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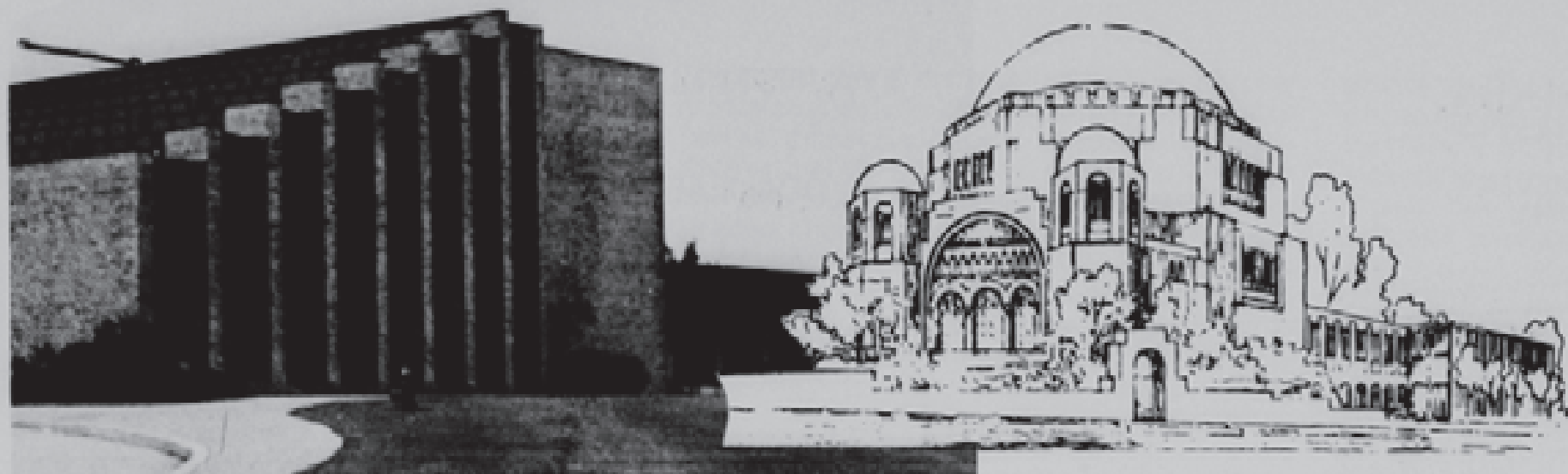
Sub-series A: Events and Activities, 1946-1993, undated.

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Newsletters, "From the Rabbi's Desk" articles, 1982-1984.



May 13, 1984
Vol. LXX, No. 19

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK:

The following speech was delivered by Rabbi Silver at Ohio State University on April 9, 1984 as part of a conference on "American Judaism Since the Tercentenary, 1954-1984."

Reform enjoys all the external trappings of success. In 1954 there were 447 congregations with some 900,000 members affiliated with the movement. In 1984 there are 770 congregations with a membership of 1,250,000. Over the same period Reform's national presence, the UAHC, has quadrupled its budget and more than doubled in its staff. More young people apply to the HUC-JIR for rabbinic and cantorial training than can be accommodated. There is a vigorous youth camp program. In a few cities congregations have given birth to Day Schools. The numbers are positive, but some of us who labor in the vineyard sense that the upward curve is losing steam and that such growth as there is is more the result of inertial energy than of increased interest or intense commitment. I would describe Reform in 1984 as a movement lacking coherence — a movement in search of itself.

Let me illustrate what I mean by incoherence. In 1975 the CCAR published a new *siddur*. The *Gates of Prayer* was widely welcomed since it made possible an ampler and more colorful service than the old *Union Prayer Book*. Today most Reform Jews want to be more demonstrably Jewish — at least in the synagogue; but the *Gates'* assertive Jewishness masks an underlying confusion about Judaism. Whatever its stylistic failings, the language of the *Union Prayer Book* refracted a rather consistent and surprisingly traditional theology. God was a personal God who heard Israel's prayers. The soul lived on with God. In contrast, the editors of *Gates* published side by side liturgies which expressed contradictory theological positions. In one Sabbath service, which the editors call 'traditional', prayer is addressed to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, a personal, if gender-conscious, God. Another service restricts itself to images drawn from the language of religious naturalism. There is even one service which is avowedly humanistic; the *Borechu* and the *Shema* are not translated and the English text makes no mention of God. '*Adonai Sefatai Tiftach*,' Lord, open my lips that my mouth may declare your glory' becomes 'may our lips and our lives be one in serving eternal truths.'

To put the best possible face on this theological smorgas-borg the editors indicate in their introduction that "there are many paths to Heaven's gates. This prayer and that one, this service and that one, may both have the power of leading us to the living God." Open-mindedness is an attractive virtue — at least to those whose beliefs are uncertain; but, historically, one of the *siddur's* functions has been to lift up Judaism's central affirmations. From this perspective *Gates* reflects not a return to tradition as it has been reviewed in the press, but a novel and radical departure. Its eclecticism, which few congregants have noticed, suggests that whatever be the shared commitments that bind most Reform Jews to their congregations, they are

not to be located in the area of theology. Some years ago I chaired a Commission on Identity for the CCAR. We wanted to understand our own, so we interviewed congregants in New York City, Richmond, Virginia and Cleveland about their motives for affiliation. The most common response was to praise Reform's open-mindedness. "My congregation lets me believe whatever I want to."

Piety is not Reform's long suit. Indeed, piety is not a particular strength of any segment of American Jewry, but this lack is particularly noteworthy in the case of Reform because Reform rather self-consciously set out to lift up and refurbish the spiritual elements of Judaism which the founders believed had become lost from view under the overgrowth of medieval practice. I. M. Wise defined Reform "as an effort to rescue Judaism from indifference, desertion and ignorance, by inspiring Israelites with a love of Judaism and by a return to essentials."

The European disciples of Reform accepted the discipline of weekly public worship as did the first generation or two of their descendants here. My congregation, founded in 1850 by central European Jews, has kept accurate attendance records since World War I. From 1917 to 1927 almost all the two thousand seats of The Temple were filled for the major weekly service. During each of the four subsequent decades, decades of membership growth, the numbers of those in attendance fell by half. Today, in synagogues across the land, only a determined and rather elderly minority still treat public worship as a required act of devotion. We used to speak of revolving door Jews, 'in on Rosh Hashanah, out on Yom Kippur.' My Commission found that one in two members of Reform congregations did not attend services on both High Holidays. People do come to the synagogue: when someone they care about is being honored with an *aliyah*, for the *bar mitzvah* of a friend's child, or to say Kaddish. In the 1980's it is the ties of family rather than the ties of faith which are central.

Let me add another bit of evidence which illustrates Reform's present lack of ideological coherence. In 1971 a CCAR committee was named to prepare a Centennial Platform for the movement. The first Platform had been adopted in Pittsburgh in 1885. The second which was accepted in Columbus in 1936, signaled, among other things, the end of Reform's institutional anti-Zionism. The third Platform was destined to be still-born. Colleagues met and found that they could not agree on many essentials. Because they could not admit that Reform was a movement without a message, they decided to prepare a document that would be called a *Centenary Perspective* which would list various popular opinions. The editors worked hard to make a virtue of necessity. "Reform Judaism," they wrote, "does more than tolerate diversity; it engenders it." The subsequent Biennial of the UAHC hailed "diversity within unity" as the "hallmark of Reform." To many

observers the inability of the rabbis to formulate a broad consensus suggested that Reform's unity, such as it is, is institutional and fraternal rather than theological or ideological.

When we asked our interviewees why they had joined a Reform congregation, we were told: 'It's where we were brought up,' 'to be with our friends,' 'the synagogue is convenient,' 'I want my kids to meet the kids who go there,' 'This Temple seems to fit my needs.' "I like their lecture series and program." "It has a good school and no-one intrudes on my life." Issues of faith rarely surfaced. For many it seemed to make no difference if their synagogue was Reform, Conservative or Reconstructionist. When we asked membership committee chairmen what prospective members wanted to know they told us: cost of membership, Bar Mitzvah requirements and cemetery privileges. The only *halachic* issue which was sometimes raised focused on whether the rabbi would perform an intermarriage. We almost concluded that the only definition we could come to was that Reform Jews are those who pay dues to Reform congregations.

In the middle of the 19th century, Abraham Geiger wrote that Reform proposed to renew the Jewish people as a community of faith. It hasn't quite worked out that way. If I were to describe today's Reform polity I would say that it represents those American Jews who are non-orthodox; who have no strong theological hangups; who desire to have their children identify with the Jewish people and, at the same time, to be able to mingle easily in the larger community and for whom some of the traditional life cycle customs still have appeal.

(Continued inside)

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

May 13, 1984

10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

THE TWA SERVICE

THE MANY FACES OF JUDAISM

Friday Evening Service

5:30 - 6:10 - The Temple Chapel

Sabbath Service

9:00 A.M. - The Branch

Are there no common beliefs? There are, but, for the most part, these beliefs derive from the political world rather than from the area of spiritual concerns. The president of a congregation where I recently led a seminar on Jewish identity told me that he was sure no one heard our prayers. He wasn't sure if there was anyone out there. 'Why then did he bother with the many burdens of a congregation?' 'The world needs Jews.' 'Why?' 'To keep the flame alive.' 'What flame?' 'The flame of social consciousness.' 'Power corrupts. People are callous. The world needs people with a *Yiddische kopf* and *neshamah*.'

My experience as a rabbi over the past thirty years suggests that two broad areas of conviction energized Reform: commitment to the survival of the Jewish people together with some feeling that this people exhibits special qualities; and the feeling that the Reform synagogue affirms and confirms a liberal political agenda: social welfare, civil rights, the separation doctrine. . .

Most Reform Jews respond to Fackenheim's eleventh commandment: not to give Hitler a posthumous victory. *Yom ha-Shoah* and *Yom ha-Atzmaut* are routinely included in congregational schedules. Twenty years ago the Hebrew Union College decided to send all freshmen rabbinic students to Jerusalem for a year. There is now a Reform Zionist movement, ARZA. Two Reform kibbutzim are in place. Peoplehood is no longer an issue. Classical Reform opposed Jewish nationalism, but today Reform Jews find confirmation in their synagogues for their deepest feelings about the Holocaust and Israel.

If Israel and the Holocaust remain compelling themes for American Jews and the Reform synagogue, the love affair between the Reform synagogue and a progressive political agenda seems to be having more than its share of problems.

Thirty years ago the political liberalism of the majority of American Jews and Reform's doctrine of prophetic mission made beautiful music together. Liberal rabbis extolled Amos, described the human being as God's designated partner in the work of Creation, and encouraged their flock to believe that the well-documented political liberalism of American Jews derived from mainstream Judaism. These rabbis did not focus in on the vexing question: why, if this were so, the polls showed that the more observant a Jewish group the more conservative its political cast.

Over the last thirty years the resolutions of the UAHC, Reform's national body, have mirrored the attitudes of so-called progressive political circles. Reform opposed nuclear testing (1959), the war in Vietnam (1967-69), apartheid in South Africa, supported Caesar Chavez, urged passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins full employment bill, supported the ERA, full civil rights for homosexuals, restitution for American Indians and Japanese-American internees, mandatory school busing to achieve desegregation, non-segregated public housing, opposed peacetime conscription, supported the Poor People's Campaign, abortion reform, and a national energy policy. I suspect a statistician could easily establish a substantial correlation between the resolutions of the UAHC and those of the Democratic Party and between those of the CCAR and of Americans for Democratic Action. At its recent biennial the UAHC demanded that human rights criteria be applied strictly before military or economic assistance is granted in Latin America; that Washington refrain from destabilizing any government in the area; reaffirmed its commitment to economic justice for women, citing particularly the areas of insurance, pension and Social Security benefits and advocated lifeline services, day care and family assistance; attacked cuts in programs serving the elderly, including food stamp, low-income winterization and home energy assistance and Medicare programs; called on the government to delay deployment of the Cruise and Pershing II missiles, and demanded a superforce to deal effectively with hazardous toxic waste.

I have no particular quarrel with this agenda. My point is analytic, not judgemental. Religions can be defined as particular clusters of ideas, virtues, institutions, myths and ceremonies which declare a particular set of values to be redemptive. My point is that since at least the end of World War II that cluster of ideas, virtues, institutions, myths and ceremonies which Reform institutions and members have accepted as redemptive derived primarily from the world of

politics and that at this point in time those particular political ideas are not as compelling as they once were. The post-war generation of Reform Jews was drawn to Reform because they found in Reform confirmation of certain cherished political beliefs, and unfortunately the institutions of Reform often let their responsibility stop here. What was called prophetic Judaism was often a political statement more than a statement of concern about Jewish religious life. When the UAHC established a lobbying center in Washington to promote its social concerns, this building was at first simply named Social Action Center. It was only after the building was dedicated that the sponsors remembered that we claim that our ethical principles derive from God rather than social theory; and the Center was belatedly renamed Religious Action Center. Note: even then it was not renamed "Jewish Action Center."

In the immediate past it was not at all unusual to find some of the leadership treating worship and religious education not as ends in themselves but as consciousness-raising techniques. One example crossed my desk a few weeks ago: a 20-page brochure from the UAHC showing how Shabbat Ha-Gadol could be used to sensitize people to environmental issues. We were encouraged to add readings like this to the liturgy.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the and; and the spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

In the beginning of the technological age, man recreated the heavens and the earth, to the earth he gave new form with dynamite and bulldozer, and the void of the heavens he allied with smog."

Other suggestions included having a "resource conservative" Oreg after the service where the goodies would be made using recipes which did not require energy. It was also suggested that during the service the rabbi turn off the lights for a few minutes to illustrate our dependence on energy. The theme of this brochure is to provide "a Jewish perspective on the environment," but in fact such a service simply tries to give a Jewish *hechsher*, certificate of authenticity, to a set of political ideas. If this were not so, this kind of manipulation of the sacred would never be tolerated.

The marriage of Reform and political liberalism characterized Reform between the two wars and in the immediate post-war period. It was a relatively happy union, but an increasing number of Reform Jews have begun to have serious doubts about major elements of the liberal political agenda. The breakdown of the traditional Jewish community, because of emigration, urbanization and industrialization, created an uprooted proletariat which was naturally attracted to the socialist ideologies then popular in Eastern Europe. The political use of anti-semitism by the opponents of social change, identified the Right with the enemy. In America the congruence of the New Deal agenda with the aims of an upwardly mobile second generation community solidified the *shidduch* of Jews and political reform. In the years after World War II many newly successful Jews looked about and decided that far-reaching social welfare legislation provided the best possible guarantee against the emergence in America of the kind of social dislocation and economic chaos which had spawned Nazism. Then, too, progressive political ideas were the accepted gospel in the Village Voice and among certain highly visible groups of the intelligentsia and many had a desperate need to feel that they are in the intellectual vanguard.

That was yesterday. Today a new set of experiences are reshaping the American Jewish political consciousness. There has been a loss of faith in old-line liberalism born of many causes. Governmental over-regulation is one. The stagnation of the economy and the cost of government is another. Jewish financial and social success is a third. The standard measurements of education, occupational status, and income suggest this American Jewish community is perhaps America's most successful ethnic or religious group. The successful want to hold on to what they have; though having known not a few socialist-minded Jewish millionaires, I would weigh political experience as far more important than prosperity as the major cause of liberalism's fall from grace. Jews have learned that our enemies are not all on the right. In Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Nicaragua and Cuba, Jews have seen dictatorships of the Left make common cause with the PLO. A majority of

socialist and Third World countries voted for the infamous U.N. resolution defining Zionism as racism. From Cuba in the 1950's to Nicaragua in the 1980's, countries which underwent social revolutions invariably witnessed an exodus of Jews. Then, too the passion for absolute equality has been seen to require a degree of state control Jews instinctively fear. Regimented societies have no room for a non-conforming people.

The old liberal is still there, but five Arab wars, affirmative action legislation, the budget deficits, and Jesse Jackson have led many to abandon Amen-saying and contributed to a growing suspicion that an activist policy of social planning may not have all the answers. Many Reform Jews are reading *Commentary* and *Public Affairs* and are asking how the rabbi can approve of affirmative action when these rules discriminate against their children or how the UAHC can be indifferent to the tax cost of welfare legislation.

Reform could enjoy the luxury of being theologically incoherent as long as its members found in the synagogue the confirmation of the civic virtues and political values they brought to it. But what happens when people, in sizeable numbers begin to lose faith in the cluster of social values which the synagogue has been proclaiming as redemptive? To thrive, even to survive, a religious movement requires that its cluster of redemptive ideas be compelling to the community.

Jews, like everyone else, have been made uneasy by the continuing and unremitting pace of political and social change. The air is full of conflicting advice. People don't know where to turn. They want someone - God - to speak with confidence and certainty. People - Jews - seek roots and direction. We see evidence of this in the new-found popularity of Evangelism and religious orthodoxy; in the renaissance of Moral Majority rhetoric, in the back-to-basics movement, in the appeal of the cults and in the compelling simplicities of poplar music. Harvey Cox has described the - to some - unexpected renewal of religious passion in his recent book, *Religion in the Secular City*. Who would have believed in 1954 that thirty years later the country would watch a bruising fight in the Senate over a Prayer Amendment. In 1954 Bishop Robinson was proclaiming the death of God. God is no longer an idea which must be discarded by anyone with pretensions to being thought of as an intellectual. America's upper middle-class churches, long the bastion of a non-theological humanistic Christianity, have taken up spiritualism and Christology. This is the age of Jerry Falwell, not Richard Neibuhr.

Though many of us are disturbed by the passions which have been aroused, the need for balance and the need to hold on to familiar personal and familiar virtues which motivates the *Ba'alei Teshuvah*, cannot be doubted. Every rabbi has faced the bitter parent whose child went off to college and was picked up by some evangelical movement or cult. Where he wants to know was the warmth and the sense of community, the living faith, the child now claims to have found?

Surprisingly, the American Jewish community, usually so quick off the mark, has been one of the last to respond to these new needs. Ten years ago when Leonard J. Fein surveyed members of Reform synagogues he discovered "a powerful, perhaps even desperate, longing for community." From his interviews Fein was convinced that many rabbis had recognized this need but had not been able to restructure their congregations to respond effectively. Why not? Finally, Fein put this down to what he called "the prevalence of opinion as a substitute for belief. . . the existence of belief but the absence of any belief systems." Reform members had few strong convictions, so there are few strong ties to which the rabbis could appeal. Many clearly wanted something - encouragement, a sense of purpose, a sense of the sacred - but Fein found that they were not yet ready to suspend disbelief long enough to allow them to enter whole-heartedly the experience of faith. At this point in time many Reform Jews remind me of smokers who talk about quitting, but do not yet acknowledge that they must. They would like to believe, to be part of, but they can't bring themselves to put aside their humanistic conditioning. Judaism involves disciplines. Reform Judaism has down-played discipline.

Since the support of liberalism has become problematic, Reform needs to put forward a broader, more attractive

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and more specific definition of religious obligation. There are indications that some in Reform have begun to recognize the problem. The new prayer book describes certain duties as *mitzvot*. Last November at its Biennial the UAHC adopted a resolution whose preamble recognized "an urgent need for renewed examination of that which religious commitment implies for us and our congregations" and resolved "to engage in a two-year study of this challenge in all its manifestations . . . to generate a suggested programmatic response." But these moves are still taken gingerly. Even as they voted to examine the implications of the concept of *mitzvot*, the delegates gave clear evidence that they were not yet fully convinced this was a way they could go. This study must be "within the context of the informed choice so precious to Reform Judaism." God ordained duties and informed choice are mutually exclusive terms. Reform will not be able to build a vibrant movement if it keeps insisting that what constitutes a Jewish way of life and commitment is purely a matter of personal choice.

Small groups of the spiritually engaged exist in all our congregations and there is a lot of talk among rabbis about building out from such groups. A recent article in the *Journal of Reform Judaism* put it this way: "We need to stop worrying about numbers and worry about igniting Jewish enthusiasm. We need to stop counting the house and begin paying attention to how we can create a sharing worship community. How shall we create such a community? By building it patiently, lovingly, person by person" (Fields). But the question remains: What model has Reform in mind to guide this work? What cluster of ideas will be promulgated and accepted as redemptive? A successful building requires careful design. Reform needs a plan which will enable it to transform itself from what is today essentially a community of fate into a community of faith.

The Reform Jewish community is by no means inert. Our congregations are full of activity, some of which is clearly focused on religious concerns. The youth have shul-ins. Young parents arrange Sabbath dinners to learn the songs and the blessings which they can share with their children. Families go on retreats which discuss the question: "How to Jew" — using Jew as a verb. In one synagogue you will find a small group of Reform Jews meeting for daily worship. In another a few regulars meet weekly to go over texts. Some rabbis are beginning to listen to those who for years have complained that all the hubbub around life-cycle activities on Friday night denies them the satisfaction of Sabbath worship. A few congregants are even beginning to see their rabbi as a spiritual guide rather than congregational factotum and general counselor. But it's also clear that the years during which Reform tended to treat the issues of religious off-handedly have dulled the synagogue's sensibilities. Numbers do matter. There are big budgets to be met. If some congregations did not schedule *Bar Mitzvahs* on Friday night, they might not have a *minyan*. Congregational leaders are often chosen for the ability to support and many accept these responsibilities out of a sense of noblesse oblige rather than of personal conviction. Practical leaders, they tend to believe a congregation should emphasize what people "want."

Michael Meyer has written, "From its very beginning the Reform Movement had drawn a great many Jews for whom religion, in some cases Jewishness, was distinctly peripheral to their lives. They attended synagogue rarely, having joined for reasons of respectability and their children's Jewish identity. Many, especially in the larger cities, were not desirous of deeper involvement. They were content to come to the Temple for the High Holy Days or for the celebration of life cycle events. At present this segment tends to see the rabbi as more of a priest who officiates on special occasions than a spiritual or moral guide, while, for their part, the rabbinical and lay leaders are now rarely imbued with that effervescent self-confidence which had

done battle with apathy in an earlier age."

I agree largely with this late 1970's analysis, but I am not convinced that lethargy or lack of confidence are now, nor were then, the hallmarks of the rabbinate or of congregational leadership. If anything, there has been a kind of frenetic energy within the Movement. Hundreds of what are inappropriately called creative services have been pasted up and xeroxed. Congregations plunged into the Havurah movement until they discovered that these self-help groups were successful in the centers of alienation — the Valley outside Los Angeles — but not in relatively stable communities such as Cleveland's. Our schools are always experimenting with new curricular materials. Our kids go to Israel and NFTY camps, and at conclave time descend on the host congregation like locusts. The problem has not been, and is not, a lack of institutional energy but the fact that Reform made its peace with the secularized interests of third-generation American Jews and neglected to explore and emphasize the more personal and more spiritual disciplines of the religious life. The results are everywhere to be seen. Reform is rich in buildings, numerically strong, able to look back on some fine accomplishments, but spiritually lethargic and uncertain of the future. Reform's old cluster of redemptive ideas has clearly lost much of its effectiveness, but a compelling new focus has not been found. To find that center — and to work out ways to awaken this generation of American Jews to the fact that they — we — desperately need the encouragement and guidance of a warm and satisfying religious life, that is the challenge. I am convinced our physicians have diagnosed our lack of energy as due to a spiritual deficiency. Unfortunately, I am not fully convinced major portions of the community care enough about their spiritual health to accept the prescribed regimen.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

OUTREACH

Recently, a group of people began meeting at The Temple with the aim of discussing what should be The Temple's response to the recent phenomena of increased numbers of people converting to Judaism. All of the congregational members of this committee have themselves, over a span of many years, chosen to become Jewish. You met two of them during the TYA service this past February. We have been talking about the need to aid new Jews by choice in their adjustment to Jewish and Temple life. Further, we also feel the need to bring more congregants into this dialogue and to inform others of the special joys and problems faced by all who convert or who are related to someone who has chosen Judaism.

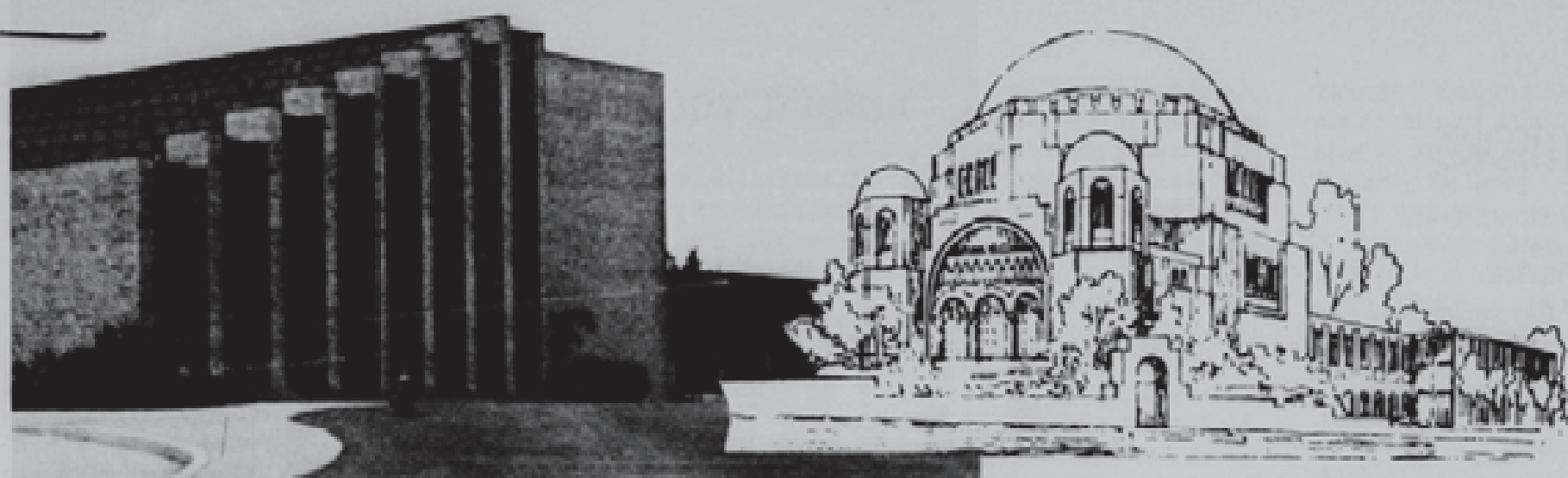
Since 1978, Reform Jews have formalized an outreach program. What this means is that we have opened our doors to welcome those who would like to become Jews. Since then many questions have arisen. First of all there is the "December Dilemma". Raising families where parents or (grand)parents are not Jewish is uncharted territory. For Jews by choice, feeling culturally at home in the Jewish world seems to be more difficult than finding religious familiarity. These are just some of the issues this group would like to address. Moreover, we want and need to involve all congregants in this process. A committee is being formed, convened by Rabbi Berman. If you are interested in getting involved, please call her at The Temple Branch.

SAVE THESE DATES !!

TMC ANNUAL MEETING
Tuesday, May 22, 1984
TRIO ELEKTIQUE will perform
Joan Terr Ronis — piano
Albert Blaser — flute, saxophone
and clarinet
Dr. Michael Dreyfus — violin, viola
Playing a variety of music
Installation of Officers
Refreshments
8:00 p.m. — The Temple Branch

THE TEMPLE'S 134th
ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday, June 3, 1984
8:00 p.m.
Entertainment
Installation of Officers
Presidential Address
Refreshments

TEMPLE ANNUAL PICNIC
Sunday, June 24, 1984
1:00 - 7:00 p.m.
At Camp Anisfield
Athletics, games, lots of fun.



June 10, 1984
Vol. LXX, No. 21

The Temple Bulletin

From The Rabbi's Desk: Reform Judaism – What Lies Ahead?

The Department of History at Ohio State University and its new Jewish Studies program recently sponsored a two-day conference on 'American Judaism, The Last Thirty Years.' I was invited to speak on Reform Judaism and I focused on the question of Reform's sense of mission. We are accustomed to think of liberal Judaism as our necessary and successful response to the changing needs of Jews in a rapidly changing world and the record of the last two centuries seems to indicate that we have been correct in that judgment. My question was whether for the first time in its history liberal Judaism may not be meeting the spiritual and religious needs of major segments of the American Jewish community. Over the last thirty years new social forces have been at work and the cultural political situation in which we find ourselves has changed dramatically.

My paper was printed in the May 14th issue of The Temple Bulletin. As I prepared that presentation I became increasingly certain of the value of taking a longer look at our history than the thirty years which the Conference had asked me to discuss. To gain the necessary perspective I found myself reaching back to the beginning of non-orthodox Judaism.

The beginnings of any ideological or religious movement determine to a surprising degree its historic strengths and weaknesses.

Reform Judaism began as a response to the radical and dramatic transformation which was taking place in the political situation of many of the Jews who lived in Western Europe in the early part of the 19th century and to the inevitable impact of their new situation on their inner lives. The newly emancipated Jews inevitably began to think differently from their medieval ancestors and to develop distinct aesthetic and ideological tastes. This new breed of Jews required a new packaging of Judaism and Reform's early successes lay in authorizing what was felt to be a necessary reshaping of Jewish life. Reform's earliest purpose was to validate change and flexibility. Adaptation has always been its strong suit. Reform spent its time and energy justifying and formalizing change; and has assumed, rather than shown, that these changes made clearer and enhanced the central affirmations of Judaism. Today the issue is no longer the validation of change but the clarification of the changeless, what Judaism is all about. We live in a fractured culture and in chaotic times and most of us feel a need to find solid ground for our value system and spiritual needs. Change is omnipresent and, to an increasing degree, overwhelming. We no longer need to be convinced that Judaism can and should be reshaped. Our question is: What

are the core indispensable ingredients of our traditions? What can a non-orthodox Judaism offer us by way of certainty? How can Judaism provide us the steady sense of direction that we need?

In its early years Reform Judaism drew itself out from a Jewish ethos which was largely medieval in its institutions and ideas. It had taken Christian Europe some four centuries to move from the corporate ideas which validated feudalism to the democratic ideas of the French Revolution. These were the centuries of Europe's adolescence during which people slowly, and with difficulty, nurtured, nourished and adjusted to a new set of values. Europe's Jews did not participate in the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Counter-Reformation, and the Age of Reason. The policies of ghettoization and apartheid imposed by governments and society walled off the Jewish communities from these influences. Until 1789 Jewish life, with rare exceptions, remained encapsulated. Our schools maintained the traditional curriculum. We spoke our own language. We were in Europe but not of Europe. Could you have brought together an eighteenth century graduate of the Breslau Yeshivah and a graduate of Christ Church College at Oxford of the same age, you would have found that about the only thing they had in common was their native intelligence. For Jews the step from medievalism into the modern world would be a precipitate one. We were not allowed a prolonged adolescence in which to try out and develop new institutions and ideas.

In 1789 France proclaimed a revolutionary republic which affirmed the rights of men; and after some hesitation, a hesitation which lasted over three years, the National Assembly decided that even Jews could be considered as men and so as citizens. A decade later Napoleon, having become the First Consul of France, led the French armies across Europe. His legions broke down the ghetto walls of the cities they conquered. Overnight, Jews emerged from the overcrowded and enclosed Judengassen in which they had survived. Those who came out found themselves in a strange new world whose cultural norms they did not fully understand. Many could not even speak its language.

Much of the history of the nineteenth century can be read as a determined attempt by the traditional groups of privilege to regain the special advantages that had been taken from them. Their agenda included, among other goals, the removal of the Jew as competitor, denying the Jew the advantages of emancipation. But Humpty Dumpty had had a great fall and all of the king's horses and all the church's men couldn't put the old world into place again. Despite numerous setbacks, during each decade of the last century

an increasing number of Jews went to European schools and attended their city's theater and opera. It was quickly apparent that there had to be new ways to present Judaism to this new breed so as to make the old-new faith seem meaningful to them: so the emergence of a non-orthodox tradition.

At first, the proposed changes involved issues of style rather than of substance. The early reforms were not at all radical. The reformers wanted a decorous and quiet service rather than the moving about and the endless underflow of noise that marked the traditional synagogue. They wanted an understandable service. The age prided itself on not accepting any traditions it had not examined. Prayers should be said in the vernacular as well as in Hebrew and Aramaic. Attendance at the symphony had taught them to appreciate elaborate and sophisticated music and they felt that their service should be accompanied by a choir singing carefully composed music, perhaps accompanied by an organ rather than the simple sing-song chants of the traditional synagogue. At concerts and the theater men and women sat together. They were determined to bring women down from the balcony and worship as families.

One can validate these changes from within the tradition. The Talmud says specifically that the *Tefillah* can be spoken in any tongue. A Jew can worship in any language. Two centuries before some of the orthodox rabbis of Italy had encouraged the use of composed music and a choir, and had, in certain situations, even permitted the use of an organ in their synagogues. There is nothing in the Torah or in the early codes which demands that the women be

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THE TEMPLE PICNIC

June 24, 1984

From The Rabbi's Desk:
(Continued)

seated separately. Recently, archeologists have discovered that the synagogues of the first, second and third centuries had no built-in separations between men and women. On the issue of decorum, the early Reform could quote Maimonides, the most famous of medieval philosopher-rabbis, who had complained bitterly to the community leaders of Cairo about the noisiness of his neighbors when they worshipped in the synagogue next door to his home.

None of this was that dramatic, but any change tends to scandalize the traditionalist. We are all creatures of habit. We tend to assume that that which is familiar is somehow right. Add to this the often overlooked fact that the business of religion, any religion, is to confirm. Religion expresses the desire of a particular cultural group to affirm and confirm certain cherished values. It does so by declaring these to be ancient, valuable and sacred. When you encourage ritual change traditionalists fear you are casting doubt on the spiritual affirmations of the tradition which these rites and ceremonies confirm for them. People sing, "give me that old-time religion," because they instinctively associate venerability with authenticity.

Despite this inbred resistance to change, there are times when change cannot be avoided. The nineteenth century was such a time. Change took place and, predictably, was roundly denounced by traditionalists. Their early and fierce attacks had the virtue of forcing Reform's leaders to think more carefully about their authority to do what they were doing. They had done what felt right and necessary. Now they need to think as well as feel. After fumbling around for awhile as to the appropriate defense which they should make, they finally decided to defend their actions by citing the authority of history.

If you had asked a traditional Jew how he knew that he should keep a kosher home or that men and women should be seated separately in the synagogue, he would have answered, "Steh geschrieben," it's all written down." He knew that he could pick up one of the classic codes of Jewish Law, say the *Shulchan Aruch*, and show you where all the rules are set down, one, two, three, four, no question about it. Tradition was Torah. Torah had existed ever since Sinai. It was all there and it was all God's will.

Reform defenders justified their change by insisting that the dimensions of time must be introduced into religious decision making. Neither *Kashrut* nor the *mehitzah* were prescribed at Sinai. Judaism, like all other living organisms, had undergone many changes. Why did the traditional Jew of the time not recognize this truth? Because our tradition, for various reasons, had lost interest in history some eighteen hundred years earlier.

We had been among the world's first historians. Much of the Bible is presented as sacred history and that literature contains two large blocks of text which are, in effect, early attempts at writing systematic history. One of these chronicles, the Deuteronomistic, runs through most of Judges, Samuel and Kings and presents a chronological record of our people's history from the Conquest down to the Babylonian Exile. The other history is to be found in Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah and reviews this history down to the Persian period. During the Hellenistic era Jews continued to be fascinated by history. The Hasmonians commissioned a chronicle of their dynasty and any number of professional historians appear on the scene of whom the best known is Josephus.

After flourishing spectacularly, Jewish interest in history withered as quickly as Jonah's gourd. From Josephus at the end of the first century to a flock of writers in the nineteenth century no Jew worked seriously at being an historian. A few writers prepared chronological lists of sages for legal purposes. During the Middle Ages a number of martyrologies appeared which listed all the deaths and persecutions which Jews in a particular region endured, but no one worked seriously at the historian's craft.

Many reasons have been offered to explain history's sudden fall from grace. Some have made the point that history is of interest only to those who make history. The earliest histories of which there is any record were written by courtiers eager to flatter the royal ego by listing the king's pedigree, conquests and major building projects. History tends to appeal to those who are conscious of their impact on their times. Generally, history ceased to be of interest to Jews after the destruction of The Temple and the loss of sovereignty when, in effect, Jews fell off the stage of power. After 70 C.E. we were a minority people whose political situation was determined by others. After 70 C.E. we were in *galut*, exile. Our theology taught us to think of ourselves as prisoners under an indeterminate sentence. Release depended on God, not us. To the long-term prisoner who has no sense of being able to control his situation a particular day means little. He lives either in remembrance of what it was like when he was still free, or in anticipation of what it will mean when he is pardoned. Our *galut* literature deals with Biblical times and messianic times.

