

Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

Series II: Subject Files, 1956-1993, undated.

Reel Box Folder 7 219

Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills, NJ, correspondence, notes, and journal, 1977-1978.

Paul Arnold Associates, Inc.

Commercial Insurance
19 Mcrolab Road, Livingston, N.J., 07039, 201-992-5500
Telex: 138219
Cable: "PAAINC LVON"

August 15, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver Tifereth Israel University Circle & Silver Park Cleveland, Ohio 44106

> Re: Congregation B'Nai Jeshurun Shorthills, NJ Scholar - In - Residence

Dear Rabbi Silver:

Permit me first to introduce myself as Chairman of the Scholar-In-Residence Committee, Men's Club, Congregation B'Nai Jeshurun, Short Hills New Jersey. It's also my privilege and pleasure to serve as President of the North Jersey Federation of Temple Brotherhoods as well as a member of our Eoard of Trustees at TBJ.

We've heard some extraordinary things about your magnificent paper on Jewish Identity at the recent CCAR convention in New York.

Consequently, it's our hope that perhaps your schedule might permit us the privilege of your appearing as our spring Scholar-in-Residence. The dates we have set are Friday evening March 31 and Sunday mcrning April 2. Our format generally calls for the Pulpit appearance on Friday evening, delivering the sermon, and setting the tone for our Sunday morning congregational breakfast and meeting. Your comments would continue on Sunday morning, perhaps elaborating on the theme established on Friday evening with a considerable amount of time for questions and answers. We have found the Sunday morning sessions rewarding to all, participants as well as guests, especially since they generally extend to and include our high schools students and Confirmation class.

Our initial concern, obviously, is the availability with respect to your own calender. Further, as with any Congregation, I am sure, there are budgetary considerations. I should like to get your thoughts as to; a) availability, b) honorarium, c) the possibility of making it with us for the entire weekend, alternatively Shabbat only.

We would certainly expect that your traveling expenses would be over and above the honorarium.

I look forward to hearing from you, sincerely and genuinely hoping that we can work out your appearance.

My sincere thanks and very best regards.

Cordiavity yours

Raul A. Goldman

PAG/ct

CC Rabbi Barry H. Greene Congregation B'Nai Jeshurun

> David Dondershine Livingston, NJ





August 18, 1977 Mr. Paul A. Goldman Paul Arnold Associates, Inc. 19 Microlab Road Livingston, N. J. 07039 Dear Mr. Goldman: Thank you for your letter of August 15 and for the kind comments it contained about my Conference paper. I would be pleased to be your spring Scholar-in-Residence and the dates of March 31 and April 2 are possible to me. My honorarium for the weekend would be \$1200 and \$750 for the Sabbath. I am enclosing a copy of the paper which I presented to the Conference. The issues are basic and go the heart of our perception of liberal Jewish thought. Will you give my best wishes to Rabbi Green? Thank you for thinking of me. Sincerely, Daniel Jeremy Silver DJS:mp Encl.

Paul Arnold Associates, Inc. Commercial Insurance 19 Microlab Road, Livingston, N.J., 07039, 201-992-5500 Cable: "PAAINC LVON" August 24, 1977 Rabbi Daniel J. Silver The Temple University Circle at Silver Park Cleveland, Ohio 44106 Dear Rabbi Silver: I have and very much appreciate your thoughtful note of August 18th. Incidentally, Rabbi Greene is away on a holiday, but I will most assuredly convey your best wishes to him

next week.

If I may presume that your honorarium for the weekend of \$1200 does include your expenses, that would be most satisfactory. As a matter of fact, that pushes us just slightly over our budget of \$1000, but we are interested enough in having you with us as our Scholar-in-Residence to put the extra effort forth. We're confident that it will be well worth the effort.

If this is agreeable, I would appreciate your confirmation so that we might set our calendar up.

My thanks and best regards.

