Special Articles
JEWISH EDUCATION—FOR WHAT?

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ENROLLMENT • SPONSORSHIP • ADMINISTRATION • TEACHERS • FINANCE • CURRICULUM • ACHIEVEMENT • AIMS • FUNCTIONS • MATERIALS AND METHODS • RECOMMENDATIONS

JEWISH EDUCATION in the United States, as we know it today, is rooted in the continued attempts of previous generations of Jews to develop forms of Jewish schooling compatible with changing conceptions of Judaism, new styles of Jewish life, and the demands of living in America. The salient features of this process of accommodation, common to most Jewish groups, were an acknowledgement of the primacy of secular studies and a consequent subordination of Jewish education to a secondary and supplementary role. This shift in the focus of education reflects a desire on the part of most Jews to enter the mainstream of American life, even at the price of neglect of the religious imperatives of Torah L'Shma, learning for its sake, and Lamdanut, Jewish erudition.

The present pattern of Jewish education in the United States had taken shape by 1930.¹ Six of the 12 accredited teacher-training schools currently in operation were already in existence then. Bureaus of Jewish education had been established in every major city, and the idea of community responsibility was accepted in theory, if not in practice. Curriculum patterns in every type of school had achieved a form and balance which was to change little in subsequent years. A corps of

professional educators gained some visibility; a body of literature was in the process of development, and several professional societies had come into being. The essential nature of the Jewish school enterprise was established. A system of supplementary education composed of autonomous one-day-a-week Sunday schools, midweek afternoon schools and day schools, was maintained by the voluntary efforts of their clientele.

Enrollment

Today, more than half a million children receive some form of Jewish education under school auspices. It is estimated that well over 80 per cent of the Jewish children in this country receive some Jewish schooling during their elementary-school years—the smaller the Jewish community the greater the likelihood that a child will be enrolled in a Jewish school—even though as few as one-third of the children between the ages of 3 and 17 may attend a Jewish school at any one time. When the gross statistic is refined by pertinent categorization, some salient features of contemporary Jewish education become clear:

1. Of all Jewish children between the ages of 3-5, 11.6 per cent are currently enrolled in a Jewish school. For the 6-7 age bracket it is 21.4 per cent, for the 8 to 12 years old 69.8 per cent; for the 13 to 17 years old only 15.8 per cent.

2. The distribution of the current Jewish school population is 15.3 per cent in the primary grades, 69.1 per cent in elementary schools, and 15.3 per cent in high-school departments. More boys than girls are enrolled (57 per cent, as compared with 43 per cent); boys receive a more intensive education than girls.

3. Current attendance by type of school shows 13.4 per cent in Jewish day schools; 42.2 per cent are in one-day-a-week schools, and 44.4 per cent are in midweek afternoon schools that are in session anywhere from two to five times a week.

4. The sponsorship of Jewish schools reflects the dominant patterns of Jewish community organization. There are today 2,727 known Jewish schools of all types in the country, serving an estimated 544,468 children. Of these 35.7 per cent are in schools under Reform auspices; 34.3 per cent in schools sponsored by Conservative congregations and 21.5

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2 The statistics in this section are taken from the *National Census of Jewish Schools* (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, Information Bulletin No. 28, December 1967).
per cent in schools under Orthodox auspices; 1.0 per cent in Yiddish schools; and 0.6 percent in communal or intercongregational schools.

By way of summary: Jewish education is now primarily a matter of congregational concern; over 90 per cent of the children attend religiously oriented schools sponsored by congregations of one or another of the three major Jewish religious groupings. Despite all the recent clamor concerning the importance of Jewish education, two-thirds of the Jewish school-age children in the United States in 1966 were not in any kind of Jewish school. Close to half of those who were, attended only one day a week; fewer than 15 per cent of the others received more than 6 hours a week of instruction. Jewish schools by and large are dealing with children of pre-school or elementary school age and, despite some encouraging advances, fail to attract or hold high school students in significant number.

The rise of the congregational school at the expense of the more intensive community school and the explosive growth of the day school are perhaps the two most significant developments in Jewish education in the last quarter of a century. Of course, the prominence of the congregational school reflects the rapid growth of synagogue membership after the end of World War II and the suburbanization of the Jewish community. If, as most observers agree, membership in a synagogue is less a matter of religious impulse and belief and more a means of a Jewish identification compatible with American mores, the congregational school is faced with the extraordinarily difficult task of attempting to persuade children to adopt a life style which their parents have rejected. The posture permitted the religious school educator in matters of religious imperatives and their implicit concomitants in the Jewish tradition is clearly compromised if the school is regarded as a symbol of Jewishness rather than as a vehicle for the transmission of an embracive code of distinctive behavior.

**Sponsorship**

The day school is most often associated with the Orthodox, the one-day-a-week school with the Reform congregation, and the weekday afternoon school with Conservative and Orthodox synagogues. But these lines are neither hard nor fast. One-day-a-week schools are found in both Orthodox and Conservative congregations, and many Reform congregations now sponsor midweek afternoon school programs. In recent years the Conservative movement has actively encouraged the establish-
Day Schools

The growth of the day school is impressive by any standard. Where there were seventy-eight such schools in 1945, today their number exceeds three hundred. The reasons for this remarkable expansion are varied, but it is clear that the major stimulus is the Orthodox community's deep conviction that the continuity of traditional Jewish life in America is dependent upon the perpetuation of the intensive pattern of Jewish education which was the glory of the European yeshivot. The circle of interest in the day school was drawn wider and encompassed a broader range than the Orthodox community when the destruction of European Jewry made it clear that American Jewry must henceforth draw upon its own resources for leadership and learning. The quickened identification with things Jewish, aroused by the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, created a demand in many sectors of the community for a type of Jewish education which promised more than the limited achievement of the afternoon school. Still others send their children to day schools for reasons far removed from the essential purpose of the school, as a matter of convenience, to escape the crowded conditions of the public schools, to enjoy the benefits of a "private" school, and, sad to say, to avoid contact with other racial and ethnic groups. But whatever the background and motivation of its students, the Orthodox day school has consistently maintained its posture as an educational institution dedicated to the inculcation of traditional values and behavior, and it brooks little compromise.

Under ordinary circumstances it would perhaps be proper to assume that the growth of the day schools has reached its highest point. However, events in this country in recent years may serve as a stimulus for

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yet another spurt. The growing acceptance of cultural pluralism and ethnic independence as legitimate expressions of American life may encourage many Jews to re-examine their conception of themselves and their place in American life, and lead to day school enrollment from quarters heretofore hostile or indifferent to this type of education. The decentralization of the public schools in New York City and the certain adoption of similar plans in other parts of the country may also affect the day school. Whatever else it may mean, decentralization clearly denotes the passing into history of the public school as the fire under the melting pot. The distance separating ethnically oriented public schools from private schools with similar purposes is certainly not one of ideological differences. Opposition to the day school, grounded in the sanctity of the public school as a “common” school, is clearly no longer defensible. The trend toward separatism may well mark the day school as a primary symbol of the Jewish community.

Congregational Control

With few exceptions, each Jewish school, no matter what its type, is a highly autonomous administrative and educational unit. Final authority for the conduct of the congregational school and its affairs is vested in the congregational board which acts through its appointed school committee. Noncongregational day schools have their own boards and committees which are responsible for every aspect of the school’s activities.

This freedom is not an unmixed blessing. The proliferation of congregations and the attendant increase of schools has taken place without any rational community organization or considered educational policy. There is no question that this development had serious educational consequences—duplication of effort, diffusion of limited financial and personnel resources, and schools too small to be educationally viable are but a few. A desire to avoid these difficulties is now evident in the happy tendency throughout the country to organize secondary schools on an intercongregational or communitywide basis.

Some observers cavil at the dominance of the congregational school because they conceive the synagogue as a social institution necessarily devoted to its own interests, that sometimes encourages a degree of parochialism potentially inimical to the disinterested efforts of more broadly based agencies to raise educational standards. The division of the community’s educational efforts along denominational lines similarly concerns those who accord the idea of peoplehood a central place in
their understanding of Judaism. They contend that the congregational school tends to emphasize a particular "brand" of Judaism, thereby encouraging a proclivity toward exclusiveness which vitiates the significance of K'lal Yisroel.

The substance of these arguments, namely the low level of Jewish learning in the American Jewish community and the indifference of young people to the national and ethnic aspects of Judaism, is no doubt correct. But to lay the fault at the door of the congregational school is to overlook forces in the larger society that are powerful determinants of educational policy, as they are of the policies of other institutions in the community. There is no need here to detail the anti-intellectualism permeating American life; it should suffice merely to note its inevitably disastrous effect on any regimen of study conceived as learning for its own sake. And more than a few will concur, however reluctantly, with the observation that

The younger generation views Judaism in strictly religious terms and finds unintelligible the stress on [the] cultural, national and defense oriented Judaism of their parents. the secular culture or nationhood envisaged by many Jews of a previous generation has proved illusory, incapable of fulfillment on the American scene.5

Personnel

Whatever its philosophy, a school is, of course, only as effective as its personnel. As in all other areas of the Jewish civil service, there is a serious shortage of qualified personnel in Jewish education. While there is a cadre of trained and experienced educators in administrative positions, these men are by and large the products of an earlier period and replacements are extraordinarily hard to find. The situation is at its most desperate on the classroom level; the idea of a profession of Jewish teacher is either a thing of the past or a hope for the future.

Administration

The administration of congregational schools is in the hands of a principal or educational director who is responsible to the school board and the rabbi of the congregation. The Educators Assembly is the professional organization of educational directors in the Conservative movement. While not all educational directors qualify for membership

in the Assembly, it has close to 200 members whose sole occupation is in the congregational school. Prerequisites for membership are a Master's degree in education, a commensurate level in Jewish studies, and at least three years of experience as a principal. A recent survey\(^6\) indicates that 36 per cent of the members are 50 years of age or older, and 55 per cent between the ages of 35 and 49. Fifty-six per cent of the sample had served at least five years in their present position and 39 per cent reported service of 10 years or more in one post. Close to half of the respondents were earning $12,000 a year or more.

The one-day-a-week structure of many Reform congregational schools makes full-time employment of administrators less common than it is in Conservative afternoon or day schools. Many are public-school people who "moonlight" in the Jewish school and lack adequate training in Jewish studies. Despite consistent efforts to raise their level, the activities of the Teacher Education Department of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations show that this remains a problem.

The Orthodox day schools have developed a core of full-time educational administrators drawn from the graduates of rabbinical seminaries, who have eschewed careers in the rabbinate in favor of work in schools. Many of them come to their posts without adequate preparation and training in education. But the insistent prodding of Torah Umesorah, the national organization of Orthodox day schools, has noticeably raised the level of qualification.

Where a congregational school is too small to warrant a full-time principal or educational director, the rabbi, or the cantor doubling as educator, conduct the school. This sort of arrangement is rarely satisfactory. More often than not, the school is not the major focus of a rabbi's or cantor's professional concern; neither generally has had training specific to the task, and all too often the press of other duties curtails the time and attention given to the school.

As a whole, the professional Jewish educator is at least as well schooled academically as his public-school counterpart. However, it is doubtful that the principal of a Jewish school has had the kind of rigorous practical experience that is demanded of supervisory personnel in the better public-school systems. Because of the severe manpower shortage a person with only a minimum of classroom experience may become principal of a Jewish school. Yet, lacking the supporting services avail-

able in the public school, he is almost always dependent on his own resources and imagination, and the degree of his technical expertise is of more than ordinary significance in determining the school's effectiveness.

Within the congregation itself, the position of the school principal is somewhat anomalous. Unless he is a man of strong character, outstanding ability, and not a little chutzpah, he generally ranks behind the rabbi and cantor in the synagogue hierarchy. This is yet another index of a symbolic style of Jewish life which ascribes a disproportionate influence to clerical functions. This cannot but seriously impair the educator's potential as a model, and inevitably reduces the significance of his enterprise. Though perhaps incongruous, it nevertheless is true that the man responsible for the congregation's major learning activity is rarely thought of as the exemplar of Jewish learning.

**Teaching Staff**

If, as our information would seem to indicate, some degree of stability and professionalism has been achieved in the administration of Jewish education, the profession of Jewish teacher, by contrast, has suffered serious retrogression. The elementary Jewish school, which today means almost all Jewish schools, is by and large a feminine preserve. The reason is that the available hours of employment in both the afternoon and one-day-a-week schools, the predominant types of Jewish school, are not sufficient to provide a family man with a living wage, even where salary scales are most generous. Indeed, a man can support a family on an income from teaching in a Jewish school only if he holds two jobs—in a day school in the morning, and in an afternoon school.

It would, of course, be fatuous to expect to remedy the malaise of the Jewish teacher without giving prompt and effective attention to his economic situation. The Jewish community simply has no right to expect alert, able, intelligent young people—and its schools can suffer no other—to devote themselves to a calling which consigns them to a life fringed by poverty. As necessary as improvement of financial status may be to the creation of a corps of effective classroom personnel, it is not the sole condition for vitalizing a profession. Above and beyond this, Jewish education must provide a sense of purpose and achievement if there is to be any hope of developing a cadre of capable and concerned people who will find their life's work in Jewish schools. Nothing less is required than a modern-day counterpart of the Eastern European maskil, whose
passion for the Hebrew language, unbounded commitment to the Zionist ideal, and deep faith in the moving power of education informed his entire being and transformed his work as teacher into an inspired vocation.

Two types stand out today among the variety of teachers—including part-time and full-time, trained and untrained, religious and agnostic, knowledgeable and Jewishly illiterate, volunteer and salaried—who compose the faculties of Jewish schools of all kinds. The one is the musmach, a graduate of an Orthodox rabbinical school who has opted for a teaching career, the other is the Israeli who is in this country for an infinite assortment of reasons. Without the former, the growth of the day school is hardly imaginable; without the latter, the continued functioning of the afternoon school would be severely constrained. However disparate the two may seem at first glance, they share much in their common task as teachers of third and even fourth generation American Jewish children.

All too often both bring an attitude of cynical disdain bordering on arrogance to their work in schools whose approach differs from their own particular conceptions of Jews and Judaism. However, the yeshivah graduate at his best is a genuine religious personality, steeped in Talmudic learning and dedicated to a way of life consonant with the halakha; the Israeli, at his best, is a fervent nationalist consumed by a love of land and language which would embrace all within its reach. The former is at home only within the small enclave of his immediate community; the latter's perception of himself as a transient permits only the most tenuous ties with the society he serves. Obviously, both are worlds removed from their students, making effective communication very difficult.

