures

have trasformed the mindscape of the American Jewry
and brought the issue of intermarriage out of the house
of mourning and into the house of study

-- indeed, into the house of prayer itself.

THIS, INCIDENTALLY, IS THE PROGRAM ~~WHICH WILL BE~~
THE NAMES BILL + LOTTE DAVIS ~~WHO ARE SMITHS~~ VS FI
OUR WAY OF THANKING THEM FOR THEIR TESTIMONY
of 2000 TO FOR.

We even sustain an considerable overseas program, especially in Israel, where we conduct extensive youth activities and where, over the years, we settled two kibbutzim -- Lotan joining Yahel in the Aravah -- and one Mitzpeh in the Galil.

All these and many more of our splendid activities are described in the brochure that is before you. You can read about them at your leisure.

The temper of our times, and those tragic events of which I spoke at the very beginning of my commentary -- the violence in our inner cities -- impels me to focus for some moments on our extensive and intensive program of social action.

As many of you know, we maintain a Religious Action Center in Washington, which is a veritable beehive of activity, and the vortex of a network of coalitions through which we endeavor to express our religious convictions in the national arena. We encourage and provide a wide range of programmatic support for synagogal activities in this realm. We train temple professionals and lay leaders in this discipline. We provide our vast constituency with a stream of information concerning issues on the national agenda that demand our response. We bestir our congregants to political action, in the endeavor to weave the values of Judaism into fabric of this land.

Thus

In the present crisis, we ^{have} ~~obviously~~ condemned the action of those
who protested the King verdict through lawlessness and violence
in the streets

Shooting and beating innocent bystanders,
setting fires to buildings and cars and looting stores
is not a solution to injustice...
it is not an answer to police brutality...
it is not a way out of poverty and despair.

An unbridled mob is the voice of madness, not the voice of the people...

But at the same time, we ^{are} ^{insisting} insist that there is an burning need
for a national program of assistance to our cities...
that will address the pain and the frustration and bitterness
that are destroying the lives of the many millions
who live there.

They too are the victims of violence, as I have said.

a violence whose impact is not a immediate as are
explosions in the street. and yet they are just as fatal.

I speak of the violence that poisons relations between people,
because their skin has different colors

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, that stifles all their hope.

It is this slower-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 ^{EVER}growing frequency and destructiveness;
It will erupt not just in the inner cities but in suburbia too,
not just in Watts and Crown Heights
but also in ~~the~~ Beverly Hills and Shaker Heights.

We intend to press for such a program, with every resource at hand,
^{AND AT THE SAME TIME}
to resist with persistence any tendency in the Jewish community
^{TO TURN INWARD}
to yield to the lure of an unbridled ethnocentrism.

to respond to these frightening events with a reactive isolationism

This is why I am so proud that the Reform congregations of LA have played
leadership role in the effort to heal their community,
collecting clothing and food,
delivering them through the churches of the inner city.

Temple Israel of Hollywood deserves to be singled out
for leadership in this realm as does Temple Isaiah.

And Harvey Fields, of Wilshire Avenue Temple leads
your community-wide commission to spearhead the effort
to establish working ties with the blacks and Korean
and Hispanic communities, to see what else can be done to help them
and to serve as a mediating force between these
often hostile factions.

Aye, we intend to maintain this social action program with vigor.
It is a solid wedge holding open the door of the Jewish conscience.
It is an amplifier through which the voices of the prophets still echo,
enjoining us to care for the stranger in our midst
and ever to seek the peace of the community in which we live.

Seperatism is bad for Jews.

We need friends to prevail, now as in the past.

Statistics tell us that soon we may be less than 2% of he population.

Yet we have battles to wage

-- on behalf of Israel, and Soviet Jewry,

and the separation of church and state --

How, pray tell, can a mere 2% wage and win these battles without allies.

But we will not find or retain allies,

if we focus only on our won interests

and show but scant regard for needs of others.

But far more important than this consideration of an elightened

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.

"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.
to open the eyes of the blind, to loosen the fetters of the bound
to bring to the light of day those who dwell in darkness.

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

AS AN VOISMAN ONCE SO BEAUTIFUL WROTE.

To be a Jew, is to be something more than a survived endangered species.

