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New York Association of Reform Rabbis, correspondence and
speech, 1983-1984.



TEMPLE SHOLOM

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dr. joseph rudavsky, rabbi

November 22, 1983

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

Dear Rabbi Silver,

On April 10, 1984 the New York Association of Reform Rabbis, in cooperation with the Long Island Association and the New Jersey Association, is sponsoring a seminar dealing with the relationship of the American Jewish community with the Israeli Jewish community.

The three basic subject areas of the seminar are as follows:

1. We are One People -- Rights and Responsibilities of Jews Worldwide.
2. Israel Democracy -- Its Strength and Weaknesses.
3. Paths to Peace.

For each discussion area, there will be two principal presenters.

We would like to invite you to participate in this most important event. We anticipate that most of the Reform Rabbis in the metropolitan New York area will participate.

As coordinator of the workshop, I should like to invite you to be one of the two principal presenters dealing with the subject, "We are One People -- Rights and Responsibilities of Jews Worldwide."

If you can accept this invitation, we will advise you as to the details. I await your early reply.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Joseph Rudavsky

JR:ek

December 1, 1983

Rabbi Joseph Rudavsky
Temple Sholom
385 Howland Ave.
River Edge, N.J. 07661

Dear Joe:

Thank you for your invitation to speak to the New York Association of Reform Rabbis on April 10, 1984. I'll be happy to be part of that seminar. I will need to know more about time, format, etc., but I have marked the date. With all good wishes I remain



Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:mp



RABBI ISRAEL S. DRESNER

16 Adar Beit 5744
March 20, 1984

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

Dear Daniel:

I and all of us of the Association of Reform Rabbis of New York City and Vicinity are really pleased that you have accepted our invitation to participate in our day of study and discussion devoted to the theme Israel Turns Thirty-Six: Which Way for the Future. There will be three panels: morning - 10 A.M. to noon: luncheon - noon to 2 P.M. and afternoon: 2 - 4 P.M. The topics for each are: (1) We Are One People: The Rights and Responsibilities of Diaspora (in particular American) Jewry; (2) Israeli Democracy: Its Strengths and Weaknesses; (3) Paths to Peace.

As I indicated on the phone, you are to participate in the morning panel from 10 A.M. to noon along with Balfour Brickner (two old Clevelanders). Each of you will speak for half an hour, followed by five minute rebuttals, forty minutes of questions and answers from the floor and the panel, concluding with five minute summations. The primary areas we want you to get into are: (1) what role do Jews outside Israel have in influencing Israel's policies both domestic and foreign; (2) ought Diaspora Jews differ publicly with the policies of the Israeli government?; (3) ought we try to suppress such public differences?; (4) are such public differences harmful to Israel?; (5) is Israel the one center of Jewish life and does Jewish discipline require total deferral to her decisions?; (6) do Diaspora Jews have any obligations to the loyal opposition in Israel which conceivable could become the government?; (7) may American Jews bring pressures on the American government to do things which the Israeli government perceives as harmful? - e.g. support of the Reagan Plan of September 1, 1982; (8) what does a partnership between Israel and American Jewry mean? what does "we are one" mean?; (9) what are the ways in which American Jews can best help Israel?

I am sure you have other questions you will want to discuss.

Please feel free to do so. Please let me know where you will be staying in New York and a phone number where you can be reached as I want to arrange to have you picked up and brought back afterward. If you can see your way clear to staying for lunch and the address by former Israeli Supreme Court Chief Justice Cohn at the luncheon session, we will be delighted. I trust that you enjoyed your stay in Europe and I look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, April 10 at Temple Israel of Jamaica at 188th Street and the Grand Central Parkway (phone # 776-4400).

with love

Si

ISD:ms

Rabbi Israel S. Dresner



April 11, 1984

Rabbi Israel S. Dresner
Temple Beth Tikvah
950 Preakness Ave.
Wayne, N.J. 07470

Dear Si:

I enjoyed being part of your program yesterday. I hope the afternoon worked out as well as the morning and luncheon sessions.