PAG/df

cc/Rabbi Barry H. Greene

August 30, 1977 Mr. Paul A. Goldman Paul Arnold Associates. Inc. 19 Microlab Road Livingston, M. J. 07039 Dear Mr. Goldman: In response to your kind letter of August 24, I shall be happy to be with you and can confirm the dates of March 31 through April 2. I am enclosing a bio and photograph for publicity purposes. Do you want me to suggest a theme for the Friday night and Sunday morning sessions or do you want me to react to your ideas? May I make another suggestion which can be mutually advantageous? About a year and a half ago I published A History of Judaism through Basic Books. It is a two-volume study of the development of our religious thought. I wrote the first volume and the Chairman of the Department of Religion at Case-Western Reserve University, Bernard Martin, wrote the second. The book is available in hard cover or paperback. If your congregation were to order, on consignment, a number of volumes I am sure that you will be able to sell more than a fair number and your Judaica Shop or Men's Club can make a profit. The hard cover boxed set sells for \$38.00; the paperbacks are selling for \$7.50 a volume, they are not boxed. That, of course, is the retail price. In any case, I look forward to being with you. Sincerely, Daniel Jeremy Silver DJS:mp Encl.



CONGREGATION B'NAI JESHURUN SHORT HILLS, NEW JERSEY 07078

March 6, 1978

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver The Temple University Circle at Silver Park Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Dan:

We look forward to your being with us on March 31st to deliver the sermon, and Sunday morning, April 2nd to speak to the Men's Club, and perhaps some of our upper grade students. I have taken the liberty of announcing your theme for Friday evening as "Of Jewish Identity."

In an effort to attract some of the parents of our Religious School children, we have added a dimension on Friday evening -- calling it "Teacher Sabbath," when we shall recognize cur Religious School Faculty (in about ninety-four seconds) for their devotion, dedication, etc. May we also impose upon you to make some mention of this in your introductory remarks. Incidentally, our members usually sit quietly for twenty - thirty minutes of sermon time.

You did send us a bio and one photo. We would appreciate, by return mail, three additional photographs for the local press.

Paul Goldman, one of our Trustees, will communicate with you concerning arrival, accommodations, etc. From what I understand, you are completely free on Saturday and Saturday evening to venture forth to the Big Apple.

Ancerely

Warmest best wishes,

Rabbi Barry H. Greene

bhg/ep

March 9, 1978 Rabbi Barry H. Greene Congregation B'nai Jeshurun Short Hills, New Jersey 07078 Dear Barry: It was good hearing from you. I plan on speaking about 30 minutes Friday night and for about 40 minutes on Sunday and then deal with questions for as long as you wish. Jewish Identity will be the theme. I presume a dark suit is sufficient. If not, could you have a largish robe available? I will be arriving at Newark at 2:15 on Friday afternoon on American Airlines Flight 581 from Bermuda. Since Saturday is free I wonder if you could arrange a tennis game for me that morning. I am not good, strictly class B, but I enjoy the exercise. I mentioned in my letter of August 30 to Paul Goldman my hope that there would be copies of A History of Judaism available for your Judaica book store. I wonder if these arrangements have been made. If not, a call to Bart DeCastro at Basic Books would easily fix it up. It is a good chance for the temple to make a little money. Unfortunately, I do not have extra copies of my picture. We normally simply duplicate the speaker's photo. Please give Ely my best. With all good wishes I remain Sincerely, Daniel Jeremy Silver DJS:mp Telephone Basic Books - 212-593-7057



CONGREGATION B'NAI JESHURUN SHORT HILLS. NEW JERSEY 07078

RABBI BARRY HEWITT GREENE

March 13, 1978

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver The Temple University Circle at Silver Park Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Dan:

Your flight will be met on Friday, March 31st at 2:15 p.m. in Newark.

Can you wait until Saturday afternoon at 1:00 p.m. to play tennis? I will be unavoidably detained on Saturday morning with a Bar Mitzvah, but we do have a doubles game in the afternoon. Will you be going into New York City for Saturday evening?

