



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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

Series IV: Writings and Publications, 1952-1992, undated.

Sub-series B: Other Writings, 1952-1992, undated.

Reel
72

Box
23

Folder
1408

Articles, "Do We Say What We Mean? Do We Mean What We Say?" CCAR Journal, reprint, 1977.

Do We Say What We Mean? Do We Mean What We Say?

Daniel Jeremy Silver

I

ABOUT A YEAR ago I completed a study, "Confirmation 1975, The Use of the Equivocal" (*CCAR Journal*, Spring 1976), in which I analyzed twenty-four Confirmation services celebrated in Reform congregations in May of 1975. I focused on the image of Judaism presented by these services, an image which the confirmands were presumably asked to affirm. I came to eight conclusions:

(1) That most of these services were equivocal, designed to confirm whatever preconceptions of Judaism confirmands and congregation brought to the occasion.

(2) That the Confirmation year leaves many students with the impression that Judaism can be defined by the *Shema*, the Ten Commandments, a few prophetic statements on righteousness and an expression of hope in the immediate future. Such a Judaism can be much or little, depending on how each person interprets these signals.

(3) That rabbis control the Confirmation service and can do with it what they will.

(4) That rabbis find it easier to signal broad-gauged ethical duties than to specify devotional requirements or parochial duties geared to insuring the survival of the Jewish people. Those speeches which mentioned Israel dealt only with the *mitzvot* of touring and the UJA.

(5) Twenty of the twenty-four services failed to mention devotional life as a religious duty and, in effect, equated living as a Jew with human compassion and social justice. Despite the traditional identification of Shevuot with the anniversary of Sinai, only four services mentioned the *mitzvah* of *talmud torah* and none provided specifics. The five services which provided a running commen-

DANIEL J. SILVER is Rabbi of The Temple, Cleveland, and Adjunct Professor of Religion at Case Western Reserve University.

tary on the Ten Commandments talked about the Sabbath as a meaningful spiritual idea rather than a personal obligation.

(6) A minority of rabbis avoided the survival issues and the issues of Jewish identity. This small group apparently are committed utopians who feel there is no hope for anyone unless they dream the "impossible dream" and live as if the cruel realities of the political world were not realities. This group is indifferent, if not antagonistic, to history, defines theology as search, worries about parochialism, and conceives of Judaism as a set of revolutionary political and personal ethical imperatives.

(7) A minority of rabbis focused almost exclusively on survival and identity themes. This small group seem to have been traumatized by the crises of recent Jewish history. The obligation of the Jew is to make it possible for Jews to survive. The mission of Israel is an internal one. The Jewish God is found almost exclusively in the history of His people.

(8) My reading of these services suggested that most rabbis emphasize both terms in the label "good Jew"—both the universal, "good person" and the particular "good Jew"—but that, at the same time, they are not familiar with a theological idiom which expresses easily and effectively such an integrated definition of Judaism and do not have available liturgical paragraphs, poetry or songs which would express their balanced vision.

I came away from that study convinced that most rabbis and congregations belong to what I call the both/and school, that they affirm both the law of righteousness and the imperative of survival. The services organized by these men sought to be inclusive, but generally lacked coherence. Ideas were piled up rather than integrated. Despite their both/and intent, most services were weighted significantly toward the universal. This occurs, I believe, for stylistic rather than philosophic reasons. Universalist statements can be simply stated and are uniformly inoffensive, since they are open to any and all interpretations. Many congregations and rabbis seem to equate nobility of expression with profundity of thought when, in fact, nobility of expression may be nothing more than a mask for irrelevance. So far, that study.

One study does not define a movement. I determined to check these results by examining another significant congregational moment. On the night of Rosh Hashanah large numbers of Jews attend public worship (congregational figures suggest that about two-thirds of the adult membership attends) and congregations

seize the occasion to express or expose central concerns. Rosh Hashanah's traditional themes can, if desired, be enlarged into a review of the priorities and agenda of congregational and/or communal life. Rosh Hashanah is a High Holy Day and is treated with careful respect. It is not an idle question to ask: What values are Jews asked to respect on such an occasion?

