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AMERICAN JEWISH  
**40TH ANNIVERSARY  
KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

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



איחוד  
ליהדות  
מתקדמת  
באמריקה

December 25, 1994 • Albuquerque, New Mexico



**I**t is a great joy to be reunited with the men and women of NATE. This is no hyperbole, no extravagant exaggeration to which we rabbis are prone . . . I really mean it. After all, I once served as the Union's National Director of Education and as such was closely connected with this affiliate. Indeed, I was made a life member of NATE, as I recall it, and I take great pride in the initials "R.J.E." which follow my name, no less than in the title Rabbi which precedes it. Jeremiah was right when he intimated that the love of our youth can never be forgotten. Well, NATE is that to me: the bride of my youth, the love of my espousals. And so it is truly good to be reunited with you, to feel your nearness and your caring.

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NATE has accomplished much in the forty years of its existence. You created a new profession, that of Reform Jewish Educator. You set standards for that profession and raised its aspirations. Your members produced manifold texts and educational materials for the religious school. You helped the Union to develop its curricula and you tested their effectiveness in the classroom. You taught the teachers of our students and you taught our children too.

We all take just pride in the knowledge that our religious community has been able to reproduce its own leadership. When I entered the rabbinate and NATE began just forty years ago, we turned to other movements within Judaism to find the bulk of our masters and teachers. Not so today! Our rabbis and teachers and lay leaders and cantors and even scholars are our very own. They are the products of Reform Jewish religious schools; the full sheaved harvest of our youth groups and camps. A movement that has the capacity thus to reproduce itself, to recreate its own communal and spiritual leadership, is a movement that is not brittle but lives.

NATE must be given substantial credit for this impressive and promising achievement. And so I congratulate you on your anniversary. And I thank you for what you have done and for what you are.

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shiyot – Shemot of the Sabbath just past and Va'era of the next - - which serve as sacred book-ends for our gathering, as it were. They offer abundantly fertile material for our deliberations. For these parashiyot begin the life story of Moses - - Moshe Rabbenu, Moses our Teacher, surely a most appropriate presence to grace this assemblage of Reform Jewish Educators on this Biblically significant 40th year of NATE's existence.

Thematically, too, there is a resonance between the text and our meeting, for in the Torah we come from a circumstance in which the enslaved Hebrews groan aloud to God, (they groan but do not pray, yet God "overhears" them, as it were.) And then we move to that extraordinary circumstance when Moses has his vision of the burning bush, and he actually speaks directly to God and learns God's name. Even so, at this convention, we are thematically concerned with opening ourselves, our children, and our congregants to prayer, opening them to a personal and communal relationship with God.

Now the Talmud observes that while it took but six days to create the world, it took fully 40 years to give the Torah to Moses atop Sinai. You who labor in the field of Jewish education understand this timetable all too well. You understand that while it takes only accidents of birth for children to be Jewish - - accidents of birth even in cases of conversionary decisions on the part of parents - - making that act of grace into a act of covenant is a lifelong learning process.

Nor is this lifelong process still only a matter of following the well trodden path of Jewish commitment that leads from Jewish nursery school to Bar and Bat Mitzvah and confirmation and then proceeds with uninterrupted continuity to youth group participation, intermediate study, temple membership and on to a Jewish marriage. Nowadays, that learning process is much more complicated than that, as you know. Our whole Jewish community has suffered deeply from such rote attitudes about learning and ritual, attitudes that convinced nearly a whole generation that Judaism was an obligation rather than an opportunity, an extortion rather than a gift. Freed of the acute parental and social pressures that kept past generations obedient to Jewish tradition, and freed also from the constraining pressures of anti-Semitism that kept past generations in need of Jewishness as a safe haven, too many of our children have simply flown out of the Jewish coop - - and are flying about yet, hungry and without a place to land.

Almost too late, we have come to understand that the process of educating the modern Jew is a conversionary process akin to the transformation of Moses when he saw his vision of the burning bush. This encounter was preceded, so the midrash tells us, by Moses' pursuit of a runaway lamb which had scampered off from Jethro's flock. It is in pursuing that lamb, in leaving his usual path as a shepherd, in stepping into the unknown wilderness, that Moses was able to perceive the holiness of his birthright.

The Torah thus calls on you friends, to be extraordinary educators: trailblazers in the wilderness, crafts people of the mind, shepherds of the soul.



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Indeed, there is even a need for skilled Jewish educators beyond the classroom, truly off the proverbial well trodden path. We need educators who can take their rightful place in Jewish communal settings, in day schools, in centers, in camps, and beyond; educators who know how to set in motion the active principles of what Seymour Rossel aptly calls "transformative learning." I would urge NATE to place this need high on the agenda. Jewish education must reach out to become a "school without walls" in every sense of the word.

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We realize, therefore, that the classroom transaction between teacher and student, no matter how wonderful, is but a small part of the Jewish educative process, a small part that will wither on the vine if, throughout the week, students live in a Jewish vacuum, without a Jewish community and in a home without Shabbat, without a mezzuzah, without Jewish books, or stories or songs, without a single Jewish frame of reference.

The drop-off style of part time Jewish schooling has produced Jewish drop-outs. How could it be otherwise, when America offers so many competing opportunities for individual gratification. The true gift of Jewish life is the possibility of genuine spiritual community and a genuine sense of family continuity. To deliver on this gift, in these days of diluted Jewish identity and diluted family cohesion, family education rather than just the education of children must become the preeminent focus of your endeavors - - as it has, thank God, for not a few among you.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah training offers an especially felicitous opportunity to have an integral family education component and I speak of something other than the joint planning of the services and the festivities. Parents should share the classroom experience with their children, or the teacher should come to the home to tutor the child when the parents are present. This would afford the par-



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We need depart from the well trodden path not just in the setting, but also in the substance of our teaching because many of the arguments which we advanced in the past and are advancing still, no longer are effective in our effort to have our children choose to be Jews. I speak of our emphasis on the chain of tradition, and on the Holocaust, and even our seizing on the Israel experience as the magic bullet which will avert the disaster of assimilation.

My experience in the realm of youth work and Jewish education has convinced me that our students find that above everything else the concept of Judaism as a pathway of action makes their Jewish identity plausible. Take away social action and you take away the driving force of NFTY. Take away social action and you deflate the sense of purpose and community that make Reform camping a transformative Jewish experience.

Two or three years ago, a Los Angeles Times nation wide survey of Jews asked: "What is the key expression of your Jewish identity?" 17% said Israel . . . 17% spoke of religious observances . . . and 50% of them said that they chose Jewishness because of its quest for justice and equality. Repeated studies by Jewish sociologists over recent years confirm this finding. How can it be otherwise . . . for being free to choose or not to choose Judaism in our era of voluntary Jewish identification, they want to know just why they should choose to be Jews. And most of the answers we give them apparently are not sufficiently persuasive.

Thus, we posit Judaism as an obligation, as a debt that has to be paid to the past: "Look at this stiff-necked people," we say, "and how generations struggled to survive . . . you must not be the one to break the chain of tradition . . . you owe it to the Jewish people to persevere."

Or we offer Judaism as an act of vengeance: "Look what happened in the shoah . . . the Holocaust . . . we say, "the Jewish people were pulverized . . . six million of us turned into wisps of smoke and blackened ashes . . . you mustn't allow Hitler to have a posthumous victory . . ."

Finally, we invoke Israel and recall its near miraculous attainments in the face of almost constant peril and we insist that the new Jewish State requires a reservoir of Jews on which it can count for support. This argument too, along with the others, evokes but a meager response. Recall, if you will, that only 17% of America's young Jews see Israel as the key to their Jewish identity.

Yes, we argue all this and more, but the only argument that carries the day with most of our youth is when we say: "We want you to be a Jew because we Jews have a special vocation and that is to pursue justice. . ."



Leibel Fein, that wordsmith of enviable, extraordinary skill, summarized these thoughts in never to be forgotten lines:

"The time of mourning passes . . . the Holocaust recedes . . . we come increasingly to understand that Auschwitz was not, after all, the most important thing that ever happened to our people . . . that it is not the fires of the crematoria but the fire of the burning bush that lights our way (or else we walk in darkness), that our primordial experience was not the day we died at Auschwitz but the day we were born at the Red Sea and went on to stand at Sinai. And it was then that our real sojourn began . . . not the years of wandering in the desert, but the wanderings through the world, ever preaching and now and then practicing justice."

In sum, then, we cannot, we dare not, separate social action from Jewish education, for you see we teach our children Torah, not only to know Torah, nor even to teach Torah, but this above all, to BE Torah.

The Berditchever Rebbe taught:

"What does it amount to that they expound Torah!

A man should see to it that all his actions are Torah and that he himself becomes so entirely Torah so that one can learn from his habits and his motions, and even from his motionless clinging to God."

Which leads me to make some commentary on the topic of prayer, the theme of this Conference, which Dr. Wax, your scholar-in-residence has already begun to explore with you in so admirable a manner. In particular, I would ask you as educators to consider the relationship between activities in your class -- the alef-beit, Bible Stories, textual study, and the like -- and the activities of the sanctuary, the experience of worship.

Obviously, as educators, you are equipping Jews with the tools of prayer: the fundamentals of Hebrew, an understanding of synagogue architecture, the history of liturgy, the p's and q's of Temple decorum, and the like. In this, however, you are but outfitters, rather than trail leaders on their spiritual journey. Is there not more to your role?

Aye, there is, and perhaps both rabbis and educators fulfill it all too well. I speak here of the role of the skeptic, the purist theologian, who tells children what prayer is not. It is not magic, we tell them. It cannot reverse the past. It cannot produce miracles. It cannot cure your poison ivy, fix your test scores or deliver the present you so ardently desire.

We thus confront the magical consciousness that inheres in the child and say "no," "no," "no," to each of his or her mystical impulses. No, prayer is not a rite by which you can manipulate nature,



or change reality, or project your inner reality on a plastic universe. Prayer is not a Nintendo joy stick.

The question remains however. What do we leave in the place of mystery mindedness? Too often, I fear, we leave a void, or at best a therapeutic notion of prayer that is of little interest to the young, especially to pre-adolescents.

Our challenge, therefore, is to root Jewish education in an active and genuine faith in God and thereby to become not merely outfitters for the prayer expedition, or debunkers of misguided directions but trail guides for the journey itself. Mordecai Kaplan put the matter well when he suggested that:

“the teacher’s task is to imbue the student with the spirit of holiness, humility, gratitude, and faith...”

It is a task, he added, which requires teachers to communicate to the pupil

“a vivid sense of the reality of God in which these virtues are being directly rooted.”

Very simply, we are speaking here about bringing God into the classroom not merely as a character in Bible stories, not merely as an anthropomorphic figure of whom we are skeptical, but as the force whom we affirm as the incarnation of our richest feelings, our greatest hopes, our interconnectedness, our ethical sensibility. When our children feel the budding of compassion, the swelling of love, the sorrow of repentance, it is then that we must say to them, “Ah-ha . . . now you are standing in the presence of God.” Then eventually, they too might be comfortable about making such an affirmation in the presence of their children.

Continuity is not dependent upon our making a leap of faith, but a leap of consciousness, a willingness to experience our higher spirituality and to name it for what it is: communion with God.

“‘Praise Me,’ says God,” wrote the great Jewish poet Aaron Zeitlin.

“‘Praise Me,’ says God, ‘and I will know that you love Me.’

‘Curse Me and I will know that you love Me.’

‘Praise Me or curse Me and I will know that you love Me.’

‘Sing out My graces,’ says God.

‘Raise your fist against Me and revile,’ says God.

‘Sing My graces or revile.’

‘Reviling is also praise,’ says God.

‘But if you sit fenced off in your apathy,  
entrenched in “I don’t give a damn,”’ says God,  
‘if you look at the stars and yawn,’ says God,



'if you see suffering and don't cry out,  
'if you don't praise and don't revile,  
'then I created you in vain,' says God."

This, then is God's prayer: that we awaken to our full humaneness, and in that awakening learn of God's presence. From there our own prayers will arise, not as a learned skill or memorized liturgy, but as a natural response to our awareness of God - - as natural as our laughter our tears and our breath.

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**H**ow can we best transmit such an awareness. As Reform Jewish educators, we have but one way. For lacking a revealed text backed by the force of divine authority, we must rely essentially on the persuasive powers of teachers to transmit Judaism's message. But teachers teach better by example than they do by precept. Students internalize their values primarily by identification with the ego ideal. They follow the leader who is, rather than the leader who only persuades with his lips. "Barzel b'varzel yachad," we read in Scripture, "iron sharpeneth iron." A knife can best be honed against the edge of another knife. The words of MISHLE are re-echoed in the words of a modern master:

"He who teaches as books enable only babbles . . . not any profane man, not any liar, not any slave can teach . . . but only he can give who has, he only can create who is . . . courage, wisdom, piety, love. They can teach." (Emerson)

This, then is the only way that we can transmit our faith. We need to be exemplars to be successful in this questing. We must embody Torah in order to pass it on. We must serve as role models in our learnedness, manifesting our own commitment to study, being a student as well as a teacher, in full public view. We must also serve as role models in our character, in our presentation of self, in our application of Jewish values.

If you would have your students pray, you must pray yourself. If you would have your students believe, you must be a believer yourself. You must reflect your own most deep felt convictions. In sum, if you mean to transmit Torah, you must BE Torah.

And because so many of you are such role models in our Jewish schools, our religious community is flourishing in numbers and substance alike. And so I congratulate you on your anniversary. I thank you for all that you have done for us, and I salute you for what you truly are: artists of the spirit, for your fashion beauty, not in silver nor in gold, but in the living soul of the human being. And surely that teacher who can take a child, an earth-bound creature, and work out in him the divine image will, one day, rise higher by his work than any artist genius who ever lived and wrought upon this earth, for there is no material like human nature, and there is no dignity like working in it and there is no grandeur like success in such a working.

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Obviously, as educators, you are equipping Jews with the tools of prayer: the fundamentals of Hebrew, an understanding of synagogue architecture, the history of liturgy, the p's and q's of Temple decorum, and the like. In this, however, you are but outfitters, rather than trail leaders on their spiritual journey. Is there not more to your role?

Aye, there is, and perhaps both rabbis and educators fulfill it all too well. I speak here of the role of the skeptic, the purist theologian, who tells children what prayer is not. It is not magic, we tell them. It cannot reverse the past. It cannot produce miracles. It cannot cure your poison ivy, fix your test scores or deliver the present you so ardently desire.

We thus confront the magical consciousness that inheres in the child and say "no," "no," "no," to each of his or her mystical impulses. No, prayer is not a rite by which you can manipulate nature, or change reality, or project your inner reality on a plastic universe. Prayer is not a Nintendo joy stick.

The question remains however. What do we leave in the place of mystery mindedness? Too often, I fear, we leave a void, or at best a therapeutic notion of prayer that is of little interest to the young, especially to pre-adolescents.

Our challenge, therefore, is to root Jewish education in an active and genuine faith in God and thereby to become not merely outfitters for the prayer expedition, or debunkers of misguided directions but trail guides for the journey itself. Mordecai Kaplan put the matter well when he suggested that:

"the teacher's task is to imbue the student with the spirit of holiness, humility, gratitude, and faith . . ."

It is a task, he added, which requires teachers to communicate to the pupil

"a vivid sense of the reality of God in which these virtues are being directly rooted."

Very simply, we are speaking here about bringing God into the classroom not merely as a character in Bible stories, not merely as an anthropomorphic figure of whom we are skeptical, but as the force whom we affirm as the incarnation of our richest feelings, our greatest hopes, our interconnectedness, our ethical sensibility. When our children feel the budding of compassion,



the swelling of love, the sorrow of repentance, it is then that we must say to them, "Ah-ha . . . now you are standing in the presence of God." Then eventually, they too might be comfortable about making such an affirmation in the presence of their children.

Continuity is not dependent upon our making a leap of faith, but a leap of consciousness, a willingness to experience our higher spirituality and to name it for what it is: communion with God. "Praise me, says God," So wrote the great Jewish poet Aaron Zeitlin,

'Praise me,' says God, 'and I will know that you love me'

'Curse me and I will know that you love me.'

'Praise me or curse me and I will know that you love me.'

'Sing out my graces,' says God,

'raise your fist against me and revile,' says God.

'Sing my graces or revile,

'Reviling is also praise,' says God.

'But if you sit fenced off in your apathy,

'entrenched in "I don't give a damn,"' says God.

'If you look at the stars and yawn,' says God,

'If you see suffering and don't cry out,

'If you don't praise and don't revile,

'Then I created you in vain,' says God.

This, then is God's prayer: that we awaken to our full humaneness, and in that awakening learn of God's presence. From there our own prayers will arise, not as a learned skill or memorized liturgy, but as a natural response to our awareness of God - - as natural as our laughter our tears and our breath.

\* \* \* \*

How can we best transmit such an awareness. As Reform Jewish educators, we have but one way. For lacking a revealed text backed by the force of divine authority, we must rely essentially on the persuasive powers of teachers to transmit Judaism's message. But teachers teach better by example than they do by precept. Students internalize their values primarily by identification with the ego ideal. They follow the leader who is, rather than the leader who only persuades with his lips. "Barzel b'varzel yachad," we read in Scripture, "iron sharpeneth iron." A knife can best be honed against the edge of another knife. The words of MISHLE are re-echoed in the words of a modern master:

"He who teaches as books enable only babbles . . . not any profane man, not any liar, not any slave can teach . . . but only he can give who has, he only can create who is . . . courage, wisdom, piety, love. They can teach." (Emerson)

This, then is the only way that we can transmit our faith. We need to be exemplars to be successful in this questing. We must embody Torah in order to pass it on. We must serve as role models in our learnedness, manifesting our own commitment to study, being a student as well as a teacher, in full public view. We must also serve as role models in our character, in our presentation of self, in our application of Jewish values.

If you would have your students pray, you must pray yourself. If you would have your students believe, you must be a believer yourself. You must reflect your own most deep felt convictions. In sum, if you mean to transmit Torah, you must BE Torah.

And because so many of you are such role models in our Jewish schools, religious community is flourishing in numbers and substance alike. And so I congratulate you on your anniversary. I thank you for all that you have done for us, and I salute you for what you truly are: artists of the spirit, for your fashion



beauty, not in silver nor in gold, but in the living soul of the human being. And surely that teacher who can take a child, an earth-bound creature, and work out in him the divine image will, one day, rise higher by his work than any artist genius who ever lived and wrought upon this earth, for there is no material like human nature, and there is no dignity like working in it and there is no grandeur like success in such a working.



PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS  
TO THE MID ATLANTIC COUNCIL BIENNIAL  
BY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER



Williamsburg, Virginia  
November 25, 1994



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

Here we can feel our movement's essential vitality. We feel it in this place . . . we feel it at our national conventions, especially during Sabbath worship when we recite the shema in unison with thousands of fellow delegates. That is an exalting, electrifying experience is it not?

In the final analysis, we are very much like tiny droplets of water that combine their weakness to attain to strength. Consider such a droplet of water, if you will. What is weaker, less potent for any effect. It is mist, invisible. It floats through the imperceptive ethers of the air, and hangs in the air until cold strikes and it congeals into a cloud whence it drips in the form of gentle rain upon the earth beneath. Sinking through the earth, the tiny droplet of water reaches the line of the rocks from whose side it oozes forth and trickles down until it meets other droplets as weak as itself.

These combine their weakness to form the rivulet which flows on, making music while it flows, until it meets counter-streams. These combine their force to make the river. The river becomes the estuary, the estuary the ocean itself. And once God has marshalled the sum of the weakness of myriads of tiny droplets together, why then they lift mighty ships as if they were a feather, and they play with the winds as if they were mere instruments of sport.

Thus it is with us. Alone we are as weak as droplets of water and less potent for any effect. But once we join with one another and make common cause, why, then we attain to a might that makes our lives not insignificant, but sublime.

Little wonder that in countries where Jews were embattled, such as in the former Soviet Union, while individual congregations were allowed to exist, the structures of a national federation of synagogues or any kind of national Jewish communal structure were immediately destroyed and never allowed to rebuild themselves anew. Certainly our enemies knew that only in such a collectivity, in a national union of congregations, can our religious life flourish. Alone we are weak. It is our togetherness, our united endeavors, which allow us to flourish.