Europe became fascinated with history during its adolescence. Increasingly, men and nations felt they were actually making history so it was worthwhile to keep a record. With Emancipation this interest passed over to the Jewish community. It was not so much that we were among the shakers and movers, we weren't; but it quickly became apparent that the historical perspective served some valuable practical purposes. Historical studies made it clear that Judaism was and had always been a process. In every age Judaism had been shaped by the cultural world in which Jews found themselves. History allowed the new Jew to recognize that what was called Torah in the *Shulchan Aruch* and affirmed as constant since Sinai was in fact a composite of any number of changes, reforms if you will, which had taken place over the long centuries. Moses had not sent Miriam to the women's balcony. Esther had not eaten kosher food. Akiba had never been *bar mitzvah'd*. History was used by liberal Jewish thinkers to break down the assumption that Judaism was consistent, unchanging, and easily defined.

Having entered history, and conscious of historical change, Reform then faced another and more difficult question: if Judaism is seen as an evolutionary process what can be affirmed as authentic Judaism? Put another way: what is it that Judaism has to teach? To answer this question Reform turned from factual events and began to search for underlying concepts. Children of an age intoxicated with the power of ideas, they began to look for the silken threads which they felt ran through Jewish history, those ideas around which Judaism had constantly reshaped itself. During much of the past century, scholars have filled many volumes with their appreciation of what we might call "essential Judaism," their understanding of the essential ideas around which Judaism continuously reforms itself. History showed that the institutions and the practices had changed, but these liberals argued, inconsistently, that the basic ideas had not changed.

On reading these volumes, historians like Heinrich Graetz commented that they revealed more about the individual writer than about Judaism. In a celebrated essay Graetz called these essence-of-Judaism books impressionistic studies. Each writer, he said, found in Judaism what he already believed Judaism to be. Ideas, he insisted, had been subject to historical forces as much as institutions.

He was right, but the basic problem with this approach to an understanding of Judaism is that it reduced living, multi-faceted religious entity which involved rituals, liturgies, music, institutions, moral duties, a calendar, a literature, and much else, to a few words. Seen this way, Judaism ceases to be a multi-faceted religious culture and becomes in people's minds a vague philosophical or moral concept.

The liberal pulpit in the nineteenth century loved to quote Micah: "It has been told you, O man, what is good and the Lord requires of you only to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." The emphasized word was "only." Confirmation texts of the texts of the period tended to define Judaism as ethical monotheism. There is nothing wrong with that definition. Judaism is a monotheistic

tradition. Judaism does emphasize social concern and moral character. At the same time, Judaism is more than what is implied by the concept 'ethical monotheism.' Judaism is the Seder. Judaism is Yom Kippur. Judaism is a set of dietary customs. Judaism is 'Ayn Keloheinu.' Judaism is the synagogue. Judaism is Amos and Mattathias. Judaism is a religious life which has a particular and distinctive pattern. All that makes Judaism is lost when Judaism is defined as an idea.

The sermons of the early part of this century often quoted an incident involving Hillel which is reported in the *Micrash*. One day a Roman came to Hillel and demanded, "teach me Judaism while I'm standing on one foot." Hillel agreed. The man stood on his one foot and Hillel said; "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you, that is the whole Torah." You'll find that most sermons of the time drop this illustration at this point. Hillel, however, had more to say. "The rest is commentary, go and study." The commentary is essential. It is the commentary which gives body shape, power and immediacy to Judaism. Without the commentary Judaism has no form, no personality, no specialness, no bite. Given this reductionist attitude, conversations such as this were often heard in our synagogues. "Why do I have to keep the Sabbath or come to services? You tell me that being good is the important thing, what God requires of me. I don't need any of these rituals in order to be good. Can't someone be good without being pious?" The answer given was, 'of course, you can be.' The paraphernalia of a religious life are not absolutely necessary in order to develop character. Ethics is part of any religion, not the whole of it.

Reform began to come back to earth about fifty years ago, just about the time that the optimism engendered by the Emancipation began to fray under the tragic realities of this century. Liberal Jews began to realize that the growing brotherhood of good will, an all-encompassing humanity into which all would be welcome, which would spin off a liberated religion which would eliminate all need for distinction, was a figment of their hopes without basis in fact. Ours has been a chilling century — the Russian pogroms, the Stalin purges, the rise of Fascism, the Holocaust, Arab cries of Jihad, Holy War. Unadorned ideas cannot provide warmth and spiritual sustenance. Ethical monotheism is an austere concept. The twentieth century wanted the new synagogue to speak to the heart as well as to the mind. A denatured Judaism was no longer sufficient. Ethical monotheism doesn't touch the heart. Judaism can. The more the skies darkened, the more Jews began to insist that their non-orthodox synagogues provide color and warmth. We have seen the increased use of Hebrew in our worship. Customs like the Bar Mitzvah began to flourish. Jews needed again a Judaism which was a way of life as, in fact, our fathers had always assumed it to be.

All this is well-known and evident all about us, but most non-traditionalists have not yet learned how to think about these changes so that they represent not simply a change of style but a confident faith. Our needs run deeper than the comfort of a few rituals. We need a sense of a divine command which demands a response on our parts. We need direction and we don't yet know how to allow the synagogue to help us in this regard. We have turned to the synagogue for a pain killer when, in fact, we need to allow the synagogue to speak to us with ultimate seriousness about values and the meaning of our lives.

We live in a world which is full of confusion, noise and violence. We want to sense the sacred. We need guidance. All about us we see the disparagement of moral values we instinctively know to be right. We're concerned about the integrity of family. We're concerned about our personal sense of values and our own dignity. We are constantly besieged and badgered by all manner of voices which tell us to be carefree, hedonistic, materialistic or assertive. We know that many of these voices are wrong, but we're not quite sure how. We have to adjust our lives in one way or another to a whole variety of pressures and beyond this are the troubling headlines and the apocalyptic fears of a nuclear holocaust. History taught us that Sinai was not

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From The Rabbi's Desk:
(Continued)

what the Torah describes it to have been. It is possible that Sinai may never have been. What then is it in our faith that commands obedience and assent? Wherein lies Judaism's authority? What can Judaism teach? As Reform Jews most of us do not accept the traditional claims to the Torah's authority or the tradition's historical definition of its teachings. Yet, we'd like to be able to find God's guidance. We're at an in-between stage. We know that we want to respond, but either we don't know how or haven't the courage just to take ourselves in hand and do it. We remind me of the smokers who know that they ought to quit but haven't yet decided that they must quit. Some, of course, have simply gone back to the old ways. For some the response has been a return to fundamentalism, to evangelism, to the cults, to orthodoxy; but those of us who cannot set history aside and who insist that the heart and the mind must work as partners can't simply turn our minds off in matters religious. Unfortunately, for such as we, liberal Judaism has not yet developed and popularized a Jewish way of thinking and a Jewish way of living which would allow us to appreciate what can be gained by our more active participation in Jewish life; what God, if you will, demands of us.

I am convinced that a good part of our problem is that non-orthodox Jews, leaders as well as laity, continue to think about Judaism in old-fashioned terms. We still think of Judaism as a constant and define Judaism as an unchanging tradition. You can see this lack of imagination dramatically in the degree to which we accept the orthodox definition of Judaism even though we are not orthodox. Again and again I hear people say, I hear you say, 'I'm not pious.' You mean that you don't observe the full regimen of *kashrut* or two days of the holidays. Interestingly, those who are most likely to speak this way to me are here every week and participate actively in Jewish life. They are pious, but haven't yet recognized that fact.

Reform began as a community committed to change. In its formative years, Reform used history to validate our right to reshape Judaism. We introduced the dimension of time into the religious equation. I suggest that we need to apply considerations of time not only to our past but to our present understanding of Judaism. Judaism is a process, part of a continuum. As such, Judaism has been and is whatever we have made it to be. Judaism is not a theology out there or a synagogue we go to, but the immediacy, the seriousness,

the intelligence with which we approach our *yerushah*, the whole range of Jewish culture and involve ourselves in all aspects of Jewish life. Judaism is the thrust of the past meeting the need of the present. Judaism is the degree to which we allow our particular inheritance to speak to us, command us. We are shaped by it and, in the process, we shape it anew.

Over the last few decades Jews have again become responsive to one non-ideational element in the Jewish equation — the sense of peoplehood and community. No observer of American Judaism sixty years ago would have predicted the active communal structures which exist today in most Jewish communities. Jews are involved with the Refuseniks, with a Jewish social agenda and, of course, with Israel. All this is remarkable, but all this is on a civic level. Inside the Jew there is still a spiritual void. Many Jews are active, but many are not sure what they really believe and what it is that Judaism asks of them, demands of them, what it means to be a Jew.

Part of our problem is that we're looking for somebody else to give us the answer. We want concepts laid out neatly in reasonable form, but the truth is that Judaism is a construct of values, attitudes and forms, our construct, not a concept which can be argued up or down. What I'm saying is that when it comes to Judaism you must find your answer in becoming, not in books. You will find it in the degree to which you are willing to participate, as you are this morning, in worship; to the degree to which you are willing to weave the patterns of Jewish life into the fabric of your life, and to the degree to which you are willing to participate in the emotional and spiritual experiences our religious life affords.

Is Judaism true? No one knows. Truth belongs to God. Certainly, it can be true for us. What then authorizes Judaism? I've never really known what revelation means, but I do know that wherever the Torah has been read over the last two thousand years, and remember it's read in an arbitrary annual cycle, week by week, wherever it has been read, under whatever conditions, whatever were the immediate needs of that congregation, someone has found wisdom in that text appropriate to that occasion. There must be something special there. And I do know this, that those who are willing to involve themselves intimately in the spiritual life of the congregation and to weave all the assets of our religious civilization into the fabric of their lives, do feel themselves more of a piece, more certain of what it is that God really asks of them and what it is that Judaism provides them.

This last week I gave the Confirmation examination to this year's Confirmation class. Many of them did quite well. Some, of course, didn't do so well; but what interested me is that among those who knew all the answers there are a number whom I am certain have not the faintest idea of what Judaism is all about. They can answer all my questions. They can describe a Jewish wedding or identify Moses Maimonides; but they don't know what it means to participate in, to be part of, a meaningful Jewish enterprise.

I speak of involvement this morning not only because of the intrinsic importance of this message but because this lovely service has been presented to us by the High School and Youth Group of our Temple, young people who have learned not simply to answer my questions but to experience the joys and challenge of participation. They continue to be active because they have recognized that their lives have been enhanced in this process. Judaism has ceased to be a label; it has begun to come alive.

I hope and pray that over the years all of us will get over our habit of dealing with Judaism as if it is a set of disembodied ideas. Judaism has ideas, but you know, when we look back upon our homes it's not so much what your parents said, but the context of the life they created for us that shaped us and gave us the values which we cherish. What is true of our home is equally true of our spiritual home. It's not how well I can explain to you the Jewish idea about this or that, but how effectively you root Judaism in your soul.

Judaism offers us an encouraging spiritual world, an ennobling vision, a demanding ethic, and a time tested structure. All of us are confused by the multiplicity of options. There are so many opportunities, so many demands on our time, that we often feel we are on a treadmill, running to exhaustion without ever getting "there." Fortunately, Judaism has a schedule, form and structure: the Sabbath, the Holidays, a way of being born, growing up, marrying, yes, and dying. From time to time Judaism slows us down and says, 'hey, stop thinking about your anxieties, think about the grandeur and glory of life, think about God.' The Jewish way offers us a structure which keeps us from becoming mad in a mad world, and our world is, to a very degree, running away from us, running away with us.

I give you Judaism because I would share sanity with you. I give you Judaism because I would share the sacred with you.

Daniel Jeremy Silver



THE MAIN EVENT

"How Lovely Are Thy Tabernacles"
Book of Numbers, Chapter 24, Verse 5

It's been a long time since the good old days of Mr. & Mrs. Club shows. This year, on November 3rd, as part of The Main Event weekend there will be a brand new musical.

Judy Friedman and Lee Rubinstein have written a script and will direct the show. This is a call for all of you who love the footlights and greasepaint; who can sing, dance, paint scenery, and construct props.

Come to the Temple Branch on Monday evening July 9th at 7:30. Judy and Lee will read the script. Jean Kleinman will play the tunes. Vivienne Krupkin is going to choreograph. The following Temple members have agreed to create the costumes: Shirley Friedland, Valerie Weitz, Pearl Rolf, Bea Gray, Janet Linder, Bea Immerman, Lois Rothschild, and Harriet Roth.

Join us on Monday, July 9 at The Branch at 7:30 p.m. If you have any questions, please call Faith Becker at The Branch office 831-3233.

TEMPLE NEWS

Cleveland, Ohio
August 19, 1984



From The Rabbi's Desk:

The summer is somewhat relaxed. With fewer meetings there is time to go through the pile of off prints which colleagues and friends have sent me during the busy season. The Jewish Studies fraternity publishes in a wide variety of journals and this exchange is one way we keep in touch.

As you can imagine, the articles cover almost every imaginable field. An essay on "The Quest for Spirituality in the Sixteenth Century" lies on top of "Glyptic Metaphors in the Biblical World." The titles often seem daunting, but each has its particular interest. The Glyptic Metaphor piece is by an old friend, William Hallo, Professor of Assyriology at Yale. You may remember his lectures last March when he was here for our Scholar's Weekend. Hallo's article is a study of the inscribed seals which were used as signatures in the ancient world. A glyph, incidentally, is an inscription or scene, designed to convey specific meaning, carved in low relief.

In Assyria, Babylonia and ancient Palestine literacy was a rare accomplishment. Merchants and noblemen signed documents by stamping them with an inscribed seal made out of a

hard, usually semi-precious, stone. Such seals were small and were usually carried about during a day's work. Inevitably, some were misplaced or stolen. The ancients faced a problem with which many of us are familiar when we lose our Visa or Mastercharge card. Once we notify the company of the loss, we are no longer responsible for any use of the card. To accomplish the same purpose, a Babylonian merchant hired the local town crier and from the time this professional broadcast news of the loss about town, the owner was no longer liable for any costs incurred through unauthorized use of his seal. There is little new under the sun.

The metaphor which particularly interested Hallo appears in a famous line in the Song of Songs: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, like the seal upon your hand; For love is fierce as death, passion is mighty as the grave." Commentators have long puzzled the implied relationship between a seal, love and the grave. Unfortunately, it turns out that the relationship between a seal and love is not quite as romantic as we might like. Only men of wealth could afford or had reason to use a seal. The seal established their worth,

and it turns out that they were quite as prepared, as many today, to equate substance with significance. Somehow, wealth was proof of their worth as human beings. The poet tells his beloved that she is as dear and close to him as his seal, as his money.

Why does the poet relate the seal, love and death, and why did he choose such adjectives as 'fierce' and 'mighty' to indicate that relationship? Apparently, he suggests that passion can be fatal. Archeologists have discovered that a number of the larger seals had a hole drilled vertically through them. The purpose of this hole was to make it possible for a pin to be inserted which would hold the seal to the owner's garment. Such pins could be sharpened to the point where they could be used as weapons. Courtiers had to come before the ruler unarmed; and a number of assassinations were successfully carried off by pulling out the long, sharpened pin from one seal and plunging it into the target's heart.

Summer reading leads down strange byways, but that's its pleasure.

Daniel Jeremy Silver



September 2, 1984
Vol. LXXI, No. 1

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK:

It hardly seems possible that another summer has run its course. Cleveland's winters plod along and our summers race by; but, like it or not, September's here and our lives will slip into an autumnal and more scheduled mold.

During the summer we tend to let the world go on its own. The weekly news magazine sits unread on a table next to a favorite chair. Our thoughts go to the Olympics or our garden rather than to the Presidential election or Nicaragua. But after Labor Day we let in the "real" world and our anxiety level rises sharply. There is so much to worry about: the arms race, the population bomb, Third World debts, international terrorism, and the ugly, unceasing elbowing of pugnacious nations and ideologies. Nor are all the problems out there: family ties are stretched thin; the streets are not safe; and pressures of all kinds play havoc with our peace of mind.

When an electrical system overloads, the fuse blows and the system is automatically turned off. Our emotional system has its own built-in fuse box. When we are pressured beyond tolerable limits, the mind closes out life's complexities and reaches for simple reassurance. Troubled times are always believing times. Need leads many to the belief that a book, a guru, or ideology has all the answers. No wonder the secular city is full of evangelists and enthusiasts. Faith provides balance and serenity, but sometimes the cost is high. Some religions offer comfort only to those who are willing to subscribe blindly. Some faith communities pull their people away from family and friends.

Some condemn all ideas but their own. A wise and life-enhancing tradition can keep us going, remind us of the basic values, and sensitize us to the needs of others; but not all faiths are life-enhancing.

In these tense and confusing times, religious issues increasingly affect not only our personal but our political lives. The anti-abortion lobby draws its crusading zeal from certain medieval faith structures. People convince themselves that if the public schools are allowed to begin each day with a prayers, they will be able to shape up the moral fibre of America's youth.

Religions are not, as some seem to believe, unmixed blessings. Every religion declares sacred some cluster of values, but declaring those values sacred does not guarantee that they are beneficial. Religious values may be xenophobic or racist or obscurantist as well as life-enhancing.

Unfortunately, many politicians have discovered that sponsoring religion pleases many potential voters. The Congress last July hastily passed an Equal Access Bill which provides that religious groups have the right to meet in public school buildings. The bill was designed to appeal to groups of "pro-religion" voters, but the communities will soon discover that groups like the Moonies, the Klan and missionary cults of all types will demand meeting space as well as mainstream churches and synagogues.

Over the upcoming Holiday season the wise, seasoned and ennobling traditions of our faith will again re-

mind us of the high road. I hope we will make full use of this opportunity, we need vision; but I also hope that we will take time to reflect on the political consequences of the religious revival and on how to make clear to those who vote for us that many of us who value faith do not require or want their heavy-handed support.

Daniel Jeremy Silver



SELIHOT SERVICES

Coffee and social hour at 9:00 p.m. hosted by The TMC

Services at 10:00 p.m. at The Branch
Saturday, September 22, 1984

From the Rabbi's Desk:

The Main Event is on everyone's mind. Preparations are extensive, exciting and, for some, exhausting. We have been reminded about the place of The Temple in our lives and I've done a bit of research about what the Building Committee of that day had in mind. After all, they not only built magnificently but according to a specific agenda.

Their plan called for what was then called a synagogue-center. The new building would include not only a sanctuary and a school, but rooms for all kinds of Jewish cultural and social activity, even sport. The Social Hall, then called Mahler Hall, had a stage and a skylight. It was to be a theater and a basketball court. If you use the back stairs from the office floor to the Social Hall, you pass a door which opens into what was the men's locker room. We use it now for the files of the Abba Hillel Silver Archives, but the stall showers are still in place. The original architectural plans indicate that the Museum space

was designed as a swimming pool. The pool was never built because the committee had to scale down its plans because of rising costs. This space remained unfurnished until the late 1940's when it was turned into the present exhibit area.

The Social Hall's skylight and stage disappeared in the early 1950's when a school and library wing was added to the main building and a general refurbishing took place, but the Temple-center concept had long since been abandoned. In 1929, just five years after The Temple building was opened, the Board reviewed the experience and decided that the center program had not delivered the benefits they had expected. Much effort and money had been expended on activities which had not added to the congregation's strength. Many came only for recreation. Some events were of questionable taste. Center-type programs took up so much of the time of the professional that they were not able to devote sufficient

attention to the congregation's major needs. There was also a feeling that card playing and sports somehow diminished peoples' sense of The Temple as a sacred place.

The Board decided to limit The Temple agenda to what it considered a congregation's primary functions: worship, education, and serious culture. At first, these limits were rather rigidly enforced, but in time a new balance developed. Card playing and the sports program disappeared completely, but the Mr. and Mrs. Club began to do theater, and the affiliates sponsored a host of social and community events. The congregational agenda necessarily changes with the times which is why each year brings new events and a new look. On the occasion of the Main Temple's sixtieth anniversary it's useful to look ahead even as we look back.

Daniel Jeremy Silcer



OUR NEW LIBRARIAN

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Claudia Z. Fechter as Librarian of The Temple. Claudia brings to us a great deal of experience. She has been, and is currently, Librarian-Archivist at the Jewish Community Center and Sunday Librarian at Suburban Temple. Claudia will be working in our library two days a week and on Saturday she will be at the Branch to assist with the Sabbath School.

Claudia received her under-graduate degree from Case Western Reserve University and a Masters of Arts in Political Science from Columbia. We are pleased to welcome her to The Temple family and look forward to many years of close association.



October 14, 1984
Vol. LXXI, No. 4

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK:

The preparation of the service with which we will celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the dedication of the Main Temple was an interesting exercise. We wanted to blend what was, what has been and what is yet to be. Fortunately, in 1924 the congregation printed an Order of Service which listed the readings which were used, the music the choir sang, and those who participated in the service. The morning's high point came when the Torah scrolls were brought into the sanctuary for the first time, opened, read and placed in the Ark. This is a traditional act of consecration, but since ours is to be a service which celebrates continuity rather than a beginning, it would be inappropriate for us to reproduce it.

We will, however, use the same prayer book which was used in 1924. The choir will sing two hymns which were heard that morning. Finally, I have interspersed into the liturgy several readings taken from the sermon which Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver delivered on that occasion. You will find, as I did, that his thoughts about the purpose of the synagogue remain as appropriate today as they were then.

The years from then till now will be evoked by a dramatic reading taken from the sermons of the last sixty years. A large team has been burrow-

ing into Dr. Silver's files and mine, taken a paragraph from here and there, and prepared a fascinating review of the major events of these decades and our judgments on those events. They have interspersed these readings with recollections of the role The Temple played in our community and of the services we offered our country and the Jewish people.

The service will begin with a procession of sixty men and women who have been responsible for the guidance of the congregation over the past six decades. Each will light a torch on the pulpit. They represent all of us who have worked to see that our children were Jewishly educated, we were

responsive to the needs of the Jewish people, worship was carried on in the spirit of the sacred, that the literature and culture of our people had a central place in this place and that we remain a family who shared common hopes, concerns and close feelings.

Worship, by its very nature, looks to the future and I will briefly suggest what I think are the concerns which we must address. I only pray that we will be as successful over the next decades as those who built so well were in their time.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

October 21, 1984
10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

RELIGION AND POLITICS

October 28, 1984
10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

THE ELECTION

Friday Evening Service — 5:30- 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service — 9:00 a.m. — The Branch

Rabbi Silver's High Holiday Sermons

ROSH HASHANAH

The Bible provides few details about the original observance of Rosh Hashanah. The Torah informs us simply that this day was a *Shabbaton*, "a day of solemn rest," a *Mikra Kodesh*, "a sacred assembly," and a *Yom Teruah*, sometimes *Zikaron Teruah*, phrases which are usually translated as "a day on which the shofar is sounded." We can coax a bit more about the observance of Rosh Hashanah by translating this latter phrase literally: *Yom Teruah*, 'a day on which the *Teruah* call is sounded.' The *Teruah*, the first of the four shofar calls in our present service, consists of a single note, repeated several times at short intervals. The *Teruah* was the tocsin, the alarm call, of ancient Israel. When an enemy approached or fire broke out, the *Teruah* was sounded to mobilize the community.

Why an alarm on Rosh Hashanah? Obviously, our ancestors believed that there was some present danger. Wherein lay that danger? Obviously, it lay in the new year itself. If the danger lay in the new year, what good would it do to sound an alarm? There is nothing humans can do to guarantee that the new year will be an auspicious one.

But God can. We tend to look on ceremony as providing a colorful background for meditation and prayer, and as a means of calling to mind important ideas which ought to occupy our attention. The ancients thought much the same, but also looked on ritual instrumentally. They believed that properly managed ritual had an effect on the actions of the gods or God. A common ritual form involved suggesting, by means of drama, what it was you wanted the god to do for you. If there was drought in the land, the priest would pour a water libation at the foot of the altar, in this way suggesting that the gods open the heavens so the reviving rains might fall. When a community faced danger it sounded an alarm to mobilize its resources against whatever the danger might be. It was only natural to sound the *Teruah* in the shrine to encourage God to protect the community from some danger.

What did they fear about the new year? The new year's newness. As humans we instinctively prefer the known to the unknown. We would rather not sail in uncharted waters. To be human is to have an active, sometimes overactive, imagination, and though we often imagine the good things that could happen, more often than not our imaginations focus on the dangers which presumably lurk in the shadows. I suspect that is why so many of the epics present the story of a hero embarked on a dangerous journey during which he faces and overcomes a series of dangers, dangers which personify people's fears of the future.

Then, too, the ancients believed that each year had a distinct personality. The past year might not have been the best of times, but at least they had survived. Who knew how bitter a year the new year might be? It was only prudent on Rosh Hashanah to summon God to shield them from the dangers which awaited them.

If an anthropologist were to describe the original observance of Rosh Hashanah, he would label it as an act of sympathetic magic, an attempt through ritual to manipulate God to the advantage of the worshipper. The limitations of this service were early recognized and by post-exilic times Rosh Hashanah has been reshaped from *Yom Teruah*, 'a day of the alarm' into *Yom ha-din*, 'a day of judgement.' You know the image. On the New Year's Day each of us, in turn, is brought before the Heavenly Court. God sits as Judge. A secretary reads from a register which lists our deeds. This completed, God renders a judgement based on our record. The original Rosh Hashanah assumed that the future was entirely up to God; the new Rosh Hashanah was based on the idea that our future well-being depends, at least in part, on our actions and the emphasis on self-examination in the service suggests how we can improve our chances. Born in magic, Rosh Hashanah matured into a demanding spiritual and ethical exercise.

To be sure, there is no guarantee that if we are good and disciplined, work hard and are honorable, everything will work out the way we would want it to. The world is not a classroom. There is always the unexpected. The times have a great deal to do with well-being. But, surely, this is true. When we are intransigent or arrogant or petty we trample on and can destroy the feelings which hold firm those intimate relationships which provide serenity and emotional security. And it's equally true that greed or naked ambition or dishonesty gain for us the kind of reputation which will keep us from gaining the respect of those whose respect is worth having.

Rosh Hashanah developed a new shape, but being human our fathers didn't completely set aside all attempts to influence God. If you happen to go home tonight and pick up the Talmud for a bit of casual reading, you might discover in a section known as *Horayot* a recommendation that we eat pumpkin seeds and dates during Rosh Hashanah. Why should we eat pumpkin seeds and dates? Because these fruits grow in great profusion and are a sign of prosperity. If you read the text carefully, you will notice that this advice seems to be followed by a pregnant pause, as if students were silently reproving their master, 'You're talking superstition.' The master senses their reproof but holds his ground: "There are those who say that it doesn't hurt to give some credit to omens." Tonight at our table we sliced an apple and dipped the pieces in honey. Why? That the year might be a sweet year and a good year for us. Of course, none of us believes that God is suggestible, but it can't do anyone any harm to dip the apples in honey. If God's not suggestible, at least the apples were delicious.

Over time, the observance of Rosh Hashanah has changed and the Jew who observes Rosh Hashanah has changed. At different times in our lives we bring different moods to the holiday. Sometimes we're exalted; the world seems to be opening up to us. Sometimes we're burdened by a thousand worries. We're surrounded by illness, age, pressing problems which seem to have no solution. From year to year our mood changes, but it's also true that over the ages the collective spirit of the Jew has changed in significant ways and since what we bring is what we take away, Rosh Hashanah's impact has changed and changed again.

In the early 19th century the German philosopher, Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, put forward the thesis that in every age there is a distinct cultural environment which shapes people's responses to the elemental questions: how they organize their communities; in what they have faith and what they declare to be right and proper. Hegel was arguing against thinkers who insisted that human nature is a constant and that all people react similarly to stress or challenge. To be sure, there is an elemental human endowment, but Hegel was certainly right in insisting that people respond to the opportunities and pressures of their time in ways which clearly reflect the conditioning of their culture. Culture determines what we believe to be right and what we believe to be wrong; what we believe to be appropriate and what seems to us inappropriate; what we declare good and what sinful.

I would suggest that Jews have approached Rosh Hashanah conditioned by one or three successive cultures.

The first and original attitude, and the longest lived, began in Biblical times and exists even today wherever rabbinic Judaism still holds sway. This attitude can be characterized by a phrase from the Psalms which was included in our service this evening: "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." Our Fathers did not believe that the coming year would be much different from the year that had just ended. They lived on the margin of subsistence and their communities survived on a fragile sufferance. Their lives were brief. Their passage through life was bruising. They had no reason to believe that the new year would be fundamentally different from the past year. They taught their children: "Be not too eager about tomorrow, for you do not know what the day may bring."

Without hope, the spirit shrivels. A hopeless people loses its natural energy and does not long survive. Something must have given our fathers reason to stay steady, accept the blows of life and continue to struggle to build societies where decency reigned. If they had few expectations for the next year, they had an unshakable faith in the End of Days. There would come a time when God would redeem the world, when the forces of evil would be undone, Israel would be released from exile and peace would reign on earth. "And it shall come to pass." When? "In the end of days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the top of the mountains... (Then) they shall beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks, nations shall not make war against nation, nor shall they learn war any more." They were sustained by their faith in God the Redeemer.

About two hundred years ago, as numbers of Jews began to leave the ghetto and the shtetl, a different sense of the future began to take over in the Jewish soul. Next year would be different. The new Jew began to sense change and possibility. His life was markedly different, usually better; and, as it happened, he entered Europe at a time when Europe, itself, was experiencing an upsurge of optimism. The first substantial effects of the Industrial Revolution were beginning to be felt. Men were creating machines which could harness the powers of nature. For the first time there was reason to believe that mankind could be freed from the burden of back-breaking, mind-dulling work. Life had been brief, but medicine began to master the skills which prolong life. Those who were privileged did not have to fight as hard to maintain a graceful standard of living and people began to believe that everyone would soon enjoy the benefits and concomitant freedoms of the brave new world. Tomorrow was bright. The day after tomorrow would be brighter.

The early Jews had said: "in the end of time, God will." The new Jew began to say: "in our time, we will." The old Jews had spoken of man as a partner with God in the work of creation. The new Jew began to think of man as the senior partner in that arrangement. Through the work of our hands and through the ability of our minds, through our science and our research, we will create a new world. The familiar messianic hope was dismissed as a form of self-delusion. They understood that people need hope, but now the old illusion could safely be set aside. It was an exalted time, a happy time, and a remarkably short-lived time.

The happy time ended for us at Auschwitz when we recognized that if man be God, God is a devil God. It ended for us at Hiroshima when we recognized that the science for which we had such high expectations could be the agent of our destruction. Our grandfathers had looked on science as a saviour, we began to think of science as the Sorcerers' Apprentice, as much a curse as a blessing. Our fathers looked at tomorrow as a bright, new day. For us tomorrow is the day after, the nightmare image of a lifeless world.

Our situation is paradoxical. In many ways science made good on its promise. Even those of us who have the least are comfortable to a degree other generations would find hard to credit. More people live at a level of decency today than the entire population of the world a century ago. But we live under nuclear threat. We live under the shadow of cancerous pollution. We fear our own numbers. We live longer and take longer to die.

How have we responded to our situation? Some have become desperate. Some of the more sensitive among us are transfixed by the idea that there may only be a few years for mankind to change course before the world blows itself to bits. Doomsday is near. By 1990 or the year 2000 someone will press the button or the bomb will go off because of a mechanical malfunction of its computer control system. Their advice is born of fear and desperation. The nation-state must be scrapped by 1990. All armaments must be eliminated by 1990. Those in power must be
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replaced by more sensitive leaders. Tomorrow may be too late. Unfortunately, their advice, however well-intentioned, is futile advice. The human being is a creature of habit. Society cannot be unwrapped and put together in radically new ways overnight. We are two centuries into the Industrial Revolution and the world is still full of peoples fighting to keep the old ways rather than to adapt.

The problem with apocalyptic thought is that it asks the impossible, and the impossible is just that. Desperate plans are bound to fail and failure only compounds the level of frustration. Desperate people are prone to actions which are not only self-defeating but which can trigger the very disaster they fear. Look about our world. Look at the many heroes of liberation who freed their country from colonialism and then sought to restructure its social order. They planned and cajoled; they organized, but most of their people held on to old ways. Others disagreed with their plans. Little happened as they hoped. Frustrated and determined, these powerful men were not to be gainsaid and so turned to force to realize their dream. The politics of impatience led to the politics of tyranny. I sometimes have a nightmare in which some of those who are most desperate about the elimination of nuclear weapons attempt nuclear blackmail to achieve their goal. Some have become desperate. Others find themselves sunk into a pervasive fatigue.

Some weeks ago I spoke to a group about the elections that were taking place in Israel. During the question and answer period which followed the talk, one man got up. He was strong and tanned. "There seems to be no end to it. The old problems don't disappear. New problems appear all the time. The Arabs and their hate. The occupation of the Lebanon. The settlements in the West Bank. Runaway inflation. An impossible balance of trade. Bitter religious divisions. When will it end?" He ended by saying, "I'm tired!" Now, this man lives in Cleveland. Neither he nor his sons must muster periodically to defend the security of Israel. He enjoys an American standard of living. He does not face the economic stringencies of Israel. But he's tired.

As we spoke before these holidays, I heard some of you say, "I'm just not in the mood for the holiday." I think you were saying: 'I'm too tired to think about the future, about all those problems.' Many of us are exhibiting symptoms of psychic fatigue. We turn off the news. When someone begins to talk seriously about the problems of the day, we divert the conversation to a lighter subject. We read the light and trivial rather than the serious. We no longer volunteer. Why? There seem to be no solutions. Many of our problems are so incredibly complex that we have difficulty wrapping our minds around them. It's easier to think of other things. We know that we ought to be doing something to improve the economies of the poor countries, but if we give them money to establish industries, these industries inevitably will draw heavily on the world's limited resources, pollute the environment and compete with our interests. To be successful, they must outproduce and undersell our factories. If and when they do, our gift increases our economic problems. There are no neat solutions to most of our problems, only tradeoffs.

Europe began to suffer psychic fatigue after the first World War, that most tragic and pointless bloodletting of the century. Overwhelmed by a sense of futility, reason had not been able to prevent war, many of Europe's best and brightest opted out of politics. They would answer anyone who tried to interest them in some civic undertaking: 'I'm not political.' They were determined to work at their profession, to teach their classes, to write their books, to do what they did best, without being involved in the thankless business of politics. And because many of the best and brightest in Germany were not political, the worst in Germany were came into power.

On this side of the Atlantic we are not given to such public pronouncements about our attitudes, but judged by our actions many of us might as well be saying, "I'm not political." What we do say is: 'I do my thing,' 'I work hard at my profession,' 'I care for my family'. We say 'I'm too busy'

when we are asked to help. We've developed a perfect rationalization. 'There are 4 billion earthlings. I am only one. What difference can I make?' We forget the one truth no one should ever forget: the decision to do nothing is also a political decision. If you are inactive, someone else will be active, and that someone may not have your values.

Some of us are desperate. Some of us are lethargic. All of us face a crisis of faith. Our fathers destroyed for us the hope that in the End of Days God would make the world right. The Holocaust destroyed their substitute hope that science would make all things right. We lack confidence in the future. We need hope, but in what can we hope?

In an age where hopes are not widely shared, I obviously can't draw upon some shared wisdom. What I can do tonight is to speak to you personally of the sources of my hopes. As you know, I am not confident that we will avoid disaster. No one can guarantee a happy ending, but I am convinced that it is possible to lead an active, effective and responsible life, to have the energy hope releases, even in this most anxious of times.

I find my encouragement right here, tonight, in a service such as this, in a congregation such as this. Why are you here? Some of you came because of family. Some of you came because of tradition. Some of you came out of a sense of fellowship with our people, some out of a sense of guilt. But I suspect that deep down each and everyone of us is here because we have felt the tug of a spirit deep within reaching out to touch the sacred. Something within us keeps insisting that there is more to life than getting and demanding and achieving. This holy day service, this sanctuary, these teachings, symbolize to us the sacred, and the sacred is compelling. We are here because our spirit seeks the presence of the holy. We may not be able to put what we feel into words. We may be more than a little confused about what we really believe about God, but deep down we recognize that we share mankind's silent but powerful thrust to create civilization. We've come here because we want to grow, to be encouraged, to be reminded, and this observance somehow encourages us in that effort. No one knows quite how. It's a matter of feeling and faith which goes beyond words – the spirit within reaches out to touch the spirit of the day. They meet. We are encouraged.

There is something within each of us which cries out for a better world, a better life, something which compels us to do what we can toward that end. Some call it humanity. Some call it the divinity within. It matters not what we call it. What matters is that we are here because we are not satisfied with life as it is. We are uncomfortable in our comfort. We want something better for ourselves and for our world. Being here reminds us that others share our feelings. They are elementary human – almost everyone shares such hopes and needs, and most are trying to respond – that willingness is the source of much of my hope.