We have arranged for a hotel room at the Turtle Brook Inn (555 Northfield Avenue, West Orange, N.J.), which is convenien: to a commuter bus line to and from New York.

Sincerely,

Kang

Rabbi Barry H. Greene

bhg/ep

cc: Mr. Paul Goldman

Mr. Robert Rosenberg

TAOCI - Amonto 909 March 16, 1973 Rabbi Barry H. Greene Congregation B'nai Jeshurun Short Hills, New Jersey 07078 Dear Barry: I would love to play tennis with you on Saturday afternoon and I lock forward to it. As of now I have no particular plans for Saturday night. With all good wishes I remain Sincerely, Daniel Jeremy Silver DJS:mp

The Temple UNIVERSITY CIRCLE AT SREVER PARK . CLEVE, AND, OHIO 44106 . 791-7755
BRANCH: 26000 SHAKER BZYD. . BEACHWOOD, OHIO 44122 . 831-3233

STUART GELLER
Associate Rabbi

Rabbi William Cutter
HUC-JIR
3077 University Avenue
Los Angeles, Calif. 90007

Dear Bill:

STEPHEN A. KLEIN Assistant Rabbi

LEO S. BAMBERGER Executive Secretary

It was good listening to your paper and getting to spend a little time with you on Tuesday. Some day I hope our paths cross in less arranged circumstances and that we have a chance to really get to know each other. As I said Tuesday, I hope you will find the right terminology for the ideas that you are working with and force all of us to really think about them. It is an important topic.

I told Adele your museum would be in touch with her and she said she looks forward to being helpful in any way that she can. With all good wishes from house to house I remain

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:mp

DAN. MANY THANKS. I'M WORKING ON THE

JESUS YOU RAISED, THOUGH I CONFESS TO TWO

PROBLEMS: I'M own "over identification" with the piece
for another week or two; i) Conflicting messages as

to the primary problems with the paper. But

The Tomple



I apprendate your comments perhaps most of AU +, maybe even more, your WArmth & care in Comments perhaps most warmth & care in Comments perhaps most warmth & care in Comments perhaps most but I warde to be Just 600 to back from Israel + hope you are well. I wrote Abele.

, and the parties of

RABBI DAVID ELLENSON THE COMMUNITY SYNAGOGUE 150 Middle Neck Road Port Washington, New York 11050 Temple: (516) 883-3144 March 21, 1978 10 Rabbi Daniel Silver The Temple University Circle at Silver Park Cleveland, Ohio 44106 Dear Rabbi Silver, Enclosed you will find three copies of the paper I delivered last week. Two are for you and one is for the Journal and Professor Martin. By the way, I would appreciate it if you or he would inform me as to whether it will be published there as soon as possible. I also want to thank you for the warmth you extended toward me last week. I hope I will have the opportunity to see you again soon. Thank you. DE:aa encl.



CONGREGATION B'NAI JESHURUN SHORT HILLS, NEW JERSEY 07078

DR. ELY E. PILCHIK, RABBI

man 28 - 1978 1"(les 's , 2/12 (")

Dear Dan:

one drugging me to Boston and A. Carolina where you are her with up. For me it it is a great 1055. I had look formend to being with gay.

and my people will accord you 7/200 50.

you as item teacher, if only ihu Stashat -

Best to Spack - Rps &



CONGREGATION B'NAI JESHURUN SHORT HILLS, NEW JERSEY 07078

DR. ELY E. PILCHIK, RABBI

April 4, 1978

Dear Dan:

I want to tell you that when I came back the walls were still applauding. This is to thank you for a magnificent job done in this pulpit Friday evening, and with our people on Sunday morning. It is so good to have things done so well.

With all my best,

Sincerely,

Ely E. Pilch k,

Rabbi

eep/ep

Ratbi Daniel J. Silver
The Temple
University Circle & Silver Park

Cl∈veland, Ohio 44106

Rabbi Barry Greene Congregation B'nai Jeshurun 1025 South Orange Ave. Short Hills, N. J. 07078

Dear Barry:

You were a fine host on Friday night. Again, please thank Betty for me. I enjoyed being at the Temple.