My expenses to New York were \$218 for air fare; airport parking in Cleveland, \$8.00; taxi LaGuardia to Manhattan, \$12.00. I would appreciate being reimbursed for these expenses.

With all good wishes I remain

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:mp

[April 10, 1984]

I find it difficult to understand the urgency of these recurring debates about the right and propriety of criticizing Israel. I take it we share a firm belief in free speech and applaud the fact that free speech is guaranteed by the Constitution. My reading of the NYT indicates that this right has been exercised freely by those like Balfour who have felt a compelling need to do so. No one has silenced them. Indeed, I suspect that such voices have commanded space denied to those of us who are not so confident we know better than Jerusalem. The most cursory review of media coverage during the Lebanese invasion would show that it was the determined critic who was most frequently quoted and interviewed.

To be sure, some individuals and organizations have criticized the critics, sometimes rather rudely, even accusing them of being Sonea Yisroel, but again, verbal excess is not an issue. If we speak our minds we know that criticism - fair or unfair - is part of the game.

If the right to criticize is not endangered, what is at issue? Is it the angst of the few timid souls in the rabbinate who feel oppressed by their baal batim? Unfortunately, all of us must fight our own fears. No one can do it for us.

Perhaps the issue is that some true believers are so convinced of their position that they must believe that only fear keeps a majority of the Conference from joining them. That argument must be dismissed out of hand if we have any respect for one another.

As best I can make out what is not free speech but the language we speak. We are troubled that as colleagues we differ on substantial issues.

1_ We have differing judgments on the policies, foreign and domestic, of successive Israeli administrations.

2) We disagree as to the value and impact of public criticism on events in Israel. Some of us doubt that what we say has any meaningful impact in Jerusalem. Others question whether public criticism of Israel undermines support for the State in the general community.

Most such discussions as this one focus on whether or not Jerusalem has done good and each of us argues strongly for his or her view. What we seldom do is to

[April 10, 1984]

hold the mirror up to ourselves. For a few minutes this morning I'd like to judge the critics and to suggest that what separates us is not ill will or perversity but the simple fact that many of us hold quite different views on the perfectability of human society. I have long felt that the deepest cleavage within our fellowship is to be found in the area of messianism. Some of us are convinced that social engineering, radical economic and political change, can transform and pacify our world. Others of us are not certain that the contradictions of human nature will not be fully resolved this side of Aharit ha-yamim. Those on this side of the argument point out that revolutions generally end in a new tyranny, that all progress involves trade-offs, that a substantive and lasting peace is a romantic pipedream, that the best we can hope for is an absence of war. Some of us truly believe that nations will soon beat their swords into ploughshares. Others of us look on politics as the art of the possible and see deterrence - *dimen na* - as a necessary factor in the absence of war process.

I must know myself before I begin to judge others. I don't believe in a personal messiah or even in Reform's favorite image of a messianic age. I believe in a messianic journey, doing what is right with whatever strength I can muster without believing that the world's problems will ever be fully resolved. If some find it necessary to demand a transvaluation of values in Jerusalem, I do not; though I find many of Jerusalem's decisions and actions not to my liking. I look on international politics as a jungle. I found myself agreeing the other day with Morris Udall when he said that much to his surprise he wished that Richard Nixon could be conducting our arms control negotiations with the Soviets. His idea, of course, was that in the jungle only a predator knows how to be effective. I feel about the Sharons of the world the same way I feel about anyone with a Napoleonic complex and power - I worry that a rolling stone can create an avalanche, but I do not believe that one can survive in the real world by a single-minded policy of restraint. I suspect that we'd have seen more unthinkable weapons even than gas used in the Iraq-Iran war if the Israel Air Force had not

wiped out Baghdad's nuclear reactor. I believe in prophetic Judaism, but, as you know, I have written a book about Moses and my understanding of prophetic Judaism includes the fact that self-stated prophets often overlook that our tradition calls Moses the incomparable prophet. Amos was not responsible for the day to day care of a people. Moses had to deal with a recalcitrant people, enemies determined to destroy Israel, and the realities of power - and so must Jerusalem.

