



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.

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Harvard University, Advanced Administrative Institute, Graduate
School of Education, The Youth Revolution, correspondence,
notes, and student papers, 1969.

By comparing Judaism to a triangle, it becomes evident that Judaism means more to the Jew than just a conglomeration of rituals, laws, and customs. Judaism has always represented more than this to me, for it has become the foundation of my existence and a focal point of my life.

Using a simple geometric figure, the triangle, as an analogy, the three points can be compared to the three primary conceptions of Judaism held by the Jew in relation to his lifetime. Three dimensions of Judaism must be considered to achieve a complete understanding of the meaning of Judaism to the Jew. The three connecting lines which give the figure its distinctive form may be compared to the broad philosophy which underlies the faith. The transformations which have been made through the years in ritual and custom are of little consequence compared to the eternal values that have buttressed Judaism through centuries in the face of adversity. These lines represent the roots of thought and tradition that have remained unchanged in spite of other alterations that have occurred. Although Judaism has been flexible and has adapted to change, it has managed to maintain a basic philosophy that has been successfully applied to the past, present, and future.

At the apex or the uppermost point on the triangle is the most conspicuous conception of Judaism -- that which pertains to the present. For those who are unfamiliar with Judaism, the insights and spiritual solace that are characteristic

of Judaism, appear to make Judaism appear to be a remote, solemn, and somber faith. In the eyes of the Jew, these play a more vivid role. Essential to any understanding of the present meaning of Judaism for the Jew is an examination of the basic theology or the connecting lines of the triangle.

The principle tenets of Judaism include the belief in a personal God whose ways are beyond man's comprehension, but whose reality makes the difference between a world that has purpose and one that is meaningless; the belief that man is made in God's image and his role in the universe is a unique one despite the failures that spring from his mortality; that man is endowed with infinite potentialities for greatness and goodness.

One can easily discern the pervasiveness of these values in Jewish life today as they form an integral part of it. Because they are not confined to the synagogue alone, they assume a far-reaching effect on the relationship of the Jew to his family, community, and society at large.

Judaism holds that man can most genuinely worship God by imitating those qualities that are Godly -- compassion, justice, and tolerance. The Talmud speaks of three general principles in life: Torah, or learning; service of God; and performance of good deeds or charity. Taking these values in the context of everyday life, one can easily see their manifestations. The core of Judaism as found in the Mosaic formula for treating our neighbor fairly, respecting his rights, his property, and above all his person. Thus, if we

deal justly with our fellowmen, truth will triumph and peace will reign. This passion for just human relations dominates the ethical teachings of Judaism and is the starting point from which all Jewish teaching commences.

The theme of freedom and equality also runs throughout Jewish history and guides the relationship of the Jew toward his fellowman. These values are voiced today by Jewish support of such issues as integrity in public office, just labor management relations, civil rights and civil liberties, equality of economic opportunity, decent education, housing and health standards for all citizens, and peace among the nations of the world.

Probably one of the most characteristic features of Jewish life is its emphasis on family integrity and unity. The religious loyalties linked to the love of home have strengthened both the home and the religion as well. Judaism measures the dignity of man in relation to his family circle and each member of the family has an important and indispensable role. The modern Jewish family has retained the high standards embodied in Jewish tradition by its emphasis on the unity of family experience and the sharing of joys and sorrows. It is perhaps this family experience that has played the most important role in my life as a Jew, for it has contributed to the preservation and instilling of values and ideas which have modified my relationships in other settings. This family solidarity has been a major factor in the survival of the Jews through the trials and tribulations of the centuries.

Although I have only presented a glimpse of Jewish life in its present context, it is obvious that the precepts of Judaism are extended beyond the synagogue to provide a guide to everyday relationships and situations. Because Judaism embraces the secular elements as well as the sacred ones, it is more than its core doctrine. Because it sets certain objectives before man and leaves it to his discretion which path to take to achieve these goals, each individual by whatever grasp of knowledge he has, must choose his own course. The truth and ideals of Judaism live only to the degree to which they are realized in the daily interactions of each Jewish person.

The second point on the triangle represents the past. The Jew today recognizes that he is a part of a vast cultural heritage that has existed for thousands of years. The traditions embodied in the laws and rituals connect him to this past and add meaning to his present existence. Because Judaism has survived in the face of relentless persecutions and despite the fact that its adherents are vastly outnumbered and scattered all over the world, the Jewish people have maintained a solidarity unmatched by any other ethnic group. Regardless of their nationality, they have felt a strong identification with one another so that these bonds of unity have only become fortified when threatened by adversaries.

Judaism is one of the oldest religions known to man, with a tradition that reached back as far as the dawn of civilization.

It has contributed richly to civilization and has grown and kept pace with the spiritual needs of more than a hundred generations. For these reasons, Jews are intensely interested in their ancestors although they are personally far removed from many of their rituals and traditions. It is only through recognizing this added dimension of the history of the Jewish people that one can fully appreciate the pride in their faith the Jewish people feel. Recognition of these past glories also aids to an appreciation of the future.

// The third and final point on the triangle is the future role of Judaism in my life. Hope describes this aspect of Judaism -- a threefold hope based on hope for the individual soul, that it will attain the fulfillment of which it falls short of in the flesh; hope for the people as a whole, or the expectation of ultimate deliverance and vindication; hope for society, or the assurance that it will be regenerated into something better when evil is purged and good is perfected and made permanent. Together these make a confidence that for man, for Israel, and for mankind, a better world lies ahead.

It is through the realization of the will of God that these hopes will become realities for He has spurred mankind throughout history to greater good. Through these aspirations and hopes, pursued with skill and fortitude, this age may come into being.

For me, Judaism represents an optimism and faith in the innate goodness of man. Judaism has in the past and will in

the future^{pe} an illuminating force which is suited to stand
for that which I believe in and cherish dearly. Judaism
functions as the starting point from which to commence my
life's journey, and with a little wisdom and prudence, it can
lead me on that way safely and joyfully. //

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A DIALOGUE

CHARACTERS:

JUDAISM - A Personification in a prophet-like figure.

STUDENT - A student in the process of writing a paper for Religion 306 - History of Judaism

SCENE: It's one A.M. In a somewhat disheveled dormitory room, amidst half-way stuffed suitcases, bulging cartons and stacks of frayed books, a student sits at a desk trying to write a paper. Next to the desk there is a wastebasket overflowing with crumpled papers, with one or two on the floor. The room is dark except for the one lit desk lamp. There is another figure in the room who is as yet unobserved by the student who is involved in the paper.

JUDAISM (walking towards student from the dark and clearing throat). Hello. Allow me to introduce myself. I am known as JUDAISM.

STUDENT (in a matter of fact tone). Oh, Hello.

JUDAISM. Hm, aren't you at all surprised by my presence?

STUDENT. No. You see, I have been up for the last three days, have not had more than three hours sleep in the past seventy-two hours period, and have already taken five finals in the space of four days. Consequently, I'm not surprised by anything I see right now. You are just probably just a product of my wearied mind. As a psychology major I would explain you as a hallucination-

both visual and auditory resulting from sleep deprivation. Either that, or I have finally conked out and am dreaming about CPU and am manifesting my guilt feelings for not having finished my religion take-home final by dreaming about my subject.

JUDAISM. Well, I guess it isn't really of any importance to what you ascribe my visitation. (Student resumes writing and no longer pays attention to the figure.) Am I disturbing you?

STUDENT. Well not really. You see I have one more paper to write and I've decided that the best way to ~~ignore~~ handle this situation is to ignore you. When my mind begins to fully concentrate on my work, it won't be able to maintain this hallucination. Oh, but this ridiculous talking to an illusion (resumes working).

JUDAISM. What is your paper concerned with? (Student gives no response.) MAYBE I can be of assistance. From the evidence in your waste basket you seem to be running into some difficulty.

STUDENT. How can you be of help? All you're doing is keeping me from my work. Trying to define my self-concept and my concept of JUDAISM and their relation to one another is not easy, you know. But wait, it

really doesn't matter if you're imaginary or not, because the nature of your appearance to me would reflect my conceptualization of Judaism. Through conversing with you, I can find out what I need to know. Okay, Judaism, who or what are you?