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:mp

Rabbi Ely E. Pilchik B'nai Jeshurun 1025 South Orange Ave. Short Hills, N. J.

Dear Ely:

I came back to find your note. Sorry our paths did not cross but then I know you brought the word wherever it needed to be brought.

You have a very warm congregation and I enjoyed very much my stay. Incidentally, I made a call to Cleveland on your telephone. Please send me a note about what I owe.

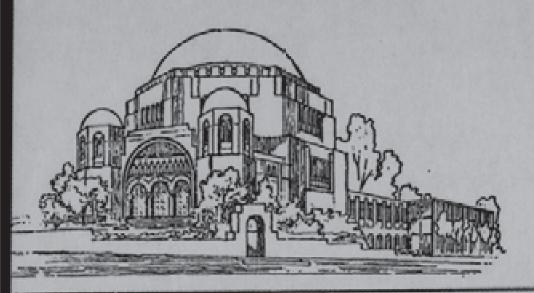
I am looking forward to seeing you at the Conference. Incidentally, our second Task Force meeting went off quite well. David Sidorsky was particularly brilliant. Keep well.

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:m

April 5, 1978 Rabbi and Mrs. Peter Rubinstein Woodlands Community Temple 50 Worthington Road White Plains, N.Y. 10607 Dear Daniela and Peter: You were wonderful hosts Sunday night and I am deeply appreciative. I had a very relaxing time and got to see a bit of the world I would not have seen otherwise. I enjoyed your kids tremendously. As I said, I hope it will not be long before the two of you can join Adele and me for an evening in the city. I know we will be in touch. As always, Daniel Jeremy Silver DJS:mp



TheTemple

CLEVELAND, OHIO

Vol. LXIII, No. 7

From the Rabbi's Desk - DO WE MEAN WHAT WE SAY? DO WE SAY WHAT WE MEAN?

This sermon delivered at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations Regional Biennial is produced here in response to numerous requests.

The Hebrew word hefter describes unclaimed property, objects which have been lost for which no owner has put in his bid. By extension, rabbinic Hebrew evolved the generic term kefheyrut to denote the condition of aimlessness, confused ideas, a community where there was no clear organizing principle. Even since the emergence of our liberal tradition, Jews of traditional bent have used this term, hefkeyrut, to put us down, implying thereby that we are an aimless movement built around confused ideas, that there is no organizing principle to what we do. Generally, they include in this putdown the charge that our lives evidence the same wishy-washiness and confusion of standards as our theology. Since we knew the quality of our homes and the concerns of our synagogues, we have not been much affected by the charge of hefkeyrut. We put it down to polemics; but, in recent years, a number of our own have been wondering aloud whether our liberal Jewish movement, in fact, is developing along any clear set of standards. They wondered whether we had slipped into hefkeyrus by glorifying change rather than the unchanging and by trying to be all things to all people.

Moments of intellectual definition tend to emerge from relatively narrow and parochial debates. The larger concerns of war and peace, race and social justice, involve so many variables that it is bard to focus the questions of responsibility and principle. But when the shoe pinches, when there is confrontation on some parochial issue, it is clear who is on what side and what the conflicting values are; then a movement cannot escape confronting itself. The debate whether rabbis should celebrate intermarriages has provided our focus of clarification. Congregents wonder: doesn't a rabbi exist to serve his congregation? Rabbis discover the piper must be paid for the decades during which their communities were told that in matters of ritual liberal Judaism has no fixed standards. If rabbis can move Shavuot to a con-I vient Sunday why can't they conveniently officiate at an inter-marriage? The debate has been long, and for some, is not yet settled. While it raged all of us have had to take a good hard look at our movement and have had to ask questions about basic principles. What authority do we accept?