We are here today and so are all the congregations that have been here before us. Our service is a compilation of the wisdom of generations. With us here are centuries of courage, concern and hope. We sense the generations and the challenges they faced. We sense their courage and it commands ours. They persevered and so can we. They were not all saints, but they tried and they did not completely fail. This moment represents the truth that civilization can triumph over the chaos of the times.

When the rabbis were asked: 'where is God?' they answered, 'God is wherever you let Him in.' Let God in. Let this service speak to you. And, I would add, let God out. Let your feelings find a satisfying expression. Admit to yourself that you do care. Accept and rejoice in those elemental feelings which are your human inheritance.

Why do we have problems letting God out? In part because we're afraid that if we listened to the still small voice others might call us romantic idealists – do-gooders. Yet, isn't doing good precisely what we ought to be about?

Honesty compels us to say that there is no guarantee, none whatsoever, that the bombs will not fall or that the population explosion will not be as deadly as a nuclear war. But

honesty also compels us to say: we are not doomed. The worst is not inevitable, provided – we allow the hope within to express itself – do what we can and more for others – love openly and care deeply – offer ourselves in service – live for values which transcend personal gain.

The rabbis said that when we come to the heavenly gates the guardian angel will not ask us, 'were you Moses,' but 'were you Daniel Silver,' 'were you yourself.' 'Did you do what was in your power to do?' We're not asked to be the liberator of our people. That's given to few. We're not asked to bring down a new Torah. We're asked to do what we do best, provided what we do is for the common good: to teach, to heal, to raise children, to encourage them, to love them so that they will become thoughtful and caring adults. In measure as we love and as we care and as we share and as we work with the institutions of support in our community, in measure as we offer ourselves to the common good, we represent the hope of our world.

YOM KIPPUR

The year was 1939. Europe was about to go up in flames, and the Jews of Europe were about to be consigned to the flames.

In Palestine the Yishuv was struggling valiantly to maintain itself. The *Halutzim* were working day in and day out, draining the swamps, clearing the fields and building the cities, while night in and night out they patrolled the perimeters of their settlements to protect them from attack. What time they had left was spent overcoming the studied difficulties which the British put in their way.

It was during these difficult months just before the second World War that the future Nobel Laureate, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, published a short story which he called *Mi-Dirah Le-Dirah*, which might be translated 'From Apartment to Apartment' or 'From Lodging to Lodging.' In this story Agnon raised the question, where can a human being find the serenity, the peace of mind, the calm, which is suggested when we speak of home.

The narrator in this story is a middle-aged man who lives in Jerusalem. He suffers from a lingering illness and consequent weakness and fatigue. His doctor doesn't really know what to prescribe, so he suggests a change of scenery. The narrator agrees, but makes a strange choice of place. He goes to the coast, but instead of taking a room in a rest house on the beach he rents a small, rather dingy apartment in the busiest, most crowded quarter of Tel Aviv, behind the bus station. It is a noisy place. Bus engines can be heard day and night as well as the sounds of people crowding to get on the vehicles.

To complete the scene, there's a small child in the house, a little boy, rather unappealing, son of the landlady. She is away all day at some work and he crawls about after the narrator, whining, reaching up with his arms, wanting to be picked up and be played with. This is hardly an ideal place for rest and recuperation.

Friends come to visit. They are understandably appalled at the situation, and without telling the narrator, they make a reservation for him in a guest house on a *kibbutz* some distance away. Armed with the reservation, they plead with him to go, and, finally he assents. He actually makes the journey to the guest house, it's everything that they told him it would be, but he finds he can't unpack. He keeps seeing the little tyke reaching up his arms, wanting to be picked up and be played with. He picks up his bags and returns to that apartment in Tel Aviv.

He finds the child crying. He picks him up and rocks him to sleep. Then he goes into his own room, stretches out on his bed and falls into the first, deep, refreshing sleep that he has known in a long, long time. "Sleep, gentle sleep, nature's soft nurse."

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What happens when you turn away, when you become a separate and an isolate, when you can no longer feel comfortable within those bedrock relationships which are the relationships that give stability and serenity to life? The spirit shrivels. The soul is diminished.

The Talmud contains an early vision of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Rip Van Winkle story. The protagonist of the Talmud's story is a rabbinic scholar, Honi, a character about whom many tall tales were told. Honi taught in an academy in a city in the Galilee. One day he decided to take a walk in the countryside. On his walk he came across an old man planting saplings. "What are you doing?" "Why do you ask?" "Because you're an old man, you'll never live to see these saplings become trees." God overheard this conversation and decided to teach Honi a lesson. Honi was put to sleep for seventy years. When God awakened him, Honi went back to his town and looked for his home. The home was no longer there. He asked passersby about his wife and his son. They had heard of people by that name, but they had died long since. He went to the lecture hall of the school which he had founded and announced himself to the porter. The porter laughed in his face and closed the door. Honi turned to God and prayed for death.

After the storyteller finished his tale, a well-known Babylonian rabbi, Rabbah, commented in the Eastern Aramaic of his day, *O Hevrulei, O Miytatei* "either community or death" — either intimacy or death. The isolate is one of the living dead. Perhaps that is too strong a statement, but how many of those who have separated themselves from all others have found happiness? How many of those for whom independence is the ultimate virtue lead fulfilled lives? Comfort, they have. Happiness, they do not have. When I look at the statistics of nervous breakdowns, of addiction, of divorce, of family breakup, at every one of the indices of disintegration, I am reminded that separation is not the way to happiness. Why? Because only as you turn to others is your life in any meaningful way fulfilled. When the narrator picked up the child and the child went to sleep in his arms, he was able finally to sleep the refreshing sleep that gives strength.

Yom Kippur speaks of repentance. Repentance is a theme shared by most of the religions of mankind. Everyone has experienced the pangs of conscience, guilt. People want to be at one again with their God. But note that alone among the great religions of the world, Judaism never encouraged people to make ceremonial repentance a full-time undertaking. Medieval histories describe bands of Christian penitents who crawled on their knees from shrine to shrine with a beggar's bowl in their hands, sometimes asking people to beat them on their backs. Their life was a lifelong ritual of penitence. Medieval Islam knew groups very much like these. That is not the Jewish way. Our way is to concentrate on *Teshuvah* and to do so on this one day. The rest of the year we concentrate on love, care and comfort, healing, help, support and encouragement, the consequences of *Teshuvah*. We repent and then return to our families and the work of redemption.

Think of yourselves as the narrator in Agnon's story. Your choice is his choice: to turn to the green places, the adult playgrounds of our world or to turn to the city, to the work of redemption. Will you choose the life of an isolate or to live in and among the human family, a life of comfort or the life of contact? People are cantankerous, restless, difficult, demanding. To live with and among is not easy. Involvement will limit your privacy and intrude on your schedule. But to turn to people is the only way known to stay human.

My message this Yom Kippur is a simple one. Turn back. Instead of distance, closeness; instead of indifference, love; instead of alienation, God.

MEMORIAL

When I first began in the rabbinate, death was a subject which most people kept at arm's length. Death was discussed, if at all, in the language of evasion: a friend had "passed on" or "gone ahead." Children were rarely taken to funerals or to visit the dying. When I introduced a unit on death and the customs which surround death into the Confirmation curriculum, a few anxious parents worried aloud that such sessions would give their children nightmares.

The truth, of course, is that the best way to guarantee that a child will have nightmares is to treat death and dying with unnecessary anxiety. The child whose questions go unanswered will conjure up all manner of unreal images. When they are kept from the funeral what can they conclude but that it must be a terrible experience. Evasion always stimulates the darker sides of our imagination. Honesty defuses fears. Discussing death with me they will get time-tested and honest answers to their questions. Allowed to attend the funeral they will be with those they love and hear good words about someone they loved.

Over the years I've tried to understand this need to evade. Obviously, parents felt they were protecting their child. But from what? What became clear was that this pattern of evasion was a relatively new phenomenon. Our ancestors treated death as a natural fact of life just as the leaves fall each autumn so that there is a place for the spring buds. Death took place at home. The family prepared the body. The whole community accompanied the body to its grave. Children were not warned off or walled away.

Believing as they did in the one and only God, our fathers spoke of death as part of God's creative design and dealt with death as an ordinary fact of life. There was only one God. Death was an elemental and essential part of His creative wisdom. "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the Heavens, a time to be born and time to die." The Bible even suggests that the fact that we are conscious of our mortality is a blessing since it sharpens our appreciation of each day. Precisely because the days of our years are numbered and we know it, we treat them as precious moments which are not to be wasted.

How did it happen then that a generation forgot the wisdom of the tradition and began to handle death as a taboo subject? The answer, I believe, lies in the surge of optimism which accompanied the radical transformation of society as we entered the modern world.

The Industrial Revolution created a growing class of the better-off, pleased by their good fortune, who began to believe that it was only a matter of time before everyone enjoyed similar good fortune. Unfortunately, the benefits of progress were as yet unevenly distributed. There were still slums and wage slaves, and those who had become part of the new world didn't want their children's spirit roughened by contact with the cruelties of the past. It became their fixed purpose to create a protected world in which their wives and their young would be free of the evils of the past. Green lawns and iron gates would provide safe and graceful space. Careful courtesy and convention would protect them from offensive behavior and mean speech. Hospitals and old folks' homes took in the ill and the infirm, medicine would do away with sickness, and life expectancy was rapidly increasing. Children needn't face what they might never have to face. Children, particularly, would be protected. These parents invented the nursery. Children ate apart. They even screened the books children read. There would be plenty of time later on for the young to learn the hard lessons — and so storks brought babies and grandparents simply went away.

The pattern of evasion was pervasive in the "better classes" and its unfortunate consequences were everywhere to be seen. Innocence is no preparation for life. Many whose youth was by the standards of the time idyllic ultimately paid a terrible emotional price for this protection. The woman shielded from decision making, first by a father and then by her husband, was not prepared for the responsi-

bilities of widowhood. The young who had no experience with the opposite sex were ill equipped to choose a suitable mate or for marriage. Young parents who had never been allowed into a sick room could not cope with their feelings when they had to nurse a desperately ill child. When death struck, many were paralyzed by the unexpected rush of grief and the complex of feelings, not to speak of the new responsibilities which they faced.

Emerson was on the mark when he wrote, "I have heard that in horsemanship he is not a good rider who never was thrown, but, rather, that a man will never be a good rider until he is thrown." Through storms we grow. The Psalmist wisely praised God for his bruises as well as his blessings. "It was a good thing that I was bruised because it allowed me to understand the way of the world" (Ps. 119:71).

In recent years the euphemisms have been packed away. Children are no longer sent away during a family's moments of grief and sorrow. We have seen the folly of denying reality. Indeed, I sometimes feel some have abandoned these illusions with such speed and thoroughness that they may have gone too far in the other direction. It's one thing to be honest with the young about a natural fact of life such as death; quite another to make them endure the emotional storms which rage between parents who are not sure who they are, what they believe in, or whether they want to be together.

Our generation's reacceptance of the naturalness of death has been due not only to a new realism but to the emergence of a new anxiety. The ancients confronted death. We must confront both death and dying. Mankind has had centuries of experience dealing with death and most cultures have found ways to help people accept their mortality. Death remains unknown and unknowable, but we accept the fact that death is not pain but the cessation of pain, and that in death, as in life, we are with God. But if death is the cessation of pain, dying may involve the prolongation of pain. In death we are with God, but the prolonged process of dying places us under the control of others.

For the most part, death came to our ancestors swiftly, "like an arrow which strikes at noonday." Childbirth, the plague, the wounds of war, killed swiftly. There were few remedies. In our day death comes slowly. Penicillin now controls pneumonia, once the welcome friend of the aged. The fathers rarely knew if a disease was fatal. Our diagnostic techniques can pass a sentence of death on those who do not even recognize that they are ill. Today many must live with the knowledge that those they love are dying, that dying will be a long process, and that there is little they can do but love and care.

Our ancestors accepted death because it was natural—from God. Dying in our day of superior medical technology is unnatural, controlled by machines and medicines. The scientist recognizes the pain and anxiety which can accompany care, but insists, and understandably so, that the prolongation of dying is the necessary cost of medical progress; and that because of modern treatment many enjoy months, even years, of capacity they would have otherwise been denied. But for those whose incapacity is bitter and prolonged this is cold comfort. No one wants to be reduced to a mattress grave. The emotional burden is heavy and difficult to bear. The frustrations and anger are real. It is not surprising that for the first time in human history many fear dying far more than death, and that even those of us who believe life is ultimately sacred, seek to understand if there may not, in fact, be a right to die.

Whenever I visit with those whose life has lost much of its quality or those who care for someone burdened by multiple incapacities, I am reminded of a remarkably prescient story reported in the Talmud. This *aggadah* comes from an age when people were confident that the Angel of Death could not cross the barrier of prayer and so it became the custom to pray all night at the bedside of the critically ill. R. Joshua lay dying. His disciples had gathered in the room next door where they prayed unremittently for his recovery. Because of their vigil he could not die; the Angel of Death could not cross the barrier of their prayers. Yet, he was in pain and

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MEMORIAL (Continued)

helpless. Finally, a wise and loving housekeeper could stand it no longer. She went boldly into the prayer room and deliberately interrupted the disciples: 'For what are you praying? You are praying for his agony. He is with God. Let him be.' R. Joshua died and the Talmud praises this lady for her actions.

The *Yizkor* service is not the time to puzzle out the precise limits we should set on efforts to protract life after capacity has fled. Given the pace of medical research in our day, I doubt that any fully satisfactory formulation is now possible. But of this I am sure; there is a time to say 'enough.' 'Let God take over.'

Yizkor is a moment when we accept again God's wisdom. *Yizkor* is a personal moment. This service addresses those who grieve, not with logical arguments but with the poetry of faith. There are no explanations, but we can be encouraged. All about us are memories of those who have gone before. We will not be alone. Here we are reminded that death, like life, is ordained by God and that even in the

valley of shadows we are with God. *Yizkor* is a congregational moment. Whatever our grief, we have no reason to feel that we have been singled out or punished. Each of us is a mourner. Each of us is mortal. The answer to the question, 'why me,' is 'why not.' "There is a time to be born and a time to die, a time to laugh and a time to weep."

Yizkor summons us to share ourselves with others. Those who wall themselves away from friends and family when grief or illness strikes not only deny themselves valuable support but deny others a chance to express their humanity.

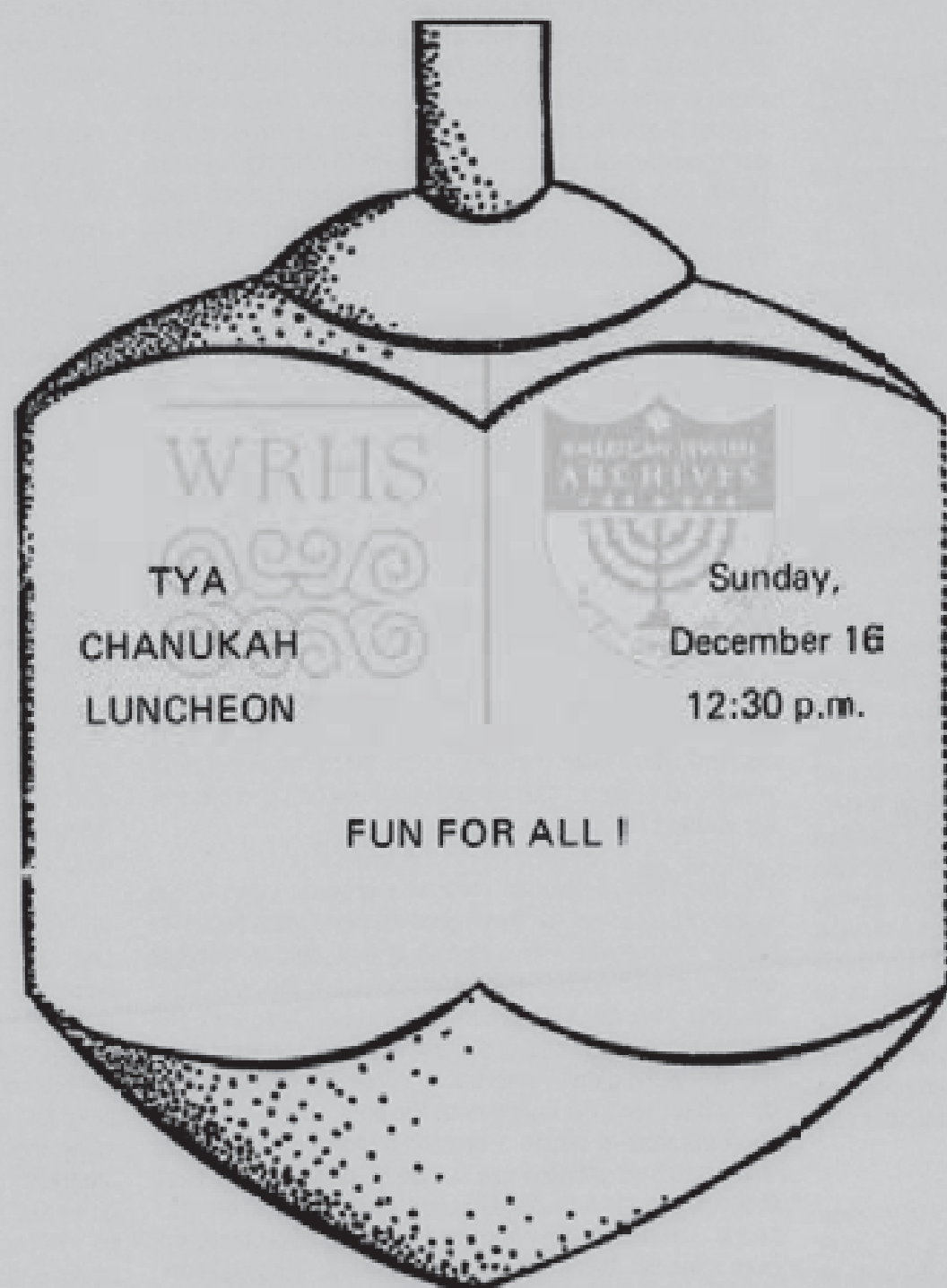
To live is to be challenged. During a service such as this we remember the many challenges faced by those we loved. Some were forced out of their native land. Some were born into mean surroundings. Some lost their parents when they were children. Some were not allowed to complete their education. Some lost a great love - a child. Some had no choice but to do unsatisfying work. Some were abused by callous employers. Some spent their last months wasting away. At times all of us must endure the force of the storms - depression, war, a fatal accident, an untrustworthy friend, illness, age. Those we remember now with greatest respect

are those who met their challenges steadily. Looking back on their lives, we recognize that they grew through their experience. Looking at our lives, we recognize the possibility of growth.

I have seen the over-protected wife discover her capacity in widowhood; grieving parents devote their lives to help stricken children; adolescents abandon their posturing and acting out when their maturity was required; and I have seen those who live with debilitating illness face the day with composed spirits and develop a wisdom which supported and encouraged others.

When you are deep wounded, remember
The blow strikes flame from the stone,
The stroke that Fate deals you may give you
A beauty you never had known.

The owl was called by the ancients the bird of wisdom because it can see best when it is dark. *Yizkor* reminds us of the spiritual heroism of which human beings are capable and that we, too, can see in the dark if we only use the eyes of faith.



SAVE THE DATE ! ! !

December 2, 1984
12:30 - 4:00 p.m.
The Temple Branch - All Purpose Room

This Mavo program is for all Bar/Bat Mitzvah candidates from December through the beginning of June. Meet at the Temple Branch for lunch and activities.

Third Friday

November 16, 1984

Services at 7:45 p.m.
The Branch Library

Join us for a warm, congregationally led worship service.



November 11, 1984
Vol. LXXI, No. 6

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK:

The Main Event was truly that — an exciting, inspiring, entertaining weekend which gave us a chance to reminisce, plan and draw closer together as The Temple family. Obviously, an event of this magnitude requires the volunteer efforts of many, but one person should be singled out for without her drive and indomitable will the Main Event could not have been the main event.

Ruth Dancyger accepted the chairmanship of this weekend nearly eighteen months ago. Since then, with the exception of a few weekends reserved for rest and rehabilitation with her family, Ruth has invested heart, soul and twenty-four hours a day toward making it a success. To guide and direct such a program is not an easy task. There must be a plan, and everybody has their own ideas. Monies must be raised, but someone else should make the phone calls. There was a play to be written and produced, a deadline to meet, but writers and actors have their own schedules. Even the Rabbi came up with his own ideas about this or that. Despite these currents and cross currents, Ruth steered the good ship Main Event on a steady course. I am sure that she was sometimes weary of everyone's good advice, but she never showed it. I know that there were times when others let her down, but she never stopped to complain and simply picked up and carried the ball herself. No task was too menial and no detail

was overlooked. I don't know how she did it, but I do know that all of us are deeply grateful and much indebted to her.

This was not the first time I have had the pleasure of working with Ruth. More years ago than either of us would like to count, I watched The Temple Women's Association thrive under her direction. I wouldn't dare raise the question of our next project with her just now, she deserves a rest, but I have a few ideas in the back of my mind and I hope when the time comes she will say yes.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

P.S. My High Holiday Sermons appear elsewhere in this bulletin.



RUTH DANCYGER

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

November 11, 1984
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

CLEVELAND —
WHAT'S WRONG

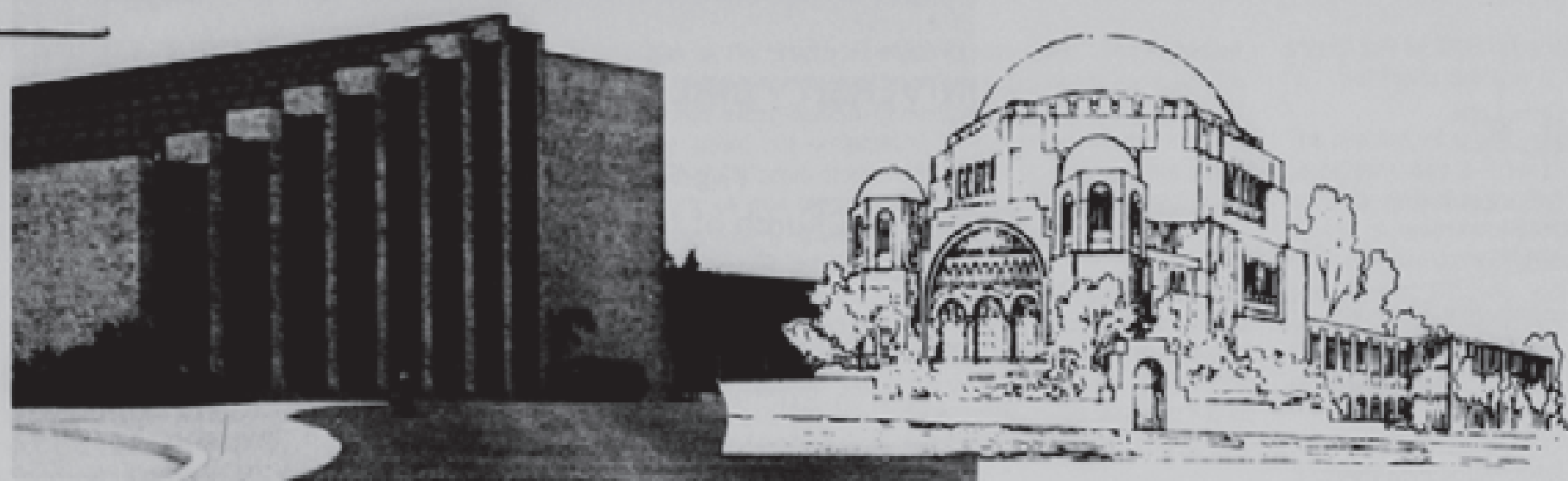
November 18, 1984
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

THE FALASHAS
ETHIOPIA AND ITS JEWS

Friday Evening Service — 5:30- 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service — 9:00 a.m. — The Branch



November 25, 1984
Vol. LXXI, No. 7

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

I have watched most of Abba Eban's T.V. series "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews" and I confess to a deep sense of disappointment. I had hoped that he would produce a stirring visual piece which would capture the creative spirit of Jewish life. What was produced instead is a rather lifeless picture of the passage of Jews through various places and cultures. This series fails to illumine the inner life, the spiritual dynamism and creative achievements of our people. There is a great deal about Jews moving here and there, back and forth, with bundles on their backs and little about the unique and special world they carried in their hearts.

One program, the fifth I believe, begins with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. We are shown a boat moving slowly across a moonlit sea. There is a good bit of arty photography in each of the nine sequences. Next we are shown sand dunes and told that Europe was closed to these refugees, so that they went East to the Turkish Empire which was more welcoming. Not a word about Isaac Abarbanel or other Spanish Jewish thinkers of his quality who lived through these terrible years, chose the way of exile, and yet found the strength to write philosophy; not a word about the elegies written during this period which became part of our liturgy or the martyrologies which tried to deal with the problem of suffering.

The next scene shows the city of Safed which in the sixteenth century became a center of Kabbalistic studies. Safed's mysticism suggests a classic

response to suffering and exclusion — transfer your impotence to God and become the agent of God's renewed power so that He can end Israel's dispersion. What is presented instead is a few disembodied lines about the philosophy of the mystic Isaac Luria, done against the background of a group of black-hatted men, watching a bonfire. An American viewer might be forgiven if he wondered if what was being shown was a witch's rick burning.

We Jews have built few grand monuments and so there are few as relics. The great empires who once dominated our people did and Abba Eban has given in to the temptation of lingering on these buildings and the cultures that produced them and, inevitably, minimizing and trivializing the Jewish Heritage. We gave as much as we borrowed, but the film does not make this clear, in part because it is

not easy to photograph the inner life of the Jew, his ideas, his way of sanctifying life; in part because this series was marketed as a program which would satisfy church groups and college survey councils by which will emphasizing what they already know and not sharply challenging any of their attitudes or assumptions. "Heritage: Civilization of the Jews" reminded me of the illustrated histories of the experience itself. Since I doubt published thirty or forty years ago and told you everything about the Jewish experience except the nature of the experience itself. Since I doubt that in the near future anyone will have the funds, and so the opportunity, to produce a truly meaningful film on the Jewish heritage, I doubly bemoan this lost opportunity.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

November 25, 1984

10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

RELIGION AND POLITICS
IN ISRAEL

December 2, 1984

10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

A BIBLE STORY

Friday Evening Service — 5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel

Sabbath Service — 9:00 a.m. — The Branch

Religious issues have played a surprisingly large role in this year's political debate, and the President must accept a large measure of responsibility for this fact. Many of his speeches have dealt with religious issues and because of his position he became something of a lightning rod which attracted many of the religious passions which are in the air.

The President chose his State of the Union message last January to lobby for three divisive religious issues: tuition tax credits for parents whose children are enrolled in private and parochial schools; a Constitutional Amendment which would permit prayer in the public schools; and legislation, possibly a Constitutional Amendment, to prohibit abortion.

A week later the President met with the National Association of Religious Broadcasters and took the occasion to develop his deep feelings on these issues.

My experience in the office I hold has only deepened a belief I've held for many years that within the covers of a single book (the Bible) are all the answers to all the problems that face us today — if only we'd read and believe.

People want a Constitutional Amendment making it unequivocally clear that our children can hold voluntary prayer in every public school across the land. If we could get God and discipline back into our schools maybe we could get drugs and violence out.

He closed with what is probably the most passionate religious profession ever given publicly by a sitting president:

If the Lord is our light, our strength, and our salvation, whom shall we fear, of whom shall we be afraid? No matter where we live, we have a promise that can make all the difference — a promise from Jesus to soothe our sorrows, heal our hearts and drive away our fears. He promised there will never be a dark night that does not end. Our weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. He promised if our hearts are pure, His love will be sure as sunlight. And by dying for us, Jesus showed how far our love should be ready to go: all the way. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Helping each other, believing in Him, we need never be afraid. We will be part of something far more powerful, enduring and good than all the forces here on Earth... We will be part of Paradise. May God keep you always and may you always keep God.

President Carter shared many of these beliefs, but he had the good sense not to make his talks to his Sunday School classes part of the public record.

Many who read this speech questioned the President's sincerity. 1984 was, after all, an election year. I am not one who does so, though I can understand the reasons for their suspicions. The President, after all, is a divorced man. He has revealed his income tax records, and his contributions to his church are, to be charitable, modest. No one would claim that he has a distinguished record of church attendance. But then, my experience tells me that with religious folk, profession tends to exceed performance.

I'm reminded of the member who told his minister that he was about to take a trip to the Middle East which would follow the route the children of Israel took from Egypt to the Promised Land. It was his plan to climb Mount Sinai and there speak out the Ten Commandments the way that Moses had done. His minister, I'm told, responded: 'Kevin, it would be better if you stayed home and kept the Ten Commandments.'

I do not doubt the President's sincerity nor do I doubt his simplicity when it comes to religious matters. He seems to be shocked whenever any religious person disagrees with

him on the proposals which he has made. The President, unfortunately, makes the common mistake of confusing his beliefs with religion in general, with religion with a small "r." He would not understand how a group of ministers in Cleveland could discuss his proposals and that not one of them, all men who worked for years in the vineyard, could agree with a single one of his proposals.

For some, the idea of prayer in the public schools violates the sanctity of prayer. They look on prayer as a special, sacred language. They understand that in the hands of teachers, prayer would become bland, lose all specific content and become platitudinous. This would, in their eyes, demean the importance of a form of expression they cherish.

Others are disturbed that the introduction of prayer into the public school violates the purpose of the public school. Our public schools were created to be common schools, places where children of different ethnic and religious backgrounds could come together and learn to share a common set of civic concerns and values. They fear that the introduction of prayer would separate the believers from non-believers, Christians from Jews, main-line denominations from evangelicals. They see prayer as a cause of division and disunity.

All agreed that the President was simply wrong in his assumption that the introduction of a few words of prayer at the beginning of the school day would improve either the morale or the morals of the student body. Most State Legislatures and the Congress of the United States introduce their public sessions with prayer and no one has ever noticed that the noble-mindedness of the legislators has thereby been enhanced.

The President has never understood such objections. Indeed, in a press conference in the late Spring he spoke of those who opposed his position on the prayer amendment as "intolerant" of religion. Some months later, at a speech to the American Legion at Salt Lake City, he decried those who speak of freedom of religion as people interested in freedom from religion.

The President's religious views are the outgrowth of a not untypical, and uniquely American, evangelical Protestant outlook whose best-known contemporary figure is Billy Graham. This approach goes back from Billy Graham to Billy Sunday, to the revival tents and small town churches of the nineteenth century and, ultimately, to the great late seventeenth and early eighteenth century New England revivals. According to this tradition, the will of God is fully manifest in the Bible. The Bible is seen as containing a faithful history of the world as it has been and as it will be, the beginning and the end, Creation and Armageddon. Faith in God has the power to save and God helps those most who help themselves. Worship tends to enthusiasm, the open expression of feeling, singing, Bible reading, and preaching the Word. The Word emphasizes the virtues of faith, neighborliness, thrift and self-reliance, personal morals rather than the larger social issues.

This tradition matured in the open spaces at a time when this country was largely out of contact with the older, more sophisticated theologies of Europe. It grew up in America's small towns and thrived in places where the general culture was consistent with its teachings. Preachers and citizens came to believe that these teachings were obviously right and proper for everyone and in all contexts. These were the religious folk in the last century who were certain that the Pope and the Roman Church represented the Devil's worship. In our time ministers of this tradition have said that God does not hear the prayers of Jews. This native Protestant strain is chauvinistic, innocent, naive and self-confident. It expresses some important personal concerns: family, honor, self-discipline; but, at the same time, remains remarkably unaware of other religions and other values. There is only one religion and one truth: the truth that comes out of The Book.

It is hard to believe that a president, one of whose embassies has been bombed by religious, after all, the Shiite Muslims are among the most religious of people,

should still be thinking of his faith as religion with a small "r." But that's the way it is.

The problem, of course, is that no one religion can claim to be religion with a small "r." There are only distinct and separate religions, and the various religions teach distinct values. I remember sitting in Jerusalem one day, talking with a Roman Catholic priest and a Muslim cadi. The priest was drinking whiskey, which is a sin to the Muslims; the Muslim was smoking a hukka, and drugs are sinful to Christians; yet, both men were learned theologians and deeply religious.

The various religions represent the various ways in which groups of people have tried to make sense out of that which makes no sense — life. We are born not by any act of our choosing. We are thrust into a world which we do not and will never fully understand. We will age and die though we would prefer not to. There is no scientific way to prove that one set of values is right and another wrong. Yet, we need to feel confident of our values so every culture sanctifies those values which have proven functional and sanctifies a philosophy or vision which seems to make sense out of life.

The values to which the President is committed are the values of small-town mid-America. There is nothing necessarily wrong with these values, but they are certainly not the values which would be espoused by someone born in one of the 600,000 villages of India or by those who live in the teeming cities of the United States and share a religious tradition which reaches back beyond the last several centuries to distant lands and other experiences.

The president concerns himself with religion because he is concerned about the spiritual and emotional well-being of the country, and one can only applaud his concerns. But, as Sam Johnson once observed, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." Whatever his motives, the President's actions and affirmations have created division, not unity, and have encouraged those who are eager to enforce private religious views as the law of the land.

The President was not able to have the Congress pass the Prayer Amendment. There were long Senate hearings but the Congress' response made it clear that the public as a whole was not enthusiastic. He did get an Equal Access Bill which was passed more as a bow to the voting power of the Evangelicals than as a statement of national conviction. This bill allows religious groups, among others, access to high school buildings after school provided such groups are student-led and student-created. I look on this law as an unfortunate piece of legislation because it will reintroduce religious division into the schools. Such divisions are not new. Most of us can remember the religious divisions which existed in high schools during our youth. Sororities and Fraternities were largely religiously divided, but because they were not avowedly religious the schools were able, over the years, to move students beyond such divisions. Now they are back. There will be meetings of revival groups, High School Crusades for Christ and Habad; and the schools will become places where religious identification becomes a central issue.

This bill does not particularly worry me, although it's an unfortunate one, because it will soon lose public support. Those who lobbied to have religious groups meet in the public schools will find that the law permits the Ku Klux Klan, the American Nazi Party, Hari Krishna, and all the cults to demand and gain access, and that the American Civil Liberties Union will fight for each and every one of these groups in each and every community of this country. Those who were enthusiastic for this law saw it as permitting their church youth group to enter the school. They will find that they have opened a can of worms.

The most unfortunate result of the President's religious passions has become a quantum increase in the intensity of the battle over abortion prohibition — a battle which threatens to split the country. The President honestly believes that abortion is murder. What he does not understand is that many of us who take moral concerns quite as seriously as he do not agree with him. The President's

(Continued on next page)

speeches and proposal encouraged many of the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church to believe the time was propitious to turn their particular theological and ethical stance into the law of the land. The church is deeply troubled by society's growing tolerance of abortion and given the President's lead, some senior prelates declared that the prohibition of abortion must be seen by the faithful as the primary domestic issue facing the American people.

I need not say that I respect the right of any clergyman or believer to take whatever position he want on the issue of abortion. The issue is not simple, but it is one thing to take a certain discipline upon oneself and to try to convince others by discussion and quiet persuasion, and quite another to insist that your views must be a law of the land; or that communicants must not only abide in their private lives the teachings of their church, but if elected to public office must demand legislation prohibiting abortion; or that the crucial test of a communicant who holds public office is his activity on behalf of this single issue. A clergyman who argues in this way, to my mind, shows a profound lack of understanding the operation of an open and pluralistic society where serious people have serious differences with his point of view.

We touch here the reason religion and politics do not mix easily. Religion deals in absolutes. Politics deals with the possible. Religion presents God's instructions. Torah means the instructions of God. "The Lord God said unto Moses, speak unto the children of Israel." If you believe that a rule is literally the word of God or that your church fully articulates the will of God, there is no room for compromise or adjustment. Politics in a free society necessarily requires discussion, compromise and negotiation, the admission that others may disagree with you about the will of God.

In the first presidential debate a reporter asked the President about his private religious views and to comment on the difference his religious views made in his attitudes toward policy. Given the President's religious speeches this last year, this was a perfectly legitimate question. Inevitably, our religious views affect our public attitudes, but it is essential in a democracy that the debate be held at several removes from church doctrine or dogma.

Many of us took our stands on the peace and civil rights issues out of deep religious convictions, but the debate on means was carried out in practical terms. Did a particular law promote the things we hold sacred? Was such a law achievable? Would such a law be obeyed?

Archbishop Law, the Bishop in Boston, is a generous-hearted man who has been active in the areas of racial and social justice, and yet, the other day, speaking of abortion, he said, among other things, "I look on abortion as a primordial darkness. I look on abortion as primordial sin." When you look on an issue such as abortion in such stark black and white terms, there is no room for debate. Your only option is to find a way to impose your view on society. Given the prevalence of this attitude I fear that we have another Prohibition in the making. No-one in the days of the original Prohibition debate defended alcohol as an absolute

good. Those who were against the Prohibition amendment argued simply that it could not be imposed on a society because the society would not abide by it and they were right. All that Prohibition succeeded in doing was to legitimize a criminal sub-culture.