However, the matter goes beyond the sometimes too simplistic assessment of failure resulting from a teacher's inability to understand his pupils. There certainly are yeshivah graduates and Israelis in American schools, who are successful teachers by any accepted standard. Indeed it is the very possibility of their success that may be most troublesome. If they are able to transmit their own belief to their students, then they cannot but alienate the youngsters from their own families and backgrounds. It is hard to avoid the feeling that not a little of the criticism directed at both the yeshivah graduate and the Israeli by the more "moderate" school people in our midst stems from a real fear of their possible success. When the teacher mutes his real beliefs, whether at the suggestion of the administration or because he recognizes their incom-
patability with the stand of the school, he loses his integrity and with it
the capability to exert any real influence.

We know too little about the dynamics of career choice to state with
certainty what would move American-born and -trained men and women
to choose careers in Jewish education. An educated guess would be that
the people a youngster encounters in the Jewish school may well play a
decisive role. An earlier generation of American Jewish children, anxious
to acquire the credentials of Americanism, identified the Hebrew teacher
with much of what it desperately wanted to escape. Today's youngster,
more secure about his place in America, may see the yeshivah graduates
or Israelis, who staff the schools in significant percentage, as just the
sort of “off-beat” characters who hold a certain romantic attraction in
our time. Or he may not; and their presence in his school may only
serve to confirm his worst suspicions about the irrelevance of what takes
place there.

The crucial presence of the Israeli teacher, like that of the European-
born teacher of an earlier period, underscores the sad fact that the
American Jewish community has never been able to produce a sufficient
number of native-born teachers and has always been dependent upon
outside sources of supply. Current enrollment in American Jewish
teacher-training schools offers no promise of early relief. Indeed current
figures demonstrate that these institutions presently do not attract a
significantly larger percentage of potential students than almost a genera-
tion ago. Knowledgeable estimates place enrollment in all accredited and
nonaccredited teacher-training institutions at about 2,000 students, a
figure which includes a significant percentage of Israelis. These institu-
tions annually graduate some 200 students. Of this number only 125-
150 graduates actually assume teaching positions upon the completion
of their studies. However, a considerable number of those who do begin
to teach have no intention of remaining in Jewish education, and use
teaching in a Jewish school as a temporary occupation while preparing
for careers in other fields. Also, one must bear in mind that many of
those who attend Jewish teacher training schools do so only out of a
desire to continue their Jewish education on the college level, and have
no interest in education as a career.

While there is much in our teacher-training schools which requires

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7 For a full treatment of Jewish teacher-training schools see: Oscar I. Janowsky,
correction, it is doubtful that internal changes alone will produce an adequate remedy. The statistics of enrollment in Hebrew teachers colleges and their high rate of dropouts are indices of the difficulties inherent in the maintenance of a system of supplementary education which, among other things, must compete with the demands of general education. The student who enters a Jewish teacher-training school can look back upon at least nine or ten years of elementary and secondary Jewish schooling, completed simultaneously with his public school work; he can look forward to at least four more years of a similar "dual" program during his college career. At a time when the demands of the public high schools are becoming more and more rigorous and college entrance requirements more stringent, only the most highly motivated students will continue their Jewish studies through the secondary level. The pressures of a selective service system keyed to academic standing and the frantic scramble for places in graduate schools similarly dissuade many Hebrew high-school graduates from continuing their Jewish studies on a college level.

However, many students in Jewish elementary and secondary schools never get to a school of higher Jewish learning for reasons that have nothing to do with the public schools and their demands. Parental and communal indifference to Jewish education certainly play a role and act as powerful negative influences. And Jewish schools themselves must surely share some responsibility for the continuing, or noncontinuing, education of their students. The programs and policies of the lower Jewish schools all too often discourage even the most interested student and succeed only in convincing him that continued attendance at a Jewish school would be a waste of time.

*Educational Agencies*

Each of the denominational groups maintains a national educational commission within the framework of its countrywide synagogue organization. Over the years these commissions have developed characteristic modes of operation, dictated as much by limited funds and personnel as by educational considerations. They generally concern themselves with promulgating statements of broad educational policy, developing curricular materials, conducting regional and national conferences and, in some cases, planning extensive text book publication programs.

The impact of the work of these agencies is difficult to assess. Certainly the textbooks they publish represent a direct influence on the
schools they serve; but there is no guarantee that these schools will use the books. Since the commissions neither have nor seek powers of enforcement, their programs must stand or fall on the strength of their response to the needs of the schools. Their importance may lie in their inherent authority to develop policy which, even if ignored, becomes the standard by which individual schools and their programs may be judged. The guidelines set by the national agencies can have the power of prodding and stimulating local schools to explore areas of practice that might otherwise be ignored.

The local bureaus of Jewish education have much closer contact with the schools. As the embodiment of the community's stake in Jewish education, the bureau's function is to give disinterested technical assistance and guidance to the schools of the various ideological groupings in the locality it serves. Affiliated schools may avail themselves of the bureau's supervisory personnel, in-service seminars, central audio-visual and pedagogical libraries, testing programs, placement services, publications, and a wide variety of other educational activities. The standards set by an adequately staffed and financed bureau can determine the quality of Jewish education in the community. In some cities the entire structure reflects the strong personality of the bureau head, and is but an extension of his own particular conception of Jewish education.

Despite the claims of its supporters, the bureau is not always as neutral as it claims to be. As the major recipient of communal funds, as inadequate as they may be, it easily can, by its administrative decisions, channel the development of educational activities in directions not always consistent with the felt needs of its constituent schools. Very often the bureau itself becomes an ideological factor promoting its own perceived interests. More subtle perhaps is the effect of the private views of bureau personnel which sometimes are at variance with the stated aims and objectives of the schools they serve. The bureau's admitted crucial role in the development of Jewish education and the vital function it has yet to serve do not obscure the recurrent friction that results from its position in a community defined by ideological differences.

Nationally, the American Association for Jewish Education (AAJE) assays much the same role as the bureau in its own locality. Through its community surveys, teacher welfare programs, periodic census of Jewish school population, publications, curriculum institute, and training programs, AAJE provides services not readily available through other agencies at the same time as it initiates activities for improving Jewish
education. Originally the national organization of the bureaus, AAJE recently was reorganized to represent all agencies involved in Jewish education. The hope is that, as such, it will eliminate unnecessary duplication and serve as a vehicle for a coherent attack on the problems of Jewish education.

**Financing**

The cost of Jewish education—the services and activities described above—is close to $100 million a year, exclusive of capital investment in facilities and equipment. These funds come from three obvious sources; the parents of the students, the sponsoring agency and the community.

Of course, tuition income hardly covers the cost of operating congregational or day schools. Investment in the congregational school’s plant and equipment as well as its operating deficits are covered partly by the synagogue budget and partly by limited fund raising. Day schools with no specific synagogal connection depend on fund-raising drives directed to the community at large for a major portion of their budget. Bureaus are funded by local federations or welfare funds of which they generally are constituent agencies. In some cities, communal funds, disbursed through the bureau offices in accordance with some established formula, are made available to both congregational and day schools. On the whole, however, the community finances only the bureau and its activities.

Needless to say, there is never enough money—nor will there ever be! However, this should not obscure the equally damaging consequences of the absence of a rational fiscal policy for Jewish education. Current practices hark back to the response of an earlier generation to the particular needs of its time. If federation funds today are but stingingly allocated in support of Jewish education it is as much because of commitments made 25 and even 50 years ago, as it is because of considered priorities in our time. The total support by the congregation itself of a congregational educational program, which trains a younger generation for responsible membership in the larger community, is dictated by neither logic nor by tradition. The distinction in the disbursement of communal funds between nondenominational—read secular—teacher-training schools and religiously oriented institutions of the same purpose is but another of the many anomalies of financing Jewish education. The overwhelming majority of the students in the accredited teacher-training schools come from Orthodox and Conservative afternoon and day schools. These alone
provide the intensive elementary and secondary education prerequisite to admission to a Hebrew teachers college. Furthermore, by and large, students will find themselves teaching in that kind of school upon graduation. And yet, communal funds are available only to schools maintaining a "nondenominational" posture and withheld from those of clear religious orientation.

To begin with, a stable financial basis can be established only after a reassessment of the relative responsibility of each of the three sources of support. Jewish federations throughout the country currently provide a total of some $6.4 million annually for Jewish education. Despite the fact that the sum of the allocations has increased markedly over the years—allocations in dollars in 1966 were 58.7 per cent higher than in 1957—the percentage of Federation funds earmarked for Jewish education has remained almost the same—11.7 per cent of federation allocations for local services in 1957 were for Jewish education as compared to 13.4 per cent in 1966, an increase of only 1.7 per cent. While it helps little to demand a greater investment of communal funds in the work of Jewish schools unless that demand is accompanied by some clear rationale for the uses to which such monies will be put, it is clear that many vital services could be provided if federation allocations were raised a mere two or three per cent. Surely, the time has come for a thorough evaluation of the allocation patterns of federation and welfare funds.

Congregations, too, must begin some clarification of their fiscal procedures to determine the obligations that are sensibly within their purview, and to arrive at a reasonable distribution of the financial responsibilities of all who share in the educational enterprise. If tuition is primarily the responsibility of the parent, then there is no question that steps must be taken to bring tuition rates into some realistic proportion to the cost of educating a child. The readiness of Jewish parents to shoulder the burden of high tax rates in support of public education must find its counterpart in Jewish education.

Questions of finance inevitably raise problems of control. Thus, while the principle of community support for day schools has largely been accepted throughout the country, the debates leading to the recognition of that obligation were not without troublesome overtones. In city after

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city, as well as at several Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds conferences, the question of the day schools' claim to communal funds was repeatedly connected with judgments concerning their "Americanism," their effectiveness, and their very right to exist—questions rarely or never asked of other kinds of schools receiving communal subsidies. In effect, one sector of the community—federations and welfare funds are rarely representative—was questioning the educational program of another sector and using its financial strength as a lever of educational policy. Surely all sorts of Jewish schools have their place in a democratic society. A community conscious of its obligations to all its members cannot legitimately support a plan of financial aid favoring one type of school at the expense of another.

Curriculum

Personnel and programs for the Jewish school are ultimately as meaningful as the achievements of the institution they are intended to serve. The measure of the effectiveness of any school is how close what it actually does comes to what it wants to do. Where a significant discrepancy exists between the two, both the school's goals and the means used to achieve them require reexamination.

The curricula of most Jewish schools in the United States are based on a religio-national conception of Judaism: the People of Israel, Torah, and God. The teaching methods used are grounded in contemporary theories of child development and education. Of course, real differences exist in the practices of the schools of each denominational grouping. The deep and abiding division separating the Reform from the Orthodox view of the religious life, is clearly manifest in the style and manner of the schools. Yet, a study of the objectives of Jewish education, as formulated in the official statements of each of the three religious groups in American Judaism, discloses elements common to all.9

The schools of all three religious orientations would probably agree to the following paraphrase of their educational objectives: (1) To provide knowledge of the classical Jewish texts and the tradition embodied therein; (2) To foster a lifelong commitment to the study of Torah; (3)

To develop some form of personal observance; (4) To develop a facility in the Hebrew language and a familiarity with its literature; (5) To nurture an identification with the Jewish people through a knowledge of its past and to encourage a concern for its survival and welfare the world over; (6) To stimulate a recognition of the unique place of Israel in the Jewish imagination, both past and present, and to foster the acceptance of some sort of personal obligation to participate in its development; (7) To encourage participation in American society, based on a conscious awareness of the relationship between Jewish tradition and democracy; and (8) To inculcate faith in God and trust in His beneficence.

The translation of objectives into curricular content is a complicated process requiring continual evaluation and refinement. That process is usually informed by a series of assumptions regarding the function of the school, the nature of the student, what is to be learned, and how it is to be learned. Though rarely explicit, these assumptions may be inferred from curricular materials and syllabi. A careful examination of the curricula of the various kinds of Jewish schools discloses that all of them share certain assumptions.

No matter what its structure or orientation, the Jewish school conceives its primary function to be the transmission of knowledge of the sacred texts. Some schools may study the texts themselves and others may only learn about them, but all of them center on them. Other subject matters, such as Hebrew, history, prayer, observance and the like, are merely adumbrations of the basic core. The acquisition of knowledge is thought essential to the attainment of that pattern of pupil behavior which is the objective of the school. This conception of function is at the heart of the dominant instructional method of the Jewish school, text-centered explication and exposition.

It is equally evident that the school, looking upon its pupils as Jewishly illiterate, believes that only it will transmit during the time of their enrollment the information, or develop the skills which they need for responsible Jewish life. Whatever the validity of this view, it places an impossible burden on the school and eliminates from the curriculum any resort to building on meaningful Jewish experiences acquired elsewhere. This sense of total responsibility is particularly pronounced in the program of the Jewish elementary school. The proliferation of subjects beyond reason is surely born of the feeling that the child will not continue above that level, and that every effort must be made to "cover" as much as
possible during the few years he attends the school. At all levels, the schools are invariably geared to the proposition that the Jewish child will find his future as a fully integrated member of American society and the Judaism and the American ethic are essentially compatible.

**DAY SCHOOL**

Free of the time limitations of other types of Jewish schools, the day school is best able to provide a thorough grounding in the traditional areas of Jewish study. Its day is generally longer than that of the public school to permit giving equal time to general and Jewish studies. Classes in the latter are usually conducted in Hebrew; some schools use Yiddish or English. Grade eight, the last elementary grade of a quite typical day school includes the following Jewish studies: a review of the Pentateuch with Rashi commentary; a regular review of the weekly Torah portion; Kings I and II, the early Prophets, Jeremiah; Hebrew grammar, language, and literature; some tractate of the Talmud, which alone takes up almost half of the time allotted to Jewish studies on this grade level; modern history or a survey of the entire range of Jewish history; Jewish law, with special reference to the laws of prayer, Sabbath, holidays. Since each school day begins with formal prayer, prayer as such is not offered as a separate course of study. The study of Talmud receives even greater emphasis on the high school level and is the dominant feature of a study course including Torah with commentaries, law (Shulhan Aruh), later Prophets, liturgy, Hebrew language and literature, history and ethics.¹⁰

**AFTERNOON SCHOOLS**

Weekday afternoon schools range from those meeting five times a week for a total of ten hours of instruction, to those holding two weekly sessions with a total of three or four hours of classwork. The six-hour-a-week school which is in session two afternoons and a Sunday or Saturday morning, is probably the most common. A suggested curriculum for the sixth, and final, year of such a school provides for: selections from an abridged Hebrew text of Deuteronomy dealing with the law, equality of man, freedom and equality, social justice, administration of justice,

¹⁰ For a detailed description of the curricula of the various types of day schools and yeshivot, see Schiff, op. cit., pp. 106–123.
humane treatment, God, Israel, and the Lord of Israel; related passages in Hebrew from the later Prophets and narrative selections from the early Prophets together with correlated readings in English; Hebrew grammar, language, and literature; Jewish life and religious practices; a survey of Jewish history.\textsuperscript{11} Graduates of this type of school, wishing to continue their studies in a secondary school, are offered a course of study with major emphasis on Bible and Hebrew, accompanied by courses in history, religion, and rabbinic literature.

