



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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Articles, "The Future of Rabbinic Training in America," Judaism,
newspaper clipping, manuscript, and reprint, 1969.

JOTTINGS

Adabera Ve-yirvah Li

Preface:

In the book of Elijah we read: Everyone of Israel is duty bound to say: 'when will my works approach the works of my Fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?' How are we to understand this?

"Just as our Fathers invented new ways of serving each a new service according to his character: one, the service of love; another of stern justice; a third of beauty; so each of us in his own way should devise something new in the light of the teaching and of service, and do what has not yet been done." (M. Buber, Ten Rungs)

Biography I:

I am the seventh in a direct line of musmahim. Family history records that my forebears wrote commentaries, tutored the sons of the well-to-do, wrote legal opinions, manufactured and sold soap, spent their time studying on a reasonably permanent scholarship, administered a moshav zekanim and organized the Zionist movement.

Observation:

The rabbinate is not in the first instance an occupation. The rabbinate is first and foremost the pleasure and mastery of Torah. The Torah learned have always had a role to play in our community; though not always a full time professional role and not always the same one. The yeshivah taught Torah because its mastery was redemptive.

This focus on the blessedness of Jewish learning has largely been blurred and forgotten. ^{Today} The rabbinate is seen as a definable occupation and a seminary's proper occupation ^{is} obviously to produce the ^{properly} necessary trained manpower. ^{For the synagogue} Economics has hastened this process. The seminaries are supported almost ^{entirely}

by and through congregations and congregational unions who ^{and their}
^{money} ~~are~~ ^{to} sponsoring ^{their} future assistant Rabbis rather than
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viously depend on the ~~"we train your spiritual leaders appeal;~~
^{"piece goods"} ^{on this appeal} so much so ^{Schools} that one wonders if they would dare alienate this
support by shifting their training emphasis away from the
^{MANPOWER} congregational rabbinate.

The urgent need for congregational ~~personnel~~ ^{rabbis} has affected
admission standards and ~~determined~~ curriculum. Pressures
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admit the academically borderline and to keep achievement
levels within their limited reach. This whole numbers game is
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^{AND} or to Judaism. The man is a demanding profession over his ^{probably 20}
depth. The congregation is fed ^{encouragement} ~~a fairly unexciting diet of~~ ^{less than adequate} ^{Teachers of}
Torah and the alert Jew ^{has living proof that} ~~decides~~ ^{little} Judaism has nothing to offer
him.

Such admissions compound another seminary problem.

^{MOREOVER} The ordination of these men confirm some faculty in their low ^{Seminary}
^{that they never} opinion of the scholarly requirements of the pulpit and they hardly
^{little to present} ~~bother to~~ present to their classes the depths of Jewish learning.

Quotation: "A faculty board will typically devote its energies to the potential
scholars rather than to the future rabbis among the students."
(Charles Liebman "The Training of American Rabbis.")

Paradox I: The rabbinic seminaries are the ^{only} ~~one~~ professional school in which
some faculty habitually derogate their student's chosen profession.

Paradox II:

As long as the seminaries see themselves as professional schools they will not teach Judaism professionally.

The Generation

Gap I:

"Do you really mean that there were synagogues who could afford rabbis but did not hire them?"

Biography II:

Seventeen years after ordination one-half of my graduating class does not now occupy a pulpit. Patently the congregational rabbinate that is mine and has given me profound satisfaction, is only one of many designs for service which American Jewish life presents to a rabbi.

Musings:

Life has caught up with the romantic image of rabbi and congregation co-existing in an effective symbiosis. Any discussion of rabbinic training must begin with a judgment of the contemporary synagogue, its quarter filled pews, its restless schools, its largely indifferent membership and the anti-institutional bias of the contemporary environment in which it must do its work. Practical training must concern the renewal of the synagogue not simply its competent staffing.

Furthermore the proliferation of congregational sub-specialties has phased out the rabbi as congregational Kol-Bo.