And we are flourishing as a religious community. We have emerged as the fastest growing synagogue movement on the North American Jewish scene. Indeed, and in the past two decades alone, our cumulative membership rolls have burgeoned by better than 25%. When I joined the staff of the Union, our total membership was just short of 450 temples, we are approaching nine hundred now. And if Jewish sociologists are to be believed, our growth rate will accelerate even more during the years ahead, for their studies show that young adults, the coming generation of North American Jews inclines to identify itself almost exclusively with Reform.

Our numbers have doubtlessly been swelled by our resolve to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

In Torah we are taught that when Moses sought relief from his leadership burdens and is instructed to gather seventy of Israel's elders to help him govern. Two of them, Eldad and Medad, though not of the seventy, nonetheless received God's



inspiration and "spoke in ecstasy" in the camp. Joshua asks Moses to jail the two, but Moses replies: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets."

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

All the Lord's people including women.

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

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

All the Lord's people, including the intermarried, and Jews-by-choice, yes, and the hearing-impaired and the wheelchair bound and the disabled in body and spirit. Their needs are also numbered among our responsibilities, and their energies, too, need to be tapped.

But more than a numeric growth has marked our advance. There has also been a flowering of Reform Jewish literacy and spirituality that is unfolding at the grass roots; a new sense of discipline in the performing of the mitzvot; a renewed appreciation of the Jewish calendar; a greater interest in Judaism's classical texts. More and more Reform Jews are coming to view our movement not as a form of minimalism, but as a Judaism that can satisfy the passionate heart.

Most significant of all, our movement has been able to raise up a vigorous new generation. Our rabbis and teachers, our scholars and leaders are our very own, the graduates of our religious schools and seminaries, the full-sheaved harvest of youth groups and camps. When I went to HUC . . . last month in Jerusalem, our detractors say that Reform Judaism has become brittle, that it is devoid of spirit, utterly lacking in vitality. What nonsense, this! A movement that has the inner strength to generate its own leadership is not brittle but lives.

If I have a concern for the future of our religious community it is this: that too many Reform Jews still question the authenticity of Reform. They believe that the phrase "a religious Reform Jew" is really an oxymoron. They think that "piety" and "Reform" are mutually exclusive states of being.

Let us admit it, too many of us suffer from such a self-deprecating mindset. The bearded Jew, pouring over the pages of the Talmud, somehow remains the normative Jew in our minds. All others are refugees, deportees, amputees. The Judaism of the shtetle, with its thick walls of halachah and its exclusivist mentality somehow remains the homeland in our minds. All other places are merely places of temporary sojourn where we can escape the demands of an allegedly more authentic Judaism.

What makes this mindset so troubling, even damaging, is that we might use it as an excuse for our own slackness and shallowness as religious Jews. For if Orthodoxy is normative - - if Orthodoxy alone is what Reform Jews are intent on reforming - - then our task is ultimately hopeless. No matter how great our numbers, no matter how successful our temples, we will always feel like illegitimate, rebellious offspring. Why then even try? Why even respond to the music? Why even open the books?

The truth is that Reform Judaism should not be viewed and judged as a critique of Orthodoxy, first and foremost. Do we stand before the masterworks of Van Gogh and evaluate them chiefly in contrast to the masterworks of his countryman Rembrandt? Hardly! We stand and marvel at the inspired way Van Gogh recast the elements of color and texture and movement and composition to create a new channel of access to the truth. Each master used paint and brush and canvas. But their animating spirits were unique.



In like manner, Reform recasts tradition, deliberately, openly so. We conceive of Judaism as a dynamic and not a static faith. But, my friends, this is what Judaism always was before it atrophied amid repressive encounters with Christendom, This is precisely what Judaism was before it became encrusted by the codification process of our Dark Ages.

The rabbis of old understood Judaism to be an evolving faith, an ever changing faith, a continuously reforming religion, in the best sense of that adjective: a religion not of obeisance, but of a dialogue tempered by a profound sense of responsibility, a religion in which halachah was not frozen like ice but a soluble substance to be mixed with human tears. Seen from this perspective, it is modern orthodox literalism that is unauthentic, that represents a fundamental break with tradition. Reform Judaism, in its ideal conception, is palpably truer to that tradition.

We in Reform do not deem sanctity synonymous with immutability. We do not equate holiness with a rigid immobility. For us, the Jewish tradition did not end in 17th Century Poland, but is an ever evolving faith.

Now, I am distressed by the self depreciating mindset which afflicts not only Reform Jews, but also Jews of every kind. Thus, when I suggested over the years that Judaism ought to be more assertive in proselytizing non-Jews beginning with those who were already bound to us by love or marriage and even going beyond them to the many of our fellow Americans who were seeking a meaningful faith for their lives - - whenever I suggested that, I was jeered.

Too many Jews of all stripes said: absurd . . . who would want to do that? As they said to Sammy Davis: "don't you have enough troubles being black?"

When our colleague, Charles Sherman of Tulsa, Oklahoma, several years ago, invited the non-Jewish spouses of interfaith couples to embrace Judaism - - and mind you, many of them had been members of his Temple for many years - - and he did this on Yom Kippur no less, not a few of his congregants responded during the following weeks. When asked why they had not converted before, they told him: "Because nobody ever asked us to become Jewish."

Why don't we ask? Why are we so hesitant? Are we ashamed? Must one really be a madman to choose Judaism? Let us shuffle off our insecurities! Let us recapture our self-esteem! Let us demonstrate our confidence in those worths which our faith enshrines?

We need to affirm our Judaism frankly, freely, proudly, and without fear that it will offend the non-Jewish spouses. Quite the contrary, it can only enhance their regard for Judaism. For if we lack in missionary zeal, they are bound to surmise that we have no message at all, or at any rate, that we do not prize it.

Many students among those studying in our Introduction to Judaism classes throughout the land are men and women who are not involved in any intermarriage situation. They are there because they are in quest of a faith which gives meaning to their lives.

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



Some years ago, the Union prepared a video film recording an interview with several Jews-By-Choice. Among them was a couple neither of whom was born a Jew and who chose Judaism together. When they were asked to relate what experience in the conversion process was most disturbing, most painful to them, John, the husband, answered:

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

"If they don't know it's there, maybe it isn't there." Here is the essential challenge, for in lacking a mission we are suspect of also lacking the message.

But we do have a message, my friends. Let us not doubt nor fail to proclaim it. We have so very much to offer. Judaism celebrates life and not death. It insists on the freedom and the capacity of the individual to determine his fate. Judaism is a religion of hope and not of despair. It holds that society and humankind are perfectible.

Moreover, we offer something more than a disembodied faith system. We are a people of faith, a caring community of Jews. In other words, we have an enormous amount of wisdom and experience, of warmth and of love to offer this troubled world. And we Jews ought to be proud to speak about it, frankly, freely, and with dignity.

Therefore, let us reach out.

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

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

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

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

NAKEL MIHEYODCHA LI EVED, LEHAKEEM ET SHIVTEI YAAKOV

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



*Outreach*  
1994  
*file*  
Harris Gilbert:

The charge was given to us to be more assertive in seeking the religiously non-preferenced and that a major part of outreach should be seeking converts. And following that address there were the press and even the electronic media, some rather violent reactions both pro and con to what Rabbi Schindler had said and I think to this day there is some misunderstanding about what the official position and the idea behind what Rabbi Schindler said. So what better way for us to learn this than to ask Rabbi Schindler to come up and speak to us about his ideas about seeking the religiously non-preferenced and our priorities. Our wonderful leader Rabbi Schindler... [applause]

Rabbi Schindler:

First of all I am delighted to be here of course and to participate in this meeting. This has been a profoundly moving experience. I think everyone without exception contributed to that sense of, or almost of sense the spiritual which I certainly feel here and I am deeply grateful. And of course I want to thank all of you for agreeing to devote your energies and your time for the advancement of our work. I want to thank especially those who were with us from our very beginnings. This certainly includes Dru Greenwood who's the principal conductor of that magnificent symphony which we call "Outreach". Unfortunately, immediately after my presentation and any questions you might have, I have to be off to Boston. I even have a small engagement before dinner. When it comes to the chasing about, the evil angel of the book of Job whose wandering to and fro across the Earth making trouble for everybody. [Laughter] So I won't be here when we thank Les Gutterman and especially Mickey Finn who, well if Mickey Finn is anything like Edie is to me, my assistant, my associate. Mickey knows more about Outreach than anybody whose sitting here.

And now it occurred to me that this is really the first time that I address an Outreach Commission under the stewardship of Harris Gilbert. Harris has been one of the stalwarts of the Union lay leadership and for many many years he was known as "Mr. Social Action" because he was the head of the Social Action Commission and he led this important aspect of our work with a great deal of dignity and strength. And now he actually volunteered to Chair the Outreach Commission. And this proves that these two endeavors are not really, as some would assume,



mutually exclusive. There are always some people who say, you know, "Outreach is more important than Social Action."

"Education is more important than something else." Well, as I travel around the country I find that Social Action is a form of Outreach in a very real sense. I find many, many people who join our congregations throughout the country, motivated essentially because they sense Judaism to be committed to social justice. And conversely, there is no denying that Judaism's commitment to social justice has brought many men and women of many faiths or of none to Judaism. Look at that Reform Judaism issue which Dru displayed before and we find that many of the Jews by Choice say that's why we want to be Jews. Actually and interesting statistic, I diverge from my text here : Some time ago the LA Times, of all things, conducted a survey of Jews to find out what the defining element of their Jewishness is. Seventeen percent of the respondents said its Jewish celebrations, practices, the Passover Seder, rituals etc. Seventeen percent said Israel. Fifty percent of the respondents said it is the quest of Judaism for justice.

So there is a inter-connectedness here and that inter-connectedness is embodied by Harris Gilbert. I was very much impressed with Jeff's presentation, his D'var Torah this morning as I was with Dru's. She really should have been a rabbi. It's not too late to go to rabbinical school. Damn it, you don't have to be ordained because some of the things you say are more beautiful than anything that I hear from some of the pulpits and that I can say myself. I love that Rav Kook quotation's. It's really, really quite wonderful.

Now Dru and Harris suggested that I ought to talk to you about my concept of Outreach to the Religiously Non-Preferred. As you know or may not know, this concept has the approval of our constituency. It was voted upon in the Boston Biennial in 1981 -- I believe it was. Every one felt that this was part and parcel of our work but the Outreach Commission, with my full concurrence, put this particular aspect of our work on the back burner as it were. We all felt that we had many more important things to do: The Introduction to Judaism Courses, welcoming Jews by Choice more effectively, the life of our congregations, dealing with, helping them deal with the problems which they confront, because after all, they may have given up the faith of their birth and of their religious education. But they certainly couldn't give up their families and then there were the "Times and Seasons" courses and "Stepping Stones" courses and so we had a great deal to do and which was done effectively and exceedingly well.



But at the last Biennial, I suggested that we move it from the back burner a little bit more to the front burner and Dru felt that I ought to tell you the reasons, my reasons for doing so, with apologies to one or two among you who may of heard me expound on the subject over and again. Let me list those reasons which motivated me to make this call. I'll mention one, incidentally, which is not a principal reason but I found in my life, that if you dramatize something people discuss it and that discussion in itself whether its pro or con has a value all its own. So I always tend to go just a little bit beyond where I want to be in order to, but let me give you the real reasons which motivated me to speak on it. First of all, this is my first external reason I really believe that every fiber of my being that Judaism, obligates us to be its champions and at the same time that our faith has very much to offer to the world and that it can attract many who are not born Jews and who nonetheless ultimately determined to share our faith and our fate. Surely I don't need to instruct you in all of this, you know that this is so -- that we were a missionary faith from our very beginnings. You know, as I read the High Holiday liturgy, passage after passage makes this point, and that isn't empty rhetoric of what we mean by when we say, " My house shall become the house of prayer for all peoples." What do we mean when we intone with gusto, not just during the High Holidays but at every single solitary service at the end of the Aleinu prayer we sing it, " Ve Ne-emar - the Lord shall be One and His name shall be One."

What does that mean if it does not mean that we are a propagating faith. And you all know that we persisted in that from our very beginnings. And that it was only the brutally restricted laws imposed by our enemies which restrained us from pursuing our mission. When conversion to Judaism became a capital crime and Jews who accepted non-Jews and the non-Jews who became Jews were burned at the stake. Well this burning tended to wane our missionary zeal.

My point is that we live in a new world now. No repressive law restrains us. The fear of persecution no longer inhibits us. Therefore, there is no earthly reason why we cannot resume and be successful in our ancient vocation and open our arms wide to all newcomers. Now I want you to know that I am scarcely the first rabbi in our generation or in even preceding generations throughout history, throughout the history of Reform to insist that we resume this time honored task. Virtually every single Reform leader of note and of prominence in our history has trumpeted a like call, and as a matter of fact, many leading



Orthodox and Conservative rabbis joined their refrain. Just as one or two or three or four examples, the great Stephen Wise in 1938, renown figure, brought over the most famous convert to Judaism at the time, a priest by the name of Eme Palmier who wrote a book called The Unknown Sanctuary, a journey from Rome to Jerusalem in which he recounts his spiritual journey. He brought that man over here for one solitary reason, to begin that mission, that was Stephen Wise who had so many other things on his mind. Eme Palmier's book was translated into English by Louise Waterman Wise, Rabbi Wise's spouse, a rather remarkable woman. By 1949 probably the greatest Reform leader, of our generation if not of our century, at a World Union for Progressive Judaism meeting, the sixth meeting of the Work Union, Leo Baeck of sainted memory had this to say, "Human--Mankind," well he lived in a different age, today we would say humankind. "Humankind is hungry and thirsts for that which Jews full of Judaism can say. Throughout our history many Gentiles were attracted to Judaism and became proselytes, educated people, high-minded people, should we not begin anew? Should we not send our missionaries to Asia and other continents? We are in need for an expansion for our own sake."

That was Leo Baeck, one generation ago. And to move from the Reform rabbinate to other rabbis --- in 1955 in Israel, a World Union for the Propagation of Judaism was organized by Dr. Israel Ben Zev, who was at that time the Provost of Bar Ilan University which is an Orthodox university and his particular interest, incidentally, was the effort to convert Arabs to Judaism and thereby to solve the problem of a significant non-Jewish minority in a Jewish state. You see Israel wants to be a democracy, and if its going to be a Jewish state, how can Arabs be members of a Jewish state? So he felt that that could help. But maybe if they had pursued it at the time we would be facing a different problem.

In 1958, Robert Gordis who was the most prominent Conservative rabbis of his time, the leader of conservative Judaism, convened a national conference of Jewish organizations to discuss all aspects of Jewish missionary activity in order to compensate for Jews lost in the Shoah. That was his goal. And thanks to his efforts, in 1959, he organized a Jewish Information Society and he led it for fifteen years. They opened greeting rooms, they published, invited, distributed, books and pamphlets on Judaism and the roster of their Board. I have here one of their publications, they publish this magazine regularly. It's called Jewish Information. The roster of their Board is absolutely amazing. One of their president's was Rabbi Robert



ambitious and we are not ready to send missionaries all over the world. And I don't want to open reading rooms and I don't want send our kids to the airports, nor do I want to send them door to door, you know knocking at the doors like the Seven Day Adventist or the Mormons. Although I would love the growth rate of the Mormons. At least a couple of decades ago there were two million strong and today they are eighty million strong. Eighty million strong. I mean the growth is phenomenal.

But all I want to do is to do all I aimed at doing is to do precisely what you have begun to do which this "Taste of Judaism Program", and that is to build on what we have. To open our doors to others. To let them know there are no "Not Welcome" signs in front of our synagogues or in front of our hearts. To put it in spiritual terms, those lines of our Hagadah, "Let all who are hungry come and eat." And let no one think for a moment that this is not an age in which people are not hungry for spirituality, and are not hungry for meaning. This is all I really want to do.

Dick Imersheim you asked a question about this would play in the South, but I want you to know that in the heart of the Bible-belt, our colleague in Pensacola, Florida, there is nothing more rifling than that, they have a Moral Majority or an Immoral Majority. He decided, you know, "I going to teach a course for intermarried couples," The 10 couples, 20 people I might as well open it up. So he put an ad in the local newspaper, right under the Baptist ad. "If you are a born Jew who is unaffiliated or involved in intermarriage situation or if you are a non-Jew interested in Judaism we have this course; An introduction to Judaism course." In Pensacola, Florida those 20 initial students grew to a class of 60 and division was exactly, well actually a little bit different: 20 of them were involved in an intermarriage situation, 20 of them were born Jews who for some reason or another were unaffiliated, and 20 were non-Jews. So this is really my goal you got to let people know that we have these courses that we want to welcome them. This is my first reason.

Now the second reason is also external. The second reason for putting this matter further to the front of our burner and that relates to the indisputable fact that conversionary marriages are less prone to be to the attenuation of Jewishness. And that intermarriages where there is no conversion are more likely ----we heard a contrary example this morning. It was wonderful to see where there was a genuine commitment. Its interesting because obviously the young man who is a believing Catholic and was reared in a Catholic church but we find that the



Gordis and one of the Vice Presidents was Trudy Weiss Rosmarin who was basically an Orthodox writer. Other people on the Board, I will just mention a few: Rabbi Ben Zion Boxer, a most prominent Orthodox rabbi in Queens, Rabbi Beryl Conen, Rabbi Albert Goldstein of the Boston area, Rabbi Israel Miller who is still the Vice President of Yeshiva University, Rabbi Bertram Cohen, a rather classical Reform rabbi from Philadelphia, Murray Rothman, Solomon Freehoff and errata to your questions about Canada one of the leaders of that national board was Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut.

So I am in good company. Now why didn't these earlier efforts succeed? Well probably because the time was not right for it. There was not a 52% intermarriage rate which made this idea somehow sound not quite so strange in people's ears. And above all because their effort was not embedded in an institution sufficiently grounded in Judaism to make this idea work. So in effect I can't escape the feeling that we are, in a very real sense, at a turning point in Jewish history and that you are in the vanguard of that turning point provided that we proceed in an orderly fashion and carefully, with all of the, recognizing all of the dangers that our implicit in it. But this is your possibility.

Now let me say that my own aspirations are far less ambitious than the aspirations of a Leo Baeck. I don't want to send missionaries to Asia. At that the time, incidentally, one of the reasons which motivated him to do so, and I think Robert Gordis was also involved, because in Japan at that time there was a movement toward Judaism. The defeat of the Japanese during the war, undermined, in a sense, the foundation of their belief system. The emperor was a god and if that god can be defeated, where shall we turn? And so quite a few Japanese began a conversionary movement towards Judaism. As they put it, to begin with there was a tradition that the Japanese are descendants of the ten lost tribes. The ten lost tribes show up everywhere in the world, in every corner of our globe. And the second reason which they articulate is even more interesting and is being repeated by the leader of the Tibetan. How do you say it in English I am a foreigner here. I mean I am an immigrant. I have only been here a short distance. My English is not so well. Anyhow, Tibetan the Dali Lama, he said the same thing. We are anxious to learn from the people that has been defeated over and again and nonetheless, managed to survive.

So there was this approach in their movement and a couple of, two or three rabbis of name at the Hebrew Union College at the time. And one of the wives of the rabbi in Los Angeles is a Japanese by birth, had converted to Judaism. So I am not that



willingness not to teach Judaism or any other religion usually comes, what we call, from the "Nones." Not the Catholic nuns, but the nones "N-O-N-E-S"--those who have no faith whatsoever, who don't feel the need for religious education. But in most cases conversionary marriages do lead to an attenuation of Judaism. Egon Mayer who is probably the foremost social scientist in this field of our time, writes: "Most of the children of conversionary marriages consider themselves Jewish. Many children of mixed marriages are indifferent to their Jewishness even when their non-Jewish parents agree to rear them as Jews and do so to the best of their ability." So for that reason, I am eager for us to become more assertive. How could it be otherwise? These findings confirm our intuitive perception. And so we should do everything we humanly can to achieve the conversion of the non-Jewish partner to Judaism before or after marriage. This is, even for sociological reasons quite exciting because, unfortunately the divorce rate for mixed married couples is almost twice as high as the divorce rate for people who share the same faith.