What are the traditions our congregations build into school curriculum and worship? What are the unshakable convictions those who occupy the pulpit use as a basis for their teaching?

The founding fathers of Reform Judaism held what is best called a double faith theory. I borrow this term from Dr. Harry Wolfson who used it in another context to define the assumptions of medieval philosophers like Saadia who insisted that the teachings of the world of reason and the assumptions of the world of revelation were the obverse and reverse of a single truth. I use this term, "double faith theory", to describe the conviction of reform's founding fathers that the values of the western civilizations and the values of our religious tradition were coherent. accepted on faith the proposition that the western world and the Jewish world were moving in the same directions toward similar progressive goals. In their eyes the public school and the religious school taught essentially similar morals. Did not the Western World, like the Jewish world, prize learning? Was not the western world devoted to social reform? The world seemed deeply concerned with the development of human brotherhood and talked a good bit about the good in everyone, what Judaism called the imprint of divinity? There seemed ample reason to believe in the congruence of these two worlds. Both worlds approved a number of activist and liberal Biblical texts:

"Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us all", "establish justice in the gate", "proclaim freedom unto the land", "holy shalt thou be".

This assumed coherence of values, which seemed so certain just a few years ago, is no longer selfevident. As the 20th century has developed we have found to our dismay that western civilization is not committed solely to reason, human brotherhood and social reform. Many elements out there emphasize passion, emotion and the irrational. (Theories of economic determinism became popular which emphasized-the state at the expense of individual freedoms There was a pullback from emancipatiens) Behaviorist assumptions challenged the doctrine of free will Philosophy was now existential, a search for meaning in the moment rather than for changeless values. Morality was no longer a list of certain constants, but situational and relative. As the 20th century developed we were increasingly confused as to the values of the larger world and no longer certain that "prophetic Judaism", our activist interpretation of the law of righteousness, was in fact an adequate definition of the essence of Judaism. We came to realize that Judaism had not been simply this-worldly and diat Judaism did not simply affirm life. There let been many ascetic elements. There had been a heavy emphasis on life beyond the grave. Judaism was not simply (continued)

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

DECEMBER 12, 1976 10:30 a.m. THE TEMPLE BRANCH

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

THE REDISCOVERY OF THE KHAZARS 10:30 a.m.
THE TEMPLE BRANCH

Rabbi DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

CHANUKAH – THE NEW LOOK

FRIDAY EVENING SERVICE - 5:30 to 6:10 - THE TEMPLE CHAPEL SABBATH SERVICE - 9:45 s.m. - THE BRANCH

DO WE MEAN WHAT WE SAY?

rational nor innocently devoted to social action. There had been much cultivation of the mystical. The art of piety had been carefully developed. Our souls thirsted for a larger promise and a deeper piety and we turned to these forgotten chords. We still organized ourselves into liberal synagogues, but we were no longer certain that "prophetic Judaism" said all that we needed to have Judaism affirm. We began to move in many directions at once and to make changes for the sake of change. At the fringes small groups are busy creating synagogues on the principle that the millenial watchword: "Hear O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one" must be denied. Devoted to change and a romantic humanism they argue that a liberal synagoque can be whatever its members want it to be, even confessedly atheist. Out there a few thinkers write as if there existed an active disjunct between the present and the past, between reform Jews and all other Jews. Such folk define Judaism as a radical openness to the future. They argue that tradition has no claim upon us and spend their time being Jewish in any way that suits their fancy. We find inconsistency even within the heart of the movement. Out there the Union of American Hebrew Congregations encourages the establishment of a congregation of homosexuals despite the age-old tradition which holds such behavior as morally unacceptable.