Those who would prohibit abortion wring their hands over the fact that there were a million and half abortions in this country last year. I take no particular pleasure in that fact, but I would turn their argument around. If a million and a half women decided that they required an abortion, social forces are at work which cannot simply be prohibited by the passage of a law. Assume abortion is prohibited: what will happen? The same thing that happened during Prohibition. Unqualified people will perform abortions in unsanitary conditions. Some women would try to perform abortions on themselves and, in effect, commit suicide. Human lives are at stake. Many good and decent people will, as a matter of principle, disobey the law and be turned into criminals. Physicians will risk their medical standing in order to take care of patients who they knew require an abortion but whose need the bureaucracy does not recognize. The rich would go to some country where abortions are available. The poor will suffer and die. Absolutist religious principles may be good theology, but when translated into law they become the cause of great misery.

Religious motives cannot and should not be separated from political life, but religion and politics should not meet in any direct way. We Jews have no reason to take pride that we are particularly virtuous in the business of keeping religion out of politics. In our own little state we have not been successful at it. Abortion is an issue in Israel. Autopsies are an issue in Israel. Religion has even intruded into archeology. The official rabbinate is doing what is natural for religious folk to do, that is, to find ways to coerce the rest of society to abide by its understanding of the word of God. Whenever religions go that way, and all ultimately do, they sow dissension and circumscribe freedom.

Let me speak for a moment of Moses Mendelssohn. Moses Mendelssohn was one of our early geniuses, a brilliant hunch back whom many call the first modern Jew. In the last half of the eighteenth century he followed his Talmud teacher to Berlin where he became one of the acknowledged intellectual leaders of that city. He entered a philosophy competition against Immanuel Kant and won first prize. As one of the first Jews to be allowed at least limited entry into European society, Mendelssohn inevitably became concerned with how Judaism could adjust to the modern world.

In the medieval world religion and state were one. The state imposed the religious authority of the ruler's faith on its citizens. If you were not a member of the state religion, you were not a citizen. You survived on toleration and within your little domestic world you were governed by your religious law. Within the ghetto, as within the larger society, there was no such thing as the separation of church and state.

Modernity begins when the idea of a nation-state emerged in which all who lived within its borders were accepted as citizens. The modern state inevitably involves a degree of pluralism. All are equal before the law, but I can't, as a Jew, be governed by Christian law, and Protestants can't be governed by Catholic law, and so land must have a secular

law and the state becomes relatively neutral in respect to specific religious traditions.

In a book which he called *Jerusalem* and is sub-titled, "An Essay on Power and Judaism," Mendelssohn analyzed the new state and the role of the synagogue within it. The state, he said, must not interfere with what happens within religious structures. The synagogue must be free to pursue its teaching and educational roles. The state is necessarily concerned with the security, safety and well-being of its citizens and must be given sufficient legal powers to effect these ends. To be sure, the religious bodies are also concerned with the well-being of the community but, unlike the state, they must not be allowed to enforce their special views. All power must be taken away from the synagogue except the power of persuasion. Religious leaders must not be allowed to use such powers as excommunication even to force their communicants to agree with them, and the state must not accede to the demands of religious leaders that the state impose one group's special and peculiar requirements on society as a whole.

Mendelssohn spoke specifically of the situation within the Jewish community. If we translate Mendelssohn's theses into our own situation we come to these conclusions. The state must be concerned with public decency and morality, but must define these in the broadest possible terms and must avoid enforcing any one group's definition of morality as an absolute truth or of forcing large numbers in the society who disagree with that view to abide by unwanted restraints. Abortion is just such an issue. For the church it is black and white, "the primordial darkness." To most of us the abortion issue is full of grays. We are not prepared to say that once an egg has been fertilized it is in all cases at all times murder to end the fertilization process. There are quality-of-life issues. There are issues which concern the safety of the mother. There are issues touching the birth of the severely deformed. Many issues must be considered.

The President has, unfortunately, raised a number of religious issues to a central role in our political life and sympathetic religious leaders eagerly moved to take advantage of that opening. What was lacking in their response was any recognition of the impropriety of intruding religious doctrine into the political process. Doctrine is definite. Politics is a process, constantly in the posture of being defined. What was lacking was not conviction but a wise restraint. Those who would live in a free society will cultivate sufficient humility to be able to recognize that our views and our assumptions are not the only way, that we can't be sure they are God's way, and that there are others who, with equal sensitivity and equal thoughtfulness, think otherwise. Religious leaders should present their views on live issues, I've done that often and again, that's what this pulpit is all about, but I have never said to you: you must vote a certain way or you may not vote for somebody who disagrees with me or with a position with which the general Jewish community disapproves.

What each of us must do, once persuaded, is to see what we can do about the political and social issues of concern to us, recognizing, as we do, that we are one among many. What we must not do is to do what the President has done: assume that our religion is the religion, that our way is the only way.



December 9, 1984
Vol. LXXI, No. 8

The Temple Bulletin

From the Rabbi's Desk: What's Wrong With Cleveland? – The Rabbi's Sermon of November 11, 1984

To study history is to know that no city is immortal. Twenty-Eight Hundred years ago Nineveh was the wealthiest and most powerful city in the Near East, perhaps in the world. It was to Nineveh, "that great city," the capital of an Assyrian Empire which ruled lands from India to Egypt, that God sent Jonah with a message condemning the city for its evil ways. In The Book of Jonah, Nineveh is described as a metropolis of such size that it would take three days to cross the city. The Bible exaggerates, but in Jonah's time the walls of Nineveh were ninety feet tall and world famous for eighteen massive gates.

Nineveh had been founded in the third millennium B.C.E. on a site on the Eastern bank of the Tigris in Northern Iraq at a point where a sizeable tributary joined the major river. A wide fertile plain marked the confluence of these two rivers whose fields easily provided sufficient food for the provincial town which grew up along its banks. Nineveh remained a city of modest size until in the ninth century B.C.E. Assyrian kings chose it as their Northern garrison center. Nineveh grew with the expansion of Assyrian power, and in time became the capital of that empire. During the eighth century emperors of legendary name, Ashurbanipal, Sargon and Sennacherib built their palaces and great temples here. For a time Nineveh was mistress of the world.

But cities, even the greatest, are not immortal. In 625 B.C.E. Nineveh was destroyed by an army organized by a new imperial power, that of the Medes and Babylonians. The city's population was put to the sword and exiled. Nineveh became an empty place, desolate. Subsequently, various attempts were made to repopulate Nineveh. A small town existed here in Roman times, and again during the Byzantine era, but Nineveh never regained even a fraction of its glory. Some five centuries ago it ceased to be an inhabited place. The river silted up so that the harbor could no longer be used. Herdsmen let their goats eat the roots which held the soil to the earth and the once fertile plain became a dust bowl. Nineveh became a ruin visited only by archeologists and tourists seeking to uncover its one-time glory. No one has lived in Nineveh for half a millennium.

Cities grow for practical reasons. Cities grow where there is water and farm land. Cities thrive if they serve a special political or economic need. A city's wealth and population increases as long as the special circumstance remain. A city becomes a lesser place, settles back into relative obscurity when circumstances change. Some, like Rome, rise, fall and rise again. Some, like Nineveh, rise, fall and are heard of no more.

In this country the larger towns of the colonial period – Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore – came

into being and grew because they provided safe harbor for the ships which brought goods and colonists to the New World and carried back to Europe our furs and produce. New York continued to grow because it had a harbor and a great river, the Hudson, which could carry its commerce hundreds of miles into the hinterland. Newport did not grow because all it had was a land-locked harbor.

Cleveland was founded as another small trading village on Lake Erie. We began to grow because of the decision to make the village the northern terminus of the Ohio Canal. The Canal brought the produce of the hinterland to our port and these goods were then shipped on the lakes eastward to the Erie Canal and to the established cities along the eastern seaboard.

In 1840, shortly after the Ohio Canal was opened, there were 17,000 people in our town. We became a city through a second stroke of good fortune. Iron ore was discovered in the Lake Superior region; and because of the Canal this city was the logical place to marry the ore brought by ships from the Mesabi Range, the coal brought by barge from the mines of southern Ohio, West Virginia and western Pennsylvania and the limestone brought by wagon and railroad from the Indiana quarries. Investors built here the great blast furnaces which supplied America the steel it needed for industrial expansion. From 1840 to 1870 our population increased tenfold. It is claimed that from 1880

to 1930 we were the fastest growing city in America. By 1930 Cleveland had become America's sixth city. There was nothing magical about our growth or, really, planned. It was a matter of historical accident: the siting of the Canal, the discovery of iron ore and the ease of transporting here the basic materials from which steel is produced.

There is an old Yiddish saying that when a man is wealthy his opinions are always significant and his singing voice is of operatic quality. During the years of rapid growth no one complained about the weather. For most of this period our symphony orchestra was a provincial organization and our Art Museum was either non-existent or a fledgling operation; yet, no one complained about the lack of cultural amenities. Our ball club wasn't much better than it is today, but no one was quoted as saying that the town's future depended on winning a pennant. There was then no domed stadium and no youth culture. Yet, young people of ambition and talent came. They came because there was opportunity here.

Those who believe that the solution to our current faltering status lies in a public relations program to reshape our tarnished image or in the reviving of downtown are barking up the wrong tree. We all welcome the city's cultural resurgence – that Playhouse Square is being developed and that there is a new Play House, the reality which is the

(Continued inside)

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

December 9, 1984
10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

THE BISHOPS AND
THE ECONOMY

December 16, 1984
10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

WHAT'S NEW ABOUT
CHANUKAH

Friday Evening Service – 5:30 - 6:10 – The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service – 9:00 a.m. – The Branch

What's Wrong? (Continue)

University Circle – but, ultimately, the future of this city does not depend on entertainment or excitement but upon economics. In real life people ask about the necessities – employment and opportunity – before they ask about life style and leisure time amenities.

We grew because we served the nation's economy. We fell on hard times when the country no longer needed our services or products. Fifty years ago the nation and the world needed the goods we provided. Today the world no longer needs these goods in such quantity and we can no longer produce our products at competitive prices.

Once upon a time the steel we forged could be shipped across the country and outsell all competition. Today steel can be brought to West Coast ports from Asia and to East Coast ports from Europe; and sold more cheaply than steel made here. The Steel Age is over and so is the age of the assembly line factories which used our machine tools. This is the age of electronics and robotics and these are not the goods in which we specialize.

Cleveland grew steadily until the Depression when, like the rest of the country, the city fell into hard times. Unlike many other areas we did not recover our elan after the Depression and the second World War. It is not hard to know why. We were a city for the Steel Age. America was entering the High Tech Age. We lacked the plant the scientific know-how and, sadly, the will to develop new products and new markets. A new age was beginning and the leaders of Cleveland preferred to believe that little had changed. We played the ostrich with predictably disastrous results. The numbers are sobering. The human cost they represent far more so. There were some 300,000 blue-collar factory jobs in the area in 1970. By 1971 this number had been reduced to 275,000 and by 1983 to 210,000. One in four factory jobs available 15 years ago no longer exists, and it seems clear that most of these laid-off workers will not be called back.

Cleveland lacks the two special circumstances which have made for the prosperity of certain American cities in the post-war era: government and advanced technological research. This has been a time of expanding government bureaucracies and of the transformation of our information and control systems. Washington has become a major metropolis. State capitals have grown by leaps and bounds. Columbus is our state's capital. Silicone Valley is the symbol of the new economy. We are a city of blast furnaces and steel sheds, not sophisticated research laboratories.

The years between 1980 and 1982 were a time of national economic stringency, but the number of jobs available in the United States still grew by slightly under one percent. In the same period Cleveland lost 50,000 jobs. Between 1982 and 1984 when there was a resurgence in employment levels, Cleveland lost another 30,000 jobs. The census of our Standard Population Statistical Area, essentially metropolitan Cleveland, indicates that between 1970 and 1980 168,000 people left the area and that the exodus continues at about the rate of 10,000 a year.

These facts should give pause to anyone who still believes that Cleveland will again become what Cleveland was a half century ago. If you retain any such illusion, I invite you to look at our Jewish community. Because Jews by necessity have tended to be concentrated in the interstitial areas of business, we provide a particularly sensitive barometer of an area's economic well-being. There were 90,000 Jews in 1950. There are less than 70,000 of us here today – an exodus of about 25%. These numbers are sometime rationalized as the result of the elderly leaving for warmer climates and a falling birth rate. These are factors, but the heart of the exodus has been our children. Our young, excited by new ideas, believe that another market will offer more opportunity or that their professional careers will be enhanced if they settle elsewhere.

Why has this happened to Cleveland?

Labor blames management. Management did not reinvest

in new plant and equipment or research. When local corporations expand into electronics, they generally built such plants elsewhere. Management blames high labor costs and low labor productivity. Both groups are right, but in the final analysis, whatever the mistakes of our political, business and labor leaders, these alone do not account for Cleveland's slide. Had there been fewer mistakes this town would still be suffering a serious economic downturn. We no longer are in the right place with the right stuff.

Our inability to adjust to a new set of circumstances is the inevitable result of a prevailing state of mind which can only be called provincial. Over the years Cleveland has been comfortable, conservative, and self-satisfied. Clevelanders were comfortable and believed, because they want to believe, that what was would always be. Those who raised questions were politely heard out but not listened to. The city fathers set little value on new ideas or, indeed, on the mind. Business did not encourage research. Our universities were kept on meager rations. I know of no other major American city which has such a meager academic base.

A vignette. In the mid-1880's John D. Rockefeller, then in the first flush of his success, went to see the town's patriarch, Samuel Mather. He wanted to talk to Mather about Western Reserve College. Rockefeller believed that his home town should have a great university. He knew that Mather was proud of Western Reserve and each year made up any small deficit from his own pocket. But Western Reserve College was small potatoes and Rockefeller proposed that the leadership of Cleveland pool its resources and turn the school into a first-line university. Mr. Mather was satisfied with Western Reserve College. Western Reserve was just fine for Cleveland. He and those close to him sent their sons and their grandsons to Yale for a real education. He listened to Rockefeller, thanked him for his interest and suggested that he might take his dream somewhere else. John D. took his advice and in 1890 gave the first million dollars to the University of Chicago, a grant which set that university on its way to becoming what Western Reserve University is not, one of the first rank universities in our country.

The same attitude of provincial self-satisfaction was to be found among our public officials. At the turn of the century, we were certainly the dominant political force in the state; yet, when Ohio's public university system began to expand, no one in Cleveland protested the fact that the northern campus would be an agricultural and a normal school at Kent. Nobody had the vision to propose the establishment here of a major urban university whose research facilities would concern themselves with the problems of the city, its people and its industry. Again, in the 1950's, during the second period of major expansion by the state university system, Cleveland showed little interest. I am told that at first the town fathers actually opposed the establishment of a Cleveland State University. They came around, of course, but ours is still one of the branches with the least research potential and fewest laboratories. Even today much of what it does is limited to the retraining of those who came out of our city schools and to the training of those who will occupy third level jobs in the electronic and computer world. Change is in the air. Our universities are struggling to come of age, but a half century, at least, has been lost because Cleveland did not prize one of God's most precious gifts – the mind.

Some argue that those who ran Cleveland limited the academic community because they did not want an intelligentsia to develop here. Academics and writers have a well-known propensity for promoting disturbing economic and political ideas. The comfortable and complacent do not want their attitudes questioned, but Cleveland's disinterest in ideas extended beyond political conservatism. Our leaders do not subsidize research and development in their corporations or in the university. Case was not heavily funded for basic research. Case was encouraged to provide the training for the mechanical and electrical engineers, the middle level people, needed by the corporations. It is only in the years of economic decline that our business leadership have begun to provide the money for that research which ultimately creates new business opportunities and provides new employment.

Cleveland did not fall behind in one area of technology – medical research. If the city fathers believed that the Steel Age would last forever, that real education took place back East and that it was wise and proper for them to look for investment opportunities elsewhere, they still lived here and they made sure that first-rate health care was available. Our hospitals have been well financed. Medical research has been promoted. Such research was valuable and non-controversial and the results of this continuing investment are clear. The medical field has been the one bright spot in an otherwise gloomy economic picture. Our hospitals have a world-wide reputation. The research done here is state of the art. Recently the medical industry has come on straitened times, but even so, the gains are there and it is not hard to see what might have happened in other areas had our investment in ideas and idea people been significant and sustained.

Cleveland majored in conventional decency rather than in critical thinking. Our town has a well deserved reputation in the areas of social welfare and private philanthropy. Social work here has been of a high order. Until the second World War the city had one of the finest public school systems in the country. We were concerned with the three R's, but research goes beyond the three R's and we never made the leap of intellect and investment which is required when you accept the fact that the pace of change in our world is such that yesterday is the distant past and tomorrow will be a different world.

We have fallen lengths and decades behind cities whose leaders invested money, time and human resource in preparing for the twenty-first century. They broke new ground and laid the ground for the change. We stayed with the familiar. As long as the economy depended upon machines and those who could tinker with machines, Cleveland did well. But when it was no longer a question of having competent mechanics retool your machines for next year's production but a question of devising entirely new means of production we could no longer compete and, to a large extent, we still cannot.

In recent years Cleveland's industrial leadership seems to have come awake to our mind and research gap, but the C.E.O.'s of the major corporations no longer have the power to single-handedly make over the economy. In the High Tech Age the factory which employs thousands, and perhaps tens of thousands, of people is no longer the dominant force. Three out of every four jobs that have been created over the last decade have developed in businesses which are either brand new or employ less than one hundred people. Those who lead old-time production line corporations struggle not to fall further and further behind and are an unlikely source of jobs.

Another of the reasons we fell so far behind is that for decades the major banks were not eager to support bright young outsiders who had drive and an idea but little ready cash. We all know people who went to our banks, were turned down, left town and set up successful businesses elsewhere. The officers of our lending institutions preached free enterprise and entrepreneurship, but most of their loans went to the stable, old-line corporations. For all their praise of capitalism they were not risk takers. New business formation here has lagged beyond most other cities. Those who have studied the problem report that the rate of birth of new business in Cleveland over the past three decades have been about 25 percent less than the rate of new business birth in other second tier cities, and that despite a new openness at the banks we continue to lag behind other parts of the country. Catch-up takes a long time.

Cleveland's business leadership has become aware of the need for research and development and of the need to stake bright young men and women who have ideas and are willing to risk their best effort to make these successful, but even as we come alive to the importance of the inquiring mind and the risk takers, of the academy and the research laboratory, we must recognize that Cleveland has a special albatross about our necks. Cleveland is not a city. There are over thirty self-governing districts in Cuyahoga County. There are over a hundred self-governing communities in the

(Continued)

metropolitan area. What we call Cleveland is an accumulation of competing fiefdoms.

This sad situation is also a result of our parochial outlook and our unwillingness to look ahead. It was easier to let each group draw unto itself than to work out ways to adjust competing needs and interests. The result is a diminished city. There were 970,000 people in the city in 1945; there are 520,000 people there today, only one in four of us who live in this metropolitan area. The economic gap and the gap of understanding between the suburbs and the city and between suburb and suburb has widened, not narrowed, over the years.

Those who live here lack a shared agenda because we have allowed each area to go its own way and seek its special advantage. Some of our fiefdoms are run simply for the benefit of their traffic courts. Others are run for the benefit of a white or black power group. Some exist to protect the genteel ways of an America which no longer exists. Each is prepared to put obstacles in the way of community planning when a proposal threatens its attitudes or interests.

Do you remember those small groups of whites and blacks who used to meet on the High Level Bridge to signify that we were really one city? Their tiny numbers, the very fact their actions were seen as symbolic, underscored how far we have moved away from each other. To be sure, Clevelanders meet together in non-political forums where we profess infinite good will and talk of shared goals; but the talk rarely leads to decisive actions. Why not? We lack a political arena where our needs are necessarily brought forward and brokered. We lack a political structure which would force us to adjust our interests and develop an agenda to which we could commit ourselves, and until such a structure is in place we will not be able to marshal the shared purpose.

Many here this morning work in the city. Few here live in the city. When suburbanites look at the problems of the city we tend to focus on the long range economic problems: how to create jobs and prosperity. Many who live in the city have no work in the city or out of the city. Their problem is how to keep body and soul together. Their problem is not how we can over a five-year period establish x number of new businesses which will provide x number of new jobs but how to provide food, clothing and shelter for their families. We do not see the immediacy of their needs. They do not see the wisdom of our plans and inevitably we frustrate each other's hopes. And so the suburbs mumble about their particular concerns and the city mumbles about its concerns

and the community stumbles into a future for which it has not and cannot plan.

In 1924 the citizens of Lakewood and West Park voted on a proposal to annex their communities to the city of Cleveland. That proposal was defeated and defeated soundly. Since then every proposal to create county-wide government has failed and failed badly. And yet, it should be clear to all that only when we succeed in becoming citizens of a single community will we be able to do much about our economy and our future.

Because the City's concerns stop at its borders, its ability to handle the future stops at its borders. The same is, of course, true of the suburbs. In Columbus the city grew by annexing to itself the farm land on which the commercial parks and the new suburbs were built. In Cleveland we went the other way and today you could do some large scale farming within the city limits.

Will we face up to this structural challenge and create metropolitan government? I see little reason to believe that we will. Our history has, if anything, intensified racial and class polarization. If we become a unified city every group and municipality would lose some precious advantage. I can't imagine the citizens of Moreland Hills wanting to throw in their lot with the citizens of Hough. Many mayors would lose their jobs. Many minorities would lose their power base. The suburbs would no longer be able to provide services tailored to the middle class and would have to bear an expensive welfare load. And yet, until we become one politically we will be unable to address effectively the needs of Cleveland tomorrow. You simply cannot plan effectively when all your meetings are at several removes from the councils where decisions are made and those in our many councils will always be able to thwart well-intentioned proposals.

These last years have been better years for this city than the years immediately before. There has been significant building downtown. The highway system is in place. We have created regional transport, regional hospitals, a regional sewage system. But big buildings downtown do not guarantee the city's future. Big buildings downtown can be empty buildings, as some of them are. Regional transport can mean empty buses. The future of Cleveland rests first on a revived economy. A revived economy depends upon bright people and new ideas. People do not get ideas out of the air. Ideas begin in our schools, universities and laboratories. Educational quality is costly.

The future for Cleveland cannot be bought cheap.

A meaningful future depends upon a new recognition of where a city's strength lies. It's nice that our suburbs are famous for their green lawns and lovely homes. It's nice that everybody agrees that Cleveland is a wonderful place to raise children. It's a wonderful place to raise children if you don't want your children to live near you when they become adults. As things stand now, they will make their futures elsewhere. Our suburbs are the result of yesterday's prosperity. Employment and political unity must be today's goal if we are to have a satisfying future.

Unfortunately, we didn't prepare in the fat years for a time when we no longer could take advantage of the circumstances that had made us prosperous. Cleveland did not listen to its Josephs. We did not prepare and the piper must be paid. Those who study such things say that if the American economy stays healthy and the formation of new businesses in Cleveland continues at its present rate, we will be fortunate if in 1990 we have the same number of jobs we had in 1970.

Our future is to be a second-tier city. I do not find that such a discouraging prospect. A prosperous city of two million can be a satisfying place and can provide many amenities. But before we can feel sure even of second-tier status, we must develop a new economic base and a renewed concern for community. We need to revalue our attitudes toward the mind. It is tragic that one in two who enter the City schools never graduates.

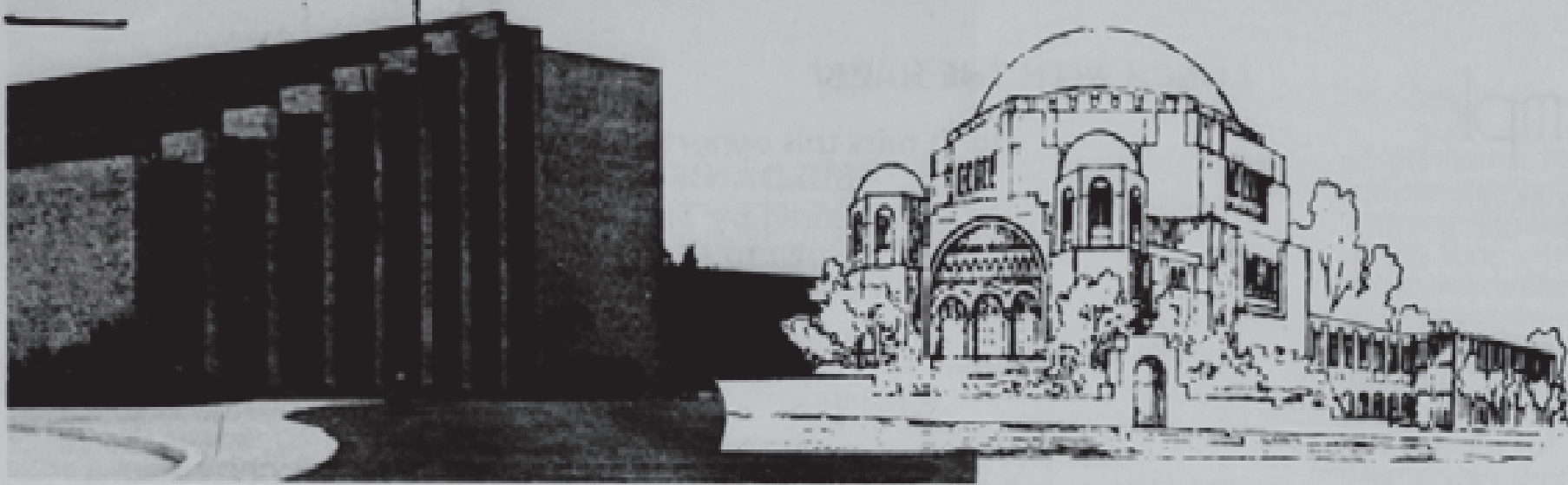
Of those who graduate, the best, and who enroll in Cleveland State University, 51 percent need remedial work in mathematics; 62 percent need remedial work in English. Half of the City's children do not graduate from high school. More than half who graduate are not prepared for this world. Is this any way to prepare for the twenty-first century?

When the rabbis were asked, "who is the happy man?" they answered, "the person who is happy with his own lot." The question that Clevelanders must ask is whether we can be happy even if we are not, and will not become again, one of the premier cities of the country. The answer seems to me obvious. We can. But even that modest hope will escape us unless we put behind us the stand patism which has characterized our past and put our minds and imaginations to work in planning for an economy and a community suited to the world of tomorrow.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

A TRIBUTE TO OUR RENAISSANCE WOMAN — MINA KULBER

Calligrapher, costume fixer-upper, props enhancer, sign maker, songstress, actress, choreographer helper, errand-girl, telephoner, baker, cocker, mediator, artistic advisor, comforter. There was no one person so willing to lend us her multifaceted talents. And also she enticed her husband to manage and solve all of our backstage problems. What a couple. What a woman is Mina.



January 23, 1983
Vol. LXVIX, No. 11

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK: The Talmud and the Telephone Poles
The sermon of December 19, 1982 is produced here in response to numerous requests.

About a month ago one of us came up to me and pulled a little piece of paper out of his pocket, 'what is this,' 'a piece of paper.' 'Read what's written on it.' I read the single word, *eruv*. 'What is it?' 'Why are you asking me?' 'I read an article in the paper that the orthodox community is demanding an *eruv*. I never heard of it and I want to know what it's all about.' Therefore, this talk on the Talmud and the telephone poles.

If I were to take you to my library and show you a translation of the Babylonian Talmud you'd discover that *Eruvim*, plural of *eruv*, is the title of one of the thickest, fattest volumes in this great compendium of Jewish law. *Eruvim* is also one of the 63 sections which comprise the *Mishnah*, which shows that by the second century of our era an *eruv* was a well-known and important feature of Jewish life; and a complex and complicated one; otherwise the rabbis of the Talmudic period, both in Palestine and Babylon, would not have dealt with this theme at length. In some ways there's no better measure of the distance Jewish life has come than the fact few outside the most traditional circles in our community had ever heard of an *eruv* until the orthodox community began to demand that they have one.

When I asked myself how best to present the *eruv* to you, I decided to begin by testing you a bit of detection. I will read you a brief paragraph written by a man named Abd al Suri Sahl Ibn Masliah. Sahl lived in Jerusalem almost exactly a thousand years ago, during the last half of the tenth century. The name, Abd al Suri, means that he came from a family which originated in the Oxford or Cambridge of Babylonian Jewry, Sura, so he was probably from a learned family. We know little about him except that he

wrote a number of Biblical commentaries and a *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, a book on the commandments of the Torah. He also wrote a public letter addressed to a rabbi in Cairo and it is from this letter that I want to read to you a paragraph and ask you to tell me who are the people Sahl is complaining about.

How can I restrain myself when many Jews leave their houses on the Sabbath on their way to the synagogue carrying various things such as purses and pieces of apparel on their arms while their wives wear jewelry, and as they do on weekdays visit from house to house, so do they also on the Sabbath.

If you guessed that Sahl was pointing his finger at certain lax practices in the rabbinic Jewish community you were wrong. There is nothing in rabbinic law

which precludes visitation between homes on the Sabbath. Rabbinic law does not forbid under all conditions the wearing of jewelry or the carrying of small objects - a handkerchief, an eyeglass case, a *taillit* bag - on the Sabbath. Actually, Sahl was writing from Jerusalem to a rabbi in Cairo, complaining that this rabbi was misleading his flock by permitting such activities. Sahl Ibn Masliah, you see, was a Karaite. The Karaites were schismatic Jews, which means simply that the majority of Jews of their day did not accept their understanding of the tradition. The Karaites believed that the sages of the Talmud had deliberately misrepresented Biblical Judaism to their people. The Torah contained God's instructions and the rabbis had added on their own the Oral Law, and in so doing misrepresented God's will. The Karaites were Jewish Protestants. that is to say,
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SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

January 23, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

ISRAEL'S FOUR HOLY CITIES:
III SAFED

January 30, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

ISRAEL'S FOUR HOLY CITIES:
IV JERUSALEM

Friday Evening Service - 5:30 - 6:10 - The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service - 9:00 a.m. - The Branch

they believed in the right of everyone to interpret the Bible directly. They were certain that such an interpretation would reveal the many errors and additions which the rabbis had introduced into Judaism.

Karaism spread across the Middle East at about the same time as Islam. The Karaites felt that the Messianic Age was close at hand and that to hasten the end of the exile Jews must explicitly follow God's specific Instructions. They accepted the well-known idea that the Jewish people were exiled because of their sins and that the exile would end when Israel became again a repentant, holy nation. The Karaites believed that the reason that the exile lingered was not because the people were unwilling but because the rabbis had misled them by misinterpreting the tradition and permitting many things that were forbidden and forbidding much that was allowed. Their remedy? To call Israel back to the true interpretation of the Torah.

Let me give you an example. The Torah contains this Sabbath rule: "You shall not burn a fire in any of your dwelling places on the Sabbath day." Not wanting to make the Sabbath too rigorous or too rigid, the rabbis had interpreted the phrase, 'you shall not burn a fire,' as 'you shall not kindle a fire.' It was and is the custom in traditional homes that a fire begun before the Sabbath day is allowed to burn throughout the day. In modern times if a light is lit it remains lit throughout the Sabbath period. But that's not literally what the Torah says. The verb, *ba'ar*, means 'to burn' and the literal reading is 'you shall not allow a fire to burn during the Sabbath day.' It's doubtful if this was ever common practice, but linguistics is one thing, practice another, and the Karaites were not prepared to determine practice by a poll. After all, the Torah is God's own words.

Because of this text, at least during the first three or four centuries of their existence as organized communities, the Karaites extinguished all fires over the Sabbath. The Sabbath period must have been a cold and dismal occasion for them, but they were consoled by the feeling that they were hastening the end of the exile and the coming of the Messiah.

What has all this to do with Sahl's complaint or the *eruv*? In the 16th chapter of Exodus the Torah explains how the tribes were provisioned during the 40 years of the wilderness trek. Obviously, a group of slaves who left in haste had not packed food for such a long expedition. But God took care of them. God provided water out of the rock. He provided quail for meat and the famous manna as the basic staple of their diet. According to the Exodus, the manna descended each morning like the dew. It looked like a white hoar frost on the ground. Each day the Hebrews would go out and pick up

enough manna for that day and then the sun would burn away the rest, and on the morrow the needed manna would again appear.

As the Sabbath began the central feature of Jewish life, it became necessary to make the point that food gathering had not been done on the Sabbath. So the Priestly Code described another miracle. On Friday a double portion of the manna fell, enough for that day and the next. Here is the language in which this miracle is introduced: 'Mark that the Lord has given you the Sabbath, therefore, He has given you two days' food on the sixth day, that everyone remain where he is, that no man leave his place on the seventh day.' The Karaites took this text in their usual literal way to mean that everyone was to stay at home over the Sabbath day except, of course, to go to the Karaite synagogue to engage there in prayers; but otherwise no visiting, no carrying, no moving about.

Now, obviously, that's not the traditional way, and long before the Karaites came on the scene the *eruv* had been devised as a symbolic act which allowed the sages to get around this text. Through the *eruv* the rabbis enlarged the sense of "place" to allow Jews to move about a good bit on the Sabbath. The rabbis could not dismiss a specific requirement of the Torah but they could interpret the Torah. The Torah says, "you are not to leave your place on the seventh day." Well and good. They simply reinterpreted place to define an area larger than the room or rooms in which a family lived. They asked, "what defines one's place," and they answered: in the first instance home is a place in which we keep and eat food. Secondly, it is a place for which we have some title. Finally, it is a definable place, it has boundaries. So they interpreted place/home to designate any area which met all these conditions.

The word *eruv* means combination or mixture. It comes from the same root as the phrase, *erev rav*, mixed multitude, the term the Torah uses to describe the comealongs who joined the tribes when Moses led Israel from Egypt. In addition to the Israelites, there was an *erev rav*, a combination of other peoples, a mixed multitude. When the rabbis wanted to express the idea, 'we are one', the unity of the Jewish people, they said, *Kol Yisroel arev zeh ba-zeh*, all Israelis mixed together, is part of a single combination, part of a single family. An *eruv* was a way in which you mixed together, you defined a public area as a name so that each person had a claim in it and it became by extension symbolically his home, a place in which he could move about.

The *eruv* goes back at least into Second Temple times. In ancient Judea most cities were small and walled. What the sages of the day probably did was to declare the wall of the city, these were

small towns, to be the enclosure which defines the home. Then they would buy with monies subscribed by all the citizens some food which would be placed in a central location, perhaps the synagogue, where all could technically enter and partake. This established that element of home. Then they drew up some kind of document which established common ownership for purpose of the *eruv*. The result was that place/home now defined all the area within the circumference of the town's walls and Jews of that town could move freely on the Sabbath day as if they were in their own home. They could carry within that town whatever they were allowed to carry within their own home, a mother, her infant, a doctor his bag, a worshipper his *tallit* or his eye glasses or cane.

We don't know how or when this ritual actually originated. According to the Talmud it was promulgated by King Solomon. I'm sure it wasn't. King Solomon, however, was the classic hero of wisdom to our people in ancient times. His wisdom, you'll remember, was God-given. According to a Biblical story God allowed Solomon to choose what he wished and he asked for an understanding heart. Since his wisdom came from God, what He promulgated, what He pronounced as law, was treated as if it were from God. Incidentally, the Talmud also ascribes to him the law which requires that all Jews wash their hands before touching food. Solomon wasn't so dumb after all.

Some time during the Biblical period, probably during or after the exile, when the Sabbath laws became more central and complex, the sages of Judea faced up to a problem. The familiar Sabbath was a day of rest. By rest their fathers had meant not working, not farming, not doing business, not engaging in commerce. When the prophets denounce those who violate the Sabbath their complaints have to do entirely with work on the Sabbath, not with the minutiae of Sabbath observance.

If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath
From pursuing your affairs on my holy day
If you call the Sabbath 'my delight'
The Lord's day 'honored'
If you honor it and go not your ways
Nor look to your affairs nor strike bargains
Then you can seek the favor of the Lord.

Originally, the Sabbath was a day on which one rested, did no work, and on which special rites were celebrated in the Temple. During the Babylonian Exile when many Jews were in the east and under Persian and Indian influence, the ritual concerns of the Eastern traditions affected them greatly. These cultures were deeply involved with questions of

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FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

(continued)

clean and unclean, purity and impurity, taboo and ritual cleansings, and with the proper form in which religious rites are carried out. Jews seem to have brought back from the East most of the laws which have to do with such rituals as *kashrut*. In all probability the attempt to make the Sabbath into a more rigorous and rigid occasion developed during this time. But you can't impose upon a community rules which the community will not accept. And clearly, the community was unwilling to stay home and live in a cold, dark house during the entire Sabbath despite an oracular text to this effect. So the *eruv*, a symbolic act, a ritual, which freed the Sabbath from some of the more rigorous denials which the law seemed to require without directly contravening the rule.