Now listen, if I had given that speech and I told you that, I let you in on my secret, that we ought to reach out, be more assertive in bringing the non-Jewish partner to Judaism, everyone would have said "Yeah, yeah wonderful" and there would not have been any kind of a discussion. But my friends, if we want to bring the non-Jewish partners to Judaism we are engaging in a missionary effort. I don't care what you call it. We are engaged in a proselytizing effort. Now in this context I want to repeat something which I said in San Francisco and I believe it, with all my heart and with every fiber of my being. An outreach program which limits its efforts to those who are bound to us by marriage is an affront to them, is an insult to them because it casts doubt on their integrity as if to say you really didn't choose Judaism based on its merits, you must have done so to please your spouse or your prospective parents-in-law. This is manifestly not so, for most Jews by choice, the Jewish spouse was the catalyst but not the cause of their conversion. Now why is the percentage of conversion in marriages so low? I believe there are essentially two reasons. To begin with we simply don't ask. Dru was the one who informed me about what happened in Tulsa some years ago on the high holidays. Our colleague Chuck Sherman of Tulsa, Oklahoma preached a sermon and he said, "I know that there are many mixed-married couples in our congregation. We welcome you. You can continue to be as you are, but if you would like to convert to Judaism, you know, we're here, I'm ready to help you I'm ready to teach you." And after high holidays six



or seven couples came to him from the congregation and when he asked them why didn't you come before, guess what they said? "--Nobody asked us. Nobody ever asked us."

The second reason is: very often the Jewish partners lack the means and the knowledge to do so. Or they are hesitant for one reason or another. That's why giving the knowledge is so important. Finally and most painful of all, very frequently, the Jewish partners don't feel strongly enough about their Judaism to ask for it. Where there is a conversion invariably it is a Jewish partner who is so committed that he seeks that. Which brings me full square to the third and internal reason which motivated my recommendation. And that is actually the most important one of all and that is that it will increase this effort, it will increase the self-assurance of those who take up the work of Outreach. You know, this is really the ultimate goal of my striving here ----- that it will bolster the self-worth of Jews, that it will enhance their appreciation of Judaism's essential value. Too many Jews, let's admit it, doubt that Judaism can attract adherents. They are hesitant about asserting their Jewishness. They think that choosing to be Jewish is a symptom of some kind of abnormality, some kind of mental imbalance.

Many of you know this story, but some years ago, you would recall it was really our first venture into video programming, the Union prepared an interview, a videotape of an interview with several Jews By Choice. Among them were a couple, both of whom converted to Judaism, a husband and the wife. And they chose Judaism together. Now when they were asked to relate what experience in the conversion process was the most disturbing, most painful to them. John the husband replied, ---I have never forgotten, at first he was funny he said: "Listen, I had learn that Hebrew is read from right to left and not from left to right. That was very painful to my eyes" but then he said "I was most troubled when my Jewish friends said to me: Are you crazy, you needed this?-- to become a Jew? and I began to wonder if they don't know its there, maybe it isn't there. If they don't know its there maybe it isn't there." Here is the essential challenge, for in lacking a mission, we are suspect also of lacking a message.

But we do have a message, my friends, let us not doubt or fail to proclaim it. We have so very much to offer. Judaism celebrates life and not death. It insists on the freedom and the capacity of the individual to determine his fate. Judaism is a religion of hope. The word despair is not in any Jewish lexicon. It holds society and humankind, Judaism does. It holds that they



are perfectible. Moreover, and this goes to that third leg of that triad which we transmit. We are something more than a disembodied faith system. We are a people of faith. A caring community of Jews. In other words, we have an enormous amount of wisdom and experience, of warmth and of love to offer to this troubled world, and we Jews are to be proud to speak about it frankly, freely, and with dignity.

Now I want to give you a postscript to that story I told you about that couple on the film. When I spoke in San Francisco the press in Israel was very disparaging. And so in despair the dean of the school, I don't know whether he was despaired or wanted to put me on the hot spot, he said "Listen, I want you to talk to the entering class at the Hebrew Union College they all go for a year to Jerusalem, all entering class people, not just the rabbinic students but the cantorial students, the school of education students, even the community service students--will at least go next year. So I want you to explain it to them, because there were a lot of attacks on you in the press." So I said, "Well I'd be glad to." So I tell them this story about this couple and all of a sudden two hands go up and said, "Here we are." He is a rabbinic student, and the girl, the daughter, one of their children lives on a kibbutz, and that's the end of this, or rather the crowning glory of this particular story. So I'm convinced, and I call on all Jews to reach out. Let us be guided by the law which teaches us that the mitzvah of self-preservation exceeds all others in consequence. Let us not be among those who in their pain and confusion, respond to the fear of self-extinction by declaring casualties before the fact. Who respond to the suffering of the past by living in the past. Who react to the long drawn isolation of our people with an isolation of their own. Let us rather recall and act on those lofty passages from the Tanach and Hazal, from Bible and commentary--that define Jewish chooseness not as exclusive but as exemplary, not as separatists but as representative, not as closed but as open, not as rejecting but as all-embracing and compassionate.

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 light unto the nations, that my salvation may be unto the ends of the earth. [APPLAUSE]

If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them, if there are any problems. Since there are not, ...I couldn't possibly have answered every question... thank God!

## Question/Answer Session

Question #1: Speaking with some of the rabbis in the area of .....much of the criticism about what you said or what you seem to have said is that why not first do Outreach to the unaffiliated Jews, then etc. etc. What is your response?

Rabbi Schdlr: My response to that is, that its one package, there all the same.

Questioner: They are not perceived as that.

Rabbi Schdlr: That is why you have to help me explain. I am going around the country explaining why I do what I do. But, the fact of the matter is that its all the same. The same rabbi who key teaches a course to intermarried couples, is the same rabbi who can reach out to unaffiliated Jews. You have seen it demonstrated in "A Taste for Judaism", you've seen it demonstrated in a congregation.

Questioner: The problem is not me, but I'm asking, my question is [interrupted] CCAR

Rabbi: Well listen, ...look the whole Outreach effort from the beginning was one which made a lot of people nervous. And then when they saw its success, they became adherents of it. I don't want to tell tales out of school, but I had people on my own staff who tried to stymie it. I had program director who said its unimportant. In those days I read the file of the regions. I wanted to find out what was going on in the regions, what the problems of the congregations were, and I read the copies of the letters which were sent out, you know and rather than asking for a long report from each regional director, I read the copies of the letters which they sent out, most of them were pro forma. I came across a letter, obviously Rabbi Harold Shulweis of Los Angeles had asked our then regional director to provide him some material. He had heard about my "Outreach" speech. It was 1978. So the guy



replies: "Oh, please ignore it that was only some of Schindler's mishigas.

Now Harold Schulweis became one of the great proponents of the Outreach effort of the Los Angeles coast. And the idea began, became accepted and the people became involved. And rabbis who opposed it became fervent exponents of that. Now and, they're many rabbis who have serious problems. First of all, rabbis who do not officiate at intermarriages feel that this will increase the pressure. That's one reason, without any validity. But, the fact of the matter is that outreach to some extent is a defense for some of these rabbis. Because they can say, well, to the point of their marriage, I oppose intermarriage, but that doesn't mean, opposing intermarriage that I have to reject the intermarried. Therefore, I am going to bring them in. Now obviously, there is no free lunch. To some extent, who was a dreamer I guess, that said, economics here. But there is no free lunch. And it is true that when we accept the intermarriage we give an amount of respectability to intermarriage. But what would be the consequence of its rejection. That would be the abandonment of a whole generation; of hundreds of thousands of young people. So we upped the price of the abandonment.

And the other thing we know that saying "NO" simply doesn't work. It hasn't worked and it won't work. It never will. Some of the best kids we have I hope we are two-two and a half, two point nine percent of the population. Our children go to school. They intermingle with the rest of the world. We are proud of that. We wouldn't have it any other way. And then we go out to work. And so they meet people. And they want to marry them. Not because they want to abandon Judaism, but simply because they have fallen in love. And once they become strong and closer, and I'm convinced that as this effort proceeds, provided we don't become mishuguna, that's why I want to start as we're starting now, an ever increasing number of people will see that this can have a tremendous impact. Now I can tell you that there are many Jews in the world, and you surely aren't among them, who feel, who certainly, when non-Jews except an idea then they think its something good.

There is a wonderful story back there. There is a wonderful story. Do we have time for a story? There is a wonderful story by David Frishman. I have never forgotten it. I don't know whether any of you know what Duchenen means. The priests of the synagogue, Orthodox synagogues, of course you still have the priesthood Levi categories. And during the festivals they go before the congregation. They go out before the blessing; the priestly benediction. And their feet are washed by the Levites of the congregation. Their hands are washed and their feet are washed. And then they come up and they cover their heads and they hold their hands out like this. You see, and they go "May the lord bless you and keep you." But in this particular town, according to David Frishman, and they called this duchenen. Means blessing, blessing as it were. Duchenen. So in this particular town a Polish Count had a secretary who was supposed to collect the taxes. He was supposed to collect the taxes and he found out that he was a little bit too compassionate and didn't collect all of the taxes from the Jewish farmers and from other farmers. So he wanted to call him in, and he summoned him. But he was told that this was a Jewish holiday and that he's not available. So since this is his community, the Count's community, he got into one of his droshki you know a coach and asked the coachman "Take me to my synagogue." He comes to the synagogue, and all of a sudden, the secretary he sees that he is being washed and, you know, his hands are being washed. And he goes and he watches the ceremony. And he felt a great deal of pride that my secretary, my right guy is a you know, a descendant of a priest. So after the holidays he calls and he says, "Listen. I am going to have a party for some of my neighboring counts, Polish counts. And I want you and your children to come." Because the children joined him to perform that ceremony. So the guy didn't know what to do, because its a "Bracha l'vatalah" - a blessing that is said in vain. You know it was not blessing the congregation. So he goes to the Rabbi and the Rabbi in good Jewish ...

[NEW TAPE. LOST PART OF STORY]

Rabbi: {Continues story} ...to the children and the



Count tells him who he is and what he saw and they go through the ceremony and everyone there was profoundly moved by it. So at the end of the ceremony, the Count said to the secretary, "Take your hat and go around we're going to collect coins." And the coins, you know, the hat, pretty soon was filled to overflowing. So then he and his children came back to the synagogue. And they said, "What happened? What happened? Did you escape with your life?" And he held out the capful of coins and said : {Hebrew phrase} "When you do these blessings for non-Jews you come out with a hat full of coins." the point, the point of the story being --- self-enhancement.

What makes these Jews say you got to be meshugena to be a Jew? Because they don't have any self-worth. They don't understand how beautiful it is. How wonderful a faith we have. And if they see others coming who really appreciate it...who are some of the best Jews by Choice we have, if not people who came from non-Judaism to Judaism. So I have a feeling that great as the opposition is, Dr. Gunther Plaut wrote me a letter a brief letter. He told me he's a part of this group. He said there are many dangers here as they are many dangers we're to be careful. We have to be define the limits of the role of the non-Jew in the synagogue. They're many problems and they're many risks. But all I know is that the contrary risk is infinitely greater. And so I persist in my conviction that we stand, we stand at the turning point, at the turning point in the history of our people. And we can recapture something which was a part of our being... for many many generations.

Harris Gilbert: Yes Jeff, Jeff has a question.

Rabbi Jeff Salkin: I want to raise another objection that has been frequently placed on my table by those who objected to what Rabbi Schindler has just said. And that is the fear of part of many of my colleagues and the part of many Jews that once we do this the fragile peace that has existed between us and other

religious groups will therefore be called off and that all the theological guns will be fired. My response to that is that in large measure we live in an open society with a free market of religious ideas and Judaism has to be expected to compete. I don't know how many of you saw, a couple Friday nights ago, a spectacular debate between Richard John Newhouse and Alan Dershowitz at the NYU Law School on the role of religion in public life. And I found myself... [REMARKS FROM AUDIENCE] It was ten o'clock at night. They don't have a lot on. [MORE REMARKS]

In any case, I found myself in a bizarre position agreeing with Newhouse over Dershowitz, because Newhouse was saying, "Alan is it not true that Judaism is a corporate covenant that has a message that must be brought to the world?" Dershowitz screamed: "You have no right to define my Judaism for me" and I was saying "Alan he got it right." [LAUGHTER]

Rabbi:

There are two things I want to say in response to that. This is very very interesting actually, because I think Alan knows better and on that day he got carried away. But you also know that this one of the objections and that after I gave my original "Outreach Speech" in which I too called for a re-assertion of our faith that we be champions of Judaism. And one of our staff members who was not enamored of the idea decided he was going to box me in by sending this particular speech to fifty of the leading clergy, Christian clergy of the country; of all branches. And to his amazement, the answer came back almost unanimous. Those who bothered to answer. Many ignored it. But there were at least 20, 30 answers. And the answer was: Where were you all this time? What have you done? We expect you to do it. Why shouldn't you offer Judaism as a free market place of ideas? This will not increase the missionary activity of other groups against us. Yes there will be Jews of Jesus but the very



Mark: [QUESTION INAUDIBLE]

Rabbi: Unfortunately you weren't here because you would have seen the demonstration of what concretely I intend and what can work. What I want to do is to build on what we have. I know that, again, in line with what I said was shocking. I threw out the figure \$5 million dollars. Ok. I threw out the figure \$5 million this frightened everybody, he's going to spend \$5 million dollars when we get it. First of all, first of all, I wanted this as an endowment fund which maximally at today's interest rates spins off \$250,000, \$300,000 dollars a year. Which would be available to the "Outreach Program." Because what you would have heard this morning is that it is a triad of experiences which are akin. The very same program that attracts the non-Jew is the same programs that attracts the unaffiliated Jew, is the same program that attracts those who are bound to us by love and by marriage. I want to make this known to others which means essentially, (A). I would like to have, instead of having part-time Outreach workers, full-time Outreach workers in every region to help with all three. And I would like to have money for advertising so that the "Taste of Judaism" program, once it is tested, as we have tested every program carefully and proven to be effective, so that we can spread it geographically. And number three, we heard it this morning, that we need more resource materials for Jews to bring non-Jews to Judaism. Not just because their spouses are non-Jewish, but even at the college level, we don't have enough. They are engaging wherever they go in religious debates and we don't have materials for them. And we want to give them the confidence and bolster that confidence. So this is what I want. I don't want to do at least not for the next generation, what, Leo Baeck proposed. I think we'll get there though. Thank you.

Harris Gilbert: Deep thanks to you Alex, your message is clear. And we accept it and we will carry it forward.

people who politely say this, they are funding the Jews for Jesus to the tune of \$78 million a year to mainline Protestant groups. This is proven. They expect us to do so.

Now the Dershowitz fascinates me because I was in Israel last July. I guess it was July, and there was a meeting of, a dialogue, between the President of Israel and the Jewish leaders of the world. Now it turned out to be there were 200 Jewish leaders of the world. And you can't carry on a dialogue with 200 Jewish leaders. And there was give and take. Dershowitz was one of those who was there and finally, you know, they were attacking intermarriage, intermarriage, intermarriage, and the attenuation of Judaism, and the assimilation. The Israelis, of course, they have only three ways, there are three options of, either assimilation, or pure anti-Semitism or Aliyah. Ok. that was the theme of the Israelis except some who spoke at the conference. But in any event, so I finally risked my life, in that particular atmosphere and said: you know mixed-intermarriage does not necessarily spell the death knell of Judaism. Of course everybody pounced on me. And I didn't even get a chance to answer. It didn't make any difference. I just want to sound that note. But afterwards Dershowitz came out to me and he said thank you for making the statement that you did because I have a son who is intermarried. He was sitting next to me and he was cringing and he was dying at that. So I am very happy that you responded at that. I am writing a book about intermarriage. So maybe he did not want to signal where he was going. He knows better than that.

Jeff: He does no better, I think, I think his overreaction was reaction to the fact that the religious voice and the public's fear for many of us is a part in parcel of the inevitable roads of religious coercion. And shattering borders between church and state. I do think he was o.k.  
[INTERRUPTED]

Rabbi: But listen people, I want to thank you. What you have Mark? Yes?



Rabbi:

[FROM OFF MIKE] I actually want to say one thing. As some of you may know in a little bit less than two years I will be stepping down from the presidency of the Union and I assured the chairman of the board that I am not going to stand in my successor's way I want to be out not in there. There are other things that I can do. I said, there is just one thing, I want to be appointed to the Outreach Commission. [APPLAUSE]

Harris Gilbert: If I hear no objection we will make this a lifetime appointment.

[END]



**YOM KIPPUR SERMON**

**By**

**RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER**



Stephen Wise Free Synagogue  
New York, New York 5755



Hashivenu adonai elecha v'nashuva . . . chadesh yamenu k'kedem

"Restore our faith in You, O God, and we shall be restored  
Renew our days as of old"

These familiar lines of our liturgy, perhaps more than any others, strike the quintessential theme of these High Holy Days. We recite this passage week in week out, whenever we return the Torah to the ark. But at no other time do we respond to these words as deeply as we do now, during these dream-haunted hours between the passing years.

In the stillness of worship we can almost hear the rushing of the waves of time, their relentless pounding against eternity's shores. Oh, would that we could stem the flow of these waves, these roaring billows of time - - but alas, we are helpless to do so. We cannot stay time's unyielding forward surge. Nor can we swim against its currents to our beginnings. We cannot 'go back to the future,' replay the past for a different present, rewind the clock of our lives to an earlier time.

Not so our inner life! The life within can be renewed. It is fully in our power to restore it. The 'new heart' and the 'new spirit' are an enduring possibility, a reach that is ever within our grasp.

It is to the realization of this possibility in each of us that these Holy Days are dedicated. This is the leitmotif of our Yom Kippur symphony. Again and again, it bursts into the song of inner renewal.

chadesh yomenu k'kedem

Renew our days, renew our days as of old.

\* \* \* \*

Now, foremost among our supplications, is our prayer for the renewal of life itself, our plea for still another year of being. Grant life and health and happiness, O Lord, to loved ones and to us.

We pray this though we know that life is not unmingled in its blessings. It's cup runs bitter as well as sweet for all. It gives us not only the beautiful things we crave, but also those fearsome things in their infinite variety from which we shrink.

Who among us has not been stunned by the tragedy of life touching too close to its surpassing loveliness: a young child, glowing today, disfigured tomorrow . . . a man strong and confident one day and then crumbling like a castle of sand built by children 'long the shore when the tides of destiny roll in. Plenty and poverty, righteousness and rottenness, beauty with its sting of evanescence, the laughter of life and then, too soon, the silence of the grave. There is no life without such cruel contrasts, and yet we pray for it, assured that being is better than non-being, life better than death, no matter what its inflictions.

Our mood finds expression in a tale of bittersweet humor told in the literature of our people about a humble laborer who walked along his toilsome road with shoulders bent, weighed down by heavy burden. Utterly spent, despairing of the future, he cast his bundle to the ground and called on God to relieve him from his misery, to take his life.

Lo and behold, the angel of death appeared unto him and asked:

"Did you call me, son of man?"

"I did," was the laborer's frightened reply. "I need some help . . . please help me place this bundle back on my shoulders."

In such a manner do we often choose life, living not as we wish but as we can.



Obviously our desire is for better things: for the vigor of health, the comforts of wealth, the inspiration of love and of beauty. But if these joys cannot be had without the penalty of equal sorrow, we seek them both and pray for strength to face the dark with dignity.

"Man is not born to suffer," taught our sages,  
"but neither is he on earth merely to seek joy.  
The worth of his life is measured not by the  
balance of pleasure over pain, but by what he does,  
with what he finds on earth."

No, life is not always what we want it to be. How we cope with it - - that is what makes the difference.

And so we pray, though not without trembling:

chadesh yamenu k'kedem

A haunting refrain gives voice to our longing, our yearning for still another year of life, whatever it may bring.