The major elements of the curricula of one-day-a-week schools are Bible and history, taught in English. A suggested course of study for the eighth grade of one such network of schools offers modern history, the Prophets and "socio-ethical living," with the State of Israel and the "Jewish way of life in recent years" as possible alternatives. Course offerings for grades 9 through 12 range over Reform Judaism, the Writings, comparative religion, American Jewish history, early post-biblical literature, modern Jewish problems, later post-biblical literature, Jewish beliefs, Jewish life, a survey of the Bible, and a history survey.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT}

The similarities in the courses of study cited above should not obscure the very real differences in approach and achievement that characterize each type of school. For instance, it is clear, that if knowledge of the traditional Jewish texts is to be the criterion of an educated Jew, then only the day school graduate has the background and skills to qualify. Given the inherent limitations of the afternoon and one-day-a-week schools, one might question the wisdom of a scholastic program cast in the mould of the day school. Certainly, the peculiar circumstances of the former ought to lead to a course of study qualitatively different from the watered-down version of the day school which characterizes their efforts.

Curricula and courses of study, particularly when prepared by agencies having little direct contact with what goes on in the classroom, do not always accurately reflect the actual work of the schools for which they


are intended. At best, they represent a framework for developing instructional goals and a guide for classroom practice; at worst they are an affectation which obscures more than it reveals and hinders more than it helps. Data about the actual achievement levels of Jewish schools are difficult to obtain, and one is forced to rely on estimates born of inference. The problem is further complicated by the absence of an absolute standard against which academic achievement may be judged.

It is clear that the day school student learns more of the traditional Jewish disciplines than do his fellows in the afternoon and one-day-a-week schools. The real question is whether or not the day school, given the time, effort and money expended, does all it might do, and really is the instrument for the creation of an "intellectual-spiritual elite," as its supporters claim. We do know that an elementary day-school graduate who does not continue his studies quickly forgets much of what he learned and loses many of the skills so laboriously acquired. This is less a comment on the quality of instruction in the day school than a sad fact of the nature of learning. If knowledge is a precondition of behavior, then continued study is essential to the development of the personality, which is the goal of the day school. The statistics of secondary day school enrollment are encouraging, but far from convincing when used as a measure of the effectiveness of the lower school in inspiring its students to continued study.¹³

When judged by even the least demanding standard of what it means to be an educated Jew, it is hard to avoid the feeling that the academic aspirations of the one-day-a-week school are either a colossal joke or an act of cynical pretentiousness. The plethora of subject matter of its curriculum is certainly beyond serious treatment in the available time, and even the most serious and able student cannot hope to acquire more than a hopeless hodgepodge of information. The jump from subject to subject from year to year and even within the same year militates against the serious treatment of any one topic. The continuation rate in Reform religious schools, which is higher than in any other Jewish school, is clearly the result of an administrative device: confirmation, the equivalent of graduation, is postponed until the high school years, and, as a ceremony of completion, it has an attraction quite independent of the quality of the school.

The three-days-a-week school characteristic of the Conservative move-

¹³ Schiff, op. cit., p. 56.
ment cannot claim happier results. A recent study\(^\text{14}\) shows that even when pupils complete the requirements established by the curriculum, they have no recognizable fluency in Hebrew and cannot understand more than carefully edited texts based on a limited vocabulary. Caught in the crossfire of Bible study as an independent subject and the use of the biblical text, and an abridged one at that, as a Hebrew language workbook, the pupils learn neither. Despite the fact that close to 50 percent of the instructional time is devoted to the study of Hebrew and *Chumash*, the pupil leaves the school upon graduation with only the most infantile notions of biblical thought and ideas, and a capability in Hebrew which hardly goes beyond monosyllabic responses to carefully worded questions. The study of history is a pious wish, restricted as it usually is to less than one hour a week. Understanding and generalization fall prey to the hurried accumulation of disconnected fact. The rate of continuation in the afternoon school beyond the elementary level is the lowest of all types of schools and is a significant index of its ineffectiveness. When, in a carefully controlled study recently completed, the 973 graduating students of all the Conservative congregational schools in the Los Angeles area in a given year were asked why they did not continue in a Jewish school, “dissatisfaction with the program of the elementary school” was listed as the primary reason, and “insufficient parental interest and support” as the least important.\(^\text{15}\)

The reasons for the low level of academic achievement are not hard to determine. Of course, first among several external factors beyond the control of the school is the diminished learning capacity of pupils coming to classes late in the afternoon or in the early evening after a full day in public school. But the school itself, and its policies are not without blame. Too many courses of study reflect a confusion of means and ends that hinders effective teaching and learning. Hebrew language learning is a case in point: Learning any language is a complicated task and, whatever else may be required, afternoon schools simply cannot hope to develop fluency in Hebrew unless sufficient time is allotted to this subject—a demand which is rarely met. The alternatives are quite clear. If the after-

\(^{14}\) Walter I. Ackerman, *An Analysis of Selected Courses of Study of Conservative Congregational Schools* (New York: Melton Research Center, Jewish Theological Seminary, 1968; mimeographed).

noon school is truly convinced of the importance of Hebrew, then it should give it the priority of time required for significant achievement; if the press of other subject demands prevents the necessary time allotment, then the pretense of teaching Hebrew should be abandoned. Bible study in the elementary school cannot hope to assume a meaningful dimension, so long as it is confused with language instruction and tied to a deadening method of translating the Hebrew text into English. Some selectivity and progression must be introduced into the study of Jewish life and practices; achievement tests on the subject which are prepared and administered by the central office of one large metropolitan Jewish school system ask the same questions for three grades running. In the three-days-a-week Conservative schools, too, the hopeless proliferation of subject matter denies even the most competent and dedicated teacher the possibility of significant achievement in any one area.

**Jewish Education and Identification as a Jew**

Information on the relationship between Jewish education and the attitudes of the students, their pattern of observance, and the nature and extent of their Jewish identification is not readily available. Some of the difficulty stems from the paucity of rigorous research; most of it lies in the evasive nature of the variables in question and the problem of isolating the specific influence of the school. A comprehensive review of the literature leads one investigator to assert that "in no case does there seem to be any dependable relationship between the type of Jewish education received by the child and the nature of his Jewish-American identification."  

A more recent study reports that

Jewish education has a definite influence on attitudes toward favoring Jewish education and religious practices—what we have called general Jewish identification—and discouraging intermarriage. However, among the adolescents with an extensive religious education, attitudes toward antisemitism, the out-group and Israel are not much different from those adolescents who received limited religious education.  

A study designed to determine adolescent attitudes towards Israel notes that

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The students’ approach to Israel appears to be negatively related to their identity as Americans [and] the over-all cultural climate to which students are exposed both in their home environment and in the formal training of a Jewish school forms the prime influence establishing and reinforcing their outlook as American Jews. The general orientation of the school toward Israel was found to be positively associated with the students’ knowledge of Israel but was not positively associated with their attitudes toward Israel or their American Jewish environment.

The problem of separating the influence of the home from that of the school is highlighted in an investigation of the religious practices and attitudes of day school graduates. Those participating in the study indicated that they had greater feelings of loyalty toward the Jewish people than the observances of Jewish law. While some of the respondents were active in communal affairs, few retained personal study habits. Indeed the data indicate rather clearly that religious observance and practice are significantly related to home background and religious background of the spouse. Another study of day-school graduates comments that “where the school succeeded in imparting both knowledge and values it may be assumed that it reinforced other factors in the students’ environment, particularly in the home.”

These studies represent attempts to measure the influence of the Jewish school. The research findings currently available are clear in their import: The influence of the school is most pronounced in imparting information; it affects basic attitudes toward Jews and Judaism and patterns of religious behavior but slightly, if at all. In this regard Jewish schools are no different from most other schools throughout the world. As comforting as this thought may be, it does not obscure the painful fact that Jewish education in America today falls woefully short of achieving many of its stated goals.

**Functions of Jewish Education**

Proposals for the improvement of the current state of affairs must be preceded by ridding ourselves of the rhetoric of nonsense that permeates most discussions of Jewish education today. Educators, for their part, must learn to avoid extravagant claims and begin to speak forthrightly about the sensible probabilities of particular circumstances. Critics of

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Jewish education must come out from behind the shield of exaggerated demands whose fulfillment is beyond the power of any school. Both must acknowledge that the process of formal schooling has inherent limitations and what is most important, that it is but one of many possible educational agencies and experiences affecting the developing person both before and after he steps into a school. Such candor would introduce some degree of much-needed realism into the position of both the beleaguered schoolman and his insistent detractors.

When mention is made today of Jewish education, the reference is clearly to schools that serve youngsters of elementary and high school age. It is interesting, and more than discouraging, to note that the term as commonly used does not include summer camps, youth organizations, adult education programs, work done with college age students, or other educational activities conducted within the Jewish community. The limitations thus implied are not without serious implications, not the least among them the enervating isolation of the Jewish school from the world around it.

This isolation can be overcome only as the school comes to be seen as one point along a continuum of educational experiences and activities involving Jews of all ages. More is implicit here than the truism, which cannot be repeated too often, that everyone, parents and children alike, ought to be engaged in learning. At each age and stage of his life an individual learns in a different way and needs to learn different things. No one age level or life stage is intrinsically more important than any other; an individual can be given the opportunity of an educational experience compatible with his needs and interests at any one given time. At each level educational activity has an integrity of its own, but its full meaning is achieved only when it has an integral relationship to what came before and what will come after.

It surely is not logical for a synagogue to spend tens of thousands of dollars on a school program for children and only a small fraction of that sum for the education of adults. Nor does it make sense to assume, as most congregations do, that children and adults learn in the same way. The theory and practice of education for adults must be qualitatively different from those of elementary and secondary education. Of course, at some point in life the directed activity of the conventional classroom is the most important and necessary service a community can provide for those who must acquire certain specific skills best taught and learned in such a setting. However, all education is not cognitive, and
there are stages in one's life when the affective realm demands primacy of place. It is conceivable that, at a certain age, a camp experience is more decisive in the development of Jewish identity than any number of hours spent weekly in a classroom. For the adolescent, who is concerned not only with himself but also with his relationship to peers and adults, a certain kind of work experience may be crucial to the development of his understanding of Jews and Judaism. A year of study or work in Israel is rarely without impact, but it means many different things to those who have such an opportunity. But as a matter of educational policy the investment of institutional funds should be for those age groups whose involvement in Israel promises a maximum return. The point is clear: A comprehensive program for the life-long education of Jews should consist of differentiated educational activities ordered in a sequential fashion responding to the concerns and requirements of the individual at each stage of his life.

Viewed in this perspective, the school assumes a dimension commensurate with its nature and capabilities as one of a wide variety of educational agencies. The quick recognition of the proper and particular role of the school is essential to the development of coherent and effective programs of education.

Aims of the Jewish School

The broad purpose of the Jewish school is to contribute to the continued existence of the Jews as an identifiable group. The authority for this assumption varies, for circumstances of life today deny the imposition of a monolithic approach. There are those who find this authority in a divine command; some derive it from the legitimate will of a group to perpetuate itself; others see it as a historical necessity dictated by the pressure of external events; many are moved by a combination of all these factors. The embracive framework which gives the school its specific direction is rarely the result of its own efforts, and is almost always determined in a wider arena of thought and events.

Whatever the particular rationale, the school has a clearcut function, and its day-to-day work as well as its long-range goals and objectives are conditioned by its role. Clearly, the Jewish school must impart knowledge and skills of a particular level. At the same time, it must provide its students with acceptable and meaningful means of identifying themselves as Jews. Beyond this, the school must make available opportunities for its students to engage in activities conjointly with other
Jews of all ages. And, finally, it must seek to define the terms of interaction between its students and the non-Jewish world around them.

The school cannot and need not operate on all these levels with all its students simultaneously. There is a point in the student's scholastic career when the acquisition of skills and ordered information is the first order of business because of his needs and abilities at that point, and also because it may be a requisite for moving on to other, more sophisticated levels of learning. Similarly there is a point, probably at adolescence, when a more open-ended and discursive experience is best suited to the student and his sense of himself. The determination of what to teach and, equally important here, when to teach it is not a simple task; but there is a growing body of knowledge which provides guidelines. To ignore it, as most Jewish schools at present do, is to undermine the entire educational effort.

**Improvement of Teaching Materials and Methods**

The content of the curriculum of the Jewish school must be drawn from the Jewish tradition—an imperative sometimes overlooked by "progressives" and those anxious to fit the work of the school to the demands of the American ethos. That tradition, however, for all its richness and variety, is essentially literary, and its mastery requires an expertise not easily vouchsafed even the most competent and enterprising teacher. Moreover, it is too vast to be encompassed in its entirety by any kind of school. For that tradition to be readily available for classroom use, several conditions must be met: first, the development of some guiding principle of selection; second, an assessment of its meaning as understood by the current state of scholarly knowledge; and, finally, its presentation in a form intelligible to a literate classroom teacher.

What is required to produce such materials is school people working together with scholars, each complementing the other's insights and competency. Some steps in this direction have been taken by the National Curriculum Research Institute of the American Association of Jewish Education and the Melton Research Center of the Jewish Theological Seminary. However, neither of these efforts is sufficient. A model may be found in the joint work of educators and scholars, which has resulted in revamping the curricula of public elementary and high schools, first in the physical sciences and more lately in the social sciences and the humanities. Jewish education desperately needs a series of regional centers for the advancement of Jewish education throughout the country,
which will develop curricula, instructional material, methodological techniques, and evaluative procedures.

The effective use of the materials of the Jewish tradition in the classroom requires a series of steps. A specific idea must first be understood in its original sense. Like the scholar, the student must be taught to engage in the intellectually demanding task of the "reconstruction of meaning." After that, the student must be exposed to the permutations of the idea in its several forms during the various periods of Jewish history. He must then know the state and status of that idea in his own time. Finally, he must be given the opportunity to weigh that idea and its contemporary meaning against competing and conflicting ideas. Such an approach admits of a variety of possibilities in curriculum construction. One can study whole books of the Bible, or pertinent sections of several books, in such a fashion. Similarly, one can develop a course of study centered on particular themes selected for their importance and centrality in Jewish thought and existence.