Worship blends words, music, congregation, dress, address, the feel of the prayer book, the architecture of the place, the charisma or uncertainty of those on the pulpit into a message. Worship presents itself as an integrated moment. Any evaluation must begin with an overall impression, an admittedly difficult task for anyone working, as I have worked, solely from manuscripts and lists. I did not attend any of the services. I did bring to this analysis twenty-five years of congregational experience and a hopefully informed imagination. This, then, is not the final word, or even a scientific word; but, I believe, that it has value as a first attempt at analysis of the Rosh Hashanah night experience for its "Jewish" impact. In each case I read sermon, liturgy and music sheets. I asked myself: "What would this experience have said to me about the concerns of Jewish life? Was I summoned to a liberation agenda or a Jewish agenda? Was the mission of Israel defined as safeguarding Israel, or as the selfless service of mankind, or as a combination of many duties?"

In late August I asked forty-four rabbis, selected at random from the catalog of *Member Congregations by State and Community* (UAHC, 1976), to send me their 1976 Rosh Hashanah night sermon and to identify for me the liturgy which they used, any additional readings that were inserted into the liturgy, a schedule of music by piece and composer, and the text of any speeches offered that night other than the sermon. A followup letter requested information as to the dress of those who participated in the service. Thirty-three rabbis responded with sufficient material to be included in this study. Respondents represent the following regions: seven from New England; four from the Middle Atlantic states; seven from the South; seven from the Midwest; three from the Southwest and five from the West Coast. Two congregations were in the New York area, two from Chicago, and three from Los Angeles. Twelve of the congregations have memberships of one thousand or more; twelve have between five hundred and a thousand member families; eight have one hundred to five hundred members; and one less than one hundred. All the rabbis in the larger congregations responded, but some in the smaller congrega-

tions did not. Consequently, this study is weighted towards the larger and middle-size congregations. The age distribution of the respondents confirms this: five had been ordained within the last ten years; twelve have been in the field ten to twenty years; and sixteen for twenty years or more.

When the average worshipper entered his synagogue he entered a place full of conversation as people greeted friends. Little attention was paid to an organ prelude. The pulpit was fitted with flowers. The ark was covered with a white *parochet*. The platform filled up quickly with the official family, most of whom did nothing but show themselves. Nine congregations had laymen assist in reading the services; ten congregations had a woman light the Sabbath candles; eight laymen read an English introduction to the *Kiddush* and the one-line *berachah*, *bore p'ri ha-gofen*. The full Hebrew text of the festival/Sabbath *Kiddush* was left to the bari-tone soloist. To anticipate, over ninety percent of the evening's Hebrew came from the choir loft.

Laymen spoke briefly in eight services. Six presidents addressed their congregations; two brought "greetings;" three discussed congregational finances; and one presented a sermonette on the value of an active citizenship. One layman offered a "creative prayer:" "If we could deal with our flaws and find peace in what is right with ourselves, then the Messianic Age would be now." This rabbi, who obviously took special delight in being different, reported "that the president and High Holy Day chair people are given a few minutes of air time to share what they want."

Despite the *machers* on the pulpit, the evening is dominated by the rabbi(s). In every case, save one, he or an assistant read the major part of the service. In every case the rabbi gave the sermon. The sense of rabbinic control was heightened by his dress. Two-thirds of the rabbis wore a robe, usually white, and two-thirds of these added an *ataro-tallit*. In every case, laymen were dressed in conventional attire. One rabbi wrote that he had abandoned the black robe for "other occasions," but, "of course, (*sic*) we use a white robe on holidays and festivals." On Rosh Hashanah night there are "holy men" before us, and this separation seems to be a calculated one. I found this language in one typed set of staff instructions: "7:01, the rabbis return to their thrones and are seated."

