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The American rabbinate in our lifetime, 1963.

To teach the Torah to his people.

This has always been the greatest service of the Rabbi. I know that many other duties are demanded of the modern Rabbi and many which he must perform -- Pastor to his flock -- Tribunal of his people to the non-Jewish world ~~and in the social arena~~ -- Defender of social justice and the rights of man -- but principally the Rabbi, as the name signifies, is teacher not pastor.

By teaching young and old the spiritual and ethical doctrines of Judaism and thereby inspiring them to a life of personal integrity and social responsibility, the Rabbi makes his major contribution to his individual communicants and to his community.

The Rabbi himself! His inherent deficiencies!

If he lacks character, courage, tact, sensitivity, he will destroy his career.

If he sets his heart on false ^{objectives} standards, ~~in~~ ^{on a} quest of notoriety, publicity, or on being well-liked by everybody, or never saying anything that will not be approved by everybody, he will corrode himself from within.

There are, of course, many external obstacles which a Rabbi will encounter from time to time -- the inertia of people, the sluggishness of progress, ~~out~~ ^{down} - right opposition, but these will not retard his true career. They will temper and strengthen him, and help him to fulfill his career.

Frustrations - Moses - smashed the staff - Ended up by blessing the people - before he died.

Every Rabbi has an area in which he functions better than in others, where his achievements reflect him at his best.

The one achievement which I consider outstanding in my life has been the contribution which I made to the establishment of the State of Israel. It is the one that I treasure most.

It ^{was} ~~is~~ not, of course, technically speaking a "Rabbinic" achievement, but it was never separate ~~and~~ apart from my profession as Rabbi. "Zionism" was always a part of my conception of historic Judaism, and I came to it not as a secular nationalist but as a devout Jew. And I never permitted my Zionist activities, even when they were most intense, to push aside or overshadow my activities and my duties as a Rabbi.

I would rather have my enemies speak of my failures than ^I myself. They can do it much better than I can.

I am conscious of many failures in my life, but of no one chief failure.

In things worth-while, my reach almost always exceeded my grasp.

In every human relationship I think that I could have done better.

If I were to live my life over again, I would correct the mistakes which I made -- but then, I am sure, that I would make ^{many} others.

A famous Chassidic Rabbi was once asked about the outstanding achievements of his life. He replied that when he was young he was sure that he could ^{improve} ~~reform~~ the world. He failed. Later on, he thought that he could ^{improve} ~~reform~~ his community. He failed. Much later on, he thought that he could ^{improve} ~~reform~~ his own family. He failed. Now that he ^{was} ~~is~~ a very old man, he ^{was} ~~is~~ afraid that he could not ^{improve} ~~reform~~ his own life ^{so as to be} ~~so as~~ fully ^{acceptable to} ~~to~~ please the Rebono Shel Olam.

Conviction, sincerity and relevancy in content.

Directness, ~~and~~ ^{and warmth} simplicity in delivery.

^{Careful} ~~Preparedness~~ ^{attention}.

I, personally, always prepared my sermons very carefully, writing them out in full and then memorizing them.

^{when I grew older and lazier}
Only in recent years ^{and} on an occasion which called for scrupulous care did I resort to a manuscript.

I seldom spoke extemporaneously, feeling that the required inspiration of the moment may be late in coming. ^{-(Kohlen) "Aida"}

As a rule, my sermons never exceeded thirty to thirty-five or forty minutes. Beyond that, both preacher and congregation reach a point of no return...

But capsule sermons to satisfy the quick-lunch taste of modern Temple-goers never appealed to me. They ^{lack} ~~are~~, as a rule, ~~devoid~~ both ~~of~~ calories and ~~of~~ nutriment.

A Rabbi's studies should include above all ~~else~~
The Torah, and all that flowed from it, Rabbinic
literature, the Midrashim, Hebrew literature and, *of course,*
Jewish history.

There is much ^{*else*} ~~else~~, of course, much, much else.
But these are the sine qua non for the Rabbi; pre-
supposing, of course, that he has had his secular
studies in the social sciences at a university, and is
^{*in later life - But*} pursuing them. These studies should supplement his
Rabbinic studies, not supplant them. *They should*
be דברים נלווים

Whichever appeal to him, and are in consonance with his position as the voice of Judaism in his community, and provided ^{also} they do not ^{encroach} ~~infringe~~ upon his ~~other~~ duties and services to his congregation.

I have known Rabbis who have been active in local non-denominational charities and social agencies, in labor-management relations, who gave courses in colleges and universities on religion and Judaism, who helped to develop psychiatric clinics in their communities, who were active in peace movements, and ^{integrate in programs} in good-will movements generally, and in many other good works. They are to be commended for it.