But even as we ask for life, we know that it is more than life that we need. Physical survival is not enough for us. We do not live by bread alone. We require sustenance for the spirit. This is why we pray not only for the renewal of our days, but also for renewal of our ways, for a rekindling of our devotion to ideals - ideals that burned within us once, that still smolder, but somehow the pressures of life lead us to stifle them.

We all of us, dream dreams, at least when we are young. Off in a distance we see visions of what life ought to be, of what we meant and mean it to be . . . but somehow, somewhere, we lose the way to their attainment.

"Life is much like a diary," Goethe once held, "a diary in which we want to write one thing, but write another . . . and life's most humbling moment comes, when we compare what we have written with what we wanted to write."

The Swedish novelist Strindberg chose a different metaphor. He compared life to an orchestra, an orchestra "which always tunes up but never begins to play." Often we are like that: Instrument in hand, wondrous music before us, but we fail to break into song.

If there is a note of sadness in our backward glance, then surely it is this: the music we wanted to play but never did. The life we meant to live but didn't. That cause we almost made our own. But we could have been defeated, we could have been humiliated, been made to suffer . . . and so we did not make that cause our own.

The word of truth we might have spoken . . . but truth has its price, and we didn't want to pay it.

Embattled self-centeredness, we nearly conquered it . . . oh, how close we came to victory.

Justice, too, was calling to us, and the clean winds of righteousness blowing through our lives . . . but we turned away.

Close to the loveliness of life, but failing to touch it. Songs in the soul, but only stillness without.

The visions of our younger years - - what happens to them? The thing that was so real yesterday, how could it lose its appeal so soon? The bloom and the freshness of our loves, the dew that glistened on our petals, the songs and carols in our gardens, the mirth and exaltation of our venturesome selves, the thrill of the



days of keen and joyous living, - - into what utter emptiness are they dissolved.

Oh, why cannot joy keep its edge, enthusiasm its fire, faith its spiritual torch? "Where are the snows of yesteryear?" asks one. "Where are the roses of yesterday?" cries another. And yet another: "where are the ideals of long ago?"

Perhaps our dreams turn to ashes because the world is too much with us, this jarring, jostling, grating world. And so we must away where there is distance and altitude, sky and horizon. And this is precisely why we welcome this day of days, these precious hours of worship which turn us from the world without to the world within. Here we are reminded of those values the world inclines us to forget. Here we can regain our vision of the good. Here the ashes of our burnt devotions are stirred to life anew.

Even so do we pray:

chadesh yamenu k'kedem

Renew our days as of old . . .

Help us recapture the vision of our younger years.

\* \* \* \*

Still another longing impels our worship. It is our quest for the renewal of belief, of hope, or faith in God. Indeed, this is how our core prayer, our keynote prayer begins, does it not?

Hashivenu adonai elecha v'nashuva

Restore our faith in You, O God, and we shall be restored  
Renew our Days as of Old

Now, some of us recite this liturgical passage as a matter of custom, of tradition. Others do feel the need to slake that thirst for spirituality, to sate that hunger for the holy that

has come to seize our lives. Whatever the case, let us admit it, the phrase "turning to God," sounds strange to the modern ear. We think of Judaism primarily in terms of ethics and peoplehood, and generally avoid speaking about God.

I've often wondered why this is so, why 'God talk' is so uncommon among us. Perhaps our reluctance, to speak about God, or even to open ourselves to the experience of the Holy is engendered 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. Completely different from us in every way. God cannot be grasped by ordinary modes of thought and perception. Such personal pronouns as He or She do not apply. We cannot, should not even conjure up God's image. We must not describe God, or, following Maimonides, we can describe God only by means of negations, by saying what God 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 does tradition teach us that while we may not see God, nonetheless we can behold His 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) 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, confronts us with a like seeming paradox.

Thus, just one example, 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.

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

You add love to a house and you have a home.

You add righteousness to a city and you have a community.

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

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

You add justice to the far flung round of human endeavor, and then and then only do you have a civilization.

Music is also such an invisible force, every form of art is that: dance, sculpture, painting, architecture. They may be discernible in their outer form, but not in their innermost essence. For you see, the sources and nature of art are a mystery even to those who create it - - just as Salieri, as portrayed in "Amadeus", could never accept, could never understand why God spoke through Mozart and not through him. The source of art is unknown to the artist. Yet art has the power to heal us. it can make the spirit soar, for art is spirit from the realm of the unseen, conveyed by means of matter.

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

Aye, there is a world of reality beyond those worlds perceived by the physical sense alone. And altogether multitudinous are life's gifts that have no practical worth but nonetheless are



altogether wondrous:

The earth's green covering of grass.

The blue serenity of sea and sky.

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

Petals on the grass and wings in the air.

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

Then do the words of prophecy apply to us:

they have eyes but they do not see

they have ears but they do not hear

they do not know

they do not understand

they walk in darkness

No, the human story simply cannot be told without reference to that mystery and majesty that transcends all logic and reason. Only those who open themselves to such a mystery can transcend the grandeur and terror of their lives without being blinded by life's grandeur or crushed by its terror.

Only when we open ourselves to this mystery, this experience of the holy, will we find our Judaism to be a sustaining faith and not a dry-as-dust religion. 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

gam ki elech begey tsalmoves lo iro ro ki ato imodi

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

Let us then heed the three-fold message of this great and Holy day, and ever follow its banner of "Renewal:" the renewal of our lives, the refurbishing of our ideals, and the rebirth of our faith in God.

Amen.





ADDRESS BY RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER  
AT THE  
DEDICATION OF THE SHERMAN EDUCATION CENTER  
AND THE SALLY AND ABE VIDGOFF PRE-SCHOOL



Portland, Oregon

April 20, 1994

It is, of course, a privilege which I greatly appreciate to be here and to participate in this double "simcha" - - the dedication of the Sherman Education Center, and of the Sally & Abe Vidgoff Pre-School which this Center houses. It is altogether fitting and proper that the names of these two families be linked and forever remembered in this place, because of their lifetime of service to this synagogue and to Reform Judaism and because in their lives they manifested a devotion to the very ideals which this building enshrines and which we seek to transmit to future generations.

Unfortunately, I never had the chance to meet and get to know Les Sherman, but all who remember him speak of him with affection. He served this congregation and its Board in countless ways, especially in the realm of the formal and informal education of our young people. Clearly, the securing of the Jewish future was a central concern of his life. What better way, then, to honor him than to have his name affixed to this teaching center.

This applies with equal measure to his lovely wife, Dorothy, who shared his ideals fully, and who supported his every effort to strengthen this synagogue in its outer form and inner beauty. Fortunately, she is with us still. I had a chance to chat with her briefly earlier this evening. She is an altogether lovely human being - - lovely in countenance and deed, as befits a beautiful daughter of her people.

As for the Vidgoffs, I knew them personally, have known them for decades. Abe was the President of our Regional Council, as he was of this Congregation, and ultimately he was elected to our National Board of Trustees, on which he served for the better part of his life.



Abe became one of our foremost leaders, sustaining our religious community with an unfaltering devotion. His stately bearing and his unassuming manner won him the confidence of his peers. He was always ready to be of service, and whatever he undertook to do he did with all his heart.

His was a quiet, not a clamorous leadership. He did not speak often, but when he did he was in full command and his words were heeded. Everyone respected the soundness of his counsel and its wisdom. And this above all, they recognized his rectitude. They saw him to be a man of principle.

Sally was always at his side and supported him in countless ways. Still, she merits to be remembered here not just as Abe's faithful helpmeet, but in her own right. She, too, served this congregation in countless ways. Indeed, she was a teacher in this school for many years, and she taught not just by precept but by example. She is what she wanted her charges to be.

But this above all, she was the very backbone of Camp Swig, that precious jewel in the crown of our religious community. This Camp owes its existence thanks in no small measure to her unyielding tenacity, even as her personal generosity made it possible for many youngsters who otherwise could not have afforded it to attend its inspiring programs.

Indeed, Camp Swig has become the finest vehicle for the transmission of Judaism at our command. No less than eighty of its alumni ultimately entered the rabbinate and now serve congregations throughout the land. Others entered the cantorate, Jewish education, Jewish communal service. They became and now are leaders of their synagogues and communities. Countless Jewish families had their genesis in encounters afforded by this Camp.

Because Sally did all this, she, too, deserves to have her name affixed to this pre-school along with that of her husband, Abe. Her works do praise her in the gates, and they merit to be inscribed on its posts.

Now the rabbis of old had a saying, that an occasion such as this should not be devoted to words of praise alone. Mere sentiment melts away, they taught, whilst a truth spoken remains engraved in the mind forever.

Since Rabbi Rose was thoughtful enough to leave the choice of subject matter to me, I determined to talk to you this evening about something that goes to the very heart and center of what we are all about as members of this Temple and of our larger religious community.

I speak now of our Quest for God, our need to slake that thirst for spirituality, that hunger for the holy that has come to seize our lives.

It is a quest which defines us as a people. It is our mission. It is 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 Him . . . to seek to serve Him . . . this is the duty that defines us as the



covenant people, and as Reform Jews we see ourselves as sons and daughters of the Covenant.

But how can we pursue this quest, how slake our thirst for the sacred?

Now, our tradition suggests three means to that end:  
the study of Torah, of Judaism's classical texts,  
the deed, that is to say the performance of mitzvot,  
and last but not in the least, a relentless focusing of the spirit.

Moreover, these three means are to be integrated.

B'chol atzmotai tomarnu ya

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.

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 hashomayim

Whosoever interprets a text in a new way

it is as if it were revealed to him from heaven.

Reading a text is certainly 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. 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.

As Martin Buber wrote, in a magnificent passage:

"It is the striving for unity that has made the Jew creative. Striving to evolve unity out of the division of "I," we conceived the idea of the unitary God. Striving to evolve unity out of the divisions of the human community, we conceived the idea of universal justice. Striving to evolve unity out of the divisions of all human matter, we conceived the idea of universal love. Striving to evolve unity out of the division of the world, we created the messianic ideal."



When this perception of unity leaps off a page of Scripture or rabbinic commentary - - when 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 reality.

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 ruchaniyut, 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.

Paul Tillich considered this emphasis to be Judaism's most significant contribution to religious thought delineating the continuing distinctive mission of the Jew.

"For the prophets of Israel" Tillich wrote, "and for all their followers among rabbis and theologians, obedience to the law of justice is the way of reaching God. It is the final criterion of the sincerity of man's quest for the divine. The 'ought to be' is the ultimate test of 'being'."

Paul Tillich adjudged us right. Naaseh v'nishma our forebears proclaimed 'round Sinai, "first we will do, then we will hear." A clear knowledge of God, so Judaism maintains, is possible to no one, but the acceptable worship of God is possible for all. Let each Jew therefore observe the mitzvot and the goal he seeks will be his: a sense of communion with the divine.

"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 present-day problem 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 mitzva, 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.

And this is precisely why our hunger for the holy is not sated, why our thirst for spirituality is not slaked, because the disciplined observance of religious rites is the most likely pathway to spirituality. 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, that it encompasses the ethical deed as well. Judaism, in its mainstream, did not yield 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 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 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 Shem 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 so 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 when we open ourselves to experience the holy, and we are not always ready to do so.

You remember the story of the burning bush: how Moses kept the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, in the wilderness of Horeb and had his vision of the bush that burned but was not consumed. Presumably there were other shepherds there who saw the self same bush but they ignored it. Moses did not ignore that vision and so he heard the voice of God.

This is a p'shat, a literal interpretation. The text is quite clear on this point, just listen:

"And Moses said: 'I will turn aside now and see this great sight why the bush is not burnt.' And only when the Lord saw that Moses turned aside to see did He call to him out of the midst of the bush saying: "Moses, Moses.'"

The experience of the holy begins with a readiness to perceive it. You cannot sense the grandeur of nature if you look at a sunrise through sleepy eyes. You cannot expect a worship service to stir you to the depths of your being if you approach it only casually in a commonplace manner. There is a prior need for kavanah, for an intention, a conscious determination to be so stirred.

Perhaps our reluctance to open ourselves to the experience of the holy is impeded by that overly rigid mind-set of modernity which insists that all postulates be demonstrable and experienced by the senses. It is a mindset which is mystified by that paradox in Jewish theological thought which holds that God, though unknowable, nonetheless makes Himself known.

God is wholly other - - we are taught. He is completely different from us. He cannot be grasped by ordinary modes of thought and perception. We cannot, should not even conjure up His image. We must not describe Him, or, following Maimonides, we can describe Him only by means of negations, by saying what He is not. And attributes ascribed to God by Biblical poets are but metaphor.



But at the same time we are taught that though unknowable, God reveals Himself in countless ways. So Moses was told atop Sinai when he stood in the cleft of the rock: "Thou canst not see My face, but I will make all my goodness pass before Thee." Even so can we behold God's goodness "in the realm of nature and in the varied experiences of our lives."

You remember those heaven soaring words of our liturgy:

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

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

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

Chemists consistently postulate the existence of certain gases merely by their effect, though the gases themselves 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 the naked eye or instruments however well-refined. Here too then, a leap of faith is required, a scientific leap of faith, if you will, to acknowledge the existence of a particle that can be known only through its traces.

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

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

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

Consider the world of the invisible, if you will. Ideas, for example. They are impalpable. No one can see or seize them. Yet ideas can seize us and they hold the power to transform our lives.

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

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

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

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

Music is such an invisible force, every form of art is that: dance, sculpture, painting, architecture, - - "music in space," Schelling called them. They may be discernible in outer form but not in their innermost essence. The sources and nature of art are a mystery even to those who create it. Yet art has the power to heal us. It can make the spirit soar, for art is spirit from the realm of the unseen, conveyed by means of matter.



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

Aye, there is a world of reality beyond those worlds perceived by the physical sense alone. And altogether multitudinous are life's gifts that have no practical worth but nonetheless are altogether wondrous:

The earth's green covering of grass.  
The blue serenity of sea and sky.  
The song of day, the silent wonder of the night.  
Petals on the grass and wings in the air.

Oh, how flat, how narrow our world is when we measure its gifts by their usefulness alone. When, in Rilke's happy simile,

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

Then do the words of prophecy apply to us:

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

No, the human story simply cannot be told without reference to that mystery and majesty that transcends all logic and reason. Only those who open themselves to such a mystery can transcend the grandeur and terror of their lives without being blinded by life's grandeur or crushed by its terror.

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 begeh 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."

These, then, are the three dimensions of being we must bring to bear in our quest for God: the searching mind . . . the heeding hand . . . the sensing spirit. It is a quest which we as Jews are mandated to pursue. It is a quest which defines the life striving of the Vidgoffs and the Shermans. It is a quest which the sons and daughters of Congregation Beth Israel must resolutely follow if they truly want to honor their leaders and if they want this dedicatory hour be not just for present use nor for present delight alone, but forever and aye.



SOCIAL JUSTICE AND JUDAISM

SERMON BY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

AT WASHINGTON HEBREW CONGREGATION



June 10, 1994

U.A.H.C. Board Meeting

Washington DC

Thank you very much for your kind introduction, Joe. Your words are like fine perfume. The fragrance of perfume is sweet, but one is better advised not to swallow it. This doesn't mean that I didn't like to hear what you said, but I only wish it were true.

My heartfelt thanks for opening the hospitality of your communal home, to our National Board of Trustees and to the Reform congregations of Greater Washington. This is not the first time that you and your lay leadership have done so. We are beholden to you for this added evidence of your care, of your commitment to that cause which binds us in sacred union.

Indeed it is heartening, always, to stand in this magnificent sanctuary to share thoughts and feelings with Jews who live within that mysterious region of power and promise that we have come to call the Beltway.

By curious coincidence, we convene here at this particular season in the cycle of our Torah readings when the text lands us midstream in struggles over privileges and responsibilities, over status and leadership, over order and rebellion - - struggles that are the essentials of what we in our age call the practice of politics.

Indeed, those of us who live outside Washington's corridors, when speaking with Jewish insiders here, must often feel like Moses in last week's Torah portion , sh'lach l'cha when he bids the 12 spies to spy out the land of Canaan "to see what kind of country it is" and whether its people are "strong or weak." "Is the country they dwell in good or bad?" Moses asks . . . His



questions are, of course, militarily oriented. He is sizing up the land for conquest. It is not improper, however, to read his questions as also seeking to unveil the moral fiber of the land - - even as we do when we come to this city. And, indeed, Joshua and Caleb, the only truthful and courageous pair of these 12 spies, understand the questions of their leader precisely in this way, for they describe the Canaanites as having lost their shadow. Sar Tsileim M'Alayhem - - - They have lost the shadow of God, that is to say, they have lost God's blessing of protection. Those moral and spiritual forces that sustain a nation.

In the Torah scheme of things, however, as we know, before the so called "redemption of the Promised Land can proceed," the Hebrew people are chastened to wander in the wilderness. For 40 long years, the tribes became consumed by their internal affairs. They are instructed intensively in the laws of sacrifice, in the wearing of fringes on the corner of their garments, and precisely how the festivals ought to be observed. They are purged and purified . . . their inner unity is strengthened.

In a very real sense, our movement for Reform Judaism has been undergoing a similar process, during my two decades as President of the Union. While our Social Action work, championed by our Religious Action Center here in Washington, has continued unabated, indeed it has flourished beyond the imaginings of its founders, we have dedicated ourselves also, in no small measure to internal development: to programs of Outreach, of spiritual reawakening, of exploring our religious parameters, of cultivating caring communities within Temple life, and on youth and camping and family education. All of this has been to the good. In two decades we have become broader in our membership, richer in our spirituality and scholarship and firmer in our identity as a movement.

But it would be a serious mistake now to view our endeavor as somehow permanently divided into parallel non-intersecting realms: the internal and the external, the parochial and the universal, the self interested and the selfless. The two are inextricably intertwined. Judaism does not suffer their separation. It does not recognize any dichotomy between the two, between the secular and the sacred, between the worldly and the heavenly. There is no not-holy. There is only that which has not been hallowed. The so called "political" and "economic" matters are religious in their essence - - and in their solution.

Judaism, in its mainstream, has never yielded to the monastic impulse. Our teachers did not believe that holiness can be found in solitude and 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 a broken world and to engage in the effort to repair it. Even so does the Talmud provide that one is forbidden to pray in a room without windows, so that when we pray, we will always hear the world's weeping, always see the poor that are huddled at the Temple's gates.

Certainly, Reform Judaism, from its very beginning has been committed to the idea that the pursuit of justice for all is the quintessential task of Judaism. Reform Judaism's social action programs have been a solid wedge holding open the doors of the Jewish conscience, doors that might otherwise have slammed shut in the name of protecting Jewish safety and Jewish prosperity. It has been the amplifier through which the voices of the prophets still ring, drowning out the ritualistic obsessions of the priests and thus preserving a sense of relevance and currency that might otherwise have eluded our faith.



All of this is not to say that there have never been tensions in the so-called political and the so-called spiritual in our history. Indeed, in many ways, Jewish history is the story of this tension between particularism and universalism, between the concern with predominantly Jewish interests and the concern for justice for all of humankind. Pendulum-like, we have swung to and fro between the poles of this tension but neither of Hillel's famous questions was ever smothered. "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I?" Neither of these two questions was ever allowed to stand by itself.

Now in Reform Judaism's 125 years as a religious movement, like tensions were manifest and, indeed, they strain us still. When Rabbi David Einhorn of neighboring Baltimore, was driven from the pulpit of Har Sinai by a pro slavery mob intent on punishing him for his outspoken abolitionism, his congregation's leadership allowed him to return only on the condition that he limit his sermonizing to spiritual matters. Stephen Wise, refused to accept the prestigious New York Temple Emanuel's pulpit because its Trustees sought to curb the subject matter of his sermons. Similarly, when my widely respected predecessor, Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath responded to the McCarthy era by establishing our Commission on Social Action, and subsequently its potent arm, the Religious Action Center, there were many who told him to desist, to leave well enough alone on the ground that these activities would divert us from our central mission.

Like reflections continue to be heard in our midst, especially when it comes to budget crunching time, when the priorities of our Union have to be established. Are we not doing enough, have

we not done enough in the arena of social action - - people think, or say. Look, so much has been accomplished in this sphere! Legal segregation has ended, the Cold War is over, the worst fears of the Reagan Supreme Court are unrealized, etc. Of course, many dangers still lurk, but have we not made enough of a contribution to these decades of transformation? Is it not time for us to complete the inward turning, to focus on our central mission and to push social action, at least to some extent, to the back burner?