Educators take over the schools, administrators the office, cantors the music and to some degree the liturgy, group workers the youth group and caseworkers the counseling.

Some day soon a congregational President will ask: "Why do

do we need a rabbi?", and no one, least of all the rabbi, will have a functional answer.

Further Musings: Despite pious presidential reports the seminaries have long since accepted this state of things. A generation ago HUC-JIR, JTS and Yeshiva existed primarily to train rabbis. Today they do almost everything else. The time is not far off when less than one-half of the funds of these institutions will be invested in the training of rabbis.

Puzzle: Find the rabbinic seminary in this self-description from the 1967 American Jewish Yearbook.

"... Organized for the perpetuation of the tenets of the Jewish religion, the cultivation of Jewish literature, the pursuit of Biblical and archaeological research, the maintenance of a library, and the training of rabbis and teachers."

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Paradox III: The Diaspora and the synagogue are one. The Diaspora and the synagogue 5728 model with built-in rabbi need not be one.

Question: What then is the role of the rabbi?

A Response: "The end of the matter all having been heard, the rabbi's task remains what it has long been: serve people, study and teach Torah. All else is treading water." (from a questionnaire on the rabbinic role)

A Further
Response:

To teach Torah, to reach the human soul and to be a judgmental force does not preclude the familiar congregational role. On the other hand it does not require it. Some of our most seminal rabbinic figures did not occupy pulpits or had signal accomplishments outside their congregations: Magnes, Wise, Silver, Heschel, Kaplan, Soloveitchik. ^{one more} Some of the most attractive proposals for rabbinic effectiveness involve teams of rabbinic specialists in the larger congregations or at the communal level.

Rhetorical
Question I

Does a trade school seminary have a trade to teach?

Department
of Short Sighted
Realism:

Jewish philosophy and Jewish theology are perhaps essential for giving the rabbinical student or rabbi a sense of spiritual identity in the broad perspectives of Israel's religious development. It remains true nevertheless that in the practical rabbinate Jewish philosophy and theology are so much unnecessary baggage.

(Edgar Siskin, "The Rabbinate and Curriculum.")

Observation:

In my university classroom, in the city and in The Temple, wherever I meet still questing and questioning minds, I find an explosion of vital questions, theological questions, a desperate search to handle life. 'Rabbi, help me, at least, ask the right questions. I do not want your ritual mumbo jumbo or wax candles or a lecture on ethnic loyalty; I want some of that vaunted insight you rabbis are always talking about.'

THREE QUESTIONS:

DOES ~~OUR~~ ^{TORAH} VAUNTED TRADITION HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS?
IS IT SUFFICIENT TO REVISE CURRICULUM SO AS TO RELATE THE
TRADITION MORE IMMEDIATELY TO THE EXISTENTIAL SITUATION?
~~OR TO REVEAL~~ WHAT MUST BE TAUGHT BEYOND TEXTS?

Proposal:

Let's reorganize seminary curriculum to train men for new roles ^{Possible}
~~with the rabbinic~~ ^{among} urban unaffiliated, the apartment alienated, ~~and~~
the campus disenchanted.

Second Thought:

Let's not. Every proposal for a practical rabbinic presumes certain knowledge of a model. We lack such knowledge. Seminaries can arm the Erev Rav only with an awareness of Judaism's existential possibilities and some realism about the make-up of Israel's mixed multitude. The community, the man, and opportunity must take it from there.

Question:

Whence Parnasa?

Congregations, colleges, communities, wherever. Some will continue for a long time to "serve" congregations. Some can better "serve" the people by not living off the people. Robert Gordis once suggested that the social worker and youth leader become "lay rabbis." His proposal presumed a specific rabbinic model. If as I believe, there is none, why should not some rabbis simply become social workers or youth leaders? They would be with amcha and be able to deal with many of their spiritual crises which do not intrude ^{LONG WITHIN}
~~upon our lives, governed as they are by congregational routines.~~ ^{PURVIEW INSTITUTIONALIZED}

Question:

If there is no rabbinic only rabbis, what is a rabbi's claim on Israel's respect?