Suggestions for the latter are not difficult. Certainly, a course in the idea of God, a subject almost never taught as an entity, is proper and necessary in the scheme of Jewish education. There is something terribly dishonest about limiting the pupils' understanding of the God idea to that drawn from the study of a few disconnected chapters of biblical text. A properly conceived and executed course in this area would help the student discover and examine the various ways in which God was comprehended by Jews from the earliest times to the present, and would provide him with the tools for assessing current theological thought. The relationship of Jews to Israel can be treated in the same way. For the pasteurized pablum characterizing instruction in this area at present one might substitute a review of the role of Israel in the Jewish consciousness throughout the ages, and in this way ultimately force the student into an honest and searching intellectual confrontation with the implications of life in a non-Jewish society. The essential thrust of this technique is using the standards of the Jewish tradition as the measuring rod of the society in which we live, rather than the other way around.

The development of a curriculum couched in these terms is not an easy task; but neither is it an impossible one. It requires the cultivation of specific skills as well as the preparation of sophisticated material, which make possible the development of a sequential program of study geared to the changing abilities of the maturing student. The elementary school here becomes the locus of skill, where a reasoned allocation of
time and a carefully constructed program of language instruction provides the youngster with the Hebrew language skills necessary to continued study. The high school provides the opportunity for broad examination of a wide variety of issues, and the college serves as the center of detailed and intensive examination of specific problems. Under no circumstances, however, ought educators or parents be seduced into believing that this complicated task can be completed at one level only, or without a clearly defined investment of time.

Having said all that, it is important to enter a caveat. To guarantee that the intellectual examination of a given set of problems is a warranty for a specific sort of behavior is to stretch the power of the intellect beyond its limits. However, if the Jewish school is to be an agency of moral education—and that is its essential function—its practices and methods must be moral. Specifically, this entails getting the student to arrive at a moral position on issues, justifying that position, and demonstrating consistency in its application to other moral issues. While the school cannot guarantee that its students or graduates will act morally when making decisions, it can provide them with the skills and attitudes without which no truly moral decisions can be made.

At the same time we must avoid the pitfall of assuming that the Jewish tradition provides precise and specific answers to contemporary problems. The search for “relevance,” aside from its mercurial character which makes long-range planning for schools virtually impossible, can distort the meaning of Judaism and impose connotations never intended. It would be far more honest and efficacious for a teacher to admit that on a specific problem Judaism, in its classic formulation, has nothing to say, rather than attempt to force a position which is easily recognized as nothing more than an intellectual gymnastic. The Jewish school could do worse than to teach that

What Judaism can do for the individual Jew is to permeate him with the total feel of the tradition and then leave him to make his own personal choices in the realm of man’s immediate actions. Many Jews remember . . . a grandmother who said often about such matters, out of the very depths of her being, that a “Jew doesn’t do this.” As political and social doctrine this may seem imprecise, but one who is not alien to the inherited Jewish experience finds this standard both precise and most exquisitely moral.21

Recommendations

Fixing Responsibility

Who runs the school is less important than how it is run. The debate over whether the authority for the conduct of the Jewish school should be vested in the community or the congregation belongs to another age, and has been resolved by the flow of events. There is a common recognition that each has a role to play and the task of the moment is to define the obligations of each.

The responsibility for the day-to-day conduct of its school rests with the congregation. This includes not only the supervision of instruction in the limited technical sense, but also the development of a philosophy consistent with the views of the synagogue membership. For its part, the community office of education ought to eschew activities which are more properly the province of the individual school, and should concentrate on research and experimentation. Bureau personnel ought to divest themselves of the "inspectorial" role and leave such tasks to the school principal. Community funds should, wherever possible, be diverted from the direct support of congregational schools, particularly on the elementary level, and directed for use as "seed money" which encourages and stimulates innovative practices. Perhaps the most legitimate and vital use for community funds is the establishment of model schools, supervised by a bureau of Jewish education together with a Hebrew teachers college, where one exists. The extension, or perhaps conversion, of the bureau's role obviously requires more liberal financing than in the past. There probably has been no other time in the history of the American Jewish community when federations and welfare funds have evinced as much interest in Jewish education as now, and one senses that additional funds would be allocated if new programs were proposed.

Both bureaus and schools must find more demanding methods of evaluation. There is probably no case on record of a school disaffiliated from a bureau or cut off from funds and services because of failure to meet a mutually agreed upon academic standard. Sporadic efforts at accreditation in cities throughout the country concentrate more on administrative efficiency than on scholastic excellence. This situation probably will fail of satisfactory resolution so long as the process of evaluation is in the hands of the professional educators conducting the schools.

One possibility lies in the creation of community boards of examiners, composed of disinterested but knowledgeable lay people, who would
undertake a periodic evaluation of the work of each individual school in a given locale. There is no large-sized Jewish community in the United States today which does not have a sizeable number of trained, sophisticated specialists willing to give their talent to improve Jewish schools. Such groups, beholden to nothing but a previously determined standard of achievement and free of any obligation to protect a vested interest, are likely to introduce much-needed control. Schools meeting the requirements established by boards of examiners in cooperation with educators should receive public acknowledgement. Schools persistently failing to live up to established standards should be made known to the public. Parents of children attending a congregational school have the right to know whether or not the school they support meets fair and reasonable requirements of achievement. Synagogues could suffer a more grievous fate than loss of membership resulting from public knowledge of the insufficiency of their schools.

INFORMAL JEWISH EDUCATION

Simultaneous with the school's move to involve lay people in its work should be attempts to work together with other educational agencies. The Jewish school has not fully availed itself of the possibilities inherent in summer camp programs and youth organizations. All too often these various agencies work independently, and fail to use the strengths of one to overcome the weaknesses of the other. We are past the point of regarding a proper summer camp a luxury available only to those who can afford it; it should be seen as an integral part of the school program, and offered to every child willing to attend, regardless of his family's ability to pay. The coordination of all these activities—school, youth group, summer camp, a trip to Israel—is essential for the maximum effectiveness of our educational efforts.

A summer camp, either day or resident, can offer students an opportunity for both enrichment and remedial work. It can also serve as a place for experimenting with methods and materials, which is not always possible during the regular school year. Most important, school personnel, working closely with camp people, should learn to draw upon the heightened emotional involvement in Judaism, developed at camp, as a base for continued work in the city. Youth groups may be asked to conduct activities and programs—in the arts, service to the community, prayer services and holiday celebrations—which otherwise would cut
into precious classroom time, and are better suited to the easy informality of self-determined peer groups.

The conception of the school as only one of many possible educational experiences has the additional advantage of offering teaching personnel a broader range of employment possibilities than are currently available in afternoon or one-day-a-week schools. Of course, not all teachers are capable or willing to work with youth groups or in summer camps; but to those who are, the extension of their role beyond the classroom offers an exciting educational challenge as well as a source of additional income. Some Hebrew teachers colleges have responded to this possibility and have begun to develop programs for the training of multiskilled educational personnel.

TRAINING THE TEACHER

As has already been noted, the most sophisticated program of education remains little more than a good idea, unless there is a sufficient number of trained and dedicated people to develop its practice. The personnel problem for Jewish education, as well as for other areas of Jewish life, clearly cannot be solved unless a radical revision of both recruitment and training is made. We also must act on evidence in the field of general education, which indicates that the reform of the lower school begins in the work of institutions of higher learning.

There is little hope for change in our educational system if we continue to rely on teacher-training schools which are inadequately staffed, underfinanced, and limited in scope and influence, and will continue to be so long as they remain supplementary institutions. We may learn from the example of nations which have created programs and institutions calculated to produce superbly trained personnel for services deemed essential to their survival. The American Jewish community should seriously consider the establishment of a Jewish university, national in scope, with the avowed purpose of securing the future of the Jews in this country through the development of a cadre of literate, concerned, and responsible persons who will assume positions of lay and professional leadership in the Jewish community.

The proposed university is not one whose Jewishness is only in the source of its financial support. Nor is it an institution in which Jewish studies are an adjunct to general studies, or vice versa, and separate faculties are responsible for the conduct of its educational program. The proposal is for a school on collegiate and graduate levels, in which
general and Jewish studies are integrated within a framework suffused by the Jewish ethic. Geared to the highest standards of academic excellence and scholarship, it will seek to establish an atmosphere of free and open inquiry, creating at the same time an environment of yidishkayt. The closest model is perhaps the English public school which, in its grandest sense, was the training ground for the elite that ultimately was to shoulder the responsibility for Britain's welfare.

That no such institution exists anywhere in the Jewish world should not deter us from the task. The resources of the American Jewish community clearly are equal to the cost of developing such an institution. What is required is the marshalling of the financial, intellectual, and organizational forces, in which our community abounds, for a concerted and imaginative approach to the academic and monetary problems involved in such an undertaking. Hebrew teachers colleges spend an estimated $15,000 for each of their graduates. It is reasonable to assume that a similar expenditure in a different environment will produce happier results.

Until the envisaged Jewish university becomes a reality, and even after, we must strengthen the Hebrew teachers colleges so that they do indeed become schools of higher Jewish learning. Salaries, fringe benefits, teaching loads, and opportunities for research must be raised and improved until they are at least comparable to conditions in the best colleges and universities in this country. Only as this is done, can the Hebrew teachers colleges hope to compete for faculty with the growing number of colleges and universities that are developing programs of Jewish studies. The Hebrew teachers colleges themselves must initiate a serious curriculum review. Most of the schools in existence today are based on the naturalist philosophies of education of their European-trained founders, who also were moved by the ideals and aspirations of nascent Zionism. The passage of time and the changed circumstances of the Jewish people notwithstanding, the present curricula of these schools are essentially the same as they were a quarter of a century ago.

The initial step in curriculum reform should be differentiation between students interested in becoming teachers and those who only seek to deepen their knowledge of Jews and Judaism. Both types of students must be given the opportunity to develop programs of study, fitting their

22 Janowsky, op. cit., p. 141.
individual needs and interests. Fields of concentration, tutorials, independent studies, and small group-seminar type instruction should replace predetermined courses of study which force every student into the same dulling progression of lecture courses. Subject matter priorities must be reexamined with an eye to the development of greater balance and interaction between the various disciplines constituting Jewish studies. Above all, disinterested scholarship must be joined with passion and compassion for the Jews of today.

Students in the teacher-training track should be given the opportunity of actually working in a classroom long before graduation. Student teaching can surely begin before the last year of the four or five year sequence. Temporary certification, subject to specific time limits and conditioned by a requirement of continued study, should be granted to able students even before the completion of their studies. Many of the subjects of the elementary school curriculum are taught in English, and there is no reason why intelligent, interested college students should not be given the opportunity to begin, while still in school, their careers as teachers of specific subjects for which they qualify. The lessons of team-teaching are certainly applicable here and it is worth experimenting with instructional programs combining the specific skills of the Israeli teacher with the talents of the American student teacher.

Every student in a Hebrew teachers college should be given the opportunity of a year's study at an Israeli university. The benefits of such a program need no elaboration. It therefore is difficult to explain why the richest Jewish community in history does not grant enough scholarship and loan assistance to every serious student who needs such help for a year of concentrated Judaica study in Israel. Scholarships and other incentives might similarly be used to encourage college students to take leaves of absence from their schools for a semester or year of full-time study at a Hebrew teachers college.

Function of Jewish School

The young teacher begins his career with the hope and excitement that only the challenges of teaching can provide. All too often that eager and infectious enthusiasm is dulled by the sharp reality of the classroom and the deadening hand of an insensitive administration. In the Jewish school his problems are compounded by the impossible hours and the limited time he has for teaching. At times, the school must seem to him as nothing more than a convenient stopping place for an endless succes-
sion of car pools. Little wonder then that he begins to doubt whether he really can accomplish anything worthwhile. Perhaps only the day school, with its early starting age and sensible school day, can do all that Jewish schools must do. Or perhaps other alternatives might be explored.

The Jewish school is influenced in many ways by the work of the public school. That is inevitable and perhaps even desirable. It is also somewhat disconcerting. It is not difficult to understand what moves proponents of day schools to point with pride to the fact that their graduates have no difficulty, either academically or socially, when they transfer to the public school. One would hope rather that the experience of a day school would make the public school unbearable. In the final analysis the Jewish school ought to be something quite different from the public school.

We reveal no hidden truth in pointing out that American education is job-oriented. The public-school and college systems in this country are predicated on the assumption that a major function of the school is to provide an adequate supply of highly trained technicians to meet the demands of an expanding economy. The broader aims of education have been subverted to the narrower goals of developing marketable skills. If not by choice then by circumstance, Jewish education is both in fact and theory the exact antithesis of general education in our time. With the exception of a few students possibly contemplating careers of professional service in the Jewish community, our pupils are truly engaged in *Tora L'shma*. The Jewish school serves no pragmatic ends and can have no other real function than to help its students understand and appreciate the "intrinsic value of education." Therefore, when the Jewish school models itself, as it often does, after the public school in organizational patterns, administrative techniques, means of pupil control and discipline, and methods of instruction, it distorts its uniqueness and creates obstacles to the achievement of its goals. To do so is to play a game in which the rules are not related to the results.

It is important to remember that what a child learns in school derives as much from his experiences in that setting as from the specific content of instruction. The structure of the school, the methods of instruction it employs, the sanctions it invokes, and the relationships it fosters, are all vital to the development of the norms it seeks to inculcate in its students. A school dedicated to the democratic ideal must perforce mold these variables into experiences quite different from those provided by a school in a totalitarian society. Similarly, a Jewish school, whose ulti-
mate aim is the inculcation of a specific set of behavioral norms, must provide experiences radically different from those available in a non-Jewish school.

Even if successful, plans for the introduction of curricular change and exhortations for increased services and funds must ultimately fall short of real effectiveness, so long as we avoid the broader question of the essential nature of Jewish schools. The belief that the Jewish school must be unique may be chimerical, but the development of this quality surely is worth a try!
CONCERNING JEWISH THEOLOGY IN NORTH AMERICA: SOME NOTES ON A DECADE

by LOU H. SILBERMAN

At the beginning of the decade 1958–1968, the chronological framework of this paper, the editor of Judaism offered as a note to the essay "The Question of Jewish Theology" by Jakob J. Petuchowski the comment, "The revival, in our day, of Jewish theology raises, if only by implication, at least two fundamental questions: Does Judaism need a theology? Is Jewish theology possible today?" ¹ The following examination of some of the writings and discussions during this period that concerned themselves with consideration of Judaism, its basic concepts, ideas, attitudes, beliefs, indeed suggests the questions may have been beside the point. For need or no need, possibility or no possibility, thinkers of a variety of persuasions, writers from a multitude of ambients, discussants from more than a few points of view, individual as well as institutional, have been busily engaged in doing theology.

Indeed, one is faced, quantitatively at least, with the proverbial embarras de richesse. During the decade there have appeared forty issues each of the Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal, Conservative Judaism, and Tradition, to point to professionally-oriented "party" organs; the same was the number for Judaism (published by the secularist American Jewish Congress, but hardly a "party" organ). The American Jewish Committee's Commentary, directed to the intellectual and not primarily devoted to religious or necessarily Jewish interests, went to press one hundred and twenty times. The Reconstructionist, whose party label does not make it inhospitable to other points of view, appeared some two hundred times. In addition, the house organs of the ecclesiastical institutions and of the various secularist organizations must

¹ Winter 1958, p. 49.
be counted in. The publications of various learned societies, non-Jewish as well as Jewish, also contain material falling within the range of this paper's interest. And then, of course, there are the books and monographs.