Having admitted my preconceptions, I believe we must all be more conscious of our own - that such confessions might reduce the stridency of our debates. If we become somewhat more self-conscious about our preconceptions perhaps we might even become a bit humble about the certainty of views. The one truth of which I am certain is that in the world of contingencies where we try to cope, certainties have no place, which is why I believe that the grandeur of Judaism lies in our affirmation of an ultimately unknowable God. Judaism teaches us that The Truth is always beyond full understanding. "Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than your ways and His thoughts than your thoughts."

To emphasize this point, I have over the years made a number of studies of our public statements. The study most relevant to our topic was done 16 months ago. In November of 1982 I solicited from a representative sampling of colleagues (66) that Fall's Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur sermons. I was interested to discover what they had to say about Lebanon. We had had to react under the pressure of events and I felt that what we said would be revealing of our preconceptions. We had to deal with events which were still unfolding. We had to deal with events for which Israel was being rather roughly criticized in the media. Our government's public position was clear: "the fighting must end, Israel must get out." In addition, the tragic events of Chatila and Sabra had come to light during the asseret y'mei Teshuvah and Begin's government was still resisting a commission of inquiry.

The most disturbing fact to emerge from this research related to the thinness of our information base. The same few people were quoted again and again, particularly Leonard Fein and Abba Eban. I found the same paragraphs from New York Times editorials in several sermons. Many colleagues seem to depend on a limited set of publications: their local newspaper, the Sunday New York Times, one of the popular weeklies like Time or Newsweek, the Christian Century, Moment, Present Tense, and Shema. There was little indication that they read any Israeli newspaper, the scholarly foreign policy publications like Foreign Affairs or such special newsletters as the Near East Report or Daniel Elazar's Jerusalem Letter.

Many of us reflect the conventional media wisdom. I have no particular brief for Menachem Begin, but I was surprised how many of us described him in terms right out of Time Magazine and the Washington Post: a cantankerous, narrow-minded, sanctimonious ex-terrorist who hypocritically quotes the Bible and is more interested in missiles than in Micah. Surely, our knowledge of recent Jewish history should have immunized us against this wholly negative judgement. Begin did live up to the Sinai withdrawal agreement, even to the challenge of Yamit. He was the first Israeli politician to speak directly to the needs of the Other Israel. Begin's a difficult negotiator, but every Jew has good reason to be suspicious of the "good intentions" of Western diplomacy. I would expect that as rabbis who know our history we would be under no illusions that what Reagan and Weinberg mean by peace in the Middle East involves primarily the security of American military and economic interests - the Maronites in Lebanon have learned this the hard way. Yet, a good number of us still harbor romantic illusions about America's support: "He is not only rigid but caustic, cantankerous, and seemingly unappreciative of America's role in support of Israel."

In some cases I found that the denigration of Begin was linked to an instinctive preference for the Labor opposition. Many of us have longtime friendships with Labor ministers, kibbutz leaders and intellectuals of the Left. Eliav, 02,

Rabin and Peres have spoken in our synagogues. The socialism of the Labor Party is a near relative of the progressive liberalism which underlies many of the political and economic resolutions of the Conference. Many Reform leaders in and out of ARZA take it as axiomatic that a Labor government would be more sympathetic to the institutions of Yahadut ha-mitkademet than a Likud coalition, although it was Ben Gurion, not Begin or Shamir, who first gave religious parties control over matters of personal status and Peres ^{who} is even now negotiating with the NRP and Tami.