Response:

Some rabbis teach the generation and others Tazriah-metzorah to 12-year olds. Some are functionaries, fund raisers, front men. Others speak the living word and lead men into the larger life. Ordination per se establishes no claim on Israel's respect.

5 On Graduation
and Ordination:

9 The practice of the seminaries to ordain their seniors has them up tight, and forces them to be technical schools, that is, to be part of that unhappy pattern in American education which has transformed our schools into essentially apprentice-training ~~institutions~~ ^{AGENCIES} to some establishment. Scholarship is sacrificed to courses in technique and the resulting mix is neither the meat of learning nor the milk of counseling.

On Purpose and
Relevance:

Today's seminary curriculum has two focii -- both terribly limited -- the congregational Kol Bo and the denominational scholar. The Kol Bo is a vulgarity and the denominational scholar an anachronism. The issues today concern life ^{STANLEY} stand and value system not minor battles over forgotten nuances of doctrine.

In a time when men need bridges between faith and life; between Israel and the nations, the seminaries have raised their draw bridges and lower them only on highly publicized occasions when a pop culture pundit is invited to speak or receive an honorary degree -- a carefully orchestrated charade designed to convince benefactors whose sons balk at re-joining their parents' congregation that the seminary administration and faculty are with it.

Quotation:

THE GENERATION
EARLY

....If helping to create a more meaningful community were, indeed, the rabbi's function, he would need training that differs radically from the one he is now receiving. The seminaries would first have to explicate the goals of Jewish life, as they see it. At both YU and JTS, the goal as implicitly understood, is the recreation of a romanticized notion of 19th century East European Jewish life. It is a goal so patently absurd that no one really dares to voice it openly. If they were forced to give serious consideration to the problem, both YU and JTS would offer more meaningful goals. (HUC-JIR simply has no model or ideal of Jewish life.) [Charles Liebman, "The Training of American Rabbis."]

Question:

Who will be a disciple of the aimless?

Observation:

The confusions of our age are pervasive and potentially fatal to the spiritual heart of the Jewish people. Yet the mood of the seminaries ^{REMAINS LARGELY} is placid, past oriented, and pedantic. Only a few teachers and students work up a sweat wrestling the long night with the living presence of God. Yet how else does one win the name of Israel?

Biography III:

^{WHERE I WAS AT ONE A} A long-time registrar in Cincinnati tried to stimulate my competitive drive by showing me the report record of my father. I was put down not by Dad's over-reach, I too, was a dutiful student, but by the shock of realizing that there was something to compare. Even the course numbers hardly had changed in nearly 40 years.

Biography IV:

I was being trained for the rabbinate of 1915, and, he was trained, really, for an end of the century rabbinate in which Wissenschaft was the cool faith of the day. Wissenschaft implied turning off, it was the way to turn off the voice of medievalism, so that men might hear an older and presumed less cramped Judaism. Wissenschaft was a valid surgical procedure. But the seminaries never turned faith back on. For generations Bible and Talmud

RHETORICAL
QUESTION:

ARE WE TRAINING PARTICIPANTS TO EMULATE ONLY VIGOROUS INSTITUTIONS OR LEADERS WHO CAN CHALLENGE, CHANGE AND REVIVE?

have been presented as intellectual puzzles not spiritual prizes. The student has been served a heavy diet of footnotes which ^{Lie} lay on the soul and gave the neophyte a bad case of spiritual indigestion.

And beyond the deadlines of pedantry there was and is the dark shadow of mock scholarship, the closing of professorial eyes to more than occasional intellectual incompetence. Among the announced these of our scholarly profession, this year as every year, such titles as these are included:

A chronological survey of significant events
of American Jewish History,
Toward a teachers training program through
visual techniques for a Reform religious school.
The rabbi as perceived and idealized by members
of the congregational board.

Question:

To build anew or rebuild?