To be a Jew is to be agoad 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 thousands of years ago,

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

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

It is because they are comitted to this grand conception of Judaism
that we honor Terry and Lionel Bell.

As a symbol of our thankfulness, we present you with a gift...

It is this beautiful tzedakah box,

EXQUISITE ^{WORKS HEART WORK} crafted in silverr by the artists

It is an altogethether fitting gift

for you have given of yourself

and what is infinitely more difficult,

you have inspired others to give.

Accordingly, the words inscribed thereon are also fitting.

"those who lead others to righteousness shall be as the stars forever"

Come, my friends, and receive the applause which you so richly deserve.

~~Interfaith Environmental Conference~~
Joint Appeal by Religion and Science
for the Environment
May 11, 1992
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Some weeks ago, in this very city, a broad range of
Jewish leaders gathered to launch a major effort seeking
to involve the Jewish community in the national drive
to protect the environment.

Several hundred leaders were in attendance,
and every conceivable stream of Jewish life,
religious as well as secular, was represented.

With a unanimity uncommon in our midst we agreed that
the "ecological crisis hovers over our many other vital concerns"
since the threat to the environment is global,
endangering all human life.

Senator Lieberman set the theme succinctly and well:

"You don't have to be Jewish to be an environmentalist," he said,
"but it is certainly consistent with the Jewish tradition,
for Judaism is a faith which requires protection of the earth."

And so it is, for in our Bible we are reminded that verything we see

"the heavens and the earth and all that fills it --
all these things are the outer garment of God..."

Enlarging on this Scriptural verse, a medieval commentator taught:

"When God created the first human beings,
God led them around the garden of Eden and said:
Look at my works!
See how beautiful they are, how excellent!
For your sake I created them all.
See to it that you do not despoil and destroy My world;
for if you do, there will be none to repair it."

Jews celebrate the Passover festival

by retelling the story of the Exodus from Egypt.

The accounting of the ten plagues is a dramatic element of
that story.

You surely remember it:

Bloody, polluted waters.

A vast sudden increase in the number of pests and parasites.

Skin diseases and other lingering ailments.

Failed crops in a poisoned land.

Darkness that blackens the day.

A dying generation of children.

These are the plagues that devastated the land of Egypt.

The Biblical poet ascribes this devastation, this fearsome destruction
of the laws of nature to the hands of a wrathful God.

Alas, we have learned over the past two decades, that our own
technology when misapplied with Pharaonic arrogance,
is perfectly capable of wreaking devastation

on a scale fully parallel to the plagues that afflicted Egypt

We have seen the water we drink and the air we breath poisoned
by toxic chemicals.

We have seen our lakes made unlivable by acid rain.

We have seen our beaches turned into sewage dumps,
and our dumps turned into disaster areas.

We have noted the extinction of one species of life each day.

We have seen the proliferation of radioactive wastes

that will continue to poison the earth for generations to come.

No, it isn't carelessness or callousness which makes us do all this!
It is greed, that corrosive materialism of our time which
we as religious leaders must join forces to counter!

The depletion of the rainforests and the daily extinction of still
another species is not a function of the "human condition."
It is the work of a specific peasant forced to slash and burn
for want of his own land.

It is the work of a specific cattle rancher selling meat to the
chains, those "fast food" spots that burgeon when a culture
becomes too insanely pressured
to take pause for a blessing before the meal.

The Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska,
or the radioactive disaster zone of Hanford, Washington,
or the proliferation of every form of cancer in our society,
are not the "price of progress."

They are the price of profit,
the price of corporate thinking about human values,
the price of a materialism so corrosive that it can rupture an
oil tanker's hull or a nuclear reactor's containment vessel.

And as was to be expected,
the Exxon company followed up this disaster,
by intensifying its opposition to laws requiring double-hulled
tankers.

And the Bush administration sought a redefinition of the term
"wetlands" to permit more exploitation of these nurseries of life.
What a mockery this...what cynicism...what hypocrisy...

"One generation goes," we read in the Book of Ecclesiastes,

"and another generation comes...but the earth remains forever."

That is the Scriptural injunction most imperilled by our times,
and hence most needful of protection.

The great Spanish Jewish philosopher and poet Solomon Ibn Gabirol
tells this tale.

Two people were once fighting over a piece of land.

Each claimed ownership,

and each bolstered his claim with apparent proof.

