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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES
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Speeches, 1993.

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Thank you for your warm introduction, Michael,
albeit, you are overly generous.

I guess you have been hanging around with rabbis for too long
and have been infected by their pronness for hyperbole.

I have an anecdote which illuminates this failing.

One or two among you may have heard me tell it before,
but since some local charcters were involved in the incident,
it bears retelling here.

(Roland Gittelsohn and Nathan Perlman)

Exaggerated, though, your introduction might have been

I am deeply grateful for the friendship which it bespeaks
and which I reciprocate with a full and grateful heart.

Mike, as you know, is a member of our national Board of Trustees.
He was just nominated to our Executive Committee and is doubtlessly
slated for higher office still.

I am glad that this is so, since he has so very much to offer:
he is bright, articulate, devoted.

He is something of a stormy petrel; he stirs the complacent.

I like that about him especially.

And this above all, because he strives to exemplify on his own life
those commitments which he seeks to implant in others.

Kol Hakavod -- all honor to him!

And all honor to all of you, for having nurtured this school,
and brought it to this time and place.

This is a magnificent facility, really,
clean in its lines, spacious, more than ample for the present need,
-- an altogether proper setting for so worthy an endeavor.

I am glad that you invited me here to share this communal simcha.
As so of you know, I was Paul Menitoff's predecessor,
twice or thrice removed.

And when I came to Boston from Worcester, now over thirty years ago,
there was no Reform Jewish school which offered full time
education here.

There were two or three Orthodox day schools
and the earliest beginnings of what eventually became the
Solomon Schechter School.

About the best that I could manage was to establish
the Union Hebrew High School
which offered part time Hebrew schooling twice a week
and on week-end mornings.

My successor bettered my instruction by far,
and so I am most admiring of him,
even as I am respect that visionary rabinnic and lay leadership
which dreamed this dream and brought it to be.

Many here merit to be congratulated for enabling us to
see this miracle at this season of miracles:
-- the dreamers and the doers, the boosters and the benefactors.

But none, so one and all agree, is more deserving of praise than
Henry Zoob, Rabbi of Westwood's Temple Beth David,
who has made the well being of the Rashi School a central concern.

We are beholden to you, Hank.

Your works do praise you in the gates.

The Rashi School is unique in the expanding constellation
of Reform Jewish Day Schools.

This is the very first such school to unite all the Reform Temples of
the Community in sponsorship.

It is not -- as it is in most other cities -- the sole possession
of a single congregation, reserved for its members alone.

This is as it should be, and as such the Rashi school serves as a model
for others even as it may be a precursor of joint endeavors
in other realms of Reform Synagogue life.

To be sure now, there is a risk in joint ventures of this sort.

It is the risk encapsuled by the adage that

'everybody's job is nobody's job.'

Everyone assumes that someone else is taking care of things.

and in consequence the venture is not nearly as successful
as it could be.

Ergo , even as I thank the leaders and the benefactors of this school
I urge you to increase your support and to expand your numbers
so that your fuller potential will be realized.

The Raschi School and its counterparts fill a critical need.

Full-time Jewish education is a vital requirement for the Reform Jewish
community.

The integrity of our movement demands it.

We boast that Reform in many ways is more taxing than is Orthodoxy
because as Reform Jews we cannot rely on a code to dictate
what we must and must not do,
but are required to make choices.

But our choices must not be capricious,
They must not be a response merely to passing fancy
or to mutable esthetic taste...

Our choices must be informed.

They must be the consequence of an intensive dialogue with the Jewish
tradition.

But that requires a greater grounding in Judaism's classical texts
than that which can be transmitted by part-time Jewish education.
Certainly, part-time education will not create that cadre
of Jewishly informed and motivated young leaders we require
to remain a vital, vibrant movement within Judaism.

But why go to the trouble of establishing and sustaining
separate Reform Jewish Day Schools.

If the imparting of Jewish knowledge is our goal,
why not send our children to Orthodox or to communal Jewish schools
and not go through all this bother?

Well, look about you and see.

Look at this school and its curriculum and its students
and you will find the answer:

the essential nature of Reform fully justifies such a mighty effort.

To begin with, and from our very beginnings as a religious movement,
we have insisted on an unrestricted equality between women and men.
We seek the full participation of women in the religious life,
Most Orthodox Day schools still deem Jewish education to be the
primary preserve of men.

We reject that notion categorically and we refuse to consign the Jewish
education of Jewish girls to a second- or third-class status.

"Outreach" is another distinguishoing element of Reform.

Rather than cloaking ourselves in an exclusive chosenness,

we have declared ourselves open to those who would choose us.

Virtually all orthodox day schools, and too many communal Jewish day
schools bar their doors to the children of intermarried couples,
even though their non-Jewish parents are ready to rear them
Jewishly.

We will refuse to set up such barriers.

On the contrary, we will vigorously support the efforts of the
intermarried to provide their children with rich Jewish experiences
experiences that will evolve into deeply imbedded memories
to mold their adult identites.

Social activism is another hallmark of Reform,

our loyalty to the prophetic spirit of Judaism.

This component of our literary tradition receives its proper
place in the curriculum of the liberal Jewish day school.

whilst it does not in more traditional schools.

We want to rear a generation of Jews for whom there is no
schizophrenic division between the "real world" and the
world of Jewish devotion;

who understand and are motivated to act on the understanding
that tikkun olm, the search for justice and mercy in
this world, is indeed the quest of Judaism.

Lastly, but not in the least, our Liberal day schools transmit
Reform's unique and passionate recognition of Judaism as
a living faith.

For us, Judaism is a flowering plant:

not merely a tangle of roots but an organism that draws nourishment
from those roots;

not only a bare stem, but a firm and flexible stem full of sprouts
and buds;

not only a flower fast to wilt and fade,
but a plant that flourishes anew in each generation.

Yes, we understand Judaism to be an evolving faith,
an ever changing faith,
a continuously reforming religion in the best sense of that word;
a religion not of obeisance, but of a dialogue
tempered by a profound sense of responsibility;
a religion in which halacha is not frozen like ice,
but a soluble substance to be mixed with human tears.

We in Reform do not deem sanctity synonymous with immutability
We do not equate holiness with a rigid immobility.

For us the Jewish tradition did not end in 17th Century Poland,
but it an ever evolving faith.

This is the understanding of Judaism that we will transmit with a
passion

And it is that very passion which is vital to the success of our
efforts.

The "lowest common denominator Judaism" of too many communal schools
offers but a pale version of Judaism which fails to inspire
and does not endure.

It is our subjective passion, and only our passion which can
make Judaism come to life in the hearts of our children.

* * *

My friends, the Jewish life for which the Raschi school and others
like them are preparing our young people
is one of integration and high energy.

The graduates of Rashi will grow up to be leaders.

They will be Jewish professionals, they will be thinkers,
they will be doers.

Our goal is to provide them with the tools of leadership,
of professionalism, of thinking of doing.

-- while providing them also with the nurturing strength of
Judaism,
of a genuinely embraced Judaism,
to help buoy and shelter them in a merciless world.

We want to furnish them with a Jewish calendar and clock as an
alternative to the rat race.

We want to give them the gift of Shabbat as a constant reminder
that there is more to life than things and activities;
that there is a here and now as well as a future;
that there is a contentment to enjoy as well as an ambition to
reach for.

We want to provide a Judaic context for their sense of goodness
of justice, of humanity, of the sacredness of life
-- so that when they experience those moments of acute
consciousness, of challenge and of joy,
they will not feel alone, but will think,
"Oh yes, I remember..."

Then they will experience those moments of reverence and of passion
as their share of a millenia-old tradition of people
striving for those very feelings.

Then they will experience their own divine madness
as part of a collective will for redemption.

* * *

When I began my commentary I praised the Rashi School's new facilities
as spacious and more than ample for the present need.

I chose the words "present need" deliberately
because I am convinced that you will continue to grow,
that since your instruction here reflects those ideals
of which I just spoke
many other parents will choose to bring their children
to Rashi -- as well they ought

Your numbers will expand dramatically
and recognizing your future need,
your benefactors will also increase their support substantially.
And I will be able to return, say five years hence,
to help you dedicate Raschi's permanent home
Thus may it be God's will.



It is good to be here and to participate in this convention.
Rabbi Smith did not have to twist my arm to be here.
He can tell you that I assented the very moment he called.

The reasons for my enthusiasm are not too far to seek.

I love being with the youth of Reform Judaism.

To begin with it reminds me of my early years in the rabbinate

when I spent the better part of my time
running from camp to conclave to conclave.

Indeed, I spent a part of our honeymoon taking a NEFTY group
from Massachusetts to Montreal..

to the dismay of my young bride,
who would have preferred Bermuda to the wintry winds of Canada.

Still, even Rhea will agree that those were the happiest days
of my career, of our lives,
and it is good to be reminded of them.

I am overjoyed to be here also

because whenever I am with you I catch a glimpse of our future
and I like what I see.

The future, after all, is not in the hands of fate.

The future is ⁱn our hands. The future is in your hands.

And so when I see your smiling faces and eyes

when I feel your love for our people

and your commitments to our faith,

why then I know with a certainty that the Jewish future is secure.

And so I salute you and those who lead you,
your youth directors, both local, regional and national
and those lay leaders who are devoted to the work of NFTY.
I join you in the prayerful hope that the beautiful promise
inherent in these days of your convention
will indeed be fulfilled during the year and years ahead.

* * *

This is a place hallowed by memory and hope.
Millions streamed through these halls
your grand-parents and great-grandparents among them.
They were a bewildered lot, to be sure, apprehensive about the future,
fearful that they might not be admitted
as indeed some were not, because they were ill
and so they were deported.
For them, alas, this was an isle of tears.
But for most of them - over twelve million immigrants, in fact --
this was an island of hope, of promise
for in America they were presumed to be human beings, not chattel,
with a right to belong
-- whatever their language or ethnicity or race.

When I came to these shores,
as a young immigrant from Nazi Germany in 1938
Ellis Island was no longer in use.
Still I steamed by this site, though I was processed elsewhere,
and in this sense, symbolically, this is my second birthplace.

I well remember when I first saw the statue of liberty.

We were on the deck of our steamer

and my father took me by the hand to point it out to me,
The words inscribed thereon are forever engraved on my soul:

Give me your tired, your poor
Your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free.
The wretched refuse of your teeming shores.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door...

America became my home, and I will always bless it,
as should we all.

For America was the land that saw in human diversity
not the seeds of endless ethnic conflicts as did the tsars
or of an apocalyptic race war, as did the Nazis.

America saw in human diversity the opportunity for growth,
the seeds of progress.

It saw and seized on immigrants as the raw material
that the American melting pot would render into a mighty alloy
to build and bond this nation.

To be sure, there were cruelties imbedded in the process of
immigrant absorption in this land,
bigotry and rejection to offset the welcome,
for Jews and many other peoples too.

There was the forced migration of Africans
who arrived "on a nightmare praying for a dream"
-- as Maya Angelou so perfectly expressed it at President Clinton's
inauguration.

There was the displacement and slaughter of the Native Americans
for which our country has hardly begun to atone.

There was forced assimilation, cultural obliteration,
employment, housing and school discrimination,
-- all this and worse.

Yet the most resonant symbol of America throughout the world
has not been the burning cross or the Jim Crow sign,
not the broken treaty or the invisible quota,
not even the Coca-Cola ad or the Marlboro man
-- but rather this woman accross the bay,

"this mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
is the imprisoned lightning and her name,
mother of exiles."

* * *

Many suffering individuals have thrilled to the sight of that woman
in New York Harbor.

But we Jews wandered the farthest, thirsted the longest.

Thrown out of Spain five centuries ago,
we embarked on our voyage to America
while the place was yet a dream.

And though many languishing individuals have been excluded
from America's shores,
we Jews suffered the greatest losses
when "the golden door" was slammed shut in 1920 and 30s.

We were the original boat people, then, desperately sailing the seas
for safe harbor.

But New York harbor too was closed to us,
to all but the fortunate few like myself.

But those Jews who came to this land when its gates were still wide open
and the few who followed,
achieved their fondest dreams and beyond in this land of
opportunity.

Here we attained to a might unparalleled in our history,
exceeding in its grandeur even the golden age of Spanish Jewry.

I speak now not just of our material well-being or of our safety
or even of our considerable influence.

I speak also and above all of that incomparable freedom which we enjoy
here to live as Jews, to lead Jewish lives.

America has enabled us to live in two worlds:
in the world of Jewish devotion and in the larger world
of which we are a part.

This has been the most vexing problem facing the Jewish people
at every resting place of our many voyages:
how to straddle these two worlds,
how to be a part of the society without losing our Jewish identity
and conversely, how to be a separate and distinct community
without cutting ourselves off from that larger society
of which we are a part.

This is the tension which stressed us wherever we lived
in our endless wanderings:
the tension between liberty and community
between the survival needs of our people
and our need to interact with the community of which we are a part.

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

It is a principle which is of relatively recent vintage.
But a generation ago -- certainly when I first came to these shores --
America was conceived to be a "melting pot,"

as the Jewish writer Israel Zangwill called it.
E pluribus unum - was the motto of the day - out of many one.
The public school was seen as homogenizing agent,
and diversity was muted if not discouraged
on the ground that it might impair communal unity.

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

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

Blacks eventually came to realize that behavior modification
would not gain them that fuller acceptance for which they yearned.

Their color simply would not wash off

and Middle America simply would not look beyond or beneath
that color.

Their blackness precluded them forever from being fully integrated
fully mixed in the American melting pot melting pot.

Somehow, room had to be made for those who would forever be "different"

And so a new social vision had to be refined and its motto became:

"black is beautiful."

Soon, Poles and Irish and Italians and Swedes also became "beautiful"

and quickly we too took up the refrain..

and Jewish became beautiful.

Thus we became the unintended beneficiaries of that very movement,
the civil rights revolution, which we helped to spawn.

By helping others, we helped ourselves.

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

and we Jews have become its most fervent exponents,

precisely because pluralism enables us

to be a part of the larger society,

and yet to stand apart from it.

We find ourselves now able to be Jewish Americans and American Jews.

* * *

Yes, America has been good to us.

We wandered the farthest to reach this place.

We thirsted for it the longest.

We suffered the greatest losses when we were denied entry.

But our success story is unparalleled by any other American group.

From these superlatives, however

-- longest in exile, most injured, but also most successful --
Jews have gained not only the privileges fulfilled by Emma Lazarus'
immortal poem.

We have also taken on a special yoke, a special guardianship
that we inherit from our history and from our tradition:

The first of these is our guardianship for Jews throughout the world
who have not yet escaped persecution,
who are still immobilized in splints of anti-Semitism and tyranny
we must reach out to them, first to feed them,
and then to free them.

Wherever there is a Jewish community which is embattled,
our help must be forthcoming.

Wherever there is a single Jew in danger,
in whatever country or continent or the remotest corner of
our far flung world,
there must we find him,
there must we reach out to him,
offering our hand, our heart, our life.

Never more let 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.