Suggestion:

Both. The 19th century required Yeshivah and Hochschule. The 20th century requires established seminaries and experimental study programs. The existing seminaries have the merit of tradition, presumedly of careful standards and factually of excellent libraries. The new groups can plan without having to fight habit and can challenge the mediocrity, the tedium and the absurd length of the rabbinic course.

Question:

To build anew or rebuild?

Suggestion:

Sectarianism is an intolerable scandal. The institutional separation of our traditional seminaries is an Averah which compounds many Averot. Each student needs courses, men,

perspectives, ideas which no insulated seminary can provide him. Yet, almost all rabbinic training is carried out in splendid isolation, yes even in the middle of New York.

Question:

To build or rebuild?

Suggestion:

The ~~present~~ separation of the seminaries from meaningful affiliation with the University; tradition only guarantees a meager curriculum. No seminary can have first-rate men in every possible discipline. ^{AND NO} No disguise of ^{the} traditional ~~seminary~~ curriculum as a University of Judaism or an Institute for advanced studies in the Humanities change ^{CONSTRUCTED REALITY} the ~~narrow realities of seminary curriculum.~~

A modern seminary must be part of a university system. Students should be able to take courses in semitic languages, Eastern philosophy, abnormal psychology, cultural anthropology, etc. which no seminary possibly can provide, and the theological ^{resources} ~~resources~~ ought to be available to the university. ^{CAMPUS} An active undergraduate Jewish studies program can give Judaism exposure and authenticity at a critical time of decision in the lives of many young Jews. Research conducted by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture has shown that undergraduate courses in Jewish studies have stimulated interest in graduate Jewish studies and in the rabbinate. At Case-Western Reserve University there is already a move under foot to use inter-term next year for a month long exploration of texts by those who are seriously contemplating the rabbinate. ⁴ Being part of a University atmosphere does not

require a slavish aping of academic trappings, an all too familiar seminary weakness. Outside of the rabbinic program the seminaries have patterned their offerings after academic -- full blown, though not necessarily full bodied, Master and Doctorate programs. All too little thought is directed to the occasional and specific needs of graduates for summer institutes, short courses, retooling.

Question:

To build anew or rebuild?

Suggestion:

We need alternative curricula. My rabbinate is congregation academic. Yours may be communal - institutional. Another may spend his days as a scholar teacher. Other combinations are conceivable. Beyond Hebrew, a sense of amcha, Torah, and some personal spiritual guidance, which by the way no seminary now offers, each student should be able to pursue his special interests and there should be continuing education for those whose interests change.

Question:

Why not one united ulpan for all first year students in Jerusalem? An American rabbi without Hebrew is unplugged not only from the past but from the creative present.

Question:

Why not an interdisciplinary approach which would permit an HUC-JIR student to take Codes or Talmud at JTS and a Yeshivah student to take Bible or hermenutics at HUC? A faith which puts blinders between itself and other attitudes is intolerable and

disqualifies itself from serious consideration and a mind trained ~~by~~
~~only~~ to parrot ^a ~~one~~ sectarian party line can hardly teach Israel
to love all Israel.

Question:

Why must semicha come after a promised number of courses?
With the varied needs and backgrounds of men and communities
why must the rabbinical degree be a four or five year graduate
package? For some a year or two of exposure to texts and
tradition may be enough to "rabbinize" their lives in social service,
counselling or religious school teaching. To those who bring or
are completing a doctorate in some Jewish study at a secular
university a year of spiritual training may be enough.

Question:

Why not leave practical training to a separate year, a year
which a rabbi could take whenever he felt the need to specialize.
For some it might be a year in education, for others a year in
congregational practice and counselling, for others ^{A WORKSTUDY PROGRAM IN THE} the sociology
of the Jewish community; always an optional year. Freed of the
practical burden the seminaries presumedly could confront Torah
and Amcha; and become again places of high voltage learning.