After arguing for a long time,

they agreed to resolve their conflict by putting the case before a
rabbi

but despite years of legal training

the rabbi could not reach a decision.

Both parties seemed to be right.

Finally the rabbi said,

"since I cannot decide to whom this land belongs,
let's ask the land."

The rabbi put his ear to the ground, and after a moment stood up
and said:

"My friends, the land says it belongs to neither of you --
but that you belong to the land...

as it is written: the earth is the Lord's

The earth is the Lord's, and as religious leaders

we are resolved not to suffer its despoilation.

HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATIVE LECTURE

College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Mass.

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES



RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

April 7, 1992

I am honored to be here at this justly renowned university and thereby to have my name linked with the other distinguished academicians and world leaders who spoke from this rostrum and on this occasion in years past.

How wonderful it was of Jacob Hiatt to endow this annual lectureship and to make possible the building of two University Library wings in memory of Joshua and Leah Hiatt and all the many other victims of the Holocaust. To be sure, now, this is not his only gift to this community. His many benefactions have made him legend here. Numerous institutions of human love carry his name. Hundreds, thousands of young people now have a future, were enabled to study, to grow in mind and spirit, thanks to his extensive and imaginative scholarship program.

Still, this particular event is probably closest to Jack's soul, for his own life experience has taught him that you cannot build a meaningful future if you fail to remember the past. Memory and hope are inextricably intertwined within him. After all, he himself is a survivor of that whirlwind of destruction which claimed his parents along with 6 million of their co-religionists as victims.

Jewish custom prescribes that Holocaust Remembrance Day be marked in the month of April . . . for it was in April that the Jews of

the Warsaw ghetto rose up against their oppressors with empty hands facing guns and tanks, the most lethal weapons of war. Come to think of it, though, this is a most unlikely time to mark so somber and melancholy an occasion. After all, April is the first full month of Spring, and Spring is the time "when the air is calm and pleasant," so Milton wrote, "and it were an injury and sullenness against nature not to go out and see her riches and partake in her rejoicing."

As individuals, we can well do that, we can go out into the public gardens and rejoice, roll up our sleeves to feel a little Springtime warmth; but as Jews rolled-up sleeves all too quickly remind us of those numbers tattooed on the arms of death camp inmates.

As individuals we can rejoice in April showers and breathtaking rainbows; but as Jews we cannot hear of "showers" without shuddering, nor view a rainbow without thinking of the Nazi killers who shattered its radiance, who took its colors and pinned them to our hearts: yellow for Jews . . . red for communists, brown for gypsies . . . pink for gays, and on and on through the spectrum of murdered souls.

As individuals we can hearken to the Song of Solomon:

"arise. . . my fair one, come away!"

But as Jews, we are mired in agonizing memories and cannot come away. We cannot see a meadow without thinking of mass graves. We cannot see a dancing butterfly without recalling the poem of a 12-year-old Jewish girl, an inmate of Theresienstadt, who said of her captivity that she "never saw another butterfly."

Oh, would that we could forget. But quick forgetting is not the reality of a people who lost one third of their number in half a decade; who lost one and one half million of their children in that time, little boys and girls, infants, innocent, guiltless all! Quick healing is not the reality of a people for whom nature itself was defiled by the Nazi murderers who sowed bones instead of seeds in the month of April!

And so we remember . . . memories continue to hurt and haunt us. They still make us stagger. The pavement sinks under the feet, the walls spin 'round, the world reels. We cannot pluck the remembrance of all this carnage from us, its anguish pierced too deep. The bitterness has eaten into our sinews, dissolved our flesh into festering sores, reduced the very spirit of our lives to sparkless, blackened ashes.

And our response to all these aching memories is silence. It must be that, it always will be that - - a silence. For our speech has been stifled by darkness and our suffering is of a

kind that has no tongue. The martyrology of the Jew is one long stillness, an endless silent scream reaching to the heavens - - where God was silent too.

And yet we must speak, for we are the spokesmen of the dead. It is our duty to testify in their behalf ever to remind the world that it was not God, but brutal men, who brought darkness to the human soul.

Those who lived through and outlived this evil do not need to speak; the yellow badge is burned on their flesh for all to see. But their ranks are thinning; the generations come and go. Memory fades. People forget. And there are those who have determined to wipe its slate to make it seem as if these things had never been.