The *eruv* will work only where there is an enclosure, a certificate of title and food at a central location. Historically, most communities had an *eruv* of one kind or another. Once the rite was available, rabbinic sermons and responsa make it clear that most Jews were unwilling to accept a more rigorous Sabbath. They wanted the amplitude which an *eruv* provides. So the rabbis say again and again; 'let's find a way to establish an *eruv*. The people will sin unless we create an *eruv*.' In Europe most towns had an *eruv*: Frankfurt, Vienna, Warsaw. In towns where there was a ghetto, the ghetto walls became the enclosure. Everything that was owned within the walls was owned by Jews so it was easy to get the legal title required. Food could always be placed in a synagogue. However, the *eruv* could be a problem in two areas. The first involved those who lived in towns where there were no walls, or in detached dwellings of one kind or another. The second involved those who lived under authorities who might not be willing to give them the required documents. Already in the Talmudic age the rabbis had validated a method of establishing a symbolic enclosure which they declared satisfied the law; that's where the telephone poles come in. According to these sages if a community puts poles at least ten hand breadths high in the ground and connects them at the top with a cord, this establishes the enclosure. This process creates a *de facto* boundary. It has what the rabbis call *zurat ha-petach*, the form of a gate, and allows the limits to be established which define home/place. Though Mr. Bell never had the *eruv* in mind when he began to set up the telephone system his poles, connected at the top, are ready-made for this kind of purpose.

What about getting the required document? In Europe it was usually a matter of cost. Dollars were exchanged and the document was granted. It was only a question of how greedy the city council or lord might be. In the United States it's a matter of finding legal language which gives the Jewish community a right, with-

out any other legal encumbrances, to an area for purposes only of the *eruv*. It can be done. There are *eruvim* in a number of American cities - Baltimore, and in parts of Queens and the Bronx. It can be done without any serious conflict over the separation of church and state. The municipalities do not give constitutional mandate over any substantial rights - only rights related to the *eruv*.

What's the significance of all this? It's another indication of the Americanization of a major part of the orthodox Jewish community. By that I mean that they're no longer satisfied to hunker down in their world doing their own thing. Now they are demanding, as other minority groups have done, those rights which will allow them to live life with some amplitude and ease. Instead of remaining passive they're being more aggressive, and that's one indication of Americanization.

It also suggests that those who lead the orthodox Jewish community are having more say in its organization. The orthodox community itself is small, about eight percent of the Jewish community of Cleveland. Those who obey the niceties of the tradition, such as not carrying small objects on the Sabbath, are a minority of that minority. Yet, it has become increasingly important to many that things be done properly. The days of those whom sociologists call the non-observant orthodox may be numbered.

Should we agree to approve their request for an *eruv*? Why not? Creating an *eruv* will allow a few in our community to live with a greater sense of ease, particularly rigorously orthodox women who feel restricted in not being able to carry their infant to the synagogue or a friend's house on the Sabbath. Their lives will be easier and we have nothing to lose.

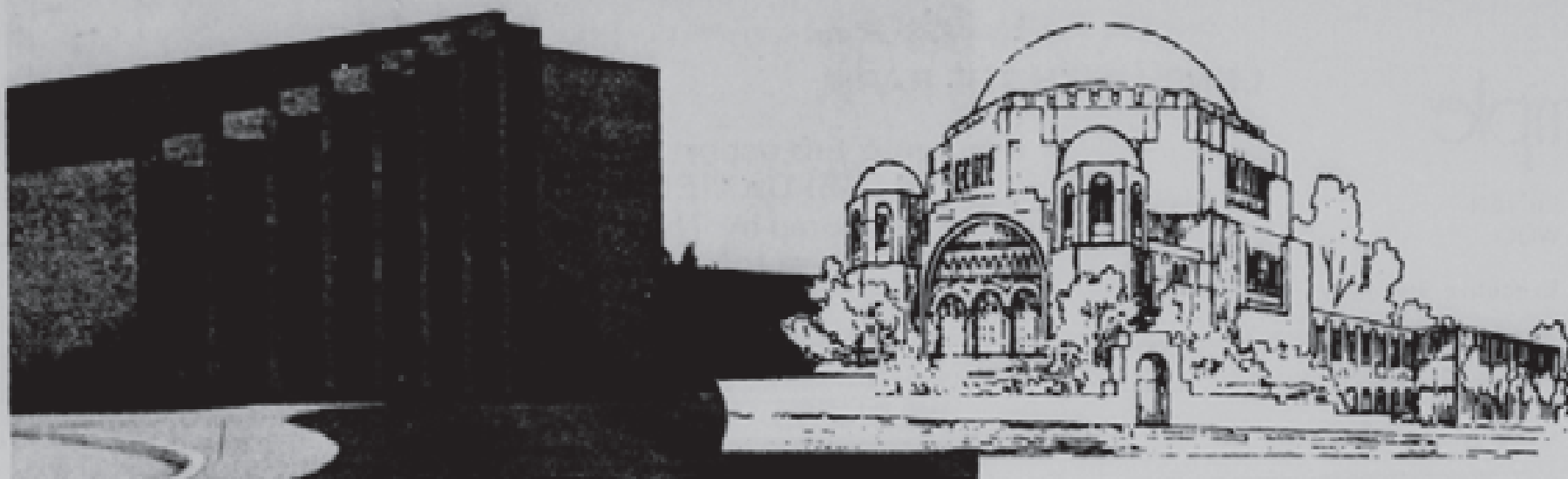
The *eruv* issue says something about us too. The fact that we were not even dimly aware of something once as common as the *eruv* suggests how far we have come from the ancient ways. The *eruv* issue also suggests the limits of the so-called return to tradition. It's at best a highly selective phenomenon. I can't imagine anyone in the liberal or Conservative community governing their Sabbath activity differently, depending on whether an *eruv* exists or not. When we speak of a return to tradition we are saying something quite different from a return to rabbinic Judaism, the whole complex system of *halacha*. We're talking of a return to those forms, whatever they be, which define for us that it means to live a Jewish life and reinforce our sense of Jewishness. It's a highly selective return and not one which will return us to the orthodox fold. The fundamental difference between orthodoxy and non-orthodoxy has to do with the acceptance of the divinity of the *halacha*. For the orthodox there's one law, God-given, unchanging. We non-orthodox look on the

tradition as rich, pragmatically useful, often suggestive, full of insight and wise, but ultimately manufactured, artificial in the finest sense of the word, a creation of the human spirit and the genius of the Jewish people. We feel we have every right to pick, to choose, to be eclectic. The sense of continuity is important to us, but we reject the idea that it's God-given and that we 'must do it all.' Many practices have become spiritually insignificant to us. The *eruv* is a perfect example.

Let me end by reminding you of Sahl Ibn Masliah's letter which is part of the great continuing debates in Jewish life over the degree of observance and the kind of observance Jews are obliged to engage in. The Karaites claimed that the rabbinic Jews of their day had reformed Judaism. They accused the rabbis of permitting what the Torah prohibits which is the same charge rabbinic Jews today level against us - that we permit what is prohibited. What is really the issue? Not laxity, as Sahl or some of our detractors claim. The fact is that we deal with different groups of people, different degrees of acculturation, different emotional and psychological needs. The orthodox in the Talmudic time had to find a way to mitigate the rigors of the Sabbath. The *eruv* was their way of accomplishing this. In the 19th and 20th century we found it necessary to mitigate the sense of constriction many felt the Sabbath and other rules imposed on them, so we created our version of non-orthodox Judaism. The *halachic* way is simply not congruent with the way we live and think.

Our task is to share a tradition which will express our feelings and allow us to be satisfied with our *sancta*, our way. Generally, what we do derives from the tradition and is sanctified by a feeling that these rites have meaning. But we're not limited to what was. Confirmation, Consecration, baby-naming - a whole congeries of rites and ceremonies, including the treating of women as full religious persons - are new non-*halachic* approaches. Does a ceremony speak to us? Does it encourage us? Does it give us a sense of the sacred? If it does we accept it. Does it restrict us? Constrict us? Does it surround our lives with minutiae which have no meaning to us? If so, we reject it. That's the way non-orthodoxy has developed and that's the great difference between those to whom the telephone poles are important and those of us to whom telephone poles are an unfortunate and increasingly archaic necessity.

Daniel Jeremy Silver



February 6, 1983
Vol. LXVIX, No. 12

The Temple Bulletin

From The Rabbi's Desk:

The rabbis used to speak of a wheel of fortune. We are all on it. Nothing remains as it is. There is no secure prosperity.

Since the Second World War most Americans have felt secure. Change was in the air and change meant progress and progress meant prosperity and prosperity would be ever more broadly shared. We looked forward eagerly to the future. Two years ago the bubble burst. This is not a time to point the finger or apportion blame. There was greed and short-sightedness enough on all sides.

We're still a society of abundance, but not to the degree we once were. Prosperity is no longer as broadly shared. Farms are being foreclosed. Businesses are going bankrupt. People who have worked all of their lives find themselves unemployed and without the prospect of employment. As I've said to you before, I find it incredible that at the time when the governmental social and economic supports are most desperately needed, they are being severely cut back. But this note is not about politics. Rather, it is to report to you on the Hunger Drive of which The Temple has been a part.

Hunger Centers have been in operation in Cleveland for several years. They exist to provide food to those who somehow slip through the safety

net. In recent weeks and months the numbers who need this food have increased dramatically and it was necessary to substantially increase the funding of these centers. The Catholic Diocese and the Greater Cleveland Church Federation have long supported these activities, and The Temple has from time to time made contributions in kind to their programs. It has become necessary to mobilize all the resources of the community.

In December, under the leadership of Leonard Schwartz, The Temple undertook to raise its share towards this campaign. Your response has

been spontaneous and heart-warming. A single letter was sent out; four hundred responses have been received and we have been able, as a congregation, to contribute over thirteen thousand dollars. The fundraising drive will end February 10, but if conditions do not improve and the present administration continues on its present economic course, I am sure there will be other times when the community will turn to us for help, and I know that our Temple's response will be as instinctive and as generous as it was this time.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

February 6, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Temple Young Associates Service
Drs. Nicholas D. & Lilia Rosenstein

will speak on

THE THIRD WAVE IMMIGRATION
FROM RUSSIA: OUR ODYSSEY

February 13, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
ALAN B. LETTOFSKY,
Executive Director of Northern
Ohio Hillel Foundation

will speak on

THE JEWISH COLLEGE
STUDENT TODAY

Friday Evening Service — 5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service — 9:00 a.m. — The Branch



February 20, 1983
Vol. LXVIX, No. 13

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK: The Year in Review

The sermon of January 2, 1983 is produced here in response to numerous requests.

I want to begin this review with a news item which may not have caught your eye. Did you notice last March a story about Alanzo Mann and Leo Frank? If not, I don't blame you. The story was buried on the back pages and only a rabbi's eye would have been drawn to it. In 1913 a 14-year old girl by the name of Mary Phagan was murdered in Atlanta, Georgia in a factory which belonged to the National Pencil Co. The next day the nephew of the owner, Leo Frank, was arrested for the crime. Frank was subsequently arraigned, tried, convicted and sentenced to death.

Most impartial observers who followed this trial were convinced that the verdict was a gross miscarriage of justice. Many called it America's Dreyfus case. Frank, they felt, was on trial because he was a Jew rather than because of the evidence which was, for the most part, circumstantial. The most damning testimony was given by a janitor at the factory. James Conlon, a man of unsavory reputation, whose word could not be trusted.

After a series of appeals the governor of Georgia, John Slayton, commuted Leo Frank's sentence to life imprisonment. This courageous act was his death knell as a Georgia political leader. When he ran for reelection he was soundly defeated. After Frank's conviction Tom Watson, a red-necked demagogue, tried to build his political career on anti-semitism. Watson organized throughout Georgia the Knights of Mary Phagan. Their sworn purpose was to see that justice was done to this blankety-blank Jew from New York. In pursuit of their goal they boycotted and vandalized Jewish businesses. When the governor commuted Leo Frank's sentence, they broke into the jail and lynched him. (Leo Frank has the unfortunate distinction of being the only Jew, as far as we know, to be lynched in the United States). The story that struck my eye was a report that Alonzo Mann, now 83 years of age, had confessed that as a 13-year old office boy in that factory he had seen on the afternoon of the murder the janitor, James Conlon, drag Mary Phagan's body to the furnace room in the basement, presumably in an attempt to burn her body in the factory's boiler. Why had he not spoken

up at the time? He was a frightened 13-year old. Why had he waited so long? He had no answer, but he was 83 and he wanted to meet his Maker with a clean conscience. What struck me about this story was not only that it confirmed the judgement of most historians that Leo Frank had been railroaded, but that it was a fitting symbol for 1982. Nineteen eighty-two was the year of the Jew. There were few times all year long when we picked up the morning paper or turned on the evening news and did not see or hear a major story about Jews or the Jewish people or, most often, the Jewish state.

The year featured a spate of stories whose theme was the Jew as victim. There was the attempted assassination towards the end of May of Argov, Israel's ambassador to London. Later in the year there was the bombing of Goldenberg's Restaurant in Paris. In between there was the bombing of a Brussels community center during which a number of Jewish children waiting to board a bus for summer

camp were injured. Bombs were placed against Jewish buildings from Sidney, Australia to La Paz, Bolivia.

Another group of stories featured the Jew as menacing occupier. Almost every day you could count on a release from the State Department or another foreign ministry or the World Council of Churches or some Third World conference or a United Nations commission describing in detail some sin perpetrated by the Israeli government in the West Bank: the suppression of stone-throwing teen-agers; the destruction of homes where saboteurs and terrorists had been sheltered; the dismissal from office of a number of mayors of West Bank towns because they had openly collaborated with the PLO. There was a spate of negative stories about Jewish settlements on the West Bank which usually suggested that Israel's activity was the obstacle to peace in the Middle East, if not to world peace.

(Continued inside)

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

February 20, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

DR. MARTIN J. PLAX
Ohio-Kentucky Area Director,
American Jewish Committee

will speak on

IS SCIENTIFIC CREATIONISM
SOLELY A RELIGIOUS ISSUE?

February 27, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

FROM ESTHER TO NOW:
THE CHANGING ROLE
OF WOMEN

Friday Evening Service — 5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service — 9:00 a.m. — The Branch

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK (continued)

Some stories dealt not with the Jewish state as an occupying power but with Israel's returning occupied lands. On May 25 Israel turned over the remaining section of the Sinai to Egypt as agreed to under the Camp David treaty. In doing so Israel not only turned over the military stations which control entrance to the Gulf of Akaba but removed its own citizens from the settlement town of Yamit and the surrounding neighborhood who were determined to flaunt Mr. Begin's policies. It was not easy for Jerusalem to act against its own citizens, particularly since most of these people were from groups which had supported Mr. Begin's election, but Israel lived up to its agreements. These stories briefly made the news, but few commented approvingly, and fewer reported that Israel was living up to its agreement despite the fact that Egypt was delaying its obligations to normalize trade and tourist relations with Israel. Though President Mubarak was moving to align himself more closely with the Arab world, Israel took the risk.

Then there were the stories of the Jew as Goliath: the invasion of the Lebanon, the swift march up through Sidon, Tyre and Damour to the gates of Beirut. There were those terrible reports about massive casualties, reports which were printed without anyone bothering to check on their accuracy and which continued to appear even after their exaggerations had been shown. Pictures were splashed across the world of destruction, presumably caused by the Israeli armies — and there was destruction — but many of the film clips and photographs shown to us were not what they claimed to be. This was particularly true in Damour, that once all-Christian town, destroyed in 1976 by the PLO. Pictures of bombed-out buildings appeared frequently in our press as evidence of Israel's indiscriminate bombings, but these were, in fact, buildings which had been damaged during the 1976 Lebanese civil war, an unreported and unphotographed war whose carnage was now somehow blamed on Israel.

There were frequent reports of the bombings of West Beirut and the daily posturings of Mr. Arafat in West Beirut. Were you struck, as I was, that the war was treated with so little attention to perspective? Few, if any, of the daily reports bothered to mention that Israel had waited patiently for half of the year to allow the United States time to get the PLO and Syria to live up to the terms of the ceasefire agreement the United States had negotiated. In 1981 the United States had pressured Israel to agree to an in-place cease-fire. Almost immediately, the Arabs began to flaunt its terms. There was a massive stock-piling of sophisticated equipment by the PLO and the placement of the surface-to-air missiles by the Syrians into the Bekaa Valley. Israel faced the danger of these two forces coalescing, the manpower of the Palestinians and the modern air and missile force of the Syrians into a powerful military threat to Israel's security. Israel signaled her impatience but delayed actions for months in the hopes the United States could get the Arabs to obey the rules. We couldn't. We didn't and, finally, Israel took matters into her own hands and the State Department acted as if we had had no role in these events.

There were also a number of stories which featured the Jew as pariah. Attempts were made in various commissions of the United Nations and in the General Assembly to expel Israel's delegations and declare Israel an outcast in the world community.

There were also a spate of stories which had to do with us. All summer long reporters fanned out across the land seeking evidence that American Jews were withdrawing their wholehearted support of Israel and that major divisions were opening up within the American Jewish community over Israel. All in all, you could hardly pick up a paper or turn on the television without seeing or hearing a piece about Jews, the Jewish people or the Jewish state. A Martian would have thought that we Jews represented a significant proportion of the population and the power of the world. Yet, we're only twelve, thirteen million people among four billion earthlings.

Many of us who tried to understand this phenomenon put it down to anti-semitism, and there was a good bit of anti-semitism in the activity of the Soviet, the Second and Third World, and a number of reporters and columnists. There was also a good bit of calculated anti-semitic ideology, particularly in the writings of the extreme left which appeared in the European press. But anti-semitism doesn't fully explain why 1982 was the year of the Jew.

I'd like to suggest an explanation which goes a little deeper. The world's religious myths have over the centuries led many non-Jews to think of the Jew as more significant, more important than, in fact, we know ourselves to be, and because of these myths the world has a long history of displacing upon us its fears, anxieties and frustrations. When someone close to us dies and we're filled, as most people are, with a terrible sense of frustration, we often find ourselves displacing a lot of anger at a friend or relative who didn't visit as often as we thought they should have during the months of illness. Suddenly, everything in us lets go on them. Or we're having trouble with a child and we find ourselves letting that anger out against someone in the office, or even a stranger. That's emotional displacement. Nineteen eighty-two was a frustration year. Few people sensed any real progress. There were no voices which seemed to offer a meaningful program to resolve the world's problems. There were problems galore and few solutions. We faced problems which we could not begin to resolve: continuing ethnic, tribal and national conflicts; problems social, economic, military and nuclear. The world had a surfeit of problems and a woeful lack of solutions. And rather than face its problems and limitations and make the best of it, the world, or much of it, displaced its frustration on us.

Throughout 1982 the two super powers continued their headlong, mad rush to rearm and to develop and deploy weapons which could destroy the world more quickly than earlier models of holocaustal weapons. The Soviet Union is in the second decade of a major nuclear buildup. The Reagan-Weinberger administration is in the second year of a major program of nuclear catchup. Both governments seemed willing to put their economies at risk in order to achieve an assumed military advantage.

During 1982 both super-power economies remained weak. During the year the Soviet Union had to admit that consumer commodities would be cut back. The Russian harvest failed again. During 1982 the recession, or was it a depression, held our country in its grip. Nearly 11 percent of our work force are unemployed and a much larger percentage is underemployed. By spending additional billions on armaments we were guaranteeing severely increased budget deficits and putting the economy at risk, but the Administration pushed ahead and tried to make

up for these expenditures by deep cuts in social programs, the economic cushion which alone stood between the unemployed and destitution. It was a disastrous policy and a childish game of who will flinch first, but neither power would be the first to back off.

Because no one had a good idea on how to reverse the arms race, sanity manifested itself in frustration. Publishers Weekly reported that in the last 24 months alone 180 of what the trade calls nuclear fear books were published, books which detail the destruction which would happen if a nuclear war were to take place. In the spring Jonathan Schnell's *The Fate of the Earth* was serialized in 'The New Yorker' and became a best seller. Schnell graphically outlined and clearly laid out the dangers, but could offer no realistic and achievable solution. All he could offer was a messianic scenario. There has to be a verifiable and mutual nuclear freeze, but a freeze is only a small first step. There has to be a major reduction in nuclear armaments, but that will not take place until the nations of the world abandon their traditional concerns with boundaries and nationhood and an entirely new form of international governance is established. This may happen, but the time frame for such a major political change would surely be measured in centuries, and the question of nuclear war or no nuclear war will be settled in a matter of years, decades at most, certainly not centuries.

Ours is a world full of problems for which there were no apparent solutions. All summer long good people were out in the streets seeking signatures for petitions demanding a nuclear freeze. Many states and a number of communities placed a nuclear freeze referendum on the November ballot, and in all but one instance these proposals passed. The voice of sanity was crying out: there has to be a better way, but where was the better way? The SALT I and SALT II treaties which were advertised and debated as significant arms limitation agreements accomplished so little that at the end of their effective period both the Soviet Union and the United States had greater nuclear fire power on the line than before these agreements were signed.

I see the nuclear arms issue as a larger version of the domestic gun control issue. We keep talking about gun control. We keep passing laws prohibiting Saturday Night Specials and other hand guns, but to no avail. There are always more guns in people's hands at the end of each year than in January. Until we make up our minds that all guns have to be taken away from all civilians, there will be no meaningful gun control in the United States. The world faces a similar choice over its nuclear guns. Until the nations make up their minds that all nuclear arms must be destroyed there will not be meaningful nuclear disarmament. Treaties will simply be documents to be worked around. No one trusts anyone else. Everyone wants the status and power which comes from belonging to the nuclear club.

In November of this year the National Council of Roman Catholic Bishops published a pastoral letter in which they called nuclear weapons immoral, described the use of the nuclear threat in international policy as unacceptable, and called on all governments to accept a verifiable nuclear freeze. Their approach made sense, but Washington responded that if we freeze development and deployment how

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FROM THE RABBI'S DESK (continued)

do we know the Russians will do the same. Moscow had its freeze proposal which was designed to see that the arms advantage they had in place would remain in being. No one had any meaningful answers and so frustrations were dumped on the Jews. That was the way of 1982.

During 1982 I had a sense of being caught up in the theater of the absurd. Three cartoons captured and capsuled this feeling. A cartoon which appeared in the New York Times showed a bemedaled American general saying: "the decision to cancel the MX or the B1 would send the wrong signal to Moscow. It would damage our credibility and make us look weak. Pushing ahead with these weapons will convince the Soviets that we're strong. How else could we afford to waste all the money?" Then there was this lovely cartoon which I found in the Los Angeles Times. Two Russian citizens are reading Pravda. One says to the other: "Brezhnev dies and who do we get? Andropov, former head of the KGB." The other Russian replies: "Don't blame me, I didn't vote for him." The Jerusalem Post provided this delightful vignette from the theater of the absurd. "Lebanon has asked for an increase of 853 percent in the size of the multinational force." Another voice says, "wow." The first voice says, "you gotta hand it to them, Amin will get all the foreign troops out of Lebanon even if he has to bring in soldiers from every country in the world."

That was the kind of year it was. In the United States we were following an economic policy which was called Reagonomics. No one, including the President, seemed to know quite what it was. Everybody, including those in charge of Reagonomics, agreed it hadn't worked and yet, we plunged ahead. As the public came to understand Reagonomics, they saw it as a theory that if the economy gave more to the rich, the financial health of the country would be encouraged. Presumably, more money would be constructively invested. Everyone knew that Washington had devised a tax system which saw to it that the poor in our society paid more and the rich were given more. It seemed unjust and, worse, ineffective. At year's end more people were out of work than in January and little was invested in new plant and research. Reagonomics didn't work, but no one had a better idea. In November we elected a number of new legislators, but they represent a variant of economic views. Mr. Reagan's popularity was at an all-time low, but no one had come forward and presented an attractive economic policy which seemed to have a chance of bringing America out of the recession.

The United States did not suffer alone. Nearly 14 percent of the work force in the United Kingdom was unemployed and 9 percent of these in West Germany. All parts of the world were suffering, even, believe it or not, the OPEC nations. Two years ago the OPEC nations had a combined surplus of 140 billion dollars. They lost 100 billion dollars of that surplus during 1981. This year it's estimated that OPEC will not have a surplus. Some OPEC countries, Algeria, Nigeria and Libya, are for the first time operating debit economies; that is, they're spending more to industrialize and modernize than they are receiving from the sale of their oil. If the oil glut continues for long and if we remain in a world-wide depression, the OPEC countries will rejoin, believe it or not, the have-not nations, a fate they richly deserve.

No one knew how to turn around the world's economy, and we sensed that the protectionist measures many countries were taking would only make matters worse. American steel workers complained that Europe was dumping steel in the United States and demanded that the government impose quotas and mounted a buy-American campaign. The UAW demanded that cars and parts purchased for the government be entirely of American manufacture. We imposed new tariff regulations in some of our trading partners, but they returned the favor, and the result could very well be that the flow of international goods on which all economies ultimately depend will be dammed up and everyone will suffer.

This was the first year when economists worried openly about the possible failure of the entire international banking system. There were over 500 billion dollars in outstanding loans from commercial banks in the Western world to nations which could not make repayments. We read throughout the year of the problems of Poland, Yugoslavia, Brazil and Mexico despite its rich oil deposits, Nigeria despite its oil fields. Multiply these examples by many other developing nations and some developed one - particularly in Scandinavia, and the world's bankers found themselves at the end of the year beginning to turn to international public banking mechanisms like the IMF to bail them out. In some cases our country unilaterally gave Brazil the money to carry them through, not because we cared that much that Brazil might go under, but if she went under our banks, our whole banking system, might collapse. No one had a solution, but the Jews are around, let's talk about them.

Before I came in today one of you said: "I came because I wanted to know if you had anything good to say about 1982." I answered, "we're alive." So I'll close as a rabbi. The best known Hebrew word in English or any other language is the word, Amen. We use it at the end of every prayer and so do Christians and a lot of people who really don't believe in prayer. Amen was used in Biblical days by those who came to Jerusalem to worship at the shrine. When the Levites would sing a hymn, the people would respond, Amen. If you look at the Book of Psalms which is divided, interestingly, into five books just like the five books of the Torah, you'll find that each of the Psalms' five sections ends with a phrase praising God and 'Amen.'

Amen comes from the same Hebrew root as *emunah*, faith, and both those words mean to be steadfast, to keep going, to hold on to what you believe despite all. That's what faith is, holding on to what you know to be right, what you believe in despite the frustrations, the setbacks and challenges of the day. It was a way of saying, 'I agree.' 'I will persevere.'

We're going to need perservance in the years ahead. We're going to need to be able to say Amen to the convictions and commitments which we know to be right. I know of no magic wand in anyone's hand which they can wave and make everything become right. Our problems have become so complex that we need computers even to tell us what our problems are. We have to attack an almost infinite number of separate problems. There's no one solution. Perhaps many of our problems have no solutions. Still, we know what needs to be done. We know that justice is and we know what peace is and we know what

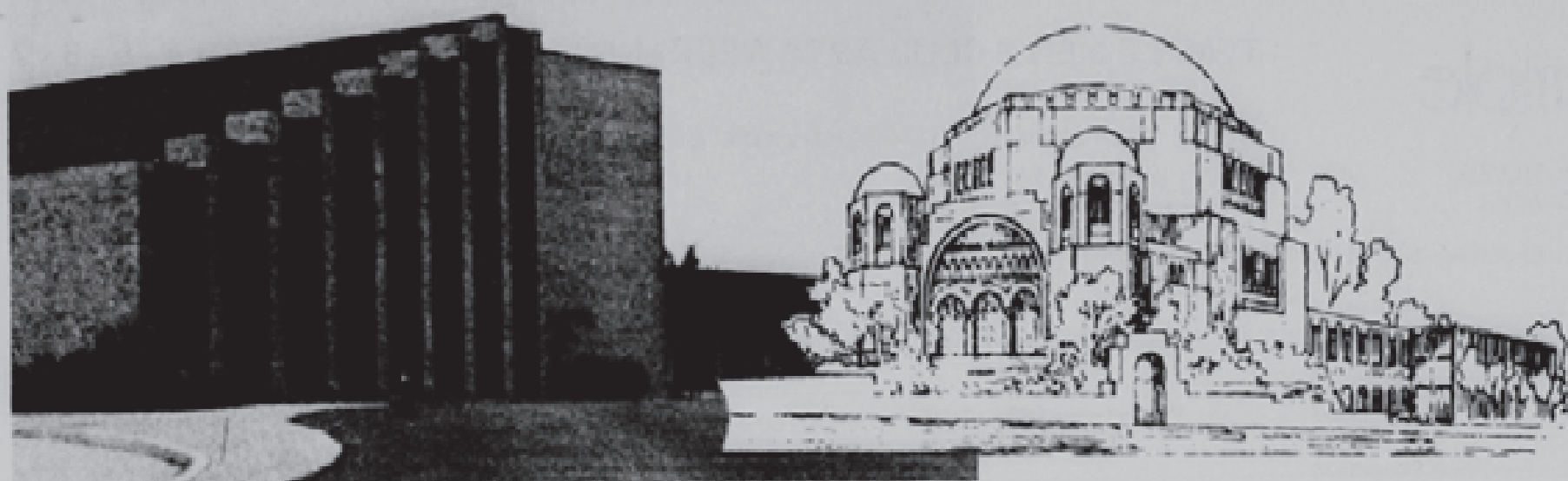
disarmament is and we know what public welfare is and we know what economic freedom represents. We know what we feel about many issues and we know that if we're going to be at all successful, we're going to have to move steadily, patiently, deliberately, fitting one piece of the puzzle into place and then another piece. It's slow going, but it's the only way. Only if we join this messianic journey, knowing we're never going to achieve all or most of the messianic goals, will we be able to sustain life on earth.

What troubles me about our times is that so many people seem emotionally unable or unwilling to accept the frustration, to admit failure, to take this patient view. They want quick fixes. They want easy solutions, panaceas. They want our illnesses diagnosed and successfully treated, and quickly. They're not prepared emotionally for the long, long haul for the long years of wilderness trekking. They believe they can fly to the Promised Land in a supersonic jet.

The problem is that frustration breeds impatience, the closed mind, and madness. All around us we're seeing a revival of ferocious religious and ideological fundamentalism. Millions of people are committed to a party, a fundamentalist ideology, a leader, an ayatollah, to men and to causes who claim to have simple solutions to the complex problems of the world. One group after another proclaims its manifesto and its revolution, but no revolution can resolve the problems of overpopulation or illiteracy or the lack of the necessary training most people need for today's job market. The world no longer needs the uneducated human being, the pack horse. It needs the trained mind, the scientific and the technologically oriented mind, and the humanist, someone who knows history and psychology and all that goes into making us what we are. Yet, the world is turning more and more toward the guru, some authority figure, false prophets, religious fundamentalists, cults, toward simplistic, and therefore, dangerous, forms of commitment, commitment which give answers which are non-answers, closed-mind commitments.

I hope the new year will be an Amen year. I hope we will find a way to keep an open mind and a well-formed mind and steady, but patient, commitments. I hope we'll find the courage to be steadfast and to persevere. Life is not fated. We're not pursued by the furies. We're not shackled to some horrible destiny as the Greeks insisted. We're free, as our fathers taught us. "See I have set before you the blessing and the curse, life and death, choose ye life that ye may live." We're free. We're free to make choices, free to do the right or to be hasty in our commitments, foolish to do the wrong. We're alive and that's to say a great deal. We're alive and we're free, and the question for 1983 and the years ahead is the question that's always before mankind: have we the steadfastness and the wisdom to use that freedom constructively and sanely?

Daniel Jeremy Silver



March 6, 1983
Vol. LXVIX, No. 14

The Temple Bulletin

From The Rabbi's Desk:

Most of us long for the security of youth. The Yiddish poet, Moshe-Leyb Halpern, captured the bitter-sweet sorrow which we feel at being thrust into the cold world in a moving short poem called Tell.

Tell

Come, be a mother to me. My
mother told
A story of a paper bridge -
Tell it to me, too, and tell of the
birds
Returning in summer.

Drive from my bed the bad dreams
That come every night.
Tell me about the angels who came
And brought me golden stars.

And if church bells peal, cover
my ears,
Cover them and say that the town
clock strikes.
And if the wind wails in the shut-
ters, say
That father sits at a holy book and
sings.

Tell that it is warm summer out-
doors
And that singing, the peasants
walk from the fields.
Tell, for telling may yet still
My sorrow - bring some brightness
to the world.

I knew little about Halpern (1886-1932) until a volume of translations of his work, titled *In New York*, crossed my desk several weeks ago.

The Jewish publication Society has been making available selections from the works of not-well-enough-known Jewish poets who wrote in other than English and this is the fifth volume in that series. Normally, I put these books aside for one of those leisured evenings which come all too infrequently, but this volume I read through within a day of its arrival because the translations had been done and a critical introduction had been written by one of our own, Kathryn Hellerstein.

In the years since Kathryn, who is the daughter of Drs. Mary and Herman Hellerstein, was confirmed here she has continued her deep interest in the literature and culture of our people, and this book represents an offshoot of her Ph.D. thesis which she presented to the English Department at Stanford

University. Incidentally, Kathryn learned Yiddish as an adult so there is still hope for most of us.

I commend *In New York* to you, not simply because Kathryn put it all together, but because Halpern's work is full of energy, the outpourings of a driving and driven soul. The poet left his native Galicia as a youth, seeking in America more than a chance at financial success and he did not find all he looked for. None of us ever does, but few of us have the skill to put words to our feelings. *In New York* is a moving document of a sensitive man and his experiences and not, incidentally, further evidence of the growing interest of scholars in all phases of the Jewish experience.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

March 6, 1983

10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

CRIME IN AMERICA

March 13, 1983

10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Temple Women's Association

Lillian Braverman

Barbara Goldfarb

Ilona Neustadt

will speak on

JEWISH WOMEN IN LITERATURE

Friday Evening Service - 5:30 - 6:10 - The Temple Chapel

Sabbath Service - 9:00 a.m. - The Branch



March 20, 1983
Vol. LXVIX, No. 15

The Temple Bulletin

From The Rabbi's Desk:

We're just back from a short vacation. Cleveland's weather had been so open that we elected to go for city rather than beach life, and we had two fine weeks in Holland, Paris and London. It was vacation time, but inevitably there are unexpected experiences which set you thinking.

We love the theater. Usually the London stage is both rich in theme and exciting in production. This year the pickings were surprisingly lean, so one night we decided that we would go and see a restoration drama, Sheridan's *School For Scandal*. The period piece was brilliantly acted and staged at the Haymarket Theater. It was the kind of evening that can only be put on by the English.

I had read the play in college, but had forgotten the story line. *School For Scandal* has a complicated plot which at one point involves a spendthrift son who must borrow money from users. The money lender he turns to is named Moses, and much fun is made of the little Jew and his passion for coin. The Jew is played as a slightly hunched, bearded, dark-suited fellow, the whole

part obviously derived from the standard caricature.

Sheridan had written in just such a figure; but I left convinced that if this production had been put on in New York or Cleveland our anti-defamation agencies would have protested. We don't like to have the old and ugly stereotype revived. When I asked several English friends for their reactions, they were not particularly disturbed: "That's the way he wrote the play." "It's part of the national heritage." "Jews here don't complain unless a contemporary is being slandered."