Such events are symptoms which in their own way force upon us the question of whether we have a principled movement or have fallen into hefkeyrut: whether, in fact, there are values and affirmations by which we organize our lives and which we will not violate, except in the conscious knowledge that we are sinning: or whether we are simply a group of people who happen to be born Jews and who like to be with others who share the name. Are there principles? What are they? What are the rituals and the practices which we as a liberal Jewish synagogue must not violate or bend, come what may? What is there lewish about our person, about our value structure, about our families? Is a Jew just like everyone else except for a few hours on the High Helidays? Are our homes, indistinguishable from those of our neighbors? What is there Jewish in our social stance, or is religious action simply a reflection of the modest middle-class liberalism thered by many whose incomes and status in America approximates our own?

About three years ago the Central Conference of American Rabbis asked me to organize a Task Force on Jewish Identity which would raise up the question of authority and authenticity, of definition. At the beginning of our work we found it rather easy to define sociologically the liberal Jewish community. We are white middle-class or upper middle-class, largely suburban, midly liberal in our politics, avidly cultural in our aesthetic interests: but when we try to define the reform Jewish community in religious terms the task becomes very difficult. Two out of three of our families make annual contributions to the United Jewish Appeal; one out of three does not. One in two of the adults who belong to our congregations attend on both of the High Holidays; one in two does not. About five percent of our membership follows a pattern of regular public worship, ninetyfive out of every one hundred do not. A small percentage in any congregations, we haven't

measured the exact proportion, but it's minimal, check out Jewish books from our libraries and do what we call Torah: but most of our members do not read anything at all dealing with the sphere of Jewish religious concern.

Clearly, for those of us who care, Liberal Judaism cannot be defined by describing current habits. Our definition must begin with convictions; what we want our practice to be. Numbers describe what is, not what we agree ought to be. I know from this congregation, as I suspect most of you know from your own, that there exists among us a devoted leadership committed to a sustained set of disciplines and values. There is concern for God, for Torah and for Israel in most of our congregations, at least among our leaders; or is there? In order to understand where those who guide our congregations are I undertook, about two years ago, a study of the celebration of Confirmation in the reform synagogue. I wrote to a number of rabbis who were kind enough to send me their order of service, their liturgy, the students' speeches, a cantata, if one had been produced, the music which had been sung, their sermon and any greetings which had been spoken by members of the Board: in other words, the entire structure of Confirmation 1975. Confirmation is a rite of passage, a day on which we highlight the affirmations that we want our young people to assume. One way or another, Confirmation signals what we define as Jewish, what is demanded of us.

I found great variety, extending even to the date of Confirmation. A number of congregations celebrated Confirmation on the following Friday night; a few on the following Sunday morning; several on the following Sunday afternoon. One congregation held Confirmation at midnight of a camp weekend.

Though I was looking for content, not for calendar, this study made me aware of the importance of a common calendar and prayerbook - consistency. Surely, some of the attention we have lavished on being creative has been misplaced in the sense that it has divided synagogue from synagogue. We are making it increasingly difficult for us to move from our home congregation and still find ourselves in familiar surroundings. We will die as a movement if each congregation becomes a movement unto itself.

About ten percent of our congregations had a Confirmation which can only be called a celebration of the religion of high-minded vagueness. In one such congregation the class made no affirmation of faith. There was a brief service followed by a series of speeches on the general theme of "Contributions to World Peace." One youngster spoke warmly of the United Nations, another of UNESCO, another of UNICEF, another of the World Federalists; one even spoke on the European Economic Community. In content and substance these speeches were identical to themes which would be written for a tenth grade civics class in a local high school. There was nothing Jewish about them; worse, there was no attempt to come to grips with the existential concerns of the Jewish community as these are affected by the actions of such international bodies. There was not a word about the attempt within the United Nations to delegitimate the State of Israel. There was a lot

of fine verbiage, but not a word about Soviet Jewry, Syrian Jewry, the American Jewish community or Israel. Here was the worship of the religion of high-minded vagueness.

