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Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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Hadoar, 1959.

HADOAR Banquet 59-7
N.Y. June 15, 1959

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My dear friends. It has always been my belief that

The Jew survived in the Diaspora because he centered his life in the ~~congregation~~ⁱⁿ the school, and the ~~synagog~~ⁱⁿ the synagogue. The ~~congregation and~~ synagogue came into ~~being~~^{during the Babylonian} exile as surrogate for Temple, state and government. It proved so accordant to their needs and so consonant with their character that the returning exiles brought it back with them to restored Judea. It remained, of course, with those Jewish communities who did not return. ~~Professor Moore correctly remarks, "The necessity of such an institution as the synagogue was even greater outside of Palestine than in it; for while at home the Jews had a religious center in the Temple and a bond of union in its worship, especially at the festivals, in foreign lands there was nothing of the kind."~~

It was because in post-exilic times Jewish life in the Diaspora found a sustaining and nourishing center in the synagogue which was also the school -- or rather, was primarily the school -- that it was able not alone to survive, but to grow intellectually so sturdy and spiritually so creative that in critical times it was able to come to the aid of Judaism in Palestine. This was true in the days of Ezra, and

again, if the opinion of the Rabbis is valid, in the days of Hillel. כולל גמרא מן המאה השלישית, מזהר ונלמד מזהר אל כולל 301 ב.

"When the Torah was forgotten from Israel, Ezra came up from Babylonia and established it. When it was again forgotten, Hillel, the Babylonian, came up and established it." In subsequent generations, too, the academies and scholars of Babylon were able to replenish the dwindling spiritual and intellectual life of the Jewish community in Palestine. In the middle ages it was Jews from the Diaspora who founded the great centers of mysticism in Safed and elsewhere in the Holy Land. Throughout modern times Rabbinic scholars from the dispersion founded academies in Palestine, even as other Jews founded colonies and settlements and reestablished after heroic struggle and with untold sacrifices the State of Israel.

In the past, centers of Jewish life shifted from one part of the world to another. At times several important centers existed simultaneously. In our day we saw the oldest and noblest center of Jewish life in Europe practically destroyed. Providentially, two other important centers ^{have} ~~are~~ arising ⁱⁿ today and are growing in strength and significance -- the national center in Israel, and the Diaspora center in the United States. The American Jewish community owes it to itself and to history to take over its full measure of responsibility for carrying on the historic work of Judaism ^{and of Jewish survival}. For this mighty task it will have to find, in the future, the resources within itself. It will no longer be able to live on borrowing. It can no longer expect its spiritual and cultural provisions to come to it from the Old World. Old World Jewry no longer exists as a provisioning center. We shall have to prepare our own victuals.

Fortunately, we are not altogether unprepared or unequipped for this task, not alone in external facilities, but also, I believe, in inner resources. American Jewry is organized, perhaps overorganized. ~~At the moment it is somewhat helplessly enmeshed in a veritable network of organization.~~ It possesses if not a sufficient, at least not a meager quota of synagogues, schools, libraries, Rabbinic seminaries, and social agencies. More are in the process of building. American Jews have also demonstrated a fine sense of solidarity and loyalty, particularly in these last desperate years when unprecedented disaster swept over their fellow Jews in Europe and when the historic challenge reached them to assist in the restoration of the State of Israel. Their reactions were those of a sound and healthy organism. A great hour did not find them a small people. All this is good building material for the future.

But the wise architects of the future of the American Jewish community will do well to use all this good human material, so readily available, of loyalty, pride and responsibility, of generosity and organizational skill, to strengthen the central

and the indispensable institution of the Jewish community, the synagogue, ^{which is also} ~~which is also~~ the school.

The synagogue, in its inception and for long centuries thereafter, was primarily a place of instruction rather than a place of prayer.