The use of the organ is universal. No other instruments were used. Vocal forces ranged from a volunteer cantor to a professional choir of two dozen voices, with the single voice being a marked

exception. With two or three notable exceptions, the music schedule suggested an unresolved tension between performance and participation, though the majesty of the day generally led to the selection of compositions of musical complexity rather than simple singalong tunes. Selections varied markedly from congregation to congregation; a visitor from out of town would have heard few settings with which he was familiar. One exception was Max Janowski's setting of *Avinu Malkenu* which appeared in sixteen programs. I asked my musical director for his evaluation of the submissions. His written reply: "The majority of the programs appear to be suffering from inertia. In far too many instances the older settings chosen are more dated than they are timeless." One congregation had no music composed after 1910.

There were a few shockers. One congregation introduced the service with Pete Seeger's "Turn, Turn, Turn." After reading *ve'ne'emar*, another burst unexpectedly into the spiritual "Go Down, Moses." I also came upon the theme from *Exodus* and the Sabbath Prayer from *Fiddler*. When I asked myself why these pieces seemed so out of place, I found myself reflecting on the special role choir music occupies in our liberal synagogues where we use it to carry most of the burden of the past. It was the music more than any other element of the evening which suggested its historical and traditional associations.

Twenty-eight of the thirty-three congregations used the *Union Prayer Book*, Vol. II, Newly Revised. Four congregations have published and used their own Rosh Hashanah night liturgy. One congregation used the *Mahzor* of the Rabbinical Assembly (ed. J. Harlow).

If anything, the *Union Prayer Book* liturgy cuts down the spare evening service of the traditional *Mahzor*. *UPB's* Rosh Hashanah night service is brief, ritually stark, basically a Sabbath eve service with a few holyday inserts. There is no prayer for our brothers who toil to build Zion or for those who suffer under the tyranny of the Soviet Union. There is no confrontation of the specific requirements of Jewish life in America.

The *UPB's* language runs to the vague and the high-flown:

Almighty God and Father, in this solemn hour we would draw nigh to thee. Help us to build our lives on the abiding foundations of Thy law that we may attain peace of mind and steadfastness of purpose . . .

The richness of Rosh Hashanah emerges only in the morning, and most congregations still refrain from transferring elements from

the morning service, though we now do so easily from Sabbath morning to Friday night. Liturgy and music last less than an hour. Half of the congregations added an opening prayer and seven congregations provided a multilithed or printed book of additional readings and songs, generally substitutions for the traditional inserts into the *Amidah*. No congregation read from the Torah. Two congregations added a *shofar* service. If my experience is a barometer, congregants often are surprised that this service is so lean.

When inserts were made, they clearly reflected unhappiness with old-fashioned and vaguely worded texts of the *UPB* (particularly pp. 8-9 and 20-27), but were generally equally vague, and often incredibly naive. What is one to make of this line from a responsive reading: "What goes on in the depth of our lives has a profound effect upon the international situation." The combination of fuzzy piety and fuzzy language sometimes boggled the imagination. "May we understand that dissension is stupidity, and that we should spread peace and cause it to grow, a wonderful peace like that which You will reveal in the World To Come." Confused expressions of neo-Hasidic piety came in varying lengths, from this abrupt ending of one reading, "Did we live right?" to the following substitution for the *UPB*'s paragraph "Our God and God of our Father, may Thy kingdom come speedily:"

Our father in Heaven, the King to whom peace belongs: You know all the differences and dissensions among men which split our generation, and our many transgressions. And now, I do not know what to do, how to behave, how to speak or express myself, or even how to pray to You about this. I am as confused as a drunkard.

Lord of the Universe, Master of Peace: Make me worthy to be a true man of peace, a lover of peace, a true pursuer of peace always with a complete heart. Help me to avoid participation in needless and petty arguments, and to control myself when others provoke me. Make me worthy to be like the dust of the earth, like the earth itself, upon which everyone treads, but which still gives up its goodness.