Another service held on a Sunday afternoon also featured an extremely brief liturgy. There was no confirmation of faith. There was no Israeli or UAHC camp songs. Beyond some nineteenth century synagogue refrains the only music is the service was the "Morning Song" from the Broadway musical Pippin. As the service began one youngster designated the class' fund to world hunger, a laudible undertaking; but the terms in which this contribution was offered were disconcerting. This contribution was the class' reproof to the adult congregation for being overly involved with the Jewish community and not adequately concerned with blacks and the poor. Most of the remaining speeches dealt with cosmic issues. Torah was defined 7 as absolute freedom. As proof they cited the midrash that the Torah had been created before the earth. In this class's hand this midrash was twisted to mean that the Torah had been created before man in order that no people might claim the Torah as their own.

Such services represented some ten percent of the submissions, no more, perhaps less. Ninety percent of our movement sculpted a Confirmation day which raised up both the particular concerns of the Jewish people and the broard concerns of humanity; the devotional concern of Jewish life and the active social concerns of the day.

In order to know whether this 90/10 ratio held in other areas I undertook a study of our wcrship this past Rosh Hashanah night. Again I found that about ten percent of our congregations make a deliberate attempt to evoke a denatured religious posture, to emphasize outer directed conkerns, and to avoid mention of specific Jewish responsibilities. On the other hand, ninety percent of our congregations use Rosh Hashanah night as they do Confirmation: to express both the prophetic and the priestly, the concerns of Israel and the concerns of mankind.

Though the majority in our movement have their hearts in a Jewish place, I found they do not easily or effectively express what they feel. Most of our congregations find it awkward to creste religious moments or a religious school curriculum which effectively expresses the both/and stance. We tend to fall back on the optimistic rhetoric of the nineteenth century. Our fathers cleated some grand, still useful, institutions, but their theology was far too innocent for our tragic age; but oh, how we love the vague words "peace." "justice" "righteousness", which mean everything and nothing.

During the nineteenth century Americans believed in progress, that it was only a manter of time before everybody in the world would become in spirit a middle-class, small town American family man, a democrat, a member of the prothe hood of men of good will. To men like Isaac Mayer Wise it was only a matter of a generation, no more, before a world brotherhood would coalesse before the ideals of the west (sweet reason, civic progress and social democracy) would become the norms of human life. If reform Judgism had any

(continued)

organizing principle it was confidence in an impending messianic age. In such an era the mission of Israel could not center on the devotional life or Torah, but turned on social reform, the Community Chest and the university. The basic Mitzvah was to involve yourself in institutions, causes and crusades which made for the betterment of man-

"O Lord. I pray that you will give me the strength to change the world." I found that amazing prayer in one of the Confirmation services. Isaac Mayer Wise would have loved it. I found almost the same prayer as a conclusion to a Rosh Hashanah 1976 sermon: "Give me the strength, the understanding, the judgement to change the world." What hutzpah. Who of us is going to change the world? Who of us can really change himself? We can use the words of messianic impatience, but we no longer believe the dream. Kishney, Stalin, Nurenberg, Treblinka, Dachau, 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 have swept over us. We have learned about genocide and Jiha'd. Israel has become for us a symbol of a world where the pioneer must carry a gun on his back, a world where men must live prudently as well as prophetically, a world where the survival of one's own community is still at stake. We do not believe, as did our fathers, that social democracy is the certain wave of the future. Tyranny is on the upswing. We do not Eelieve that reason oblides the world's leaders. We have become aware of the banality of evil. We cannot be certain that manking has the capacity to transform itself, but we know with an awful clarity that we have the capacity to destroy all life.

The challenge of the nineteenth century was the challenge of change. The challenge of the twentieth century is to find the changeless, the unchanging. Our need is to find again and understand the long thrust of our tradition. The challenge for our congregations is the challenge of definition: to create patterns of worship and study, a curriculum, a defined set of observances which will proclaim our Jewishness and define what we mean as a consecrated way of life. Clearly, we cannot define Judaism by those values which are currently acceptable in the outside world. Every kind of value and cause is being huckstered out there. To find those basic themes of human dignity, of family, of community, of social concern, of learning and holiness which our tradition has long emphasized, we will have to turn inward; learn and study, turn off the outside world and search for the deep wellsprings of our own tradition. It will not be easy. A minority exists among us who believe that Judaism is whatever they want it to be and they will throw the gauntlet of cowardice in our face. Some will be cowed. We are not used to rules. For a century we have been intoning terms like righteous and justice with happy abandon and little precision.