I'm not sure I would be that patient or understanding. Most of us are not as free of history as we think we are, but, more than anything, this episode reminded me of the major differences which separate American and English Jews, we don't hold our tongue. We are far less reticent, but then our society has never had a State church or a medieval cultural history.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

March 20, 1983
10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Menachem M. Haran
will speak on
**PRIESTHOOD, TEMPLE
AND SYNAGOGUE**

March 27, 1983
10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
will speak on
IDEAS ON THE SEDER TABLE

PASSOVER SERVICES

FIRST DAY OF PASSOVER

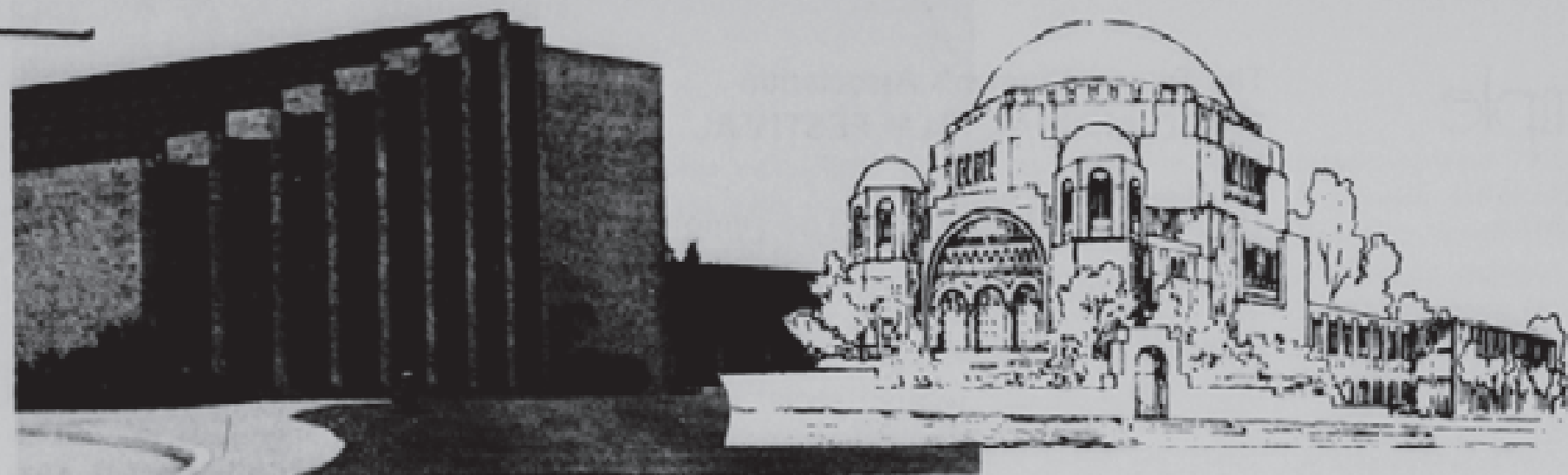
March 29, 1983
10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Conducted by
The Temple Seniors Group

Rabbi Jonathan S. Woll
will speak on
ELIJAH

Friday Evening Service
5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service
9:00 a.m. — The Branch



April 3, 1983
Vol. LXVIX, No. 15

The Temple Bulletin

From the Rabbi's Desk: CRIME IN AMERICA

The sermon of March 6, 1983 is produced here in response to numerous requests.

Crime and violence are constant subjects of conversation. We're fascinated by the theme. Some of us read a seemingly endless number of murder mysteries and suspense stories full of blood and gore. In most book shops Agatha Christie outsells the Bible. The way newspapers define news proves our predilection. Papers sell when the front page features the details of the most recent mass murder or hostage crises. Television follows the press in this respect and the six o'clock news always features a major crime story, preferably with pictures of the body or the captured criminal. Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* sold millions of copies and America has devoured reams of type about the Manson cult. One can hardly spend a social evening without someone talking about the latest electric sensor that they have put in their homes.

The details of crime and violence fascinate us. We follow avidly the search for the Son of Sam. Hitchcock movies became a cult. We are anxious for details about break-ins in the neighborhood and quickly pass on rumors about a rape at the local shopping center. And yet, when I try to talk about crime and violence rather than about a crime or a specific act of violence I find, surprisingly, that most people pull back from the discussion.

Some weeks ago I tried again with a good lady who was bemoaning the fact that she no longer felt safe on her streets. When I tried to talk about the causes of crime, she stopped me short: "Don't, it's too sad a subject to think about." I dropped the subject, but ten minutes later I overheard her discussing with a friend what she would serve her neighbors at an organization meeting for a block group who were meeting to counter a rash of break-ins.

There's one exception to our reticence. We're willing to talk about the problems of the criminal justice system as it relates to crime and violence. Most of us have some ideas, generally half-formed,

about what could be done by the police, the courts, and correctional authorities to improve the system and in so doing presumably increase our safety. One line of opinion has the virtue of simplicity: lock up the bastards and throw the key away. These people are convinced that if the police would simply round up all delinquents and criminals and store them in jails our problems would be at an end. When you talk to them of constitutional rights and due process, they either snicker or talk about an emergency situation.

Others argue that we need more certain punishment. They believe that the criminal justice system doesn't work because the criminal feels, and with some justification, that he will not be caught and that if he is caught he will either escape punishment or be slapped on the wrist. The crime solving rate is, in fact, fairly low and sentences are not standardized. Presumably, if we could guarantee that crime would be found out and appropriately punished, potential criminals would think twice.

A third group, a more kind-hearted group, argues that it's really not the criminal's fault, but ours. They argue that society has created an economic and social system which does not provide employment or provide poor children an adequate and meaningful education, and that until such injustices are corrected, until we reform society, we cannot expect any significant reduction in the crime rate.

Each of these positions is argued by some with passion. Unfortunately, none of these ideas are sustained by social research. If we were to round up all the delinquents and all who commit street crimes and lock them up we would not be helping with their rehabilitation and we would be burdening the society with an overwhelming and unnecessary cost since we would be keeping in jail people

(Continued inside)

SERVICES

Sunday, April 3, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
will speak on
THE RIVER AND THE TREE

Concluding Passover Service
Monday, April 4, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Conducted by
Hebrew School Graduates

Sharon Joan Abrams
Joan Frances Berger
Laurence Ari Friedman
David Henry Seed
Halli Lynn Small

Sunday, April 10, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Sarah Austin, Executive Director,
The Cleveland Round Table
will speak on
OUR CITY

Friday Evening Service
5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service
9:00 a.m. - The Branch

CRIME IN AMERICA

(continued)

who are unlikely to commit further crime. An unexpected fact about crime and violence is that most crime — most street crime, most violent crime — is committed by those in their teen ages and their twenties. Most who have been involved in such criminal activity fall out of it when they pass through their early thirties and join the straight society. We don't quite know why, but we do know that only a hardened minority remain at their criminal trade beyond that point. Perhaps it's that the emotional strain of being young and adolescent is finally over. Perhaps the realities of adult life have become all encompassing. Whatever the reason, if we threw away the key we would be keeping tens of thousands behind bars who no longer presented any danger to the society.

What about the idea that the crime rate would fall if every crime were solved and every convicted criminal guaranteed a particular sentence. The assumptions of this argument are obviously utopian. Moreover, though deterrence is a factor in the control of crime, no one is quite sure to what degree. Then, too, locking up a person in a so-called correctional institution does not guarantee that we help them adjust to the society. Those who take this line respond that America has never invested the money or the necessary human service skills in the rehabilitation of the criminal; that our jails are schools in crime rather than rehabilitation institutions. There's truth to this charge; but money and professional skill will not solve the crime problem. In Sweden where a great deal of money and attention has been paid to rehabilitation, the limits of the rehabilitation approach have become apparent. In America the rate of those in the 15 to 30 age bracket who, once imprisoned, return to prison is 8 out of 10. In Sweden, despite a prodigious human and financial service, they have been able to reduce the recidivist rate only slightly — to 7 out of 10.

And what about those who argue that the crime problem is really the society's problem because the society is unjust? There is poverty and unemployment. Many are poorly educated. But here again, research does not bear out the argument that economic reform would reduce the crime rate. During the Great Depression the crime rate in America went down, not up. The crime rate exploded in the 50's and 60's, precisely during that era when the unemployment rate was the lowest, the society the most prosperous, and the opportunities available to the young in the society the greatest they had ever seen. If you have followed the saga of crime rates these last years you'll have noticed that they have fallen, not risen, during the recession. Poverty is a factor in crime but not the immediate cause many think it to be.

What is? How should we begin to think about crime?

When we do think about crime most of us echo, consciously or not, the thinking of the 16th century English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes argued that human nature is governed by three great passions: a passion for wealth which may lead to theft; a passion for glory which may lead to the ruthless pursuit of power; and a passion for life, the fear of death, which may lead to a willingness to kill to protect oneself and all we possess. According to Hobbes, since these drives are part of our nature, people would be at each other's throats were it not for the restraining hand of the state. If the state, which he calls the Leviathan, did not impose its authority on us and restrict our actions, each of us would grab ruthlessly for possessions and power. The state necessarily imposes its power and sets the rules of community life so that we know that we can violate them only at great peril and cost. Under these necessary restraints, we learn to limit the degree to which we give our passions free rein; and, ultimately, we develop habits which direct these energies constructively. Hobbes didn't know the modern term, sublimation, but that's the phenomenon he was suggesting. All of us have found ways to redirect aggressive drives and to use them in societally acceptable ways.

In any case, Hobbes convinced many that we must look to the state and to its police power to effect law and order. In line with this thinking, most of us expect the criminal justice system not only to solve crime and punish the criminal, but to handle the larger question of the causes of crime.

The criminal justice system can be more effectively organized, but, however well structured it becomes, it cannot get to the root of the crime-violence problem. In societies where the criminal justice system operates more efficiently than it does here, let's say in England, where a case against a car thief or a purse snatcher will not be postponed time after time until the witnesses can no longer appear, the crime rate has risen in recent years much as it has in the United States.

The problem of crime is ultimately a problem of human nature and if we want to deal with the problem of crime we have to look at ourselves and at our cultural values and not just at the criminal justice system.

Let me illustrate my point with a quick look at some facts from American history. During the American Revolution there were some folk who agreed that English taxation was ruining the colonies but who did not subscribe to the cause of revolution because they were afraid that once people learned to defy legitimate authority they would never again submit willingly to it. Crime, they said, would be encouraged because the legitimacy of state authority would have been brought into question. Their analysis was not borne out by events. The crime rate did not rise during or after the American Revolution. Crime did not begin to rise at a significant rate until the

decades between 1820 and 1840, that is until the first period of rapid urbanization. (Incidentally, Most of us remain convinced that there is a direct relationship between urbanization and crime). Young men came from abroad or from the farms to the cities alone, adrift; and the city did not yet have in place any institutions which could provide them roots and community. They lived wherever they could. They mixed with others as footloose as they. There was frustration and loneliness. Alcoholism was rampant. Full of energy, without guidance, alone, some fell into what were then called 'bad ways.' A significant rise in crime was noted.

But the crime rate did not rise throughout the whole period of urbanization. Indeed, from about 1840 to the second World War, the crime rate did not rise significantly despite the fact that this was a period of massive immigration, of industrial abuse, of sweat shops and scab labor, or urban poverty and overcrowding, a period when for the first time an urban proletariat developed in America and the division between the haves and the have-nots widened considerably. Despite all this, as far as researchers can discover working from the limited records available, no significant rise in the crime rate occurred. The question is why the crime rate did not rise at some predictable rate during this long period so full of dislocation — the Civil War and World War II and innumerable cycles of boom and bust. A further question: why did the crime rate begin to rise at a significant rate after more than a century of urbanization and precisely when America entered a period of remarkable prosperity, when increasing numbers were able to move out of poverty into the middle class and when, by every standard, America enjoyed the broadest sharing of wealth this society has ever known?

Some who have thought about these unexpected findings argue that the flat crime rate during most of the 19th century represents a response to the impact of a particular morality and cultural ethos which was broadly shared by the society. This ethos emphasized self-discipline, thrift, industry and personal responsibility. It assumed that if you worked hard you would get ahead. It emphasized the virtue of delaying one's gratifications. In church it was called the protestant work ethic: "As you sow so shall you reap." It showed even in one's dress. There was always a proper costume. Standards were generally agreed on, failure to abide them was summarily punished; and people looked in punishment as only fair when someone broke the rules. Most people felt that their responsibility to the public order lay not only in being law-abiding but in not becoming a public nuisance. Call these victorian ethics. Call these bourgeois values. Call them what you will, these values were shared by the majority of the society. During the 19th century, education, child rearing, family management, all emphasized these

(Continued)

CRIME IN AMERICA

(continued)

values. Mothers and fathers expected to raise their children according to the prescription I read to you this morning from the book of Proverbs: "Train up your child in the way that he shall go and he will follow you the rest of his life." He will follow you the rest of his life. What parent today expects his child to be like him or to share his sense of values? Education was looked on not simply as mastery of the three R's but as character formation, civics. Schools emphasized self-discipline. There was a way to write your letters. There was a way to spell every word. A child dressed a certain way for school. Those who have analyzed the popular magazines of the time have found that most articles on child-rearing offered advice on how to teach honesty, how to teach clean speech — wash out their mouths; how to teach responsibility — give them an allowance and no more; how to punish them for mischief — with a switch before the society punish them with prison.

During this period cities developed at all levels popular institutions which reflected these values. This was the heyday of adult Sunday schools, YMCA type programs, evening adult education classes, all kinds of self-improvement groups. In almost everything it did, the society encouraged responsibility, character, self-discipline, and the cultural had an impact on crime rates. One went to work buttoned up, in uniform. Oh yes, there was crime and there was violence. I'm not describing utopia. There was the drunkenness of Saturday night and regular bar room brawls, but crime was not rampant and violence was generally limited to certain times and places. Despite urbanization, most Americans felt safe in their homes and in the street. It was the era when Americans did not lock the doors of their homes and expected to be able to stroll on the streets and the parks of their cities.

Why did this situation change after World War II? Many things happened: the spread of drugs; the spread of guns; an increase in functional illiteracy; racial tension; elements which were to a certain degree unique to American life; but if we look at the industrialized world we find a sharp rise in the crime rate in every industrialized society beginning at the same time.

Why? One answer which non-Marxist historians offer with increasing confidence touches on the radical cultural changes which have reshaped Western mores. Our century has seen a revolutionary change of attitude toward social and personal values. As this century wore on, more and more people began to look with scorn at the uplift values of the 19th century. They were put down as hypocritical, as based on a double standard, its restrictive and hopelessly bourgeois. Instead of industry and self-discipline, our century has emphasized self-expression and self-realization. The new rule was do that which seems right in your eyes as long as you do not harm someone else. Where the 19th century had spoken of duties, the

20th century spoke of rights. Where the 19th century spoke of responsibilities, the 20th century spoke of opportunities. Where the 19th century spoke of deferred gratification, our century has encouraged us to seize the moment. No one was going to tell us what we were to do. A youth culture emerged, untrammelled, free. Parents encouraged this openness and this new freedom, not only because they wanted their children to have every opportunity but because many shared a common misinterpretation of Freud which insisted that all restrictions are somehow inhibiting and, therefore unwarranted and unhealthy.

The earlier approach conditioned people to say: 'wait a minute, don't do that.' Today's approach no longer shapes that kind of super ego. Our children are not taught in school, or out, to say: 'wait a minute, don't do that,' but to say: 'Why can't I do it?' 'I'll make up my own mind. I'm a free person, aren't I?' 'I won't be restricted by your rules, I'm going to do my own thing.' This philosophy of self-expression has permeated at all levels of the society and all of us have found our sense of right and wrong become hazy. Punishment is no longer accepted as deserved. Who set up the rules anyway? Paradoxically, at that moment when the society is freest, we and our children face the future without a clear sense of direction, with only a hazy sense of what is right and what is wrong; and so we have no confidence that we will use our freedom intelligently.

Oh, we wouldn't steal, at least we wouldn't snatch a purse, but what about creative accounting? "everybody does it." 'who gets hurt?' We have a treasury of ready rationalizations. 'If I don't look after myself, others will take advantage of me.'

We see this especially when it comes to those human relationships which were once clearly defined but where we accept today every possible manner of exceptions. Is adultery a crime? Is homosexuality a crime? Is using parental authority a crime? Is it a crime to play the radio loudly over the neighborhood? To make a public nuisance of ourselves? To hoot down a speaker we don't agree with?

Our society has not yet worked out a set of commandments. We are like the tribes of Israel after they had crossed the Red Sea and left the Egyptians behind, but before they had accepted the Sinai covenant. They were free from the slave master. We are free from the restrictions and customs of the past. Schools no longer tell us what we must learn. Parents no longer tell us what we must do. Society no longer imposes its values on us. But though free of the Egyptians, the tribes were not yet a free people. They were leaderless and aimless. Within days they fell to bickering. Some wanted to return to Egypt. They couldn't use their freedom effectively and were not and wouldn't be able to until they accepted the

covenant at Sinai.

We, too, are free from. What we lack is a Sinai, commitment to a set of appropriate commandments. We lack broadly accepted do's and don'ts and a broadly shared sense of purpose. Our crime rate is where it is because we're a society of self-serving individuals, not a community. We can't help the young through their inevitable confusions, because there are no ground rules. We don't know the permissible limits of freedom or how to develop purpose in their lives because there is no broad agreement on these issues. We haven't faced up to the ultimate questions: what is right, absolutely; and what is wrong without question. We explain away. We justify. We rationalize. We find exceptions. We accept all kinds of behavior and not a community of moral commitments.

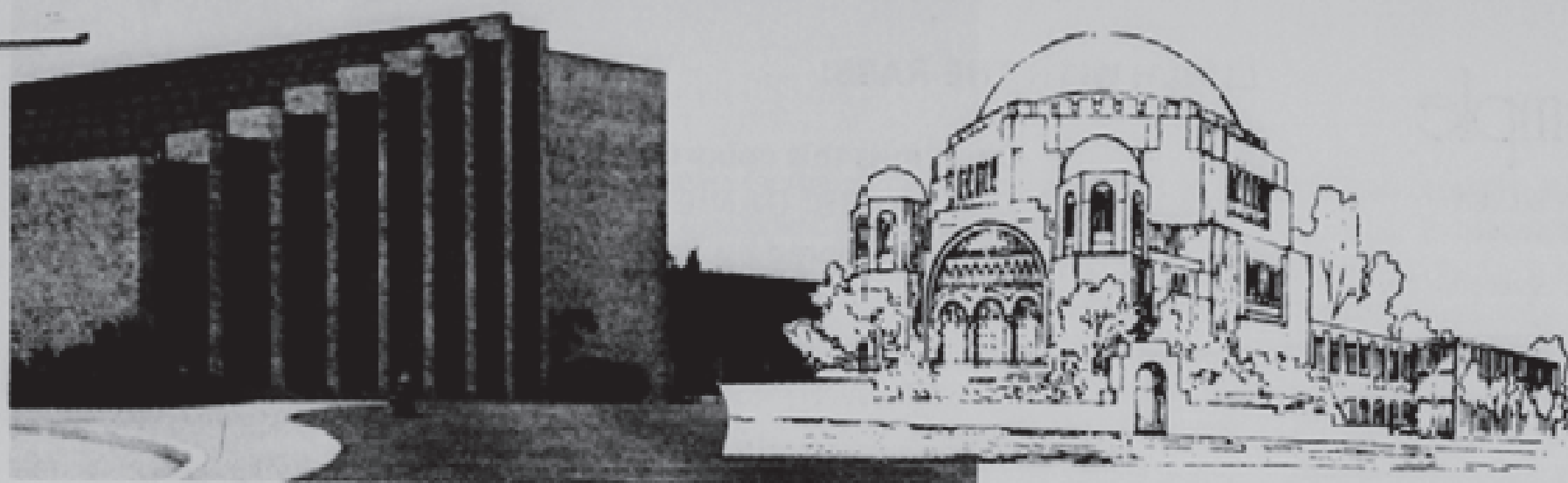
Crime, I am convinced, will continue to metastasize in the society as long as and until our society decides it's time for Sinai, that it's time to talk of duties as well as of rights, of self-discipline as well as of self-realization.

Let's be honest with ourselves. Our literature isn't a value-related literature but an exploration of sensations and the emotional frontiers. Our school systems wrestle with the basic problems of literacy and provide technical skills, but stay away from questions of character. They'd rather not discipline. Civics is no longer taught. Department standards are minimal. How many of our homes provide and maintain clear standards? How many parents are exploring their own freedoms rather than worrying about the values their children are internalizing?

The rise of crime in our century is related to the moral confusions which we have allowed to spread throughout our communities. Many individuals have tried to fight their own good fight, but when they have they're generally overwhelmed by the pell mell rush of the society for materialist rewards and hedonistic pleasures. And our institutions, including the school, the church and the synagogue, have often been as "tolerant of the intolerable" as any other group. Certainly, they've not clearly defined and defended clear standards.

We can't go back to the values of the 19th century. Its standards are no longer appropriate. We have to forge our own ethic out of the moral insights of the past and the experience of our times; but forge it we must unless we want the crime rate to climb ever higher and our lives and homes to become evermore insecure.

Daniel Jeremy Silver



April 17, 1983
Vol. LXVIX, No. 16

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK: From Esther to NOW: The Changing Role of Women
The sermon of February 27, 1983

This afternoon there will be several hundred Esthers running around our building in their mothers' finery. They'll come in all sizes, up to about three feet; and each of them will be carrying herself as the quintessential Jewish heroine. Esther's courage and beauty are certainly the classic qualities of a heroine. Nevertheless, I'd like this morning to take another look at Esther and at the book of Esther, and to do so not with a child's simple enthusiasm but as one who is deeply sensitive to the issues of feminine consciousness. My hope is that we will gain a better understanding of the long struggle within our tradition for the Jewish woman to gain her rightful place.

If the Miss Persia contest in which Esther won the crown were to take place today it would be picketed by some of our more vociferous women's groups. Esther was chosen because she was a beautiful object and, if the story is to be believed, her courage rested on the single fact that she was willing to brave the disfavor of her husband at a time when a man's word was law. When Haman's decision to destroy all the Jews of Persia became public knowledge, the queen was really the only one who could make an effective representation to the king about it; but in ancient Persia even the queen was not allowed to intrude into the king's apartment unless she was summoned. Esther could not wait to be called since the date of the execution of the Jews had been set, and so she took her life in her hands and went unbidden to his apartment. If Ahasuerus had been out of temper or preoccupied and had been unwilling to receive her, her life would have been forfeit.

Two impressions emerge from a critical rereading of this scroll. The story of Esther reflects another time and a male-dominated social context, and it is Vashti, the deposed queen, who stands up for women's rights.

You'll recall that the story opens at a banquet. Ahasuerus and the nobles of Persia have been eating, feasting and drinking for seven days and seven nights. Towards the end of this revel the king, very much in his cups, begins to boast about the beauty of his queen, about Vashti's comeliness, and he decides on the spur of the moment to summon Vashti so he can show her

off to his drinking companions. Much to her credit, Vashti refuses to come. The company may be noble-born, but at this point they're nothing more than a bunch of drunken men and she's not about to display herself to them. For her courage, she is summarily deposed and disappears without further comment from the scene.

The king feels the need to justify his action against Vashti and he tells anyone who will listen that if he had not deposed her the women of Persia would have been encouraged to show disrespect to their husbands. As always, he had

(Continued inside)

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

April 17, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

**NON-VIOLENCE!
DOES IT WORK?**

April 24, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

**LEBANON: TO BE OR
NOT TO BE?**

Friday Evening Service — 5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service — 9:00 a.m. — The Branch

only the welfare of his people in mind. We're tempted to say, that's a Persian king for you, Jew wouldn't act that way, but when we examine our tradition's record, we discover that no sage or commentator from the first century C.E. down to the 18th century was ever moved to praise Vashti's motives or to give her proper credit. Quite the contrary. To a man, and all the commentators were men, they impugn Vashti's motives. They suggested that she acted out of conceit or else out of necessity. Some say she couldn't obey the king because God had stricken her with an ugly skin disease as punishment for the fact that she had conspired to delay the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. Others suggest that she was simply a vain and arrogant woman and they support Ahasuerus' concern that wives must obey the will of their husbands. They're not willing to even suggest that a woman's sense of her own dignity might appropriately lead her to deny an unseemly order from her husband.

This emphasis on a wife's subservience becomes even more pointed when we compare how these commentators treated Vashti with their treatment of Mordecai. Mordecai and Vashti are guilty of exactly the same offense. Both of them refuse a royal command. Vashti refuses the king's order to exhibit herself to the drunken lords. Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman after his appointment as Prime Minister although the king specifically has commanded that all members of the court do so.

To a modern reader, Vashti's disobedience is understandable, Mordecai's is not. In ancient Persia a bow was simply an acknowledgment of authority, a courtly convention and Mordecai's action seems to be little more than an exhibition of personal pique or stiff-neckedness. Yet, the same male commentators who denigrate Vashti's behavior go out of their way to insist that Mordecai had acted out of the most worthy motives. They invent the story that Haman wore around his neck a large religious icon, and go on to say that if Mordecai had bowed to Haman it might have appeared as if he were bowing to the god and this worthy Jew would not perform an act tainted with idolatry. In the hands of our male commentators, Mordecai becomes the model of a good and pious Jew.

The problem is, of course, that there is nothing in the *megillah* which suggests that Mordecai was a pious Jew. Would a pious Jew encourage his niece to compete for the crown since the prize would require intermarriage with an idolator? When Esther enters the palace to

prepare for the contest Mordecai doesn't go to his friends who are in charge of the harem to ask them to provide kosher food for her. He visits these officials only to ask them to make sure that Esther commands the attention of the best hairdressers and coutouriers. There's nothing in the book of Esther to suggest that Mordecai was a particularly pious Jew, and yet the sages, the commentators, go out of their way to ascribe piety to him. A double standard surely: the woman may not disobey, the man may. Vashti's actions are demeaned and Mordecai's are praised.

We tend to have difficulty accepting the facts about our tradition's attitude towards women for whay they are because we're used to the idea that Judaism's ethics are on the cutting edge of moral sensitivity. When the world was mired in paganism we developed the idea of monotheism. When the world still believed that peoples had been created separately, Jews developed the idea of humanity: "Have we not all one Father, has not one God created us all?" When the courts of Egypt and Babylonia approved many forms of sexual deviation, the Jews condemned all unseemly acts and limited the relationship between men and women to those sanctified within the marriage bonds. When the world practiced infanticide Jews declared life to be sacred.

But no people is uniformly clear-sighted and sensitive. We have had our blind spots, and one of these, perhaps the major one, has been in the area of women's rights. This is somewhat surprising since we began fairly well. In pre-exilic times there were women who played active roles in the life of their time and who exercised independent judgment. The Sarahs and Rachels have their limitations, but they enjoy a certain freedom and live with their husbands more or less as partners. Certainly, they were not kept in a harem. In pre-exilic times we find a woman like Deborah who is the effective chief of all the tribes; the prophet Hulda whose word was accepted as God's own; and a reigning queen Ataliah. But after the Babylonian exile the independence and freedom of Jewish women was increasingly circumscribed.

To be sure, our post-exilic Biblical writing includes the well-known acrostic poem which describes the Woman of Valor. Apologetes point to its tender verses as proof of the respect in which ancient Israel held women. But when

you look carefully at this text in the book of Proverbs, it becomes clear that the woman being described is a homemaker who does not share her husband's life in the outside community. Nowhere is it indicated that she goes out with him or is consulted by him in business or political decisions. She's praised for being diligent, industrious, a good manager, a tireless homemaker — that she fulfills ably an enabling role. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her/She riseth while it is yet night and gives food to her household/She lays her hand to the distaff and her hands hold the spindle/She makes for herself coverlets; her clothing is fine linen and purple/She is not afraid of the snow for all the household are clothed warmly/She looks well to the ways of her household and eats not the bread of idleness."

The literature of our tradition is full of praise for the good wife who makes no effort to interfere in her husband's life. But what of the woman who shows some independence of mind and wants to share her husband's life or lead her own life in the community? What of women who have opinions of their own?

The book of Job reflects one of the negative images of women which looms large in our tradition: the woman as the temptress, the woman who leads her man astray. When Job is bruised by God his wife says to him: "Curse God and die, why do you hold fast to your integrity?" The Bible begins with Eve, the temptress. In the opening chapters of Proverbs woman becomes the quintessential seductress, the cause of men's sins. In most of the rabbinic texts the woman is praised when she does those things which serve the man and allow him to be free to take part in the real life, but is not to lead a full life of her own. A woman may not initiate an act of divorce. The testimony of women is not accepted in court. A woman may say to her father: 'I do accept your choice as my husband, but the father need not accept her demoral.' Women were not counted in the *minyan*, the ten people who are required to make up a congregation. Like children and the intellectually limited, she is not obliged to obey many of the commandments.

To study history is to discover that our tradition was far less sensitive than many circles in the Greco-Roman world as far as the women's role is concerned. At the very time that the Book of Esther was written and the outline of rabbinic Judaism was being shaped, that is, from about

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

(continued)

the third century B.C.E. to the fourth or fifth century C.E., the outside world experienced a significant transformation in its ideas about women – and this transformation did not effect Jewish life.

In classic Athens a woman was expected to remain at home, her place. Her role was not unlike that of the wife in Japan. To be sure, there were in classic Athens women called *heterei*, courtesans, who went to the feasts with the men and satisfied their desires for entertainment of all kinds. Some of these courtesans had reputations as being sprightly and bright, but for the most part, they were treated as objects and their role was that of the geisha in pre-modern Japan. The wife never went out socially with her husband. She did not go with him to the theater or to the hippodrome or to the gymnasium. Her role was to breed a legitimate son. Then for reasons we don't yet fully understand, a new, somewhat romantic, spirit began to be manifest in the Greco-Roman world. Men began to show some concern for the dignity of women. Plato suggests that daughters ought to be educated the same way as sons, and he seems to have had at least two women among his students. Later, Zeno and the Stoics suggest a view of marriage as partnership. Zeno assumes that women can share with the man the activities of the community, going with him to theater or out to dinner. Hellenistic and Roman law began to make provisions which allowed a woman to initiate a marriage arrangement or a divorce proceeding. For the first time a woman's testimony is accepted in the courts. Interestingly, when archeologists uncovered Pompeii they found campaign posters supporting women who were running for public office on the walls of some of the buildings. These were centuries when women began to develop a persona of their own, but not in the Jewish world. If anything in our communities the woman's role was becoming increasingly restricted.

In pre-exilic times men and women seem to have been able to enter the same areas of the shrine. During Second Temple days women were excluded from its inner precincts. In the early synagogue there is no indication of a *mehitza*, a physical barrier between men and women, but by the Talmudic period such barriers were in place. Rabbinic law ruled that many of the commandments which applied to men did not apply to women. Women need not hear the shofar blow on Rosh Hasharah or dwell in the *sukka* or hear the *megillah* read on Purim. The

sages admitted that there was no prohibition against women reading from the Torah, but discouraged the practice nevertheless for fear of its effect on the congregation. Women were seen as a cause of distraction. Some sages said that one who spends time talking with a woman will be led into sin. The ground work for the male dominating forms of Jewish practice were put in place at a time the host culture was opening itself up to the concept of personhood.

How are we to account for this moving against the tide? We really don't know. Some argue that this was a period when large number of Jews were in the Eastern countries where they picked up many of the concerns of ritual purity and taboo then current in the Persian-Indian world. After the destruction of the Temple, Jewish life, as you know, turned in on itself in order to survive and in that turning emphasized separation from the outside world. Some suspect that the rabbis had been suspicious of the outside world ever since the time of the Maccabees and the Hasidim who had fought so bitterly against the Hellenization of Jewish life, and that they continued to associate the pagan world with sexual perversion, infanticide, homosexuality - all practices which they condemned. Presumably, in turning against the vices of the Greco-Roman world, they disabled themselves from seeing its virtues. Those who defend the separate roles of women in our day argue in just this way.

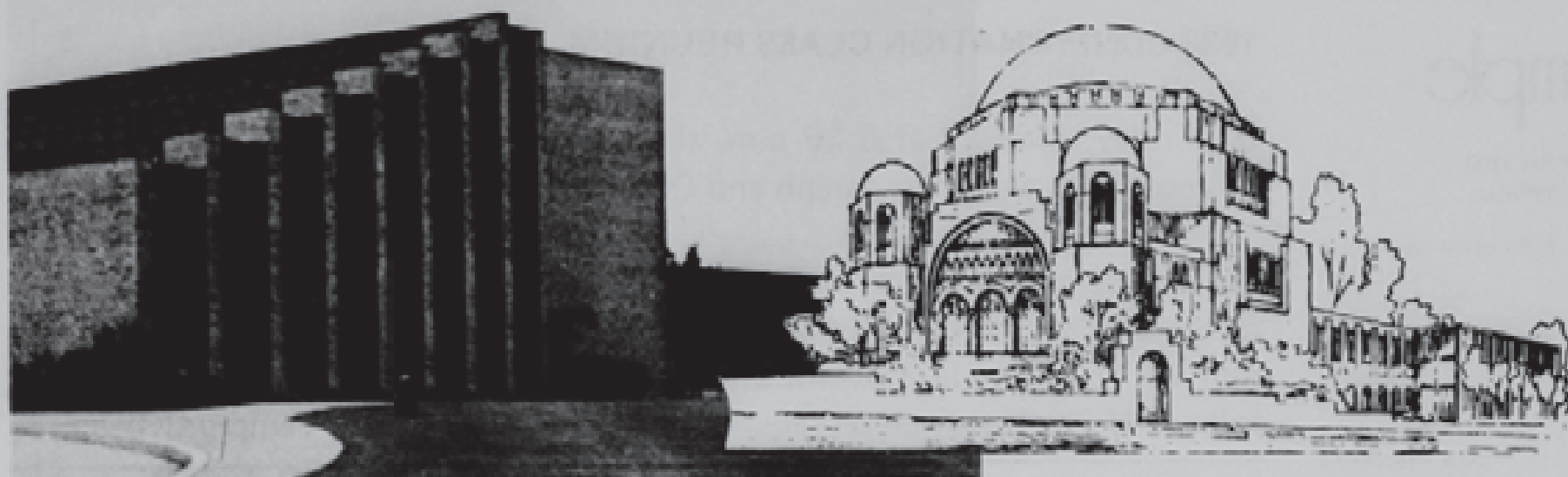
To be sure, you can find here and there during the rabbinic period men who showed respect for their wives or were concerned with the education of their daughters, but the school and the synagogue were male places; and those women who achieved a certain independence generally achieved a certain notoriety at the same time.

Jewish life centered on the man. A wife had fulfilled her duty when she delivered a son. Ethical writings describe the woman as having a clearly defined role, honorable, but separate from the man's, quite apart. When the history of Reform Judaism is finally written, whatever other judgments are made, the record will say that from the first Reform Judaism caught the mood of the times when it insisted on the personhood of woman. In 1810 when Reform services were first held in Germany, the *mehitza* was taken away. There were family pews and a mixed choir, men and women sang together. The most important innovation of the

early Reform movement was the co-educational school. The *heder* was for boys. The *yesh'vah* was for men. The Reform Sabbath school was for young men and young women. Confirmation, which was the first ceremony created by Reform Jews, was designed to make possible a co-educational graduation. Until then Jewish had celebrated only the *Bar Mitzvah*, the boy's coming of age. It's obviously not a matter of chance that by the 1840's you had women as officers in Reform congregations and that by the 1920's in some small-town Reform congregations in the United States the widows of rabbis continued their husband's work. Today, of course, we have women cantors and women rabbis. The identification of the personhood of women has been one of the major themes of Reform Judaism and represents, I am convinced, an irreversible change in our tradition.

In our times women can no longer turn to Esther as a model for heroism. Esther's heroism consisted in manipulating her man. Today women, as men, describe heroism as standing for what a person believes to be right and struggling for it, by doing what they can in the public arena as well as by meeting their personal and family obligations. I would hope that the days of manipulation of women by men and of men by women are over. They're not, of course, but that's the hope. We rejoice in the fact that change is taking place but recognize its complexity. Change is easy for us. It's harder on our children. It will be harder yet on theirs, but God willing, in time women will have a much greater understanding of how to balance their needs and society will have created the institutions and the laws which will make personhood truly possible. As for Purim, I hope there will always be a gaggle of little Esthers at our carnivals; six-year olds don't need to think too deeply on the philosophic implications of their costumes, and the theme of Purim is a happy one. They'll have plenty of time later to face up to the ambiguities of their role.

Daniel Jeremy Silver



May 1, 1983
Vol. LXVIX, No. 18

The Temple Bulletin

From The Rabbi's Desk:

Those of us who write fairly serious books do so for a number of reasons, but, let me assure you that financial gain is not one of them. *A History of Judaism* is still selling quite well — and it's being used as we hoped it would be, as a college and adult education text — but even after seven years I suspect that I have earned about five cents an hour for the work that was involved.

We write because we enjoy ideas and because we have something we want to say. We write because we grew up with books and were taught that they were the stuff of civilization and because we wanted to add our bit. We write because we want to get the reactions of others to our argument and to our approach. The best ideas are constantly being refined by the experience and knowledge of others. And vanity plays a role. We like it when others appreciate our work. A good review is tonic for the soul. Fortunately, *Images of Moses* has been well reviewed and I thought I would share at least one of these with you. It appeared in *The American Rabbi* and was signed by its editor, Rabbi Harry Essrig.

I predict that this book will win several literary and academic prizes in this coming year. I urge every Rabbi to devote at least one sermon to a consideration of its contents. For the book is a remarkable phenomenon in the Jewish exploration of our past and its tradition; it offers a keen insight not only into the variety of reflections cast by previous generations from the original portrait of Moses in the Torah, but into the very heart of the Jewish religious enterprise itself. It is based on profound scholarship, an intimate acquaintance with all the sources of our faith, an analyzing and synthesizing examination of the changing milieu of our people for well over three thousand years; at the same time it reads smoothly and joyously, elegantly, with much humor and charm. We are able to see

Moses as he comes to life in the Torah, the Talmud, the Kabbalah, modern Hebrew literature, as well as perceived by Christians and Moslems.