A few readings were carefully conceived, though none was written with grace and flair. One represented an arresting attempt to raise the question of the purpose of congregational life: "What are we after with our efforts . . . when we gather together, make plans for our children, instruct them to learn, to practice and teach? . . . Give us the Torah our Teaching, renew within us the loving mercy, the search for a life that is sacred and joyous, a luminous round of our stories and songs that we may be known for our

manner of living, our vision of justice, our labor of peace." This reading continued with a review of Jewish history, evoking the long wanderings and the reality of redemption: "Can you not see in your people an Eternal Presence, in your past a story is told for all peoples . . . Unto ages to come we say: "see this people driven over the face of the earth, many times near to dying, bearing its truth . . . reconstructing for its own survival still a home of memory and hope which is the universal hope." The language is a bit involuted, but this text makes a serious attempt to express the tension between the particular and the universal in our theology and the possibility of delay in our messianic hope—an attempt which compares favorably with the *UPB*'s innocent confidence in the swift arrival of the Messianic Age: "Hasten the day that will bring gladness to all who dwell on earth and victory of the spirit to those who bear witness to Thy unity." One insert raised directly the theme of both/and responsibilities; but the language was Buberian and stood in the way of the thought:

My "I" includes the collective legacy of my people—all of it—the glory and the ruin, the exaltation and the degradation.

My "We" includes all mankind—all of it—the glory and the ruin, the exaltation and the degradation . . .

Like people everywhere, I can begin to find the We only by starting with my I.

The four congregations who published their own liturgy revealed, by doing so, a more profound dissatisfaction with the *UPB*.

Two liturgies attempted to turn the Rosh Hashanah congregation into a close, warm *yiddishe neshome* family. The first of these new services was developed by a large Midwestern congregation, using the basic frame provided by *UPB* but adding readings which consistently develop the theme of national renewal. Abba Hillel Silver's reading "I stood with Abraham . . ." was recited antiphonally at the beginning of the service. The following was inserted after the *Avot*:

And we thank Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast sustained us to witness the ingathering of our exiled brothers. They come from all corners of the world—the people without a land to a land deserted and waiting. They rebuilt the war-torn and neglected countries and they were healed from their sufferings. They made the soil fruitful and they were blessed. They brought law to the land and welcomed all to the shores of their new homeland and they live in freedom and are brothers again. Their peace is our peace; their freedom is our joy; and their brotherhood is our inspiration. Together we shall strive to become a light unto the nations.

Meditations which addressed ethical issues tended to use words like "sensitize" ("sensitize us to the grief and the pain afflicting the family of man"), and to speak to the reformation of character rather than to larger public action concerns. The rabbi's sermon was warm, full of *heimishe* anecdotes and concluded: "Be good Jews—and whatever else you may be, you will also be the kind of human beings whom God blesses. May it be so—O Lord." Interestingly, there was little concern with increasing the congregational use of Hebrew. The *Barechu*, *Shema*, *Mi Chamocha*, *Hashkivenu*, *Avot*, *Kiddush*, *Yehi L'ratzon*, *Avinu Malkenu*, and *Kaddish* texts are published but only the *Barechu* and *Shema* are signed for congregational reading. All other Hebrew is marked "choir" or "cantor." This minimal schedule is not unusual. In most pamphlets transliteration is the name of the game.

A second service written for a moderate-sized congregation in the new South picked up these themes of national renewal and history in another way. The long history is rehearsed and the value of the old teachings is praised. "Our belief in freedom, human dignity, equality and justice stood the test of time, an example of what should be among men. We have survived." Another reading evokes the Holocaust and paraphrased Fackenheim's eleventh commandment ("thou shalt not give Hitler a posthumous victory") with a congregational pledge: "Never again to allow ourselves the fatal sickness of apathy . . . never again to allow man to act with such inhumanity . . . to work to insure the survival of Israel." There is much talk of our "common history and uncommon challenge," and generalized talk of social mission and Israel's peace-making mission. Clearly, someone has set about to add particularist references to the denatured language of *UPB*.

We pray that you will give us the strength, ability and patience to make this year a year of service to you and humanity; a year of devotion and loyalty to our land and to Israel; a year of consecration to you and to Judaism . . .