The second obligation which flows from of our good fortune of
living here is to nourish the survival roots of our people
The pluralism of America allows us to do so,
to be the guardians of our memory:
to remember even now, in the full flush of American citizenship,
that we were strangers in Egypt;
to remember even now in the full flush of individual opportunity
and secular knowledge,
that our deliverance was won and can be sustained only
in covenant with God and with our community.

Let it be noted that Judaism and the American ideal are not in conflict.
They are felicitously congruent.

The great Zionist leader and Supreme Court Justice Brandeis spoke a
profound truth when he observed that
"the 20th century ideals of America have been the ideals
of the Jew for more than 20 centuries..."

To which I would add that the strength of our movement for Reform
Judaism has been rooted in this confluence of
American and Jewish ideals.

Reform has, since its beginnings here,
viewed the American landscape of diversity and democracy
as fruitful soil for the cultivation of Judaism
-- and Judaism, in turn, as rich in nutrients
to be plowed back into that soil.

The result has been our emergence as the most viable and successful
Jewish denomination on this continent.

There is one more debt which we must discharge because our lot
has fallen on such pleasant places,
and that is the guardianship of American democracy,
and especially of its readiness to be a sanctuary
for all those who are still in bondage,
the many who are still

"tired and poor and yearning to breathe free"
in Haiti and Bosnia and Latin Ameica,
in other places of places of chaos and violence
where power is measured by body counts.

Aye, we Jews have a special duty to hold open the American door of
refuge
-- to remind America of the precious gem-in-the rough lying within
each immigranty,
of the aspiring spirit behind each dirtied face,
of the payback, the yield that we as a nation have invariably
reaped from the overflowing gratitude of rescued hearts.

The Harvard historian Oscar Handlin once wrote:

"There was a time when I thought to write a history
of the immigrants of America...Thewn I discovered
that the immigrants were American history."

Aye, the immigrants are American history.

The Puritan immigrants who landed at Plymouth Rock

-- they are the founding fathers and mothers of American history --
but so are the Africans who landed in shackles in the Southern ports;
and so are the Chinese who washed sweat from American collars
on the West Coast;

and so are the Norwegians who homesteaded in the face
of Midwestern blizzards;
and so are the Mexicans who wade across the Rio Grande even today
to help gather the harvest in the steamy Southwest.
They are all founding fathers and mothers of American history
for it is their labors,
their suffering,
their dreams
and their bodies
that activate and accelerate the very process of America.

This then are our tasks of guardianship as American Jews:
to secure the safety of all Jews,
to internalize and nourish our faith
and to make certain that America will continue to be
a haven for the world's oppressed.

Let us resolve to assume these tasks as we stand on this ground
which is hallowed by memory,
this isle of tears and of hope.

Here came hundreds of thousands, our own forbears among them,
whose lungs were bursting for breathing space,
whose hearts were pining for opportunity,
whose minds were longing for freedom.

They learned that the responsibility
for preserving that space, those opportunities, that freedom
was theirs to shoulder.

Those wishes matured into principles which they internalized,
and so they became full citizens:
not merely the inheritors of the American past,
but also the guarantors of the American future.

Standing here tonight,
upon this island which is the place of my second birth,
I have experienced once again the essential consciousness of the
immigrant,
in which the past and the future wrestle like Jacob and his angel
to create a new self-hood.

The past echoes all around us.

The future shines in your faces.

And I thank God that I am here.



SOL LEVITES AWARDS DINNER

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

SARASOTA, FLORIDA
MARCH 16, 1993

זכר אלה יעקב וישראל

I am delighted to be here, of course, and to participate in these ceremonies, this occasion which honors Sol Levites. Words do not come easy to me this night, for you see, it is easier by far to speak of a stranger, but Solly is no stranger to me. He is my friend. I feel bonded to him, as it were, soul touching soul, as David's was to Jonathan.

Sol Levites is an altogether remarkable human being. I speak now not primarily of his outer attainments. All these were recorded on the invitation which we all received, and they require no rehearsing by me. I speak now rather of the inner man, of those gifts of heart and spirit with which he is endowed and which enabled a street-wise kid from Montreal, who used garbage can tops as shields in snow-ball fights and hockey games, to achieve what he did and to be what he is.

Solly certainly has an inventive intellect; witness if you will, his pioneering role in the plastics industry. His mind is keen, razor-sharp in its ability to reason and he articulates his thoughts with precision. Moreover, Sol's is a constantly questing mind. No subject is beyond his ken, or at least his interest. He is always eager to nourish his own literacy.

But he also has a well-refined sense of the beautiful, of the harmonious fitness of things. Everything has to be just so, in the proper place, in perfect balance. He loves good music. He appreciates fine art. Beautiful paintings adorned the walls of his home in Plattsburgh. Matchless sculptures filled its spaces.

In other words, he has the mind of a corporate executive, but the soul of a poet. And I suspect that it is the poetry of creating

his several commercial enterprises which drew him from law to business, and which was ever more important to him than the bottom line. He builds not only for use, but for beauty, not only for comfort, but for delight, not only for today, but also, and always for tomorrow.

Sol's zest for living is infectious. He holds life precious and embraces it with eagerness. He seizes each of its golden minutes. He is never too busy for the wonder and the awe of it all.

The official biography insists that he has "successfully challenged every major ski area" in the world. That may be an extravagant exaggeration, at least my wife, who is his oftime skiing companion, tells me. -- "trying to challenge perhaps," she says, " but successfully challenged? -- that's gilding the lily!"

At the very core of Solly's being is his compassion. He is essentially good and kind. He genuinely cares for people and is determined to help them in their need. Just read about those many institutions which call forth his involvement and support.

Let it be noted and remembered also, that these public beneficences properly acknowledged and acclaimed are equalled, if not exceeded, by many individual acts of human kindness known only to giver and receiver and all the more precious for their tender privacy. There certainly is no more faithful friend than Sol. Once he embraces you as such, he shuns no pain to be of help, to stand at your side.

Clearly, Sol cares most for those who stand nearest to him: his sisters and sisters-in-law, their spouses and their children.

And above all he loves his Dorothy. How fortunate they were to be able to mark their Golden Anniversary but a short while ago. She is a remarkable lady, that Dorothy of his. And everything that I said about Sol I could say about her - - and more. The fact that he gained and retained the love of a woman such as this is surely his finest tribute.

As a rabbi, of course, it is to Sol's Jewishness to which I am especially drawn. He loves his people with an abounding love. He serves them wherever they are in need - - through the American Jewish Committee, and Federation, and the Weizman Institute, and the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and above all, through the Union of American Hebrew Congregations whose honorary life-trustee he is and for which I speak.

In a sense the synagogue is the matrix from which he sprang. Indeed, he helped build two synagogues in his life time, first in Plattsburgh and then in Longboat Key. And they are both beautiful to see. Their lines are clean. Everything is well-proportioned. They are places which make the spirit soar.

This above all, Sol understands that it is our solemn duty as Jews to care not just for our fellow Jews, but for all of human kind. He knows that we Jews are not just another ethnic group or pressure bloc, that our survival in the past has been for a higher purpose, and must continue to have meaning today. Aye, he knows and manifests by his deeds that to be a Jew 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 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 human kind.

It is because you are such a Jew, and an exemplar to us all, that I am delighted to bestow upon you, my friend, Sol Levites, the American Jewish Committee's Human Rights Award.



RABBI BYRON T. RUBENSTEIN MEMORIAL LECTURE

BY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER



Temple Israel, Westport, CT

March 26, 1993

I am pleased to be here in this sanctuary which is endeared to me by memory and by affection . . . after all, it is on this Bimah that all of our five children became B'nai Mitzvah and were confirmed. I am even more pleased to give this lecture, dedicated as it is to the memory of Byron Rubenstein. Byron was my friend and rabbi even as he was yours.

His impact on the life of this congregation was consequential. His tenure as your rabbi not only spanned the decades, but also plumbed the depths of being, cemented, as it was, by tears of joy and sorrow alike. I dare say that many varied scenes flash before your mind's eyes even now as we speak of him, and Byron is central to them all. Byron as teacher . . . Byron as exemplar . . . Byron as a prod to the conscience . . . Byron as a consoler, a healer of bruised souls. The words of the liturgical poem bespeak our experience:

"So long as we live, he too will live, for he is now a part of us as we remember him." That assuredly is true for Sue. How good it is to have her with us tonight.

Now Bob suggested that I devote my lecture this evening to a social action theme. At first flush, this seemed to be a natural suggestion. After all, a concern for human betterment distinguished Byron's ministry. And yet, his passion for social action was not unconnected to his religious commitments. Quite the contrary, that passion was rooted in his faith . . . He was a deeply believing Jew. Had social action been Byron's sole concern, he would have become a political activist or a member of the ACLU. But he became a rabbi. He understood that ethics and religion are inextricably intertwined. He knew with a knowledge of the heart that the love of righteousness comes only with religion, that it is, in fact, the love of God. This is why I determined to speak to you tonight not about specific social issues - - perhaps these can be raised during the Question and

Answer period - - but rather about the wider religious quest which gives proper context to social action, which gives the ethical life its necessary Jewish mooring.

This quest assuredly defines us as a people. The search for the sacred in life is our mission, our historic calling.

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

"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 and 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 God . . . to seek to serve God. This is the duty that defines us as the covenant people, but how can we pursue this quest, how slake our thirst for the sacred?

The Jewish tradition suggests three means to that end: the study of Torah, of our sacred text, the deed, that is to say the performance of mitzvot, and last, but not in the least, Kavana, a relentless focusing of the spirit. Moreover, these three means are to be integrated.

B'chol Atzmotai tomarnu va

With every bone of our body, every fibre of our being, shall we declare the glory of God.

In Judaism's view, faith is more than just a mind questing in isolation, or only a hand heeding the mandate, or the spirit only sensing the holy. It involves all three dimensions of being and always within each other, for faith is the centered movement of the whole personality toward God.

* * * * *

Study of the Torah is the first step along the way to God. The encounter with Judaism's classical texts, texts which at present we more often learn about than actually read.

Yet encountering a text itself can be a religious experience.

Even so, we read in the Yalkut Shimoni (Shoftim 47)

Kol ham'chadesh divre torah al pif dome kfi shemashmi-im min hashomavim

Whosoever interprets a text in a new way it is as if it were revealed to him from heaven.

Reading a text can be a transforming experience. We approach the text, and soon the text begins to reach out to us, to envelop us, until we almost become the text.

Altogether, I am afraid that our movement has taken too literally the rabbinic teaching lo hamidrash ha-ikar elo ha-maaseh, that the essential thing is not study but deeds. True enough, study without action is denounced as a vanity, yet deeds, however good, when detached from Torah study, are trivialized and denied their Jewish moorings. Yet without such a mooring, deeds become entirely non-obligatory. They can be accepted or rejected capriciously.

I know that we Reform Jews are easily deterred by that word 'obligatory'. but I do not speak of the coercion of religious authority now. I speak rather of the coercive power of truth itself: the truth that our patriarchs and matriarchs discovered in lonely places and in encounters that forever changed their lives; the truth that generations of commentators, in safety and in peril, in exile and in Jerusalem, debated and expounded and applied to the details of daily life; the truth that only life itself can ultimately teach and which Judaism posits as a core spiritual perception: that life is a holy unity, a single web of meaning.

When such truths leap off a page of Scripture or rabbinic commentary and once we drink it deeply with our eyes, it goes directly to the heart. There it resonates with all those feelings of wonder and compassion stored since our childhoods, and it gives rise to the irrepressible mitzvot commanded by the life force itself. Such should be the impact of our encounter with religious literature.

The Talmud proclaims that each day God regrets the creation of this world of ours, and each day a destroying angel is set forth to revert it all to chaos. But when God sees young children studying the Torah, when God sees would-be-sages studying with their masters, the heavenly rage transforms to compassion, and the world once again, is spared. This reprieve is earned not by prayer, mind you, not by deed, but by study, by the encounter with the text.

But Torah study alone does not suffice for the need. While it may be true that an ignorant person, a person unwilling to study, cannot attain to the sacred, it is equally true that not every knowledgeable Jew is ipso facto pious. Thought and deed must be conjoined. To reach the holy, we must bridge the distance between midrash and ma'aseh, between the mind and the hand. Indeed, Judaism deems the performance of mitzvot to be the most effective means to attain to ruchanivut, to spirituality.

Judaism runs counter to conventional wisdom here. Most people believe that faith is the necessary precedent of action, that only when we accept the God-belief as a rational postulate can we be moved to religious observance.

Not so, teaches our religion. The faith-deed relationship is not fixed eternally in one direction. The former is not of necessity

the pre-condition of the latter. Often, so teaches Judaism, the deed is father to the thought. In going out to meet the commandment, we may find the One who commands.

"The mitzvah is the place where God and man meet," taught Abraham Joshua Heschel. And before him, Leo Baeck wrote:

"Commandment and mystery are inextricably intertwined . . . our deeds open up the gate through which the floods of the divine surge into human life."

If this is so, our inability to slake the thirst for spirituality may well be rooted here, for we are not sufficiently disciplined in our observances. As liberal Jews, we assert our autonomy, we insist on the right to choose. But all too often we choose nothing at all, or choosing something we observe it only haphazardly. We saunter in, we saunter through, we saunter out.

As a case in point, there isn't a Reform Jew alive who, when asked, would not say that the Sabbath is essential to Judaism, that it is our solemn obligation to preserve it. Indeed, so we pray in our prayerbooks - - and not just the new, the old Union Prayerbook too - - "Even as Israel has preserved the Sabbath, so has the Sabbath preserved Israel." Yet walk into the typical Reform Synagogue on a Sabbath when there is no bar or bat mitzvah, and how many people will you find? Will there be more than a corporal's guard of worshippers in attendance? Walk into the typical Reform Jewish home on the Sabbath and what do you find there? The candles, well yes, maybe. The kiddush, rarely. And where are the books? Where is the discourse on themes other than the everyday? How do we use the Sabbath to sanctify our space and time? And how in heaven's name will the Sabbath preserve us, if we do not find even a single way to preserve the Sabbath?

Moreover, as synagogue leaders, we make few demands on our constituents beyond the financial. And because we don't, we give

substance to the perception that Reform Judaism is but a religion of convenience, that in Reform anything goes, that this is a place where easy answers are given and few, if any, questions asked, that we need do little, if anything at all, and we can still call ourselves Jews.

But to be a Jew in one's mind or heart is simply not enough. The pure idea can serve only a few rare individuals, theologians, philosophers, if you will. The truth - - to be felt by most of us - must put on a garb. There must be rite, legend, ceremony . . . visible form.

It is important to remember in this context that the concept of mitzvah is not limited to religious rite, but that it encompasses the ethical deed as well. Judaism, in its mainstream, never yielded to the monastic impulse. Our teachers did not believe that holiness can be found in solitude or isolation alone. And so they insisted that while the quest for holiness may well begin with the self and within the self, it must not end there. There is an equal, if not greater, need to turn outward, to turn to a broken world and to engage in the effort to repair it.