Settlement policies and control methods on the West Bank are real issues, and positions opposed to some actions of the Begin government in these areas are not only understandable but probably sound. But I could not help wondering to what degree these harsh judgments were motivated by a deep-seated distrust of the democratic process in Israel and of the political opinions of the Sephardim. One colleague demanded the resignation of the Begin government and cried for a new partnership between the leadership of Reform Judaism, the kibbutz movement, and Israeli intellectuals "in pursuit of a liberal Jewish spiritual revival built on the principles of Reform Judaism and Zionism." A cozy idea, but isn't the problem that we must learn to work with those who represent today's Israel? The Likud was twice elected by a truly free society - and may be again. Admittedly, Labor's social democratic vision is closer to the CCAR's understanding of Israel's mission than the narrower, less optimistic, social instinct of Begin and the Likud, but do we act wisely when we caricature their policies and avoid confronting their genuine concerns? Their version of the old faith may be a bit tough-minded for our taste, but then our diaspora version of the old faith with its romantic faith in cooperation and dialogue must seem naive to many who live under a permanent seige imposed by a world of True Believers.

Many of us were not prepared to credit the moral sensitivity of any in Israel except those who are leaders of the Peace Now. "These leaders (Begin and Sharon) are supported by certain changes in the population of Israel. The clear majority

are the Sephardim - eastern Jews who grew up in Arab lands. They brought an Arab belief in muscle and force. The Arab knows muscle, not equal justice under law. These Sephardim who did not share the early Zionist ideas of socialism, humanitarianism, and equality are the firm supporters of the Prime Minister and his policies."

As I read this offhanded dismissal of the moral sensitivities of more than half of Israel's citizens, I wondered if I had found in these lines what was not intended. I had not. He continued: "Israel is not the guardian of Jewish values. In many ways America is a better guardian of those values than Israel. We are, after all, concerned with equality and civil liberties. In addition, Israel is a frontier state struggling for survival with little time to concentrate on ideals. We are citizens of an older, far more secure democracy, which has had time to focus on ideals necessary for survival. The American Jew is more likely to take to heart the great spiritual and moral teachings of our heritage than his Israeli counterpart."

I can only call such a statement moral chauvinism. I still find it difficult to believe that such a position was articulated by anyone in the name of Judaism. Traditional moral reasoning among our people has always tried to relate ethical standards and the specifics of a particular situation. The Responsa dealt always with issues in context. Only when our moral reasoning ceased to have practical consequences, when it became sermonic, did it become inflated. How can anyone defend the gratuitous proposition that our superior moral outlook is a direct benefit of our being a diaspora community which is not fully responsible for its own fate? Is powerlessness really the only posture from which moral pronouncements can be made? If so, diaspora's attitudes will always be irrelevant to Israel where power is and will always be a fact of life. Is it in fact true, as one colleague insisted, that "Judaism and Jews have lived most of (their) existence without a state and flourished better in this situation than as a nation in antiquity or modernity?" I find this a strange thesis, indeed, for a rabbi who

Another sermon described "three great and interlocking dangers - mortal dangers - that afflict world Jewry." The second of these dangers turned out to be "the danger posed to Jewry by some of the actions of Israel and the way an overwhelmingly hostile world has interpreted these actions. . . The last thing our world needs is a mini superpower that claims to be answerable only to God. . . The fanatic chauvinism that moves the Begin government to rash actions, to extravagant claims, and to biting the hand of its one ally" has transformed "what the word 'Israel' means today even to its friends. There was a time when the word 'Israel' conveyed an image of scholarship, of agricultural miracles, of musical prodigies, of prophecies fulfilled. Today the word 'Israel' projects an image of yet another nation-state involved in the blood and guts of real politik, no worse, but alas, hardly better than any other." This sermon was followed by a second entitled "American Jewry, the Only Hope." Its conclusion: "If Jewry is to survive into the 21st century in any meaningful way it will be through the strength and determination of the American Jewish community." He repeated this theme on Yom Kippur. "We have created here in America outstanding Jewish universities and rabbinical seminaries and wonderful social service agencies; we have produced an unbelievable number of Nobel laureates; we predominate in the musical and literary communities. As I see it, we are in the midst of a Golden Age here in America, an age even