A third rewritten service was of a quite different nature. The pamphlet is large, bright and colorful, and the service presents an enthusiastic, if sometimes incoherent, blend of Buber's *Tales of Rabbi Nahman* and classical Reform's social gospel. One reading insists that "throughout the nations, morality is wrecked and dying, strewn upon the fields of modern life. . . ," after which the *shofar* sounds as a summons "to the challenge of moral living." The service is a piling on of readings without discernible shape,

using perhaps three times the amount of language found in the *UPB*. God is in the meeting or in the soul of man and woman. Righteous deeds are stepping-stones to God. The mission rhetoric of classical Reform flourishes alongside the symbolic vagaries of neo-Hasidic pietism, and both themes are carried aloft by singalong melodies and by a simple trust that individual faith can revolutionize the world: "It shall come to pass if we believe." The sermon, too, was a *kol bo* of passion whose main thrust appeared to be anger at the pullback of Jews from social action and interfaith concerns.

The fourth service reflects another world, lonelier, more sophisticated and more conflicted. Here is a precision of language, conspicuously absent in the other services. Here is evidence of a determined rabbinic position, no less definable because the writer delights in ambiguity. The determined mood begins the pamphlet's prickly title: "Nowhere in all our religious tradition was it commanded of us that our historic destiny was to be nice." Torah is defined entirely in universalist terms. Torah is freedom. The readings cry out against every perversion of justice with no particular focus on existing injustice to Jews or on the Jewish condition. The worshipper is not allowed to love God or the Jewish people or another or himself unquestioningly. Life is uprootedness. Abraham "set our people to wandering the highways of the world," and the sense of wandering, of incompleteness, of anomie, pervades the service which fights against any sense of place or the comfort of being rooted: "Solomon built the Temple and perhaps some day we will gain the insight to see that it had to be destroyed." Under it all, there is a deeply expressed longing for a simpler way—an innocent joy. Both rabbi and cantor wore robe and *atoro-talit* and the cantor led the congregation in simple singalong melodies. A folksong was inserted which evoked the gift of simplicity:

'Tis the gift to be simple
 'Tis the gift to be free
 'Tis the gift to come down
 Where we ought to be.
 And when we are in
 The place just right,
 It will be in the valley of love and light.
 When true simplicity is gained,
 To bow and to bend
 We will not be ashamed.
 To turn, to turn will be our delight.

'Til by turning, turning
We come round right.

But even as the heart cries out for security, the mind cries out it can never be. What emerges is a hymning of Judaism as a rule of righteousness and a liberation epic, and an insistence that we live in the here-and-now by utopian standards. The Jewish experience has little value as a thing in itself. No other service was so unyielding in its denial of all value to the particular, that is, to the Jewish. The sermon ends.

We have not always played our role very well. In this generation, in particular, there are Jews who put on the costume of Jewishness, very much as in a masquerade, but not as someone seriously intent on playing one's part in the best way possible. We Jews also are too frequently eager to be spectators, rather than participants. And as Abraham Heschel once said, "as spectators we become sneering, disdainful; as partisans we are responsible, sensitive to what the moment demands of us."

But there persisted in us always an awareness, one that surely can be awakened in times of crisis, and even at holy days such as this, an awareness that we are all, in our infinite variety, we are all, young and old, members of this drama which is, in fact, a processional, a processional that reaches back into the past, and is moving, moving forward into the future, a future that might fulfill the aspirations of social justice, human decency, universal peace.

That sense of history, of drama, of processional, and of the kinship of all those who are in it—that is the vision of human possibility the Jewish experience can provide for us and for our time.

The people gather. The cantor sings. The rabbi speaks. The *shofar* sounds. Once more the New Year has come, and the whole household of Israel is at prayer. And its prayer is not for itself alone, but for all humanity. The processional continues . . ."

II

Let me categorize some rather typical services. None was presented precisely as I describe, but nothing has been invented.