If anything, Judaism assigns a primacy to the ethical mitzvot. Thus, the prophet Isaiah proclaims in the name of God:

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

Note, though, that the prophet does not negate the disciplined observance of religious rite . . . he merely established the pre-eminence of the ethical life. The mitzvot, to be an effective

means to the holy, must be seen and heeded in all their fullness as encompassing the moral and the ritual alike.

Let each Jew, therefore, observe the mitzvot. Let him begin, if necessary, with one such mitzvah, let him observe this single mitzvah with a sense of obedience to the divine command, and the goal he seeks will be his: a sense of communion with the divine.

Let each person observe but one mitzvah, but one commandment. The Bal Sehm Tov gave this injunction a central place in all of his teaching:

Thus, one of his followers made it his business never to tell even the smallest falsehood, whatever the cost of the truth might be.

Another saw it his mission to fulfill the Exodus commandment which enjoins us to help the neighbor or even the enemy whose 'beast is lying under its burden.' And as this particular chossid was continuously to be seen in the streets, helping one man to load his wagon, and another to drag his cart out of the mire.

A third chassidic rebbe, a tsadik, no less, made the service of the oppressed his religious specialty. One day the rabbi's wife, having had a quarrel with her maid, determined to take her before the local magistrate in order to gain satisfaction. When she saw that her husband, the rabbi, was preparing to accompany her, she enjoined him to stay at home. "This quarrel with a servant is beneath your dignity," she said, "I can deal with this matter by myself." But he replied: "That may well be, but I intend to represent the maid, who when accused by my wife, will find no one to take her part."

Let each person develop a religious specialty, as it were. Let him observe but one mitzvah, but one commandment, and the goal for which he yearns - - at-one-ness with God - - may be his.

Modern Jewish existentialists take up a like refrain. They bid us take a 'leap of action' rather than a 'leap of faith.'

Israel's clarion call naaseh v'nishma is interpreted to mean: in

doing we perceive. What is the Jewish way to God, they ask. It is not the way of ascending the ladder of speculation. It is not the triumphant outcome of an assault on the riddles of the universe. Nor is it a gift which we receive in return for intellectual surrender. By living as Jews, we attain our faith as Jews. We do not have faith in deeds. We attain faith by means of deeds.

* * * * *

The way of Torah study The way of the deed And one more way still: the way of the spirit, of intent, of will the direction which we give to mind and hand.

This process begins only once we open ourselves to experience the holy, and most of the time we are not prepared to do so. Yet you cannot sense the grandeur of nature if you look at a sunrise through sleepy eyes. You cannot expect a worship service to stir you to the depths of your being if you approach it only casually in a commonplace manner. There is a prior need for kavanah, for intention, a conscious determination to be so stirred.

Perhaps our reluctance to open ourselves to the experience of the holy is impeded by that overly rigid mind-set of modernity which insists that all postulates be demonstrable and experienced by the senses. It is a mind-set which is mystified by that paradox in Jewish theological thought which holds that God, though unknowable, nonetheless makes Himself known. God is wholly other - - we are taught. He is completely different from us. He cannot be grasped by ordinary modes of thought and perception. We cannot, should not even conjure up His image. We must not describe Him, or, following Maimonides, we can describe Him only by means of negations, by saying what He is not. And attributes ascribed to God by Biblical poets are but metaphor.

But, at the same time, we are taught that though unknowable, God reveals Himself in countless ways.

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

"Thou canst not see My face, but I will make all my goodness pass before Thee."

Even so can we behold God's goodness "in the realm of nature and in the varied experiences of our lives." You remember those heaven soaring words of our liturgy:

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

Unknowable, yet known . . . how enigmatic . . . how paradoxical . . . Yet strangely enough, modern science of whose teachings we accept with greater ease than we do the teachings of faith, nonetheless confronts us with a like seeming paradox. Chemists accept the not infrequently accepted existence of gases that have never been seen. Physicists, in their endeavor to study the nature of matter, developed a device called a cloud chamber. Cloud chambers allow the observer to see paths traced by particles resulting from nuclear reactions. The actual particles, however, remain unobservable. They have never been seen, might never be seen, with naked eye or instruments however well-refined. Here too, then, a leap of faith is required, a scientific leap of faith, if you will, to acknowledge the existence of a particle that can be known only through its traces. Unknowable, yet known through its traces. Invisible, but real, nonetheless.

This paradox may account for much of our present-day reluctance to reclaim and proclaim our spiritual identity as Jews. Like the rest of humankind, we are creatures in bondage to our eyes. Only seeing is believing, we say; only the visible is fact. We also

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

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

Consider the world of the invisible, if you will.

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

Ideals, too, are of such a kind. They are intangible, yet what is life without them?

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

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

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

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

Schelling called them. They may be discernible in outer form, but not in their innermost essence. The sources and nature of art are a mystery even to those who create it. Yet art has the power to heal us. It can make the spirit soar, for art is spirit from the realm of the unseen, conveyed by means of matter.

And then there is love which is also an invisible force. We can see its expressions, to be sure: the caress, the kiss. But no one has ever seen love itself. It certainly cannot be

anatomized, or schematized, or reduced to clearly identifiable elements. Yet how powerful a force love is! It can evoke our willing sacrifice, inspire us to the noblest of deeds.

Aye, there is a world of reality beyond those worlds perceived by the physical sense alone. And altogether multitudinous are life's gifts that 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.

This, then, is the multi-fold path which Judaism bids us pursue. A wrestling within and a wrestling without . . . an assertion of the will to lead a disciplined Jewish life through study and observance coupled with the determination to pursue the quest for the holy.

May we heed this mandate. Then will we find our Judaism to be a

sustaining faith and not a dry-as-dust religion. And it is precisely this kind of faith that we so desperately need. For while routine religion suffices to sustain our lighter hours, once life runs out into its depths, why then we need a different faith. When death takes those we love, when our children slip through our arms, when dread disease makes waste our strength, when we think or even say, now I have reached the bottom of the morass, now I can sink no deeper . . . and yet we sink deeper. Why then, we need a deeper faith. Then we need the kind of faith that led the Psalmist to exclaim:

gami ki elech begev 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 three-fold path to the holy:

The way of study,
the way of the righteous deed,
the questing of the spirit for God.

Only if we take these paths will our thirst for spirituality be slaked, our hunger for holy be sated.

Let me conclude as I began, with the assertion that ethics and religion are inseparable. But is this really so? Can we not be good for the sake of goodness? Can we not be moral for morality's sake? Why must ethics be linked to Judaism, to any religion for that matter? Why must we connect human behavior to divine command?

World history provides us with an answer, for it tells us of countless reform movements which themselves became corrupt; of revolutions that were supposed to free men, but enslaved them instead; of freedom that abused freedom. Can we forget the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution or the farmers slaughtered in

the Russian Revolution? Intentions were good, but results were evil - - because men decided for themselves what is right and what was wrong . . .

Ethics without religion is like a cut flower. Since it has no roots, it has no staying power. Neither does it reproduce itself . . . Only a prophetic religion transmits ethics from generation to generation. One must become emotionally attached to ethical behavior. This is the meaning of Israel's clarion call:

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

It is, in fact, the love of God. To the truly believing Jew, ethics and religion are inseparable.

Byron Rubenstein grasped this truth and manifested it in his life and ministry. And this is why we say that his memory is for a blessing.



Presidential Address



62nd General Assembly of the
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

*Lifelong Learning:
The Path to Informed Choices*

October 21-25, 1993 • San Francisco

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
BY
RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER



October 23, 1993
San Francisco, California

I am deeply grateful to Mel Merians for his gracious introduction. His words are pleasing to the ear. But an honest self-reckoning compels me to confess that I do not really deserve all this praise.

Too much of what is credited to me is truly the accomplishment of others: my colleagues of the Union staff, so ably led by Rabbi Daniel Syme, the members of our national committees and commissions, all the leaders — both lay and professional — of our vibrant religious community, each of whose principal components is represented on this dais. I accept Mel's words, then, as descriptive not of *my* attainments but rather of our collective achievement.

Mel himself deserves much credit for what he is: a highly capable Chairman of our Board. He calls himself a "volunteer," yet he presides in the House of Living Judaism in New York from early in the morning until late in the afternoon no less than four days a week. And the rest of the time he is dashing about the country, tirelessly meeting with our regional and congregational leaders. Mel has strengthened the Union immeasurably in the fiscal and administrative realms.

But Mel has numerous innovative ideas in the programmatic realm as well, which his forceful leadership then renders real. Many novel and worthwhile directions in our work — particularly in the area of gaining and retaining the unaffiliated for synagogue membership — must be credited to his creative imagination and his determined leadership.

Mel's challenges were daunting, but he met them well. His predecessors in office had set the highest possible standards of leadership. Think of them for a moment, if you will; their names are still honored in our midst: Allan Goldman, Chuck Rothschild, Donald Day, and Matthew Ross — giants of the spirit all, and all of them still serving us diligently in sensitive and exacting roles.

Don Day, will be honored tomorrow night, when we will give him the Eisendrath Bearer of Light award for his lifetime of service to Reform Judaism. Tonight we will accord this prestigious award to the determined yet ever gracious leader of the Joint Distribution Committee, Sylvia Hassenfeld, for her lifetime of fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *pidyon sh'vuyim*, of ransoming the captives, her lifetime of redeeming Jewish lives.

I will have more to say about each of them when I make the actual presentation, but you ought to acknowledge their presence even now. This is, after all, the highest accolade that is ours to confer.

Let me salute, also, the leaders of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, Judy Hertz and Ellen Rosenberg, whose delegates have come here, in joint convention with us, for Sisterhood's 39th biennial gathering. Judy now completes her final years of office as NFTS President. She, too, deserves to be commended for her manifold contributions to the advancement of our work. She has led the Women of Reform Judaism with dignity and strength.

Lastly I want to express our deep-felt gratitude to the many men and women who planned this Assembly. The problems facing them were many and vexing, but they mastered them all.

The leaders of the Local Arrangements Committee were especially challenged. After all, we are here in unprecedented number — nearly 5,000 delegates and alternates and observers strong — the largest Assembly on the North American if not the world Jewish scene. Nonetheless, our hosts created a sense of community and made us feel at home.

Their energetic and effective chairman Sharon Silverman and her cochair Rosyland Bauer, assisted by our Council Director Morrie Hershman, were able to assemble a veritable army of volunteers who labored for nearly two years now to prepare for our arrival. We do appreciate their many deeds of human kindness.

Like thanks must go to our National Convention Committee under the judicious chairmanship of Mark Levy and his vice-chair, the effervescent Len Teitelbaum, even as we are indebted to Arthur Grant, who coordinated the multitudinous details of this complex venture.

The fruitage of all their labor is rich indeed. This will be remembered as an outstanding convention, stimulating in content and setting alike.

The Thrilling Call of Peace

Sixteen years ago, when this great assembly of Reform Jews last convened in San Francisco, I received a late-night telephone call from Menachem Begin. As a matter of fact, it was Mildred Ross who roused me from my slumber to take the call and only after she berated the caller for phoning at the ungodly hour of 3 A.M. — that is, until he identified himself as the Prime Minister of Israel, whereupon she stammered and ran for me. Begin shared with me the dream-like news that Anwar Sadat of Egypt was about to visit Jerusalem, about to cross the swollen rivers of hatred in order to sow the seeds of peace. Would I come to Jerusalem to share this historic occasion?

My first commitment, of course, was to be here, among Reform Judaism's finest. In truth, however, in spirit I did spend those days in Jerusalem, as did we all. For however and wherever we received the news of Sadat's journey, it proved to be a journey to the Jerusalem of our own Jewish hearts, where the hope for peace is set like an ancient immovable stone. Every handshake, every embrace that Begin and Sadat shared that November weekend resonated deeply within us. Together in community, we offered up our prayers as girders from which the bridge of peace might be built.

But the years passed. Those two archenemies who fulfilled the talmudic definition of greatness by rendering each other into friends went on to their greater

peace. The treaty negotiated at Camp David was honored by both sides but not fully implemented. The five-year Palestinian autonomy plan they envisioned was not set in motion, and the Mideast body count mounted.

But now, as we meet once again in San Francisco — this city of gold rush and earthquake, of liberation and experimentation — the thrilling call of peace wakens us once more. Had we but recognized the catalytic power of San Francisco Biennials, we would have scheduled ourselves for this splendid community a decade ago and ever after.

It all began with Abraham and the land that God pledged to our forefather when he bade him go forth from the place of his birth: *Lech-l'cha m'artzecha umimoladtecha...*, as we read in today's Torah portion:

Go forth from your father's house to the land I will show you.... I will give it to your offspring as a possession.... And I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you....

But be you a blessing, too, so that through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

It all began with Abraham, for we are Jacob, that is to say Israel, and Israel began with Abraham. It all began with Abraham, who fathered two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, whose descendants now feel the shock of sudden recognition.

It is only a moment of recognition, not yet a brotherly embrace. Still, it holds forth the promise of a strategic turning point in Arab-Israeli politics, a turning point more sweeping by far than was Sadat's dramatic journey to Jerusalem.

The moment allows us to dream great dreams — of Israel as the renaissance center of a new Middle East, of Jews and Palestinians joining forces to build it, to create a united continent of tolerance and real freedom, of science, education, commerce, and understanding. But such dreams need great nurturing to become prophecy. This tender shoot of peace needs careful cultivation if it is to come to its full flowering.

Tramplers and wreckers of the peace abound, and its doubters, too — more doubters on these shores than in Israel itself. It is our task to counter them, to speak up volubly in support of Israel's policies.

These doubters berate Israel's leaders for taking an unconscionable risk for peace. A risk it surely is. Israel is trading materiality for mere words on a paper. But is that risk really unconscionable?

For you see, while Israel is trading land for peace, it certainly is not trading its *strength* for peace. Israel's defense forces constitute the fourth most powerful military force in the world today. From the security perspective, the Oslo plan is heavily weighted in Israel's favor. Its citizen soldiers were given the right to protect all West Bank and Gaza settlements. Israel will have full control over the

roads and passes and bridges both inland and, more critically so, those providing access to the country from the North and the East and South. Nor does Israel intend to slumber and sleep. It will continue to live with wakefulness, with constant vigilance. Therefore, the risk, such as it is, is hardly inordinate! As Leon Wieseltier so elegantly reminds us:

When the lion lies down with the lamb, it is the lamb not the lion who lies down anxiously.

True, the Palestinians retain the power to unleash destruction in the streets. But in the absence of peace, the stones and knives of terrorists were scarcely stayed and their rockets were never silenced. Those who would rely on force alone tried everything to quell the intifada: repression, killings, war, the arbitrary seizure of lands, mass deportations, collective punishment, even counter-terror. But nothing availed.

Allowing the present state of affairs to fester also carried its risks. The status quo promised only endless conflict. Occupation was corroding the Jewish and democratic character of the State. It sapped the nation's morale and spent its moral capital.