But these things have been. They really happened. Millions of God's children, perished through the cruelty of the aggressor, victims of demonic hate; the aged and young, the learned and unlettered - - all driven in multitudes along the road of pain and pitiless death. So we must speak - - and meet, and write - - however faltering our tongue and unavailing our speech. And we begin this task as did our forebears with words hallowed by centuries of our martyrdom:

"Yitgadal, vevitkadash sh'mev rabba . . . "

"Magnified and Sanctified be the Name of God"

It has been ordained that this prayer be repeated six million times. People must never forget why this is so.

* * *

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

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

Thus, we do infer certain lessons from the suffering we have endured; and by so doing, we convert the mystery of suffering into a revelation.

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

Wherever there is a single Jew in danger, in whatever country or continent or the remotest corner of our far flung world, there are we determined to find him, to reach out to him, offering our hand, our heart, our life. Never more will it be said: that we had eyes but did not see, that we had ears but did not hear, that we had mouths but that we failed to speak.

"Never will we allow this to happen again!" This is the vital force which propelled the creation of the modern Jewish state, and which impels the Jews of the world to do everything humanly possible to secure its safety. This, the vital force which spurred the Israelis to legendary acts of heroism like Entebbe, or to the recent rescue, over one short week-end, of nearly 15,000 endangered Ethiopian Jews. And remember, this was the first time in human history when blacks were taken from one continent to another not in chains but in love.

"Never will we let it happen again!" That has become our motto. I suppose we Jews are overly sensitive, even paranoid, on the subject of our safety. Yet where will we find reassurance?

How can we feel at ease when recent studies report a global rise in anti-Semitism . . . denials of the Holocaust, the refurbished iconization of erstwhile Hitler puppets such as Antonescu in Romania and Tito in Slovakia . . . the proliferation of neo-fascist parties in many lands - - only yesterday a Mussolini was elected in Italy. Jewish cemeteries desecrated, synagogues defaced, acts of violence, even murder, several such incidents recorded every single day now - - and all this only one generation after Auschwitz.

How can we feel secure when a recent poll showed that over 30% of the Germans of today believe that Jews are ultimately to blame for the Holocaust, for what they did, or failed to do, in a word, that the victims and not the murderers are really guilty.

How are our fears allayed when even in our own country, yes, here too, anti-Semitic incidents have seen an alarming rise during the year just past . . . when a David Duke, who wears a swastika as a halo if not breastplate, nonetheless gathers a majority of the white votes in Louisiana's senatorial election. Or when a Pat Buchanan, who even Bill Buckley has assessed to have indulged in anti-Semitic rhetoric, stumps our economically troubled America inciting passions of xenophobia and selfishness and yet nets one-third of the Republican Primary vote. Aye, or when the presidential pulpit is abused to impugn our political influence,

and the Secretary of State is said to have muttered unmentionable words about us.

Nor are our fears allayed by the trauma of having the public classrooms and college campuses, those erstwhile unifying forces of our nation, become a combat zone for competing interests battling over multi-culturalism, by having the Martin Luther Kings and Bayard Rustins, those builders of bridges, supplanted by purveyors of hate like Sharpton and Jeffries, or by the fact that our country's failure fully to implement the civil rights revolution particularly in the economic sphere is producing an explosive African-American nihilism, with no small portion of anti-Semitism for fuel.

No, alas, our wounds are not merely of another era. Our wounds bleed anew. And so we are not likely to forget the first lesson of the Holocaust: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" We intend to deny Hitler a posthumous victory. We are, and we will continue to be. Survival: it is the best defense, the sole revenge, the only worthy response to those seek our destruction.

* * *

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

We cannot deny this reality. True, the Holocaust is sui generis, unprecedented and unmatched in its evil. Nonetheless, it is but one of the many man-made roads that have led into the abyss of human iniquity. Our age has many pathways sinking into this hell: the archipelagos of Stalin's Russia, napalm scorched Vietnam, death squads in Latin America, and perhaps most damning of all, the pathway of hunger, of neglect and apathy, upon which 40,000 more corpses are strewn every single day of our lives.

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

A Yiddish proverb encapsulates this truth:

"a velt brent brider nit nor unzer shtetl."