JUDAISM (picking up chair text to student's desk). Well apparently to you I'm first annoying and something to be avoided and only encountered when I can be taken advantage of. But this of course is not an unusual reaction to me. All through history I have been used either to explain or rationalize for events or occurrences, or as a shield or retreat against threatening external forces. The answer to your question is not an easy one. Let me ask you the same question - Who are you?

STUDENT. So whose playing amateur psychologist now? Nevertheless, your point is valid and relates to my paper as well. My self concept is a resultant of combining the many concepts, attitudes, and reactions^{of} others, significant others that is, have about me and my personal internalization of them. Forgive me if I sound like a sociology text book, but I just had a final in my social psychology course this morning, or was that yesterday morning? Anyhow,

I basically see myself as I think others see me, even though they may not really see me in that way. For example if others see me ~~in that way~~ as having the ability to do well academically, I internalize their views and I expect myself to do well academically as well.

JUDAISM. Yes, but how do others see you?

STUDENT. Well now, in relation to role, others see me as a student, that is, in a preparatory state of my development. This of course is a transitional role. Unfortunately I sometimes am uncertain as to what role I am to take on after I graduate college. It seems that rather than just being a transitional role preparing me for a later one, I'm learning to be a perpetual student.

JUDAISM. This is all very well, but what makes you, you?

STUDENT. Well, I suppose that I'm like everyone else in that I too am of the species homo sapien. This almost goes back to the idea of what is man — a product of evolutionary events and processes in nature over millions of years, who has the ability to reason, utilize the elements in his physical environment to his own benefit — though often he by using it to his advantage exploits

it and it is to his disadvantage - and hopefully to formulate, free-thinking open minded ideas through social interaction. I'm only like some people in that I may share a common religious belief, a common ethnic background, a common socio-economic level, a common political ideal, or national identity. All of which affect my outlook on life through association with groups of individuals who also are members of these categories. But though I'm like everyone in certain aspects, like only some people in others, there are certain qualities which make me like no one. In other words, I, like every man, am unique. And this of course entails my personality and that is the core that would be the real me. But exactly what that core is I really don't know.

JUDAISM., What comprises your personality?

STUDENT. I suppose various traits which allow me to respond consistently to various environmental situations, and which pattern my behavioral responses. Personally I don't believe most traits are inherited, though some such as intellectual potential may be; they are environmentally influenced or induced. But because no one has absolutely the same conditions in his environment,

Everyone turns out to be unique. One personality characteristic which I have which has both positive and negative value is my extreme tolerance for all situations and conditions such as the falling short of my expectations of others in their behavior. For example, I tend to rationalize away some one's inappropriate ~~immature~~ behavior by saying they were ~~in~~ going through a period of stress, or have have been conditioned to act immaturity throughout their life and to expect any other reaction from them would be unfounded. Or similarly I'll tolerate a situation by saying - Well that's the way life is! But such reactions on my part leads to stagnation, for I'll never affect change. I have to learn to be more intolerant and angry if I want people or conditions to improve. I guess that's about all the free association I can come forth with. Now that I've tried to offer some insight into my nature, it is your turn to tell me about yourself.

JUDAISM. In your description of yourself as like only some people, you used the concepts religion, nationalism, and ethnic background. Through history I've been all of these things. When some one says he is

a Jew, others don't just react to him on a religious plane but along these other areas as well. People are constantly seeking security, a feeling of group identity, and I provide this feeling. To some it has been a religious identity which affects their way of life by making him eat prescribed prayers at various times of day and upholding such laws as Kashuth all of which are based on my dogma that God is the Lord and he is One. To others, such as the strong Zionists of a generation ago I provide a national identity for they have for so long felt out of place and only tolerated in the countries they live. I provided the vision of a state of Israel which eventually took a hold in reality without the coming of the Messiah. Yet to others ~~who get~~ who call themselves Jews, but do so out of no religious or national fervor, I am something else - an ethical-cultural background - all the way from the various types of food such as Gefilte fish to other cultural ideals such as every Jewish mother's wish to wanting her son to be a doctor and if he has a weak stomach a lawyer. To some people I embody all these qualities and to some I can be one without the other. Some one can

be an ardent, orthodox, pious Jew but be intolerant to the idea of Zionism.

Whilst others can be strongly adherents of Zion, they can be practicing atheists.

Others can yet denounce both of these, and claim only a cultural, traditional type of affiliation or identity. I see myself as not absolute but as a dynamic force constantly in a state of change — different to different individuals at different times. May I ask what am I to you?

STUDENT. I would have to answer that question in relation to different periods in my life. I guess in the beginning of my life to my early teens Judaism affected me predominantly as a religion and as an ethical way of life. My parents being extremely Orthodox taught me religious practices and sent me to a parochial Hebrew school. Not only did I ~~fail~~ practice all these prescriptions but I did so faithfully, believing in their intrinsic importance. This reached into every part of my existence, such as not turning on a light switch because it was the Sabbath. Most of my early associations with others, especially other children, was restricted to other Jews. Then early in

my sub teens I was taken out of my sheltered and stable environment and put into a public school setting where there was more of a heterogeneous group of individuals to come in contact with. It was not until my middle teens though that I began to abandon my religious beliefs and turned to kind of agnostic-ethical culturalism. It was then that I also turned on to Zionism. I suppose I was at that stage of development - adolescence - where I was going through an identity crisis - not that I've ~~already~~ recovered from it - and needed some sort of new yet familiar group to identify with and Judaism ~~with~~ in its nationalistic form of Zionism provided me with this. But I eventually abandoned this too for nationalism of any form repulsed me. So I now I suppose I am only left with an ethical-cultural type of identity. The schema I used to structure my self concept can be applied to you as well. You are like all other institutions, be they religious, national, or cultural in that you provide a comfortable security, a feeling of identity and an explanation for life. And why one should do what one has

been taught to do. You are only like
 some institutions in that you share
 common practices such as ^{adherence to the Ten Commandments} ~~sets of~~ prayers,
 having a national flag, or having specific
 traditions^{and rites of passage}. But you are also unique because
 certain practices are unique to you. I
 tend to reject you because I see all
 these as being sources of limitations and
 prejudice creating within the entire community
 of man. I do not reject Judaism for its
 brand of religion, nationalism, or ethnicity,
 but simply because you embody all
 these properties. I tend to reject any-
 thing that would limit man such as
 nationalism; today we need an international-
 istic outlook. Unfortunately this is a
 paradoxical situation, because man needs the
 security he gets from such institutions
 or he would not create them. And once
 in them he can't completely divorce himself
 from them. Before I said I had out-
 grown my enthusiasm for Zionism, but only
 intellectually, emotionally I'm still tied to it
 for I shudder when I hear about
 Arab-Israeli fighting in the Middle East...
 (Student all this time has been speaking increasingly
 politician-type form of address, staring off into
 space with a "search of higher ideals" look and

has not noticed that the figure has vanished.) Gee
I guess I got carried away.

Jewish Davidson



Judaism has provided me with an everpresent point of identification in environments of both Jews and Gentiles. First, a discussion of the meaning of Judaism for me will enable me to determine the role it is to play in my life.

Judaism as a structured religion consists of all the practices, observances, prayers, customs, and liturgy that differentiate it from other religions. For me, the practices, the day to day rituals, the specific prayers to be recited, often by rote rather than feeling, are all secondary to the philosophical teachings, the commentaries on human existence that are not unlike those of every other major religion of the world.

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My first exposure to Judaism, and my first recognition that I am a Jew came to me in the first years of my religious school training. During that time I was taught the history of the the Jews, the meaning and observances of the holidays, and the rudiments of Hebrew and the liturgy of the religious service. It was not until later in my religious school education that I was exposed to the philosophy of Judaism, indeed of all religion. This philosophy is the essence of Judaism for me.

My religion is much more than prayer and faithful attendance at Sabbath and holiday services. In fact, I often find religious observance irrelevant to my daily life.

My religion is a more universalist one than more orthodox members of the Jewish community would accept. It is a belief that stems from the faith in man, rather than the faith in a supernatural power. At the risk of appearing blasphemous, I suggest that one need not ever set foot in a synagogue, perhaps not even hold a belief in God, in order to be a good Jew.

All this is not to say that Judaism, or any other religion, is unnecessary or superfluous. Rather, it is a vehicle through which we may learn the philosophy of religion, the teaching that man, together with his symbolic "brothers" must act according to his own conscience to make a world in which he can achieve whatever goals he may hold.