*I would not circumscribe
the scope, the Rabbi.*

*Sincerity and good-judgment
should determine his course.*

I have also observed a drift in our Conference
to react to all controversial issues, such as the *plea*
for democracy in the
Eichmann Trial, ~~for example~~, which do not at all

involve any principle or teaching of Liberal Judaism;

also an unconscious move to change the character of
our Conference *from a ^{voluntary} professional association to an authoritarian ^{one}*
by imposing an income-tax upon its
members in place of fixed dues, and a prescriptive,
in place of a voluntary, pulpit placement procedure.

As you probably know, I have never paid this
income-tax, although on top of my dues, I ~~have~~ always
sent in a voluntary contribution to help carry on the

work of the Conference. We are not a government *or*
a union where seniority rights prevail,
and we should not attempt to exercise the prerogatives

of government, either in the matter of the payment of
I was almost tempted to say ^{mandatory} ~~quasi~~
our income-taxes or of quasi-mandatory pulpit placements.

We had some very good ones in our day, and some very poor ones, too. I imagine that that holds true today, too ~~and~~ ^{take} it is quite impossible to make a Gallup poll canvass of the ability, ~~and~~ sincerity and effectiveness of the Rabbinate today and contrast it with the Rabbinate of a half-century ago. It is a

case of

(1653) 713 713. "Do not say the days that were before were better!"

I have observed a trend among some of our young ~~perhaps an over~~ men towards an over-emphasis on what has come to

be known as social action, on ^{an avid} a search for causes to ~~— six causes, so to speak, in quest of a Rabbi —~~ champion, and correspondingly, lesser emphasis on learning and scholarship. *אין אדם לומד תורה* Neither the one nor the

other was especially in evidence in my day, but I

sometimes wonder whether ^{this} the trend, if it is a trend, is a salutary one.

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THE AMERICAN RABBINATE IN OUR LIFETIME

Symposium

SOLOMON B. FREEHOF AND ABBA HILLEL SILVER

Rabbi Leon I. Feuer, Chairman: Two years ago when you charged me with the responsibility for building Conference programs, I began to dream about this one, and tonight we are to translate that dream into reality.

The participants in the program, I think it can be said without challenge, have been the most significant influences in shaping the contours of our rabbinical calling in this country and in this period of Jewish history.

By a very wonderful coincidence, they have a great deal in common. They are classmates, the year 1915, of the Hebrew Union College, and have been intimate friends throughout their lives. Each celebrated his seventieth birthday this year, and each had the *simcha* of tendering a birthday tribute to the other.

They are both honored Past-Presidents of our Conference. In a sense, then, this evening is an evening of tribute to them and to their achievements.

Possessing completely distinctive styles, both are magnificent preachers and superb orators. Lovers of Hebrew learning, they have both made significant contributions to Jewish scholarship.

Here the resemblance, at least outwardly, and superficially, ends. Both are supremely dedicated to the rabbinical calling, although their constructions and their execution of this calling have been somewhat at variance.

One has served his people, his country, and mankind, in the arena of action, in the clash of political and economic forces, in the building of a state, in championing the cause of his fellow Jews, in helping to answer their cry for salvation; but also in demanding justice for all men, seeing both causes, that of his people and that of mankind, as inseparable.

The other has followed his vocation in the world of books, in Jewish law, seeking the laws and principles by which Judaism has survived, searching for the secret of its vitality and therefore of its future, and endeavoring to establish and to identify the unifying element which binds together the members of the household of Israel.

This will be the form of this evening's program. We will follow what is now fashionably known as the "Dialogue." The two participants will speak to each other; then we will allow you to enter into the conversation.

So it is with a great sense of privilege that I turn this platform over to my teacher, Dr. Solomon B. Freehof, and to my rabbi, Dr. Abba Hillel Silver.

Rabbi Freehof: Dear colleagues: No one needs to do any talking for Abba Hillel Silver. Since I am the first speaker, mine is the privilege to express thanks, in his behalf and in mine, for the beautiful words just spoken by Leon — Leon, who is perhaps equally dear to both of us.

Rabbi Silver and I are classmates, and I do not remember that we ever had a single brief period of alienation, and in our profession (laughter).

Now, I would like to ask Abba Silver a question that may be difficult. I know, dear friend, that the rabbinate to you is more than a career; it is a devotion of your life. That devotion is based upon a definition. That definition has specifications, as all definitions should have, and undoubtedly there is a list in your mind, and a list has been in your mind from the very beginning of what a rabbi should be, what he should do. Now, of all of these, I ask you to try, for the benefit of our colleagues before us, to answer this: What is the greatest service of a modern rabbi?