My friends, we cannot do so even if we would. For you see, in all of these marvelous inward efforts of education, of youth programs, outreach and spiritual enhancement, in each and every one of these endeavors, the social action component is crucial. It is the cement that binds all of these activities and gives them their authenticity.

Take Outreach for example. If you read the last issue of Reform Judaism, you might have read these words spoken by John Golmant, a member of a nearby Alexandria congregation worshiping with us tonight. He wrote, "I was most attracted to Judaism because of its emphasis on the here and now rather than the hereafter . . . because of its emphasis on serving others."

Wrote our own UAHC Board member, Wayne Kreuscher, of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, "I became a Jew because I found that in Judaism, social action and spirituality are really one."

"I like being Jewish," said young Krysten Hewitt-Parsons of Congregation Rodef Sholom, Waco, Texas, "because I believe there is only one God and he takes care of us and wants us to take care of others too."



Now all of these speakers are Jews by choice. All were drawn to making a commitment to Reform Judaism because of the Commitment that Reform Judaism has made to the world. Indeed, wherever I go on this great continent, I find people whose principal reason for identification with our movement are our principles, our commitment to tikkun olam, to Jewish social justice. This is as true for converts as it is true of born Jews - - Jews-by-choice, all of them, in this new era of voluntary Jewish identification.

Let there be no doubt about it. Reform Religious Action has returned to the Jewish fold numerous idealists, young and old, whose prophetic yearning had no prior Jewish expression, who knew only the language of universal activism. It has helped 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 that tikkun olam, the quest for justice and peace, is indeed the work of Judaism.

Now as far as Jewish education is concerned, it appears that our children find that above everything else, the concept of Judaism as a pathway of action makes their Jewish identity plausible. Take away social action and you take away the driving force of NFTY. Take away social action and you deflate the sense of purpose and community that make Reform camping a transformative Jewish experience.

Two or three years ago, a Los Angeles Times nationwide survey of Jews asked, "what is the key expression of your Jewish identity?" 17 percent spoke of Jewish observances, 17 percent said Israel and 50 percent of them said, Social Action. Repeated studies by Jewish sociologists over recent years confirm these findings. How can it be otherwise . . . for being free to choose or not to

choose Judaism in our era of voluntary Jewish identification, they want to know just why they should be Jews. And most of the answers we give them, apparently are not sufficiently persuasive.

We posit Judaism as an obligation, as a debt that has to be paid to the past. "Look at this stiff-necked people," we say, "and how generations have struggled to survive . . . you must not be the one to break the chain of tradition . . . you owe it to the Jewish people to persevere."

Or we offer Judaism as an act of vengeance. "Look at what happened in the shoah . . . the Holocaust . . . : " we say, "The Jewish people were pulverized . . . six million of us turned into wisps of smoke and blackened ashes . . . you must not allow Hitler to have a posthumous victory."

Then we invoke Israel and recall its near miraculous attainments in the face of almost constant warfare and constant peril, and we insist that the new Jewish State requires a reservoir of Jews on which it can count for support . . . This argument, too, along with the others, invokes but a meager response. Recall, if you will, that only 17 percent of America's young Jews see Israel as the key to their Jewish identity.

Yes, we argue all this and more, but the only argument that carries the day with most of our youth is when we say: " We want you to be a Jew because we Jews have a special vocation and that is to pursue justice . . . "

Leibel Fein, that wordsmith of enviable, extraordinary skill, summarizes these thoughts in never to be forgotten lines. "The time of mourning passes . . . the Holocaust recedes . . . we come



increasingly to understand that Auschwitz was not, after all, the most important thing that ever happened to our people. That it is not the fires of the crematoria, but the fire of the burning bush that lights our way (or else we walk in darkness), that our primordial experience was not the day we died at Auschwitz, but the day we were born at the Red Sea and went on to stand at Sinai. And it was then that our real sojourn began . . . not the years of wandering in the desert, but the wanderings through the world ever preaching and now and then practicing justice."

In sum then, we cannot, we dare not separate social action from Jewish education, for you see, we teach our children Torah not only to know Torah, nor even to teach Torah, but this above all, to **BE** Torah.

The Berditchever Rebbe taught:

"What does it amount to that they expound Torah!  
A man should see to it that all his actions are Torah,  
and that he, himself becomes so entirely Torah,  
so that one can learn from his habits and his motions  
and even from his motionless clinging to God."

Which brings me full square to the final point I want to make, and that is that religious action pertains to the very core of our mission and mandate.

I speak now of the quest for God, which ultimately distinguishes us as a people.

"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 the center, without this contact . . ."

"Others may get along without God," - added Martin Buber - "But if a Jew should attend such a course, he shall perish at his own hand. If a 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 an 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 a Covenant people. And as Reform Jews we see ourselves as sons and daughters of the Covenant.

And what has social action to do with that pray tell? I find my clue in the phrase tikkun olam as it appears in our liturgies, in the olenu, in the adoration. Thus we pray: l'taken olam b'malchut shaddai meaning, quite literally, "to unify our world with the world on high." In other words, tikkun olam really speaks of something more elemental than the influencing of social policy to "heal our fractured world." It means rather, questing to bring the world of everyday life into a unity with the world on high, the world of our ideals to which ascribe the name of God.

In the cabalistic thought of Isaac Luria, God created our universe by contracting part of the Divine Being, thus emanating light into the world. But the emanation of light was too powerful for the vessel, and so the first attempt at creation shattered, scattering sparks throughout the world. These holy sparks create the background to our world, - - our successfully second chance world. They are the sparks of holiness imprisoned in the stuff of creation, the light of unity trapped in our separate selves. Freeing those fragments and uniting with God is what the task of tikkun olam really signifies.



Tikkun Olam means not just healing this world, but healing the cosmos . . . uniting the worldly with the heavenly, bringing our everyday world to a unity with the world on high.

Tikkun Olam means questing for God, and we pursue that quest best when we use our resources as blessings . . . when we restrain our use to avoid abuse . . . when we treat other human beings as human beings . . . when we surrender the sanctity of our individualism in order to include the Other as part of the Self in order to make the It into the Thou. Then are we truly doing the work of tikkun olam . . . the gathering of the sparks, the searching for God in every corner of the world, the restoration of the divine unity.

This unity is no mere metaphor my friends: it is the core reality of all creation, the perception of which is the very foundation of Judaism. The so called external and internal, the political and spiritual, the particular and the universal, the secular and the sacred, they are not really separate spheres. Rather are they interconnected sephirot, manifestations of God's unity.

Let us therefore never parcel or portion or sever our magnificent enterprise of Reform Judaism. Let us rather unite and expand it into a resource for renewal, a tool of redemption . . . a civilizing and a humanizing force in a world that lurches between chaos and covenant.

Thus may it be God's Will.

Amen

ADDRESS OF  
RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER  
IN HONOR OF  
RABBI LENNARD R. THAL



June 5, 1994  
Leo Baeck Temple  
Los Angeles, California



Let me begin with words of thanks, of deepfelt appreciation to all those who made this splendid evening possible. They will probably be discomfited by being singled out for praise - - gratitude is the most painful thing to bear, next to ingratitude, that is. Yet how can we fail to acknowledge our indebtedness to them. I speak of Mark and Peach Levy, of course, who chaired this function as well as of Jean and Jay Abarbanel who were their loyal and hard-working cohorts.

If you promise not to tell it in Gath or in the streets of Ashkelon, the Los Angeles FRJ functions have emerged as the most magnificent of like events held elsewhere. This elegance is due largely to the diligence of these two couples and to their well-refined sense of the beautiful. They and their steering committee members toiled energetically. The harvest of their labor is rich indeed, more full-sheaved with every passing year. Janet Marder also merits special recognition. Since this function was in honor of her senior colleague, the burden of staffing this event fell primarily on her. What an exceptional rabbi she is! We owe her immeasurable gratitude.

Allan Goldman is here tonight, and so are innumerable leaders of our national family of congregations. Their presence bespeaks the importance of this occasion as well as their ever-readiness to advance our work. How good and how pleasant it is for this community to be blessed with a leadership such as this.

Thank you all for coming here this night. It is gracious of you to do so, to lend us your strength. In return, I can give you the assurance that the cause which your presence advances is exceedingly worthwhile.

As for the man we delight to honor, - - Lenny Thal, Rabbi Lennard Thal - - what can I possibly tell you about him that you do not know so much better yourself. After all, your relationship with him now spans many years, and plumbs the very depth of being, cemented as it is by tears of joy and sorrow alike. Still, you probably do not really know the full scope of his doing, since so very much of his work as Regional Director takes place behind the scenes.

Consider, for a moment, what he does, what he is repeatedly called upon to do: In the course of any given year, he plans a half-score regional and sub-regional programs. He attend to the needs and desires of synagogues of vastly different sizes and structures and styles of worship patterns and mind you, there are nearly 80 congregations in this region, in his diocese.

Lenny works with Temple Boards to have them function more effectively. He counsels rabbis who are having a career crisis. He buoys up frantic Temple Presidents when congregational crises erupt; and when a change in leadership is required, he guides them through the transition process.

He goes about encouraging congregational innovation and creativity. The national departments of the Union require him to test and then to carry out their programmatic projections; indeed, he is the primary staff member of several key national committees and commissions. We prod him to raise some of the funds we need to carry on our work, through the Fund for Reform Judaism - - and woe unto him, through MUM. We encourage him to build new congregations - - which he has - - and to nurture lay leadership on a local and regional level alike, a task at which he particularly excels.



All this and more our Council Directors are asked to do, and Lenny does them as well, nay better than most. he is a superstar of the Union's star studded staff.

Conflict resolution is one of Lenny's specialties. Whenever a divisive issue surfaces in a congregation, and especially when Rabbinic congregational relationships break down, his help is sought and freely given. He is a good listener, a clear thinker, a most insightful counsellor. He inspires trust. His very presence is calming and his findings are fair, doing justice to rabbi and congregation alike.

His sound judgment is respected by the larger Jewish and general community. Just read the listing of those many and varied organizations that have summoned his service. He sits on the Board of over 30 communal institutions and no less than five of them chose him to lead them.

David Saperstein already told you about his involvement with the Council of Religious Leaders and of his work with youth in the inner city, so there is no need for me to multiply words. Suffice it to say that this work is as critical as it is complex and it requires courage.

Which brings me to that which I admire most about Lenny. Not so much what he does, though that is immensely impressive, but what he is . . . those rare gifts of mind and spirit which he manifests . . . and which make him an exemplar of what we Jews are about . . .

He has a keen mind and he cultivates it assiduously.

His integrity is unbending.

He is humane, a warmhearted, compassionate human being.

He has a delicious sense of humor. This, too, bespeaks his tender fellow feeling for others, for humor is a gift not of the mind but of the heart.

Lenny is well versed in our literary tradition, yet he carries that knowledge lightly. There is no contumely about him. He does not look down on those who know less. He tries, rather, to lift them up to higher levels of understanding.

Indeed, Janet tells me that he is a superb teacher, in no small measure, she says, "because he is deeply respectful of the subject matter and his students alike." But that is not the primary reason why he is effective in his teaching. I suspect that his students and campers and youth groupers respond to him primarily because he is the real McCoy, the genuine article.

Aye, Lenny never merely teaches as books enable. He is what he wants others to be. He does not just preach social justice, he practices it. He does not just limn in words his vision of a better world; he resolutely goes about the task of shaping that world, a better world, a world that is decent and good and pure.

Lenny doesn't just teach about Judaism, he does Jewishly, he lives Jewishly. Sit around the Sabbath table with the Thals in their home and you will know and feel what it means to sanctify space and time.

Lastly, I love Lenny for his songs? His songs you say? For God's sake, the man can't even carry a tune! No threat to the cantorate he! But I talk of a different kind of singing now, for



you see, our tradition identifies song with inspiration, melody with vision. Even so does Lenny sing songs of vision, songs of possibility, the song of dreams. When he heals isolation with community, when he binds sorrow with comfort, rejection with acceptance, separation with inclusion . . . when he strives to awaken a sense of reverence towards Creation, toward this Tent of Meeting on which we live, lest we destroy ourselves by trampling holiness into dust, then does he sing songs; divinely inspired songs, the songs of hope, the songs of the reach beyond the grasp.

And then there is his Linda, his helpmeet, his soul's far better part. She, too, was just accorded an unprecedented honor - - an award and stipend from the Covenant Foundation - - for her career work in Jewish Education.

She has all the same mailes, the same virtues that I just ascribed to Lenny. And she carries them even more lightly than does he. The fact that he gained and retained the love of someone so utterly lovely is surely his greatest tribute.

Surely I need not tell you that Lenny did not seek to be honored. He neither craved nor relishes such open flattery. And he responded favorably to our pleading only because he saw this evening as a means of furthering a cause that has been central to his life of public service: the nurturing of our people's spiritual life, the sustenance of the synagogue, the strengthening of its supportive institutions.

Those of you who were at these functions in prior years, have heard me talk about the Union's many-varied programs which

purpose to serve this very end: our youth and camping movement which involves thousands of young people every year, our education division which prepares the curricula and diverse materials - - books, texts, teachers guides, tapes required for the synagogue's educative process - - our innovative Outreach ventures which have transformed the mindscape of the American Jewry and brought the issue of intermarriage out of the house of mourning and into the house of study - - indeed, into the house of prayer itself, our exciting social action projects which have returned to the Jewish fold numerous idealists, young and old, whose prophetic yearnings had no prior Jewish expression, who knew only the language of universalist activism.

These are some of the activities and many more which the Union pursues as it seeks to secure the Jewish future.

By sustaining these activities, we render our honoree that tribute which he will value most: not only the tribute of the lips however genuine, nor only the tribute of our presence which demonstrates our great love for him, but above all, the tribute which comes when we buttress that cause which consumes his daily doing and which is the flaming passion of his life.

May he and Linda and Alona and Ariela be granted many more years of life and health and creative endeavor not just for their sake, but for the sake of that striving which binds us in sacred union.



Notes for Beth Adam Debate

Now let me make some commentary concerning the programmatic theme of our Board meeting...I refer, of course to the debate generated by the Beth Adam application for membership in the UAHC.

You must have wondered all along why I have been so quiet in this discussion.

Usually, I am the lead off hitter -- once in a while I get on base and many a time I strike out.

In this instance I desisted from leading off because I was genuinely interested in generating a debate and I was afraid that if I did take a public stance too early along the way, that debate might be muted.

Indeed, when I spoke with Gene Mihaly and subsequently with Bob Baar and Jim Cummings

I was up front with them..and they can attest to that.

I told them where I stood, where I believed the movement stood.

I said that nonetheless I welcomed their application

in no small measure because I felt it would generate a discussion which I deemed important for our religious community.

And this is why I hope that this conversation will be carried forward even though the particular matter of Beth Adam is now resolved.

I think it critical that we collectively ask ourselves those questions I posed in Baltimore.

Which beliefs have a valid place in Reform Judaism and which do not?

Is there any belief which is beyond the pale of Reform.

Just what is essential to a Reform outlook,  
what is optional  
-- and what, if anything, is forbidden?

Our debate was excellent, in every possible way.

and I am admiring of all those who expressed their views.  
They spoke with passion and with compassion.  
I am proud of this movement, its rabbis, its teachers, its lay leaders.  
Many of you have told me that the shabbat morning program  
was one of the most instructive sessions which we have had  
and I agree.

I was going to speak yesterday at the end of the debate,  
because I felt that you are entitled to know where I stand.  
though I suppose I gave you something of a subtle hint during my  
Friday evening sermon

Virtually every possible argument was made during the debate,  
and so there is no reason for me to multiply words.

Let me just make four brief points:

1. We are an open, welcoming community and I have always been in the  
forefront of those who urged us to be as open as possible.

Just the same I understand that in order to remain a community  
we need to achieve ideological coherence.

The elasticity of our Judaism has undoubtedly produced the elasticity  
of our numbers, but stretched too far it can rip us apart.



Reform does allow for a wide spectrum of belief,

a ranging gamut of theological stances.

Nonetheless, some common understanding is necessary

to give us the kind of ideological cohesion which a

religious movement, or any movement, for that matter, requires,

to retain its distinctiveness, and to secure its continuity.

2. I believe with Larry Hoffman that the concept of God

is an ikkar, the core, the essence, the very foundation of Judaism.

The quest for God, the wrestling with God defines us as a people.

It is our mission, our historic calling...

It is the duty that defines us as the covenant people, and as Reform

Jews we see ourselves as sons and daughters of the Covenant.

Yes, God is a symbol, a vessel, if you will,

into which we can pour divergent theological conceptions.

but when that vessel is not there, such a pouring is foreclosed.

I speak now not of an intellectual debate,

but of an outpouring of the heart and soul,

of silent prayer if you will,

of a motionless clinging to God.

Whoever has a symbol has thereby the beginning of a spiritual idea;

absent a symbol, spiritual ideas are stifled and die aborning;

symbol and reality together alone furnish the whole.

Professor Mihaly, who supports Beth Adam's application, nonetheless

makes this very point in the post script of his responsum.

He writes:

The deletion of the word "God" from its liturgy after acknowledging as Beth Adam does that "the concept of God has undergone constant modification in Judaism," is to revert to a prosaic...literalism and at the very minimum deprives the worshipper of the rich experience of poetic metaphor. Moreover such a stance also eliminates the richest literary treasures of our heritage.

Which leads me directly to point

3. to wit, that I am particularly troubled by the deletion of the sh'ma and the kaddish from the liturgy of Beth Adam for I consider these erasures not just a severing of our ideological roots but also of our historic roots as a people.

If Judaism has any overarching affirmation of faith, it is the shema. the assertion of God's unity.

That is the ultimate ground of our collective being.

As Mike Meyer reminded us this morning, it was the prayer which our people sang throughout their millennial martyrology.

Even when they were at the epicenter of the whirlwind of destruction which we now call the shoah did our people recite the shema.

Yes even there, in the innermost circle of hell, did our people voice that prayer and they sang:  
Ani Ma-amin, I believe in redemption.

and they "drew reasons for hope from their despair."

Bob Baar told us that when they worship in the HUC Chapel, he does not cover the two tablets of the law over the ark and that the presence of that symbol does not constrain the freedom of thought and devotion of his congregants. Would the inclusion of the shema and the kaddish in their liturgy really have a restrictive effect?



Be that as it may, I consider the shema as the primary mode  
of our being aware that we are Jews...  
whatever our ideological divergences  
and whatever adjective we use to mark these divergences.  
Its absence from the liturgy, therefore,  
severs both our ideological and historical roots.

4. All this does not mean that I read the members of Beth Adam  
out of the Jewish fold, chalila v'chas, for I too draw a distinction  
between private autonomy and public policy.

I have met some of the leaders of Beth Adam twice or thrice now.

I have learned to respect them, their integrity, their fierce  
fierce determination to follow their chosen path.

I therefor share the fervent hope of Prof. Mihaly when he expressed  
his confidence that as the members of Beth Adam pursue their search  
under the guidance of their able rabbi,  
they will come to recognize  
"that the genius of Judaism is best expressed in the declaration  
'only God is God and there is none else'  
though God can never be known."

"This," so Gene Mihaly wrote, "is the historic witness of the Jew  
which rejects every form of idol, and commits him to the  
eternal quest.

As the medieval poet phrased it:

"I have not seen Thee, yet I tell Thy praise,  
I have not known Thee, yet I image forth Thy ways."

May God who is enthroned above our praises,  
continue to bless the work of our hands.

# Natchez Jewish Homecoming Shabbat Sermon

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER  
*President*

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

Natchez, Mississippi  
April 30, 1994



**NATCHEZ  
JEWISH HOMECOMING**

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

**Shabbat Sermon**

by

**Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler**



איחוד  
ליהדות  
מתקדמת  
באמריקה

I am thrilled to be here, deeply moved by the significance of this occasion; and I join in congratulating the many men and women who had a share in making this moment blossom into something grand and memorable. Our tradition tells us not to specify lest we exclude. But surely no one will fault me if I make special mention of several people whose contribution to our gathering was of critical consequence.