And what better time to take the risk for peace than now? For it is now that the Jewish state is in full command of the peace process, with leaders whose peace-making skills match their military mastery, and with security arrangements more favorable than the ones Menachem Begin accepted at Camp David. It is now that the Arab powers understand that the real threat they face is not the steady achievement of Zionism but the rampaging golem of Moslem fundamentalism. It is now that the influx of Jews to Israel from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union has upset the demographic contest the Palestinians had expected to win.

Therefore, it is now that we must speak up, loudly and clearly, now and throughout the unfolding of this remarkable, soul-stirring process.

But we must do more than counter the doubters of the peace. We must apply the full force of our influence in the political arena to make certain that the assurances given to Israel will also be met. Not the least among these is the promise to end the Arab boycott.

Everyone recognizes that rapid regional economic expansion is the only cement that can bind the Israel-P.L.O. peace process. This is why the U.S.-sponsored "donors conference" pledged billions to develop the West Bank and Gaza, and why Israel itself made a significant contribution to that effort as an act of enlightened self-interest. But what about Israel itself? Why should the crusade to impede its growth be permitted to persist?

Several years ago, the Baker State Department assured us that if only settlement activities would cease, the boycott would end. Well, Labor was elected. All *new* settlement projects were halted, now nearly two years ago. But the boycott continues unabated.

Two weeks ago, and a full two weeks after Rabin shook Arafat's hand, Warren Christopher remonstrated with the Saudi Foreign Minister on this very subject, only to be told that the removal of the boycott is "premature" and that "more needs to be seen on the ground." A subsequent discussion between Christopher and Assad of Syria elicited a like response.

Just what more do these Arab dictators need to see on the ground? Withdrawal to the pre-'67 lines, perhaps? Or the redivision of Jerusalem? Or the dismantling of Israel's military might?

The boycott was designed to impede Israel's economic development. It denies all Arab markets to Israel's business enterprises. It effectively deters most international companies from investing or locating their plants in Israel. In a word, the boycott is nothing short of an act of naked aggression in the economic sphere, and, therefore, it contravenes and threatens to undermine the process toward political accommodation. This warfare, too, must cease, and now! On this front, too, enough is enough!

Lastly, in this context, I would like this Assembly to go on record as favoring a prompt move of the American Embassy to Jerusalem. This act, above all others, would buttress the confidence of Israelis as they venture forth on their quest for peace.

I know that the disposition of Jerusalem is a sensitive issue that, for this very reason, has been placed last on the peace agenda. Still, our country is pledged to keep Jerusalem united, even as it has committed itself, as has Israel — and not just in promise but in practice — to assure free access to the sacred places of all religions.

Retaining our embassy in Tel Aviv is an aberration that urgently requires a corrective. In every other land, we respect the city chosen by its citizens as the official seat of their government. Why, *l'ma'an Hashem*, not in Israel? Does not Israel's decision in these matters also demand respect?

Jerusalem was never ever the capital of an Arab nation. But it was designated as Israel's capital long before the Six Day War, a score years earlier, when the modern Jewish state was born. Indeed, it became the spiritual capital of the Jewish people earlier still, in the time of our millennia-long wanderings. Generation after generation of our people cried aloud: *L'shanah haba biyerushalayim*, as they turned in their prayers to Jerusalem, even as Moslems ever turn away from Jerusalem to Mecca.

Let us, therefore, affirm the resolution on this and kindred matters that the ARZA's leadership has asked me to set before you. Let us support the work of ARZA and Kadima. These organizations were founded when we were here in San Francisco, sixteen years ago, and both have done much, especially through the Israel Religious Action Center, to advance the rights of Reform Jews in Israel.

And let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Pray for the well-being of her people and their land. Israel is the hope that was born out of suffering, the springs that came to the dry valley, the rose that blossomed in the desert. Bless Israel's leaders, God. Continue to grant them wisdom and courage. May their people dwell in safety and live in friendship with all their neighbors.

Affirming Our Own Jewish Identity

There is one other task that is ours as North American Jews, which may appear to contravene what I just said, although it does not. I speak of our need to recognize and affirm that we are more than just a part of Israel, that our communities have their very own identity, integrity, and value, and that it is our sacred task as Jews to strengthen them.

It is difficult to explain this to American Jews, who for too long have been plugged into Israel as if it were a dialysis machine, a scientific marvel that keeps them Jewishly alive. Somehow we must absorb two apparently contradictory lessons: that we have a worth and value as Jews independent of Israel even while we must continue to love and support Israel. If we make too much of the first lesson, some will take it as an excuse to cut themselves off from Israel. And if we make too much of the second, we will never know who we are. We will continue to use Israel as a fig leaf to cover our own nakedness. We will have slipped into the sloppy equation that says Judaism equals Zionism equals Israel.

In our deep love for Israel, we have become largely a one-issue community. For too many American Jews the Land of Israel remains the sole touchstone of their Jewish existence. The state has become a synagogue and its prime minister their *rebbe*. Our Federations and foundations view trips to Israel as the sole guarantor of our continuity, a panacea for the multiple problems of intermarriage, nonaffiliation, and assimilation that beset us.

We do ourselves irreparable harm when we allow this to be — when we permit our Jewishness to consist almost entirely of a vicarious participation in the life of Israel. There is a greater Israel that sustained our Jewishness through the many centuries of our dispersion. It is not isomorphic with the political state. And it is this greater Israel that we must nurture if we — and it — are to endure.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not arguing that we should diminish our involvement with Israel. I want more, not less. I certainly recognize that a trip to the Jewish State is a compact and powerful experience to strengthen Jewish identity, and I am proud of the fact that NFTY, the Youth arm of the Reform movement, sends more young people to Israel than any other of its counterpart groupings, and that includes the Zionist movement. But at the same time I insist that in making the Jewish State into a summer camp, a drop-off center, and a dating service, we dare not abandon our own central responsibility for creating a Jewish future by teaching our children — and ourselves — how to live Jewish lives at home.

In other words, I argue primarily for a restoration of balance. We will not survive if all that we are about is Israel. And Israel will not survive if the Jews of the world become its pale extension, mere solitary asteroids circling in space around a distant sun. Both are needed: a strong Israel and Jewishly strong communities throughout the world.

Theodor Herzl himself spoke of this need for balance when he averred that the "return to Zion must be accompanied by a return to Judaism." Golda Meir, *alecha hashalom*, certainly understood this. I will never forget what she said to me and my fellow emissaries when we repaired to Israel during those dim and grim days of the Yom Kippur War. She was understandably distraught. Her face was ashen, its skin sallow. Her deep-circled eyes mirrored the agony of her soul. And while she surely had many more urgent tasks at hand, she remained with us almost every waking hour of our visit, as if she needed the inner strength that emanated from our companionship.

And as we left, this is what she said:

My friends, as you return to your communities, I will not ask you to remember us and give us more material support. You do that in abundant measure. Nor will I ask you to rally more political support for us in those countries in which you live. You have done that, too, in abundant measure. I will ask you, rather, to return to your communities and to buttress your synagogues and schools because **the struggle for Jewish survival is fought not only along the frontiers of Israel but in every synagogue and in every Jewish school of the world.**

This, Golda said, was the contribution to Israel that was most needed: to buttress our synagogues and Jewish schools. They are the strongholds that are ours to buttress in the struggle for Jewish continuity. And so the Biennial Program Committee did well to choose "lifelong learning" as the theme of this Assembly.

But as we all know, in Judaism "learning" does not mean simply the opening of texts — all well and good. It means *applying* the text to life, *becoming* the text in our lives.

"Which is greater, study or action?" debated the rabbis. "Study," Rabbi Akiba concluded, "but only when it leads to action." Study when it leads to *lech-l'cha*, to our "going forth," or, as this phrase has been interpreted by chasidic sources, our "going within," a "going to ourselves" — going deep to our Jewish roots and deep to the wellsprings of our human potential. Going forth, going to ourselves — for Jews these are always one and the same, for the closer we come to our Jewish selves, the closer we come to humanity, to a healing role in our fractured world.

Honoring Our Leaders

Now consider how advantaged we are in this quest "to go forth." Abraham and Sarah had no guides or advisers. Essentially they walked alone with God. Indeed, our patriarch was given the surname *Haivri*, the Hebrew. The root of that word is *ever*, meaning "across" or "side," which, when applied to Abraham, was usually seen to be a geographic reference recalling that Abraham crossed the Euphrates River from one side to the other when he heeded God's call to go forth.

Not so, taught Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi. It is rather an ideological reference. It denotes that in his new worldview, Abraham stood alone on one side while the whole world was on the other, across from him.

By contrast, we are not alone but can depend upon the guidance of outstanding and dedicated men and women. I have already spoken of the rich human capital provided by our lay leadership.

But our movement is also blessed with a professional leadership of uncommon worth: with scholars, teachers, and administrators, cantors, rabbis, and even *mohalim* and *mohalot*.

Abraham had no teachers. "He learned the Torah all by himself," declares the Midrash in *Genesis Rabbah*. We, by contrast, have the professional corps of NATE educators who have the Judaic as well as the pedagogic expertise to inspire and guide us.

There was no *sheliach tzibur* in Abraham's time. He himself likely led his fledgling community in worship. And Scripture does not record whether he used the spoken word or chanted in his prayers.

Our religious community, on the other hand, has talented cantors on the wings of whose wondrous song our prayers soar on high. They have placed a resolution before us today, affirming the centrality of training at the School of Sacred Music and the crucial role played by the Conference of Cantors itself.

I endorse that resolution wholeheartedly, because my travelings about the country have taught me that where the music is rich and, above all, participatory, the worship service is like a well-watered garden; but where it is not, services are dry as dust. Israel Abrahams was right when he wrote that "individuals may pray in prose or even in wordless silence; but a congregation must sing or dissolve."

But first as equals among our respected professionals we must count our rabbis, of whom the founder of this Union said: "The rabbi is the teacher in Israel, no more and no less."

"The teacher in Israel." The phrase sounds modest, yet the task is prodigious,

for the "teacher in Israel" means no less than the teacher of God-wrestlers, the teacher of the sons and daughters of Jacob, who was surnamed "Israel" by the Angel of God. Etymologically, the name is formed by the union of two Hebrew words: *Yisrah*, meaning "He will strive," and *El*, meaning God. But note that the word is in the future tense, referring not merely to Jacob's encounter with the divine but to the ongoing struggle of future generations.

We are those future generations, learning from our "teachers in Israel" how to wrestle with God, not by the banks of a river but between the skyscrapers of modernity; learning how to contribute to the strength of our community, even while the Cult of the Individual is practiced all around. Learning how to view our world with rapture, like Jacob awakening at Bethel:

Mah nora hamakom hazeh, ein zeh ki im beit Elohim, v'zeh sha'ar hashamayim.

How full of awe is this place.... Surely this is none other than the abode of God and this the gateway to heaven.

"The teacher in Israel." Alas, that role sometimes calls for more hats than the Mad Hatter could supply! Thus did the Chasidim tell of the time when their great rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev was about to be born, Satan complained to God that the presence of this soul on earth would bring about an end to the power of evil. Whereupon God comforted the Accuser by saying: "Ah, but Reb Levi Yitzchak will be a rabbi, and, thus, too busy with communal affairs to fret about matters of good and evil."

In our day, this is truer than ever. With less authority than at any other time in Jewish history, our rabbis are, nevertheless, called upon to fill an infinite variety of roles. For a few rabbis, this multiplicity of roles has created confusion about boundaries that has led to tragic, unethical involvements that violate the standards of our profession and the trust of our congregants.

I know that these matters rest primarily in the hands of the CCAR and its Ethics Committee. But let it not be forgotten that congregations are gravely affected, too. I, therefore, urge that a tripartite Task Force be convened involving the College-Institute, the Conference, and our Union to develop an appropriate response to these vexing problems. In particular, Rachel Adler's insightful recommendations, made in the Spring issue of the *CCAR Journal*, for tools of prevention such as education, training, and careful supervision should command our study and implementation. A bill of rights for congregants also needs to be formulated.

But let us not allow those few who abuse their status as rabbis to lessen our high regard for the Reform rabbinate as a whole. Its achievements are signal, both in making tangible the values of Judaism and in representing our movement before the Jewish world and in the world of many faiths. Well over a thousand rabbis serve our congregations with constancy and devotion, and their lives exemplify the noblest ideals of our faith. They merit our admiration and our unqualified respect.

Now, as many of you know, the professional leader of the CCAR for the past score years, Rabbi Joseph Glaser, has determined to retire. As a passionate defender of rabbinic rights and dignity, Joe has established the foundation upon which rabbis can build up the House of Israel. We honored him on Thursday, but his presence on this dais today should be acknowledged.

There is another notable event, pertinent to the rabbinate, that occurred since last we were in convention assembled. I speak of the 20th anniversary last year of Rabbi Sally Priesand's ordination as the first woman in Jewish history to be ordained a rabbi.

In many ways, this ordination was a revelatory experience for us all. I don't mean this in the theological sense of the word "revelation," but rather in its more everyday meaning as a revealed truth, a truth that once absorbed seems obvious, a truth that renders past ideas irredeemably flawed, a truth that makes change imperative, a truth so obvious that when it brands us, we are forever changed and can no longer revert to obsolete frames of reference that held us in thrall but yesteryear.

Sally's ordination was such a revelation for with it, two thousand years of exclusivist assumptions collapsed. With well over 200 HUC-JIR women graduates now serving in the rabbinate, with many times more serving as cantors and educators, as *mohalot* and administrators, it now seems obvious, oh so obvious, that women can and should serve in every realm of religious life. And because they do, they have transformed the synagogue and Jewish life.

To be sure, it would be disingenuous for me to suggest that this revelation in Jewish life is a *fait accompli*, that the sexist practices of the past have shuffled off their mortal coil and have ceased to be. They have not! They have not vanished from sight — they persist.

They persist in the ongoing reluctance of certain large congregations to interview women rabbis for senior posts.

They persist in the salary inequities between male and female rabbis that still plague our movement.

They persist, above all, in the incidences of sexual condescension that undermine the very institutions of the rabbinate and our seminary. Thus, I was deeply troubled by the statistics recently reported in *Moment* magazine that fully 70% of our women rabbis have experienced some form of sexual harassment in their work — one-quarter of them on an oft-recurring basis. That is intolerable and must come to an end!

I, therefore, urge our movement to place this issue fully on a par with other issues of rabbinic well-being. Let us propel the force for change within Reform Jewish life through education, through public and private agitation, through dialogue, and through affirmative action. Let there be no setbacks now that the

"otherness" of women within Reform Judaism has been terminated and our striving for God fully joined. Let there be no contraction now that the expansion of our community has brought about the expansion of our souls.

Education and Reform Authenticity

"Teachers in Israel" all, both men and women. They affect eternity, for we can never know just where the influence of their teaching stops. But teachers require students, even as leaders must have followers, if they are to be effective in their work.