American Jewry is prosperous, well supplied with institutions, and has many notables to its credit, but I was brought short by this encomium not only because. I do not share his belief that we are enjoying a Golden Age - piety is hardly a distinguishing characteristic of American Jews - but because he had begun on Rosh Hashana by naming as the third and "most severely metastasized" of the mortal dangers that confront world Jewry "the increasingly casual and apathetic manner in which the vast majority of Jews respond to their Jewishness in a secular world." Obviously, all is not well in paradise. Whose fault was this? Incredibly, Israel's: "In the midst of all of this intellectual and social creativity, so many American Jews

define their Judaism through Israel, and so many American Jewish institutions take their cues from Israel. There is an immaturity, a lack of responsibility, in the American Jewish community that is frightening to people like me who see American Jewry as the guarantor of Jewish survival."

To blame Israel for American Jewry's lack of cultural and spiritual quality seems to me a false and unthinking charge. Israel has not drained funds from the synagogue. If you doubt this, go back and look at temple budgets and rabbis' salaries from the 1920's. We are as well off as we are because of Israel. Israel has not drained funds from our communities' social welfare institutions. Joint WJA-Federation drives exist because local agencies find it to their advantage to piggy-back on the WJA's appeal. I object as much as anyone when a rich no-goodnik is honored by an Israel-related institution, but let the synagogue which has not done the same cast the first stone. I decry the coarseness and machismo of some American Jews, but are Entebbe and the bars of Tel Aviv to blame or the violence and indulgence of our own society?

One can find evidence of "military triumphalism" in Israel: Kahane, the Gush, Sharon; but I wonder whether those who claim that Israel's policies reflect faith in the gun rather than in God are thinking more of Reagan than of Israel. To what degree do our judgments on America's role in the world confuse our judgments of Israel? There are similarities: Israeli planes regularly streak across neighboring borders, elected mayors are summarily removed from their West Bank offices, and the IDF uses force to gain its objectives. But there are significant differences. America is not threatened on its borders; Israel is. The PLO and Syria have bombed Israel's cities. The IDF practices Tohar ha-neseq. We applauded the tens of thousands in Tel Aviv who protested Begin's position on the Commission of Inquiry, but we must face the fact that many of them and most in the Labor Party are willing to see a Palestinian State on the West Bank and are determined

that Jerusalem must remain united under Israeli sovereignty and that the Arab world is not yet ready for peace - and may not be for a long time. Whether we like it or not, Peace Now represents a minority of a minority position. Complete withdrawal from the West Bank and the acceptance then of a Palestinian State may be a theoretically arguable resolution; but no government in Jerusalem could make such a policy stick unless it was prepared to turn the army against its own people.

What is gained by stereotyping Israel's Sephardic community as medieval in practice and perspective? I like Schindler's suggestion that we "de-Ashkenize Reform Judaism so that we truly become one people;" but to take up his suggestion whole-heartedly would require that we do more than recognize that Levy and Navon are Sephardis or to invite Sephardi intellectuals to our next Conference. To de-Ashkenize Reform Judaism would require that we remove Hegel, Kant, Marx, the social utopians, and Women's Lib from our value assumptions. It cannot be done. I am not sure it should be done. But, at least, let us play with the idea long enough to admit that our ethical assumptions owe as much to secular Western ideologies and to the impotence of our diaspora existence as to traditional Jewish sources. Jewish power in Israel is the IDF. Jewish power in the United States is the uncertain benefit of a few hundred thousand dollars contributed to any and every presidential campaign except Jesse Jackson's and he has found the tap into the Arab pipeline.