First and foremost among them is Macy Hart. It was he, after all, who first dreamed this great dream, and then mustered the forces and resources to attain its realization. I speak now not just of this event, but of his life's work as the Director of Jacobs Camp, and its Museum, that unique educational venture which intertwines both memory and hope.

The capable Chairman of that Camp, Earle Schwartz, is also with us as is Herman Kohlmeyer who presently chairs the Board of the Museum of the Southern Jewish experience. I salute them and through them the many men and women who labor ceaselessly to preserve the rich heritage of Southern Jewry even as they seek to secure its future.

It is good to be here then, and to participate in these joyous and yet solemn events. I am especially moved by the knowledge that I stand on the bimah of a sanctuary whose cornerstone was laid by the founding president of our religious community, that master-builder of Reform Judaism in America, Isaac Mayer Wise. It is a knowledge which fills me with awe, as well it might us all. In the stillness of the hour we can almost hear the rushing of the waves of time, their relentless pounding against eternity's shore.

These stirring events remind me of a tale that is told in the literature of our people about a wise and enlightened king whose son was gone from his side for many, many years. The prince had left the palace to learn about life, to pursue his own glory, to prove his own worth. As sometimes happens under such circumstances, a certain alienation developed between father and son which, given the politics of royalty, might well have resulted in a crisis for the entire country.

One day the prince returned, but because he was exhausted by his campaigns he encamped to rest at the edge of the kingdom. When his father heard of it, he dispatched a corps of messenger to bid his son to come home at once, in order to be reconciled. But when the young man saw this sizable troop, he became frightened. He was reminded of his father's great power and of the trappings of palace life. And so he sent word to his father that he was simply too weary, that it was too far for him to come, and that he would stay where he was.

Outrageous! declared the king's advisors . . . How insolent! And they urged His Majesty either to send troops to arrest the prince or to cut him off as successor to the throne. But



the king, in his wisdom, rejected their counsel of anger and sent this message to his son: "Come as far as you can and I will come to meet you there."

Perhaps this tale of homecoming will resonate for many here who have come from afar to reunite in Natchez. You had your roots in this community or nearby places, but in the course of growing up, and going to college, and finding a life mate, and seeking a career, and staking a claim amidst this wild and wooly land called America, you wandered far from the borders of family acceptance, as did the prince of our story.

Perhaps this tale is also a metaphor for the experience of Reform Judaism in America. Ours is a movement that has in its wisdom been able to say to our prodigal children: "Come as far as you can and we will come to meet you." Ours is a movement that did not stand on ceremony, that did not defend the sanctity of tradition at the expense of continuity. But rather did we expand the boundaries of Judaism, to reconcile with the forces of change, to meet the generations as far as they could come, and if necessary, to meet them more than half way.

Nowhere has this been truer than in the American South. Those of your ancestors who came to the South during the critical two decades preceding the Civil War were under particular pressure to 'adapt' to Southern ways with speed and facility. They were strangers, after all. Of the approximately 200,000 Jews living in America on the eve of that fearsome struggle, a mere 30,000 or so lived in the South. Unable to claim an ethnic turf of any size, reluctant to separate themselves in any way from the land of liberty and opportunity that surrounded them, the Jews of the South found in Reform Judaism the perfect mirror for their aspirations. They sought a truly American religious identity for which, in Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise's words spoken in this very place, "the progress of liberty" would serve as the only "genuine Messiah."

In fact, the very earliest document expressing the impulse to Reform Judaism is a Southern document. It was a petition from a group of Charleston, South Carolina Jewish businessmen to the leadership of their congregation, Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim. Dated December 23, 1824, this remarkable document bemoaned the "apathy and neglect" on the part of Charleston's Jews. Mind you, Charleston at the time was probably the largest and wealthiest Jewish community in the country, and these leaders were concerned about Jewish continuity. (There is nothing new under the sun, is there?) In any event, their document suggests that the disinterest of too many of their fellow Jews was attributable at least in part - "to certain defects which are apparent in the present system of worship" which, so they thought, might be corrected through the inclusion of English prayers and in a shortened service, among other innovations. The petitioners concluded their appeal with these words:

"We wish not to overthrow but to rebuild. . . we wish not to destroy but to reform and revise . . . we do not want to abandon the institutions of Moses, but to understand and observe them . . ." No more eloquent statement of Reform Jewish intentions has since been formulated.

It is no mere coincidence, therefore, that of the thirteen states which were represented when our Union of Congregations was formed, eight of them were Southern states. Nor is it a coincidence that at the turn of the century, in this State of Mississippi alone, there were 12 flourishing synagogues, and every one of them was a Reform congregation. Nor is it a coincidence that in these same eight founding Southern and border states, the UAHC can now claim nearly 150 congregations.

Some of these are smaller groupings to be sure, but they are nonetheless most precious to us. For you see, these-small congregation Jews have truly been the finger tips and toes, the most sensitive receptors and the most active organs of outreach of the Reform Jewish body. They are the ones who clasp hands for us, for American Jewry as a whole, with so called Middle America. They are the ones for whom the hallmark Reform tradition of social action requires a particular brand of personal courage and commitment. They are also the ones, alas, who must be most concerned with issues of preservation, for in truth, the small town Southern Jewish community has been fading during our lifetimes - - because of those wanderings of the younger generation of which I spoke when I began my commentary. While the South as a whole remains a vibrant center of Reform Judaism, indeed it is even burgeoning, the locus of that activity, like the locus of Jewish economic activity shifted during the decades following the Civil War from the small town to the big city. And so it remains centered today.

Yet look around you at the people assembled for this Natchez Jewish homecoming and you will see not only current members of Temple B'nai Israel and their families, each of them a page of the Torah in their own right, but also representatives of the City of Natchez and its Historic Foundation, and of like State wide institutions: the Department of Archives, the State Historic Preservation Commission, the Mississippi Heritage Trust and Partners for Sacred Places. Their presence here bears testimony to the fact that the history of the Jews of Natchez is an integral part of the history of Natchez, of Mississippi, of the Deep South and of America itself. It is a history of peddlers and pioneers, of farmers and doctors, lawyers and educators, of public servants, and of soldiers and casualties, of realists and of idealists.

In Natchez' glory days as a world class port for cotton export, Jewish supply houses like Ullman and Laub and S.L. Benjamin - names that loom large in the life of this congrega-



tion - - played a key role in sustaining the prosperity of Natchez. During the Civil War, Natchez Jews fought with courage and distinction for the hapless Confederate cause. The women of the Ullman family successfully contrived to take contraband supplies through Union lines by suspending the goods under their wide hoopskirts. Meanwhile, 7 year old Rosalie Beekman paid the price that innocent children throughout our world continue to pay for their elders' inability to live in peace.

In the transformative years of the late 19th Century, Jews served as mayor, aldermen, sheriff, country representatives, even as fire marshals. Jews were active as Masons, Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias. Jewish citizens were responsible for the build-up of Natchez-on-the Hill, that most elegant historic district in this fair city.

And in the most transformative years of all, the decades of the civil rights struggle in which the New South was born, Jews from the North and South alike contributed their measure of conscience. An early advocate of human and civil rights, Rabbi Seymour Bottigheimer, spiritual leader of this Temple at the start of our century, a time when lynchings were nearly as common as confirmations, nevertheless invited the illustrious Black scientist and educator, George Washington Carver, to occupy this very pulpit.

The stones of this Temple, then, are like gold ore, heavy with precious memory - - a memory that will be forever defended thanks to Temple B'nai Israel's trusteeship arrangements with the Museum of the Southern Jewish experience. Yet there is more to Jewish identity and Jewish spirit than memory, my friends. Memory must have its mission: continuity. Memory must have its solace: hope.

Memory and hope. Our rabbis spoke of them as the two angels who accompanied the Jewish people through their many years of wanderings: one on the right, the other on the left; one holding fast in memory to things of the past, people and events endeared to us by affection; the other pointing to the distant future, brightening up the goal and giving hope. This weekend, therefore, represents more than a Homecoming, more than a celebration of history. It marks as well our rededication to a mission of continuity, our rededication to the renewal of hope.

We are now in our 121st year of existence as a movement of Reform Judaism in America. It is 121 years since Natchez' own Isaac Lowenburg and Rabbi Norden became signatories to the establishment of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Our Union has just passed the age limit our Torah sets as a lifespan for human beings, for it was the age at which Moses, "his eyes undimmed and his vigor unabated," died in the land of Moab.

Therefore, as we stand in this magnificent building to celebrate its safekeeping, its preser-

vation and eventual passage into history, it is appropriate also to declare the beginning of a new cycle of life.

It is a cycle in which our purpose as Reformers must be not simply to harmonize our religious and civic identities, not simply to assure that our Judaism not impede our American accomplishments. Rather our purpose now must be to unleash Judaism on behalf of American renewal.

Let us therefore become champions of Judaism! No longer simply grateful for the American values of democracy, meritocracy and pluralism that have allowed us to prosper, unmolested, in as fully a Jewish lifestyle as we might choose - - but ready now to translate the best values of our faith into a language that America might hear.

Champions of Judaism! No longer content merely to practice a "civic religion" that brings sacred legitimation to the prevailing social order - - but ready now to bring a sacred religious consciousness to bear upon our civics.

Here in the South, where religion has roots as deep as the deepest waters of the Mississippi, the spirit of religious commitment, pride and active outreach that have marked our movement during the past 20 years is best understood and most readily engaged. Here in the South, where the American dream is not diminished by rust, where the forces of change have not degraded family values; the embrace of Judaism, as a ready resource for American renewal is perhaps the firmest.

Here in the South, where the impulse to Reform first took place, the continuing flow of Reform has its head waters. For Jewish life in the American South is presently undergoing a renewal, in numbers, in spirit, in depth of commitment, in influence.

Today, therefore, in Natchez, we are participating in what the early Reform philosopher Abraham Geiger called "the transition from the past into a regenerated future." Such a Reform, Geiger taught, "does not break with the past but rather preserves carefully the bond which connects the present and the past."

Aye, from the ground of memory, we grow budding flowers of continuity. Thus do we hallow this holy place forevermore.

Amen.



PRESENTATION OF  
NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH CULTURE AWARD

TO

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES  
BY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER



May 2, 1994

It is a privilege which I greatly appreciate to present the third of this afternoon's awards to Dr. Leonard Fein, better known to his many friends throughout the Jewish world as just plain Label Fein. I am flattered that he suggested that I be asked to make this presentation. I am proud to have him call me friend.

While he nominally receives this award for "excellence in the field of Jewish scholarship," this honor also recognizes his remarkably diverse pursuits as teacher, lecturer, editor, columnist and political activist which have had a profound impact on the evolution of American Jewish life and thought.

This is not to say that he is lacking in those attainments that mark the true scholar. He held professorships at MIT and Brandeis University. He co-directed Harvard and MIT's Joint Center for Urban Studies. He authored six books, a half score monographs, and innumerable articles. He conducted research and designed studies in a variety of disciplines ranging from problems of the inner city to Jewish identity. He developed a curriculum on African-American studies that was eventually adopted by hundreds of school systems throughout the land. His work on the urban crisis was widely read and well received, and his book on Israeli politics became the standard text in the field, required reading in Israeli universities for many years. No trespasser he in the company of scholars.

He was also an exceedingly effective teacher. I didn't take Label's word for that. I checked with some of his former students and they confirm his boast. They agree that he was a remarkable mentor, a master of his craft and of a kind encountered but rarely in life.



He preferred class discussion to lecturing and always stimulated his students to react critically to what they read - - to evaluate and to interpret. He insisted on the highest possible standards of scholarship. Class discussion had to reflect knowledge and a detailed familiarity with the sources. He did not abide the kind of self-expression which rests on hearsay and headlines, always favoring the hard-working student over those glib pupils who were adept only in catch-phrases and sweeping generalizations.

He remained a teacher throughout his life, even once he left the classroom. His writing, and his lecturing, and his publishing were just alternate ways of teaching.

Indeed, when he founded Moment magazine, he became the teacher of an entire generation. It was an altogether remarkable publication, a class act, a crushing confutation of Commentary magazine, a place where issues of vital importance could be and were thoughtfully discussed. And this above all, it was a publication which helped set the American Jewish community's political, religious and cultural agenda.

Label was an exacting editor; even his rejection notes - - of which I received not a few - - were instructive. And he certainly was and is a brilliant writer, a wordsmith of uncommon skill. Some of his essays are sheer poesy, paintings with the gift of speech, the music of his Jewish soul.

Still, his very best teaching was done when he moved out of the classroom, away from his typewriter and when he stepped down from the speaker's lectern to become the political activist, a persistent and ever insistent prod to our conscience.

When he risked rebuke to repair the relationship between Jesse Jackson and the Jewish community, between Blacks and Jews in this land. . .

When he imaginatively conceptualized and launched Mazon, the Jewish Community's response to Hunger. . .

When he suffered vilification for his support of the Peace Now movement and eventually became American Jewry's acknowledged leader of the loyal opposition to some of Israel's policies. . .

And when, more recently and almost singlehandedly, he forged an inter-religious coalition to press for a more active American intervention in the hope of staying the tragedy in Yugoslavia...

Why, then, he did some of his finest teaching. He taught us the compatibility of universalism and particularism, taught us this valuable, needful lesson not just by precept but by example.

Then, he embodied the lesson inherent in Emerson's dictum that

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

Label Fein possesses these qualities, and in abundant measure. This is why he will always be remembered as one of the great teachers of our generation. And this is why we honor him today.

It is with great pride then, Label, that I bestow upon you the National Foundation for Jewish Culture's award for excellence in the world of Jewish scholarship. With it go the good wishes of a grateful and admiring Jewish community.



**MEMORIAL TRIBUTE TO RABBI MAURICE DAVIS**

**By**

**RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER**



**Jewish Community Center of White Plains**

**April 24, 1994**

With heavy hearts we gather here this day to offer a tribute in memory to Maurice Davis, who meant so very much to all of us. Holy halls that usually reverberate with festive songs of praise, today are filled with the plaintive strains of sorrow, for a chord is loosed, the silver chain is broken, tender ties of friendship and of love have been torn asunder by relentless death.

To be sure now, one full season has come and gone since Maury's illness came to its inevitable end. But the passing months have not yet brought their healing. We still mourn. Maury was such a vital, valuable human being. The feeling persists that he had so much more to give and we to receive. And so we remain bereft.

There is precious little that any of us can say by way of comfort to Marion, to Michael and Jay, their wives and children. They feel the loss most keenly. Their wounds are too deep for words to balm them. Still, we can offer them that chatzi nechama, that measure of consolation that comes with the knowledge that they do not sorrow alone. Many others feel an aching emptiness this day. Indeed, this entire community grieves for it has lost its pride and its crown.

It is altogether fitting and proper, therefore, that this service of remembrance be held in this place. After all, Maury was the rabbi of the JCC for twenty years. He loved this congregation. He gloried in its past and ceaselessly strove to secure its future. he did everything he humanly could to add to this Temple's outer beauty and inner strength.

You really do not need me to tell you this! You who were and are the members of this congregation know all this far better than do



I. After all, your relationship with Maury spanned the decades, it plumbed the very depths of being. It was cemented by tears of joy and of sorrow alike.

As I speak, many-varied scenes flash before my mind's eye as they must of yours, and Maury is central to them all: Maury as teacher, Maury as exemplar, Maury as a prod to the conscience, Maury as a consoler, a healer of bruised souls. His countless deeds of loving kindness, many of them hidden, known only to giver and receiver and all the more precious for their tender privacy, cannot ever be encompassed by words - certainly by no words of mine.

Yes, Maury bore the burdens of this congregation. You entrusted him with them: the burden of shaping this Temple and guarding its sacred objects, the burden of attending to your life-cycle rites, the burden of daily teaching, by precept and example, aye, and that most painful burden of all, when he walked with you when you suffered, yea, even into the valley of the shadow of death, and he endured your pain and sorrow . . . then his own heart was lacerated, and the burden became nigh to unbearable.

Ah! But he also sang this synagogue's songs . . . the songs of people's joys when life was reborn, when health was renewed or vows of love were spoken. He sang other songs as well . . . for you see, our tradition identifies song with inspiration, melody with vision. Even so did Maury sing songs of vision, songs of possibility, the song of dreams. When he healed isolation with community, when he bound sorrow with comfort, rejection with acceptance, separation with inclusion. . . when he strove to awaken a sense of reverence towards Creation, toward this Tent of Meeting on which we live, lest we destroy ourselves by trampling

holiness into dust, then did he sing songs, divinely inspired songs, the songs of hope, the songs of the reach beyond the grasp.

You ought to know that Maury's influence extended far beyond these holy halls, or even the boundaries of this community. He was one of the mainstays of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, that national family of synagogues of which this Temple is a treasured part. He made substantial contributions toward the advancement of our work. Virtually no aspect of our doing was untouched by his creative genius. He spoke at our conventions; he labored on countless Committees and Commissions, he served in our highest leadership councils. Whatever he undertook to do, he did with all his might; ever offering those rich gifts of mind and spirit with which he was endowed.

We are especially indebted to him for his notable and unique contributions to our national youth and camping program. This is the realm in which I came to know him first. Affectionately and universally known in that arena as "Mo-Dean," (for Maury, known also as Moe, and served as dean of countless national youth institutes) he helped to rear generations of young people who today are the professional and lay leaders of our entire religious community. He was a veritable pied-piper, electrifying in his appeal to young people. By a magic all his own, he made Judaism come to life in their hearts. he made it true for them - truer than mere preachment - truer than vague recollection - much truer indeed than pride in a heritage which is mere hearsay and not a true possession.

I suppose his students and campers and youth groupers responded to him because he was the real McCoy, the genuine article, because he embodied the very ideals which he sought to transmit to others.



For you see, young people internalize their values primarily by means of identification with the ego ideal. They follow the teacher who is; rather than the teacher who only persuades with his lips. Maury never taught merely as books enable. He was what he wanted others to be.

He did not just preach social justice, he practiced it. He did not just limn in words his vision of a better world; he resolutely went about the task of shaping that world, a better world, a world that is decent and good and pure. He did not merely extol the worth of ideals; he always stood by them, firmly pledged to attain them, refusing to depart from them, either to please a friend or to appease an enemy.

He certainly manifested an uncommon courage in his quest for the ideal. Just think of his heroic work in rescuing young people from the snares of the cultist movements of our time. What abuse he suffered . . . what risks he courted . . . what a fearsome price he paid. But he knowingly, willingly paid that price. And because he did, numerous young people and their families were saved from adverse, tragic fate.

He manifested a like courage in his personal life. Remember that he was buffeted as were few others by cruel fate, yet he never allowed destiny to crush him. He bore defeat without ever losing heart.

Earlier, I spoke of him as a singer of songs. I meant this metaphorically not literally. Maury's singing voice wasn't as good as all that . . . no threat to the cantorate he. I called him a singer in the sense that his words were a song. He was a wordsmith of uncommon skill. His sermons and essays were sheer

poesy. They were paintings with the gift of speech. They were the music of his soul. And his soul's sublime song filled our own lives with wondrous harmonies.

This above all, Maury was a man overflowing with love.

To begin with, he loved life. He lived it with a fierce intensity and zest. He luxuriated in just being. He allowed no moment of existence to slip by unawares. He seized each golden moment of his life with all his heart and soul and might.

And Maury loved all those who peopled his life. His reach in this regard was wide. His love was seamless. This is why he served not only those who stood near, but those who stood at a greater distance.

Can any of us who knew him ever forget that big bear of a man, his eyes brimming over with love, his arms spread wide to embrace us? So long as I live, that image will gleam in my heart.

The great Chassidic master, Reb Moshe Leib Sassover taught:

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

Maury felt the pain of others. And when he did he went about the task of alleviating that pain. And this is why he had so many friends.



Obviously, the greatest measure of Maury's care was given to those who stood nearest to him: the members of his family and foremost his sons and their spouses. Them, too, he taught not by precept, but the example of his own all-embracing life which they then chose to emulate. Ultimately, he liked what he saw and he gloried in their attainments. As for their children, his grandchildren, of course they were the jewels of his crown.