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

This second lesson is infinitely more difficult to internalize than is the first. When a people is beset by fear, the likely consequence is a reactive isolationism, and it is precisely this malady that has afflicted too many of our fellow Jews. "We are surrounded by enemies," they say, "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. We did not achieve our freedoms alone. 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.

Separatism is bad for Jews . . . we need allies to prevail. But we will not find and retain them if we care only for ourselves.

The chassidic master, Moshe Leb Sassover taught:

A peasant helped me to understand the true meaning of love. I overheard him at an inn talking to his companion . . . He asked his friend: "Do you love me, Ivan?" And Ivan replied, "of course I do." And then the peasant asked: "And do you know what hurts me, Ivan." "No," replied he, "How can I possibly know that?" "Well, " concluded the peasant, "if you do not know what hurts me, how can you say that you love me?"

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 and we will not survive without the help of others.

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 thus we read in Scripture:

"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."

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.

Al Vorspan once cleverly and movingly wrote:

"If, in order to survive I must become a bald-headed Meir Kahane. If in order to survive I must kiss the world good-bye and separate myself from humankind. If I must emulate

the violence, the callousness the bigotry and narrowness of my opponents . . . then survival is not worth the candle for me."

But all this is true not just for Jews but for all groupings in our society - - racial, ethnic, religious - - and indeed for all the peoples of the earth. None of us lives alone . . . we interact with others: we depend on others always. The Jewish sage, Hillel, may have counselled: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" But then he quickly added: "But if I am only for myself, what am I?"

We simply dare not define our group identities in parochial terms alone, none of us should, whatever our race or creed. Was it not that very nearsightedness, and the arrogance that it bred, that led Germany to its feverish fantasies of a master race? Was it not precisely this parochialism run amok that led dictatorships to their barbaric sense of "national security?"

The philosopher, George Santayana, taught: "When you believe in absurdities, you can commit atrocities." Surely the commonest absurdity that human beings have believed is that of the superiority of individuals or groups over others. Surely, it is that absurdity which has led us into a century of savagery. Surely that selfsame absurdity now threatens to turn the whole globe into the charnel houses of Auschwitz.

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

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

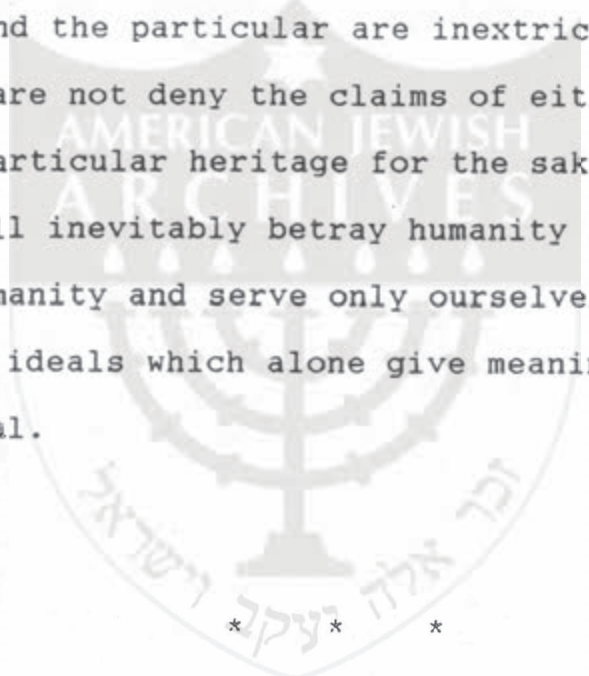
All of us are primary color bands in the spectrum of suffering humanity. We must therefore hold our heads high, wear our colors, speak our languages, let ourselves be seen by all.

And when the gaze of humanity is upon us, we must bid them look

back in time and see the monstrosities that gave birth to our modernity. We must bid them to look into their own hearts and see the internal bleeding that is draining us of our very humanity. This above all, we must bid them look at one another, whatever be their nationality or color or creed, and say:

"You are the bone of my bone, the flesh of my flesh, for one God has created us all."