One may ask, "why, then, should any religion exist?" The answer to me is simple. Religion serves as the most powerful and pervasive institution of education that exists. It provides us with our foundation of ethics; it outlines a plan by which we can strive to live righteously and justly. Religion gives us a sense of direction or goal orientation; the prescriptions and directives of how to act, how to behave in a specific situation are secondary. It would have been enough to merely point us in the right direction.

My concept of Judaism is not clear cut; rather, it is abstract and hazy, reflecting the unspecific, unpre-scribed nature of action I feel to be religious. It would be far easier for me to tell what Judaism is not.

Judaism is not the observance of holiday, the chanting of prayer, the wearing of skull cap and prayer shawl. For those who believe that all one must do to qualify as a good Jew, and hence, a good person, is faithfully fulfill these actions, Judaism is as empty and meaningless as pagan idol worship. Rather, these actions should serve only as reminders that there is a much deeper meaning to religion, that religion encompasses the act of living, and not just the act of acting.

I firmly believe that I am a good Jew. I make this claim with the full knowledge that I rarely attend services, that there is much I do not know about customs and observances. I make this claim on the basis of my belief that I am striving to fulfill the teaching of my religion, the teachings basic to any religion--to be a good person. I realize, however, that the concept of "goodness" is empty unless it is lived. I choose to maintain my identification with Judaism as a reminder of the basic philosophies I will strive to follow.

One may now ask, "Why do I choose Judaism as my reminder to be a 'good' person?" Quite frankly, I believe that Judaism is the best religion through which the education of which I spoke previously can be carried out. The Judaism to which I have been exposed, although cold and empty in some instances, seems to best relate my life to its philosophical teachings.

My affiliation with Judaism is with the Reform Movement. It is my belief that Reform Judaism is the best example of

living Judaism. By paring away much that is trivial, that is superfluous and empty in modern day context, Reform Judaism is better able to address itself to the questions of living. In the Reform Movement, one is no longer forced to go through the motions of meaningless ritual in order to prove one's self. Reform Judaism represents to me an attempt to make Judaism a living religion, concerned with living people. An important aspect of Judaism, unique among major religions, is that the religion is chiefly concerned with existence now, and does not dwell so much on the importance of salvation or life after death.

My religious identification has not been constant or consistent. There have been times when I have accepted the religion, along with all its rituals and trivialities, without question. This occurred during the early part of my life, when I had not developed my intellectual skills enough to understand all the implications of my religious belief. Like any child, I had to be told and directed by my elders.

After this came a period of great questioning. Disillusioned by the immediate irrelevance of all religious practice vis a vis my own life, I rejected religion completely, not realizing that I was discarding very much of the good along with what I believed to be the bad aspects of religion.

It is only recently that I have renewed my identification with Judaism. I realize now the importance of much of my religious education. What I could not understand

a few short years ago now seems so much more relevant to me now. Having developed socially and intellectually, I can look at ideas with a better perspective. My Confirmation training, which seemed totally without value at the time of my Confirmation, is much more meaningful to me now that I have been able to relate it to my life.

I will not try to convince myself or others that my stronger identification will make me a more observant person. Judaism occupies an important place in my life, not because it directly serves to influence my actions, but because it serves to influence my thoughts, which alone serve to direct my actions.

Judaism's role in my life is that of a philosophy of existence, rather than a religion in the traditional sense of the word. It serves as a social conscience, and the outward manifestations of the religion serve only as a reminder of the inner implications of my belief. I must conclude from my observations of self and other men, however, that man, though he may strive, is imperfect, and is thus, often in need of reminders. Perhaps those who wander must have religion as this reminder. Perhaps only when man achieves perfection, will religion disappear. Until then, religion will fulfill this important purpose, and, I believe, my Judaism will do so for me.

PAUL LEVIN

Judaism and Me

WRHS



Carl Hoch
Religion 306
Rabbi Silver
June 6, 1969

For a little more than a year, I dated a Gentile girl and during this time I had given considerable thought about marrying her. In the course of my thinking, a great deal of time was devoted to how important Judaism would come into the relationship, and more important, what it meant to me. I wish that I could say that my thinking was rational, but it was not, because it was dominated by emotion and religious training, by my parents and the religion itself.

I started my formal religious

training when I was about eight years old. I went to Hebrew school and Sunday school and I must admit that I enjoyed them both. Hebrew was somewhat of a novelty because I was learning a second language long before my classmates would even begin to think about a second language.

Those early years were very enjoyable, even though there was so much to learn. I can remember my mother lighting Friday night candles and my father praying faster than I thought was possible. Judaism was

much more than words to be read,
rules to be learned, or prayers to be said;
it was like the fellow in class said -
it was chicken soup and all the
love and hope that goes with it.

The strange part about it is,
that even now I view my religion
in the same light that I viewed it
as a child; with awe, fascination, and
wonder. There is so much more to learn,
so much more to understand. That
was the reason I took your course
both semesters. The more I learn, I realize
that there is that much more to learn.

I have always enjoyed services from the Sabbath with its simple "Shema" to Yom Kippur with its beautiful and complex "Kol Nidray" (spelling?). More important than the routine of worship is what I get out of them. Praying is sometimes very hard to do. Having a set prayer gets you moving, then it becomes easier to say what you mean. I can remember as a boy that once my cousin and I were home alone during a rather severe thunderstorm and we were both frightened, so we looked in the prayer book and

both of us felt better. I will
be the first to admit that our action
did us a great deal of psychological
good, but we had faith and it gave
us peace of mind. (Sorry about the
melodrama, but the story came to my mind).

As far as Judaism and I
are concerned for the future, I think
that it will become more important.
It will help me raise my children,
because it will show them, as it has
shown me, that faith is an important
part of life. Faith in a supreme
being can then grow into faith

in mankind and faith in yourself.

These are factors that are very important in ones life, as far as I am concerned. I hope to continue my religious education by teaching Sunday school. Judaism, I feel, will always be an important factor in my life for two reasons. One is that I have faith or I believe or call it what ever you want, and the second reason is, that it gives me peace of mind.

I come from a traditional Jewish background but I can only realize the value of traditional Judaism in asking what it can offer me today. The conversion process I have been and am going through resembles the historical struggle between tradition and its contemporary influences. I can realize the value of contemporary Judaism only in asking what I can offer it.

The assertion that I am a Jew means to me that psychologically I identify as a Jew. Much of my inner world is continuous with the Jewish religion, people and culture of my outer world and its history. This, however, is a nice abstract conceptualization not conveying much of the personal feeling behind it. In essence, Judaism pervades all of my life without its being consciously thought of as Jewish in nature.

My strongest Jewish feelings are probably present in my idea of family life because this is where I first learned practical Judaism. Unavoidably religion will always be psychologically confused with the idea of parental control as a socialization factor. But my idea of family life makes up a good part of my Jewish consciousness.

I am tightly bound with the historical Jewish people I identify with my history more than the living people. Although I did know a close identity with the living people through my teen-age years

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it was a limited identity, restricted to Jews who practiced Orthodox Judaism. All other Jews were Yiddische Boyim.

Beginning a little over a year ago I became conscious of my increasingly indifferent attitude toward my ~~toward my~~ traditional religious beliefs and behavior. Most of my religion was reduced to mere habit. It was not a process of rebellion but one of growing passivity. The only reason why it did not happen sooner was because of the fact that I am living at home while attending school. It has always been expected of me to remain a traditional Jew and I internalized that expectation. The indifference, passivity, and realization of the meaninglessness of the many traditional rituals I practiced, plus a summer vacation spent away from home brought me to be more honest with myself. I no longer expect myself to remain a traditional Jew. My conversion, rather than having emotional grounds is based on simple insight into the reality of my being.

I do not regret living the life of a traditional Jew. Looking back I can relate to my exposure to living Jewish history. Although I find many of the ghetto-like Jewish attitudes tacked on to traditional Jewish life rather aversive, it is not something I hold against a people conditioned by a history of oppression. All the ethnic Jewish feelings were great factors in Jewish survival.