Rabbi Silver: Well, now, Sol, you mentioned before that in all these years we have known each other, there has been no friction between us. That, of course, is true.

But I remember there was considerable competition especially way back there in our early college days. I remember we were asked to write a prize essay, and the winner would get a Jewish encyclopedia. The subject of the prize essay in the College was: "The Sopheric and Tanaitic *Am Ha-aretz*," and inasmuch as I was the greater *Am Ha-aretz* of the two, I won the prize.

In that same year Sol entered another competition and he won the prize. He wrote an essay on the history of the Torah, and he has had "*Maftir Yona*" ever since in all the Reform congregations of America.

Well, now, Sol, you asked me a rather important question: What should be the prime function of a rabbi? I should like to answer that by saying his prime function is to teach the Torah to his people. This has always been the greatest service of the rabbi.

I know that many other duties are demanded of the modern rabbi, many which he must perform — pastor to his flock, tribune of his people to the non-Jewish world, defender of social justice and the rights of man. But principally, in my humble judgment, the rabbi, as the name signifies, is teacher — not pastor, but teacher. And by teaching young and old the spiritual and ethical doctrines of Judaism, and thereby inspiring in them a life of personal integrity and social responsibility, the rabbi makes his major contribution to his individual communicants, to his congregation and to his community.

I know that is not a sensational answer, but that's the answer I can give you.

Now, Sol, out of these many years in the rabbinate, you have certainly distilled some wisdom which you would like to share with these younger rabbis here. I would like to ask you a question, *Yelamdenu Rabbenu*. In judging the success of your ministry — it has been an eminently successful ministry — what standards do you apply?

Rabbi Freehof: That is not an easy one, because we're surrounded by standards that are not our own; and we often discover to our bewilderment that what we rabbis consider central and vital, our people consider perhaps an amiable eccentricity of ours.

I have a way of knowing that our standards are not quite the same. Saturday morning service, the traditional service, will attract perhaps two hundred or so; Sunday morning service, six, seven hundred. And then I have a lecture on literature on Wednesday, that has almost nothing to do with Judaism, and they come in enormous numbers.

What is more important to me is less important to them. This is *their* standard. But they also share ours to some extent.

It reminds me how, (do you remember?) when I became rabbi at K.A.M., Lou Mann spoke before you, and he said something to the effect that one cannot judge the success of a rabbi by how many people come to hear him. And you got up and you said: "An empty building is no proof of a rabbi's achievement."

What I mean to say is this: Our Reform Movement was primarily, in its initiation, a liturgical movement. We found the synagogues of Central Europe empty, and we wanted to bring people back to worship. The first thing our early predecessors did was to revise the service, the prayer book, the music, et cetera.

Now, while our attendance might perhaps be better than those of the average Orthodox *Schul* except for the very pious who never miss, nevertheless, we have not succeeded in our basic intention, at least not succeeded enough.

I would count a rabbi's success by how many people he trains to divine worship. Now, this may be an outward sign, but it also may be what the Episcopalians call the "outer visible sign of an inner visible quest."

Now, Abba, our rabbinate has been a fairly long one, and I believe neither of us has any immediate intention of abbreviating it.

Rabbi Silver: Our congregations may.

Rabbi Freehof: The fact that our congregations might, by accident, quote Scripture, that their thoughts are not our thoughts, brings me to this question that I should like to put before you: You are, in my mind, the great overcomer of obstacles. What in the rabbi's career would you say are the greatest obstacles?

Rabbi Silver: You know, Sol, one of the reasons we have gone to each other's congregations on our seventieth birthday, is to freshen up our members on our importance. (Laughter) They were in danger of forgetting it. (Laughter)

You asked me what I regard as the greatest obstacle in the rabbi's career. The rabbi himself. I mean, his inherent deficiencies. If a rabbi lacks character or courage or tact or sensitivity, he is likely to destroy his own career.

If he sets his heart on false objectives, in quest of excessive publicity —

we all like a certain amount of publicity — or on being well liked by everybody or on never saying anything that will not be approved by everybody, that rabbi will corrode himself from within, in the long run.

There are, of course, many extra obstacles which a rabbi will encounter from time to time — the inertia of people, the sluggishness of progress, the downright opposition. We all encounter them from time to time. But these will not destroy or even retard his true career. They will temper, strengthen him, and help him to fulfill his career.