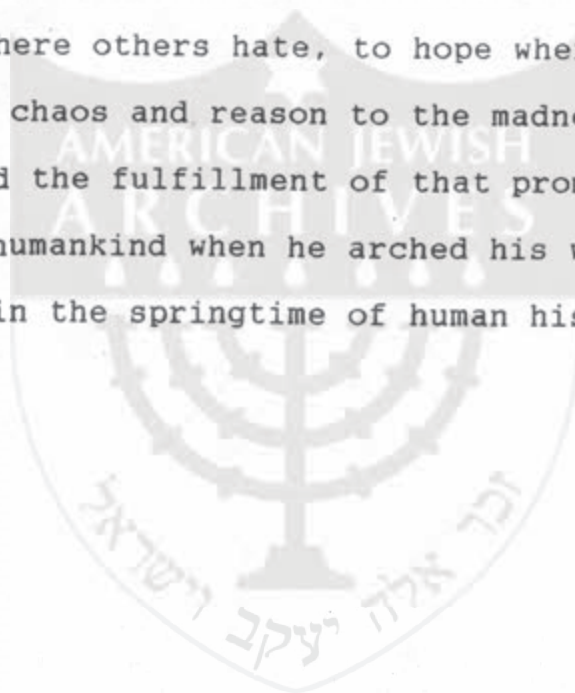
The universal and the particular are inextricably intertwined within us; we dare not deny the claims of either. If we repudiate our particular heritage for the sake of a greater humanity, we will inevitably betray humanity in the end. But if we repudiate humanity and serve only ourselves, we will betray those ideas and ideals which alone give meaning to our own people's survival.



This, then, is the two-fold truth forged on the anvil of Jewish suffering, these the thoughts that stir within us as we recall with loving remembrance our martyrs, all those who perished through the cruelty of the oppressor. Not punished for any individual guilt, but indiscriminately, men and women . . . the

aged and the young . . . the learned and the simple . . . were driven in multitudes along the road of pain and pitiless death. They lie in nameless graves. Their places of everlasting sleep are not known to us. Yet we will not forget them. We take them into our hearts and give them a place beside the treasured memories of our own beloved.

May their remembrance give us the strength to turn from death to life, to love where others hate, to hope where others despair, to bring beauty to chaos and reason to the madness of our days. In a word, to speed the fulfillment of that promise of lasting life made by God to humankind when he arched his wondrous rainbow over Noah's ark - - in the springtime of human history.



REFLECTIONS ON THE LIFE OF MENACHEM BEGIN
PRESIDENTS' CONFERENCE HAZKARAH



MARCH 11, 1992
6 ADAR II 5752

By: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

Nitparda Hachavila

"The chain has been severed . . it is riven!"

These words, spoken by Rabbi Judah Hanaasi, when he was told of the death of his friend Antoninus, reverberate within us now. A cord is loosed . . . The silver chain is broken . . . Tender ties of love and friendship have been torn asunder by relentless death.

Menachem Begin was an altogether remarkable human being. History will rank him among our generation's foremost leaders. The many decades he spent in the underground and in the wastelands of political opposition did not blunt his ability to govern, indeed, they honed it. He left an imprint on Israel deeper than most of her Prime Ministers. And he achieved what eluded all others: a peace agreement with at least one of the Arab nations.

His death leaves us all bereft. It diminishes our strength. Truly a star has been torn from the firmament of our lives, and our lives are the darker because of it.

Unhappily Malcolm did not ask me to speak until just a few hours ago, so this will be by no means the kind of hesped I would want to give, no polished evaluation of Begin's life and work. I will speak, rather, words which flow from the heart, random personal reflections and reminiscences, some dabs of paint, as it were, with which a sharper and more vivid picture might some day be drawn.

Let me begin by saying that I valued Manachem Begin as a friend, and I am proud that he called me that, too. It was an unlikely friendship, to be sure - - Leibel Fein called us an Odd Couple - - after all, our political inclinations diverged rather sharply,

our religious inclinations too; he was a non observant traditionalist, I, a Reform Rabbi, with not a few radical ideas. It was a friendship fostered in the first instance by political necessity: how could I as Chairman of the Presidents' Conference fail to support the democratically elected Prime Minister of Israel? But over time that friendship blossomed and became strong enough to survive many a bitter dispute. We argued violently one night, till the early hours of the morning; it was during his second term when the Lebanese War took a disastrous turn. But before we parted we still embraced, and he generously said:

"all this has nothing to do with our more personal relationship . . . it is on a different, deeper plane, where soul touches soul."