The value of Jewish survival has personal importance to my identity with Judaism. I look to myself as a link in the Jewish historical process. In modern day America there is no need for Jewish isolation. This, to me, was one of the strong points of traditional Jewish identity. Aside from the religious values much of the emphasis was on identification with one's fellow Jews. Many traditional laws attempted to isolate the people. The modern Jew is much more cosmopolitan in his outlook. I do not believe there to be much validity to the stereotype of the cliquishness of the American Jew. If anything, it is a carryover of the picture of the Jew in the ghetto of Eastern Europe. Today, Jewish survival is less a matter of survival of the people and more the survival of the religion.

I am still searching for my place in the Jewish religion. I do not believe that a denominational affiliation is a valid way of finding my own identity within the religion. In the Orthodox tradition of my upbringing I was taught that there is only one land of Judaism. Some Jews adhere to it and others do not. The Shomer Shabbos was the businessman to patronize. Now that I have learned something about how the other Jews live and their variations of religion I still do not believe them to be members of another religion. Sociologically I may be a marginal Jew but I only care to call myself "Jewish." In spirit I will never be an Orthodox, Conservative, Reform or Reconstructionist Jew.

From traditional Judaism I am seeking to find what is meaningful to me. Judaism is too tied up with the past to ignore it. But I do not find absolute truth in tradition. I look at the literature in terms of ideational struggle which is common to all religious literature and thought. Reaching my present stage and coming from a traditional past I go through the historical ideational struggle in my own mind. It is the struggle to find continuity between the old and the new. The difference between traditional and liberal thought is a difference in conception of where history is. Viewed in a time context Traditionalists and liberals are usually continuous with each other. Taken out of a time context they are two sides of the same thought.

In losing my identity with the isolated people I have lost much of the Zionist feeling that I had had. I can recall saying during the summer of 1967, "If Israel is destroyed what will be left of me!" I am hardly in such a confident state of being at the present. I am not so sure whether my being American or Jewish gives me the meaning I seek. I have a strong potential for close identity with a group but I also have a strong aversion to look to institutionalized groups of any kind. If, however, I can give my own structure to a diffuse group then perhaps I can achieve my goal. I would much rather construct my own rigidity than be limited by previously existing structure. I can

appreciate conformity only if it is inner-directed rather than being governed by the environment. Mature authority and responsibility has to come from within.

My outcome will depend on the practical decisions I make concerning the future. If I allow myself a chance and time enough I suppose I would come to some more definite conclusions about what Judaism means to me. Perhaps it is a lot more important than I am aware. I often believe this because of the early training and long years I spent learning and living traditional Judaism. About all I found out in the last couple years is that I care and am interested in other things in life but I really have not found a place for what has always been there. I would be the last person to say that I know what I want in life.

Although I do not have the ability to live everyday like there were no tomorrow, every tomorrow I look back and romanticize about yesterday. I can romanticize about historical episodes and my own past religious behavior but it is difficult to live Judaism and know its value today.

I appreciate some of the Chassidic influences in the old rituals. Unfortunately, I did not have much exposure to Chassidic ways in my upbringing other than occasional mockery. I find much more meaning in the style or form of religious behaviours than in its content. If

anything caused me to lose interest in the traditional ways it is the lack of sane and sound intent that was prevalent in the religious behavior I saw. It has been a long time since I have attended any religious service where I could really involve myself. I do a lot more serious meditation in my own secular confines than within the walls of a sanctuary.

I think Judaism is just as caught up in the "death of God" feeling as is any other religion. I cannot help but feel a lack of God-consciousness at a Jewish service of any kind. God's name in any form is just another word in the rendition of lip service. A discussion of theology in a classroom environment has a lot more value for me than a sacred service.

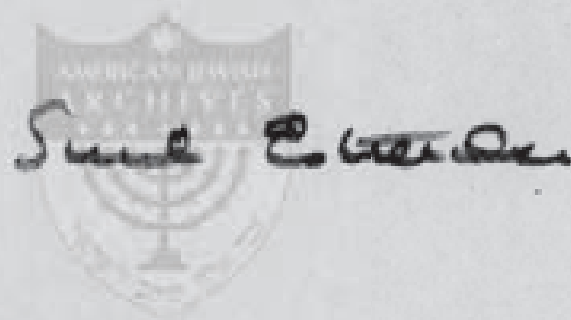
The type of Jewish god I am able to sense is very secular and pantheistic. It is not much of a firm belief but rather that for which I can allow. Because of my past sometimes I sense an omnipotent Jewish god but this is usually suppressed by my more contemporary mood of deism.

My sense of God does not actively play much of a role in my Judaism. Only when I think in terms of ultimate meaning to life, if this be related to God and the Jewish scheme of redemption, am I able to feel deeply religious. I have attained profound states of religiosity in casual discussions with friends. In such states I feel more Jewish than

Judaism + Me

at any other time. The feeling I experience involves a sense of Jewish universalism. Judaism helps me to achieve a feeling of humanistic brotherhood.

In relating to contemporary Judaism I feel it is not going to offer me much unless I act upon it. In order to feel like a contemporary Jew I would have to establish myself as a contributing link in Judaism's historical development. Perhaps just repeating history without influencing it does not satisfy my needs.



This is a rather difficult paper for me to write. It deals with the religion I was brought up to believe - Judaism - and the religion I later renounced as inconsistent with my philosophy of life. I have considered myself, for some time now, a Jew in name and cultural upbringing only. May it sound phony or not, this course taught by you, Rabbi Silver, has set me to wondering if my renunciation of Judaism was not a faddish, immature reaction to prove to myself and to others my true liberality. Originally, I believed Judaism to be as dogmatic as any of the other great religions. I was refuting dogmatism. Through this course, however, I have been thinking more and more as to whether I am still a Jew. I have begun to wonder if I am simply a radical Jew - but then Judaism seems such a personal religion - I wonder if there is such a thing as a radical Jew.

Originally I renounced Judaism because I was completely science-oriented. I considered myself a member of the new science left. Anything inconsistent with science simply had no part in my life philosophy. Everything followed from a cause-effect relationship. Everything either could or someday would be fully explained by the methods of scientific logic. Therefore, of what need did I have for a God? To me, God was simply a mental crutch created by the imagination of weaker people. God simply explained or gave meaning to the incomprehensible. I, however, had seen the true light - science. I had no use for a weak man's God. I was strong. I needed no crutch. Thus, my renunciation of Judaism.

I still consider myself science oriented in the fact

that all natural phenomena may be explained by scientific logic. However, my concept of God has changed, from a supernatural opponent of science to a completely different rather amorphous concept (which I shall explain later). Perhaps it was maturity or perhaps it was my need for a mental crutch (I can not actually determine which yet) I now truly believe in a God concept and perhaps even Judaism.

All great religions promise redemption. Judaism promises redemption through the teachings of the Torah. However, it has been stated that there has been found more true benefits in the following of the Torah itself, than in the hope of being redeemed. I cannot truthfully say that I have studied the Torah; therefore it would be impossible for me, if not completely hypocritical, to base my life on the set of rules as put forth in the Torah. Rather, I have devised my own Torah in the Jewish tradition. I have devised or utilized my own set of rules to help me (crutch) explain my questions of death, my questions of sex, my questions of love, my questions of health, my questions of life. My "Torah" and my "God" are the same overriding moral force - society. (At first this may seem to imply that I am simply a tool of the Society. Although true to an extent, I am selective, and do utilize freely directed will.)

My life philosophy deals with truthfulness to self - consistency of self. As discussed in class, this does not condemn me to an island among men. Rather, interactions are as important to me as they were to your life philosophy. However, to me, instead of your over-riding "Sinai", there is simply another societal myself to react and learn from. Through the love I gain from these various myself interactions, I will

gain, in the manner I deem best for myself - and I must be internally consistent - answers to the questions that religion may help in answering. Surely, this is a crutch. I am just beginning to realize this - and it seems to me that my life is changing because of it.