Thus, a survey in the magisterial form of some European journals, critically sifting all the books, articles, reviews, notes and communications comprising the total output, would easily exhaust both space limits and patience. The alternative to such a procedure (that it is being rejected casts no shadow upon its desirability and value) is the more vulnerable undertaking of discussing what this writer considers to have been the dominant themes, the crucial tensions, the significant developments of the decade's thought. In the circumstances, names mentioned are generally illustrative, although it ought to be assumed that the author's prejudices are unconsciously, if not consciously, at work. Further, it should be noted that not all or even the majority of the materials pointed to above were examined.

**PROBLEMS OF JEWISH THEOLOGY**

If the spring-flood of writings suggests that the editorial note to "The Question of Jewish Theology" about the need and possibility of Jewish theology is beside the point, Petuchowski's insistence that, in a predicted emergent situation, "the only possible form of Jewish existence in the Diaspora will be the religious existence" does indicate something of the problem at the root of the discussion during the decade.

The preceding decade saw the establishment of the State of Israel as a political entity, enthusiastically supported by American Jews, and then witnessed a growing inability to establish a theoretical basis for the relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community. Were Jewish existence to be understood primarily as Israeli nationality—a position pressed for by some leaders of the new state—then there could be no basis for a permanent community outside the land, but only one with colonial status, temporary by its very nature, in which one's Jewish existence was determined by a sense of national belonging. Such a definition, although altogether possible, did not shape the philosophy of American Jewish life, despite the pro-Zionist sentiment of much of the community. As for other secularist philosophies, the American equivalents of European diaspora nationalism, their theoretical statements were

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largely ignored. However, on the practical level the community paradoxically functioned in terms of the yidishkayt at which those formulations aimed, although sociologically, the basis for such a mode of existence in America was being questioned.

More than a decade ago, Nathan Glazer, in his *American Judaism*, examined the relationship between Judaism and Jewishness and argued that the latter was then everywhere in retreat, while the former "showed a remarkable, if ambiguous, strength." According to C. Bezalel Sherman, whom Glazer cited, the reason may have been that secularism, i.e. yidishkayt, was being forced to wear the garb of the religious establishment in order to survive on the American scene, where cultural pluralism was dead. The import of this paradox of an ever more secular society defining allowable differences in terms of religious groupings was developed during that decade in its most ambitious form by Will Herberg in his volume *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*. If diaspora existence was to be religious existence or, perhaps more accurately, existence as a religion (i.e., ecclesiastical institution), it required, intellectually, a body of reflective thought interpreting the structures, forms, and institutions of that existence—theology. Thus viewed, theology serves the apologetic function of providing an intellectual structure for a community forced by its historical setting to appropriate a churchly mode of existence. There is no doubt that consciously or unconsciously, such an apologetic motivation helped determine the development during the decade, and therefore must be taken into account. But to make it the sole or predominant factor is to misjudge the situation. Thus a new perspective is needed.

The immediate postwar years saw a tremendous upsurge in theological discussion among American Protestants. The full impact of what unfortunately has been called neo-orthodox thought (neo-Reformation would be a more satisfactory term), closely associated with Reinhold Niebuhr of the Union Theological Seminary in New York, began to make itself fully felt. The promises of liberal theology that had been part of the optimism still pervading the American scene in the period following the First World War, could not sustain themselves in the face of the cruel contradictions of the 1930s: the depression (only partially solved by the New Deal); the rise of the fascist states; the Second World War, and the military use of nuclear fission and its later developments. No matter when the American people lost its innocence, the post-World

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War II period marked the widespread recognition by the religious and other intellectuals of the dominant culture that they were not only naked, but also had been thrust out of Eden. This recognition gave rise to an intense preoccupation with theological questions, influenced in large measure by European models, most particularly Karl Barth, and the emergence of positions resolutely critical, and often less than understanding, of the liberalism of the past.

For the American Jewish community and its religious intellectuals, this development was of little consequence at the moment. Confronted by the enormity of the Jewish disaster of the 1930s and 1940s; involved in rescue and rehabilitation of the remnant; concerned with the political problems of the Palestinian community, and filled with enthusiasm at the emergence of the State of Israel and its survival, American Jews attempted no serious assessment of the intellectual structures of Jewish existence. Thus Will Herberg's *Judaism and Modern Man*, a work clearly influenced by Niebuhrian thought but also reflecting the existentialist positions of the German Jewish thinkers Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, met for the most part vigorous rejection and even denunciation that had little or nothing to do with its real deficiencies. The liberalism that American Protestantism rejected, however, found a home in Jewish thought, although it was proclaimed rather than used as an intellectual instrument for examining and understanding the situation of the Jew. Even the Jewish indigenous writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel, also touched by Buber's and Rosenzweig's influence, found little response. They often were judged more by the appearance of the word "mysticism" in his academic title (he is professor of Jewish ethics and mysticism) and by his textured literary style than by the theological structure of his works.

Yet the world could not forever be held at arm's length and the intellectual environment could not be ignored. Liberal optimism could not cope with the question put by the murder of six million; nor was the singling out for destruction of the Jews as Jews to be dealt with constructively by those who understood the chosenness of Israel as a call to spiritual laureateship, or by those who found it an obsolete formulation of national genius. The reality of the State of Israel, greeted by some traditionalists as "footsteps of the Messiah," was largely unassimilable,

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except as a positivistically viewed political fact. Also, the influence of Buber on Protestant and, to a lesser degree, Roman Catholic thought while Jewish thinkers continued to disregard him, was somewhat more than a minor scandal in the face of his determinedly Jewish provenance and the undeniable fact that he was speaking to the situation of the Jew. In light of this intellectual situation and the sociological phenomena noted above, it is small wonder that the decade saw a growing concern of intellectuals with questions of theology.

**Trends in Jewish Theology**

Moving from motivating factors to the realities of theological construction in this period, one is faced by the critical query: What noteworthy trends or tendencies have emerged in response to the religious question the situation put to the intellectuals? Is it as yet possible to lay out the directions in which the thoughtful scholars and writers are moving? Are there relations and interactions between the emergent positions?

**Commentary Symposium**

We may begin our examination by reference to suggestions made by Milton Himmelfarb in his introduction to a *Commentary* symposium, later issued as a separate volume. Commenting on the replies by 38 rabbis to five questions—about revelation, the chosenness of Israel, the relation of Judaism to other religions, social ethics, and the challenges of contemporary thought—Himmelfarb indicates that, according to the responses, the true division is “between Orthodox and non-Orthodox.” In the latter camp, he finds, “the single greatest influence on the religious thought of North American Jewry is a German Jew—a layman, not a rabbi—who died before Hitler took power and who came to Judaism from the very portals of the Church.” The reference is, of course, to Franz Rosenzweig. On the Orthodox side, Himmelfarb sees as the most important single influence “another German Jew, this one of the nineteenth century, Samson Raphael Hirsch.” He further points to what he takes to be the absence of influence of Buber’s thought on American Jewry, and, in what this writer considers an inadequate paragraph, seeks to explain this without making sure that it is indeed so.

Evaluating the symposium as a whole, Himmelfarb concludes that

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“there is far less theological ferment than among Christians and that there are few new ideas about Judaism.” His explanation is that “after all, Judaism is rather old,” has seen everything and therefore is unperturbed by what bothers the Christians, and that, “in any case, theology is not the same as religion or faith, and Jews have normally theologized less than Christians.”

In light of the situation described above, in which the contemporary Jewish thinker is called to reflect upon the problem of Judaism, one may wonder whether this conclusion comes to grips with the realities of Jewish theological discussion. Indeed, one must inquire about the validity of the kind of Gebrauchstheologie conjured into being for the symposium, in which the questions themselves, although broadly aimed, may have skewed the responses. Nonetheless, if the meaning of the symposium may have somewhat eluded the editor, the endeavor, rightly seen, does set in perspective the problems and concerns of the American Jewish religious thinker. What is of primary importance for avoiding the kind of judgment about “theological ferment” noted above, is the self-evident but often ignored fact that, although our environment superficially viewed seems to be the same, and although we share, for better or worse, the same cultural vocabulary, and although methodologically we face the same requirements, Jews and Christians doing theology at the same time are not doing the same theology. We are each reflecting on the interfacing of our tradition and our world; but since this is done existentially, our questions are not necessarily the same—even when they may seem to be.

To begin with, as Eugene Borowitz points out in a discussion of the symposium, the influence of Buber is far more pervasive than the responses seem to have indicated to the editor. Indeed, the very paucity of reference suggests the way in which Buber’s thought has been woven into the fabric of the symposiasts’ ideas. He belongs so much to the given of contemporary theological discussion that his not being there is clear evidence of his presence. As Borowitz cogently argued,

... without Buber it would not be possible for modern man to rely upon Rosenzweig. ... He has made as clear as one is likely to be able to do the source of belief and the reason for its open, personalist texture today. Because Buber’s image of the I-Thou has been accepted by many thinkers in the modern world, the modern Jew can speak of faith and even Revelation with substantial integrity.

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Put another way, Buber made it possible for many nontraditionalists (at this point, the term “Orthodox” is turned over to institutionalists to play with) to break out of immanentism in both its idealist and naturalist formulations. Yet the success of that breakthrough raised the very question that made Rosenzweig’s formulation crucial. Buber’s statement of the meeting of God and Israel after or, indeed, as the paradigm of I-Thou, provided a basis for understanding Israel as “the people of the Covenant standing over against, being addressed by, and addressing the eternal Thou, the people whose only real existence is in relation which always transcends the forms and means expressing it.”

This ceaseless transcendence of forms and means was, for Rosenzweig, a difficulty; and it is just his search for a solution that recommends him so strongly to those who, like him, accept Buber’s portrayal of the way in which Israel came into being, but who are further concerned (as, in principle, Buber refused to be) with relating the structures of Jewish existence to encounter. “The problem was to find the means of possessing the deed of Judaism in the same living fashion in which Buber had shown the thought of Judaism could be grasped.”

Just as Buber’s rediscovery of Torah as teaching, without a priori limitations, became the starting point of serious reflecting upon Judaism, so Rosenzweig’s concern to discover the meaning of Torah as way became a central theme in existentially-oriented Jewish thought. Hala-khah is part of the given of Jewish existence, and its place in any viable and consistent statement appears crucial. Indeed, it is just Rosenzweig’s deep concern with the problem that reopened the question for the existentially-oriented Reform wing of the nontraditionalists, and provided the similarly-directed Conservative group with the means of holding on to Buber’s insights, despite the embarrassment of his more than ambiguous attitude toward halakhah. For Rosenzweig, the content of Revelation was revelation itself. Halakhah, i.e., form and structure, was already a human response to, or comment on, that content; but it did not necessarily become objectified to the point of impeding the meeting of God and Israel, which was the crux of Buber’s problem. Indeed, the mitzvot are thought of as occasions imbedded within the daily, weekly, monthly, and annual cycles of the individual’s and the com-

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10 Ibid., p. 141.
community's life, through which the divine-human encounter may find its renewal.

It is this particular facet of Rosenzweig's position that makes him so visible in the thought of the existentialist group; he provided them with an instrument for dealing with one of their problems. Influenced by critical methodology and recognizing the developmental character of halakhah, the nontraditionalist finds in this formulation the mode of relating his existentialist understanding of revelation to his existence within a historical community. It is a community possessing a complex structure of deed that includes all, from ritualistic behavior patterns to decisions made in the face of the exigencies of political, economic, social, and personal (intimate as well as external) life. Rosenzweig's revolt against philosophical reductionism, particularly of the idealist variety, is certainly not evident in current discussions. However, his spiritual trek—which took him to the very doors of the Church—although never explicitly spelled out in its denouement, undoubtedly provided a model to be identified with, at least for some who invoke his name.

It may be that the continued exploration of Rosenzweig's formulation, rather than a mere appropriation of it as a completely satisfactory solution to the problem, will serve as catalytic agent both within the ranks of the various nontraditionalists and between them and at least some traditionalists whose understanding of halakhah is, to use their own term, not fundamentalist. Whatever the future may hold, it now is clear that a purely Wissenschaft des Judentums approach to this crucial question of Jewish existence has been rejected by some nontraditional scholars, whose influence may increase during the coming decade.

Returning briefly to the question of Buber's continuing influence, one may point out that its critical examination by some outside the existentialist circle indicates its importance. Eliezer Berkovits,\textsuperscript{11} attempted to deal with Buber's thought, both philosophically and dogmatically. Unfortunately, the former investigation is not always made from a consistent point of view: On the one hand, the I-Thou relation is challenged as inadequate, since it is open to further reduction to a "mystical merging of the I in the All." On the other hand, it is argued, the meaning "received in dialogical revelation may have existential significance for the I; it lacks objective validity," which, of course, would be equally true of the mystical union, whose reality Berkovits uses in denying ultimacy to

\textsuperscript{11} Eliezer Berkovits, \textit{A Jewish Critique of the Philosophy of Martin Buber} (New York, 1962).
the I-Thou relation. From the dogmatic point of view, the I-Thou relationship is rejected as paradigmatic for "the biblical encounter" on the grounds that the divine Thou is other than all other thous. Dogmatic rejection is then supported by a return to more consistent philosophic considerations in which the ontological natures of the I and the Thou are examined, and rejected as inadequate. As a whole, the paper seems to be philosophically unsatisfactory; its real value lies in its wish to engage seriously in a confrontation of Buber's thought from a traditionalist point of view, in preference to dogmatic rejection. Indeed, one of the significant developments of the decade is Berkovits's readiness to pay attention to the thought of nontraditionalists and to support his dogmatic position (expressed or implicit) by critical philosophic argumentation.

**Reconstructionism**

Another interesting engagement with Buber's thought comes from the pen of Mordecai Kaplan. Essentially, Kaplan retains his neo-Ahad-ha-'Amist position and finds much of what Buber has to say about the nature of the Jewish people satisfactory and confirmatory of the Reconstructionist emphasis. Of course, this is a very partial reading of Buber and avoids direct confrontation of the fundamental structures and processes of his thought. What Kaplan finds unsatisfactory is what he takes to be Buber's "extreme position with regard to philosophic thought vs. the Jewish religious tradition." According to Kaplan, Buber constructed an esoteric system that rejected philosophical insight and thus was unable to confront modernity. What he seems to be doing in fact is reading his own weakness into Buber, whose writings are philosophically far more sophisticated than are his own. Kaplan's category of "philosophic thought" is too broad and unspecified to do justice to Buber's challenge. For it is not philosophic thought in general, but Hermann Cohen's critical idealism, so painstakingly described in Kaplan's volume, with which Buber deals and whose rejection is crucial to his development.