The first rabbi in our religion, if I can call him that — our people calls him rabbi, *Moshe Rabbenu* — the first rabbi suffered enormous frustrations and heartaches, so much so that he came to a point once where he smashed the *Luchot*, broke the Tablets of the Commandments. Yet, this *Moshe Rabbenu*, this rabbi, ended up his life by blessing his people before he died.

And so, while obstacles and frustrations are inevitable in our career, unfortunately some have more of them than others, nevertheless, it is part of our job to try to surmount them, rise above them, perhaps try to derive from them strengthening of the spirit. I think that is the real test of a good rabbi.

Well, now, Sol, I want to ask you another question. Do you believe that there is a more positive or a more negative attitude among our people today toward the synagogue, toward public worship, toward religious observances than there was when we began our ministry nearly half a century ago? What do you think?

Rabbi Freehof: I am not sure about it. I know that when the Reform Movement began, which was two generations or so before us, public worship was a great enthusiasm. The people believed that by modern public worship, the whole of Judaism would be revived.

I do not believe that the concept of worship is as dynamic a one in our generation as it was two generations before. But I reflect that it is the nature of worship to fade inevitably into routine.

At how many times, how many different times in Jewish literature was it necessary, beginning with the Ethics of the Fathers, when our liturgy was likewise new for a rabbi, to warn that prayer should be a devotion of the heart and not a routine. Or, a little later in the Talmud: "God wants your heart." They wouldn't have said it if the people had not fallen again to praying only with their lips.

You might say the whole Hasidic movement was an attempt to give cosmic significance to every nuance of the prayer. So it is clear that the dying away of devotion to worship is almost inherent in the nature of worship.

God, as it were, keeps on hiding Himself, and even *David ha-Melech* cries out: "Why standest Thou far off?"

I fear just now we are in one of the liturgical doldrums. Judging by the past, we will fight our way out of it. I think people are more interested in the organization and in the physical activities of the synagogue than they were ever before. To that extent, we have them with us. They are

busy in the institution. I hope from that, in the very near future, in the career of our colleagues, we will achieve again the revival of mass Jewish worship.

Now, Abba, I suppose a man can't help saying occasionally a word about something he has done — *zeh chelki mikol amoli*. Suppose you had to go over Abba Silver's career, what would you consider your best achievements of everything you have done?

Rabbi Silver: You know, every rabbi has an area in which he functions better than in others, where his achievements reflect him at his best. It is true of every one of us. One achievement which I consider outstanding in my life has been the contribution which I made toward the establishment of the State of Israel. It is the one that I treasure the most.

This is not, of course, technically speaking, a rabbinic achievement. But it was never separate or apart from my profession as a rabbi. Zionism has always been a part of my conception of historic Judaism, and I came to it not as a secular nationalist, but as a devout Jew, and I never permitted my Zionist activities, even when they were most intense, as they were in the years before the establishment of the State — I never permitted my Zionist activities to push aside or to overshadow my activities and my duties as a rabbi.

So, if you ask me what I regard as the most outstanding achievement in my life, I would say that, as a rabbi, I worked for the establishment of the State of Israel.

Now, Sol, I have a third question for you, and one which I have been wanting to ask you for some time. I have been reading all your books on the responsa. I never really could understand how you as a Reform Rabbi became so much involved in *Sha-alot* and *Tshubot*. How and why did you get interested in responsa, and how do you relate this interest of yours, evidently a dominant interest of yours, to the rabbinate of Liberal Judaism?

Rabbi Freehof: The first part is easy — how did I get into it? By political accident, since we are talking about the political side of the rabbi's career.

The Commission on Jewish Chaplaincy appointed a legal committee, and the structure of the chaplaincy commission required that an Orthodox, a Conservative, and a Reform rabbi be on it. There was Rabbi Jung and the unforgettable Rabbi Steinberg, and I was put on as the Reform rabbi. Then we had to decide who would be the chairman. The chairman is the one who really writes the responsa. The other two must agree or disagree. But they never disagreed, except once, about *Mohel* in Alaska.

I was made chairman, and had to write the responsa. I knew very little about it at the time, because Dr. Lauterbach was chairman of the Conference Responsa Committee, and he didn't want to bother with amateurs; he wrote the responsa, and I said yes. Then I began to write them, began to accumulate books, and began to study.

Now it is clear that this subject is of growing importance in the Reform Movement. When Dr. Lauterbach, and Dr. Kohler of blessed memory before him, were chairmen of the Responsa Committee, there would be about eight, nine, or ten questions a year. Our committee now gets two hundred, sometimes more questions a year, from our colleagues. So it is evident it is something in the life of our movement, out of which this intensified interest grows.