GLEN RINKES



EATON'S
CORRASABLE
BOND
U.S.A.
PARKSHIRE

COTTON FIBER CONTENT

The Role of Judaism in My Life

The role which Judaism has played and still continues to play in my life has varied according to my age. As my understanding of Judaism has changed during my life, I have defined it in different ways and I still feel it's impossible to give an absolute clear cut definition of Judaism. It may be broadly defined as a religious system (whatever that is) or as a collection of rituals and laws and yet it may be viewed as a way of life or the manner in which one lives.

will probably be further modified as I grow older. As a child it represented a set of rituals and laws which I did not clearly understand, although, I did my best to observe and obey them. I attended services, had a Bar Mitzva, and went through confirmation because it was the thing to do, according to my parents and the parents of most of my peers. I was not enlightened or sincerely inspired by any of these experiences, and I was rather pleased when

his life and tries to find meaning in it. This last suggested explanation or definition also implies that Judaism contains a system of philosophical principles which help explain the enigmas of life. Historically it has been viewed, studied and defended in a number of ways. One thing is certain, some form or forms of Judaism are still around today.

During my lifetime, Judaism's significance and meaning have changed in relation to my personal view of it, and

My Bar Mitzva and confirmation ceremonies were over. I became a non participating member of a synagogue. I failed to understand what was so very unique about Judaism, or what value or meaning it could have in my life. Keeping kosher or reading prayers in Hebrew which I did not understand and found to be monotonous, seemed to be senseless gestures. I still feel these formalized rules and prayers are of little benefit to myself.

By the time I entered college, I was very alienated from many judaic rituals, however, I still considered myself to be a Jew, although I am not nor was I sure of what a Jew is. Being away from home, I naturally wanted to find something familiar, and I found it in a Synagogue on Yom Kippur.

I discovered that although I was far from home, there was still a group of people whom I could relate to (to a degree) and share something in

Common with them. It was the fact that we were all Jews sharing a common cultural and religious heritage or tradition.

Judaism has, to a limited degree, given me moral and ethical guidelines which place certain restraints on my behavior.

Beyond that, I identify with Judaism as representing a people, still living today, who can share an extensive and colorful historical heritage. I believe that Judaism

has survived because of its flexibility and ability to adapt to changing situations. One reason why I am willing to affiliate myself with Judaism and call myself a Jew is because of its flexibility. I can also find pride in knowing that the successful Jewish state of Israel exists today, I can be proud of my Jewish ancestors who were willing to endure grave hardship and suffering rather than give up the Jewish faith.

Judaism and the Jewish people
represent a group I can identify
with in a world of people who are
labelled as alone and anomie. Judaism
offers me some guidelines to help
me try to understand myself
and make my life more meaningful.
It has ~~failed~~ failed in some cases
but at least it offers me
a type of flexible framework
I can utilize and build from
to hopefully make my life become
more than futile or wasted effort.

Judaism certainly will not give me the answers to all or possibly any of my questions about life, but it does offer me a variety of approaches I can employ in search of satisfactory answers to my questions.

I am still puzzled by what it is to be a Jew. I do not have to be a Jew in order to believe in God. The Jewish concept of God was probably not the same for Moses as it was for MAIMONIDES, yet both of them were

Jews. In the same manner, my opinions and beliefs may be in almost entire disagreement with another Jew, yet we are both Jews and presumably share a common bond between us.

The role which Judaism has played in my life and still continues to play cannot be clearly stated as I am unable to recognize the total effect that it has on my life. It has essentially been part of my life style or mode of living. Judaism has offered me

a group within our larger society and also outside and beyond our society, which I can be part of and identify with in some positive manner. Judaism has caused me to question and think about many of its rituals and beliefs or principles (which sometimes contradict themselves) and has therefore motivated me to search for more adequate answers, when possible, to the questions which have been plaguing Jews and all of

man kind over the ages. It's given
me KREPLACH and MATZA-BALLS
and other delicacies. Judaism has
forced me to realize, as a member
of a minority group, whose existence
has been threatened in the past,
how valuable my rights and beliefs
are to me and how important it
is for me to maintain and
protect these rights for others
as well as for my self. Finally,
it has given me the pleasure of
knowing, as I study the history of

Judaism, that I am part of this
long existing civilization or
tradition, which despite its
extreme modification from its
original form, has been able to
outlive many other so called
advanced civilizations and is
still very much alive today.

Robert WEISMAN

Judaism has had a major impact on my life and it will continue to influence me in the future. In the next few years it will influence some important decisions I will have to make concerning marriage, a home, a family. It will shape my actions in society and the community. Judaism will help to mold my outlook on life. Since it has permeated my childhood and my adolescence I think it will continue to be a meaningful factor in the future.

~~Before I can attempt to explain the role of~~
~~Judaism in my future life I must try to clarify~~
~~what Judaism presently means to me.~~ Judaism was handed down to me by my parents as a religion. I came to believe in one supreme being, G-d. I believe that Judaism sets the guidelines for my actions, it teaches me, through my parents and society, the ethics which I follow. In addition

to being a religious system Judaism is a nationality and a culture. It is difficult for me to decide if I am a Jew first or an American citizen but I do feel that I have strong ties to my people. I do not feel that I have to have a land to go to in order to be Jewish but I will not hinder others if they disagree. I would do everything in my power to see them established in their homeland. The beliefs of Judaism were conveyed to me by my parents who learned them from their parents. Religion as a culture has been transmitted from generation to generation. Judaism, for me, is a religion, a nationality, and a culture. It is difficult for me to be more explicit because I am still questioning what Judaism is. My family is Jewish, so I am Jewish — and yet there is more to it than that. That is why I am still seeking answers to the question of what Judaism means to me.

In order to explain what I think will be

Judaism's role in my life I will have to recount some facts and events of the past. I was born and raised in New Jersey. My father's parents were very observant Jews but my mother's parents were not as religious. My parents were members of an orthodox synagogue and my brother was sent to Yeshiva and I attended the Talmud Torah. My brother and I were taught to observe the Sabbath as a holy day, a day of rest. We observed all the Jewish holidays, and attended shul regularly. When I was ten years old and my brother was sixteen we moved to Edison, New Jersey. Due to the fact that there was no orthodox synagogue close to us my parents joined a conservative temple. We still regularly attended services, kept the Sabbath, and observed the kashruth laws in our home. My parents did not follow the laws of Judaism as strictly now so my brother and I followed their example. Through my continued interest in Judaism I attended

Hebrew school and Hebrew high school. I also was an active member of United Synagogue Youth. I was never consciously forced to do these things but I am sure my parents were an influential factor.

During my freshman year at college I decided that I wanted to observe the laws & customs of Judaism more strictly. I was on my own now and had time to think about Judaism. I decided that I was not following the laws & customs of Judaism as closely as I wanted. Today I still feel I am not fulfilling my part of the contract that I'd made with the Jewish people.

In view of my upbringing and my own thinking I feel that I know the role that Judaism has to play in my life. My home has to be strictly kosher. I feel that the kashruth laws, although not fully explained in the Torah, are a special part of the Jewish tradition.

Since I have been taught about these laws I do not feel I can ignore them and really be a Jew. I value my religion and feel that it is something special.

It is my way of communicating with G-d, through religion. I feel that the Kashruth laws are special too and that this is one way of following G-d's commandments.

Also, the place to teach your children about Judaism is in the home. If the parents do not observe the laws of Judaism and set an example that a child can never accept the laws, rituals and beliefs as being meaningful. Therefore, the Sabbath will have to be observed as rigidly as our modern, mass, technological society will allow. The holidays must be explained and observed. A child will imitate his parents in the beginning and if the parents do not provide an example for the child to follow it is less likely that the child will incorporate the religious beliefs into his world by himself. The nucleus of Judaism for me will be the home.

I feel that Judaism will be a way to maintain family unity and stability. I do not feel that each person should be an autonomous unit. Judaism

will provide the thread to hold a family together.

It seems to me that a religion should be able to do this. If the knowledge of a long and beautiful tradition is explained and transmitted from generation to generation then the culture will be perpetuated and through its perpetuation family ties will remain strong.

Since I was brought up with the beliefs of Judaism being instilled in me by my parents and my teachers, I imagine my children will be raised this way too. I feel that the family plays a large role in bringing up the child but so does Sunday School and Hebrew School. In a classroom the child would learn about the history of the Jewish people, the customs and holidays of Judaism, and the language of the people. This is all very important because then when a child goes home he can see that what he has been learning is being practiced at home.

As I said, Judaism played a significant role in my childhood and adolescence. Because of

this emphasis on Judaism I will probably play an active role in the Jewish community. I feel that associating with other Jewish people will possibly enable me to better understand my own beliefs. You can learn an awful lot from other people if you do not merely accept their ideas but if you take their ideas, think about them, and then accept or reject them — whichever will be best for you.