If our reasoning is correct, if the synagogue is to become the institution primarily responsible for the survival of the American Jewish community, then it must drastically re-orient itself. It must shift its emphasis from a place of worship to a place of serious religious education, far more extensive and far more intensive than anything which we, ~~at least we, of the liberal synagogue,~~ have so far achieved. ~~Our Sunday Schools are simply not preparing Jews for the kind of an American Jewish community which we have in mind. This is not the time to discuss the remedy, but a frank facing of this fact is in itself the first step in the direction of finding a solution.~~

Reyn Failure to teach the Hebrew language ^{adequately} ~~in our schools~~ is consigning the future American Jewish community, I am afraid, to cultural sterility. ✓ No Jewish community *Begin* ever contributed culturally or scholastically to Jewish life which did not foster the Hebrew language and literature. No Jewish community ever survived for long which ignored Hebrew. ~~This is an ineluctable fact of our experience. We cannot survive without Jewish learning. Our people perishes for want of knowledge. "An empty bag cannot stand upright."~~ We have armor against everything but "am harazut".

Our people frequently employed other language media for their religious-cultural expressions -- Greek, Arabic, Aramaic, and many European languages. This was true especially in the fields of technical scholarship and philosophy. However, the language of prayer, poetry, ethics and Jewish law -- the deepest and most vital -- was nearly always in the Hebrew. In the philosophic field, too, only those books which were early translated into the Hebrew and became available to Jews everywhere exerted

any influence upon Jewish life and thought. One simply cannot conceive of the great creative periods in our history, whether in Babylon, Spain, Italy, North-western, or Eastern Europe without reference to the deliberate and extensive ^{use of} cultivation of the Hebrew language and literature in these centers.

The Hebrew language has been not only the native and natural vehicle for the mind and soul expressions of our people, the repository of its most glorious cultural trophies, the bond of union and the chain of continuity, but also a powerful instrument for progress and renewal in Jewish life. The revival of Greek and classical Latin in the fifteenth century brought to a close the scholastic age in Europe and ushered in the new and emancipating age of the Renaissance. The New Learning which closed the Middle Ages was, in fact, the learning of ancient Greek and Latin. These languages which enabled the Western world to rediscover its great past made possible progress towards an even greater future. In the same way did the rediscovery of the Hebrew language affect the progress of Jewish life. And not only of Jewish life. Both Humanism and the Reformation felt the impact of a revival of Hebrew learning on the part of Christian scholars, ~~(led by Pico della Mirandola in Italy and Johann Reuchlin in Germany, who did for the revival of Hebrew what Manuel Chrysoloras had done for Greek)~~. But while the effect of Hebrew on European trends towards new ways of life and thought was secondary to that of Greek and Latin, its effect on the modernization of Jewish life was primary and decisive. The Hebrew language served as the weapon with which to batter down the spiritual and intellectual walls of the ghetto. The Haskalah movement which began with the Measefim under Moses Mendelssohn and which passed over to Eastern Europe, Russia, Poland and Galicia, employed Hebrew as the weapon against obscurantism and medievalism. It served as a revolutionary solvent of antiquated forms of social life. It made possible a fresh advance towards a better and freer way of life. Hebrew was the highway along which our people moved into the modern world. And of course, it is difficult to over-estimate the

the role which Hebrew played in the movement for national revival, which culminated in the establishment of the State of Israel. One cannot think of the restoration movement at all from the early Hibbat Zion days to the recent crowning days of struggle and victory, without at the same time thinking of the brilliant galaxy of Hebrew writers, poets, and essayists who inspired it and sustained it.

The Hebrew language has been, second only to the Torah itself, the principal factor, in our survival and our continued renewal. (We are not at all times aware of this fact.

10U2 >1ON OJD RZ/plc "The miracle is not always recognized by him who experiences it.") I cannot conceive of a vital Jewish life in the Diaspora without an extensive study of the Hebrew language and literature among our people, without a knowledge of Judaism in its historic Hebraic manifestations. Furthermore, if we are thinking of any cultural link between Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora, between Yisrael and Tefuzot Yisrael, then we must be thinking in terms of the Hebrew language. We must raise a generation which will be able to read the language in which the future cultural creations of Israel will be cast.