I will confess that I have not yet developed a philosophic principle, a doctrine upon which the responsa are based. Some theologian will some day clarify a doctrinal basis for Reform Halacha. But until then I am satisfied to work by rule of thumb. I observe that it is always a gratification to us when we find that a certain line of conduct is in harmony with Jewish legal tradition even though there come times when it is so opposed to our conscience that we say "no." But we are glad to say "yes" most of the time. So we say, in general, the responsa in our movement give guidance rather than governance.

But I have a more psychological connection in my own mind between the responsa and our movement. Our movement began with a battle against the whole legal literature — it couldn't do otherwise — against the old rabbinate which would not permit even the most minor change. With its rebellion against the whole legal literature, Reform turned to Scripture, and made its permanent contribution to Jewish thought and feeling — namely, a scale of values, the prophetic ethic, which will forever remain the center of the emphasis of our movement. But in doing that, we paid a terrific price — two thousand years of Jewish intelligence, clear, sharp thinking which reached into the remotest villages. Jews would write *chiddushim* that would be worth a Ph.D. in any university for keenness or basic knowledge. Jewry had twenty centuries of tremendous intellectual effort — I would say the greatest intellectual outpouring in human history.

Now, what I would like to contribute is one step in this direction: that we, the Reform Movement who have established contact with the conscience of Judaism, should now re-establish contact with the intelligence of Judaism.

Now, Abba, if this is a little uncomfortable, pass it by. But I will ask it: You spoke of what you considered your best achievement. What, if anything, would you count as your chief failure?

Rabbi Silver: Sol, I would rather have my enemies speak of my failures. They can do it much better than I.

I am conscious of many failures in my life, but of no chief failure. In things worth-while, my reach almost always exceeded my grasp; and in every human relationship, I think that I could have done better. And if I were to live my life over again, I would correct the mistakes which I made, and I am sure I would make many others.

A famous Hasidic rabbi was once asked, what were the outstanding

achievements of his life. And he replied, when he was young he was sure that he could improve the world. He failed. Later on he thought that he could improve his community, and he failed. And much later on he thought that he could improve his own family, and he failed. And now that he was a very old man, he was afraid that he could not improve himself, so as to be fully acceptable to the *Ribono shel Olam*.

I suppose that is true of all of our lives. We should be happy if when we come to strike a balance that there is a little bit more on the positive scale than on the negative scale.

So if you ask me about failures, Sol, I can speak of a lot of them. But we Jews are accustomed to make confessions only to the Good Lord.

Well, now, following up an earlier question I put to you, Sol, I would like to ask you this question: From your knowledge and experience of the nature and programs of our Reform congregations, have they changed very much in our day?

Rabbi Freehof: I think that in our day there have been, of course, great visible changes in the program, in the type of service, the sort of ritual. I have often wondered about it. In the first two Yearbooks, somebody — I think it was Berkowitz — was assigned the task of recording all the discussions, the essence of the discussions in the German conventions that preceded ours. And they are all there.

All these questions of Jewish ritual, observances of the rituals, then faded out of our movement for about two generations. But now, we again have discussions about Bar Mitzvah, the day of Bar Mitzvah; we have questions of *Kashrut*, questions that never came up any more in our movement when we were young rabbis.

I think that part of the explanation — if it is not in some change of theological or philosophic mood — I think part of the explanation of the change in our movement toward greater ritualism is a sociological reason.

When the Reform Movement was new, every member of every new Reform temple had most of his relatives Orthodox. Then as the years went by in America, our temples were peopled by Reform children and Reform grandchildren and Reform great-grandchildren, and we lost our direct family contact with Orthodoxy. Then with the great growth of our movement in the last twenty years, almost every congregation has three quarters of its members related to Orthodox grandfathers, Orthodox grandmothers, to whom it would have been a heartbreak if the boy was only confirmed, and not Bar Mitzvah. We have become, in our family lines, reintegrated in Orthodox lives, and that, of course, has affected the type of observances in our congregations.

I believe we still do not consider all these observances to have any deep theological basis, as *Mitzvahs*. That means, if the time comes when we consider any one of these changes as harmful to us, we will not hesitate to drop what we have picked up. But in the time of our career, we would say that a tremendous amount of Jewishness has been added to the

Judaism. Whether it will last when we cease having Orthodox parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents, is a question for the future to answer.