Judaism has taught me the way to live and it will continue to be my blueprint of life. Judaism tells me the prayers to say and yet it allows me the freedom to speak to God in whatever manner I want, it tells me how and when to celebrate our holidays, and it explains to me how to keep the Sabbath. If we were not so busy with our extracurricular activities, prayer and study could dominate our lives and make them more meaningful.

I want to learn more about Judaism in the

future and there are numerous resources available to do this. Among the Jewish people there are thinkers, philosophers, artists, writers, musicians, ... who try to express their ideas of Judaism. Judaism can perform the role of educating adults and not just children. No one has ever learned everything.

It seems to me that Judaism even permeates my thinking. An example is the attitude - prejudice. Today there is a powderkeg existing in the United States concerning the Negro and the White man and their relationship. The Negroes are a minority group. We are a minority group with similar problems. Because of this I feel that the Jewish people can understand the situation a little better. We therefore should not be prejudiced against others who, like ourselves, are fighting for their human dignity and the right to live. Judaism makes us stop and think about our attitudes

in such a situation.

Judaism can perform numerous functions. For me, Judaism will be a blueprint of my life. It will have a role to perform every day of my life. Judaism will set the pattern by which my home will function, it will help to educate me and my children. Judaism is my religion and my culture — it embraces my entire life.



Betty Kiken

Thus far, Judaism has had an enormous effect on my life and it will continue to be so in the future. I must admit that I am not as religious as I was before I entered college, but my orientation keeps my practices within certain limits. One of the most disturbing things which I have discovered in the past year is that far too many Jews don't identify themselves in the least with their religion and the fact has changed many of my attitudes. How many times have I heard someone say that he was so Jewish that he was practically a Catholic or "I'm not religious but I'm very Zionist." My cousin, when speaking to me about a friend of hers whom she wanted me to meet said "Well Allan, she's reformed. She goes to The Temple. Oh, but she's going to Israel during vacation." Please don't get me wrong. I'm not knocking Reformed Jews because they are Zionist. There are plenty of Orthodox Jews who are hung up entirely over Israel whereas other aspects of their religion don't seem to concern them. What am I coming to? I believe that Jews should identify themselves as being Jewish. Why am I orthodox? I believe that ~~falling~~ falling a bit short from a high goal is much better than setting a much lower one and falling short of it. It seems very logical to me. By subtracting from the level of religious goals, I believe that it is becoming easier and easier not to live up to those lower goals. As the goals are lowered, so is the attachment to their religion of all those people who did lower their goals. One needs only to look at the rate of intermarriage to testify to this fact.

How then will Judaism affect my life? The answer is very simple. Greatly. It will affect the person with whom I will decide to spend the rest of my life. It will affect my career since I will not work on the Sabbath. It will affect the way I raise my children, but most importantly it should make a better man of me. Statistics show that frequent religious attendance at church or synagogue affects a person's values. I knew it before I read about it. Yes, Judaism will greatly, as it has in the past, affect my life.

ALLAN WEISS

Thus far in my life Judaism has been an intangible force from which I have derived my ethical beliefs. These Jewish values have been passively (that is not of my own volition) inculcated into me by my parents, as I will do with my own children. It will be my ultimate source of moral guidelines. Judaism will function as a positive force in my attempt to live a happy and just life.

Part of my living will consist of beginning a new family. Judaism will provide a core around which this family can identify. The traditions of the past will serve as a unifying force to create continuity between the generations and with the Jewish community.



WESTON FIBRE CONTENT Howman Levin

Case-File Bond
Weston

Final Examination



Phyllis Herskman

The question put forward is to suggest the role Judaism has to play or might play in my life. For my needs, I feel the role of religion is to show man how to ^{can't} ^{other} conduct his life with dignity and ^{or} sensitivity to the needs of his ^{public} ^{school} fellow men. Within the frame ^{to that} work of Judaism I can find rules of conduct and guide lines to obtain this goal. I realize that I am ruling out the mysticism, faith and even belief in God that is a part of Judaism. At this time in my life, I do not believe that prayer and worship of God can alter or direct my life. Heredity, that chance grouping of genes and chromosomes, environment and cultural heritage have shaped my being. But wasn't there a God who first created that spark of life? Yes, this might very well be — but, I am not concerned with philosophical examinations of or the mysteries of

life. Perhaps this calls for a profoundness which I do not possess.

As for environment, I was born a Jew, raised in a Jewish home and exposed to a Jewish education. I remain a Jew for several reasons. First of all, I am comfortable with my Judaism. At an earlier age I was more defensive about being Jewish. I was very aware of being a part of a minority group. Perhaps my feelings were shaped by the events of the day.

Anti-Semitism was more open and prevalent. The quota system in the schools, restrictive housing and discrimination in business and social life were very much a part of my life. The rise of Hitler and the persecution of the Jews in Europe also created an atmosphere in which the Jew was despised and hated. This feeling of rejection and of being second-class has been altered over the years as I have

read and learned more about my heritage. I am proud that I am a Jew — proud of the accomplishments and contributions made by Jewish men and women in all fields of endeavor. Somehow, their success adds luster to my image. I doubt there is not a Jew who does not scan a list whether it be for Merit Scholars or athletic events, who is not pleased to see a Jewish name recorded. The establishment of Israel and their heroic accomplishments has also contributed to this feeling of pride. Paradoxically, a wrong doing by a fellow Jew does not put me down as it once might have done. The dealings of an Abe Fortas or the boorishness of certain types of Jews does not reflect on my character or status as I feel secure in my Judaism.

Perhaps this feeling of pride is also due to the recognition of the values that Judaism represents.

Through my home and Temple training, a certain way of life was stressed. The warmth and closeness of family life, the value and pursuit of education, and the sharing and giving to the less fortunate were daily brought home to me. I was led to believe that each man is responsible for his actions, and by use of whatever abilities he possesses he should attempt to improve himself morally, culturally and even materially. I know that Judaism does not have a copy write on moral and ethical behavior. But, to me, Judaism represents that way of life where "love thy neighbor as thyself" is the dominant theme.

Of course I realize that my existence has never been threatened because of my religion. I have not had to choose between conversion or death as in Medieval Spain or been slaughtered as the Jews in Europe during World War II. But, because of this martyrdom and persecution

3

of my people, I told my heritage precious. There must be lasting value to Judaism to have convinced a people to remain steadfast during two thousand years of persecution. I strongly desire to continue and pass on this chain of tradition to my children. By attempting to live by certain moral and ethical standards, by instilling pride in our Jewish Heritage and by stressing knowledge of our past and present I feel this may be accomplished.

I know I am not an observant Jew. Though I am knowledgeable, I do not observe Jewish rituals and ceremonies to any great extent. Somehow, this does not seem as important to me as how I behave toward my family and neighbors. This is the role that Judaism plays in my life today. Perhaps in the future a different aspect may come forward. To me this is one of

the beauties of my religion — I can seek new forms of expression relevant to my changing needs. Perhaps, one day I will find prayer and Temple attendance will bring satisfaction and beauty into my life as I see it does for many Jews. At this time, however, Judaism provides me with a historical, cultural and ethnic background from which I can pattern my life.

COTTON FIBRE CONTENT

Case-Rite Bond
Weston

THE ROLE JUDAISM PLAYS IN MY LIFE

Elizabeth Gross
Rabbi Silver
Religion 306
June 4, 1969

THE ROLE JUDAISM PLAYS IN MY LIFE

Certainly the two courses I have taken with you have taught me a great deal more than simply the history of Judaism. They have helped me clarify my ideas on what is moral and what is immoral, and I have gained an even greater respect and admiration for the Jews and the way in which they conduct(ed) their lives in relation to both their Torah and the community in which they live(d). The laws and the life styles of the Jews reflect a compassion for the wronged, for the "underdog," and a conviction that self-respect and learning are of utmost importance in one's life.