I. The Bahyan—or the duties of the heart. There were five of this type. The *UPB* was read without addition. There is neither *Kiddush* nor candlelighting. The rabbi is in an ordinary suit. Only the *Barechu*, *Shema* and *Kaddish* are read in Hebrew. The music is choral, highly professional, and presents a mixture of Schalit, Fromm and Janowski. The sermon is a carefully crafted piece on "living life to its fullest measure," replete with quotes from Herman Wouk and a Hassidic *maaseh* labeled not *maaseh* but "A Tale

of the Hasidism." There are no Yiddish words in the sermon and the only Hebrew phrase used is a reference to *Yamim Noraim*. The advice is sound, but not necessarily drawn from Jewish sources, and no attempt is made to suggest how involving oneself with Judaism's devotional discipline or with *talmud torah* or with the affairs of the Jewish community might help a Jew live life to the fullest.

II. The Maimonidean—or guidance for the perplexed of our times. There were four of this type. The *UPB* was used without addition. There was a *Kiddush* and a candlelighting. The service was conducted by rabbi and cantor in white robe, *atoro-tallit* and *kippah*. The music included Ephros, Idelsohn, Janowski, Sulzer. The sermon is a well written and balanced comment on the agenda of Jewish community life which insists that our vision must be both realistic and idealistic. The theme is advanced on the basis of Rabbi Soloveitchik's distinction between the majestic Adam and the covenantal Adam and the need to be something of both Adams—at times practical and at times idealistic. The sermon analyzed the relationship of Israel and the American Jewish community, but there was also mention of such general social issues as desegregation and defense spending. A number of rabbinic statements were quoted in the original.

III. The Halevian—or the poetry to the Jewish heart. There were seven of these. The *UPB* was read straight, with *Kiddush* and candlelighting added. The rabbi is white-robed. The music is both choral and cantorial and tends toward the lyrical. The sermon is replete with stories and personal experiences, warm but not particularly incisive or original. The language is effusive rather than precise—these sermons "hear" better than they read, but such evocations can be effective when a group shares similar upbringing and conditioning. One conclusion can stand for the genre: "We need to pray Jewish. We need to observe Jewish. We need to practice Jewish and we need to translate all of these into living Jewish and giving Jewish and handing down Jewish to the generations that will follow ours and striving Jewish for the sake of our own people and for the sake of all peoples who hunger and are oppressed." Another of these sermons concluded:

The full flavor of Jewish living is more than just the universal ideal. We are *am segula*, a special, particular, chosen people. We have a singular history and a common fate and destiny, unique and added responsibilities, to the Jewish people, to their particular needs and benefits, to Jewish

education and fraternal zeal, to the Jewish home base, its upbuilding and defense, to Jewish culture, music, art, literature, to the endless (*sic*) institutions of Jewish benevolence and care . . ."

IV. The Bar Hiyyan—or the meditation of a sad soul. There were three of these. The *UPB* was read with some rather awkward additions. The rabbi wore a white robe and *kippah*. A choir intoned music which had not changed in thirty years. These sermons were written in Orwellian language: it is almost time to say *Kaddish* for the world and for the Jewish people and for the synagogue. After twenty-five pessimistic minutes during which a grocery list of worries and anxieties was suggested, the preacher shifted to a short peroration which promised that if one leaned on God, did the right and empathized with others, the darkness would lift and a new dawn break. One such jeremiad ended this way: "If all this is true, then on whom shall we lean? Upon our Father who is in heaven."

V. The Samuel Ha-Nagidian—the poetry of physical courage. There were three of these. The *UPB* was read with appropriate inserts by a rabbi in an ordinary suit. The cantor and choir sang a mishmash (Adler, Lewandowski, Helfman, Goldfarb, Stein, Bloch, Janowski, Eisenstein). A long sermon touched every tear from Kishinev through Dachau and every emotional peak from 1948 to Entebbe. The message: "We are a people of courage born of a faith studied and lived." One peroration called for a "spiritual Entebbe that will open the eyes of the world." One rabbi ended his sermon by asking the congregation to rise and sing *Hatikvah*.