One of the things I found disconcerting as I read the various cantatas that were spoken on Confirmation was their silence about the achievements of Jewish life from Judah Macabee to Moses Mendelsohn. The long rabbinic tradition was pasted over as a midnight of oppressions, suffering and martyrdom. There has been little interest among us to understand the halachic way, how by casuittry and

case analysis, by applying the moral concerns which ought to be applied, we can evolve a sensitive understanding of what must be done in a particular situation. We have been enamored of platitudes, these great sweeping statements which mask careful thought, and our innocence has kept us from growing up.

I love the word peace, but I have heard Hitler speak of peace. I have heard Stalin speak of peace and Wasser and Kruschev and Joe McCarthy and Richard Nixon. Peace has no meaning outside a specific context. We must come to grips with context and consequence. We can do so only by asking ourselves what it is we are really trying to do. What are the values around which we are really organized? Are we simply an adjunct of the ADA and the ACLU? Are we latter day incarnations of Amos or Micah? Is religious action both passion and prudential concern? Are we devoted to Torah as a vague abstraction "I use the public library" or as a careful study of the tradition. Our tradition is a complex, paradoxical, tension-filled spiritual discipline. Can we polish its insights and let them permeate our congregations so that we will understand what do we stand for and what we must do? I believe we can, I believe we want to, but the way is long and there is much to be done.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

TEMPLE FUNDS

THE ABBA HILLEL SILVER CHARITABLE & EDUCATIONAL FUND THE RICHARD ALAN FISHEL HONOR KEY FUND

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September-October 1977 \$2.50

The great blue heron

Bird-watching on a grand scale, naturalists retrace the route of Audubon's 1833 expedition to Labrador.

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with the past of intellectual cowardice, of turning reform into a new orthodoxy. Some will be cowed. I hope most of us will not be.

It will not be easy. A majority exists among us who simply do not care or care to understand. Our interviews heard again and again: "I chose reform to make the kids Jewish but not to bother me." "Reform fits very nicely with my needs." "I can be Jewish and yet not necessarily believe in God." "Here's a chance to teach my kids Judaism and it's not going to interfere with my life." "The reform rabbi said it is okay to do as little as you want." "I'd rather have my daughter marry a Unitarian Harvard attorney than an orthodox Jewish businessman." There is a clear and present danger that in a desperate attempt to increase membership and attendance, we will pander to the disinterested and in doing so drive away the sensitive and concerned who are our best hope for a significant future.

The challenge to define does not mandate the drafting of a new platform or the redrafting of the Perspective - words are not the problem. Jewish living is. Cur problem is the superficiality of affiliation and pervasive indifference to Torah both as a study and a discipline. For too many membership is simply a check, a car pool and a cemetery plot. Fact: one in two adult members of our congregations did not attend services on both high holidays last year. Fact: last year one in two affiliated families did not contribute to the local United Jewish Appeal. In such an environment diversity is simply a cuphemism for indifference. We say we are that a million strong. Actually, we are only as strong as the interested core.

There is much that is healthy within the house of Reform. You find it wherever you find sensitive social concern, a serious wrestling with issues, honest and disciplined study, the habit of worship, a sturdy defense of Jewish rights, a challenge to

been grounded and the talk is again of <u>Torah</u> and <u>Avodah</u>. Unity will emerge in measure as we care. Diversity will dominate in measure as we are careless. The battle for intellectual freedom is long over; the struggle to respond lovingly and fully to a commanding voice has just begun. The Exodus is behind us, Sinai is ahead of us. Will we have the courage to say with our fathers, <u>na'aseh v'nishmah</u>?



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