Before I discuss these ideas further, I would like to tell you of a particular personal experience I had which has a direct relationship to this paper. My husband is from a Jewish background. When we were planning to get married my parents were as pleased as they could be, as they think very highly of John. However, when they discovered that he is Jewish, there was a tremendous reaction against the marriage. In all honesty I was flabbergasted, as my parents are and always have been leaders in civil rights in Minneapolis. Because of the reaction I thought back and tried to remember anything which they had said to my sisters and me concerning Jews, any attitudes which might have been conveyed. The only thing I could remember was once having asked my mother what difference there was between the Jewish religion and the one we were brought up in (Episcopalianism). She simply said that the

Jews did not believe that Jesus was the son of God (which was a sufficient answer as I was only 9 or 10 at the time.) And this was not related to me in a downgrading way, as my mother also stated that she didn't believe in Christ's divinity either.

I think my parents were as surprised at their reaction as I was. In all honesty I had never before experienced any prejudice against Jews or even knew that any existed. That seems awfully naive and even rather hard to believe now, but Minneapolis simply is not a race- or religiously torn city by any stretch of the imagination; also there were no Jews in my high school - which, if I had thought about it at that time, might have seemed awfully strange - but I was definitely not the thinking type when I was that age. Also, my parents have always pressed upon me the importance of treating others with respect - that the worst possible sin is to make another feel inferior, no matter who or what he happened to be, and that when all the externals were taken away, each person is nothing more or less than a human being and therefore has the same rights as the next person.

So now you understand a little better my interest in Judaism. I wanted to see what all this hubbub was about, which resulted in my taking this course. I understand that the Jews are a special people, but because of their history and the precepts by which they live(d) - which reflect their concern for granting everyone an equal chance, within the necessary dictates of the laws. I have seriously thought of converting,

but after examining my reasons for wanting to do so I decided it was not necessary.

Now why should Judaism play a role in my life? In the past four years I have gained an insight (or rather been hit over the head, considering my former naivete) with the realities of life, one of which is the fact that in certain areas of this country and the world anti-semitism still exists. I think this problem will continue to exist until the people who live in this world are all brought up to feel adequate and secure and confident enough in themselves so that they don't need scapegoats. Along with this goes the necessity of educating people about themselves, teaching them the "whys" of their behaviors. Obviously this state of affairs is not imminent. But I can do my small part in helping to bring it about, by educating my children-to-be along these lines, and also perhaps helping to influence the attitudes of others through active involvement in various civil rights organizations. The amount of good which I contribute certainly will not be earthshaking but will do something towards helping people to realize the irrationality and destructiveness of anti-semitism.

Judaism is also important to me because of what it offers through its ideology. (I cannot accept it as a religion because I don't believe there is such a thing as a "superior being" or whatever anyone wishes to call it.) But its laws reflect the balance between complete freedom and the responsibilities one must necessarily carry in order to enjoy that

freedom. In short, it offers a beautiful system of both civil and moral checks and balances, many of which were copied by the court system in the United States today. But above all, Judaism refuses to be narrow-minded and rigid. It is flexible and changes with the need of the changing societies. I have profound respect for it because of these reasons.



Weston
Rite-Rite Bond
COTTON FIBRE CONTENT

If I first thought about this question, the thought came
to me that as a religion, Judaism means almost nothing to me. In
regarding it as a religious value, I feel that it furthers social
problems as do all other religions. As is evident, I am not one
to speak in favor of religious values. However, when I look upon
Judaism as constituting a very prominent ethnic minority, I can
not say that it has very little meaning for me. I hope to make
my future life one of dealing with social problems and minority
groups, and to say that Judaism is not a major functioning aspect
of our society would be encouraging everything which I am trying
to fight against. I took the course for I wanted to learn about
the Jews history and perhaps certain forms of their life. The
Jews are a live functioning body of people. They should not
be scapegoats by whom we are to learn our misgivings. As a
living body of people, they are a great deal to
me, but if I must choose between actual religious
practice, then I choose the latter. I do not want you to feel
that I feel particularly Jewish. In Judaism, I feel antagon-
istic towards all religions. That is saying it rather blatantly,
but I feel religious values can be associated with the perpetuation
of social problems. Within our present society, I feel that a
stratification of religious values contributes to a cultural
lag.

What does Judaism mean to me.

Robert S. Post, Jr.

Rabbi Silver

Religion 306

June 6, 1969

When I first thought about this question, the thought came to me that as a religion, Judaism means almost nothing to me. In regarding it as a religious value, I feel that it furthers social problems as do all other religions. As is evident, I am not one to speak in favor of religious values. However, when I look upon Judaism as constituting a very prominent ethnic minority, I can not say that it has very little meaning for me. I hope to make my future life one of dealing with social problems and minority groups, and to say that Judaism is not a major functioning aspect of our society would be encouraging everything which I am trying to fight against. I took the course for I wanted to learn about the Jews history and perhaps certain forms of their life. The Jews are a live functioning body of people. They should not be scapegoats by whom non-Jews direct they own misgivings. As a living body of people, the Jewish people mean a great deal to me, but if I must answer this question in terms of actual religious practice, then I can not condone this. I do not want you to feel that I feel particularly this way towards Judaism, I feel antagonistic towards all religions. That is saying it rather blatantly, but I feel religious values can be associated with the perpetuation of social problems. Within our present society, I feel that a stratification of religious values contributes to a cultural lag.

The Realm of Judaism



Larry Pencak
Religion 306
June 2, 1969

When first confronted with the question how Judaism relates to your life, I, as a Roman Catholic, could not immediately list neat analogies or principles. Moreover, after some concentrated thinking concerning the subject my approach and answers were even more confused. Theologically, although both Judaism and Catholicism claim a strained brotherhood linked by a belief in "one" God, there is a large gulf which separates the two faiths. Judaism has its roots deeply entwined in the Old Testament; its great patrons are from that era as are most of the Jewish rites and ceremonies. Catholicism, like all Christianity, is founded in the New Testament. The groundwork for the conflict between the two is based here. It is true that the Vatican Council and the ecumenical movement in general has attempted a reconciliation. However, most will readily admit that it is too little, too late.

My first encounter with Judaism at the academic level was this course. Before now I have had no knowledgeable background for any statements or conclusions concerning it. Even now my understanding is somewhat less than negligible. The subject itself has never been paramount to me. In researching my paper, I found Karl Marx stating that the main Jewish problem was finding itself a place in a Christian world. Thus for the Jew, Christianity does

relate and effect his life, even if it is an adverse way. For the ordinary Christian there is really no necessity to relate to Judaism. And it is readily seen that no such relations readily develop.

The course itself has given me a better understanding into some of the theological and historical background of Judaism. Through it I have gained at least a limited understanding for some present day mannerisms and practices. If I were asked what is the relation of Luthernism or Calvinism or Protestantism in general to my life, I would have to conclude that they make me look at my own religion with a more critical glance. Although stemming from a common origin, they found points of disagreement large enough to enact a split. For this reason I must examine my own faith for inadequacies and weaknesses and where it needs progressive change. After only a general exposure to Judaism, I must conclude that its role and relation to my life is that it too makes me examine my own faith a little harder. Judaism's conflicts and disagreements with Catholicism makes me look at my religion in a slightly different light. Certain points and beliefs take on a little different meaning when viewed from a point of view which is not in agreement with your own. I believe that for a person such as myself who has had no great academic or theological experience or confrontation with Judaism this is one of the only ways which I can relate Judaism and its doctrines to myself personally.

Weston
29-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77-78-79-80-81-82-83-84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91-92-93-94-95-96-97-98-99-100

I think that the effects that Judaism will have on my life will be pretty limited. Judaism, in a more classical definition than the one which we used in class, in a definition which my father would recognize, will have virtually no effect on my life. A Judaism which is an outlook on life that stresses action in this world could have an effect on me in that it would be compatible with my views and goals, but the question of whether it will have an effect on me is quite open. I think that the best way to deal with this question is to start from how Judaism effects me now, as a senior in college, and as a person who would like to become a psychologist.

My knowledge of Judaism comes from a year or two of Hebrew School, this semester's course, and the absorption of a few ideas that were mentioned in my home as I was growing up. I consider my father to be an intelligent man and he is also religious. I cannot reconcile these two statements in my mind, because I consider the religion that he believes in to be superstitious, a relic from the past whose ritual and routine serve no purpose other than to perhaps rationalize a painful situation. He is not what you would call deeply religious. By that I mean he doesn't keep a kosher house or attend every activity of the synagogue during the week. But still he usually goes to services at least once a week and enjoys it. He never forced Judaism on either myself or my brother. He thought that it was important for us to learn how to play baseball after school and that we should not sacrifice much of the fun in our childhood

in order to learn a language that would have ~~very~~ little utility to us. He believes that you can't make a person religious, and that it must develop from within. For holding this view I owe him a great deal of thankfulness. I doubt that I would have liked or respected a religion whose study was forced upon me.