These sermons indicate that we have a rather desperate need to moralize, to be on the side of the angels. Some of us see the pulpit as a place where questions of prudence should never be considered. In our sermons we don't like to consider strategic or defense considerations. A pristine moralism becomes the yardstick of sermonic judgement. One illustration will suggest the problem: "We all accept and support that Israel was created as a Jewish State in part to give physical security to Jews who were not allowed the luxury of living elsewhere on earth. That purpose still holds true. . .but more than a refuge, Israel must be Jewish. To be Jewish it must live and act in the spirit of Judaism as reflected

by our highest ideals and loftiest values. If it does not, it has no more reason to exist than any other nation and can lay no special claim to the allegiance of anyone, including its own citizens." From moral judgement to the delegitimizing of Israel in one easy rhetorical step.

We do not have to agree with Begin or Shamir or Peres on many issues - I certainly do not - but let us recognize that they are not wrong when they insisted that in their part of the world, as in ours, peace between nations depends to a large degree on power and deterrence. One colleague has asserted that "there are other ways to resolve disputes short of physical violence or war. Indeed, Judaism insists that we 'can' choose life and not death. Instead of Chilul hashem Jews are required to work for Kiddush Ha Shem. Kiddush Ha Shem is conduct which pursues shalom, peace." Reading this, I found myself muttering: Kiddush Ha Shem is martyrdom, and the peace you propose may be the peace of death. We talk to congregations whose members live in a society of law and rights. Israel has to survive in a sea of sharks.

I kept asking myself how those who told their congregations "the promise of self-determination (for the Palestinians) will bring peace," could be so sure that if Israel granted Palestinian autonomy peace would descend on the region. The Palestinians may have other ideas as to the reach of their legitimate rights. Will they be satisfied with an autonomy that does not include the vacating of all Israeli defense positions and settlements? If they insist on all or nothing can Jerusalem agree that the West Bank be judenrein? Will the Palestinians be satisfied if Jerusalem is not an Arab capital? What will happen when a Palestinian State seeks lebensraum?

Behind many of our judgments lies the unexamined assumption that there are always reasonable resolutions to conflict situations. Tell that to Khomeini or Quadaffi or Abu Nidab. True believers are not given to dialogue or compromise. Let me say something that I hope will not cause offense. If some of us were more religiously committed we would more easily understand the inevitable limits of

compromise. A committed believer cannot be infinitely open-minded. That's true of the Gush and it's true of Assad which is why the Ihud and its successors have never been able to find Arabs to dialogue with. If history teaches anything it is that the virtue of a policy does not guarantee its victory, but one colleague was so certain that Palestinian self-determination would bring peace that he encouraged Washington to turn the screws on Israel to make it happen: "President Reagan will have to apply enormous pressure on Begin in order to alter the way the government of Israel interprets the concept of autonomy laid down in the Camp David Accords."

Many sermons speak of the need for a more forthright and fruitful dialogue between Israel and the diaspora - the subject of our discussion. A family holds together best when its members speak their minds, know wherein and why they disagree, and agree to disagree; but I find it difficult to accept the idea that we have not been speaking to each other or affecting each other. There have been numerous conferences and congresses, and some of those who waxed most eloquent about the need for dialogue have been among the most faithful participants in those meetings. Their complaint, I suggest, is not the absence of a dialogue but that the Israel government has not accepted their point of view.

For many of us the issue is that our point of view is not being accepted. This is the spirit that seems to lie behind the call made by a colleague for a World Jewish Assembly. Presumably, in such an assembly his views (our views?) would have effective representation and if we had the vote we would carry the day. I wonder. Are we so sure that most Jews share the urgent messianism that motivates some of us? Are we so sure even of our congregations? Moreover, I doubt that even if we had a sizeable delegation it would be more effective than ARZA has been at recent World Zionist Congresses; and the reason is self-evident: on Israel-related issues no international congress of Jews will ever have the final say. However convinced we are about what Jerusalem should or should not do in regard to the West Bank, our lives are not on the line and most of our sons are not in

the IDF. Inevitably, any such body would lack authority (Israel is, after all, a sovereign state) and with equal inevitability it would be little more than another frustrating debate forum.