Question:

Why alone among the faiths must Judaism remain tied to
the imbecility of a womanless ministry? Why alone among the
professions is the rabbinate in violation of the Fair Employment
Practices Act? Can we afford any longer to keep half of our human
talent in the rabbinic deep freeze?

Question:

Why not add competent spiritual tutors, father figures, to the seminary staff? All seminaries teach subject matter, none teach the man. Yet Seminary, as Mordecai Kaplan has suggested, implies ^{seed} seed bed not a hot house.

In Place of a
Conclusion:

Our search is for a usable past. Both the long past of lernen and the more recently discovered past of wissenschaft ^{no} ~~no~~ longer provide an adequate perspective. It's no longer simply a choice between the Talmud and the prophets, but of confronting the deeper, more human, more demanding elements in the entire literature. We want to know more about the state of a prophet's ^{soul} soul and ^{less} less about the state of his text, more about struggling people and less about pristine principles, more about the paradoxes of the human condition and less about disembodied truth, less about the known and more about the ineffable; less about illuim and more about amcha; less high flown ethical generalization and more about that wisdom which may ultimately be revelation.

Conclusion:

Today's seminaries must be as paradoxical as life.

Rabbi Says Jewish Seminaries Are 'Past-Oriented and Placid'

By IRVING SPIEGEL

A Reform rabbi called yesterday for major changes in Jewish seminaries on the ground that the institutions, were "placid, past-oriented and pedantic."

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver of Cleveland, president of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, held that the seminaries were carrying out "rabbinical instruction in splendid isolation, even in the middle of New York."

The spiritual leader said that seminaries must change from "trade schools" for rabbis "serving half-filled synagogues" to training centers for social workers, youth leaders and scholars.

Rabbi Silver did not identify by name the seminaries in his talk on the theme, "the Future of Rabbinic Training in America," at a symposium sponsored by Judaism, a quarterly magazine published by the American Jewish Congress, at its headquarters, 15 East 84th Street.

Called 'Technical Schools'

Pressures to provide congregational rabbis have led the seminaries to be "technical schools" and to lower admission standards and achievement levels, Dr. Silver said. He contended that the seminaries had fallen into that "unhappy pattern in American education which has transformed our schools into essentially apprentice-training centers."

Rabbi Silver criticized what he termed the "intolerable scandal" of sectarian separation of traditional Jewish seminaries.

He declared that although seminary students need "courses, teachers, perspectives and ideas which no insulated seminary

can provide, almost all rabbinical training is carried out in splendid isolation, even in the middle of New York."

In this connection, Rabbi Silver proposed an interdisciplinary approach that would permit students of the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion (Reform) to take Codes or Talmud at the Jewish Theological Seminary and a Yeshiva University (Orthodox) student to take Bible or hermeneutics at Hebrew Union College.

Each seminary, representing a different branch of Judaism and located here, has its own approach to the basic texts of Judaism. Participants at the symposium and spokesmen for the seminaries rejected Rabbi Silver's criticism.

Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, who is identified with Orthodox Judaism and is an administrative assistant to the president of Yeshiva University, cited Yeshiva's program in serving the needs of the city and state, in welfare, education and social service activities.

Rabbi David Kogen, administrative vice-chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, a major institution of conservative Judaism, reached by telephone, said the seminary offers its students pastoral psychiatry and practical theology to "cope with practical problems of the ministry and the community."

Rabbi Eugene B. Borowitz, a Reform Jewish scholar at Hebrew Union College, said that he had "far more trust in what our students are suggesting as new departures in curriculum and organization than what most of our alumni or friendly critics have to say."

The Future of Rabbinic Training In America

A Symposium

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER
EUGENE B. BOROWITZ EMANUEL RACKMAN
IRA EISENSTEIN SEYMOUR SIEGEL
ARTHUR GREEN EUGENE WEINER
CHARLES S. LIEBMAN ARNOLD JACOB WOLF
MARK LOEB SHELDON ZIMMERMAN

Introduction

ARNOLD JACOB WOLF

Rabbi Gilbert Klapperman, in his "The Story of Yeshiva University," reminds us that the current conflict in our rabbinical schools is really old-hat:

In the space of a few short days, the quarrel between the students and administration of RIETS [Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary] had been transferred from the relative insignificance and obscurity of a local struggle to one of wider importance. It received national and international coverage in the Yiddish, Hebrew and Anglo-Jewish press as well as some prominence in the English press, which often completely confused the issues, places and people involved.