Now, I know all of your world work, Abba, but I have often thought that even your great achievement as the founder of the Jewish state would not have been possible without your magnificent talent as a preacher and a public speaker. It was the grand voice and what it spoke that gave you, in my judgment, the tremendous powers that you have exercised for so much good.

Now, what I would like to ask you is this: For all of us — and I know greatly for you, all the speaking that you have done in all the great auditoriums where mass audiences gathered for you — it all was only a reflection of the light from your own pulpit. Would you comment? Do us all a favor. Tell us what you consider to be the greatest element in preaching.

Rabbi Silver: From this *Mi-she-berach* which you have given me, people might think that you, yourself, are something of a slouch. I have heard you move great audiences to great heights by your eloquence and your incisive logic.

You ask what I regard as the most important element in preaching. I would say, first of all, conviction and sincerity, and relevancy and content. And then directness, simplicity and warmth in delivery. And finally, very careful preparation.

I personally have always prepared my sermons very carefully, writing them out in full, and then memorizing them. Only in recent years since I became older and somewhat lazier, and on occasions which called for scrupulous care, have I resorted to a manuscript. I seldom speak extemporaneously, feeling that the required inspiration at the moment may be late in coming.

As a rule, my sermons never exceed thirty, thirty-five, or forty minutes. (Laughter) You think that is a long time? Beyond thirty to thirty-five minutes, forty minutes — (laughter) — both preacher and congregation reach a point of no return.

But capsule sermons — I suspect the laughter comes from rabbis who deliver capsule sermons — but capsule sermons, which are intended to satisfy the quick-lunch taste of modern templegoers, have never appealed to me. They lack, as a rule, both calories and nutriment.

I could say much more on this subject, but it is not necessary to a group of rabbis. You understand what I mean. That is my answer to your question.

Now I would like to ask you a question: You were a teacher for some years in the Hebrew Union College — I wasn't there at the time — but they tell me that you were a teacher in the Hebrew Union College, and a good teacher. If you had your life to live over again, would you prefer teaching to preaching?

Rabbi Freehof: I taught at the college for nine years. And, of course,

I was very happy to have done so. I learned a great deal. The atmosphere of a great college is one which honors scholarship and makes it the desideratum of life, is what you absorb in a college, and particularly one like the Hebrew Union College.

As far as memories are concerned, the boys I taught are now grandparents. They still call me teacher, and it is a great pleasure for me to sense their kindness to me, although I was, I believe, a strict teacher in certain subjects that I taught; most of the subjects were to help out Dr. Lauterbach.

But it is a small college, and for a man who loves preaching, who loves public life, the college faculty is a wonderful point of departure. I am glad I was there, Abba. I am happy that I left.

You spoke of reading my books. I have always read yours with a special care. Knowing your intellectual standards, and knowing that every line that you wrote had to be done in time stolen from urgent public work, I conclude that you must have a certain selectivity of subjects, although on the surface your books do not show an inter-relatedness. You wrote first on the Kabbala and then you wrote on, you might say, comparative theology, and then a most heroic book on the Bible, in which you dared all the Protestant professionals of the Bible. Therefore, it is clear that you have certain choice themes. What is it that you consider the main line of your personal study? And tell us why.

Rabbi Silver: I believe that a rabbi's studies should include, of course, above all else, the Torah, and all that flows from it — the rabbinic literature and the Midrashim, Hebrew literature generally and Jewish history. There is much else, much else for the rabbi to study, but these are, in my judgment, the *sine qua non* for a rabbi, presupposing, of course, that he has had his secular studies in the social sciences in the university, and that he pursues them in later life.

But all these other studies should supplement his rabbinic studies. He should not permit the secular studies to supplant the rabbinic. They should be *parpera-ot la-Torah*. I am wondering whether we are doing that today, whether we are not making in some instances — I am not speaking generally, because I do not know — whether we are not making our own great Biblical, rabbinic and medieval Jewish literature *parpera-ot la-chochmah*. The two are quite distinct, as you know.

Sol, my final question to you before we both throw ourselves into the arena: What do you think is right and what do you think is wrong with the young American rabbi?

Rabbi Freehof: It is a very dangerous question, Abba, because, as we get older, we naturally think well of our own youth, and therefore think naturally that the past is so much better than today. The young rabbis, those who are in the twenties, are able and devoted men; but there are certain differences in circumstance between theirs and ours, and we ought to judge whether it helps or hurts them.

When we went to college, there was an eight-year course. You and I entered the fifth year, and then you skipped into the upper class, and you took four years; but even so, for most of the men who went through the eight-year course, by the time they graduated, if they began at the beginning, they knew fifteen classes, and when they entered into the Conference, they knew half the Conference, and the whole Conference had two hundred and fifty members.