As of this moment the most direct effect that Judaism has on me is what I say to my mother when I call home every Sunday and she asks me, "Are you going out with nice Jewish girls?". Some weeks I answer yes. Of late I have had to use four years of psychological and linguistic training in order to avoid a direct answer without arousing suspicion, and at the same time without lying.

In a more positive sense Judaism gives me a vague feeling of identity. I feel a sense of pride that I am descended from people who could take the worst that this earth could throw at them for thousands of years and survive and at certain times flourish. I feel a sense of guilt in that if I don't raise my children in the Jewish tradition, they will somehow lose something, and I will somehow have betrayed those who came before me. It would seem pitiful if what they suffered ~~to~~ to preserve, were lost for ever by a gap that might develop in one generation. I feel that if I don't give my children the same choice that my father gave me, then none of their children will even have a chance of making a choice in the matter.

Still however for myself I come back to the point that I cannot spend my time doing something that I consider to be superstitious (I use this word in an operant sense: a response which has no contingency with a reinforcer, but has accidentally become associated with a response that does have a contingency

COTTON FIBRE COMBING

with a reinforcer.) , and ritualistic for the sake of ritualism. This type of religion seems basically unhealthy in that it induces people to rationalize a situation. For example, if something goes wrong my father's response is that things will get better. If I don't get something that I have worked hard for and wanted very much, he replies that the alternatives which are left to me are good and points out a fault in the goal that I was striving for. The fact is that things don't always get better, and that I really wanted what I was striving for and did not need sugar plums to sweeten the taste of adversity.

Of course I cannot attribute my father's statements to the fact that he is what I have termed "religious". But nevertheless I have a feeling that one is related to the other. The idea that all must eventually be good and that somewhere, something, which is basically benevolent, exercises some sort of control seems to be founded in his religion, whose texts praise the power of God and whose services, through repetition emphasize security and sameness through passing time to him, but stagnation and useless ornamentation to me. I therefore cannot participate in the religion of my father. I am tolerant and believe that it is good for other people, my father included, but not for myself.

What of your religion? And to me it seems like a different religion than that of my father. Its outlook is different. It seems to say to me that I cannot look out of my window and say that there is some good in everything. It fortifies my belief in reality in that you seem to be telling me that things won't change unless people, live people living right now, go out and

change them. Just as important, it gives me a feeling that if I don't try to change myself, make my self into what I want my self to be, no one or no thing will make it that way for me. I must act because this is the only time in all of eternity that I will be able to act. I must influence because I will have no second chance to influence, and if I fail I cannot do so in the knowledge that there is some goodness in my failure. I cannot smile and say to myself that someday someone else will carry on, because I realize the very real possibility that this may not happen. Perhaps I also realize that man may have hit his high point. More exactly, I mean that I realize now that man may be able to hit a high point. Not because we couldn't go farther, but because for some reason we didn't go farther. Maybe we have come so far or will come so far that advancement will be determined by the success or failure of a few people who might achieve a breakthrough in education or some other area which effects us all in our society. And just maybe if a few people fail we will destroy ourselves before others could carry on, indeed assuming that others would follow and carry on.

Suddenly things seem dangerous and uncertain. My father's religion is no comfort to me because I see no comfort in closing my eyes before a sabre that is about to be driven home. Your religion is no comfort to me because it gives me no answer. It tells me that I should try, but that if I do try there is no guarantee or perhaps even no possibility of success. I am not afraid of trying and failing, or of the ridicule that may ensue. What frightens me is what might happen if I do fail. It may

be that I am one of those people, who if he does fail, we may never recover. What frightens me even more is that I may be one of those people who would have carried on from those who preceded him, if the unthinkable did not happen. It may be too late. My father's religion says that it is not too late, but for no other reason than that according to my father's religion it can never be too late. This does me no good.

Your Judaism allows truth and reality to enter religion. I still do not know if I need your religion, your Judaism. It seems to me that I can think, act, and try without it. But then again I've only known your Judaism for a few weeks, and it does seem to have clarified, so I think a better phrase would be given arrangement and meaning to, a few ideas that I have had. If nothing else it has had an effect on me. That is more than any other religion has had. By effect I mean something that is positive or at least not negative. Your Judaism is something more to me than how I should play the game of answering my mother's questions when I call home on Sunday night. I don't know what effect it does or will have on me because I haven't been exposed to it long enough, but in the very least it is not an avoidance or negative thing. If it does have eventual meaning for me it will be on an entirely different level.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that I may never enter a temple again in my life, but if I do it will probably be The Temple or its equivalent, and if I do, your Judaism will probably have some positive meaning to me, so that I may be able to call it my Judaism also.

Bob Solomon

I remember a story from religious school that impressed upon me what I thought to be the essence of Judaism. An impatient man once came to Shammai, a learned scholar, rabbi, and a contemporary of the great Rabbi Hillel, and asked the scholar to teach him the Torah while he stood on one foot. Shammai became enraged and chased the man away. Still wishing a condensed version of the law, the man went to Rabbi Hillel. Hillel was as patient as he was great. He listened to the man's seemingly ridiculous request and did not become angry. Not wishing to chase away any man who had a desire to learn, Hillel said, "Do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you. That is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary. Now go and study."

It has always seemed to me that Judaism has as its basis the dignity of the individual and the emphasis of man's obligation to his fellow man. This message is as old as the prophets of Israel. The words of such men as Amos still ring out when the needy are oppressed,

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan,
who are in the mountain of Samaria
who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,
and encourage your husbands to feast and drink:
"As sure as I am G-D," the Lord Almighty declares,
"Your day is coming,
When you will be dragged out of the city with hooks...
Out shall you go, each of you headlong..."...
Thus says the Lord!

And wasn't it the prophets who envisioned the age when all men would be brothers?

But they shall sit each one under his own vine and under
his fig-tree;
And there shall be nothing to make anyone afraid:
For the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

Judaism has two distinct sectors, the religious and the secular. The religious sector has two foci, the ritual and the ethical. The ritual is the ceremonial part of the religion that has evolved as a means of mass validation of a concept. It is by means of the ritual

that people are able to ostensibly reaffirm their beliefs in a manner proscribed by the group of people who share these beliefs. The ethical concepts of a religion are those ideals which provide the moral basis for the conduct of the adherents of the religion. In Judaism, the secular and religious sectors are closely related. However, one may divorce the secular area from the religious. Hopefully, the ethical focus of the religion is so ingrained in and valid to the adherents of Judaism that it accompanies any form of Judaism. It was the ethical precepts that gave rise to the ritual. This ethical basis provided common ground for a group of people who eventually evolved their own sub-culture. At times the ritual became an end in itself, as in the days of the Prophets, but this was defeating its purpose.

Judaism is a religion. It is a sub-culture. It is biologically transmitted, and yet one may become Jewish by conversion. It is the study of the Torah and Talmud. Judaism commends its followers to action in the pursuit of the fulfillment of the law. Judaism is the revelation of the law at Mount Sinai 3,000 years ago, and yet it is as recent as the most recent celebration of Shavous, the reaffirmation of the law. It is the hope that some day "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more", and yet it has constantly had to fight for its survival since its beginnings. Judaism is the pious who prayed at the Wailing Wall in May of 1948, it is also the members of Hagannah who fought so valiently to secure the State of Israel. Judaism is Saul; David, Solomon, Moses Maimonides, Vladimir Jabotinsky, and David Ben Gurion. Judaism is the unbroken chain of tradition and law from the time of the patriarchs to the present day. I've always thought that one of the most dramatic recognitions of the bonds of present day Judaism with the past is when the Passover Haggadah explains

role in my life. I hope that I will have the courage to follow the dictates of my conscience, the moral and ethical ideals that have been taught to me through my religious training. These basic teachings of Judaism are fundamental to preserving human dignity and freedom. I agree whole heartedly with the words of the late Louis Brandeis, past justice of the Supreme Court, when he stated,

The 20th Century ideals of America have been the ideals of the Jews for 20 centuries.





Container 8