Indeed, it should long have been apparent that Kaplan's own largely unfocused philosophical position has been, or has become, a sort of pragmatist misreading of neo-Kantian idealism. One is reluctant to use the term misreading; but how else is it possible to explain the statement intended to describe Cohen's idea of deity: "Divinity is to be conceived

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as that aspect of nature which impels and helps man to transcend his animal nature"? That divinity is an aspect of nature is a concept totally foreign to anything Cohen thought. It has been just this philosophic imprecision, an unfortunate heritage of some aspects of American pragmatism, that has dogged the footsteps of Kaplan's Reconstructionist movement. The value of his sociological analysis of the Jewish situation in the United States in the immediate post-World War I period (Judaism as a Civilization, published in 1934) obscures the precarious nature of his philosophic synthesis. What he attempted was a reading of the Durkheimian analysis of religion, in which deity is a projection of the survival values of a tribe, from Dewey's point of view, that the religious symbolized the ideal ends emerging from "the continuing life of this comprehensive community of beings [that] includes all the significant achievement of men in science and art and all the kindly offices of intercourse and communication." 

That Kaplan's thought does not deal with the more central philosophical questions, lightly brushed aside by Dewey's cosmic optimism, was pointed out by Jacob Agus more than a quarter of a century ago. The critique is renewed, with a larger corpus of material, by Berkovits in a critical analysis of "Reconstructionist Theology" that proceeds not dogmatically but philosophically. This essay engendered an important discussion of the philosophical problems of Reconstructionism, when Emil Fackenheim took it as the basis for his examination of that movement. His conclusion was that, while Berkovits's article had effectively "accomplished a refutation of the possibility of an alliance of Reconstructionism with (1) positivism and (2) naturalism," it does not conclusively deal with "the religious immanentism implied in its central faith." In his view, "It is over the issue of immanentism versus supernaturalism (orthodox or existentialist) that the most religiously committed Jews today are really divided." The philosophical alliance Fackenheim recommends, and which Kaplan's volume makes amply evident, is just that which Kaplan has always secretly cherished—idealism. What all along had

13 Ibid., p. 58.
16 Eliezer Berkovits, "Reconstructionist Theology," Tradition, Fall 1959, pp. 20–66.
prevented Kaplan from embracing it was, of course, the antimetaphysical bias of his ostensible pragmatism.

The response to Berkovits's paper was not made directly, but appeared in a reply by Ira Eisenstein to Fackenheim's discussion. Eisenstein's letter argues that 1) more pressing problems divert Reconstructionism from theological speculation; 2) theology is a source of disagreement rather than unity, and it is unity that is to be sought; 3) Reconstructionism is idealist, but pragmatically so; 4) reality is all of one order, the natural; 5) the process of nature we call God "is immanent, in us, in our drive toward the realization of those values which, from reason, experience and intuition we know contribute to man's salvation." Fackenheim's response —by this time Berkovits was out of the picture—examines the philosophic claim of reality as a single order, and its relation to the question of value "in a universe of sheer fact." This claim to the presence of value in reality as a single order indicates the idealist strain, which is acceptable to Eisenstein but which demands rational justification, a task Reconstructionism has not undertaken. However, Fackenheim is not willing to go along with a single-ordered reality for, in his view, "fact, a universe full of amoral strife and cosmic indifference," does not disclose moral purpose. Rather he remains "realistically with the clash of two orders—the world of amoral fact of which we are a part, and the world of moral values which commands our loyalty." Those values are not emergent but are revealed by the incursion of "God, who being beyond all fact, is its Creator and Redeemer." The exchange closed with a reply by Eisenstein that, for all its willingness to grapple with the issues, suggests the unreadiness of most Reconstructionist spokesmen to enter into disciplined philosophical discussion.

A clear exception is a paper by Jack Cohen. It examines the besetting question of the source of value in a universe of facticity through an analysis of the ethical commandment "Thou shalt not murder," and arrives at three conclusions:

1 The first is that the prohibition of murder cannot be logically derived from an analysis and an understanding of the meaning of "thou." The second point is that the meaning of "thou" can be derived from the meaning of "shalt not

murder." And finally, "God" cannot be understood until the meaning of both "thou" and "shall not murder" is grasped.

In the course of this carefully argued paper, Cohen discusses the Buberian I-Thou position, to which he grants poetic status as a statement of "the truth of human psychology, that man cannot stand the pain of loneliness and meaningless existence." However, he finds it a misleading and intellectually dangerous view "as a description of cosmic reality."

"Existentially," Cohen writes, "there is only the I and its thoughts." Thus God, "like other ideas is an interpretive construction placed upon [man's] experience of the world around him." Here Cohen stands more firmly in the pragmatic position than Kaplan, whose itch for metaphysics is always evident.

A thoughtful response to Cohen's statement is made by Fackenheim, whose generally irenic openness to discussion with other positions is always governed by a mastery of philosophic ideas and detail. In it he moves side by side with Cohen's thought, until he comes to the parting of the ways. His critique points to the problem of making "human needs the ultimate standard when he himself has asserted that we cannot derive moral values from the empirical facts concerning man—among which are needs." The true source of value for the Deweyan reading of pragmatism—as contrasted with the Russellian, which is closely allied to Sartre's pessimistic refusal to find value anywhere except in the evanescent decision of the single one—is in an optimistic cosmic stance that must be called faith, although those who hold it do not come "to grips with its logical status as faith."

**Auschwitz Theology**

It is just this optimistic reading of man's nature and situation, surreptitiously imported from idealism into pragmatism, that is rejected in its totality by another, singular disciple of Kaplan. Perhaps it is unwise to call Richard Rubenstein a disciple of Kaplan. Yet, careful analysis of his writings suggests that, in one way or another, Reconstructionism's critique of traditional and liberal positions made possible Rubenstein's development. Kaplan's people-centered interpretation of Judaism taught him that theological concepts are to be thought of basically as expressions of the community's experience, which could be demythologized and

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replaced by ideas presumed to be intellectually more compatible with the new situation of the community. Thus, for example, Kaplan's rejection of the concept of the chosen people was taken over by Rubenstein as a means of extricating the Jewish people from what he understands to be the consequences of "accepting the normative Judeo-Christian theology of history." Rather,

Religious uniqueness does not necessarily place us at the center of the divine drama of perdition, redemption, and salvation for mankind. All we need for a sure religious life is to recognize that we are, when given normal opportunities, neither more nor less than any other men, sharing the pain, the joy, and the fated destiny which Earth alone has meted out to all her children.24

Except for the final clause, the formulation is Reconstructionist in temper. But Reconstructionism's lack of tragic vision, which, from Rubenstein's point of view, it shares with both traditional and liberal readings of Judaism, also makes it unsatisfactory for him as an instrument for interpreting the Jewish and human situation. In Auschwitz and in existentialist thought, as found in the writings of Albert Camus, Rubenstein discovers that human existence is tragic, ultimately hopeless, and without meaning.25

Yet, since religion is the projection of the community's experience, whatever it may be, recognition of its situation allows it to formulate a statement giving meaning to what, in itself, is meaningless. Thus, facing an ultimately absurd world, the "people of Israel," rejecting historicity, acts out meaning as the hieratic gesture of a sacral community. It is, in communal terms, Camus's rejection of suicide in the Myth of Sisyphus. That formulation need not begin de novo, for, Rubenstein holds, embedded within the Jewish tradition are the recollections of just such a world-view, one overcome, but not irretrievably, by what he calls the prophetic-Deuteronomic theology of history: "The priests of ancient Israel," he writes, "wisely never suffered Jahweh entirely to win his war with Baal, Astarte, and Anath. Paganism was transformed but never entirely done away with in Judaism."

Thus, when the theology-of-history superstructure is dismantled, it will be recognized that "Almighty Necessity has never ceased Her omnipotent reign. We are born but to perish. We are more than the fools of the gods; we are their food. The Kingdom lies ahead of us, but it is not the new reality. . . . It is the Nothingness out of which we have come

24 Ibid., p. 58.
25 Ibid., p. 20, n. 14; p. 216.
and to which we are inescapably destined to return.” 26 This, for Rubenstein, is the fundamental insight of paganism into the human situation, and such an insight, utilizing the forms of traditional Judaism, he writes, “is the only meaningful religious option remaining to Jews after Auschwitz and the rebirth of Israel.” 27

Here is the methodology of Reconstructionism, applied with a vengeance; but here, too, is an agonizing attempt to deal with the two crucial events of the 1940s—Auschwitz and the State of Israel—a task barely undertaken by thinkers of more conventional positions. Whatever responses Rubenstein called forth were marked more by sorrow or angry repudiation than by careful analysis.

Fundamentally, Rubenstein’s interpretation of the prophetic understanding of history is far from convincing; his easy glide from Deuteronomic to prophetic-Deuteronomic is an act of scholarly legerdemain, illegitimately equating the cult-centered historical thesis of Deuteronomy and its religious interests with the prophets’ nonreligious reading of Israel’s history. However that may be, Rubenstein reminds us that the entwined problem of history and evil knows no easy answer. Yet the experience of the people of Israel is so intimately bound up with the problem that it is ignored at our spiritual and intellectual peril.

**Joseph B. Soloveitchik**

By something more than fateful coincidence, Rubenstein’s interpretation of the people of Israel as a sacral community has its counter-image in, or is a counter-image for, the covenantal faith-community adumbrated by Joseph Soloveitchik in his essay, “The Lonely Man of Faith.” 28 That community, too, has its beginning in man’s recognition that “he is just a handful of dust,” in his “ever-growing tragic awareness of his aloneness and only-ness and consequently of his loneliness and insecurity.” He, too, must “bring his quest for redemption to full realization , must initiate action leading to the discovery of a companion who will with him form a community.” What is striking up to this point is the essential agreement between the two existential portraits of man in search of redemption, despite the crucial significance of the totally different way in which they are arrived at and the dissimilarity

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26 Ibid., pp. 124, 258.
27 Ibid., p. 130.
of the language used. It would be neither helpful nor constructive to continue the correlation between the two. Yet, unless this agreement is noticed at least to this point, we will fail to recognize the undeniable truth that the traditionalist rav and the "arch-heretic" are caught up in the same nexus of human tragedy and do their theology within the same existential framework, despite the differences in how it is done.

It is the how-ness of Soloveitchik's theology, rather than its content, that is altogether striking in contemporary Jewish thought. However, the content is not to be dismissed as unimportant, for, as presented here, it is an intellectually sophisticated and sensitively informed contemporary statement of a traditional position, commanding respectful attention. In it the twofold nature of man is examined and the kind of community emerging from each is described. It deals in detail with the tension between the two communities of man—the one, the "product of the creative, social gesture in which [man] engages whenever he thinks that collective living and acting will promote his interests"; the other, a "new kind of fellowship which one finds in the existential community" where "one lonely soul finds another soul tormented by loneliness and solitude yet unqualifiedly committed." The latter community is composed not of "two grammatical personae, the 'I' and the 'thou,'" but "comprises three participants: 'I, thou, and He;' the He in whom all being is rooted and in whom everything finds its rehabilitation and, consequently, redemption."

The major part of the paper provides an analysis of the covenantal faith-community created by man's surrender to the divine. In particular, Soloveitchik relates covenantal and natural man to halakhah, whose theological ramifications have loomed large in his thought and are laid down in his earlier paper, "Halakhic Man." 29 From this vantage point he examines the situation of contemporary man who has dismissed "the covenantal faith-community as something superfluous and obsolete." This man is not a follower of "the vulgar and illiterate atheism professed and propagated in the most ugly fashion by a natural-political community which denies the unique transcendental worth of the human personality." He is "Western man who is affiliated with organized religion and is a generous supporter of its institutions. He stands today in danger of losing his dialectic awareness and of abandoning completely

the metaphysical polarity implanted in man as a member of both the majestic [natural] and covenantal community.” Soloveitchik is concerned here, in a fashion reminiscent of Karl Barth, with a distinction between the religious community whose “prime purpose is the successful furtherance of the interests of man who values religion in terms of its usefulness to him and considers the religious act a medium through which he may increase his happiness,” and “a covenantal faith community.” It is from the man of culture that the man of faith takes his departure “to the abode of loneliness. He experiences not only ontological loneliness but also social isolation whenever he dares to deliver the genuine faith kerygma. This is both the destiny and the human historical situation of the man who keeps rendezvous with eternity, and who, in spite of everything, continues tenaciously to bring the message of faith to majestic man.” In light of Rubenstein’s question of Auschwitz, one must ask: Is this an indication of an as yet unspelled-out theological affirmation of the “sanctification of the Name” that, above and beyond all else, is the sign of the covenant community?

To turn to the matter of how Soloveitchik does theology, let us pick up the brief hint contained in the earlier reference to Karl Barth. When reading Soloveitchik, one is struck almost at once with the programmatic similarity of these two men. Essentially, they theologize out of man’s existential situation, from the biblical text. Soloveitchik’s paper is an extended comment on the double creation story in the early chapters of Genesis, in which the Adam of each story and the unfolding of each narrative are understood as types of man, his environment, his community. By rights, one should use the terms *drash* and *midrash* to describe the method. But these have become so overlaid with the suggestion of homiletics, rather than searching out of the text, that their use may lead to misunderstanding.

Soloveitchik reestablished for himself, in contemporary terms, the kind of biblical exegesis that is the foundation and framework of Maimonides’s *Guide of the Perplexed*. This should not suggest a similarity between his typology and the philosophical exegesis of Maimonides, but it points to the patent fact that both view the Bible as offering man in his existential plight the means of understanding his situation. What makes Soloveitchik’s development and use of this way of doing theology so fascinating is the peculiar circumstance that, since the 18th century, the very *halakhic* school of which he is considered the greatest contemporary master by those capable of judging the matter has all but ignored Scrip-
ture as a foundation for a constructive statement of Judaism—if, indeed, it concerned itself with the problem at all. Which seems to bring us closer to the solution of the anomaly suggested by Milton Himmelfarb in the Commentary symposium—the role of Samson Raphael Hirsch in contemporary traditionalist theology.

In the 19th century Hirsch began to do Jewish theology from the Bible. The reason may well have been the German Jewish community’s cultural environment, in which Protestant biblical scholarship played a significant role. But no matter what the reason, Hirsch doubtless discovered a way of doing theology that rested on an unmistakably Jewish foundation, one that was more readily available than the immense halakhic literature even to his strictly traditionalist community.