We come in contact with a personality who is variously regarded as prophet and holy man, lawgiver, master of Torah study, faith healer, intercessor with God, liberator of his people from the Exodus, man of God, semi-divine benefactor, etc. We view him through the eyes of the redactors of the Torah, the philosophers such as Philo, the Rabbis and sages of the Talmud era who regarded him as their model and progenitor, the mystics who attributed to him power to bend God's will, and modern novelists and scholars such as Buber and Rosenzweig who projected contemporary notions into the Rorschach-like outlines of what the original Moses may have been like. This is an excursion not only into the changing spectrum of thought and feeling about the founder of

the Jewish faith. It is a voyage on the sea of Jewish history, stopping at the various ports from ancient Palestine to modern America in which Jewish struck root and redefined their notions of what Moses meant.

As William H. C. Congdon has noted: "This image of Moses is the image of the Jew himself. To know a community's Moses is to know something of what that community meant by Jewishness." Nothing like this has been tried before and few scholarly tomes excel as this one does in its readability and human touch. I read it through at one sitting and regard it as a truly moving spiritual experience, for suddenly I discovered what Judaism was all about.

If you haven't read *Images* as yet I hope this will encourage you to do so.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

May 1, 1983
10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

SHOULD SCIENCE BE STOPPED?

May 8, 1983
10:30 a.m.

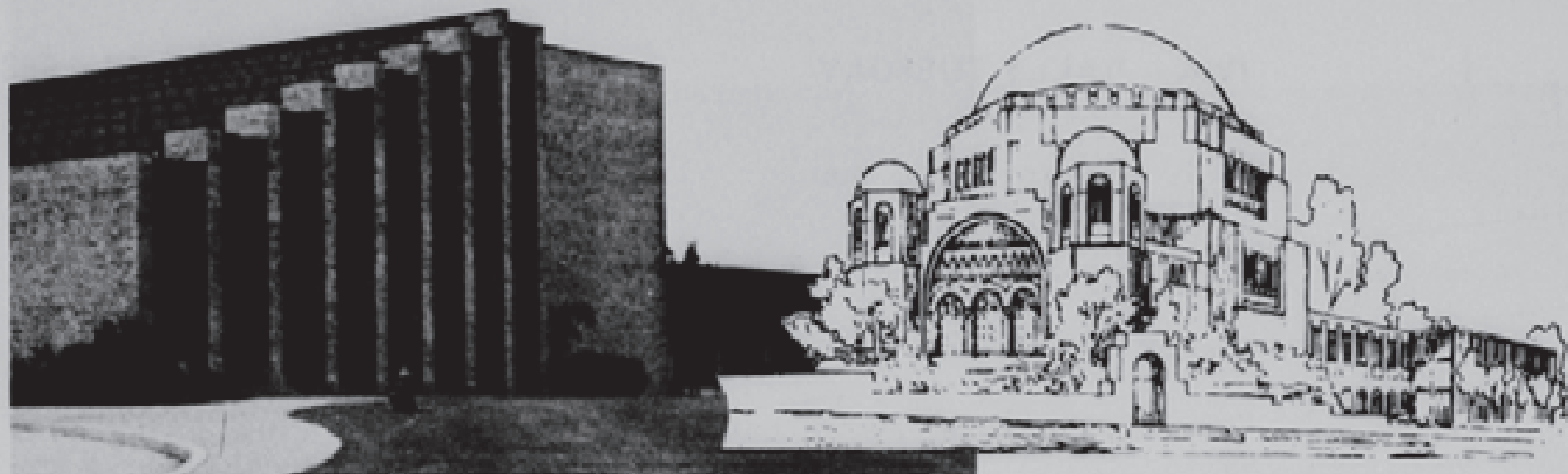
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

LOOKING BACK ON A HARD YEAR

Friday Evening Service — 5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service — 9:00 a.m. — The Branch



May 15, 1983
Vol. LXVIX, No. 19

The Temple Bulletin

From The Rabbi's Desk:

I have been asked a number of questions about the recent decision of the Reform rabbis to enlarge the legal definition of a Jew to include those born of a Jewish father as well as those born of a Jewish mother.

The old rule had the virtue of simplicity: a Jew was one who was born of a Jewish mother or who converted to Judaism. It was developed at a time when polygamy was normal. Since a man could have several wives, though a woman could not have several husbands, a rule of this kind was needed in order to establish rules of inheritance and descent. In a tribal society only one son could inherit the authority of his father and the best way to do this was to designate the eldest son of the number one wife who was usually the noblest born. The famous story of the struggle of Jacob and Esau over the birthright revolves around this practice.

The old rule was sanctified in the halacha and continued to be the norm even when monogamy became the accepted form of marriage among Jews. In recent times inheritance ceased to play the critical role it once played and new questions came to the fore, questions necessitated by the growing number of intermarriages. We live in an open society and the old answer that religion follows the female line no longer fit the facts in any number of family situations.

There are families in which the father cares deeply about the Jewish loyalties of his children and the non-Jewish mother willingly goes along, but for reasons of conscience does not feel that she can convert. The new rule makes it possible for the children of such a family to remain with the fold. Many congregations have long followed this practice. Most such children were enrolled in the Religious School of Reform congregations, and Consecra-

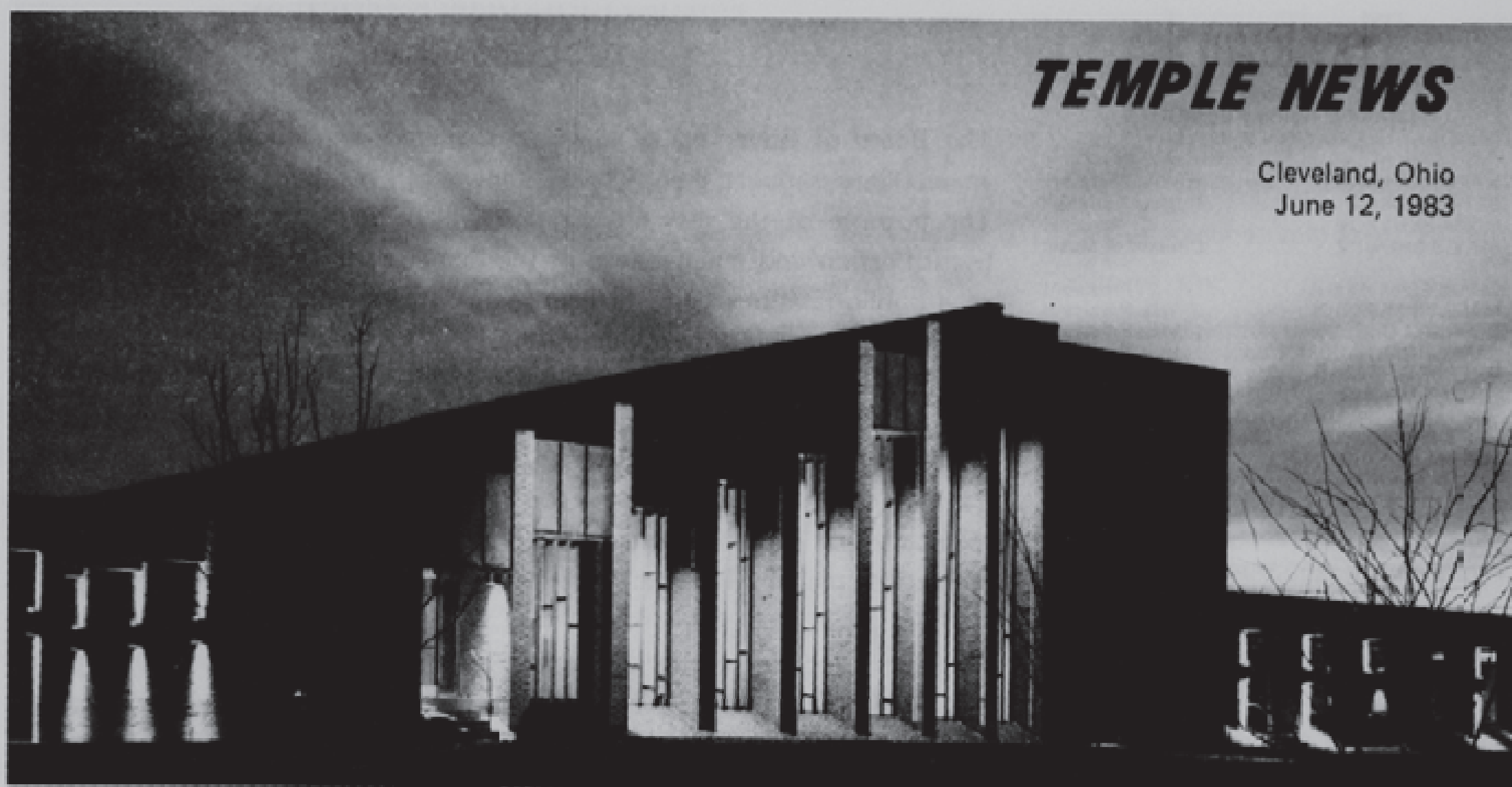
tion and Confirmation were assumed to be proof of intention and acts of affiliation. The new rule simply says that a Jewish religious education is seen as proof of the intent of the family to raise their children as Jews and the involvement of the children in Jewish life is accepted proof sufficient of their loyalty.

As expected, traditionalist Jews have rejected this break with the past. They hold the tradition to be God-given, inviolate. As Reform Jews, we hold the tradition to be wise and insightful, but not inviolate. In our view this is one of those times when circumstances necessitate a changed approach. I was a member of the Patrilineal Descent Commission of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and fully agree with its findings. Certainly, it represents what has long been the actual practice of The Temple.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

TEMPLE NEWS

Cleveland, Ohio
June 12, 1983



From the Rabbi's Desk:

It is my pleasure to introduce to you two fine young people who will be ordained in June of this year at the Hebrew Union College and who will begin serving our congregation in July as Assistant Rabbis.

Over the past several months, we interviewed some 20 Rabbis, some were out in the field and others were about to be ordained; and I am pleased to report that we secured the two people who were rated top on our list.

Susan Ellen Berman was an honors graduate of Vassar College before she entered HUC. She has an excellent academic record and for the past three years has served Temple Beth El in Niagara Falls, New York as Student-Rabbi. Members of that congregation speak highly of her work and her personality as do the faculty of the College. In addition to the familiar Rabbinic duties, Susan will be responsible for much of the counseling and hospital visitation, and will act as Rabbinic Advisor to most of our affiliates. I hardly need add that she will be the first woman to serve as a Rabbi at The Temple.

David Fox Sandmel graduated from Ohio State University in Jewish studies and compiled a fine academic record at HUC. He is no stranger to The

Temple. Some years ago, he served as music director and counselor at several of our Confirmation Camps. David has broad experience as a song leader and in youth work. He served this past year as Student-Rabbi at Am Shalom in Painesville where he was extremely well liked. David comes from a Rabbinic background. His late father, Dr. Samuel Sandmel, was Provost of The Hebrew Union College, and a distinguished scholar in the field of Inter-Testamental studies. In addition to regular Rabbinic duties, David will serve as Rabbinic Supervisor of the Religious School. David is married. His wife, Betsy, will complete this June her first year at Western Reserve University's Medical School.

We will be saying *l'hitra'ot* to Rabbi Jonathan S. Woll in June, and I know you join me in congratulating him on his engagement to Joyce Beverly Meltzer. Joyce and Jonathan are to be married at the end of July, and it will be my privilege and joy to officiate at their wedding. Rabbi Woll has served The Temple willingly and well the past two years, and we wish him Godspeed.

Daniel Jeremy Silver



Susan Ellen Berman



David Fox Sandmel

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK:

All summer long the realization that the holidays would come early this year lay like a dark presence at the back of my mind. Nineteen eighty-three is the first year in recent memory when all of our Fall holidays and festivals, from Rosh Hashanah through Simhat Torah-Consecration, will be celebrated in September. Selihot actually fell on Labor Day.

The traditional calendar is based on the lunar month. In Biblical times a new month was proclaimed whenever the citizens of Jerusalem observed a new moon. As calendars became more sophisticated, our ancestors decided to adjust this lunar system to the solar year and they devised a mathematical system which accomplished this end by introducing a leap month into

the calendar nine times every seventeen years. Since the holidays are dated by Biblical law to a particular day of a particular lunar month, they can vary anywhere within a thirty-day period when they are placed into the familiar calendar which governs our lives.

This year is a leap year, so not only do the Holy Days come in September, but Shavuot-Confirmation is scheduled in June, on the sixth to be exact.

Fifty-seven forty-four is an early year and a long year, but length should not be its most significant feature. As always, the days will follow each other in endless succession and we will face the crucial test; to use wisely the gift of time. Where other cultures celebrate the

passage of time, Judaism encourages us to consecrate time. In most cultures the New Year means a party or a parade. With us the New Year is Rosh Hashanah—a holy day. Actually, the synagogue not only consecrates the new year but the new moon and the week. We have a whole network of rituals which remind us of the passage of time and seek to “teach us to number our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom.” Judaism challenges us to consecrate time. Time wasted cannot ever be recalled. When we use time wisely we prove our maturity and understanding.

Happy New Year.

Daniel Jeremy Silver



October 2, 1983
Vol. LXX, No. 3

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK: Rosh Hashanah Sermon
The sermon of September 8, 1983

Rosh Hashanah celebrates the passage of time and the promise of time. A year has ended. Where have the months gone? A new year has begun. We pray that it will be *Shanah Tovah*, a good year for everyone.

Ever since human beings recognized the cycle of the seasons, they have marked the turn of the year with appropriate ceremony. These ceremonies have generally been gay rather than solemn occasions, marked by festivities, noise-making, parades and processions. The clang of bells and the bang of firecrackers suggest concern that evil spirits might be lurking in the way, ready to pounce on the new year. It was hoped the noise would frighten them and drive them off. Researchers suggest that the singing, the dancing and the festivities associated with the new year represent our unconscious defiance of age. It is as if we were saying: 'I know that I have one year less to live and I'm not going to let this fact get me down.'

Whereas most peoples mark the new year in some less than solemn way, our people, the Jewish people, treat the New Year Day as a High Holiday, a Rosh Hashanah. Buddhism does not have a Rosh Hashanah. The New Year Day is a minor moment in the Christian and Muslim calendar. Only Judaism whole-heartedly celebrates the passage of time and the promise of time.

This difference in approach is not an accidental one but derives from Judaism's unique understanding of the concept of time. Most traditions tend to emphasize time as a source of suffering and pain. After all, none of us wants to age, and few of us want to die. We want to hold on to youth, strength and competence. When things are going well for us, when we're prosperous, wealthy and secure, we want to hold on to our good fortune, but the moment inevitably passes. Time cannot be stayed. We soon learn, as the Zohar observes, 'that there is no day without its night and no night without its day.'

Many of the pressures which bedevil us occur because of time. The exigencies of time-bound responsibilities press in on us and force us to give up our leisure, to put down the book that we're reading, to surrender time with our family, to do what must be done. During the harvest season the farmer can't say, 'I don't feel like going to my fields today, I'll go next week.' If he doesn't submit to time, he will lose his crop. Many take delight in the innocence of their children and would like to protect them from growing up and suffering the inevitable buffeting and the heartaches of life, but neither we nor they can escape the march of time.

Given our desire for stability, and time's destabilizing impact on our lives, it's not surprising that most of the great philosophies and religious traditions of our world emphasize the suffering and pain that time introduces into life. They try to help us escape bitter and continuous frustration by telling us not to expect the impossible. But then, interestingly, many of these philosophies and religions turn around and offer their followers a gospel which suggests that they can escape from the pains and pressures which time introduces into life. Buddhism, for instance, tells its followers that if they gain enlightenment and learn not to care about all those elements in life which are time-related, they will find happiness. They will not be disappointed when youth is lost or these senses become dim because they will not have valued them in the first place. In this way they will escape the emotional pain time inflicts. Islam and Christianity offer a different promise. They tell their followers that if they live by faith then they will escape the ravages of time when they enter the next life and are welcomed into the endless peace of heaven.

Among the classic philosophies and religions, only Judaism affirms the passage of time and confirms the promise of time. We are not taught to escape from time but to enhance time. One of the fathers of rabbinic Judaism, Akiba, is reputed to be the author of the beloved holiday hymn, *Avinu Malkenu*, whose theme affirms our faith in the possibility of time. *Avinu Malkenu hadesh Aleinu Shanah Tovah*, 'Our Father, our King, renew for us a good year.' By contrast, Clement, one of the fathers of the church, a near contemporary of Akiba's, expressed his faith's attitude when he wrote: 'Blessed, indeed, is the man whose life is short.' To the church life was a *via dolorosa*, a way of tears and tribulation. Death, escape from this time bound existence, was seen as a blessed release. It isn't surprising that in many Christianized cultures death is celebrated with a wake, joyously. Someone close and dear has entered the timeless peace of heaven.

Our tradition did not deny that much pain and suffering occurs to us as we pass through life. The psalmist is quite blunt on this score: 'The days of our years are three score years and ten, or even by reason of strength four score years; yet is their pride but travail and vanity; it is speedily done and we fly away.' Time wears away our youth. Time dulls our sensitivities and reduces the sharpness of our pleasures. Ecclesiastes said it clearly: 'Rejoice a young man in your youth, before the evil days come when you shall say I have little pleasure in them.' 'There is a time to be born and there is a time to die,' and nothing is gained by

trying to deny that suffering is associated with our time-bound existence.

Perhaps I can underscore the difference between our perspective on time and that of the other traditions by contrasting the judgment legends which play such a central role in Christianity and Judaism. The Christian judgment takes place exclusively after death. Each person appears at the gates of heaven and Peter reviews their application to see whether they are worthy of admission. If they are, they enter into a place where there is day but no night, pleasure but no pain, where time does not intrude.

Our judgment legend takes place not after death but annually, on Rosh Hashanah. Each of us each year stands in an open court before God. A book is brought into the court, a record of our deeds, and this record is read out and a judgment is made. If we pass muster our reward is not the timeless peace of heaven but more time on earth. Blessed, indeed, is the person whose life is long. We are pleased to be granted more time.

Now, everyone of us could imagine some scheme of existence which would be more comfortable and more comforting to us than the present one; perhaps a world in which we would be forever young, a world without age or senility; but God, in His wisdom, has decreed otherwise and Rosh Hashanah, which celebrates among other things God's creation, insists on the wisdom of His ways and reminds us that God built time into the fabric of the universe. God saw fit to make us mortal. We may wish otherwise, but if we were immortal there would be neither place nor opportunity for our children and our grandchildren. We must die in order that others may have their chance. Time plays a crucial and necessary role in life and there is no benefit in complaining about our lot. Instead of emphasizing the negative, Judaism tries to teach us to make the most of our opportunity, to use time as lovingly and as sensitively as we possibly can.

In recent generations increasing numbers of people have come around to our traditional up-beat point of view. Our world has become a gentler place. Most of us expect to live three score years and ten or more in relative good health. All of us here have escaped that life of back-breaking labor which so often broke the spirits and the bodies of our ancestors. As the times have become more comfortable, people, almost without thinking about it, have tended to put less stock in philosophies which emphasize the dismal side
(Continued inside)

of life and to look to the future with a high degree of optimism. That's all to the good. When you look for fulfillment you are more likely to find it than when you're convinced it doesn't exist; but, unfortunately, our modern optimism has not always been coupled to wisdom. People are plunging into the future without thinking through the nature and source of the satisfactions it can provide.

Many now equate time's promise with the weekend rather than the everyday, with leisure rather than their work. They work in order to have time off. They do not see everyday responsibilities as a potential source of satisfaction, and that's a tragedy. The most lasting joys are those which we experience in the intimate places of our lives. For though it can be thrilling to ski down a mountain course, unless, of course, we break our leg, speed offers only a momentary sensation. The lasting satisfactions are those which exist within the quiet of our homes and our intimate relationships.

Lasting joy derives from work which engages our mind and our talent and which we know to be worthwhile. You don't have to live the weekend with gusto to know that there are joys that do come true and hopes that can be realized. You don't have to challenge fate in order to be excitingly engaged.

Some overemphasize leisure and others overemphasize labor. They're the ones who keep saying, 'Time is opportunity, don't waste it.' 'Time is money, don't be a spendthrift.' 'Keep your eye on the main chance. Don't let anything divert you from your purpose.' It's true, of course, that if we want to achieve something worthwhile we have to be determined and persistent. But too many of us energetically pursue goals which are not worth the effort or the cost. We all know those who single-mindedly seek financial success or fame or social status and in the process lose their marriage, the love of their children, and sometimes their health and good name.

I often think of the old English doggerel: "He spent his health to get his wealth and then with might and main spent his health to get his wealth again." The Hasidim tell this story of one of their great rabbis, Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev. Levi Yitzhak was walking in the streets of Berdichev when he saw one of the town's more affluent citizens bustling along, elbowing people aside, heedless of anyone or anything except his own purpose. Levi Yitzhak stopped the man and inquired: "Good sir, where are you running to?" The man answered: "Time is money, I'm running after my livelihood." Levi Yitzhak then said to him: "How do you know that your livelihood is out there ahead of you? Perhaps it's behind you, trying to catch up with you." We all know those who raced through life after some goal and who on retirement find that their real life had all the time been trying to catch up with them. They had neglected developing new interests or skills, cultivating sustaining friendships, sensitizing their spirit. The success they had gained offered them far less than they might have had had they lived a more balanced and wiser life.

Inevitably, on a New Year day such as this we think back over the year and know a pang of sadness for what we did not do. We tend to procrastinate. We say: 'there will yet be time.' Unfortunately, there may not be time, so we remind ourselves on a day such as this of the importance of Hillel's famous saying, "If I'm not for myself who will be for me; if I am for myself alone what am I? If not now, when?" *Im lo ahshav ematai*. There is no sadder thought than "it's too late." A young woman came into my office. She had left home some years before in bitter adolescent rebellion against her parents. The years had seasoned her and saddened her. She'd come back seeking reconciliation, but her father had died and her mother was no longer responsive. It was too late. We say, 'I'll spend time with my children as soon as...' but they grow quickly and often they've gone from us before we really get to know them or they us. It's important to do what needs to be done now, but it's equally important to be sure that what we have set out to do is worth the effort.

Rosh Hashanah celebrates time, and many of the holiday's symbols refract our people's ancient wisdom about time. Take the shophar. The shophar was for ancient Israel what church bells were for medieval Europe, the instrument which announced the passage of time. In ancient Israel there were, of course no calendars, and a new month was declared when a new moon was sighted. When this occurred a shrine priest would sound the shophar that all might know that the new month had begun.

On Rosh Hashanah four distinct calls are blown on the shophar: the sharp, shrill *tekiah*; the energetic, quickly-repeated *shevarim*; the wavering, lower-registered *teruah*; and the long, sustained *tekiah gedolah*. Whenever I hear these calls they speak to me of time and the lessons of time.

The shrill, sharp, demanding *tekiah* with which the shophar service begins seems to me to be the voice of commanding reason. The *tekiah* insistently demands that I acknowledge the passage of time. A year has passed. Put it behind you. Don't try to act as if the year is not over, it is. Act your age.

One of the more sensible insights which our age has begun to cultivate is that growth and learning must not be limited to the school years. We ought to learn more and develop new skills and expand our horizons at every stage of our lives. There is so much to learn. We each possess many underdeveloped or undeveloped capacities. To stop seeking is to narrow our lives needlessly.

We can always add life to our years, but I'm afraid that many of us try to act as if the way to do this is to assure that youth is a mantle we can keep wearing. There is a widespread belief that you're only as old as you feel and that you need not feel your age. Many seem still to be trying to escape time. It can't be done. It shouldn't be done. We find it laughable when a person of seventy tries to speak and dress in the modish ways of those who are twenty, but I'm afraid that many of us do not yet accept the fact that inside we're forty or sixty, not twenty. We acknowledge birthdays, but not that we age psychologically as well as physically. Youth is a time of passionate interest, strong commitment, fresh eyes. The young know that there is nothing they cannot accomplish. They are impatient with those who tell them to be more cautious and pragmatic. When one has been buffeted by life, and inevitably as we grow older we are, it's impossible to remain innocently confident of success. In middle-age the spirit does not surge as exuberantly or the passions exert the same commanding authority as they once did. The middle-aged no longer react with the innocent intensity they once did. Love is companionship as well as passion. Friendship involves restraint as well as openness. Something is lost. Something is gained, and in the larger scheme of things the world benefits. The world has need for the surging vision of the youth and it has need for the prudential wisdom of the experienced.

A new disease has spread among us and some say it has reached epidemic proportions. It's called middle-age crisis. Its symptoms are sudden dissatisfaction with one's lot, a burning desire to recapture the freshness and excitement of youth. It occurs, I believe, because many of us are unwilling or unable to accept the emotional changes which affect us. As we cross the years life is lived in a quieter key and many want desperately to feel again the surging emotional excitement they once knew. They blame the spiritual heaviness of their lives on the responsibilities and habits which they have acquired with the years. They think they'll find youth again by casting these ties and duties aside. It rarely works. The cure, I believe, is to reshape our culture so that it encourages us to accept the fact that as we grow older our emotions and feelings also age.

Youth is for the young and middle-age is for the middle-aged and age is for the aged, and the world has the need of the balance and interplay which all these stages of life provide. Your children, your grandchildren, need your maturity, not your youth. Our world needs their passions and their dreams and your experience and hard-earned wisdom.

The energetic, repetitive *shevarim* always reminds me of a troop marching in double time, using the short repetitive

steps of such a drill. The *shevarim* says to me: Be energetic. Time is elastic. Stretch it as far as you can. A year is a fixed measure of time. It's up to us to fill each year with useful activity. The Talmud puts it this way: "There are years which have life, and there are years which have no life." The difference is not in the year but in us; in the urgency of our commitment: in the degree of energy which we manage to rouse within ourselves. Life is brief enough as it is without folding our hands and letting much of it flow by. Fill the year to the full. You'll be surprised how many opportunities are there.

The *teruah*, with its lower-voiced, slow, rather wavering, call adds this note: Be careful. Don't plunge on without thinking whether the goal is worth the effort. Think before you leap. Be intelligent and judicious about what you do. The word intelligence is an interesting one. Etymologically, it comes from two Latin terms; *inter*, between, *legere*, a root which means to choose. Intelligence is the capacity to choose between alternatives: to choose what is worthwhile; to discard what is not, to choose wisely among and between the many duties and responsibilities which we might undertake and the many avenues which are open to us. Be energetic, but be sure that your energies are usefully directed to your benefit and to the benefit of those who share this world with you.

And finally, there is the *tekiah gedolah*, that great sustained, aspiring call which says: 'Yes, life is bracing. Expect defeats. At times you will be greatly frustrated. Life requires steadiness and perseverance. Be steadfast.' I know no more tragic figure than that of the person who sets out to accomplish something worthwhile but who surrenders his hopes at the first check. Moses' last words to his successor, Joshua, were: *Hazak v'ematz*, "be strong and of good courage." Nothing is achieved easily. In life we must be steady, certain, and determined.

The *tekiah gedolah* also speaks to me of God's support. At the end of the long call I always hear an echo. There is a sudden intake, probably it's nothing more than the result of the Baal Tekiah's running out of breath, but I hear the call coming back towards me and in this echo I hear the voice of God. 'You're not alone. I'm here with you. Don't despair that you're the only one. I'll help establish the work of your hands.' Ultimately, here is the affirmation which is the foundation of our faith. God is not unaware of our concerns. God is not indifferent to our hopes. God is with us as we pass through time. God wills us to achieve. He wants us to live fulfillingly. God will be a partner with us in the establishment of peace and justice. There is a strengthening from without even as we seek to strengthen ourselves from within.

Happiness, our tradition tells us, consists in learning to be satisfied with our lot *ashrei ha-ish ha-sameah be-hetko*. Our lot is to be human and not immortal. Our lot is to live a time-bound existence, not to live in a timeless world where change does not intrude. Our lot is to have a limited number of adult years in which to work out our hopes and our destiny. We are not allotted an endless supply of time, but there is reason to be satisfied with our lot. There are hopes that do come true. There are moments of great joy, even of exaltation. There are the daily pleasures of fulfilling work, love and friendship. There are the quiet pleasures of books and music and the active pleasure of sport and the open air. The question this Rosh Hashanah is, as always, am I doing what ought to be done, what needs to be done? Am I affirming the promise of time? Have I learned how to be happy that my lot is to be human?

Daniel Jeremy Silver



October 16, 1983
Vol. LXX, No. 4

The Temple Bulletin

FROM THE RABBI'S DESK: Yom Kippur Sermon
The sermon of September 16, 1983

For the last eighteen centuries the book of *Jonah* has been read out in our synagogues as part of the Yom Kippur ritual. This custom, which is already mentioned in the *Talmud*, developed because *Jonah* contains a dramatic and graphic description of the power of repentance. The prophet is sent by God to bring an oracle of condemnation against Nineveh. "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Unexpectedly, the Assyrian emperor and the citizens of his capital take the message to heart. They repent, and the fatal decree is rescinded.

This story suggests, and it's only a story, that we have a measure of control over our lives. We can make choices about how we wish to live and act effectively on them. Nineveh did what was right and necessary and the city's future suddenly brightened. The Torah reading which is assigned for the morning service returns to this theme. It is taken from Moses' valedictory speech as presented in the Book of Deuteronomy. Moses reviews the basic terms of the covenant, the Commandments and then speaking in God's name lays this charge on Israel: "See, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse, choose life, that you may live." "Choose life." We are capable of choosing between the noble and the ignoble, between self-discipline and careless living, between generosity and greed; the choice is ours to make and the choices we make go a long way toward determining our future.

This long day of fasting, confession and atonement, would be a pointless exercise if our fate were predestined. Yom Kippur rests on the conviction that if we fail, the fault lies not in the stars, in our Karma, or in some pursuing Fate; but in ourselves. We can choose the high road or the low road, and the road we take determines much of what happens to us during our lives.

I affirm this great Yom Kippur theme; but I acknowledge that it is capable of being misunderstood. Many seem to think of *Teshuvah* as a relatively swift and easy process. It is not. *Teshuvah* is a long and demanding task. The theme of *Teshuvah* is not the simplistic notion that we can easily change our lives if only we will admit our faults and promise to live up to our resolutions. Much more is required.

In many ways *Jonah* misleads us as regards *Teshuvah*. I find the conclusion of *Jonah* quite incredible. Nineveh was the Paris or Washington of the day, the capital of a great empire. The noble families of Nineveh possessed great power, and certainly were prone to all the corruption that power brings. Many possessed great wealth, Assyria had taken booty from many nations, and these certainly knew all the corruption that wealth can bring to the spirit. It's hard to believe that this community of calculating and military-minded people would suddenly experience a spirit-

ual conversion, renounce the wickedness of their ways, and accept the way of righteousness. Yet, that's what the story of *Jonah* says.

I find it interesting that the opening of the story of *Jonah* is not like its conclusion. We first meet Jonah, the prophet, sitting comfortably at home. The word of God comes to Jonah and tells him to go to Nineveh. Jonah does not want to go. He wants to exercise his right as a human being to determine his own fate. So instead of going east to Nineveh, he goes west to Jaffa where he hires passage on a ship bound for the Spanish coast. But God will not be gainsayed. God sends a great storm and the ship nearly capsizes. Jonah is driven back to shore and forced to go on a mission which he did not want to undertake.

This scene suggests that there are circumstances when we do not, in fact, control our lives. Jonah is not master of his destiny. Many readers are not surprised to find a story of this type in the Bible. What else would you expect in the literature of a people who spoke of an all-powerful God? "Who is there among those who live on earth who can stay God's hand or say to Him: what does Thou?" God gives us life, and in time takes life from us. God raises up those who are cast down, and casts down those who are overly proud and arrogant. But we should note that this theme is not restricted to the pieties of a theistic faith. The thesis that our lives are controlled by powers we do not control was deeply embedded in the shared wisdom of the ancient world. The poet Horace wrote: "Fate calmly determines the fate of the high and the low." The Greek myths portray the gods as weaving the thread of life and cutting that thread when it suits their fancy. The *Gilgamesh* epic, the best known legend of Mesopotamia, explains the great flood by reporting that the gods had been disturbed in their mountain

retreat by the noisiness of the human race, and that they decided to remove this annoyance by destroying mankind. The power of Greek tragedy lay in its description of a hero's titanic struggle to escape his fate and the audience's knowledge that he could not be successful.

These legends, myths and theologies make the point that we do not control the circumstances of our lives. We did not will ourselves to be born at a particular time, in a particular place, and into a particular family. We did not specify our physical and psychological endowment, those talents and potentialities which have determined, to a large degree, the course of our lives. More than most of us care to admit, the circumstances of our lives are set for us.

Ancient wisdom had no patience with those exuberant folk who peddle gospels of guaranteed success. You know the litany: "Where there's a will, there's always a way." "If you want something badly enough and will work hard enough, you'll attain your goal." Nonsense! Such assurances not only have no basis in fact, but are dangerous. A child born with less than adequate intelligence cannot hope to become a nuclear physicist. Someone whose physique is not robust cannot expect to become a professional athlete. A child born into an illiterate, impoverished family, let's say in sub-Saharan Africa, cannot expect to live a life of ease and prosperity. Many have been emotionally broken because they were encouraged to reach for attainments beyond their reach.

Jeremiah warned us centuries ago against mistaking good fortune for achievement: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; let not the strong man glory in his strength; let not the rich man glory in his wealth." We are not self-made. We

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SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

October 30, 1983
10:30 a.m.
The Temple Branch

Rabbi
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

ISRAEL: THE POLITICAL SCENE

November 6, 1983
10:30 a.m.
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A RABBI LOOKS AT LUTHER

Friday Evening Service — 5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel
Sabbath Service — 9:00 a.m. — The Branch

are to a large degree what the accident of our birth and the political and economic realities of our time allow us to be. If our lives have been fortunate we ought not be self-proud. If we have not been as fortunate as some, there is neither grace nor benefit in wasting our energies complaining against our circumstances. It does us no good. We can't choose a new body or exchange our bundle of talents for another more to our liking. We can't suddenly decide that we don't like living in the 20th century and select the 25th or the 15th. Such choices are not given us. Wisdom consists in accepting the situation God has designated for us. Character consists in using the circumstances of our lives as fully, capably and honorably as we can.

This ancient wisdom, shared by Greek and Jew, does not directly challenge the theme of Yom Kippur. We are not told on Yom Kippur that by repentance we can change the controlling circumstances of our lives. Yom Kippur does not promise that repentance is the way to riches or happiness. Yom Kippur does not describe *teshuvah* as a way to heal our bodies or recapture our youth. Yom Kippur says simply: "You can make those choices which control the quality of your life."

In recent years some fundamental questions about *teshuvah* have been raised on the basis of our increased knowledge of the human psyche. Some years ago, during a discussion of Yom Kippur, a psychologist friend put it to me this way: "You and I have experienced a number of Yom Kippurs; and you know as well as I do that we are still troubled by these same habits and attitudes that bothered us in years past. Next year's Yom Kippur is already scheduled and you and I will be wrestling then with most of these same familiar concerns. Our attitudes and habits are deeply enmeshed in our personality and they are very difficult to uproot and reshape."

My friend made some important points, but he had not said that *Teshuvah*, the reshaping of our spirit, is impossible. He did not insist that we are prisoners of our genes and our past. Unfortunately, many of the whiners and complainers among us have twisted the psychological and sociological research of our time to provide themselves with a litany of ready and always available excuses for their inadequacies and failings. They paint themselves as shackled to their personalities. They never say: 'I didn't try hard enough,' or 'I gave in too readily.' It's never their fault. It's always, 'I had a terrible childhood.' 'I didn't have the opportunities others had.' Someone else, home, family, parents, community, environment, is always to blame.

A young man came to my office. His marriage was on the rocks and he delivered himself a long litany of complaints against his wife. When he had exhausted her sins, he admitted that he was not totally without faults, though his faults were minor. I also noticed that whenever he finally managed to say, 'This was my fault,' he'd quickly add 'but you know I had a terrible childhood.' Finally, I said to him, 'But you're no longer a child. Did you never try to grow up?' It simply isn't true that childhood experiences imprison us for life. Just because we were raised in the overly protective environment of modern suburbia doesn't mean that we haven't the strength or ability to be an adult in the real world. We can grow and we can grow up. Ultimately, we have to take responsibility for our lives, and God has given us sufficient wisdom and will for that task.

Of course, we are born with a particular emotional endowment. We are deeply conditioned by our environment and culture. Everything that happens to us affects us and that every experience leaves a residue. But it is not true that we cannot take ourselves in hand and raise the quality of our lives. It's not easy. You can't change attitudes or the habits of a lifetime overnight. We're talking about an arduous and unceasing task which will require every ounce of strength, wisdom and wit we possess, but much can be done.

Teshuvah can begin on a day such as this; but it must not end here.