It was an intimate brotherhood. And of course, the young men today pay a price for that which is not their fault, that the Conference is huge. So I think they lack the comradeship that circumstances gave us, and therefore I believe their mutual influence is less. The mass nature of the Conference makes them individualists fighting against comparative anonymity. That, I think, is a drawback.

I think we had another advantage. You remember, Abba, the Committee on Social Justice. In those days — we graduated college in 1915, almost half a century ago — in those days it took a day and a half to debate the subject brought up by the Committee on Social Justice. All the subjects that they dealt with were taken away from them by the New Deal — the right of labor to organize, that we fought over; minimum wages, that we fought over.

In those days we had this advantage: We believed that it was in our hands as individuals, and as a Conference, to help to rebuild the world. In these days, of course, the private organizations, even in the matter of peace, in the matter of social justice, may have one single cause. But the concept that inspired our boys, particularly those who were active in social justice, was that the whole world was waiting for them to bring the prophetic influence to bear. Those were advantages.

Young men today have an advantage over us. They are much more mature. Most rabbis today are married before they graduate from the Hebrew Union College. I believe we were more youthful in spirit and the young people today are more mature. They will do their work perhaps with a little less spreading of wings, but with a very careful, efficient progress. They are older, perhaps even sager, but they couldn't have our enthusiasm because circumstances are different.

So now I suppose we ought to let the audience speak.

Rabbi Bernard J. Bamberger: This was a wonderful colloquy, and my only criticism of it was that neither of the individuals answering a question asked the other one back the same question.

I wonder if Dr. Freehof would tell us, looking back on his own ministry, what is the thing that he finds most satisfying, and what is the thing that he regrets the most?

Rabbi Freehof: Most satisfying, I always found the pulpit and people's appreciation of a sermon that reached their hearts. I was always gratified when people showed that they liked to learn, to be taught by the pulpit.

What I regret most has nothing to do with me. It has to do with what has happened to the rabbinate.

It is the nature of the Christian ministry for the minister to be the pastor of his flock, and to attend to what they call the cure of souls. In the nature of the general Christian environment, the Christian minister, who has no special tradition of study as we have and therefore has time, is compelled in many denominations to call on everybody—in the Baptist denomination twice a year, on every member. The Christian minister had to hang around the hospital, and when the Baptists were used up, he would visit the Jewish brothers, and, of course, the Jewish brother's wife would say: "Look, the minister can come; where is our rabbi?" She would forget that *Bikkur Cholim* is a *Mitzvah* that is incumbent on every Jew, and not a special rabbinic duty.

But as a result of all that, the Christian pastor has made our congregations discontented, and the rabbinate is "pastorized."

Rabbi Martin B. Ryback: I want to direct my question to both of my esteemed colleagues. To what do you ascribe the gradual evaporation of the Sunday morning service in Reform temples; and do you see any reason for the rejuvenation and the renewal of the *Shabbat*, and the *Shabbat* morning service in Reform Jewish life in the near future?

Rabbi Silver: I don't know what you mean by evaporation. If you mean that there are very few Sunday morning services left on the American Jewish scene, I agree with you. I do not know the reason for it. And if they all evaporate, I wouldn't be heartsick about it.

The only reason we introduced the Sunday morning service was because we thought that was the time when people are free, and would come to a week day service.

In the larger cities which have Sunday morning services they are well attended.

I do not know that the evaporation of the Sunday morning service will contribute to the increase of attendance on Friday night. My judgment is that where a Sunday morning service is feasible and draws people, it should continue. Why not? Jews are supposed to pray every day in the week, not merely on Friday night or Saturday morning. Wherever such a service is not feasible, I would not spend too much energy in trying to keep it alive.

Would you like to add something, Sol, to the profound observations which I have made?

Rabbi Freehof: The way the additional rabbinical comments were printed was the way the scholar would write in the margin the criticism of the text, and after all the margin would be printed, and this *Melamed* was studying, and he felt he had to make a comment, he wrote: *ani maskim l'divrey Rashi*.

Rabbi Jack D. Spiro: I would like to ask Dr. Silver what is wrong and what is right with the contemporary rabbinate, and also, if he would mind commenting on the emphasis today, which we all feel, on pastoral counseling and pastoral visitation. Has this taken the place of the strong sense of social justice felt a generation ago?

Rabbi Silver: Actually, the question "What is right and what is wrong with the young American rabbi," was one of the questions Sol was to ask me. But Sol just forgot, that's all. So now I will give the answer, assuming that Sol has put the question.