This time the students did not surrender as easily as they had in 1906. The strike was well thought out, and the discipline among the students was rigid. No sooner was the strike declared than a prepared plan was immediately put into effect. The first news of the strike had appeared on May 5. Only three days later on Friday, May 8, the newspapers announced that a number of students would speak on the subject of the strike in various prominent Synagogues the following morning during the Sabbath Services. The purpose was "to explain their trouble with the directors of the Yeshiva."

This was in 1908!

Yet, it seems obvious there is something new under our sun, indeed that the sun herself is not unchanging. It is impossible any longer to pretend that our students are the compliant, careerist young seminar-

On May 25, 1969, JUDAISM sponsored a symposium on the theme: "The Future of Rabbinic Training in America." The major presentation was made by DANIEL JEREMY SILVER, rabbi of The Temple, Cleveland and president of the National Foundation of Jewish Culture, who read a paper to which nine panelists were asked to give five-minute responses. The symposium, held before an invited audience who later participated in the general discussion, was chaired by ARNOLD JACOB WOLF, rabbi of Congregation Solel, Highland Park, Ill., who last year served on the faculty of Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. What follows below is an edited transcript of the proceedings.

our technical responsibility if we work to realize our own uniquely significant potential. We are small, committed, fairly well-supported schools. There is nothing to prevent our revolutionizing American Jewry except our own timidity or our own smugness. In the symposium that follows, many issues are joined. The Establishment (identified by its denial that there is any such thing) dredges up the considerable successes of its own years of magisterial imperialism. The rebels, the critics, the students call for something very new and very much better, which will also be something very old.

With the barricades of the mind, it is always 1789. For the Jew, Sinai is wherever and whenever the commandment is heard at last.

Presentation

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

In the book of Elijah we read: Everyone of Israel is duty bound to say: "When will my works approach the works of my Fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" How are we to understand this?

"Just as our Fathers invented new ways of serving each a new service according to his character: one, the service of love; another of stern justice; a third of beauty; so each of us in his own way should devise something new in the light of the teaching and of service, and do what has not yet been done."

MARTIN BUBER, *Ten Rungs*.

Biography I

I am the seventh in a direct line of *musmakhim*. Family history records that my forebears wrote commentaries, tutored the sons of the well-to-do, wrote legal opinions, manufactured and sold soap, spent their time studying on reasonably permanent scholarships, administered a *moshav zekenim*, and organized the Zionist movement.

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The rabbinate is not in the first instance an occupation. The rabbinate is first and foremost the pleasure and mastery of Torah. The Torah-learned have always had a role to play in our community; though not always a full time professional role and not always be the same one. The *yeshiva* taught Torah because its mastery was redemptive.

This focus on the blessedness of Jewish learning has been blurred and largely forgotten. Today the rabbinate is seen as a definable occupation and a seminary's proper occupation obviously is to produce properly trained manpower. For the synagogue economics has hastened this process. The seminaries are supported almost entirely by and through congregations and congregational unions who send their money to sponsor a future assistant rabbi rather than *Torah lishmah*. Annual seminary

fund drives depend so much on this "piece-goods" appeal that one wonders if the schools would dare alienate this support by shifting their training emphasis away from congregational manpower.

The urgent need for congregational rabbis has affected admission standards and curriculum. The seminaries admit the academically borderline and keep course requirements within their limited reach. This whole numbers game is of dubious value to the man, to the congregations, and to Judaism. The man is in a demanding profession, probably in over his depth. The congregation is encouraged to hire a less than adequate teacher of Torah and the alert Jew has living proof that Judaism has little to offer him. Moreover, the ordination of these men confirms some seminary faculty in their low opinion of the scholarly requirements of the pulpit and confirms their estimate that they need present to their classes only the patina of Jewish learning.