And so I do more today than give voice to the complaints of others. I, too, am sorrow-stricken; my friend is no more.

Begin possessed qualities not often found in political leadership, alas. He was an honorable man. He cared about the truth as he perceived it. He refused to diverge from it, either to please a friend or to appease an enemy. There was no venality about him, none whatsoever. He could not be bought at any price. He lived simply - - in a small unpretentious two-room apartment - before he assumed office and after he left it. He had none of the imperiousness, the contumely, the arrogance which others in high office too often assume. He was always chivalrous, cordial, approachable, unaffectedly kind. He certainly was perseverant in the quest to achieve his vision of Israel's good. He followed that inner star relentlessly, risking everything in its pursuit. Even defeat did not sway him from his course. This quality above all others is what marked him the statesman, for it is only the statesman and never the politician who is willing to suffer political defeat in the pursuit of goals which may not be attainable in his lifetime.

Everyone assumes that in his retirement, as a virtual recluse, Begin was a "lonely, bitter, and depressed man." That simply is not so. I spoke to him often during those years, indeed just two weeks ago, on the day before that final seizure which ultimately claimed his life. There was none of that in his voice ever. When he left office, he may have been saddened, angry, frustrated - - but bitter, never! Whenever he met defeat, he withdrew within himself to take stock, to seek alternate avenues, to find a better way to fight. That was the pattern of his life.

Witness the equanimity with which he faced his more personal afflictions: Throughout his years in office he was beset by serious ailments. On the eve of his election he had a heart attack. He suffered other cardiac incidents while in office. He was in frequent pain. But there was never a complaint, neither against fate nor against man - - and the work went on.

I was drawn to him above all by this quality: He was an ohev visrael in the richest sense of that word. He saw the state as a means to serve the Jewish people, not the people as mere servants of the state. He loved all Jews, whatever their color, ethnic origin, ideological stance or religious bent. Remember that it was he who defied the Orthodox establishment by insisting on the rescue of Ethiopian Jewry . . . "they consider themselves Jews, they live as Jews, they share the fate of our people . . . that is all that matters," he said, "let us free them and bring them home."

These are Jews, mind you, who trace their lineage by the paternal line, who are considered Jews because their fathers are Jewish though their mothers might not be. This was also the first time in human history that blacks were taken from one continent to another not in chains but in love. Manachem Begin effected that.

Aye, he loved his people and their land with an abounding love. He also relived their historic faith. Not their religious faith so much, but rather that faith which is the inverse of despair, which was infused into the very fibre of our being, "mixed with our blood" from our beginnings, the faith in our direction, our justice, our future, the faith in the ability of the Jew to endure the struggle and to prevail.

I suppose that Begin will forever be associated with the Camp David agreements. He brought peace to Israel, at last for a time, and on one front. Begin never received enough credit for that, Sadat reaped much of the glory. But Begin was the first to make a move . . . and I was with him when he made it.

It happened at the American Ambassador's 4th of July party, where Israel's leadership was wont to assemble. I stood near Begin when he suddenly turned to Yechiel Kadishai, his faithful friend, and said:

"Is the Roumanian Ambassador here? I want to talk to him." Kadishai found him and he and Begin wandered off for a brief chat.

Some weeks thereafter, I heard of Begin's projected visit to Roumania, the first country after America he was to visit. I wondered about that, but ultimately was able to make the link. He went to see Ceausescu, Sadat's close friend, to assert the earnestness of his desire to seek accommodation with Egypt. A few months later, came that meeting between Dayan and Egypt's Foreign Minister in Morocco. Then came Sadat's dramatic visit to Jerusalem, and 16 months thereafter Camp David.

However cool that peace might have been, it held. It has

withstood much buffeting, Sadat's assassination, the Lebanese War, even Desert Storm. But it held . . . and it was Menachem Begin who took the first step towards peace.

Begin was not just the leader of a nation; he was above all a deeply feeling human being. He adored his children . . . Hassiah and Leah. . . and his son, Benjamin, in whose political success he took much pride - - the son seems to have inherited his father's integrity. But above all, did Menachem love his wife, Alizah, the companion of his life and soul. Oh how he loved her, with an abounding love. No diplomatic seating in Washington for him; he revised the protocol by insisting that his wife be seated at his side, always.