Let me conclude by returning to what I have called the messianic divide. Some among us are committed to what I call an urgent messianism. We are quick to see the messianism which lies behind the Gush, the amoral argument that since these are messianic times the State of Israel can abandon the normal moral restraints. Our messianism is of another nature and takes the form of perfectionism and a denigration of prudence. Principle must be upheld whatever the circumstance, i.e., "either Israel and Jews everywhere are abnormally moral or why be Jewish." I frankly find myself troubled when I read: "I expect Israel to live by standards higher than those of other nations. Not only are the eyes of the world upon Israel; I believe that God's eyes are upon her. I refuse to settle for Israel acting just like any other nation. If that be a double standard, so be it."

Israel is not always in the right. Begin and Shamir may not have been the best leaders Israel could have had, but surely, we who are so understanding in our counseling of individuals should work at least as hard to be understanding of the actions of the Jewish State. Let us at least recognize that in these tragic times and in a tough, unyielding arena a less messianic, more prudential and, yes, even more power-oriented standard may have some merit by even some claim to be called Jewish. "We Jews pride ourselves that we changed the land of our forefathers to which we returned in peace a century ago. We changed it from a desert to a land in bloom. But the land, the burden of a native home, has also changed us. This is the price we now have had to pay for nationhood. Jews now have a military force. Jews now fight wars to protect their own. Thank God we can. Thank God we are good at it. Thank God we can say, 'never again,' and have the force and the will to persevere - to make it stick."

Of this I and many others are certain. The disciples of urgent messianism

have no monopoly on morality. "Reform Judaism has as one of its main doctrines that Judaism should be a light unto the nations. We should be an exemplary people. I long ago relinquished that idea. When American Jews developed the same divorce rates, when we produced delinquents, drug addicts, and drunkards as everybody else does, I concluded that we Jews are just like any other people and perhaps more so. To demand of us what no other people expect of themselves is to operate on a double standard. . .if other peoples are entitled to their miscreants so, too, are the Jewish people. When we agonize over the Beirut massacre. . .it is because hiding one's eyes in the face of evil is against the Jewish ethic. It is something Jews shouldn't be doing because decent human beings do not turn away when evil is being perpetrated."

Judaism teaches both "Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue" and "Be not righteous overmuch, why should you destroy yourself." My understanding of the Jewish approach is that it rejects the either/or attitude: "Either Israel and Jews everywhere are abnormally moral or why be Jewish" in favor of a both/and approach: "Take hold of this (the vision) but don't let go of the other (the imperative of survival)." To most of us the image of Zion redeemed in justice is a compelling image, but justice is a goal to reach for, not an inflexible standard to be applied across the board in all situations. I take my conclusion from a colleague's sermon: "We should walk the extra mile of understanding for our fellow Jews for whom living up to their highest ideals is so much more difficult."

Daniel Jeremy Silver

Rabbi, I called Rabbi Dresner's office and he could not be reached since he was getting ready for a funeral etc. I left with his secretary the message, asking what time you would be picked up, telling her when you would have to be at the airport to leave NYC and also gave her Jonathan's address and telephone number. She was going to get back to me. Since she didn't I called her again and she told me that Rabbi Dresner told her what time you would be picked up and that she forgot and could not reach him since he is at a funeral and she is leaving for the day and on and on. Finally, she agreed to call me on Monday and I could get in touch with you and let you know the time. She even asked if she could reverse the charges and I said I didn't think so. In case you want to talk to Rabbi Dresner yourself his home phone is 201-790-3290.

M

WRHS AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES
If you want me to call him at home let me know - I'll be glad to do it from home (442-2647) any time this weekend.