Our Torah, in its wisdom, adduces a like perception. For note how in the three moments of encounter between God and Abraham — all of them recounted in this week's *sidrah* — it is only during the third that the man Abram is renamed Abraham and that the woman Sarai is renamed Sarah. What is the meaning of this third most transformative encounter? God promises the land once again, yes, "all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession." But what is unprecedented is God's miraculous promise that Sarah, although advanced in years, shall bear a son. For the first time, Judaism becomes not only an ideal but a tradition to be passed on from generation to generation, not just a distant summit that we admire and to which we aspire but a small child who needs be nourished in body and soul.

For most of us, this lesson resonates meaningfully and personally. As parents, we have experienced the way our children serve as bondsmen of the Covenant. Whether they articulate it or not, whether they admit it even to themselves or not, they look to us for instruction and they provoke us with both their questions and their innocence.

Knowing that those who dare to teach must never cease to learn, we have piecemeal tried to fulfill our obligations to our children. We have dabbled in Torah study, scanned this or that book, attended this or that seminar or Union Kallah.

Intense and effective as these may be, they are not sufficient for the need because in the final analysis, the authenticity of the Reform movement itself goes only so far as our own Jewish knowledge and commitment. The sad truth remains that whereas Reform *ideology* has winning appeal for an ever greater majority of Jews— attracted by our egalitarianism, our social activism, and our evolutionary sense of Judaism — nonetheless, the sketchiness of Jewish knowledge and practice of too many of our congregants undercuts the credibility of that appeal.

What we need, therefore, is a serious and sustained learning effort: academies for adults, with graded classes, regular summer courses, programs of home study, all following a carefully constructed curriculum leading to a degree.

Our colleague Gene Mihaly once suggested to me that the venerable title of Chaver might well be reclaimed for such a degree. He also dreams the dream of

a national Jewish study program that follows the pattern of the widely acclaimed Aspen Institute, a dream that is well within the reach of our movement's collective resources to realize.

Just look at what the Reform congregations of Toronto have created with their Center for Liberal Jewish Learning. We salute them and Steve Morrison, our fellow Board member, who is the driving force of Kolel. This is an endeavor that well merits emulation in our larger cities.

I, therefore, call on our Commission of Jewish Education and its principal partners, the Union, the Conference, the College-Institute, as well as NATE, to design such a comprehensive program and to develop those instrumentalities that would bring it to be. Together, let us bring to an end this era of intermittent if intense adult Jewish study. The integrity of our movement demands it. Jewish literacy should become a precondition for leadership in our congregations and in the Union.

My second recommendation in the realm of Jewish education will not find such ready assent. I know, because I have spoken of this matter often before and thus far have had no takers — none at least within our own movement, although the much admired Conservative Rabbi Harold Schulweis launched the concept in his congregation last year, by all reports with splendid success.

The idea is based on the Stepping Stones project adopted at our New Orleans Assembly four years ago, which called for the development of a tuition-free Jewish educational program to children of unaffiliated mixed-married couples. Pioneered by our colleague Steven Foster in Denver, this program has now been most successfully extended to a half-score communities throughout the land.

But why should Stepping Stones be just an Outreach tool? Why limit its reach only to the offspring of mixed-married couples? Why not extend the concept to embrace the children of *all* who are unaffiliated and not just the intermarried?

Why not indeed? Let me, therefore, fortify my reflections with a formal proposal that our congregations suspend those rules that restrict religious school to the children of temple members; that the doors of our schools be open to all, free of charge, for at least a year, the only requirement being that parents also attend temple study programs at regular intervals.

Please don't reject this notion out of hand. Even in the short run, such an investment would be profitable. One in three of our Stepping Stones intermarried families ultimately joined a congregation, the vast majority associating themselves with the Reform temple in which they were so warmly embraced. There is every reason to expect that unaffiliated Jewish families would join us in similar numbers, thus producing a windfall of new memberships and human energies.

But even if they don't, what have we lost? We will have made a substantial

advance in our striving to secure Jewish continuity. As a more detailed analysis of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey has shown, Jewish education remains the single most effective antidote to the assimilation and intermarriage trends that are terrifying the Jewish community and draining its coffers.

Federations might be willing to offer support for such a free-tuition venture, even as they do in virtually every community where the present Stepping Stones program has been implemented. In this manner, our affirmative response to this proposal could serve to reinforce the new, yet still tenuous bond between the world of Federations and the synagogue movements.

The Role of the Non-Jew in the Synagogue

I make my call for an intensified commitment to Jewish Education not out of any feeling of impending peril but more in the confident spirit with which Abraham heeded God's call to go forth. There was no panic in his step, no desperation in his quest, no weapons at his back. There was simply a light in his eyes and a voice in his heart.

Far from portraying Abraham as a leader in flight, both the Torah and the rabbinic commentators speak of his ease, his confidence, and above all of his hospitality, which the Talmud admires as a tool of conversion: "Our father Abraham," so says the text, "would bring people into his home, give them food and drink, attract them, and then convert them in order to bring them under the wings of the *Shechinah*, of God's Presence." Hospitality with a conversionary bent — this is the spirit in which I made my call for the Outreach program as well as my undertaking to have Jewish identity determined by the paternal as well as by the maternal line.

And how successful these efforts have been! We brought healing to many bruised hearts: to would-be converts who felt deeply hurt by the rejection of born Jews; to parents who sought to bring to an end the bitterness wrought by their initial spurning of the non-Jewish spouse so that they could establish a relationship with their grandchildren; to adult children of interfaith marriages who felt Jewish in every way yet were denied a place on the *bimah*, and on and on. These and more were the painful stories that we heard and that spurred us on.

Only recently did I receive again such a communication, this time from a Holocaust survivor who was applauding our ongoing advocacy of patrilineality. My correspondent was the daughter of a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother. The father was killed in a concentration camp, and the daughter spent most of the Hitler years in hiding, hungry, hounded from place to place. After the war, she survived the chaos in Europe by cleaning toilets in a hospice in Basle. It was the only job she could find. The local functionaries of the JDC refused to give her aid because she had no Jewish mother. She was anxious to learn about her father's religion, but no Jewish doors were open to her in Europe at the time.

"What irony this," she writes. "Hitler persecuted people for having 'Jewish blood,' but then Jews discriminate against people for having 'non-Jewish' blood." She continues:

But gradually I awakened to an understanding that it was not my lack but an abysmal lack in Jews who rejected me! Now I am over seventy...and they still squabble in Israel over children with only one Jewish parent....What could be more important than to lovingly accept children with Jewish blood?

Through Outreach, we have enabled such people to make their way from the perimeter to the center. It is a process of mutual *t'shuvah*. By easing the pain of the so-called "half-Jew," the intermarried Jew, or the Jew-by-choice, we are summoning them to return, to connect. And in their returning, through their connecting, they summon us to a fuller consciousness of our own Jewish identities.

But the joyous success of Outreach has also raised some thorny issues for synagogues. Since so many interfaith couples join our congregations, defining the role of the non-Jew in the temple has become a critically pressing need.

Not everyone is of one mind on this subject, although there is a general consensus on guiding principles. Everyone is agreed that we should be as welcoming as possible, emulating the warm hospitality of Abraham, to which we just referred. And everyone also concurs that boundaries need to be drawn, that there will be no incentive to embrace Judaism if both Jew and non-Jew have the same entitlements, and, more serious still, that such a blurring of distinctions will lead to the attenuation of our faith.

Such boundaries do not offend non-Jews who make our houses of worship their own. They do not "raise barriers" for them, as the excellent handbook on the subject prepared by our Commission on Jewish Outreach notes. But rather these boundaries "demonstrate a healthy pride in who we are." They will be accepted by non-Jews who join us, provided, of course, that the lines are distinctly drawn, consistently applied, and clearly communicated.

But here's the rub: Just where ought those lines be drawn? *This* is where opinions diverge, sometimes very sharply.

As far as membership is concerned, nearly 90% of our congregations allow non-Jews to belong, with 62% percent granting them full voting rights. I hold with the majority here, all the more so because virtually all of our congregations count membership by households rather than by individuals.

But let me quickly emphasize that what I say in this context is not *ex cathedra*, so to speak. It is not a collective decision that was reached by anyone or that I urge for formal adoption. It is merely what I personally believe and what I would commend to my leadership were I a congregational rabbi.

I move now from membership to governance. Most of our congregations permit non-Jews to participate but most often with restrictions as to leadership roles. I agree with that, too. Temple governance, after all, means making decisions that will affect the communal lives of Jews, and few non-Jews expect us to abrogate the principle of self-determination so that they might feel more fully included. They understand that temple leaders are exemplars of Judaism. Abram must become Abraham and Sarai must become Sarah in order to become leaders of our generations.

I would add, however, that I am uncomfortable with the practice of using a "religious" yardstick to determine on which committees non-Jews may or may not serve. You see, I consider *all* of our synagogue committees sacred. Is it not a fundament of Reform to affirm that the decisions of a social-action committee about *tikkun olam* are as intrinsic a part of Judaism as the decision of the ritual committee regarding *tefilah*? Is a budget committee, for that matter, any less laden with a potential for holiness than teaching the *alef-bet* to children? Perhaps a nonvoting category of committee membership, applied equally to all committees, would better serve those congregations that seek to limit the role of the non-Jewish member within the committee structure.

Be that as it may, it is in the realm of religious ritual, rather than membership and governance, that passions run most high. There seems to exist, for example, a very strong taboo against non-Jews touching a Torah. Yet this zealotry has no traditional or halachic underpinning whatsoever, since a Torah scroll is not susceptible to ritual uncleanness, *ein m'kablin tumah*, and, therefore, anyone may handle it. Indeed, the doyen, the dean of Reform Judaism's decisors, the late great Rabbi Solomon Freehof, deemed it even fitting and proper to give non-Jews an *aliyah*, suggesting only that a special *b'rachah* be provided, since the phrase "thou hast chosen us from amongst all peoples" would certainly sound strange from the lips of someone who has not yet embraced Judaism.

Still, the Mishnah tells us, "you must appear justified before the people as well as before God." Perhaps even the purely emotional reactions of Jews deserve respect, rooted as they are in our tumultuous social history.

Now while non-Jews do not resent restrictions in the realm of governance and even membership, when it comes to life-cycle ceremonies, especially bar and bat mitzvahs, they are more sensitive, infinitely more likely to feel hurt. Here the boundaries that we draw seem less an assertion of Jewish self-determination and more an invasion of personal space, that is to say, the space of family, the space of personal spirituality. After all, this Torah scroll they are not allowed to touch, is it not (in the case of Christians) part of *their* religious heritage? That cemetery plot denied to them, is it not on the very hallowed ground where *they* go to pay respect to their in-laws, to their Jewish friends and neighbors, and, in some cases, to their own spouses and children?

Hence in this realm, my personal position is one of maximum openness — not

the total abandonment of boundaries but rather their enforcement through creative ritual. Our sense of evolutionary Judaism, you see, does not merely give us license to challenge the Orthodoxy of the past for the sake of the present. It also requires that we challenge our own orthodoxies for the sake of the future; most particularly, for the sake of gaining and retaining the hearts of the children of interfaith marriages for Judaism.

In sum, then, when it comes to such public life-cycle ceremonies as baby namings and bar and bat mitzvahs, I believe that the non-Jewish parents or partners should be allowed to participate in a manner virtually identical to that of Jews. Such rituals should maximize their roles as parents of a Jewish child and magnify their experience of Jewish spirituality.

Of course, truthfulness should never be violated by our desire to be inclusive. Thus, for example, the wording of specific *tefilot* would place the role of *sheliach tzibur* beyond the pale of non-Jews. But in all other ritual matters — the offering of a specific prayer, the lighting of candles, the recitation of the *Kiddush*, singing in a choir, and, yes, the handling of a Torah scroll — we should strive to present our synagogue as a “house of prayer for all peoples.” If we choose to fence in that house, to create a hedgerow around our Judaism, that is our right, but let us be certain of our motivation and not use ritual exclusion to express our emotional grievances, conscious or unconscious, historical or contemporary.

Once again, these are my personal views. I soberly realize that my stance differs from that of many Reform temples and their rabbis — perhaps even from the gut feeling of many Jews. Although when I see the wide gamut of views on these issues, I feel that I am only slightly left of center. Nonetheless, I do not urge the universal adoption of my views. What I am urging, however, is the adoption of a clear decision-making process, a process that will enable a congregation to define its goals, express its heart, give tradition a vote, and build its own special community through its ritual life.

Crucial to this process is the voice of the congregational rabbi. He or she is most committed to defending the integrity of Judaism from the demands of fashion. He or she is the one who is best equipped to read the landscape of an individual congregation and know where to draw the boundaries. He or she is the one least likely to be ruled by subconscious forces. The rabbi's convictions, therefore, should hold sway on the *bimah*.

Expanding Our Commitment to Gay and Lesbian Jews

While we are on the subject of stretching our sense of justice, our sense of community, our sense of Judaism, I want to turn to an item of unfinished business by asking you to extend our commitment to gay and lesbian Jews. We have made extraordinary progress over the years in this realm, but discriminatory practices still persist.

They persist in our society at large. Gay and lesbian couples are denied the legal benefits accorded to heterosexual couples. They cannot share in their partners' health program. They cannot file joint income tax returns. All this because not a single state permits them the right to legalize their relationship. And too often, they are adjudged unfit to adopt children, even when they meet and exceed the standards required of heterosexual adoptive parents, and not withstanding the studies that show that children of same-sex couples grow up with absolutely no greater likelihood of being homosexual than children of heterosexual couples.

These matters require remedy, and I ask the President's Message Committee to draft a resolution for acceptance by this Assembly that will put our movement on record as supporting the right of gay or lesbian couples to adopt children, to file joint income tax returns, and to share in the benefits that society normally assigns to married couples. And let us at the same time make certain that our own institutions, the College-Institute, the Conference, and, of course, the Union, too, will make benefits for staff, including health care, automatically available to gay and lesbian partners and their children.

We are pledged to the concept that we are one family. We will not speak of "them" and "us," as though gay men and women were descended from a distant planet. They are our fellow congregants, our friends and committee members, and, yes, our leaders, both professional and lay. Some of them are our sisters and brothers, our daughters and sons. Ours is a commitment to the re-forming of Judaism for the Jewish people, for *all* Jews and not just for some.

120 Years of Re-forming Judaism

For 120 years now, this commitment has been the *raison d'être* of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Yes, 120 years. Founded in 1873, the UAHC has now reached the age limit our Torah sets as a life span for human beings. It is the age at which Moses, "his eyes undimmed and his vigor unabated," died in the land of Moab. We now begin a new cycle of life, and I deem it altogether fitting and proper that we mark this birthing hour of renewed life by choosing a new name. Like Abram becoming Abraham and Sarai becoming Sarah, we, too, must adopt a new name in order to go across, to deliver our message to future generations.

But what's wrong with our present name? It has served us so well for so many years. So why discard it?

Well, to begin with, the name Union of American Hebrew Congregations is non-referential. It does not describe who we are and what we are about. And so, in our publications and releases and even on our letterheads, we always have to add all sorts of qualifying phrases in order to identify ourselves and what we do. Why even my children never understood what UAHC means, and well into their teens they called the House of Living Judaism in New York "Daddy's factory."