He once told me a tender story. My wife, Rhea, had asked him whether Alizah had suffered from asthma always or developed it only later on in life, to which he replied:

"When I first proposed to her, she said 'before I respond, I must tell you a secret: I have asthma,' whereupon I said to her: 'and before you respond, I must tell you a secret: the day will come when I will be arrested and jailed'."

And so, together they walked the way of life, drinking from its one cup, when it ran bitter, when it ran sweet, giving new meaning to the words: husband, wife, and marriage.

Now, I realize that I drew Begin larger than life. Omitting those failures and weaknesses to which he, no less than others, was prone. Our tradition enjoins us to do so, to omit a critical evaluation on an occasion such as this. Still, it would be a distortion of the man and a violation of that code of rigid honesty by which he lived were I to portray him as flawless, as a Tsaddik or even a malach. He was no angel, no saint - - just a man - - but what a man.

He lived the kind of life, many of us dream to live. A life large and generous, bold and adventurous, a life great in the scope of its desire, magnanimous in forgiveness, courageous as an act of faith, smilingly triumphant even in the face of set-back and disaster.

And so it is that Menachem Begin's death leaves us bereft. It has diminished our strength. Truly a star has been torn from the firmament of our lives, and our lives are the darker because of it.

T'hi nishmato tserura bitzror hachayim.



3/9-10
West. De

Environment Conf 1992
Speech

Joy, you requested a copy of my remarks...I spoke from notes... the first part is from my Biennial Address...the latter part is new... Still, it is fragmented, since I interpolated a lot. For what it's worth, here it is:

The human race's material reach is surely exceeding its spiritual grasp.
is it not?

Consider how we live in relation to the world,
to this planet earth,
how we take God's handiwork and despoil it:
the sweet air He gave us to breathe
and the fresh water with which he blessed us
the fertile green which delights the eye.

Instead of acknowledging and making proper use of all these gifts,
we poison them..."we tear apart the ozone...
we carbonize the oxygen...we acidify the refreshing rain."

No, it isn't carelessness or callousness which makes us do all this!
It is greed, that corrosive materialism of our time which
we must counter!

The depletion of the rainforests and the daily extinction of still
another species is not a function of the "human condition."

It is the work of a specific peasant forced to slash and burn
for want of his own land.

It is the work of a specific cattle rancher selling meat to the
chains,
those "fast food" spots that burgeon when a culture becomes
too insanely pressured

to take pause for a blessing before the meal.

The Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska,
or the radioactive disaster zone of Hanford, Washington,
or the proliferation of every form of cancer in our society,
are not the "price of progress."

They are the price of profit,
the price of corporate thinking about human values,
the price of a materialism so corrosive that it can rupture an
oil tanker's hull or a nuclear reactor's containment vessel.

And now the Exxon company is following up this disaster,
by intensifying its opposition to laws requiring double-hulled
tankers.

And the Bush administration is seeking a redefinition of the term
"wetlands" to permit more exploitation of these nurseries of life.
What a mockery this...what cynicism...what hypocrisy...

"One generation goes," we read in the Book of Ecclesiastes,
"and another generation comes...but the earth remains forever."
That is the Scriptural injunction most imperilled by our times,
and hence most needful of protection.

Not many weeks hence, we Jews will be celebrating Passover
by retelling the story of the Exodus from Egypt.
The accounting of the ten plagues is a dramatic element of
that story. You remember it well.

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

A dying generation of children.

These are the plagues that devastated the land of Egypt.

The Biblical poet ascribes this devastation, this fearsome destruction of the laws of nature to the hands of the Almighty God.

Alas, we have learned over the past two decades, that our own technology when misapplied with Pharaonic arrogance, is perfectly capable of wreaking devastation on a scale parallel to the plagues that afflicted Egypt.

Let us as Jews utilize the memory of slavery in Egypt to fashion a Jewish response to the degradation of God's creation.

Let us as Jews remember that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof and that we are but stewards of what we possess.

Let us recognize that we Jews are not a breed apart, but share the fate of humankind.

This above all, let us remember that the place on which we stand, this planet earth, is holy and that therefore as Jews we must never countenance its despoilation.