Quotation

"A faculty board will typically devote its energies to the potential scholars rather than to the future rabbis among the students." (Charles Liebman, "The Training of American Rabbis")

Paradox I

The rabbinic seminaries are the only professional schools in which some faculty habitually derogate their students' chosen profession.

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The Generation Gap I

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which it must do its work. Seminary training must concern the renewal and radical reshaping of the synagogue, not simply the competent administration of the present structure.

Furthermore, the proliferation of congregational sub-specialties has phased out the rabbi as congregational *kol bo*. Educators take over the schools, administrators the office, cantors the music and to some degree the liturgy, group workers the youth group and case-workers the counseling. Some day soon a congregational president will ask: "Why do we need a rabbi?"—and no one, least of all the rabbi, will have a functional answer.

Further Musings

Despite pious presidential reports, the seminaries have long since accepted this state of things. A generation ago Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion, the Jewish Theological Seminary and Yeshiva University existed primarily to train rabbis. Today they do almost everything else. The time is not far off when less than one-half of the funds of these institutions will be invested in the training of rabbis.

Puzzle

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Question

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A Further Response

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gregations: Magnes, Wise, Silver, Heschel, Kaplan, Soloveitchik. One of the more attractive proposals for rabbinic effectiveness involve teams of rabbinic specialists in the larger congregations or at the communal level.

Rhetorical Question

Does a trade-school seminary have a trade to teach?

Department of Short-Sighted Realism

"Jewish philosophy and Jewish theology are perhaps essential for giving the rabbinical student or rabbi a sense of spiritual identity in the broad perspectives of Israel's religious development. It remains true nevertheless that in the practical rabbinate Jewish philosophy and theology are so much unnecessary baggage." (Edgar Siskin, "The Rabbinate and Curriculum")

Observation

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Three Questions

Does our vaunted Torah tradition have all the answers? Is it sufficient to revise curriculum so as to relate the tradition more immediately to the existential situation? What must be taught beyond texts?

Proposal

Let's reorganize the seminary curriculum to train men for possible new roles among the urban unaffiliated, the apartment alienated, and the campus disenchanted.

Second Thought

Let's not. Every proposal for a practical rabbinate presumes certain knowledge of a model. We lack such knowledge. Seminaries can arm the *eirev rav* only with an awareness of Judaism's existential possibilities and some realism about the make-up of Israel's mixed multitude. The community, the man, and opportunity must take it from there.

Question

Whence *parnasa*?

Congregations, colleges, communities, wherever. Some will continue

for a long time to "serve" congregations. Some can better "serve" the people by not living off the people. Robert Gordis once suggested that the social worker and youth leader become "lay rabbis." His proposal presumed a specific rabbinic model. If as I believe there is none, why should not some rabbis simply become social workers or youth leaders? They would be with *amkha* and be able to deal with many spiritual crises which do not come within the purview of our institutionalized lives.

Question

If there is no rabbinate only rabbis, what is a rabbi's claim on Israel's respect?

Response

Some rabbis teach the generation, and others teach *Tazriah-Metzorah* to twelve-year-olds. Some are functionaries, fund-raisers, front men. Others speak the living word and lead men into the larger life. Ordination *per se* establishes no claim on Israel's respect.

On Graduation and Ordination

The practice of the seminaries to ordain their seniors has them uptight, and forces them to be technical schools, that is, to be part of that unhappy pattern in American education which has transformed our schools into essentially apprentice-training agencies to some Establishment. Scholarship is sacrificed to courses in technique and the resulting mix is neither the meat of learning nor the milk of counseling.

On Purpose and Relevance

Today's seminary curriculum has two foci—both terribly limited—the congregational *kol bo* and the denominational scholar. The *kol bo* is a vulgarity, and the denominational scholar an anachronism. The issues today concern life-stance and value-system, not minor battles over forgotten nuances of doctrine.