Furthermore, elements of our present name are anachronistic. In the nineteenth century, the word "Jew" was a pejorative used by those who hated us. The word "Hebrew," on the other hand, was employed by those Christians who were eager to proclaim their religious roots in the spiritual legacy of the "Hebrew prophets," even while they distanced themselves from the much-reviled Jews who lived around them. Alas, most of our coreligionists of the nineteenth century accepted this invidious distinction and adorned their institutions with the name "Hebrew," whilst the word "Jew" was cautiously avoided.

Last, and this is most important to me, the word "Reform" does not appear in our institutional name, and yet it is precisely this adjective that defines our essence and has made us the religion of choice for American Jewry.

Therefore, I call upon this Assembly to initiate a process that will lead to the submission of an alternate designation to be considered at our next Biennial. We should no longer allow our Hebrew prophets to be separated from our Jewish people. We should no longer accept a name rooted in nonacceptance. We are Jews whose community is a *union of Jewish congregations committed to reform*. That new name should ring out with a clarity of purpose. Let us henceforth be known for what we are and what we intend to be.

Judaism and World Renewal

"Hospitality with a conversionary bent." This is the spirit that bestirred me to project the Outreach program fifteen years ago. It is a program that proved to have alchemical properties. The investment we have made in it — barely ten cents per year for each North American Jew — has produced riches beyond the alchemist's imagination for our movement. But the most miraculous transformation of all is that wrought in the hearts of our brothers and sisters who have entered the synagogue through the portals of Outreach and have been renamed as sons and daughters of Abraham.

These Jews-by-choice, men and these women, who have, within their own brief lives, recapitulated the entirety of Jewish experience — the exile, the longing, the returning in love — are the ones who have most fulfilled the hope of Outreach that I affirmed fifteen years ago when I asked us "unabashedly and urgently" to resume our vocation as champions of Judaism.

But note that mine was not exclusively or even primarily a response to the problem of intermarriage. Indeed, an outreach program that limits its efforts to those who are bound to us by marriage is an affront to them. It casts doubt on their integrity, as if to say, you really didn't choose Judaism based on its merits, you must have done it to please your spouse. This is manifestly not so. For most Jews-by-choice, the Jewish spouse was the catalyst but not the cause of their conversion.

No, I envisaged the Outreach program not as an emergency to repair the holes

in our tent but as a long-range effort to "enlarge the site" of our tents, to "extend the size of our dwellings." My dream was to see our Judaism unleashed as a resource for a world in need—not as the exclusive inheritance of the few but as a renewable resource for the many; not as a religious stream too small to be seen on the map of the world but as a deep flowing river hidden by the overgrown confusion of modern times, which could nourish humanity's highest aspirations.

Early on, however, our Outreach Commission rightly moved to the back burner my call to reach out to those of our neighbors who belong to no church or other religious institutions because there were thousands of hungry individuals close at hand who needed the nourishment of such innovations as Times and Seasons and Stepping Stones and our affirmation of Jewish identity based on the paternal as well as the maternal line.

But now the time is ripe to move forward with the wider mission. We cannot do this with our present resources, to be sure. Our Outreach Department is already overstretched and understaffed. Because this is so, the founding chairman of Outreach, David Belin, who fully shares my convictions on this score, has agreed to contribute to and help raise \$5,000,000 for a fund that will enable us to begin this venture and to reach out to all who are seeking religious meaning in their lives.

This is what Outreach was meant to be from its beginning. It calls for more than a passive acceptance but requires an active pursuit. It means something more than welcoming the strangers who *choose* to live in our midst.

It bids us seek them out and invite them in, like the prototype of the proselytizing Jew, Abraham, whose tent was continually open on all four sides for fear that he would miss a wandering nomad and fail to bid him enter.

Why do we continue to resist the notion of an assertive Judaism? Are we ashamed? Is it that our self-image still mirrors the contempt of our traducers? Or do we perhaps think that Judaism has little, if anything, to offer to our world?

Well, look about you. Look at this planet earth, riven as it is by conflicts of every conceivable kind. Would not Judaism's insistence that every human being is created in God's image provide healing for such a fractured world?

Consider the fear that shuts doors to the hungry and borders to the persecuted. Mightn't Judaism's emphasis on *loving* the stranger — and the Jewish experience of *being* the stranger — help to wedge open the doors of the world's conscience?

And what of the immorality, the unethical business practices born of greed that have come to mark our age? Might not the Judaic understanding of wealth as a stewardship help to restore the integrity of our own people and restore trust in our larger society?

Consider, finally, the yearning in our lands for a deeper life rhythm than the rat race, a richer reward than the accumulation of wealth, a fuller purpose than just "making it." Mightn't Judaism's sanctification of time and space and of the daily things of life satisfy that hunger?

Aye, Judaism has an enormous amount of wisdom and experience to offer to our troubled world, and we Jews ought to be proud to proclaim this fact with fervor and with pride.

Let us, therefore, be champions of Judaism. Let us not be among those who in their pain and confusion respond to the fear of self-extinction by declaring casualties before the fact, who respond to the suffering of the past by living in the past, who react to the long-drawn isolation of our people with an isolationism of their own.

Let us rather recall and act on those lofty passages from the Tanach and the Chazal, from Bible and Commentary that define Jewish "chosenness" not as exclusive but as exemplary, not as separatist but as representative, not as closed but as open, not as rejecting but as all-embracing and compassionate.

Nakel miheyod'cha li eved, l'hakim et shivti Yaakov

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

You Shall Be a Blessing

My friends, as I bring my presidential message to its conclusion, some among *you* may have concluded that I have lost my bearings, that, perhaps, I am too much under the influence of our Torah portion and its numerous promises by God to Abraham that God will make him the "father of a multitude of nations" and that "kings will come forth" from him.

It does stretch the imagination, after all, to think that an imperiled community, less than 3% of the population and dwindling, should pave a missionary path to the heartland of this continent, if not the world! Why it is almost as outlandish that worldwide Communism might collapse in half a decade! Or that half a million Soviet Jews might make their exodus to the Promised Land in a fraction of the time that it took Moses and the Children of Israel! Or that the apartheid system of South Africa might be toppled with words rather than guns! Or that Arafat and Rabin might shake hands on the White House lawn!

Are we so very "modern" so as to no longer recognize the miracles in our lifetime, miracles wrought by people of faith? Are we so removed from the vocation of being Jews that we scorn the miraculous power of our own faith?

Yes, the power of faith! For as Maimonides taught, miracles are not the things that awe us with a sense of the impossible. Miracles, rather, are those events that stretch our sense of the possible. Miracles are not transcendent, not otherworldly. They are simply the achievement of people in *this* world who proceed in faith to deal with life not merely as a personal quest for happiness but as a communal quest for *worthiness*.

Menachem Mendel of Rymanov taught: If a thousand believing Chasidim were to gather around a block of wood, that block of wood, too, could work miracles." The Rymanover *rebbe* understood the power of focused, faithful human action, how it can turn a piece of wood into a tabernacle, into a temple, a conduit through which the Goodness of Creation can flow into our world.

But I am not summoning you to gather around a mere block of wood. Instead, I am summoning you to gather around our Torah, each letter of which resonates with potential energy, like the very atoms of Creation. I am summoning you to gather around our miraculous children, each of them carrying "his or her own blessing into the world." I am summoning you to gather around our Union, its teachers, its rabbis, its cantors, its incomparable lay leaders, each of them representing a new page of Jewish history.

When we are gathered together thus, our numbers do not seem so small, and the barrenness inflicted upon us by torture and exile does not seem so irrevocable.

When we are gathered together thus, the promise made to Abraham and Sarah — "Look to the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them.... Thus shall your offspring be" — does not seem a bit preposterous.

For that promise is not merely of well-being but of responsibility. Abram was to become *Avraham avinu*. Sarai was to become *Sarah imanu*, father and mother to a multitude of nations.

Today, in our maturity as a movement, in our maturity as a people, we, too, are enjoined to go forth — from the legacy of fear and hiding, of assimilation and pretense of self-protection and self-loathing — in order to establish a new Jewish household with wide open doors and to help give birth to a new world.

Indeed, there is a child waiting out there. She is scheduled to be born. The demographers' computers have said that within the decade, the six-billionth human being will be born upon this earth.

Perhaps she will be one of our own, born into one of our congregations. Perhaps you'll even meet her at her *b'rit habat*. You'll lean over to give her a blessing and tickle her to evoke a laugh in which you might hear the echo of Sarah's laughter. *Dayenu*, you might think. This is enough of a miracle: Another Jew born as we leave this blood-soaked century.

But far more likely this sixth-billionth child will be a girl born in Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa — so, at least, the computers predict. Never mind, you'll get to see her, too: that tiny bag of bones in Somalia on the evening news; or the baby clutched by a screaming Angolan woman as bombs destroy her mud-and-stick home pictured in yesterday's newspaper; or the eyes that plead with you not to turn the magazine page without first contributing to her beggar bowl.

What echoes will we hear in her cries of hunger? If we listen with Jewish ears, we will hear our children of the Warsaw Ghetto, our children of the camps, our children whose miraculous existences were obscured by smoke and obliterated by hatred.

And what failure will it be when this six-billionth human being fails to see her second birthday, when she succumbs to one of those easily preventable childhood diseases that take thousands of impoverished lives each day? If we are living with a Jewish heart, if we really believe that all Creation is One, then it is our sacred duty to avert that failure.

When I sleep, in my mind's eye, I see that child crossing the threshold of heaven's gate, like Bontsie Schvaig of Peretz's immortal tale. Horns sound and lights flash across the sky: THE SIX-BILLIONTH HUMAN SOUL!

A horde of angels rushes forward to surround her with gifts: a plate heaped high with biscuits, a jug of milk, a bundle of toys. They wipe the child's face clean of mucous and blood, flies and dust, and they pass her around, hugging and kissing her beneath fluttering wings, all of them laughing or sobbing, depending on their memories, each one embracing her as if it were that angel's own lost child.

But in my waking hours, and in the hours left to me, I am working to assign that child to you. Like Rymanover's thousand Chasidim, let us surround her and embrace her as our own. Then and then only will our "lifelong learning" yield its diploma. Then and only then will God's promise to Abraham be fulfilled:

I will make you a great nation.... Your seed will be as numerous as the stars in the heavens.... But be you a blessing, too, so that through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
62nd UAHG GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. I call on this Assembly to thank our Chairman, Mel Merians, for the manner in which he has led us these past two years. "Mel has strengthened the Union immeasurably," not just in the fiscal and administrative realms but in "programmatically" areas as well. "Many novel and worthwhile directions in our work — particularly in the domain of gaining and retaining the unaffiliated for synagogue membership—must be credited to his creative imagination."
2. I ask this Assembly to salute Judith Hertz, who concludes her second and last term in office as the President of NFTS. Her contributions to the advancement of our common sacred tasks were manifold. "She has led the Women of Reform Judaism with dignity and strength."
3. I call on this Assembly and its delegates to express our collective gratitude to all those who brought this convention to be:
 - a. To our host congregations of San Francisco for their most gracious hospitality. This is a proud Jewish community that has provided American Jewry and Reform Judaism with an extraordinary leadership.
 - b. To Mark Levy, Chairman, his vice-chair, Len Teitelbaum, and to all the members of our Biennial Program Committee for the rich fare with which they feasted us. They responded fully to the felt needs of our constituency.
 - c. To Sharon Silverman and Rosylind Bauer who chaired the Local Arrangements Committee and who did everything in their power to make us feel at home and insure that this convention run smoothly. We are grateful, also, to our area director, Rabbi Maury Hershman, who assisted them in this work.
 - d. To Arthur Grant, the Union's Director of Program and Regions, who "coordinated the multitudinous details of this complex venture." He is an efficient administrator, virtually unflappable, and a thoroughly decent human being.
4. I urge acceptance of the omnibus resolution on Israel submitted by the leaders of ARZA and Kadima, asking us:
 - a. to support the Israeli government's decision to come to terms with Israel's neighbors by trading land for peace. Let us "speak up, loudly and clearly, now and throughout the unfolding of this remarkable, soul-stirring process."

- b. to commend the United States for its determined efforts to lift the Arab boycott. It is "nothing short of an act of naked aggression in the economic sphere and, therefore, it contravenes and threatens to undermine the process toward political accommodation."
 - c. to enjoin our government to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. "Retaining our embassy in Tel Aviv is an aberration that urgently requires a corrective.... In every other land, we respect the city chosen by its citizens as the official seat of their government.... Does not Israel's decision in these matters also demand respect?"
 - d. to support the work of ARZA and Kadima. These organizations have "done much, especially through the Israel Religious Action Center, to advance the rights of Reform Jews in the Jewish State."
5. The renaissance of the American Cantorate is a source of immense pride for us as a Reform movement. Because of the increasing inability or unwillingness of many Orthodox and Conservative congregations to engage duly trained and invested cantors, our Reform congregations have become the principal inheritors and preservers of our rich Jewish musical heritage.
- Over the past ten years we have witnessed a rapid increase in the number of Reform congregations that have added trained, invested cantors to their clergy staff. Responding to this demand articulated in the 1991 Report of the Task Force on Professional Needs in Reform Judaism, our School of Sacred Music doubled the number of cantorial students it recruits and prepares.
- Now that we have challenged the College-Institute to train more professional cantors to serve our member congregations, it becomes our movement's obligation to engage those cantors trained by our School of Sacred Music. I call on the Commission on Synagogue Music to continue its efforts to work with congregations towards the creation of new cantorial positions. I likewise call on our member congregations to engage as cantors only those properly trained by the School of Sacred Music or certified by the American Conference of Cantors.
6. I ask the formation of a tripartite Task Force — involving the College-Institute, the Conference, and the Union — to develop a response to the vexing problems occasioned by the unethical involvement of temple professionals "that violate" their own standards and the "trust of their congregants." Tools of prevention, such as education, training, and careful supervision, should be evolved, "A bill of rights for congregants also needs to be formulated."
7. I ask that we acknowledge the splendid contributions of Rabbi Joseph Glaser, professional leader of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, who has determined to retire from office two years hence. "A passionate defender of rabbinic rights and dignity, Joe has established the foundation upon which rabbis can build up the House of Israel."

8. Taking note of the inequities to which women rabbis are still subject, particularly the sexual harassment that so many are experiencing ("This is intolerable and must come to an end"), I call on our movement to "place this issue on a par with other issues of rabbinic well-being." Indeed, this matter affects not just women in the rabbinate but all other women professionals and lay women in our synagogues. "Let us propel the force for change within Reform Jewish life through public and private agitation, through dialogue, and through affirmative action."
9. I urge our Commission on Jewish Education and its principal partners to develop "serious and sustained" education programs for adults — academies in our larger cities (following the innovative Kolel program of Toronto), regular summer courses, programs of home study — "all following a carefully constructed curriculum leading to a degree."
10. I ask that the successful Stepping Stones project, currently extended only to the children of unaffiliated intermarried couples, be expanded to encompass the children of unaffiliated Jewish families. Let the doors of our synagogue schools be "open to all, free of charge, for at least a year," the only requirement being "that parents also attend temple study programs at regular intervals." Such an endeavor might well produce a "windfall of new memberships and human energies."