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It will not be easy to cultivate the Hebrew language and literature in the American Jewish community of tomorrow. It was never easy. Nehemiah, you will recall, singled it out as one of the three grievous failures of the Jews of his day. The cultivation of Hebrew always involved struggle, not so much with forces without as with forces within. The survival of Judaism itself has always been a matter of struggle not only in the Diaspora, but also in Palestine. (Certain American Jews are giving up the struggle in the name and on the score of integration within the American community. ~~This is the new slogan heard on the American Jewish scene, and I am afraid that the best part of that potato is underground.~~ This is the most recent rationale for a minimalist Judaism which will be stripped of Hebraic character, which will abandon the Hebrew language both in the synagogue and in the school, and

which will reject the concept and the mandates of "Kelal Yisrael."

True integration has never been a Jewish problem. Jews have always integrated themselves with the life and the culture of the peoples in whose midst they lived when given the least chance and encouragement. In fact, many Jews have in times past rushed to integrate themselves so eagerly that they went far beyond adjustment, to the point of precipitous and total assimilation. ~~Jews have always made good and loyal citizens, and the deeper their full-orbed Jewish religious loyalties, the finer citizens they made.~~ The Jewish problem has ^{always} been one of self-integration. This was less difficult when our people lived, as it were, in a walled and beleaguered city, in a hostile world. It is far more difficult when they live in a free and open city, in a tolerant or friendly world.

To sum up, the American Jewish community of tomorrow will, in the main, be what American Jews will make it. External pressure will be massive but the internal motivations will be decisive. It should be remembered that always it was not compulsion or any historic dialectics which kept the Jewish group alive but fierce, stiff-necked voluntarism. ~~If it is left to Jews who are Jews by fate only or by drift or for an occasional beau geste, they will permit it to run down in ignorance and apathy to slow exhaustion and disintegration.~~ If leadership is ^{in our hands} held by Jews who experience the inner compulsion of covenant and mission, who wish Judaism and the Jewish people to carry on triumphantly in the world, who draw from the brave and noble remembrances of the past high and valiant hopes for the future ~~of our spiritual commonwealth;~~ and who are prepared to do all that is necessary and advantageous to vitalize and perpetuate their faith and their communities, there is sure to emerge the adequate and suitable organizational forms, the agencies which the community will require for positive and creative living, as

well as the vital synagog and the efficient school, especially the school! Forms will change. ~~The lines, for example, separating Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism may grow indistinct in time and dissolve; although it is not quite clear what gains will accrue to Judaism from physical merger, or ritual uniformity. But~~ Given devoted and purposeful leadership and adequate religious educational agencies, we may look to the future of the American Jewish community, barring disastrous revolutionary changes in the structure of the American government and society, with a good measure of confident hope.

וְכֵן אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְכֵן אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ "As soon as a child can speak, his father should teach him the Shma, Torah, and the sacred tongue." Extended to all age levels, here is the formula not only for survival, but for a creative and satisfying life for the American Jewish community of tomorrow!



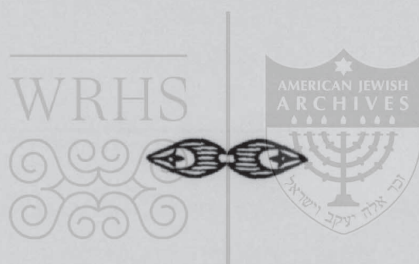
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של

הד"ר

כלי מבטאה של ההסתדרות העברית באמריקה

מוקדשת

למשמרת הצעירה של סופרים עברים באמריקה

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המסיבה תתקיים

ביום השני, ט' סיון, תשי"ט (15 ביוני, 1959)

בשעה 6:00 בערב

במלון ניו-יורקר

השדרה השמינית ורחוב 34

ניו-יורק

יעקב מ. אלקוב

יושב-ראש המסיבה

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