VI. The Isaac Arama or *noblesse oblige*. There were three of this genre. The rabbi is in white robe and *atoro-tallit*. There is a candlelighting and *Kiddush*, a choir and cantor, a presidential sermonette and lay readers. The well-written sermon is brief, "Remember poverty and relive it. Remember family and strengthen it." Where a Halevian might have taken the *Zachor* theme and suggested devotional pieties or the Jewishness of the home, here the emphasis is solely on what every family needs and what all who are impoverished require. Remembering does not suggest nostalgia or *The World of our Fathers*, but the imperative: "Take a hand in your own development." "Support public welfare programs." These sermons berated Jews for pulling back from the civil rights movement and shared the assumption that Jews are too involved in Jewish concerns. Here are Amos and Isaiah in all their pristine force:

DO WE SAY WHAT WE MEAN? DO WE MEAN WHAT WE SAY?

For what do we stand? As a congregation, certainly not for the prophetic ideals of Judaism . . . we have no social action committee. We have no program. We have no overriding vision . . . We merely exist.

VII. The Nachmanidean, a unicum. The aim here is to recreate Safed or Mezeritch by using NFTY camp songs, a robe and *kippah*, the legends of Elie Wiesel, a few simple line melodies and as much Hebrew as anyone can read. A brief, intense sermon delighted in ambiguity and allusion, and was probably felt rather than understood. Its announced theme: "The creation of light and consciousness and heightened awareness."

VIII. Shevilei Rabbenu, the rest. A resurrected bicentennial sermon given by an emeritus helping out in a small town; a rewrite of the material on American Jewry Jacob Marcus sent around with his annual *schnorr* letter; the cluckings of a young father whose first child had been born the year before. ("She grew so much this year; so can you"); several *kol bo* addresses which had titles but no discernible theme; and one extended appeal for financial support of the synagogue.

What emerges from this study?

(1) The *UPB* liturgy for Rosh Hashanah night is a skeleton whose bare bones fail to provide the richness of ideas and variety of symbols which could of themselves suggest the many levels of duty and feelings involved in Jewish life. One in three rabbis now add material to the *UPB*, and certainly others would have followed suit had they not been forced to keep the evening brief to accommodate consecutive services.

(2) the left side of the page is full of good thoughts and high hopes, vaguely stated and largely devoid of specific Jewish elements. These paragraphs are what most worshippers hear as *the* service, since little Hebrew is read besides the *Barechu*, *Shema*, and *Kaddish*. Unfortunately, the congregationally prepared anthologies offered more of the same overblown language. I am afraid that high-flown vagueness has a fatal fascination for our movement.

(3) Perhaps ninety percent of the Hebrew is presented by cantor or choir, which allows the worshipper, like an opera goer, to enjoy the mood without thinking about the libretto. A number of congregations have printed up the few transliterated hymns which they use. In correspondence a number of men indicated their desire to move more consistently toward group singing. A singing congre-

gation is a wonderful thing; but given current levels of piety and Hebraic literacy, a Rosh Hashanah singalong, of necessity, will consist of the few well-known melodies which are used year round and minimize or eliminate the significant traditional Hebraic elements which are unique to the holy days and which now provide one of the most important links to the fullness of our tradition.

(4) As celebrated in our congregations, Rosh Hashanah 1976 was an affirmation of prophetic Judaism which was at least as Jewish as it was prophetic. As in the Confirmation study, I found that the both/and emphasis predominates. Only a small minority are either "prophetic" or "Jewish." One original liturgy and the sermon which complemented it consistently challenged everything that is particular and rooted in the Jewish experience. Several of the Halevian evenings suggested that the rabbi and/or congregation preferred not to raise their sights above the particular, but no rabbi or liturgy suggested that Jews cut their ties with the world or turn away from the world.

There were varying degrees of emphasis within the large both/and middle. The majority clearly were more concerned with the particular and specific than with a Judaism of denatured civic duties, but they were not always effectively able to signal their position. Neither the *UPB* nor the published readers display any skill with both/and language.