That Hirsch’s model was not Soloveitchik’s first choice seems evident from the latter’s basic work (p. 51). But the existence of a large audience capable of following the development of a theology that is derived from an existential confrontation of halakhic literature cannot be counted upon; thus, it may be conjectured, the acceptance of the biblical structure. Yet it must be noted that, particularly in the extensive footnotes to “The Lonely Man of Faith,” the personally more compatible mode of doing theology from the halakhic sources is always evident. Soloveitchik is recognized as the acknowledged master of many, if not all, of the younger traditional writers engaged in theological speculation. Why then the emphasis on Samson Raphael Hirsch and the omission of Soloveitchik? The answer is not hard to find. Soloveitchik’s literary production is so scanty that those outside his circle have to rely on hearsay for even a glimpse of his position. He has written no more than two or three essays, all comparatively recent, that can provide a basis for carrying out a program of theological speculation. On the other hand, there is a whole corpus of Hirsch’s writings that, though far from contemporary, still provides a source of biblically-oriented theological speculation.

Returning for a moment to the Barth-Soloveitchik parallel, one may say that the availability of the Kirchliche Dogmatik (“Church Dogmatics”) makes it easy to be a Barthian. The less than a handful of Soloveitchik’s writings make it difficult to be, or rather to appear as, a Soloveitchikian. Hence the Hirschian cast noted in the introduction to the Commentary symposium.

It is important to establish the real availability of Soloveitchik’s method for doing Jewish theology within the traditionalist camp. Is the community to which such theology is directed actually able to move with
seriousness from the biblical text, through a typological midrash, to a meaningful contemporary intellectual understanding of Judaism? To do so, it must be able to concur with Soloveitchik’s statement:

I have never been seriously troubled by the problem of the Biblical doctrine of creation vis-à-vis the scientific story of evolution at both the cosmic and the organic levels, nor have I been perturbed by the confrontation of the mechanistic interpretation of the human mind with the Biblical spiritual concept of man. I have not been perplexed by the impossibility of fitting the mystery of revelation into the framework of historical empiricism. Moreover, I have not even been troubled by the theories of Biblical criticism which contradict the very foundations upon which the sanctity and integrity of the Scriptures rest.80

Soloveitchik is in fact eschewing apologetic theology in favor of dogmatics, as Barth too had done and as Rosenzweig had recommended—a confessional theology of a very high order, intended to deal not with “theoretical opposition and dichotomies” but with “the practical role of the man of faith within modern society.” It is spoken to those who already stand within the covenantal faith community, and can be understood in its intellectual seriousness only by them. If Scripture is not, and cannot be, for his hearers what it is for him, then the former are engaged ultimately not with intellectual truth, but with literary gesture.

Finally, one must ask, how available is the method to others? Barthians do not write Church Dogmatics, they quarry it; for the demands of such a program are beyond the capabilities of all but the blessed few. Thus, failing a Synagogal Dogmatics from the pen of their mentor, Soloveitchik’s followers must quarry Hirsch. They are forced to report; they have not as yet done confessional theology.

QUESTION OF OMISSIONS

As indicated early in this paper, no attempt is made here to canvass in detail the entire field of Jewish religious speculation, leaving the discussion open to charges of discrimination and distortion. One such charge may be that there is a bias toward what may be called technical theology. Since it is evident that significant theological discussion is going on in areas formally remote from the concerns with which I have dealt, such criticism would be justifiable, and is only partially averted by the admission of the flaw. It is to be hoped that lack of attention here will not be confused with inattention. Of course, it is important to cite contributions by novelists and poets. Some authors doubtless are existentially

and essentially concerned with human problems in their theological dimension. But, in the words of the late Leo Schwarz, there also is the author who “treats of religion simply because it is an ingredient of life and not because he intends to theologize.” 31 It is then simply not fair to make theologians of all. While it may be foolish to ignore the insights they offer or the wisdom they present, it is more foolish to make them oracles from whose lips comes ultimate enlightenment.

Another area of omission is so-called Jewish-Christian dialogue (the misuse of the last word is particularly offensive to this writer’s “black orthodox” purist Buberian understanding of the term), the reason being that what is real behind the official and sometimes public-relations facade is not yet clear, although genuine possibilities do indeed exist.

The paper also ignores what, in this writer’s view, is the purely idiosyncratic, despite the silent warning that the portentous may thus have been overlooked. Yet, some attention must be given to the position espoused by Alvin Reines—apparently an idiosyncratic application of logical positivism, one not of the most recent variety, to the history of Judaism. It seems evident that this method was undertaken not for its own sake, but to provide an apologia for a process-philosophy interpretation of Judaism. Had Reines devoted himself to the latter rather than the former, he could have produced, as he may yet produce, a valuable statement of a possible contemporary position. What appears to have happened is that he has become far more interested in his “shocking” reading of the history of Judaism than in the constructive task. However, the reader may judge for himself. 32

Nor is attention given here to those few who still do theology in the classic or, to use a contemporary term, the “cool” mode. 33 This not to deprecate their work, but to suggest that, whatever the future of that mode, it does not reflect the present temper. And it is the present temper this paper seeks to limn.

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33 Reference is to the writings of Jacob Agus, among others.
All of which leads to some concluding remarks about the so-called New Theology, in whose ranks the writer is a supernumerary spear-carrier. Of it, the editor wrote in his introduction: "The reader will find in this book contemporary answers to the classic problems of Jewish theology." Some critics have chided us for not having lived up to that "promise," but that was not really the "promise." What we sought was a corporate turning of intention in our approach to Jewish theology. We had each decided within ourselves, after several seasons of extended intense discussion together, that we would have to move out in a new direction if our intellectual reflection upon the tradition was to have any meaning. *Rediscovering Judaism* therefore asserts that our self-conscious standing within the tradition is the crucial center of our reflection.

This has now been most clearly articulated by Emil Fackenheim, one of the contributors to the volume. In a recent book, and most particularly in the introductory essay, he articulates what he and the rest of us are trying to do. The importance of the statement lies in the fact that Fackenheim is a professional philosopher, bringing to the discussion the acumen and hard-headedness of his discipline. There is no confusion of categories, no hidden agenda. What the philosopher is called upon to do and the theologian seeks to accomplish are laid out without compromise. The theologian does not hide behind the philosopher's gown. He does his "thing" because it is in and of itself worth doing. He is grateful to the philosopher for his distinctions and his criticism; he accepts and uses both *in the place in which he, the theologian, stands*—and it is not the philosopher's place. Therefore, Fackenheim's essays sum up, in a significant way, the endeavor of the decade. But they do more than that; they confront the future. Fackenheim is totally aware of and sensitive to Rubenstein's double foci, Auschwitz and Israel. For him, they are the tasks for the theologian tomorrow. However, Fackenheim looks upon Rubenstein's solution as no solution at all. His own intent is to deal with the two *facts* in such a way as not to give Hitler his victory. Does he

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36 The emergence of the second focus, Israel, as a theological problem is apparent in the symposium "On Jewish Survival" in *CCAR Journal* (October 1968), most particularly in the slashing polemic of Steven Schwarzchild that, one hopes, will set off a burning discussion.
sense, as this writer has begun to, that Rubenstein unwittingly may be doing just that? At any rate, Fackenheim must now be seen as the theological mentor of the last and, we may hope, the next decade, for a significant segment of the nontraditionalist community.

What connects the writings of the men of the New Theology with those of a Rubenstein (who may indeed turn out to be purely idiosyncratic) and Rabbi Soloveitchik is a sense of urgency whose existential nature is not just one emerging from the general human condition, but from the particularly Jewish. Perhaps it is precisely this point that differentiates Jewish theological endeavor from the Christian, and makes conversation so difficult or easily misunderstood. The Christian theologian seems to begin his explanation from his being man, not Christ-man, Christian having no ontic status. The Jew begins with his being Jew-man, not just man, Jew having ontic status. Existentially, it is reflection upon the what-ness and how-ness of being Jew that has set in motion the otherwise diverse programs and positions we have discussed.

Put yet another way, it may be said that the dominant tone of this decade’s Jewish doing of theology has been confessional. This clearly emerges from Fackenheim’s response to the recent and, I suspect, ephemeral trend in American Protestant theology, gathered under the unhelpful labels “Death of God” or “World Come of Age”:

The Jew is singled out for special contradictions. In America he enjoys a freedom and security unparalleled in his history; yet he is but twenty years separated from the greatest and as yet uncomprehended Jewish catastrophe. His trust and joy in the modern-secular world cannot but coexist with radical distrust and profound sorrow. Authentic Jewish religious witness in this age must both face up to Auschwitz and yet refuse a despair of this world which, wholly contrary to Judaism, would hand still another victory to the forces of radical evil. Insofar as he is committed to Jewish survival, the Jew has already taken a stand against these forces. But survival-for-survival’s sake is an inadequate stand. The Jew can go beyond it only if he can reopen the quest of Jeremiah and Job, who for all their agony refused to despair either of God or the world.

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The intent of this paper was to examine what “this writer considers to have been the dominant themes, the crucial tensions, the significant developments of the decade’s thought.” A re-examination of the scene from that vantage leads to the conviction that the problem raised by Rubenstein, confronted by Fackenheim, and explored by the novelist

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Elie Wiesel with utmost sensibility and sensitivity—the *Hurban*—is the inescapable task of Jewish theology. Perhaps, as Fackenheim argues, we are not ready to deal with it; but here it is, our *memento mori*, the skeleton at our feast of life, whose sardonic smile warns: "Ignore me at your peril."
MAX WEINREICH (1894–1969): THE SCHOLARSHIP OF YIDDISH

by LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ

Max Weinreich died on January 29, 1969, and his death brought to a sad close the era of East European Jewish scholarship, uniquely associated with Yiddish, the language of East European Jews. A founder of the Yiddish Scientific Institute—YIVO (now called YIVO Institute for Jewish Research), Weinreich was its chief architect, animating spirit, and standardbearer. As YIVO’s head, first in Poland and then in America, he, more than any other man or institution, succeeded in gaining for Yiddish prestige and status it had never before enjoyed.

A distinguished linguist in the international community of linguists, he did not choose the prestigious academic career that his professors at the University of St. Petersburg had predicted for him, their most outstanding student. Instead he chose to associate himself with Yiddish. It became his life’s goal to fashion from this folk language a refined and supple instrument, a tongue fit for learned discourse, and to win prestige for it among Jews and non-Jews. This he achieved.

Early Life

His life story reflects the history of upheaval and change of the age into which he was thrust. Max Weinreich was born April 22, 1894, into a middle-class merchant family in Goldingen (now Kuldiga), Latvia, a town of ten thousand, a quarter of them Jews. Like most Jews influenced by the prevailing German culture of that region, the former Baltic duchy of Courland, his family were lukewarm in religious observances and preferred German to Yiddish. His first school was a heder, though a somewhat secularized one. His parents, ambitious for their precocious youngest of ten, enrolled him, at the age of nine, in a gymnasium (high school), attended mostly by children of Baltic German nobility and Latvian gentry. In 1908, after five years in this upper-class gymnasium, with a bare handful of Jewish pupils, he withdrew because of its anti-
semitism. He continued his studies in a private Jewish gymnasium in Dvinsk (now Daugavpils), Latvia. When he was about twelve, he became friends with a boy who was a member of the Kleyner Bund (Junior Jewish Socialist Bund). That friendship was to affect the future course of his life. Perhaps the repressive and intolerant atmosphere in the gymnasium made him especially receptive to the warm friendship of a lower-class Jewish child. Perhaps it was the spirit of the times.

Tsarist Russia was in revolutionary ferment and the great wave of demonstrations and strikes of 1905 that swept Russia reached the Baltic cities and towns. Goldingen, too, witnessed a stormy demonstration in January 1905 in which the Bund took a leading role. The exhilaration of the revolution and its consequent brutal suppression affected the young Weinreich and drew him into the Junior Bund. A brilliant child, fluent in Russian and German, he began now to learn from his young comrades, besides revolution and conspiratorial techniques, Yiddish too, the language of the common people. At thirteen he began his journalistic career as correspondent for a Bundist Yiddish daily in Vilna. At fifteen, his first Yiddish translations of European literature were published and at sixteen his first articles on Yiddish.

Distinctly and distinctively Max Weinreich's identity began to be shaped in his youth. The scope of his interests was to grow and expand, his ideas to mature and deepen. Politics—the Bund, that is—brought him to Yiddish, but Yiddish eventually displaced politics in his scale of values. At eighteen Weinreich entered the University of St. Petersburg, where his scholastic brilliance made him something of a cynosure. Yet he shared his passion for linguistics with politics. The spirit of revolution was alive at the university: Weinreich joined a Bundist student circle and wrote for Bundist publications. After the Bolshevik revolution of November 1917, he left St. Petersburg and moved to Vilna, where he edited a Bundist daily. When the war was over, Weinreich went to Germany to continue his studies. In 1923 he received his doctorate from the University of Marburg for a dissertation on the history of Yiddish linguistic studies. He returned to Vilna, where he had married Regina Szabad, of a distinguished Jewish family.

In Vilna

In 1923 some 56,000 Jews lived in Vilna, about one third of the city's population. Despite the havoc of World War I, the flight and death of thousands of Jews, the succession of governments, and finally the cap-
ture and forcible incorporation of the ancient capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into the new republic of Poland, the Jewish community in Vilna remained intensely and vibrantly Jewish, as it had always been. Napoleon, it is said, dubbed Vilna "the Jerusalem of Lithuania" (though Weinreich thought the epithet had originated in the seventeenth century). Vilna was the historic citadel of rabbinic Judaism, the seat of Rabbi Elijah, the Vilna Gaon; for 150 years the home of the famous Romm press, printers and publishers of the Talmud and other rabbinic and secular tomes. But Vilna was also a center of Jewish secularity, a stronghold of the Haskalah and Hebrew revival. It was the birthplace of the Jewish labor movement and it early became a metropolis for Yiddish and its literature, press, theater, and school system.

In this Vilna Max Weinreich began his adulthood. He taught Yiddish language and literature at the Yiddish Teachers Seminary, was an editor of Vilna's Yiddish daily Der Tog and a correspondent of the New York Jewish Daily Forward (to which he remained a regular contributor till his last years). He was active in educational and communal institutions.

In 1924 he received from Nahum Shtif, a Yiddish linguist then living in Berlin, a pamphlet proposing the establishment of a Yiddish academy. Such an academy would be a center for research and study in Yiddish linguistics and literature, Jewish history, social studies and pedagogy; it could also serve as the authority for standardizing Yiddish—usage, grammar, spelling. A Yiddish academy, Shtif hoped, through the Yiddish school system, Yiddish press, and other cultural institutions whose medium was Yiddish, could systematically diffuse the new scholarship being produced in Yiddish. The academy would thus improve the quality of Jewish cultural life and enlarge the community of educated Yiddish-speaking Jews. These, in turn, would become consumers of the academy's high scholarship and culture.