Teshuvah begins in contrition, but requires continuing commitment and steady discipline. There are daily temptations. When we are tired we let down our guard. Any struggle

to life up our lives requires perseverance, but it can be done. We know we can. One time or another each of us has taken himself in hand and found the strength to do what we recognized needed to be done. We've stayed with some of our resolutions, but we've also broken a hundred others, some almost as soon as they were made. Some of these were beyond our power, but most were not. We simply lacked the will to keep at it. In most of us the will is our most underdeveloped capacity.

How shall we begin? There's an old folk saying that a small hole in the hull of a ship can cause a great liner to sink. A single match can ignite a good bonfire. Yom Kippur can help us take the first small, but absolutely essential, first step. *Teshuvah* begins with a tear, a single tear of contrition. Yom Kippur encourages us to shed that tear. Here we are, in a great sanctuary whose every line reminds us of all that our tradition represents — strength, standards, Torah, the right, duty, faith. Here we are before the altar on which many of us were confirmed and where our children and grandchildren have been confirmed; and few of us can escape today the memories of those innocent childhood moments when we planned to achieve so much, to give so much, to change our world for the better. Today we participate in a service which highlights the themes of confession, atonement and repentance. If we have any sensitivity, a tear of contrition wells up in our soul, a tear for what might have been. We cry for all those compromises we made, the appetites we indulged, the ugly words we spoke; for all that we should have done but did not do.

Our mystics insisted that a tear can melt the seal of any gate. They taught that we live within a high wall and a locked gate. These are our defenses, our rationalizations, our ready explanations. "Everybody does it." "I have responsibilities. What else could I do?" "It's a dog eat dog world." "Nobody cares anyway." A tear of contrition, they said, can melt the lock on the gate behind which we hide, and if we allow the gate of our defenses to swing open and expose our unprotected soul to Yom Kippur's message, we will have taken the first step in raising the quality of our lives. Normally, we shield ourself, our inner self, against the cruelties and the buffetings of the harsh world. That's the reason for the wall. Tonight we don't need the wall. There are no dangers here, only God. Tonight we are alone with God, alone with our thoughts. We can allow ourselves to be vulnerable, to want a better life.

Teshuvah begins when we shed a tear of contrition and open that gate and expose our soul to our hopes and God's standards. *Teshuvah* begins when we allow ourselves to feel the pangs of conscience we usually repress and to reaffirm standards of conduct we normally compromise. *Teshuvah* begins when we wonder whether success, fame, wealth, social status, the goals we normally pursue, are as important as we have allowed them to become. *Teshuvah* begins when we ask ourselves whether we have become self-indulgent or shut off from others. Did we serve to serve or to gain approval? *Teshuvah* begins when we recognize the person we can still become.

The Yom Kippur tear is only a beginning. When Neilah is over we will step back into the familiar world and all the familiar pressures and temptations will be there. Here is a case where our fathers were better off than we are. When they shed the tear of remorse and decided to reshape their lives; when they said, 'I want to live in a more compassionate, more sensitive and more honorable way,' they returned to a world which supported and encouraged *Teshuvah*. The old Jewish communities confirmed the values of this place and this day. Their literature dealt with Torah. The pattern of their daily life revolved around the synagogue. The extended family was source of strength. To use the modern jargon, our fathers had a readymade support group.

We don't. Come Neilah, when we walk out of these doors, we'll enter a world where many voices deny or scoff at the standards which this place sanctifies. Some say: 'Live it up, it doesn't matter what you do, so enjoy yourself.' Others say: 'Don't be a fool, think of number one, you're all that really counts.' Others say: 'Who cares?' Our environment is not a consistently supportive one. Many of us lack

the institutional supports which our fathers had. Many of our homes are lonely places where we are left too much alone and little of importance is said. The home, once so strong, so full of instruction, so firm in its values, has been weakened. The patterns of friendship have been frayed by the mobility of our society and by a prevailing feeling that a friend's character is not our business. Many equate companionship with friendship and feel that they cannot talk with their friends about private matters, certainly not reprove them, so there, too, there is emptiness — a lack of support. The synagogue is here, but few Jews turn to the synagogue, and fewer know how to use it effectively. The synagogue confirms righteous and sensitive living, but few return week after week to reassure themselves that *teshuvah* is worth the effort. When we leave here we re-enter a world full of struggle and bitterness, full of temptation and confusion, a world in which the institutions which support character have been weakened.

If you want to know why some of our children turn to the cults the answer is here. They're seeking community. They need confirmation of basic values. They seek a world that is consistent, coherent, moral, a caring community. We paid a high price for the privilege of walking our own way and doing our own thing; perhaps too high a price.

We need to be encouraged when we falter; to be criticized when we rationalize; to be listened to when we need to talk. Whenever we're in pain, whenever something troubles us, whenever we're having difficulty finding our way, we need the support of others who are as vulnerable and as much in pain as we are. Every day that we live people are at us, and every day our appetites say to us, 'give in,' and our weakness says to us, 'You can't make it, turn back.' We need support.

Where can we find the support that we need to persevere in the way of *teshuvah*? I'm afraid that we're going to have to strengthen existing institutions even as we turn to them. Too many homes today are simply places to feed and clothe the children and put them to bed. We need homes where adults and children meet and learn to share and honestly talk over their confusions and their attitudes, a place of love, a place of correction, a place of character and a place of standards. We need families that are open, openly critical and loving with one another. In turning our lives around we would be wise to turn again to the synagogue for no other institution provides us a regular opportunity to stand before God, draw on His creative strength, and remind ourself of all the Torah represents — rectitude, honor, justice, compassion.

Our rabbis and teachers did not need Dr. Freud to describe to them the difficulties inherent in raising up the quality of our lives. Nearly eight centuries before Freud Maimonides wrote: "It is beyond belief, human nature being what it is, that we can suddenly change the habits of a lifetime." Our sages knew a great deal about habit and addiction, but they had sturdy consciences, strengthened by instruction in Torah and reinforced by the coherent culture of their community and their homes.

We can't really do it alone. That's the bottom line! We like to believe that we're self-sufficient. Most of us handle competently a whole range of responsibilities; but, when it comes to the non-practical, the non-financial, the non-professional sides of our lives, when it comes to character, to moral habits and to the sublimation of appetite and passion, we can't make it alone. The pressures are too unrelenting. At times everyone needs help and encouragement.

Alone we shed the tear of contrition. Alone we must muster the will, wit and the wisdom to go the way of *Teshuvah*; but along the way we need support, reinforcement, and beyond reinforcement we need a faith, a hope, the certainty that God cares and will help.

Daniel Jeremy Silver



October 30, 1983
Vol. LXX, No. 5

The Temple Bulletin

Rabbi Silver's Yizkor Sermon

Each of us is part of a chain of being. The genes of our ancestors shape our physical and emotional structure and we owe civilization to their talents and achievements. We live in a society of law because others believed in justice and democracy. We read what others have written. We respond to the music and the art others created. Our worship expresses their wisdom and is consecrated by their devotion.

John Donne wrote the famous line, "No man is an island — sufficient unto himself." He might well have added, no man is self-made. We are, to a large degree, what the thoughtfulness of others allows us to become; and so an hour such as this is not simply a remembrance of our intimates but a memorial of all whose interests, labors and sacrifices deeded civilization to us.

Yizkor is a time to remind ourselves of those to whom we are indebted. Our greatest debt is to God. "For each morning with its light, Father we thank Thee/For rest and shelter of the night/For health and food, for love and friends/For everything Thy goodness sends/Father, in heaven, we thank Thee" (Emerson). In the beginning God. God created the glories of nature, the opportunity which is life, and the human being's special gift of conscience. God doesn't need our thanks, but we need to say thanks. To be self-proud is to be an ingrate, and to be a taker, not a giver. The self-proud acknowledge no obligation to others and so they live apart in a world of permanent and increasing dissatisfaction. Enough is never enough. The grateful do not need to be told that we must not only think of our needs but be responsive to the needs and concerns of others.

Next to God, our debt is to our parents. They brought us into life and with rare exceptions provided us the necessary security, shelter and support which allowed us to grow into confident maturity. We love because we were loved. Parents provided us not only shelter but emotional support and our first lessons in virtue and character. They established for us a place of encouragement, intimacy and love — a home where we took our first steps, thought our first thoughts, and fought our first fight for attention, confident that even when we were impossible they would be patient with us. Even when we broke with their ways it was their standards against which we measured ourselves.

The gifts did not stop with childhood. Throughout life friends encouraged us when we were confused, comforted us when we were hurt, shared with us life's pleasures, and introduced

us to new experiences and broader vistas. When another gave us the full confidence of their love and celebrated with us the sacrament of sharing, they helped us unlock sensitivities and feelings which had until then lay dormant. They helped us understand the joys of intimacy and true partnership. In time our children filled our lives with noisy joy and ceaseless responsibility, forced us to listen to fresh ideas, and gave us the privilege of providing for others without thought of return.

Over the years most of what we know was taught to us by others. People we barely knew went out of their way to help us — took time to listen to us — opened doors for us. One of my favorite passages in our prayer book uses rather old-fashioned images, but is nonetheless to the point: "How much we owe to the labors of
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Rabbi Silver's Yizkor Sermon
(Continued from front page)

our brothers! Day by day they dig far away from the sun that we may be warm, enlist in outposts of peril that we may be secure and brave the terrors of the unknown for truths that shed light on our way. Numberless gifts and blessings have been laid in our cradles as our birthright."

No one likes to feel that he takes without return. To remember is to feel obligated – indebted. It would please us to give, but they can no longer receive. We would like to say thank you, but they cannot hear. This service represents an attempt by our tradition to help us meet our need to return good for good, love for love.

Jews began to observe *Yizkor* perhaps a thousand years ago. If you had attended one of those medieval services you would have found that the liturgy centered on this paragraph: "May God remember the soul of my mother/father/husband/wife who has gone to their eternal home. In their memory I pledge charity for the mention of their name. May their soul be bound up in the bonds of eternal life. May their rest be honorable." This formula was called *hazkarat neshamot*, the mention of the dead. Medieval Jews, like medieval Christians, believed that each person would be judged immediately upon death to determine whether he/she deserved admission into Heaven. Since no one is a saint – perfect, they assumed that this judgement would take some time and that there was a waiting period between application and the final judgement which each case was taken under advisement and character witnesses were called. The *hazkarat neshamot* process was their way of supporting the cause of their dead. If our dead deserve our prayers, if we thought enough of them to give charity in their name, surely they deserve Heaven. *Yizkor* allowed worshippers to feel that they had, to a degree, repaid their debt of love.

Some of the more theologically-minded rabbis strongly opposed *hazkarat neshamot* on the uncontested grounds that it brought God's judgement into question, and even suggested that God could be influenced: but in matters religious, emotion almost always outweighs theological logic. *Yizkor* became immensely popular because it met a basic emotional need. *Yizkor* became a well-loved part of the Yom Kippur ritual because worshippers felt they were actually helping their dead even as they had so often been helped by them.

The need to say thanks is one we have all felt – and often feel, and though originally limited to Yom Kippur, the practice of *hazkarat*

neshamot soon was added to the liturgy of the major festivals. When someone close dies we seek desperately to do something, anything, to prove our love and devotion. Families continue to tell their children of grandparents they hardly knew. We have all seen the widow who devotes her energies to make sure that her husband's compositions or writings are published and that a street or fund is dedicated in his name so that his civic duties remain visible.

Most of us, I'm sure, no longer believe that an angel checks credentials at Heaven's gate, but all of us know we are in debt to our dead and so *yizkor* and *hazkarat neshamot* remain beloved parts of our ritual, but the central text has been significantly changed. "May I always remember my loved ones who have died and honour their memory by living uprightly and showing kindness to my fellow human beings. May their memory inspire me so to conduct myself that they may live in me, and that, through my life, their highest ideals and noblest hopes may be brought nearer to fulfillment. Rather than murmuring because precious ones have been taken from me, may I be grateful for the time they were with me. May I recount the past days not as loss, but as gain. I have had them, and now that they are ended, may I turn that loss to gain – the gain that comes with new courage, with nobler tasks and with a renewed awareness of life."

Our purpose is no longer to assure that our loved ones enter Heaven. They are with God and we trust God implicitly. What we have recognized is that we can repay our debt to the past in measure as we put the future in debt to us. They cared for us. We will care for our children. They stood for fine values. we will stand firm. The next paragraph of the payer I quoted earlier fleshes out the *Yizkor* theme: "Let us then, O Lord, be just and great-hearted in our dealings with our fellowmen, sharing with them the fruit of our common labor, acknowledging before Thee that we are but stewards of whatever we possess. Help us to be among those who are willing to sacrifice that others may not hunger, who dare to be bearers of light in the dark loneliness of stricken lives, who struggle and even bleed for the triumph of righteousness among men. So may we be co-workers with Thee in the building of Thy kingdom which has been our vision and goal through the ages."

We cannot be indifferent to the ties of family and friendship for which our dead sacrificed and prayer. We must not be careless in our citizenship when they worked so diligently to secure our rights. We will not treat Judaism cavalierly when they sacrificed, and even died, for the sanctification of God's name.

On a more personal note, some among us are fortunate in that our loved ones told us what was important to them, how we could repay our debt. Many of us can still hear a parent saying to us, "You'll have to go your own way, but I hope you will appreciate that our family has always been proud of its good name and felt a responsibility for the institutions of our community and our faith." A teacher, long since dead, once said to me: "I have done my research, you will do yours. I don't ask you to agree with all I've taught you, but I want you to believe that I spoke with integrity and after careful thought. When you write thoughtfully and with integrity, you will honor me."

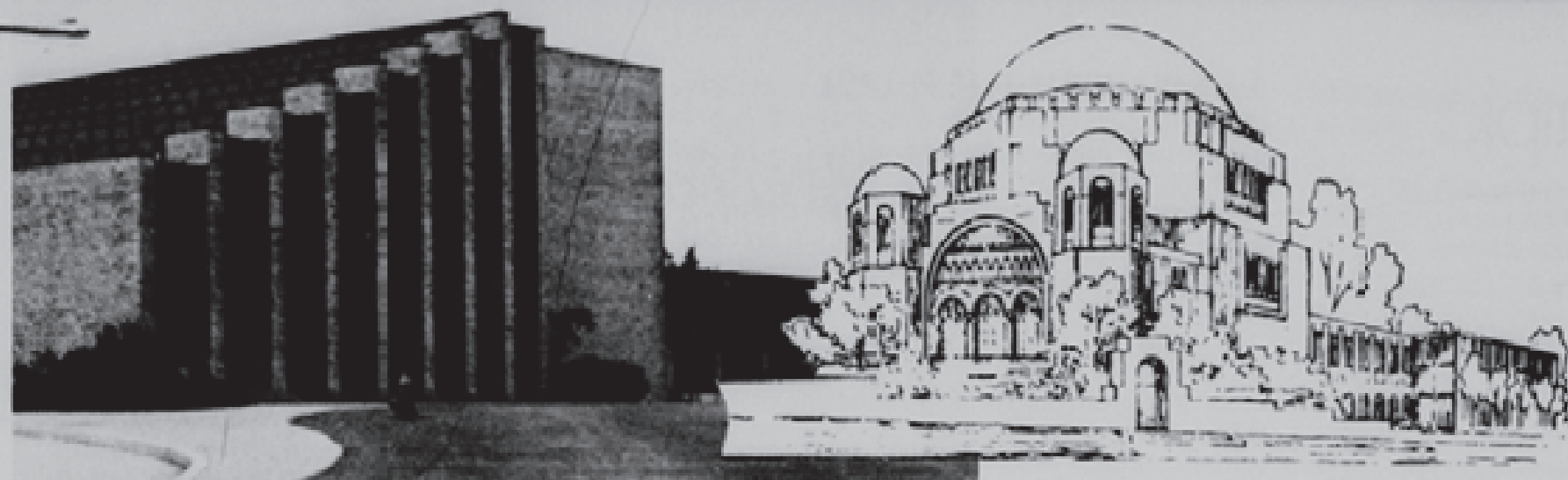
This sense of indebtedness is so powerful and universal an emotion that I still find it surprising when otherwise sensible people do not take the time to make clear to their intimates what is truly important in their lives – how their memory should be honored. Deeds speak louder than words, but deeds are not always self-explanatory, and a few carefully chosen phrases would clear away many confusions. When a friend died recently, I remembered his saying to me when we were together at another's funeral, "Money is wasted in stone. Money should help people." Apparently, he never mentioned these feelings to his wife and when he died she built in his memory a marble mausoleum.

Of course, circumstances sometimes make such talk difficult, but in most cases there was time. The fault was ours. Unfortunately, some of us are superstitious – we are afraid that if we talk about death we will invite death into our lives. Others are simply not in the habit of talking about their deepest feelings. More is the pity. What we feel deeply we ought to share.

During *Yizkor* my first thoughts are to my dead and to my grief, but during this half hour I sense my thoughts moving from memory to duty, from what has been to what must be. During *Yizkor* learn again that I can best repay my debt of love as I love those about me and support all those enterprises which enhance faith, community, justice, peace and civilization.

If I should die and leave you here a while,
Be not like others, sore undone, who keep
Long vigil by the silent dust and weep.
For my sake turn again to life and smile,
Nerving thy heart and trembling hand to do
That which will comfort other souls than thine;
Complete these dear unfinished tasks of mine,
And I, perchance, may therein comfort you.
(Mary Lee Hall)

Daniel Jeremy Silver



November 27, 1983
Vol. LXX, No. 7

The Temple Bulletin

From The Rabbi's Desk: A Rabbi Looks at Luther

The sermon of November 6, 1983 is produced here in response to numerous requests.

Our tradition praises all that is worthy in human achievement, but does not declare any man or woman to be fully worthwhile. Perfection belongs only to God. Our Bible puts it bluntly: "there is no one on earth so righteous that he sins not." We have no library full of volumes detailing the lives of saints. Our literature concentrates on history rather than hagiography. We do not celebrate the birth or the death of our heroes. We are to pattern ourselves only after God.

The Christian world makes rather more of certain personalities. This very day they are celebrating the 500th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther who was born on the 6th of November in 1483 in the little German town of Eisleben. There can be no question as to the importance of Luther's achievements. He was the central figure of the Protestant Reformation. Luther's personality was as imposing as his ideas. His followers call themselves Lutherans while the disciples of the other major reformers—Knox, Calvin, Zwingli—called themselves Presbyterians or Methodists or Baptists.

When the world becomes excited about an anniversary it's usually worth our while to ask who is celebrating it and why they're doing so. Luther's anniversary has not been limited to Lutherans. Most Protestant groups have held seminars or celebratory services and, surprisingly, Roman Catholics have joined in the anniversary although this Augustine monk who broke with the Church to whom he had taken vows of obedience catalysed a schism which split Christendom. You may have seen in the morning paper that the present Pope has agreed to preach in a Lutheran chapel in Rome in honor of this anniversary.

Why should the Roman Catholic Church now turn favorable attention on a man who led a rebellion against its authority? Why does the Pope feel the need to say: "what was was. The past is behind us. Christian divisions must be healed. Let's focus on the faith of the man rather than on the schismatic consequences of his faith?"

The Pope wants to forge the bonds of Christian unity. For centuries Western dominance lulled Christians into the belief that they were not only the dominant world religion but destined to be the universal church. In recent years the resurgence of Islam and the rapid spread of Communism have rudely shaken that confidence. A once self-confident Christianity feels itself threatened. In unity there is strength. In disunity there is weakness, so Christians are eager to build again the unity which they enjoyed during the medieval period.

Among the reformers, Roman Catholics find Luther an attractive figure because his theology, though Protestant, remained heavily Christological and assertive of church authority. Luther emphasized the miracles which always are implicit in the Christ myth and the importance of ecclesiastical authority. Though he challenged Church authority, Luther remained in much of his thinking a medieval monk.

Holy writ was for Luther the ultimate source of authority. He used Scripture to challenge and reject the authority of papal bulls and decretals. Luther insisted that the Bible, not the Church, must be obeyed. He taught what many identify as basic Protestant doctrine, that every person has the right to make up his mind about Biblical meaning, God's Word, but what he means was that Scripture is the basis of authority, that each person should read Scripture, and that when they do they will see that *my* reading is the right one. After his break with Rome, Luther spent most of his time translating Scripture into German and publishing voluminous commentaries on the various books of the Bible. He was determined that his followers would know which interpretation was the true one. To this day the Lutheran tradition is among the most theologically rigid of Protestant groups.

Though many of us were raised to believe that the Protestant tradition somehow leads directly to John Locke,

Thomas Jefferson and the American Constitution, to democracy, in fact Luther's purpose was anything but democratic. He simply sought to exchange his Christian orthodoxy for the familiar orthodoxy of Rome.

Certainly, the most interesting and unexpected celebrant of Luther's anniversary is the German Democratic Republic. Communist East Germany has spent hundreds of thousands of marks to rehabilitate Wartburg Castle where the Elector of Saxony hid Martin Luther after he was declared contumacious by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, at the Diet of Worms. Libraries and university halls in East Germany where Martin Luther wrote and taught have been turned into museums by that country's Communist leaders.

For those who prize paradox, here is one at which we can only marvel. Here are Communist leaders whose ideology condemns religion, working to publicize and emphasize the life and work of a religious figure whose teachings rejected political activism in favor of patient acceptance of the social, political and economic inequities of his day. Luther told the masses to obey their lords.

By way of partial explanation, I would point to that peculiar temptation of Germans to believe that they are a special people. Luther was a German among Germans. Much of his
(Continued inside)

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICES

November 27, 1983

10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

SAYING NO TO THE PRESS

December 4, 1983

10:30 a.m.

The Temple Branch

Rabbi

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

will speak on

WHO IS A HERO? THE QUESTION OF CHANUKAH

Friday Evening Service — 5:30 - 6:10 — The Temple Chapel

Sabbath Service — 9:00 a.m. — The Branch

From The Rabbi's Desk: (Continued)

attack on the papacy was an attack on what he dismissed as an Italian dominated church. Luther often donned the robe of the national spokesman of German Christians against Italian Christians, and his speeches often allude to German racial superiority in terms which we have, unfortunately, heard again from Germans of our time.

Rome is the greatest thief and robber that ever appeared on earth or ever will . . . Poor Germans that we are - we have been deceived. We were born to be masters and we have been compelled to bow the head beneath the yoke of our tyrants . . . It is time that the glorious Teutonic people should cease to be the pawns and puppets of the Roman pontiff.

National self-interest and pride explain some of the interest of the East Germans in Martin Luther's anniversary. "He was one of ours. He speaks to us." Their participation reflects German frustration at being a divided people, a weakened people, who still cherish a strong sense of a special German destiny.

I believe there is another reason for the East German activity. Martin Luther was a rebel against a particular authority, but not against authority as such. Many tend to romanticize revolutionaries as people who oppose tyranny and authority in order to establish a free society. Some rebels are democrats, but most are not. We have seen in recent years in revolution after revolution that when rebels came to power, if anything they outdo in tyranny and autocracy those whom they replaced. Compare Lenin with the Czars; Mao with the Manchu emperors; and some of the leaders of the Third World with their colonial masters. Most revolutionaries do not seek democracy but a political order which they will organize their way.

Luther was just such an authoritarian rebel. He opposed the authority of Rome and sought to establish the authority of his ideas, and he was willing to support those who would enforce his theology. Much of Luther's success derived from the fact that he encouraged the rulers of the small German states of his day to counterpose their authority to that of the Holy Roman Emperor and Rome, and when they did so, he sanctified their sovereignty by insisting that their authority must be obeyed as long as they promoted his understanding of the true faith.

Martin Luther tacked the famous theses on the door of the Wittenburg Cathedral in 1517; or, to be more accurate, in that year he printed these theses and passed them out around the university where he taught. By 1521 a number of German lords had signed on to the Lutheran position, and by 1525 Lutheran structures had become the state church in a number of German states. During the stressful period, as the struggle between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church heated up, other elements in the society saw a chance to air their grievances. In Germany no group was more destitute than the peasants. They were the poor of the poor, and their lot had worsened as an urban money economy slowly replaced the agrarian barter economy of medieval feudalism. In 1522 peasant bands rebelled against the authority of those who represented the new economic order, their lords. Luther's response was to address a pamphlet to his Lutheran lords in which he said:

Stab, smite, throttle, slay these ravid mad dogs without mercy. For nothing can be more poisonous, hurtful or devilish than a rebel. He that shall die on the side of law and order is a true martyr before God, but he that perishes on the side of rebellion is doomed eternally to Hell.

The popularity of Solidarity in neighboring Poland explains much of the interest of the German Democratic Republic in Luther's anniversary. Solidarity espouses the right of the working classes even in a Communist society. The G.D.R. obviously hopes that German Lutherans will take to heart his law and order thesis and remain passive and obedient. I know of no better illustration of the hypocrisy of the leaders of many Marxist-dominated countries about the well-being of the proletariat. Their primary concern is to stay in power.

Luther's celebration is not an uncomplicated testimonial. None of this is said in order to diminish his historic importance. Luther was the dominant figure of the Protestant Reformation, and the Protestant Reformation represents a major watershed in the history of the modern world. Yet, it must also be said that Martin Luther did not single-handedly create the Reformation. In retrospect, we see him as a catalyst of changes which were inevitable.

The speed of the acceptance of Lutheran doctrine and institutions makes this clear. Until 1517 Luther was a little-known Augustinian monk who toiled as a respected lecturer in theology at a small Roman Catholic university. The theses which he published in 1517 were not intended as a direct challenge to Roman Catholic teachings but as statements of problematic issues which he felt ought to be re-examined and debated by Roman Catholic theologians. Four short years later a number of major cities and duchies had become Lutheran, and by the mid-1520's a full-blown Lutheran liturgy and polity was in existence. Obviously, Germany before Luther was like the inside of a volcano before the actual moment of explosion.

Luther's Europe had experienced several centuries of structural and cultural change. Feudalism was coming to an end. Particularly in northern Europe an agrarian economy was giving way to an urban, commercial economy. This was the Age of Discovery. This was the era of the Renaissance. The first book was printed 33 years before Luther's birth. The new commercial class needed to be able to read, write and cipher and, for the first time there was now in Europe a literate group beside the clerics. A number of church traditions, especially its attitudes toward banks and commerce, ran against their interests and their leaders began to question the doctrines and teachings which were offered by a clergy who were often, themselves, poorly educated.

The Church no longer commanded unquestioned reverence. Many feared for their immortal soul, but most were only too aware of the Church's worldliness and venality. The papacy had become a secular power with its own geo-political ambitions. In Luther's day at least one Pope actually led his troops into battle. The Church had become another money-hungry bureaucracy. Appointments were bought. Simony was rife. The poor were ruled strictly. The rich could always purchase dispensations. The Renaissance church repeatedly harvested its cash customers in order to fight wars against Christian princes as well as the Turks; and in order to rebuild St. Peter's. In Luther's day the likes of Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael were beautifying the papal palaces and chapels at sizeable expense.

One major source of Church income was the sale of indulgences. According to medieval Christian theology, the crucifixion had not only cancelled Original Sin and so opened the doors to salvation, but had presented the Church a large credit in Heaven which the Church could use as it saw fit. According to this theory, the Church could draw down at will on this endowment fund of merit for the benefit of the faithful. Those whom the Church decided to reward gained a speedy passage through Purgatory into Heaven. Indulgences were offered to those who went on a Crusade or who contributed money to the Church's various building campaigns. It was put out that the faithful could insure a speedy passage through Purgatory by contributing to a grateful Church which would issue them a certificate of indulgence. This was the Church's guarantee that for having given so much to its work, the donor could expect to be released a specified number of days early from Purgatory. It was, in effect, an assurance of entry into Heaven.

Some of you are laughing, but I remind you these were days when people were desperately concerned with Heaven. Life was accepted as a vale of tears, and Heaven was anticipated as the great release. Our tradition had similar practices. Many took literally the Biblical text on *Tzedakah* *Tasil Mi-mavet*, "righteousness (charity) shall deliver from death." It was assumed that if you give charity as a memorial, your loved one's passage into Heaven would be expedited. These were the centuries when a son said Kaddish for his father in order to assure his entry into Heaven. Our customs were not as crude, surely, as the sale

of indulgences, but they were responsive to the same kinds of needs.

When the Renaissance popes, Luther's contemporaries, undertook to rebuild St. Peter's and to do so at a time when they also required large sums to equip an army to fight the Turks who were at the gates of Vienna, religious hucksters, working on commission, were sent throughout Europe to raise money through the sale of indulgences. Martin Luther looked on these religious hucksters in the same way that sensitive church leaders today look on T.V. preachers who assure their audience that if they'll only send in money their prayers will be answered and their illnesses will be healed. The crudity of this practice disturbed Luther and he was particularly sensitive to the fact that indulgence monies collected in Germany did not benefit the German church. But where others simply grumbled that no portion of what they gave came back for local use, Luther, always the theologian, began to examine the theological basis of the claims the Church advanced to justify this practice. The more he examined these traditional explanations, the more he became convinced that the Church was acting in an unauthorized way. The shield of the Pope featured crossed keys, the keys to the Kingdom. The Church claimed that it controlled admission. Luther began to question this mandate. By what right did the Church grant indulgences. How did the Church know the procedures by which individuals were admitted into Heaven? Luther came to feel that the Church was acting as if it were God. Luther understood salvation as a gift of God's grace, a miracle beyond the control of the Church. God's grace redeems life, but its operation remains a mystery.

Luther first questioned the authority behind the sale of indulgences. A bulldog thinker who never let go of an idea till he had followed it through to its conclusion, Luther's concerns quickly reached out to other areas in which the Church seemed to be in the dispensing of salvation business. Within a few months he was asking about the sacraments. The Church insisted that unless the sacraments were performed, a person would be denied admission to Heaven. Luther insisted that only God determines who shall enter. One is justified by faith, by God's mercy, not by the acts of the Church. Following out this logic with bulldog tenacity, indifferent to prudence or reprisal, Luther soon challenged all of the Church's claims to be the accredited salvation-dispensing instrumentality. As Luther saw the Church, it was not God's accredited salvation-guaranteeing system but the body of those who faithfully affirm the teachings of Christ and who seek to spread the faith and live by that faith. God, not the Church, determines who is saved and how.

Few cared as much as Luther did for theology, but many were prepared for his attack on Rome. Papal abuse of power and Roman venality were notorious. Leo X, the Pope who ex-communicated Luther, had become a Cardinal at thirteen when his father, Lorenzo di Medici bought that office for him. Twenty years later Leo, like any Tammany politician, bought the votes in the College of Cardinals necessary for his election as Pope.

If Luther challenged long-familiar and long-exercised Church authority, he had to do so on the basis of some authority which Christians would acknowledge as superior to that of the Pope. There was only one such authority, that of the New Testament text. God's word was surely to be trusted more even than that of the most exalted priest.

Luther insisted that the New Testament nowhere describes Jesus or any of his disciples as priests; therefore, he taught the priesthood of all believers. Anyone could intercede on his own with God. The Ten Commandments required that "you not have any graven image nor any manner of likeness." Catholic churches were filled with statues and icons. Luther's church was bare of such idolatries. The New Testament describes women playing significant roles in the early Church. The Roman Church had become a male-dominated institution. Luther insisted that women were men's equals before God. The New Testament does not require celibacy. Luther married. The Church had emphasized literacy only for the clergy. Because authority now lay

(Continued)

From The Rabbi's Desk: (Continued)

in Scripture rather than in teachings controlled by the church, Luther emphasized learning. Services were to be worshipful and educational. Preaching came to occupy a prominent role. Lutheran liturgy featured congregational participation and singing rather than a sacred ritual performed for the congregation by a priest.

These radical changes in church form and practice spread quickly. Obviously many of his neighbors were already thinking along similar lines. Luther spoke to a community which was ready to hear, to a nation ready to be separated. He spoke powerfully and charismatically, and in Northern Europe carried the day.

What occurs to a rabbi as he reviews Luther's life? He feels, in the first instance, that the Christian church has a number of problems which he is very glad the synagogue does not — particularly the issue of authority. He is reminded that this man, whatever his other talents, remained prisoner of some of the most stereotypic and pernicious medieval ideas about Jews. Early on in his career, Luther hoped to be able to convert us. He believed, as did many in his day, that the time of the Second Coming was near. Many of the messianic traditions popular in his day held that the Second Coming would follow shortly after the fall of Rome. Rome, Constantinople, had fallen to the Turks in 1453 just 30 years before Luther's birth. Another popular messianic theme insisted that the conversion of the Jews would be a signal that the End of Days was about to arrive. Luther seems to have felt that he and his teaching would win us over, and so insure this long-awaited event.

If I were a Jew the Pope would never persuade me of his doctrine. I would rather be wracked ten times. Popedom, with its abominations, Profanities, has given Jews infinite offense... I am persuaded that if the Jews heard our preaching and how we interpret the Old Testament, many of them might be won over.

In his later years Luther becomes increasingly exasperated with us. He preached and we were not won over. In his mind our obstinacy delayed the *Parachute*. His language,

never temperate, becomes positively poisonous. In 1546 he published a pamphlet, *The Jews and Their Lies*, addressed to the Princess of Germany, in which he suggested to these lords that they should authorize the tearing down of every synagogue, stone by stone; that the houses of Jews should be burned, and Jews led off into cattle pens to live as the animals that they are; that rabbis should be forbidden to preach or teach; that our prayer books and Talmud should be confiscated and burned; and that, really, it would be best for all if Jews were removed by whatever means possible. The next year he published a pamphlet on the *Shem hameforash*, the Sacred Name of God. Our word for God, *Adonai*, is not how God's name was originally pronounced. Early on that pronunciation was shrouded in mystery and reserved for the High Priest to use on Yom Kippur to assure God's acceptance of Israel's repentance. By the medieval period God's special name was associated with magical powers; and in this pamphlet Luther accused the Jews of using the *shem hameforash* to curse and harm Christians, as a form of voodoo. He pictures us as malevolent practitioners of black magic and argues that to be free to work out their destiny, Christians must be rid of us. In ugly language, he repeats all the familiar medieval anti-semitic canards, including the charge of ritual murder.

A rabbi sees Luther then not only as a leading Protestant theologian but as a man whose passions fueled many of the ugliest elements in German, passions which made life difficult for Jews over the centuries and which erupted disastrously in our day.

Two weeks ago the American Jewish Committee sponsored a dialogue among Jewish and Lutheran scholars, and this issue of Luther's anti-semitism and the importance of his anti-semitism in the development of the German mentality was much discussed. The Lutherans said essentially that Luther's excessive language was simply that of a man given to excessive language; the Jews said that may be, but his words did influence many excessively.

Is there a direct line between Luther and the Nazi ideologues? Certainly, Germans who were predisposed to

anti-semitism found in Luther a religious sanction for their feelings. It's not hard to find evidence that many of those who held dear the theories of anti-semitism read Luther's writings. Certainly, they quoted from them abundantly. On the other hand, Denmark is a Lutheran country and it was the Danes who saved their entire Jewish community from the Holocaust. When all is said and done, a man cannot really be fully blamed or praised for how later generations use his writings.

Anti-semitism apart, I must say that as a rabbi I find little that is useful in his writings for our times. Luther remained a medieval thinker. He remained convinced that the State must support the Church. He believed that the State can rightfully impose a particular religious ideology upon its citizens. He believed in education, but he saw education as supportive of his doctrines, not as the untrammelled search for truth. For all his erudition, he remained a pious monk who believed in The Truth and that he had grasp of The Truth.

Yet, it must also be said that Luther understood that the role of religious institutions was to inspire and teach, not to claim control of salvation. He was the right man for his times in terms of his catalysing a significant religious change; and the movement that he helped create did, in fact, by its very being, and despite his beliefs, make it possible for pluralism to develop in Europe. It was not that Luther believed in freedom but that people are freest when power is divided. The Protestant Reformation divided Europe: Catholic in the south, Protestant in the north, and soon northern Europe was divided among a number of Protestant sects. Conflicting claims to The Truth inevitably led some to question all such claims, and political division ultimately forced some communities to create neutral spaces where people could live with those of other persuasions without demeaning them or trying to control their lives.

There are many reasons to celebrate Luther's anniversary, and I must add that it is a bit disconcerting to note that some of the forces in our world which oppose freedom also find good reason to join in the festivities.

Daniel Jeremy Silcer

TYA CHANUKAH BRUNCH

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1983 at 12:15

Come join The Temple Young Associates and celebrate Chanukah at the Temple Branch. Light candles — Bring your own Menorah if you wish. Enjoy a wonderful brunch.

There will be a sing-a-long and a ventriloquist for the children. Chanukah favors!

Donations of toys and books in good condition will be accepted at the door to be forwarded to the Jewish Day Nursery. Please bring an item for a child 4 months and up or a 3-6 year old. No stuffed animals please.

COST: Adults \$3.75 — Children \$2.00 (age 4-12)

Children under 3 no charge