Part of the fault lies with a fatal fascination with golden words like peace, justice and righteousness. It is one thing to pray "Grant us peace" and "Let Israel be a messenger of peace" while playing "America" as muzak background, as one congregation did; it is quite another to suggest how American policies contribute to world peace or how, apart from national suicide, Israel could be a messenger of peace in the reality of today's Middle East.

(5) I have come to feel that our failure to establish a consistent mood on Rosh Hashanah night grows out of a lack of theological confidence. Our movement does not yet revolve around a theology which marries our parochial and universalist commitments. Only two sermons moved beyond presenting undigested lists of duties to the complex task of thinking out how our duties to Israel, the Jewish people and mankind might be adjusted. The fact is particularly surprising since 5736 was a year in which the tension between parochial and universal goals has been on many minds. Advocacy of cuts in Defense Department spending had to take into consideration the possibility of an adverse impact on military aid to Israel. Those interested in the passage of boycott legislation had to deal

with the possible effect of such laws on the American economy. Our interest in public welfare suggested possible reductions in foreign aid with detrimental impact on Israel.

(6) I have come to the conclusion that our failure to establish a coherent mood on Rosh Hashanah night grows out of our messianic inheritance, the confidence that a "new and better world was about to dawn" which was the hallmark of our movement during its first century. Reform developed during an era of tremendous promise. Isaac Mayer Wise, Kaufmann Kohler and Emil G. Hirsch were confident that reason and social democracy would soon sweep the world; consequently, they had little patience with prudential or "parochial" concerns. Despite the lengthening of the shadows, Reform has not moderated the immediacy of its initial messianic posture. Ours is a burdened age where many ask only to survive with some measure of dignity. Can you imagine Isaac Mayer Wise preaching a Bar Hiyyan sermon? Yet, such sermons are preached and understood and even those of us of a more hopeful cast of mind know the anxieties which beset our age.

Do we mean what we say? I found little evidence of services organized as "putdowns" or "ego trips." There was much evidence of generosity of spirit and greatheartedness, but also of a movement whose leaders have not abandoned the naive mission rhetoric of the nineteenth century in favor of an idiom which speaks sensitively to the tragic realities of the twentieth century and the long messianic journey.

(7) Do we say what we mean? By the testimony of these services, most congregations are committed to the survival of Israel, to the needs of the inner city, and to an infinite number of other *mitzvot*. We are for *midrash* and *maaseh*, but we do not like to confront those areas in which one primary commitment seems to oppose another; thus, the preference for vague and equivocal language. If all Jews were committed to God, Torah and Israel, equivocal language could evoke shared perceptions; but today not all Jews share these commitments. On Rosh Hashanah night open heart spoke to open heart, but those who came with troubled minds often left feeling that they had not been addressed. As one congregant observed, "Rosh Hashanah is for those on the inside."

A footnote: I titled this paper: Do We Say What We Mean? Do We Mean What We Say? As I worked through the material I found that I might well have asked a third question: Are We Careful Whom We Say It To? Rosh Hashanah is *yom ha-din*, a day of

judgment. Apparently several men used the occasion to spank their congregations for alleged insensitivity to racial prejudice or to the presence of poverty in their cities; and several of these accusations were mailed to the newspapers and reported on. One sermon I received dealt with the general topic of sin—sins which can be forgiven and sins which cannot be forgiven—and concluded with an attack on colleagues who "had gone to the public press and endangered the Jewish people with their words . . . What prompts them to require a gentile audience to instruct fellow Jews?" According to this speaker, one such sermon had stated that Jews are "racists, anti-black, anti-goyish." This colleague's conclusion: "To preach such a sermon to one's congregation, to upbraid, to chastise, to purify, is the calling of a prophetic pulpit, but to submit it to the public press in advance is beyond comprehension . . . the prophet speaks to Jews that they may be renewed and relieved; the anti-semitite to non-Jews who will then destroy." His anger suggests strongly that many of us no longer are at ease in the American Zion. Perhaps this perception more than any other reflects and explains the theological division between universalists and particularists among us, and the facts of the situation suggest why the pure universalists among us are a diminishing breed.