Ideas for Jewish intellectual renewal were widespread in Berlin, then a haven for Jewish writers, scholars, and journalists who had fled Russia and Poland. But Berlin could not fulfill Shtif's plan. Vilna could—and did—because of Max Weinreich's initiative, determination, and passion. Yiddish was a socio-political reality in Vilna and Weinreich held strategic positions, on the Yiddish Teachers' Seminary faculty and as chairman of Vilna's Central Jewish Education Committee. He succeeded in winning community support for a Yiddish research institute. In 1925 YIVO was established, organized in four research sections: 1) Yiddish linguis-
tics, literature and folklore; 2) history; 3) economics and statistics; and 4) psychology and education.

Concept of Jewish Scholarship

YIVO’s largest single asset was Weinreich’s will power—his strong-mindedness and his capacity to work for what he believed. That was a psychological, perhaps even a metabolic, characteristic. Determination, he held, could move worlds, could make something out of nothing. He used his will power to realize a vision of scholarship in the service of the Jewish people. His youthful passion for politics was replaced, as he grew older, with a passion for scholarship. He envisaged the YIVO as a vital center that would knit the work of individual scholars together with the needs of the Jewish community. Weinreich’s concept of scholarship to clarify the Jewish community’s socio-cultural needs and serve them inaugurated a new phase in modern Jewish scholarship.

For over a hundred years secular Jewish scholarship had been shaped by the apologetic concepts underlying the Wissenschaft des Judentums. When Leopold Zunz and his friends founded the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden in 1819 to cultivate and disseminate knowledge of Judaism and Jewish culture with contemporary methods of scholarship, they wanted to demonstrate that the cultural level of the Jews was not inferior to that of Germans. That would prove that Jews deserved to be emancipated. Scholarship was a means to a political and social end. These scholars were not convinced of the viability of Jewish existence or of Jewish culture: most of the Verein’s members abandoned Judaism within a few years. Only Zunz retained his commitment to Jewish scholarship as a way to preserve the past of a culture—which he doubted had a future.

In the mid-nineteenth century Wissenschaft des Judentums was re-organized and continued under a variety of auspices into the beginning of the twentieth century. Though Jewish scholars today are less likely than those of the immediately preceding generations to belittle its accomplishments, many of the criticisms leveled at Wissenschaft des Judentums for the narrowness of its conceptualization and scope were justified. It focused on Judaism, rather than the flesh-and-blood reality of the Jewish people, and its subject matter was usually antiquarian. Its orientation remained basically apologetic, in response to the so-called “scientific” antisemitism of Treitschke, Rohling, and LaGarde, and to the biblical scholarship of Wellhausen and his disciples. Furthermore,
East European Jews, who then constituted two thirds of the world Jewish population, seldom figured in the elitist scholarship of Wissenschaft des Judentums, or, if they did, it was as targets of contempt and derogation.

The first East European Jewish scholarly group came into being in 1891 when young Jewish lawyers in St. Petersburg, under the influence of Simon Dubnow's epoch-making booklet *On Studying the History of the Russian Jews and Establishing a Russian Jewish Historical Society*, formed the Jewish Historical Ethnographic Commission. Like the institutions of Wissenschaft des Judentums, the Commission was elitist, its subject matter somewhat antiquarian, and its approach apologetic. Jewish historical societies were then being formed in Europe and the United States largely for apologetic purposes—to demonstrate the antiquity of Jewish settlement in those countries and testify to Jewish loyalty and patriotism.

If Wissenschaft des Judentums began and long continued as an instrument to bring German Jews political emancipation, Weinreich conceived the YIVO as the instrument to bring cultural emancipation to Yiddish-speaking Jews. On YIVO's tenth anniversary he said:

> Our contribution in the struggle of the common Jewish people for their cultural emancipation can be expressed on one foot, in a few numbered sentences: We want to fathom Jewish life with the methods of modern scholarship and, further, whatever modern scholarship brings to light, we want to bring back to the Jewish masses.

"Jewish life" means all Jewish life, its present as well as its past. This must be stressed, for it is the mark distinguishing our institution from those Judaistic institutes—with all due respect to them—which the German Jewish scholars started putting up and which their followers in other countries copied. For us the present is not less important than the past; for us the distant past is not rated more highly than the recent past; for us all study of the past is mainly a means of better understanding the present. The YIVO investigates all aspects of Jewish life—not only rabbis, scholars and writers, but also the social life of the common people; not only economic life, but also the language, the literature, the mind and spirit of the Jews.

Max Weinreich was a twentieth-century enlightener, a neo-maskil. He wanted to improve and uplift the East European Jewish community. He proposed to do this through research and study, by applying Western methods of critical scholarship to East European Jewish history, Yiddish language, literature, and culture. Research and study were to be of the highest scholarly quality, but were also to serve the intellectual needs of Jews, increase their self-understanding, give them intellectual fortifica-
tion against antisemitism and self-depreciation, and help them develop a healthy sense of self-esteem.

The most concrete way to do this was to use scholarship to raise the social and intellectual prestige of Yiddish and, consequently, of its speakers. On one of his trips abroad, Weinreich noted that in the ship's first-class accommodations, despite the many Jewish travellers, Yiddish was not seen or heard. In second class, he saw Yiddish signs and heard Yiddish spoken aloud. That, for him, symbolized the status of Yiddish: it was recognized only as second-class. Weinreich wanted Yiddish to be first-class and he intended to do that by making Yiddish the language of cultivated men, a medium for discourse on the most abstruse, complex, and subtle subjects in all disciplines.

The standardization of Yiddish, with normative usage, grammar, and spelling, was one of his ambitions. Without an authoritative academy to set standards and without a scholarly tradition in secular Jewish matters, Yiddish spelling had been subject to the arbitrariness of its users. Indeed, the Jewish community's physical and political dispersal discouraged uniform usage. After years of consultations with scholars, writers, journalists, and teachers throughout Europe and in the United States, the YIVO adopted a set of orthographic rules in 1936. These, somewhat modified after a consultative conference with the Central Yiddish School Organization in Poland (Cysho), were published early in 1937 and instituted in all YIVO and Cysho publications and taught in all Cysho schools. Weinreich hoped that Jewish writers and publishers would voluntarily submit to the discipline of these rules and accept YIVO's authority. Until his last days he was active in this effort.

Diversity

He was a true polymath, and no field of scholarship was alien to him—above all, languages and linguistics. He wrote on erudite, often recondite, subjects, which only a handful of scholars could appreciate. A dedicated practitioner of high scholarship, he nevertheless also popularized. He translated many literary and scholarly works into Yiddish. He edited an immense number of works about linguistics, language, and style; on the history of literature, on folklore, on history and social psychology. His productivity and breadth of interest are reflected in the bibliography of his writings: 377 items, including books, pamphlets, studies, book
reviews, newspaper articles, and translations.* Before he was forty, he had published several books on Yiddish grammar and orthography; had edited three volumes of linguistic studies published by YIVO, and was an editor of *YIVO-Bleter*, a bimonthly scholarly journal that the YIVO initiated in 1931.

In 1932 Weinreich left Vilna for Yale University, where he spent two years as a Rockefeller Foundation fellow at the International Seminar on the Impact of Culture on Personality. At a time of life when most men settle into a comfortable routine or move ahead in predefined paths, Max Weinreich turned his innovative energy in a new direction. In pursuit of new knowledge, he went to Vienna in 1934, to study with the psychoanalyst Dr. Sigmund Bernfeld, a pupil and disciple of Freud. Psychoanalysis offered dazzling possibilities for studying the impact of culture on personality and for expanding the therapeutic function of research.

At Weinreich's initiative the YIVO gathered, through competitions, over 300 autobiographies written by young Jews. These provided the raw data for his path-breaking book, *Der veg tsu undzer yugnt* ["The Way to Our Youth: Elements, Methods, and Problems of Jewish Youth Research"] (Vilna: YIVO, 1935). In this work Weinreich applied the advanced methodologies of diverse disciplines—psychoanalysis, social psychology, anthropology, statistics—to illuminate the problems of Jewish youth growing up in a society that legitimated antisemitism. It was especially after this time that Weinreich, when speaking of the social uses of research for the Jewish community, also stressed this psychological component: Jews needed research and study to help them learn self-esteem, to help heal the socio-psychological wounds inflicted by society on personality, to create whole individuals and whole Jews.

In 1935 the YIVO inaugurated its research-training program (*aspiran-tur*), to train Jewish researchers and scholars. Weinreich believed that, though the universities should provide the basic academic training that an aspiring researcher required, only a Jewish institution, steeped in Jewish learning, could provide the right training for Jewish studies. In Poland, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Jews were subjected to a *numerus clausus* in the universities. Even those admitted had little opportunity for advanced Jewish studies. At the University of Warsaw, Jewish

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students, if they wished, could study ancient Jewish history and Hebrew with Professor Moses Schorr or modern Jewish history with Professor Maier Balaban. The Institute of Judaic Studies in Warsaw, founded by Professor Schorr, also provided facilities for Jewish scholarship. Nevertheless, Weinreich's plan for aspirantur was unique. He was not satisfied only to train university graduates for Jewish research by equipping them with a critical approach and methodological tools, but he wanted to imbue them with a sense of the social purpose of scholarship. Furthermore, in the aspirantur young scholars could learn from each other, developing an interdisciplinary outlook and overview, beyond the confines of their own specialization.

The aspirantur existed for only three years in Poland. In America, Weinreich again turned his attention to a center for training Jewish scholars. His last great institutional project was the YIVO Center for Advanced Jewish Studies, still in the planning stage.

In New York

In the summer of 1939 Weinreich and his older son Uriel left Vilna to attend the International Conference of Linguistics in Brussels. The outbreak of the war prevented their return home. Early in 1940 they arrived in New York and were shortly thereafter joined by the rest of the family.

Weinreich undertook to continue in New York what he had begun in Vilna, despite the gloomy prognosis about America's inhospitality to foreign tongues and foreign-language cultures. At the annual YIVO conference in 1941, he told his American audience about the magic of will power. Inertia alone did not account for the success of Yiddish in Poland. Yiddish there had benefited from propulsion and thrust: "The question is not one of numbers or place. The question is: Do we have enough vitality, enough resistance?" Two years later, in the midst of the greatest catastrophe the Jews ever endured—though its full dimensions were yet unknown—he returned to this theme: "All that is required is will power. The responsibility of every communal institution is to strengthen the will of its people." The responsibility to survive became a moral one: "We have an obligation to ourselves, an obligation to our overseas brothers and sisters in the grip of the hangman, an obligation for the entire future of the Jewish people."

If the fate of the Jews under German occupation obsessed him, the role that German scholars and German scholarship played in the
methodical murder of six million Jews tormented him. For him, scholarship had been an instrument for Jewish survival, but the Germans had turned it into a tool for Jewish death. This perversion of scholarship led him to write *Hitler's Professors* (New York: YIVO, 1946), a report on the part of German scholarship in Germany's crimes against the Jewish people—still another of his innovative accomplishments.

In the last two decades of his life Weinreich worked on his *History of the Yiddish Language*, a monumental work that he had virtually completed just before his death. Largely linguistic—i.e., employing the methodology of the science of language—Weinreich's history is no narrow specialist's book. He used linguistics to illuminate the history of Ashkenazi Jewry, to illustrate the rise and flowering of Ashkenazi Jewish culture, and to explore the socio-cultural relations between Jews and non-Jews. His wide-ranging scholarship and interdisciplinary approach, which had become hallmarks of his craft, found their consummation in this massive work, his monument to Ashkenazi Jewry. Ashkenaz, in Weinreich's definition, was the Jewish community, with its language, literature, and culture, which was born some 1,100 years ago in the Middle Rhine-Moselle territory and, in the course of centuries, slowly moved eastward. Until 1500 its metropolises were in Central Europe: Mayence, Worms, Ratisbon, Prague. Thereafter Ashkenaz shifted to Eastern Europe: Cracow, Lublin, Mezbizh, Vilna, and Warsaw. Consequently, as Weinreich put it, Ashkenaz became "freed of its territorial connotations; geography, as it were, has been transformed into history." The Yiddish language was the most striking result of the encounters between Jewish culture and the coterritorial non-Jewish cultures in the Ashkenazi community's eastward migration.

Yiddish, Weinreich writes, came into being as the linguistic vehicle of a community set apart from the outside world by its religion:

The principal cultural determinant in the history of Yiddish is the fact that Ashkenazic Jewry came into existence as a community defined by *yi'dishkayt* [Judaism]. On the basis of evidence uncovered it can be firmly stated that *yi'dishkayt* shaped not only the conceptual world of the Ashkenazic community but its language as well. Moreover, although Yiddish never was a language of religious expression only and, in recent centuries, in growing measure has become a medium of "secular" endeavors, too, the master pattern of Yiddish as the language of a community defined by *yi'dishkayt* has not changed.*

Ashkenazi culture rested on Hebrew-Yiddish bilingualism, but not on the dichotomy sacred/profane. Weinreich rectified the popular misconception that relegated to Yiddish merely the expression of secular Jewish life. Not so, Weinreich proved abundantly, reclaiming for Yiddish a central place in traditional Jewish culture. Historically, the difference developed between Hebrew as the language of recording and Yiddish as the vernacular. In time, however, Yiddish too became the language of recording, even for the sacred system. Witness *Tsene Urene*, the "women's Bible," and the Yiddish prayer books designed for women and men unlearned in Hebrew.

In "Ashkenaz: The Era of Yiddish in Jewish History," a paper read at a YIVO conference in 1951, Weinreich concluded:

In the culture and language of Ashkenaz are wonderful transcendental values from both a Jewish and universal viewpoint. It would be a cultural catastrophe for our children and children's children if these values would vanish with the blood and ashes of the Jewish holocaust in the Second World War.

Max Weinreich preserved Yiddish for his children and children's children and transmitted it to them as a living tongue. His son Uriel turned his hopes and dreams into reality. He grew up an eminent linguist, whose chosen field was Yiddish and whose scholarship brought distinction to the name of Weinreich and to the study of Yiddish. But in March 1967, Uriel, at the age of 40, died of a cruel disease. Uriel left, besides his other work, a lasting monument to Yiddish, *The Modern English-Yiddish Yiddish-English Dictionary*. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.

In New York Max Weinreich concluded what he had begun in Vilna. He found the YIVO in New York housed on the lower East Side, alongside the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, small and shabby, surviving in an immigrant milieu. He left the YIVO housed on upper Fifth Avenue, in a former Vanderbilt mansion, its name and influence extending beyond the immigrant Jewish community, known in the academic world as an institution of high repute for its scholarship and publications. It had been his goal to elevate Yiddish intellectually and socially. He lived to see that goal fulfilled. To how many men is such grace given?