And he adored Marion as she loved him. She was the true companion of his life and soul. Oh, how she cared for him, and how she requited his love with a love as great as was his. Indeed, during the years of his illness she kept him alive, she virtually willed him to live. Together they walked the way of life these many years, drinking from its one cup - - when it ran bitter, when it ran sweet - - giving true meaning to the words: husband, wife, and marriage.

In sum, then, Maurice Davis lived the kind of life many of us only dream to live - - a life large and generous, bold and adventurous, a life great in the scope of its imagination, magnanimous in forgiveness, courageous as an act of faith, smilingly triumphant over set-backs and disasters.

Now, my instinct told me not to be overly mournful in my comments today; not to evoke sorrow here, but rather happier memories; not to make this a solemn service of remembrance, but rather a celebration of Maury's life. I feel that this is precisely what he would have wanted his final tribute to be. Maury was too life affirming to have this hour dampened and darkened by dirge, by somber strains of sorrow.

Still, we cannot fully repress our sadness and only radiate cheer. Our sense of loss is too great . . . deepened as it is by

the greatness of that gift that was taken from us. Tears, too, are a fitting tribute to Maury, for what are tears, when all is said and done, if not remembered smiles.

Yet his memory can brighten our way as it did throughout his life, above all, the memory of his inner strength, which surely surged from him to Marion and through her to their children. It is a strength that flows to us even now, when we remember him. it steels our own resolution to turn from death to life.

Our liturgy tells us that we do best homage to the dead when our grief sends us back to bless the living. Maurice Davis would have wanted that of us: that we cherish those causes he embraced, that we love the living whom he loved in life.

Let us resolve to do so. Then, though a leaf has fallen to the ground, the trunk will remain firm and strong. And once the winter has past and spring has truly come, new leaves will spring forth from its branches.

Thus will Maury's soul be bound up in the bond of lasting life.



EULOGY FOR MARGERY ROTHSCHILD

BY

RABBI ALEXANDER M. SCHINDLER

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES



Temple Emeth

Teaneck, New Jersey

April 27, 1994

With heavy hearts we gather here this day to bid farewell to a friend, to take our final leave of Marge Rothschild who meant so very much to all of us. Her care sustained us. Her embrace of life inspired us. Her soul's sublime song filled our own lives with wondrous music.

Our grief finds no relief . . . we are almost numbed by sorrow. The suddenness of it all, this ghastly, tragic accident. It is a hideous nightmare from which we crave to wake, but it is all to horrible and true.

Our anguish becomes all the more intolerable when we relate it to the joy that filled us . . . when was it, only four months ago - it seems like eons now. . . when many of us were gathered to mark Chuck and Marge's 50th wedding anniversary. How happy the two were then, and their joy radiated to all of us. They looked forward to spending their remaining years serenely surrounded by family and friends in that beautiful house, with its breathtaking view of the Berkshire Hills, which they had just acquired and in which they delighted so much, and with Trapper prancing about.

But that was not to be. As the Yiddish adage has it: "der mensch tracht un Gott lacht." Human plans are at continual, imminent risk. They crumble abruptly, much like castles of sand built by children 'long the shore when the tides of destiny roll in.

Why? Why did it have to happen? Why this relentless law of life that exacts the price of sorrow for each of its joys, the penalty of loss for each of its gifts? It is a why, alas, which has never been answered and likely never will.

Unfortunately, there is precious little that we can say by way of comfort to Carol, Chuck, Judy, their spouses, and children, and



Marge's sister, Claire. They feel the loss most keenly, but their wounds are too deep for words to balm them. We can only give them that "chatzi nechama," that measure of consolation which comes with the knowledge that they do not grieve alone, that others share their sorrow.

There are many such others today. Look about you and see - an entire community is bereft. Your rabbis count themselves in this companionship of sorrow. We do more today than give voice to the complaints of others. We, too, are sorrow-stricken; our friend is no more. We, too, will miss her presence and feel the want of her tireless care.

How fitting it is that Marge's final tribute be held right here in this place, this synagogue. After all, this is the source from which she drew so much of her strength. Chuck once told me that when they moved to this area, they made it their first task to find a synagogue and they quickly determined to make Emeth their spiritual home.

Marge loved this Temple - she was one of its Trustees. She gloried in its attainments and ceaselessly strove to secure its future. She and Chuck worshipped here with regularity. And they did everything they humanly could to add to this synagogue's outer strength and inner beauty.

But much more than institutional pride was involved in all this, certainly as far as Marge was concerned. It touched rather on her commitments, on her deep-rooted beliefs. She was a daughter of the synagogue in the sense that her actions were motivated largely by the awareness of her Jewishness and its demands. Judaism was her vital force. It was the source that gave her life its vitality and essential direction.

Her Jewish soul was made manifest in countless ways: She served on the Jewish Community Relations Council of Teaneck. She was a long-time member of Sisterhood's National Board. She was a dedicated and dependable leader and worker of the Jewish Braille Institute.

She was a governor of ARZA and travelled to Israel innumerable times to enable Reform Judaism to take root in the modern Jewish State. She counselled the spouses of rabbis through their CCAR Support Group. Rabbi Glaser called me late last night enjoining me to make mention of that fact; he spoke lovingly of her intelligence and her grace.

Marge was consistently gracious. She was also blessed with a well refined sense of the beautiful. This, too, was an aspect of her essentially spiritual nature. For you see, Judaism always identified religion and art; remember, if you will, that the Tabernacle's mastercraftsman was named Betzalel, literally meaning "in the shade of God," that is to say, that he functioned in the divine spirit. Margie delighted in fashioning jewelry. And she was a photographer of uncommon skill. Indeed, her photographs were works of art. Their essence lay not in their preoccupation with the visible. They were rather the external projections of Marge's inner vision.

Much the same can be said of her more recent interest in mythology. Her children wondered about that the other morning when we talked about Marge in the waiting room of the Hartford Hospital. It seems that of late, Marge had been taking courses and reading lots of books and articles on the subject. The reason is clear and it has to do with her spiritual core. For you see, myths are stories which bring to light deep strata buried in the depths of the human spirit. They express the



other-worldly in terms of this world. They show the divine in terms understandable to human beings.

Now, Marge's life of the spirit found its most meaningful expression in the world of music. It is a world which Chuck and she shared, which they both explored, hands held and souls united.

They studied music - learned everything there was to know about composers and the performers and all the fine points of their art. This knowledge enhanced their appreciation of music.

Yet Margie did not stop with its analysis. She did not remain a detached, passive listener. She also felt the music, with every fiber of her being, allowing it to wash over her, to cleanse her soul from the dust of every-day life.

In many ways, music was her religion, and this is no belittling of her life of faith. To begin with she loved liturgical music with a passion. Steinberg was one of her favorite composers of synagogue song and we will hear one of his compositions in a moment, Marge's favorite, the Steinberg Shalom Rav. In any event, all music, whether we call it sacred or secular, is no human invention. It is the gift of the Gods, the speech of angels.

Now Margie's many attainments notwithstanding, she was essentially a humble person. She did not bloat with pride, or brook any pretense. She was exceedingly gentle, never strident, always restrained. I never heard her lift her voice in anger or impatience. She held strong conviction, nonetheless; she knew what she wanted, what she wanted others to be. But she never bullied. She preferred to persuade. She taught not by precept

but rather by example. Humility, patience, simplicity, truth - these elements combined in her in wondrous harmony.

This above all, Margery cared for people. Her reach in this regard was wide. Her love was seamless. This is why she served not only those who stood near, but also those who stood at a greater distance. I dare say that a great many of us sitting here this day thought that we were her special friend.

Of course, the greatest measure of her love was devoted to those who stood closest to her: her children and their spouses, her sister, and above all her grandchildren. They were the very jewels of her crown. When you saw her with them, with any children for that matter, you saw Margie at her finest.

Last, but not in the least, Marge loved Chuck with an abounding love, supporting him with her quiet strength in everything he undertook to do. I always admired how she opened her home to Chuck's mother when her mother-in-law no longer could take care of herself. That couldn't have been an easy time, but there was nary a word of complaint. She knew that Chuck needed to do that, and that was enough for her. His pain was her pain, his joy her gladness. And so together they walked the way of life in perfect union and devotion to each other. It was an exemplary marriage: the transmutation of romantic love into a genuine and indestructible human love.

Chuck will miss his Marge dreadfully, once he recovers from his own bed of illness, as we all fervently pray he will. May God grant skill and wisdom to those who minister to him so that he will be restored to full usefulness in the midst of those who love him. Hopefully, he will then find the strength to turn from the silence of the grave to the tasks of life, if only for the



sake of his children and grandchildren who continue to depend on his fortitude and care.

There is a Talmudic epitaph that is reserved only for those who are endowed with a special talent in the art of living, who bequeath a rich spiritual legacy to humankind. It reads as follows:

Chaval Al D'ovdin V'lo Mishtak Chin

Alas for those who are gone and cannot be replaced  
Margery Rothschild is gone and cannot be replaced. But her memory continues to be a benediction!



EULOGY FOR

MARGERY ROTHSCHILD

by

RABBI LOUIS SIGEL

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES



TEMPLE EMETH  
Teaneck, New Jersey  
April 27, 1994



Carol, Judy and Bill, Susan and Charles: I know you loved your mother.

I know you honored her by that love, in keeping with the Fifth Commandment, in your childhood and as you grew to maturity. But last week's Torah portion, K'doshim, asks something more of you. Did we not read: *יִרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ* You shall fear your mother and your father. A more modern translation of the operative verb is to have deep respect for, to "stand in awe of." You are to revere, stand in awe, marvel at your mother as well as your father. Filial devotion needs that blend of love and deep respect at one and the same time.

I ask you to stand in awe at her inherent quality of naturalness: Margery was the most ingenuous human I've ever met. There were no chokhmas about her. Maybe it was the midwestern upbringing that engendered it. I only know that the law of kindness was on her tongue. I experienced it from the first days when my young family came to Teaneck 34 years ago, to the habit she lately had of bringing into her home and into her heart lone members of her community who were bereaved of their spouses, to share a Shabbat meal with Chuck and her. Hers was a young, girlish sweetness that pervaded every relationship she had. Her tastes were simple. How joyous was her springtime when the circus came to town, a joy she would share as she accompanied our young Debbie to Madison Square Garden; or the happiness she would derive from photographing a beautiful flower growing wild by the side of the road.

In an age of patent fakery, of daily dissimulation, how can you not stand in awe of this woman whose genuineness will stand as a challenge to us all.

We must acknowledge with deep respect her profound loyalty for Reform Judaism: after all, she was the legatee of midwestern Reform Judaism, the spiritual home for European Liberal Judaism as it first encountered these American shores. Margery's Reform Judaism that she and Chuck brought to this area was a no-nonsense Reform, unrelenting in its rationalism, untrammelled as yet by nostalgia for a dim past. And she was fiercely loyal to it and unflinchingly protective of it. So, she aspired to leadership in this congregation and served it with distinction as president of its Sisterhood, as a member of the Board of Trustees and as a member of its Executive board. And when American Reform Judaism intuited that it

was time for a greater Reform option in the new State of Israel, Margery's sense of fairness, of equity and justice made her a veritable tigress for ARZA, the new Association of Reform Zionists of America. There was no question of the confusion of political Zionism with her native brand of classical Reform Judaism. At Temple Emeth, she was ARZA, and she was the chair for its Committee on Israel for many years.

And shall you not revere her incredible capacity for forgiveness and reconciliation?

A dozen years ago, Margery suffered a deep personal hurt. It was an injury to her personhood that was inadvertently and unnecessarily caused by my own momentary lapse of rabbinic leadership that failed to thwart the misguided judgments of certain temple officials. Yet, so strong was Margery's heart, after a few weeks, she resumed her weekly Shabbat attendance at Emeth. I marveled silently as I encountered that healing balm of reconciliation in every one of her sincere Shabbat Shalom greetings, in her warm smile and her dignified willingness to lay petty things aside and to get on with the business of Temple mutuality. I shall personally miss Margery's bright encouraging look, a look that was compounded of equal parts of quiet understanding and genuine glee at human encounter.

Margery was a true disciple of our ancestor Aaron: loving peace and pursuing peace, loving all humans and bringing them close to the Torah through forgiveness and reconciliation.

The wisest of women builds her house." Margery Rothschild built that house you children were reared in as well as this house of the Jewish spirit with her wisdom that was almost Biblical in its simplicity, in its capacity for loyalty, and in its utter humanity.

יהיה זכרה לברכה

May her memory be for a blessing.



FUNERAL OF HENRY GREENWALD  
Comments by Rhea Schindler



April 3, 1994  
Kingston, Pennsylvania

It is with a heavy heart that I stand before you today. I speak for my husband whose peremptory duties prevented him from standing here, as he wanted. But I speak for myself as well. We both loved Henry Greenwald and his Sylvia. We too are sorrow stricken; our friend is no more. We too will miss his presence and feel the want of his tireless care.

To be sure now, in a sense, Henry's death came as a kind of release. He was the prisoner of his own body for many years now. But his mind seemed knowing to the very end, and his caring heart gleamed from eyes though they were dimmed by illness. And so his dying is not easy to accept. He was such a precious human being. The feeling persists that he had much more to give and we to receive and we stand bereft.

Our hearts go out to the bereaved - - to Michael, to Jonathan, Ann, Gabrielle and grandson, Andy, but above all to Sylvia - - they feel the loss most keenly. Yet our words can offer them but scant comfort. Only the knowledge that there are others who share their loss will give them a measure of consolation. And there are many such "others" today. An entire community is bereft.

Your rabbi has given voice to what Henry meant to this Temple and to the larger community of which it is a part. He was its strong stay, its pillar, its very foundation. You who live here know this well and there is precious little that I can tell you that you do not know so very much better yourself. After all, your relationship spans the decades. It was cemented by tears of joy and sorrow alike.



But I can tell you that Henry's influence extended far beyond these holy halls or the boundaries of Wilkes-Barre. He was one of the foremost leaders of our national family of congregations, sustaining our religious community with unfaltering devotion. He served on the Union's National Board of Trustees, held high office for many years and chaired numerous committees and commissions. Ultimately, his peers named him a life trustee, a honor which is accorded only to a few and only to the most deserving.

His leadership of America's Reform movement was intelligent and forceful. His was a quiet, not a clamorous leadership. He did not speak often, but when he did, he was in full command and his words were heeded. Everyone respected the soundness of his counsel and its wisdom. And this above all, they recognized his rectitude. They saw him to be a man of principle, someone who stood by his ideals; resolutely pledged to attain them, refusing to depart from them, either to please a friend or to appease an enemy.

Henry was instrumental in the acquisition of nearby Camp Harlam. This surely was his finest and most lasting contribution to the UAHC. He persuaded Betty and Joe Harlam to proffer their generous gift and then he helped nurture Camp Harlam from infancy to sturdy adulthood.

This camp has become a bright and shining jewel in the crown of the Reform Jewish community. It is the most effective vehicle for the transmission of Judaism at our command. It has helped us rear a generation of our leaders both professional and lay. Many young and even not so young families had their genesis in the

encounters which Camp Harlem afforded. In a word, this camp has brought Judaism to life in the hearts of our young people, and because it continues to do so, it serves to secure the Jewish future.

This, and so much more did Henry Greenwald do for us all. And this is why we mourn his passing along with Jonathan and Michael, their spouses and Henry and Sylvia's grandson, Andy.

This is why our hearts go out especially to Sylvia. Was there ever a wife more constant than was she? Oh how she cared for him, in sickness, in health. She loved him as he loved her, with an abounding love. Together they walked the way of life these many years, drinking from it one cup, when it ran bitter, when it ran sweet, giving true meaning to the words: husband, wife, and marriage.

May Sylvia, may we all, find the strength to turn from death to life, if only for the sake of those who continue to depend upon our care.

HANNAH SARAH TRAUTMANN

BRIT BANOT

16 JANUARY 1994

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## *Parents*

Today we celebrate with you the birth of our daughter and the blessing of children. Hope, joy and the wonder of life have been renewed within us through this little girl. Through her we reaffirm our enduring covenant with life and with Adonai, our Creator.

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו במצותיו  
וצונו על קדוש החיים.

Blessed is the source of life in the universe for commanding us to sanctify life.

## *Debby*

We joyfully bring our daughter into the Covenant of Israel. May she be comforted beneath the wings of Shechinah. May the light we see in her eyes, and the light she has brought to our hearts shine on those who come to know her. May we be ever appreciative of the privilege of parenthood and provide for her a home filled with kedusha, with holiness, with Torah, with simchah, with joy and with tzedakah, righteous acts. We present to her these candlesticks for the home she will someday create. May the light of Shabbat illumine her home. May the world she will come to know be a world bathed in the light of shalom, of wholeness and peace.

*(Debby lights candle)*

## *Bob*

May our daughter be a blessing to those who know her. May she grow to be strong in body and mind. May she become a person who greets the world with passion, courage, humility, humor and patience. May we have the ability to love and nurture her with wisdom, understanding and tenderness. May we provide for her a loving and secure home. May we provide opportunities for learning and enable her to find her own place among the community of Israel and understand her purpose in the world. May we light her path with wisdom and guide her toward becoming the best person she can be.

*(Bob lights candle)*



*Debby and Bob*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה, יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ  
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְהִכְנִיסָהּ בְּבְרִית עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל.

We praise you, Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, who hallows us  
with Mitzvot and commands us to bring our daughter into the Covenant of  
our people Israel.

*Responsively:*

Every person has a name  
Given her by God and by her parents.

*Every person has a name  
Given her by her stature, and given by her smile.*

Every person has a name  
Given her by the planets and given her by her neighbors.

*Every person has a name  
Given her by her celebrations and given her by her craft.*

Every person has a name  
Given her by mistakes and given her by her longings.

*Every person has a name  
Given her by her love.*

-- Adapted from a poem by the Israeli poet Zelda

## *Meditation*

How strange it seems that in times of joy we are so often disturbed by unexpected moments of reflective sadness. How strange that during our celebrations of life we are caught unprepared by haunting thoughts of profound absence. Even now, in our joy in this beautiful baby and in our celebration of her name, a moment of quiet allows the shadow that seems forever at the edge of our lives to intrude.

As Jews; no, as people, every moment of joy and celebration must be darkened by this absence. By this shadow created by each life of millions of lives that knew too few moments of joy and celebration. By each death of millions of deaths that disturb even now our joy in children and temper our hope in their future and ours.

So on this day of giving new names, we again commit ourselves to also remember their names. We commit ourselves to remember the thousands of Hannahs and Sarahs whose names will not be forgotten because this day we have remembered. Whose beauty and innocence were as profound as our Hannah Sarah's, and who shall be remembered again because we have determined to remember.

We have given our child names in their names.

-- *Written by Robert Trautmann*

*Saba*

אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, קים אתהילדה הזאת לאביה  
ולאמה, ויקרא שמה בישראל... ישמח האב ביוצאת  
חלציו ותגל אמה בפרי בטנה. זאת הקטנה גדולה תהיה.  
כשם שנכנסה לברית בן תכנס לתורה, לחפה, ולמעשים  
טובים.



## *Saba and Savta*

Our God and God of our Mothers and Fathers, sustain this child through her parents' loving care. Let her be known among our people Israel by the name Hannah Sarah. May her name be a source of joy and may she be inspired to serve our people and all humankind. May loving parents rejoice in her growth of body and soul. As mother and father have brought her into the Covenant, so may she be brought with steady guidance to...

*(All gathered)*

*the study of Torah, a life of good deeds and to a warm and loving family. And we all say, Amen.*

*Bob*

Hannah's name comes from the Hebrew, meaning grace, gracious and merciful. In the Bible, Hannah, is the mother of the Prophet Samuel, the wife of Elkanah.

*Debby*

The name Sarah means "noble" or "princess". Sarah is a name given to her also for her great grandmother Sali. Sali was a woman of great strength. She was worldly, intelligent, determined, and a loving grandparent and great grandparent. We pray that Hannah Sarah will live to see her dreams fulfilled: that she will see the sights of the world and know the profound blessing of holding children, and even great grandchildren, as did her great grandmother.