Federations should be approached to support such a free-tuition venture, even as they support the present Stepping Stones program, thus reinforcing "the new, yet still tenuous bond between the world of Federations and the synagogue movements."

11. I ask the President's Message Committee to draft a resolution by this Assembly that will put our movement on record as supporting the right of gay and lesbian couples to adopt children, to file joint income tax returns, and "to share in the benefits that society normally assigns to married couples."

Let us make certain, also, that our own institutions — the College-Institute, the Conference, and the Union, too — will make benefits for staff, including health care, automatically available to gay and lesbian couples and fully on a par with benefits given to regular married staff.

12. I call on this assembly to initiate a process "that will lead to the submission" of a new name for our Union. That new name "should ring out with a clarity of purpose" and meaning. "We are Jews whose community is a *union* of *Jewish congregations committed to reform*. Let us henceforth be known for what we are and what we intend to be."

"The Religious Implications of Zionism"



Address to the ARZA Convention
by Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
President of the Union of American
Hebrew Congregations

April 18, 1993
BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

It is good to be here with the men and women of ARZA.

Let me say at once how delighted I am that you have chosen to honor Eric Yoffie by giving him the Jay Kaufman Award, named to honor the memory of that Rabbi who truly began the process of the Union's Zionization. Eric well deserves the superlatives which were showered on him, and I echo them heartily. I, too, admire the quality of his character, his dedication, and his creative work on behalf of Israel and of Reform Judaism in Israel. Eric's assumption of his present role as the head of our Commission on Social Action is reflective of Reform Judaism's understanding that Israel's well-being and the cause of social justice are intensely intertwined, that a prophetic sensibility about Israel very much undergirds the religious significance of Zionism for Reform Jews.

In praising Eric, I am really praising ARZA as a whole, for it is truly the grassroots dynamism of Reform that enables its leaders to serve so ably. ARZA has a two-fold task: to raise the consciousness of the Reform Jewish community about the needs, problems, and compelling achievements of the Jewish State and to enhance the presence, the legitimacy, and the constructive role of Reform Judaism in Israel. This dual purpose, which you advance by your support of ARZA, is of ever-increasing significance within the American Jewish landscape as well as within an Israel that hungers for a Jewishly authentic alternative to Orthodoxy and secularism.

Marking Yom Hashoah

Today is Yom Hashoah, and we marked it with a most moving ceremony earlier this morning.

Holocaust Remembrance Day invariably is observed in the month of April, but what an unlikely time it is 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 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, innocent, guiltless all! Quick healing is not the reality of a people for whom nature itself was defiled by Nazi murderers who sowed bones instead of seeds in the month of April!

No, the mood of April clashes with the theme of Yom Hashoah, but it is altogether fitting and appropriate that ARZA's convention coincides with its observance. After all, today is the 50th anniversary of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto, that stirring and fateful event in which overwhelming human evil and redeeming human heroism collided. In that collision were created the sparks from which the State of Israel eventually flared to life.

On the Need for a Platform of Reform Zionism

This is a rightful time, then, for us to consider "The Religious Implications of Zionism for Reform Jews," although I am not at all certain that I am the right person to address so weighty a theme. After all, I am scarcely a Zionist ideologue, and as a rabbi, I identify more strongly as an activist than as a theologian. Do not expect me, therefore, to develop a coherent, comprehensive Reform religious philosophy toward Israel - - certainly not in the fleeting time that I have been allotted for this assignment. All I can really do is to offer some personal and hopefully helpful reflections, some currents of thought on our theme.

And the first of these is my acknowledgement of the need for such a comprehensive statement. We require it to help others understand wherein we differ, and to give sharper focus to our own doing.

Earlier theological statements on the subject simply do not suffice for the present need. Thus, for instance, the Columbus Platform of 1937, which is often said to mark the beginning of Reform Judaism's "Zionization," may have muted Reform opposition to Jewish nationalism and embraced Jewish Palestine as a haven of refuge for Jews. But it ignored other elements, such as the mythical meaning of Eretz Yisrael and Galut concepts which continue to be central to Zionist ideology and to the thinking of most Israelis today.

In this sense, the Columbus Platform's plank on Israel is not really a theological affirmation. It represents rather the surrender of ideology to the necessity pressed upon us by Nazi Germany's savage war against the Jews.

Subsequent statements - - and this includes those principles which ARZA affirmed at its birthing - - are equally incomplete. This is why I am pleased that you have begun to make remedy, by convening a think-tank on Zionism, by making this subject a leitmotif of this convention, and by your resolve to continue the discourse.

I, for one, would be delighted were you to succeed in evolving a 'Platform on Reform Zionism' and then submit it to the Conference as well as to the Union for endorsement. Our Biennial Assembly would be enlivened by such a debate.

There certainly is a pressing political purpose for such a platform. We must not allow the religious vision of the Jewish State's meaning and destiny be left solely in the hands of the Gush Emunim and their fellow travellers of the religious right who deify the land and devalue human life. In any event, there

is a demand within Reform Judaism for greater coherence, for an articulation of what we are and what we are not. Defining the religious meaning of Reform Zionism would contribute enormously to that evolving sense of ourselves.

What Aliyah Means to Reform Zionists

Now, let me begin my own more substantive ruminations by focusing on the Zionist conception of galut and its absolute negation which, as I have indicated, remains central to the thinking of most Israelis, though they may refrain from articulating it, at least within our hearing, though they convey it in their attitude and actions. witness, if you will, their almost exclusive emphasis on aliyah rather than Jewish community building in the former Soviet Union, and their disdain for those who choose countries other than Israel as their haven of refuge.

I reject this conception categorically; Shelilat ha'galut has no place in any Reform definition of Zionism. The Shoa may have shattered the classical Reform view of "Zion" as being wherever Jews make their home; but neither has the classical Zionist view of the Jewish State as the negation of the Diaspora been fulfilled. For most Jews in the world, Zionism means a love for Israel, a readiness to secure its safety; but it requires no commensurate alienation from our countries of birth or of residence.

Most of us, if not all of us, share such a view. We are not prepared to negate the dispersion, not just yet anyway. If we were, and since the ultimate justification of belief is action, we would not be meeting in Boca today. We would or should be on the move to Israel, and not just for a brief visit, but rather to make it our place of permanent abode.

Let me underscore that this does not mean that Reform Jews need refrain from fostering aliyah as a valid option for Diaspora Jews many of whom might well find a life of greater fulfillment and meaning in the Jewish State, and we should therefore foster programs which facilitate this possibility.

It is the classical Zionist insistence that no viable Jewish life outside Israel's borders is realizable that we reject.

Consequently, it is our responsibility as Reform Zionists to build Jewishly strong communities wherever we live; to nurture the inner life of our people; to sink our roots deep in the soil of the Torah, a soil more enduring than the soil of any continent. In the final analysis, the struggle for survival of our people is fought not only along the frontier of Israel, but in every Jewish school and camp and in every Jewish House of Prayer in our world.

In a word, Reform Zionism must be defined so as to assure an ongoing place in it for Diaspora Judaism. The sentiment of Bratzlaver Rebbe, that "no matter where I go, it is always to Israel" should be the watchword of our Zionism. Israel must be a place in our hearts, an obsession in our minds, but ever as portable as a Scroll of the Torah.

The Holiness of the Land of Israel

There is, however, an element of classical Zionism which we should include in our self-definition as Reform Zionists and to which, if anything, we should give a far greater religious significance. I speak of the Land of Israel, its sanctity, its holiness.

There is no escaping the sacredness of the land as a necessary element of our religious quest. As Reform Jews, we affirm that

"God, Torah and Israel are one." To limit the concept of Israel to peoplehood while ignoring the land of Israel as its necessary component is to truncate it, to diminish the strength of one of the three central pillars of Judaism.

Israel, after all, is the place where our people was born, where our forebears walked, where our Holy Torah came into being. It is the place where "waiting for God" was conceived, where the dream of an everlasting peace was quickened. It is the place where, in the stirring words of the old Union Prayer Book, "our prophets taught their imperishable message of justice and truth" and where our psalmists "sang their deathless song of love" for God and of God's love "for us and all humanity."

Needless to say, the rote recitation of bits of liturgy does not suffice to make the concept of the land's holiness a reality for us, nor will the mere articulation of this concept in a platform's plank. It must be touched . . . it must be tasted . . . it must be experienced with our every sense.

Yes, Reform was the first contemporary stream of Judaism that has designated Yom Ha-atzmaut as a religious festival. But, alas, it is marked more in the breach than in observance -- the recitation of an appropriate liturgical passage or two, on the nearest Friday night, the singing of Hatikvah as the anthem, but little more. ARZA ought to spur a more disciplined and enthusiastic celebration of this festive day.

No fitting home ceremonies for Yom Ha-atzmaut have yet been fashioned, so Dan Syme reminded us recently, and ARZA ought to press for their creation.

Much further still, ARZA might well move to revive the ancient tradition of pilgrimages to Israel as a religious obligation, perhaps not thrice a year, but at least on one of the regalim.

Certainly ARZA's tours to Israel should be conceived in such a light - - not as mere trips to an exciting land, or to a place endeared by memory and affection, nor even as a means to be linked to its people, and to bolster their confidence. They should be conceived rather as a sacred journey, a quest to be spiritually invigorated, an opportunity to feel that inner force which emanates from Israel and to breathe that air which is the life of our very soul.

Only in such a way, will Zionism, in Herzl's words, become "the Sabbath of our lives" . . . that intersection of space and time when our Jewish souls are most engaged and fulfilled.

The Land Given for a Purpose

The land of Israel is holy. It is the mainstay of God's covenant with Abraham. But the land's mantle of holiness does not ipso facto envelope the machinery of the Jewish State. The State of Israel and the Land of Israel are not coterminous. The land may be sacred but it was promised to Abraham and his descendants for a purpose: to create a just and holy society and to be a blessing to all humankind. To maintain the land's sanctity we must make it a model, a miniature which reflects that ideal society which God wants us to fashion on this earth.

Obviously modern Israel cannot be fully that kind of a model. for the Altneuland, the ancient state reborn, must survive in an uncovenanted world whose calculus is force. Still, as Reform religious Zionists it is our calling to press Israel to fashion a society which demonstrates for all to see that the prophets of Israel and their teaching of social justice and of compassion-in-action still live in us.

In order to fulfill this calling, we have to muster the courage to speak truth to power. This has been the historic role of our

people's religious leadership since Samuel warned the people about their desire for a King, a desire, they said, "that we might be like all the other nations." This was the role played by Nathan when he indicted King David for sending Uriah the Hittite to his death, so that David might quench his lust for Bathsheba. We must not demur from taking on this yoke of responsible dissent, for it is only through such chastening that the state and its machinery can come to share in the holiness that adheres to the land.

Thus, for instance - - and allow me for a few minutes to concretize this theological abstraction in contemporary terms - - as Reform Zionists we are right to reject the notion that there are inviolate boundaries marking which clumps of Israeli clay are sacred and which are not.

The Torah, so Eric Yoffie taught me, offers at least four different versions of the Holy Land's geography. In any event, the Covenant is something more than a real estate deed. Or at least, it is a deed which imposes on its rightful tenants a reciprocal obligation: to craft and conserve a society which is reflective of Judaism's ideal vision - - and the repression of populations or their transfer manifestly have no place in that vision and will only besmirch it.

As another example, I pray that even in these tense days, when the random murder of Jews has brought the Israeli people to cry for harsh measures against terrorism, and when the promise of peace sits unharvested on the vine that Arik Sharon's recent call for "emergency powers" shall be resisted and resisted fiercely. Sharon, still bloody from his past misadventures, too much resembles King Saul from whom "the spirit of the Lord departed," and on whom "the evil spirit of the Lord descended." Hopefully,

the Israeli people will, like the prophet Samuel, search elsewhere for leadership than in the realm of dictatorship and demagoguery. Ultimately the prophets rather than the Kings, must be the role models for our Zionism.

Dissent and Disloyalty

In seeking to emulate such models we ought to propagate the principle that dissent and disloyalty must never be equated. Yet there are pressures on the American Jewish scene which would make it so - - witness, if you will, the ZOA's recent abortive effort to bar the Shalom Achshav organization from membership in the Presidents' Conference.

Note that these pressures come from within rather than without, that is to say they are applied not by the Israelis so much as they are by their self-appointed minion here in America - - minor functionaries strutting about as the guardians of the state's security. And the further from the center of power they are, the more inquisitorial they become. Isn't it always so? Shamossim plague us ever more than gabo-im - - clerks invariably are more officious than presidents.

Let us once and for all reject the inculcation that by speaking the truth as we see it, by giving the Israelis our own honest perception of events, we are somehow treasonous. I believe that Israel is indeed the possession, the treasure, and the burden of the Jewish people. And that gives us both the right and the responsibility to speak out.

Intriguingly enough, Norman Podhoretz, who once ranked among the foremost critics of Israel's critics, took up the pen himself to publicly chastise Israel's present government for policies which

he deems inimical to her well-being. I guess it all depends on whose ox is being gored! Still, he has the right to do so, and so do we.

Golda Meir had a refreshing way of conferring this right.

Interviewed soon after the Yom Kippur War, she said:

"We want to hear nice things about ourselves, but we must also hear the truth . . . the Arabs, the United Nations, the anti-Semites - - their criticism we ignore . . . but American Jews are mishpacha, they are our family, and from them we expect not only praise but criticism as well . . . They should not only support us, that is understood; it is equally important that they help us see what is wrong and how it can be corrected . . . "

True, dissent is delicate and sometimes dangerous. It must be exercised with sechel, with the greatest of care. We should not join those media wolves who beset Israel with their baying and barking at her every step.

ARZA should never conduct public protests like those which the Satmer Chassidim staged some years ago, when they followed Begin through the streets of New York and on to Washington parading before the White House with big signs demanding that this "Nazi," as they called him, "go home." That was a chilul hashem, even as was a similar protest held by another group of chassidim before the Regency Hotel when Peres spoke there some weeks ago. Still, if either the Israelis or American Jews suppress honest dissent and smear the dissenters, why, then, the Jewish people will be spiritually impoverished and Israel's cause intolerably diminished.

Be all this as it may, it is our task to help Israel fulfill the purpose inherent in the covenantal promise of Eretz yisrael: to deepen Israel's Jewish being. This purpose limns our highest duty as Reform Zionists. It must become and remain the centerpiece of our platform, the very cornerstone of its

foundation. It is a duty which the men and women of ARZA so nobly fulfilled with their creation and sustenance of Israel's Religious Action Center.

Building Reform Judaism in Israel

There is one other plank that we must add to our declaration of policy and that is the assertion of our determination to establish a viable Reform Jewish community in Israel.