We had some very good rabbis in our day, and some very poor ones, too. And I imagine that holds true, also, today. It is quite impossible to take a Gallup poll, canvass the ability, the sincerity, the effectiveness of the rabbinate today and contrast it with the rabbinate of a half century ago. You may recall the Biblical phrase: "Do not say: How was it that the days before us were better? It is not out of wisdom that you ask it."

I have observed, however — I may be wrong in this observation of mine — a trend among some of our young men toward an over-emphasis of what has come to be known as social action. An arid search for causes to champion; six causes, so to speak, in search of a rabbi — and correspondingly a lesser emphasis on learning, on scholarship, on Torah. Neither trend was especially evident in my early days, but I sometimes wonder whether this "social action" trend, if it is a trend, is a desirable one.

I have also observed a drift in our Conference. Please don't tear me apart in what I am going to say. It is just the opinion of one man. I have observed a drift in our Conference to react to all controversial issues, such as a plea for clemency in the Eichmann trial, or opposition to capital punishment, which do not involve either the principles or the teachings of Judaism, or of Liberal Judaism.

Also an unconscious trend to change the character of our Conference, from a voluntary professional association to a more or less authoritative one, one which imposes an income tax upon its members, in place of fixed dues, and a prescriptive in place of a voluntary pulpit placement procedure. As you probably know, I have never paid this income tax, although on top of my dues I have always sent in annually a voluntary contribution to help carry on the work of the Conference.

We are not a government or a union where seniority rights prevail, and we should not attempt to exercise their prerogatives, either, in the matter of an income tax or of a *quasi*-mandatory — I was almost tempted to say *quasi*-military — pulpit placement.

These are conditions which did not prevail in our day. Perhaps they are inevitable in this day. If they are, I for one deeply regret it.

Rabbi Freehof: Abba, I don't want you to say that alone, so that it should appear that you are unique in holding an eccentric opinion, out of touch with the world.

I believe that you and I both opposed this idea when it was brought up many years ago — I in the Conference, and you in the Union.

The fact that we are so out of step in this regard must indicate that it is a different world. And therefore, I did not attend a single one of the discussions when this was brought up.

It is evident that circumstances have made most of our colleagues disagree with what, in this regard, we have considered vital. We can't help that. I don't like it a bit, but my not liking it, and I am afraid your not liking it, has become to them irrelevant, and you will forgive me for saying that.

Rabbi Alan S. Green: It has been my privilege, shared by many rabbis who came from Cleveland, to have been inspired by Rabbi Silver for many years. I have always been struck by the fact that you have spoken, Dr. Silver, out of the whole sweep of Jewish history. You gave us the feeling that a Jew has something unique and positive to contribute to mankind. Undoubtedly, this helped inspire me to go into the rabbinate.

I was privileged to hear this in high school, and throughout my college days. Today we deal with young people who leave their home towns to go to college and thus break off the roots of their association with their rabbis. How can we somehow touch them with this feeling that they have something unique to give that grows out of the whole sweep of Jewish history?

Rabbi Silver: I can only say you must try to continue what you have been doing, Alan, with your congregation. You are not in a position, really, to evaluate effectively your ministry. It is not like an engineer who can point to the number of structures or bridges which he built, or a doctor to the number of cases that he cured.

You are dealing with imponderables. You have to have faith in what you are teaching, in what you are preaching. I do believe that you succeed in touching a number of lives that you yourself may not be aware of. Very often you and I, and all those present here, have had the experience ten, twenty years after a man was confirmed in our temples, that he will come back and say: "Rabbi, you helped me greatly in those years — something that you said has remained with me all the time."

You have to have confidence that the seeds that you sow will somewhere, in some heart, and in some soul, take root. After all, if you don't have that faith, you are in the wrong profession. I think that you are doing a pretty good job.

Rabbi Freehof: May I add a *Mi-she-berach* to that.

There is one peculiar little tangible evidence of what a rabbi accomplishes. I hope this will be the last — I don't want Abba to be tempted to make a counter-comment.

You notice from the time Abba Silver started to preach in Cleveland, how every year more and more Cleveland boys decided to be as like him

as they could, and entered the rabbinate. That is tangible evidence of something. So it has been with other rabbis in Cleveland and elsewhere.

Chairman Feuer: I want to express for myself, and for the Conference, our profound gratitude to our esteemed and beloved colleagues, Dr. Freehof and Dr. Silver, for this magnificently informative and inspiring meeting, and I want to wish on your behalf for both of them God's blessings and His bounty of strength.