*Parents, Grandparents and Family*

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, בורא פרי הגפן.



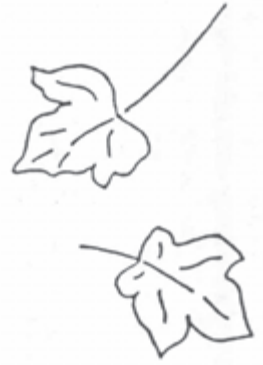
We praise you Adonai our God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine. Amen.

ברוך אתה, יי אלהינו, מלך העולם, שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו  
לזמן הזה.

Blessed is the Source of Life in the Universe who has given us life, sustained us and enables us to reach this day. Amen.

## Parents

Hannah Sarah, our precious daughter,  
May you live to see your world fulfilled,  
May your destiny be for worlds still to come,  
and may you trust in generations past and yet to be.  
May your heart be filled with intuition  
and your words be filled with insight.  
May songs of praise ever be on your tongue  
and your vision be on a straight path before you.  
May your eyes shine with the light of holy words  
and your face reflect the brightness of the heavens.  
May your lips ever speak wisdom  
and your fulfillment be in righteousness  
even as you yearn to hear the words  
of the Holy Ancient One of Old.



--Talmud, Berachot 17a

Rabbi Sagal



מִי שֶׁבֵּרַךְ אֲמוֹתֵינוּ שָׂרָה, רִבְקָה, רָחֵל, וְלֵאָה, הוּא יְבָרֵךְ  
אֶת־הַיֶּלֶדָה הַרְבֵּה וְיִשְׁמְרָהּ מִכָּל־צָרָה וְצוּקָה. וְיִזְכּוּ הַזִּקְנִיָּה  
לְגִדּוּלָהּ לְחֻנּוּכָהּ וּלְחֻבּוּמָהּ. וְיִהְיוּ יָדֶיהָ וְלִבָּהּ לֵאל אֲמוּנָה,  
וְנֹאמֶר: אָמֵן.

May the one who blessed our mothers, Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel, bless  
this child and keep her from all harm. May we rear her to dedicate her life in  
faithfulness to God, her heart receptive always to the traditions of our people.  
Then shall she bring blessings to her parents, her people and all the world.

## Saba

יְבָרֵכֶךָ יי וְיִשְׁמְרֶכָּהּ,  
יֵאָר יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיִחְנֶכָּהּ,  
יֵשָׂא יי פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וְיֵשֶׂם לָךְ שְׁלוֹם.

Motzi - Jonah, Naomi and Micah



Comments by RHEA EHINOLO

Rhea's Comments, Funeral of Henry Greenwald April 3, 1994 Kingston PA

It is with a heavy heart that I stand before you today.

I speak for my husband whose peremptory duties prevented him from  
standing here, as he wanted.

But I speak for myself as well.

We both loved Henry Greenwald and his Sylvia.

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

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

To be sure now, in a sense, Henry's death came as a kind of release.

He was the prisoner of his own body for many years now.

But his mind <sup>seemed</sup> ~~was~~ knowing to the very end,

and his caring heart gleamed from eyes though dimmed by illness. <sup>they were</sup>

And so his dying is not easy to accept.

He was such a precious human being.

The feeling persists that he had much more to give

and we to receive and we stand bereft.

Our hearts go out to the ~~immediate~~ bereaved.

-- to Michael <sup>to</sup> and Jonathan, their spouses and children, <sup>Ann Rachel the and grandsons</sup>

<sup>but</sup> and above all to Sylvia -- <sup>Andy</sup>

They feel the loss most keenly.

Yet our words can offer them but scant comfort.

Only the knowledge that there are others who share their loss,

will give them a measure of consolation

And there <sup>are</sup> many such "others" today.

An entire community is bereft.



Your rabbi will ~~give~~ (has given) voice to what Henry meant to  
to this Temple and to the larger community of which  
it is a part.

He was its strong stay, its pillar, its very foundation.  
You who live here know this well and there is precious little  
that I can tell you that you do not know so very much  
better yourself.

After all, your relationship spans the decades  
<sup>was</sup> It is cemented by tears of joy and sorrow alike.

But I can tell you that Henry's influence extended far beyond  
these holy halls or the boundaries of Wilkes-Barre.

He was one of the foremost leaders of our national family  
of congregations  
sustaining our religious community ~~an~~ with unfaltering devotion.  
He served on the Union's National Board of Governors  
held high office for many yeras  
and chaired numerous of ~~its~~ committees and Commissions.  
Ultimately, his peers named him a life trustee,  
an honor which is accorded only to a few  
and only to the most deserving.

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

His was a quiet, not a clamorous leadership.

He did not speak often, but when he did he was in full command  
and his words were heeded.

Everyone respected the soundness of his counsel and its wisdom  
And this above all, they recognized his rectitude.

They saw him to be a man of principle,  
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This surely was his finest and most lasting contribution  
to the UAHC.

He persuaded Betty and Joe proffer their generous gift  
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to sturdy adulthood.

This camp has become a bright and shining jewel in the crown of the  
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It is the most effective vehicle for the transmission of Judaism in  
our command.

It has helped us rear a generation of our leaders  
both professional and lay.

Many young and even not so young families had their genesis in the  
encounters which Camp Harlem afforded.

In a word, this camp has brought Judaism to life in the hearts of  
our young people

and because it continues to do so,

it serves to secure the Jewish future.

This and so much more did Henry Greenwald do for us all.

And this is why we mourn his passing

along with Jonathan and Michael ~~and~~ their spouses and children.

This is why our hearts go out especially to Sylvia...

Was there ever a wife more constant than was she?

Oh how she cared for him, in sickness, in health.

She loved him, as he <sup>loved</sup> her, with an abounding love.

Together they walked the way of life these many years,

drinking from its one cup

when it ran bitter, when it ran sweet,

giving true meaning to the words: husband, wife, and marriage.

<sup>Sylvia</sup> May ~~she~~, may we all, find the strength to turn from death to life,

if only for the sake of those who continue to depend

upon our care...



## Eulogy for Rabbi Eugene J. Lipman

Delivered by Albert Vorspan  
Temple Sinai, Washington DC, January 16, 1994

Essie gave me the honor of saying a few words about Gene because she said that Gene and I were brothers — spiritual brothers. We were inseparable colleagues and friends, especially during Gene's years at the UAHC. Shirley and Essie were equally close. Gene and I co-authored a book called "Justice and Judaism" which argued that those two were also inseparable: we co-directed the Commission on Social Action, which Gene largely invented and shaped. We even shared the same cell in the civil rights days in St. Augustine, Florida. We were so close that Rabbi Roland Gittlesohn used to call us simply *Lipspan*. But Gene Lipman was a unique phenomenon. Frankly, he was as close to being the Last of the Just, a true *lomed voynik*, as anybody I ever knew personally. That kind of *person*, that kind of *Jew*, it took more than 74 years to make. It took 3,000 years, to make a Gene Lipman.

Gene was a giant oak, giving shade and protection and sustenance to so many. He was a man of such quiet strength, such depth and absolute integrity that he awed many people, sometimes including me. I confess a secret: Gene was a hero to me before I ever even met him. I knew that as an army chaplain in Europe during World War II, Gene had virtually gone AWOL to help save Jews, relocating holocaust survivors to Israel and America by steering many to the clandestine boats that waited to smuggle them into pre-Israel Palestine. And for those Jews waiting in DP camps, Gene poured out his energy tending to their religious and practical needs. But I do not remember ever hearing about this from Gene, only from other chaplains and especially from the survivors themselves, who regarded Gene as a living legend. Gene served in the Army in Europe from 1944 to 1946 and stayed on after the war, serving as a liaison between the Haganah and the U.S. army until 1948, working for the IRO and simply saving Jews one by one. Essie did a little underground work and judicious smuggling herself when she joined Gene in Germany in 1947, working on resettlement, serving as a nurse in a clandestine truck transport.

Many of these refugees later found their way to 838 Fifth Avenue, New York City, headquarters of the UAHC, where Gene Lipman came to work in 1951. Gene always had time for each of them, advising, counseling, laying out options, helping a would-be artist here, a job-seeker there, resolving a dispute here. Some of these people were very difficult. Some were, frankly, worldclass *nudnicks*. Once I arrived at the Union, in 1953, I began to plead with Gene not to give so much time to people off the street, ever perfect strangers. He would respond that we are supposed to perpetuate Judaism, how do we do that without perpetuating Jews? Jews in trouble. Jews in pain. Jews in search, underdogs, whether Jewish or not — Gene was the giant oak enfolding them all.

Gene left an indelible imprint on the 20th century history of American Reform Judaism. At the UAHC, as president of the CCAR, rabbinic conference, here at Temple Sinai.



This was a rabbi who was serious about liberal Judaism, who demanded rigorous study and competent scholarship, especially from himself, and who embodied in his own person the most exacting standards of excellence. At the UAHC, he was the creator of the Department of Synagogue Activities and Management. It was Gene who assembled the panels of distinguished architects and artists and mobilized their talents in the post-war synagogue building boom, bringing fresh beauty to the modern synagogue in America. It was Gene, working with the late and great Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, who organized the national Commission on Social Action. And, working with Eisendrath and Rabbi Jay Kaufman, Kivie Kaplan, and myself, conceived the idea for the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, now one of the proudest jewels of our movement, thanks to the brilliant tenure of Rabbi Hirsch, Marvin Braiterman, and now David Saperstein.

It was Gene, in this temple, who fought to sustain the highest standards in Jewish education, adult education, worship and daily observance, and worked with so many of you to create Temple Sinai's exceptional social action and inter-faith pioneering efforts, serving local food banks and pantries and establishing the innovative Assisted Housing Unites for Homeless Families, making certain — as Rabbi Reiner and the SAC have insisted — that Temple Sinai not only stands proudly on Military Road but stands for something in the life of the larger community. The Washington Inter-Faith Conference, of which he was a founder, reflected Gene's deepest values.

And it was Gene, as president of the CCAR, who insisted that Reform Judaism not become a religion of convenience for the lazy but a demanding and serious commitment to personal *mitzvot*, not only in the social and ethical realm but also in the life of the mind and the spirit. And, as Joe Glaser noted, Gene cared most about the hurting rabbi, the lonely rabbi, the rabbi from Yennavelt.

Gene was a wonderful co-author. But we had our occasional differences. Gene could be stubborn, even ornery when he felt principle was at stake. But beyond principle, there were questions of style. Gene loved nouns — simple, unadorned, honest — like him. I loved the flourish of adjectives. He preferred direct declarative sentences. I had a weakness for hyperbole and rhetoric. Gene liked to edit me leaner. I liked to embroider his words — or, as he put it, *furteitched* and *ferbasserred*. He would also correct my Yiddish. But this reminiscence is, alas, unedited.

Gene had a wisdom tempered with compassion. I remember when Dr. Raphael Lemkin, the author of the Genocide Convention, first came to our office in 1953 — one of those guys whom Roland Gittlesohn refers to as *nudnicks* who made history. He marched in, unannounced, demanding to know what *mishigas* we were wasting our time on and how dare we be devoting our attention to such things as civil rights and church-state separation, when his Genocide Convention was languishing in the United Nations and even in our nation's capital. How could any other issue claim the priority attention of the Jewish community? I fumed and tried to make excuses to escape



Lemkin's single-issue zealotry. Gene? Gene gave him his *ear*, his *time*, and finally his *desk* and of course the very first of our Issues of Conscience series was devoted to the Genocide Convention.

When Alex Ross, a former chair of the Commission on Social Action, was in a hospital in New York City for heart repair, Gene called and said, look, Alex, you will need to do a lot of walking. It's hard to walk on the streets of New York. Don't go to malls — they're antiseptic. Go to the Metropolitan Museum and walk to your heart's delight in an atmosphere of culture.

Gene was at heart, a country person, whether vacationing with Essie in their beloved Mohegan Island in Maine, or their favorite kibbutz, *Gvat Chaim*, in Israel, or in his retirement, the plot of land in Dickerson, on Charlie Fenvesi's farm, where Gene cultivated with such gusto. Gene exalted in vegetable farming and splitting wood. Indeed, David Saperstein tells me that, as a wedding present, Gene presented David and his bride, Ellen, with a cord of his own freshly split wood for their fireplace. Many of you read the delicious story in the newspaper last year about Gene's farming adventures — how he would deliver his own vegetables to nearby shelters *shlepping* the produce from his farm in his pick-up truck to the food pantries, and the poor souls there would exclaim: oh, here come the Vegetable Man! In his beat-up overalls and beard and shining eyes, he looked like Greenleaf in Captain Kangaroo. Gene knew his farming. When he heard that Shirley and I were planing to grow garlic in our vegetable garden, Gene said not garlic — shallots. And of course, he arrived in Hillsdale, New York, soon after to show us exactly how to do it.

Gene was incorruptible. I don't mean in the obvious ways, but in the soft and subtle ways in which most of us are corrupted — the occasional self-dramatization, the seductions of credit, title, the inflated press release, the over-stuffed bio, the pecking orders and tables of organization, the ego trips and the power plays. These games were not for Gene. Gene Lipman was unvarnished, solid oak — straight, strong, himself — a tower of dignity and self-respect. When he volunteered in his retirement to help out at ACLU and at the Religious Action Center, he said he would prefer to file papers, thank you very much.

In my word picture, I may have painted Gene too stern. But he had a playful, fun-loving side. He loved to laugh. Edie Miller and Vivian Mendeles, early co-workers with us at the UAHC, recall the spontaneous explosions of mirth during which Gene lead us dancing atop our desks in a Reform version of the *kezodski*. Or the time we interviewed Myron Schoen to become the Director of Synagogue Activities and we auditioned him with patter songs from Gilbert and Sullivan. And the time we attended a delightful party at the Lipman home in Rockville Centre, Maryland — and lo, at the stroke of 10, Gene appeared, smiling and cherubic in his pajamas, pointing to his watch, wishing us all a tender g'night. Alex Schindler recalls a cold winter night at a NFTY conclave where Alex and Gene drifted down the stairway in their green tutus!



Gene had so many parts, all integrated into a remarkable unity, but the essence of Gene Lipman, of course, is his family. Gene and Essie were — are — one word since they first met as school kids at the ages of 6 and 7, falling in love for keeps at the age of 13. Two separate persons, not clones, but connected by such bonds as love, friendship, sharing and tenderness that they warmed the hearts of all who knew them. Last year they celebrated their 50th anniversary, surrounded in love and affection by their children and grandchildren. How proud Essie and Gene were of Jonathan, their professor and scholar; of David, their rabbi, whose ordination inspired Gene to deliver one of the most unforgettable charges ever given to young rabbis; and their never-to-be-forgotten son, Michael, whose memory will always be a blessing. And the wonderful grandkids — Avi, Kivie, Mia, and Shira — who enriched and blessed their lives and who loved to gather around Saba as he sounded the piano at family *simchats*, who used to send him video tapes of their musical and dancing events, and soar up at his encouragement. How they brought consolation even to the last days of Gene's illness! Our hearts go out to all of them and to Gene's sisters, Riva and Gerry, loving parts of a remarkably supportive *mishpochah*, which also includes their wonderful neighbors of all faiths and ages.

I last saw Gene on the historic day of the Rabin-Arafat handshake. Immediately after that stunning ceremony, I rushed to the hospital to see Gene who was recovering from the operation and was filled with courage and hope. Gene had watched the event on TV, and he gave me his typically lucid, positive, pithy analysis of the event. Mostly nouns. It was a day of such promise and hope and Gene, while certainly not looking forward to the hard therapies ahead, seemed confident, strong, determined. He also wanted to *shmooze*. Did I have any good jokes, preferable new? Any good gossip? How were Shirley and our *mishpochah*? We kissed each other goodbye. I am so grateful for that memory.

But, like each of you, I am even more grateful for having been touched in my life by Gene Lipman. He died too soon, too young, but what a life! No stranger to tragedy, broken-heartedness made him more deeply human. He made of his life an affirmation of love, of faith in God, of caring, of decency, of sifting through life with energy and hope, of Jewish meaning and purpose. **Gene Lipman's life was his finest sermon** and we will **re-live** it and **cherish** it in our hearts as long as we live. Rest in peace, dear friend.

By Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler

It was with disappointment tinged with sadness that I read Prof. Jack Wertheimer's article titled, "Proselytizing is Bad for Jews."

Disappointed because he wrote a 1074 word essay on the basis of a brief report in a newspaper without taking the trouble to read my speech -- a most unprofessorial act, it seems to me.

And sadness for two reasons -- first, because his words place him among those who are ashamed of the notion of an assertive Judaism, who believe that it has little if anything to offer to the world; and second, because he fails to grasp the historic nature of the opportunity that now avails itself to offer our faith and the spiritual strength it contains to the many of our fellow Americans who have no religious affiliation but who are searching for meaning in their lives.

Indeed, Professor Wertheimer bypasses my central theme in its entirety, and instead initiates a multiparagraph diatribe against Reform Judaism and its synagogues which distorts reality and denigrates the Reform rabbinate.

Had he attended our Assembly and seen and felt the earnestness with which our nearly five thousand delegates approach their faith -- the fervor with which they voiced their prayers, the eagerness with which they engaged in Torah study -- he could not have written as he did. Come to think of it, he might have anyway, for I find that those who hate usually see ~~see~~ what they want to see and hear what their bias inclines them to hear.



Professor Wertheimer manifests such a sinat chinam, an unreasoned hatred of Reform. Just as one case in point, he writes that Reform Rabbis are "so intimidated by the Outreach 'lobby' that they will not publicly affirm the desirability of Jews marrying Jews for fear of offending or alienating interfaith families." What nonsense this! He isn't describing any Reform Rabbi I know!

Indeed, at the Baltimore Biennial, and before an audience equally massive, I made precisely the kind of plea which Professor Wertheimer accuses us of muting. I said then, that "we must lose no opportunity to persuade our children either to marry Jews or to urge their non-Jewish partners to opt for Judaism...We need to affirm our Judaism frankly, freely, proudly, and without fear that it will offend the non-Jewish spouses. Quite the contrary, it can only enhance their regard for Judaism, for if we lack in missionary zeal, they are bound to surmise that we have no message at all, or, at any rate, that we do not prize it."

This indeed, is my central thesis: that Judaism, from its very beginnings was a missionary religion; that our Tanach and subsequent rabbinic literature underscored the compelling need for such conversionary activity -- indeed, the prophets made Israel's mission a clarion call; and that it was only when our enemies instituted severely restrictive legislation that our conversionary zeal waned. But such restrictive legislation no longer inhibits us. Then why not resume our ancient vocation of being champions of Judaism?

Why does Professor Wertheimer resist the notion of an assertive Judaism? Is it that his self-image still mirrors the contempt of our



traducers? Or does he, perhaps, think that Judaism has little if anything to offer to our world?

Well, look about you and see: 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 the Judaic emphasis on loving the stranger -- and the Jewish experience of being the stranger -- help to wedge open the doors of the world's conscience?

Consider 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." Cannot Judaism's sanctification of time and space and of the daily things of life satisfy that hunger?

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

Professor Wertheimer charges that Reform proselytism encourages "religious switching," that we promote the trend toward religious identity as "a matter subject to easy disposal," indeed, that we are encouraging individuals "to treat religion yet as another replaceable shmate, a cheap suit...and dispose of it when the fashion passes." That is an affront not just to me personally, but above all to the many thoughtful, feeling men and women who have within their own brief lives recapitulated the entirety of the Jewish experience -- the exile, the

longing, the returning in love. He owes these people an abject apology. His intemperate language ill befits an academician. It also violates the manner in which Judaism enjoins us to behave towards those who have chosen to share our faith and fate.

And let his thoughts and language be tempered by the knowledge that fully 50% of those who are raised as Conservative Jews <sup>are currently marrying</sup> ~~also marry~~ non-Jews -- at least so the demographers instruct us.

My dream is 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, that could nourish humanity's highest aspirations.

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 Tenach and the Chazal, from Bible and Commentary that define Jewish "chosenness" not as exclusive but as exemplary, not as separatist but as representative, not as closed but as open, not as rejecting but as all-embracing and compassionate.

"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."