The role of Reform Judaism is crucial to Israel. The dynamism of our faith, the egalitarianism of our ways, the accessibility of our community, our insistence that Judaism requires more than ritual observance, that it is rather a wedge holding open the doors of the Jewish conscience, an amplifier through which the voices of the prophets still echo, drowning out the ritualistic obsessions of the priests - - these unique virtues of Reform Judaism, those virtues, at any rate, to which we aspire, are the sacred oil which can fuel Jerusalem's luminous light.

But we will extend Reform Judaism's stake in Israel not merely for what it might or might not mean to Israel, but rather because of what the building of Reform in Israel will do for us because without such a linkage, American Reform Judaism runs the risk of becoming a thing apart from the body Jewish, a kind of party or even sect rather than a movement within Judaism. Our fiscal and political ties to Israel are not sufficient to secure us against this risk. We need the deeper, more abiding bonds of a common community of faith.

This is also why we should encourage aliyah, though we reject the classical Zionist concept of the Diaspora's negation. Reform Jews must become a part of Israel and be its builders. And all of us must come there with regularity, as oleh regel, as did the pilgrims of yesteryear.

Only in this manner will we Jews remain one people. We are one because there is a reality of which both the State and the Diaspora communities are but modes of manifestation. That undergirding reality is the Jewish people. The machinery of the State and the communal structure of the Diaspora alike are its extension. They are both but instruments of the people's will and need.

Jerusalem, so Heschel wrote, is not divine. "Her life depends on our presence." Alone she is silent; when we are there she is a proclamation. Alone she is a "widow;" when we are there "she is a bride."

And so we shall come to Israel, and we shall bring our children there. Some will be there for a time, and some for always. There we will build our synagogues, and centers, and settlements. The very center of our movement has been established there. And through the glass of its windows we can see the walls of our holy city, and the Tower of David, and the mount where waiting for God was born.

Then Jerusalem will live.

And we will live.

All Israel will live.

Ken Yehi Ratzon.

THE RELIGIOUS IMPLICATIONS OF ZIONISM



Address by
Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President
UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS
SERVING REFORM JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA

ARZA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
BOCA RATON, FLORIDA
APRIL 18, 1993

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It is good to be here with the men and women of ARZA.

Let me say at once how delighted I am that you have chosen to honor Eric Yoffie by giving him the Jay Kaufman Award, named to honor the memory of that Rabbi who truly began the process of the Union's Zionization. Eric well deserves the superlatives which were showered on him, and I echo them heartily. I, too, admire the quality of his character, his dedication, and his creative work on behalf of Israel and of Reform Judaism in Israel. Eric's assumption of his present role as the head of our Commission on Social Action is reflective of Reform Judaism's understanding that Israel's well-being and the cause of social justice are intensely intertwined, that a prophetic sensibility about Israel very much undergirds the religious significance of Zionism for Reform Jews.

In praising Eric, I am really praising ARZA as a whole, for it is truly the grassroots dynamism of Reform that enables its leaders to serve so ably. ARZA has a two-fold task: to raise the consciousness of the Reform Jewish community about the needs, problems, and compelling achievements of the Jewish State and to enhance the presence, the legitimacy, and the constructive role of Reform Judaism in Israel. This dual purpose, which you advance by your support of ARZA, is of ever-increasing significance within the American Jewish landscape as well as within an Israel that hungers for a Jewishly authentic alternative to Orthodoxy and secularism.

MARKING YOM HASHOAH

Today is Yom Hashoah, and we marked it with a most moving ceremony earlier this morning.

Holocaust Remembrance Day invariably is observed in the month of April, but what an unlikely time it is 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 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, innocent, guiltless all! Quick healing is not the reality of a people for whom nature itself was defiled by Nazi murderers who sowed bones instead of seeds in the month of April!

No, the mood of April clashes with the theme of Yom Hashoah, but it is altogether fitting and appropriate that ARZA's convention coincides with its observance. After all, today is the 50th anniversary of the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto, that stirring and fateful event in which overwhelming human

evil and redeeming human heroism collided. In that collision were created the sparks from which the State of Israel eventually flared to life.

ON THE NEED FOR A PLATFORM OF REFORM ZIONISM

This is a rightful time, then, for us to consider "The Religious Implications of Zionism for Reform Jews," although I am not at all certain that I am the right person to address so weighty a theme. After all, I am scarcely a Zionist ideologue, and as a rabbi, I identify more strongly as an activist than as a theologian. Do not expect me, therefore, to develop a coherent, comprehensive Reform religious philosophy toward Israel - certainly not in the fleeting time that I have been allotted for this assignment. All I can really do is to offer some personal and hopefully helpful reflections, some currents of thought on our theme.

And the first of these is my acknowledgement of the need for such a comprehensive statement. We require it to help others understand wherein we differ, and to give sharper focus to our own doing.

Earlier theological statements on the subject simply do not suffice for the present need. Thus, for instance, the Columbus Platform of 1937, which is often said to mark the beginning of Reform Judaism's "Zionization," may have muted Reform opposition to Jewish nationalism and embraced Jewish Palestine as a haven of refuge for Jews. But it ignored other elements, such as the mythical meaning of *Eretz Yisrael* and *Galut* concepts which continue to be central to Zionist ideology and to the thinking of most Israelis today.

In this sense, the Columbus Platform's plank on Israel is not really a theological affirmation. It represents rather the surrender of ideology to the necessity pressed upon us by Nazi Germany's savage war against the Jews.

Subsequent statements — and this includes those principles which ARZA affirmed at its birthing — are equally incomplete. This is why I am pleased that you have begun to make remedy, by convening a think-tank on Zionism, by making this subject a leitmotif of this convention, and by your resolve to continue the discourse.

I, for one, would be delighted were you to succeed in evolving a 'Platform on Reform Zionism' and then submit it to the Conference as well as to the Union for endorsement. Our Biennial Assembly would be enlivened by such a debate.

There certainly is a pressing political purpose for such a platform. We must not allow the religious vision of the Jewish State's meaning and destiny be left solely in the hands of the *Gush Emunim* and their fellow travellers of the religious right who deify the land and devalue human life. In any event, there is a demand *within* Reform Judaism for greater coherence, for an articulation of what we are and what we are not. Defining the religious meaning of Reform Zionism would contribute enormously to that evolving sense of ourselves.

WHAT ALIYAH MEANS TO REFORM ZIONISTS

Now, let me begin my own more substantive ruminations by focusing on the Zionist conception of *galut* and its absolute negation which, as I have indicated, remains central to the thinking of most Israelis, though they may refrain from articulating it, at least within our hearing, though they convey it in their attitude and actions. Witness, if you will, their almost exclusive emphasis on aliyah rather than Jewish community building in the former Soviet Union, and their disdain for those who choose countries other than Israel as their haven of refuge.

I reject this conception categorically; *Shelilat bagalut* has no place in any Reform definition of Zionism. The Shoa may have shattered the classical Reform view of "Zion" as being wherever Jews make their home; but neither has the classical Zionist view of the Jewish State as the negation of the Diaspora been fulfilled. For most Jews in the world, Zionism means a love for Israel, a readiness to secure its safety; but it requires no commensurate alienation from our countries of birth or of residence.

Most of us, if not all of us, share such a view. We are not prepared to negate the dispersion, not just yet anyway. If we were, and since the ultimate justification of belief is action, we would not be meeting in Boca today. We would or should be on the move to Israel, and not just for a brief visit, but rather to make it our place of permanent abode.

Let me underscore that this does not mean that Reform Jews need refrain from fostering aliyah as a valid option for Diaspora Jews many of whom might well find a life of greater fulfillment and meaning in the Jewish State, and we should therefore foster programs which facilitate this possibility. It is the classical Zionist insistence that *no* viable Jewish life outside Israel's borders is realizable that we reject.

Consequently, it is our responsibility as Reform Zionists to build Jewishly strong communities wherever we live; to nurture the inner life of our people: to sink our roots deep in the soil of the Torah, a soil more enduring than the soil of any continent. In the final analysis, the struggle for survival of our people is fought not only along the frontier of Israel, but in every Jewish school and camp and in every Jewish House of Prayer in our world.

In a word, Reform Zionism must be defined so as to assure an ongoing place in it for Diaspora Judaism. The sentiment of Bratzlaver Rebbe, that "no matter where I go, it is always to Israel" should be the watchword of *our* Zionism. Israel must be a place in our hearts, an obsession in our minds, but ever as portable as a Scroll of the Torah.

THE HOLINESS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL

There is, however, an element of classical Zionism which we should include in our self-definition as Reform Zionists and to which, if anything, we should give a far greater *religious* significance. I speak of the Land of Israel, its sanctity, its holiness.

There is no escaping the sacredness of the land as a necessary element of our religious quest. As Reform Jews, we affirm that "God, Torah and Israel are one." To limit the concept of Israel to peoplehood while ignoring the land of Israel as its necessary component is to truncate it, to diminish the strength of one of the three central pillars of Judaism.

Israel, after all, is the place where our people was born, where our forebears walked, where our Holy Torah came into being. It is the place where "waiting for God" was conceived, where the dream of an everlasting peace was quickened. It is the place where, in the stirring words of the old Union Prayer Book, "our prophets taught their imperishable message of justice and truth" and where our psalmists "sang their deathless song of love" for God and of God's love "for us and all humanity."

Needless to say, the rote recitation of bits of liturgy does not suffice to make the concept of the land's holiness a reality for us, nor will the mere articulation of this concept in a platform's plank. It must be touched . . . it must be tasted . . . it must be experienced with our every sense.

Yes, Reform was the first contemporary stream of Judaism that has designated *Yom Ha-atzmaut* as a religious festival. But, alas, it is marked more in the breach than in observance — the recitation of an

appropriate liturgical passage or two, on the nearest Friday night, the singing of Hatikvah as the anthem, but little more. ARZA ought to spur a more disciplined and enthusiastic celebration of this festive day.

No fitting home ceremonies for *Yom Ha-atzmaut* have yet been fashioned, so Dan Syme reminded us recently, and ARZA ought to press for their creation.

Much further still, ARZA might well move to **revive the ancient tradition of pilgrimages to Israel as a religious obligation**, perhaps not thrice a year, but at least on one of the *regalim*.

Certainly ARZA's tours to Israel should be conceived in such a light — not as mere trips to an exciting land, or to a place endeared by memory and affection, nor even as a means to be linked to its people, and to bolster their confidence. They should be conceived rather as a sacred journey, a quest to be spiritually invigorated, an opportunity to feel that inner force which emanates from Israel and to breathe that air which is the life of our very soul.

Only in such a way, will Zionism, in Herzl's words, become "the Sabbath of our lives" . . . that intersection of space and time when our Jewish souls are most engaged and fulfilled.

THE LAND GIVEN FOR A PURPOSE

The land of Israel is holy, It is the mainstay of God's covenant with Abraham. But the land's mantle of holiness does not ipso facto envelope the machinery of the Jewish State. The State of Israel and the Land of Israel are not coterminous. The land may be sacred but it was promised to Abraham and his descendants for a purpose: to create a just and holy society and to be a blessing to all humankind. To maintain the land's sanctity we must make it a model, a miniature which reflects that ideal society which God wants us to fashion on this earth.

Obviously modern Israel cannot be fully that kind of a model, for the *Altneuland*, the ancient state reborn, must survive in an uncovenanted world whose calculus is force. Still, as Reform religious Zionists it is our calling to press Israel to fashion a society which demonstrates for all to see that the prophets of Israel and their teaching of social justice and of compassion-in action still live in us.

In order to fulfill this calling, we have to muster the courage to speak truth to power. This has been the historic role of our people's religious leadership since Samuel warned the people about their desire for a King, a desire, they said, "that we might be like all the other nations." This was the role played by Nathan when he indicted King David for sending Uriah the Hittite to his death, so that David might quench his lust for Bathsheba. We must not demur from taking on this yoke of responsible dissent, for it is only through such chastening that the state and its machinery can come to share in the holiness that adheres to the land.

Thus, for instance — and allow me for a few minutes to concretize this theological abstraction in contemporary terms — as Reform Zionists we are right to reject the notion that there are inviolate boundaries marking which clumps of Israeli clay are sacred and which are not. The Torah, so Eric Yoffie taught me, offers at least four different versions of the Holy Land's geography. In any event, the Covenant is something more than a real estate deed. Or at least, it is a deed which imposes on its rightful tenants a reciprocal obligation: to craft and conserve a society which is reflective of Judaism's ideal vision — and the repression of populations or their transfer manifestly have no place in that vision and will only besmirch it.

As another example, I pray that even in these tense days, when the random murder of Jews has brought the Israeli people to cry for harsh measures against terrorism, and when the promise of peace sits unharvested on the vine that Arik Sharon's recent call for "emergency powers" shall be

resisted and resisted fiercely. Sharon, still bloody from his past misadventures, too much resembles King Saul from whom "the spirit of the Lord departed," and on whom "the evil spirit of the Lord descended." Hopefully, the Israeli people will, like the prophet Samuel, search elsewhere for leadership than in the realm of dictatorship and demagoguery. Ultimately the prophets rather than the Kings, must be the role models for our Zionism.

DISSENT AND DISLOYALTY

In seeking to emulate such models we ought to propagate the principle that dissent and disloyalty must never be equated. Yet there are pressures on the American Jewish scene which would make it so — witness, if you will, the ZOA's recent abortive effort to bar the Shalom Achshav organization from membership in the Presidents' Conference.

Note that these pressures come from within rather than without, that is to say they are applied not by the Israelis so much as they are by their self-appointed minion here in America — minor functionaries strutting about as the guardians of the state's security. And the further from the center of power they are, the more inquisitorial they become. Isn't it always so? *Shamossim* plague us ever more than *gabo-im* — clerks invariably are more officious than presidents.

Let us once and for all reject the inculcation that by speaking the truth as we see it, by giving the Israelis our own honest perception of events, we are somehow treasonous. I believe that Israel is indeed the possession, the treasure, and the burden of the Jewish people. And that gives us both the right and the responsibility to speak out.

Intriguingly enough, Norman Podhoretz, who once ranked among the foremost critics of Israel's critics, took up the pen himself to publicly chastise Israel's present government for policies which he deems inimical to her well-being. I guess it all depends on whose ox is being gored! Still, he has the right to do so, and so do we.

Golda Meir had a refreshing way of conferring this right. Interviewed soon after the Yom Kippur War, she said:

"We want to hear nice things about ourselves, but we must also hear the truth . . . the Arabs, the United Nations, the anti-Semites — *their* criticism we ignore . . . but American Jews are *mishpacha*, they are our family, and from them we expect not only praise but criticism as well . . . They should not only support us, that is understood; it is equally important that they help us see what is wrong and how it can be corrected . . ."

True, dissent is delicate and sometimes dangerous. It must be exercised with *seichel*, with the greatest of care. We should not join those media wolves who beset Israel with their baying and barking at her every step.

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Ken Yeibi Ratzon