In a time when men need bridges between faith and life, between Israel and the nations, the seminaries have raised their drawbridges and lower them only on highly publicized occasions when a pop-culture pundit is invited to speak or receive an honorary degree—a carefully orchestrated charade designed to convince benefactors whose sons balk at rejoining their parents' congregation that the seminary administration and faculty are with it.

The Generation Gap II

". . . If helping to create a more meaningful community were, indeed, the rabbi's function, he would need training that differs radically

Jewish studies program can give Judaism exposure and authenticity at a critical time of decision in the lives of many young Jews. Research conducted by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture has shown that undergraduate courses in Jewish studies have stimulated interest in graduate Jewish studies and in the rabbinate. At Case-Western Reserve University there is already a move under foot to use inter-term next year for a month-long exploration of texts by those who are seriously contemplating the rabbinate.

Being part of a university atmosphere does not require a slavish aping of academic trappings, an all too familiar seminary weakness. Outside of the rabbinic program the seminaries have patterned their offerings after academe—full-blown, though not necessarily full-bodied, master and doctoral programs. All too little thought is directed to the occasional yet specific needs of graduates for summer institutes, short courses, retooling.

Question

To build anew or rebuild?

Suggestion

We need alternative curricula. My rabbinate is congregational-academic. Yours may be communal-institutional. Another may spend his days as a scholar-teacher. Other combinations are conceivable. Beyond Hebrew, a sense of *amkha*, Torah, and some personal spiritual guidance—which, by the way, no seminary now offers—each student should be able to pursue his special interests and there should be continuing education for those whose interests change.

Question

Why not one united *ulpan* for all first-year students in Jerusalem? An American rabbi without Hebrew is unplugged not only from the past but from the creative present.

Question

Why not an interdisciplinary approach which would permit an HUC-JIR student to take Codes or Talmud at JTS and a Yeshiva student to take Bible or hermeneutics at HUC? A faith which puts blinders between itself and other attitudes is intolerable and disqualifies itself from serious consideration, and a mind trained to parrot a sectarian party line can hardly teach Israel to love all Israel.

Question

Why must *semikha* come after a promised number of courses? With the varied needs and backgrounds of men and communities, why must

the rabbinical degree be a four- or five-year graduate package? For some a year or two of exposure to texts and tradition may be enough to "rabbinize" their lives in social service, counselling or religious school teaching. To those who bring or who are completing a doctorate in some Jewish study at a secular university a year of spiritual training may be enough.

Question

Why not leave practical training to a separate year, a year which a rabbi could take whenever he felt the need to specialize? For some it might be a year in education, for others a year in congregational practice and counselling, for others a work-study program in the sociology of the Jewish community—always an optional year. Freed of the practical burden, the seminaries presumedly could confront Torah and *amkha*, and become again places of high-voltage learning.

Question

Why alone among the faiths must Judaism remain tied to the imbecility of a womanless ministry? Why alone among the professions is the rabbinate in violation of the Fair Employment Practices Act? Can we afford any longer to keep half of our human talent in the rabbinic deep-freeze?

Question

Why not add competent spiritual tutors, father figures, to the seminary staff? All seminaries teach subject matter, none teach the man. Yet seminary, as Mordecai Kaplan has suggested, implies a seedbed, not a hot house.

In Place of a Conclusion

Our search is for a usable past. Both the long past of *lernen* and the more recently discovered past of *Wissenschaft* no longer provide an adequate perspective. It's no longer simply a choice between the Talmud and the prophets, but of confronting the deeper, more human, more demanding elements in the entire literature. We want to know more about the state of a prophet's soul and somewhat less about the state of his text, more about struggling people and less about pristine principles, more about the paradoxes of the human condition and less about disembodied truth, less about the known and more about the ineffable, less about *iluim* and more about that wisdom which may ultimately be revelation.

Conclusion

Today's seminaries must be as paradoxical as life.