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NUMBER 1

AUTUMN
1983

MANNA

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המרכז ליהדות
במאנור האוס

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MANNA is the Journal of the Manor House Centre for Judaism and the Manor House Society.

It is published quarterly in October, January, April and July.

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Subscription rate: £4.50 p.a. (four issues) including postage anywhere in the U.K.

MANNA 2 (January 1984) will include:-

As Others See Us – Kenneth Cracknell
Pinto-Duschinsky on The Bar Kokhba Syndrome

Israel and the Left – Valerie Cocks

Jews and Minorities – Edie Friedman
Should my child go to a Jewish Day School – Tony Bayfield

Wendy Greengross carves up kosher butchers

Why people honour synagogues by their absence

If you wish to join in any debate begun in these columns, letters to the editor will indeed be most welcome.

EDITORIAL . . .

This new *Manna* is as urgently needed in Anglo-Jewry today as was its namesake in the desert more than 3,000 years ago.

Anglo-Jewry is entering a new phase of history. And so far few seem to have noticed. A new generation is taking command of its destiny. Its members face new problems of identity, and many are rethinking their attitudes to Israel. Many more are launching a fresh, personal attack on the ancient problems posed by Jewish practice and Jewish belief.

Some say that on the threshold of this new epoch, the Anglo-Jewish community is declining and divided. Certainly we are convinced that the future of Anglo-Jewry is not to be found down a one-way system. In the acceptance of Jewish pluralism lies its only hope.

To air its new doubts, state its new certainties and ancient commitments, Anglo-Jewry today requires a new platform. *Manna* is that platform. As the small print says, it is the journal of the Manor House Centre for Judaism. As such it has just one creed – that all party lines must be crossed and transcended. The religious and the secular, the radical and the conservative, the orthodox and liberal – all shall have a place within these columns.

The only intolerance we shall show will be of intolerance itself. So Jews of all religious commitment and none will grace these columns, as indeed they already grace our editorial board.

Manna is a declaration of war against one-eyed vision – an assertion that the new generation of

Jews in Britain can see far, wide and clear, can choose and discriminate. Like most of them, we shall have no truck with the attitude that anyone more observant is a fanatical fool, or anyone less “frumm” is scarcely Jewish. We consider that lamentable frame of mind to be a greater threat to Jewish survival than acculturation.

Finally, *Manna* will not merely be a vehicle for the big names. Our columns will be open to all views that are worth sharing, and to everyone who can put pen to paper or finger to typewriter – of whatever renown or blissful anonymity.

Above all, *Manna* aims to sustain Anglo-Jewry with conviction and commitment as it marches towards the 21st century.

WHY THIS RABBI'S PLACE IS ON THE HUSTINGS

by Julia Neuberger

THE PRECEDENTS ARE NOT ALTOGETHER prepossessing – Ayatollah Khomeini, the Reverend Ian Paisley, Rabbi Meir Kahane . . . to name but a few whose example I would prefer not to follow. And yet despite these figures and others too countless to list, there are many people now involved as professional religious leaders (and I use that term in order to blur the distinction between ordained priests, teachers and pastoral ministers) who have become politically active.

Indeed, the Archbishop of Canterbury voted in the election on 9th June, despite the convention that members of the House of Lords are disenfranchised. He claimed that this applied only to the lords temporal, and cast his vote, which caused minor stirrings of disquiet. The Bishop of Derby – on what authority we do not know – claimed that it would



never happen again. But it was an important gesture – the Primate of All England felt sufficiently strongly that he wanted to cast his vote in a general election because it mattered, he wanted to have his say . . . This has to be seen together with the fight by C. of E. clergy against a legal ban on their standing for Parliament. Is it true, one asks, that the prohibition exists because of the already-considerable political influence of the bishops in the House of Lords? Or is it “no mixing of Church and State”, and “the clergy should keep out of politics” – and “they should have their minds on higher things” – is *that* set of ideas really at the root of the ban? If so, is there anything “higher” than politics?

I say this because all these shape to a quite extraordinary extent people’s reaction to my own involvement in party politics. I did not get such a reaction, curiously, when I was involved in the pressure groups – Age Concern, Child Poverty Action Group and Shelter. One wonders whether there is anything inherently different in fighting for particular groups rather than for a political party. It seems to be considered “morally” far more acceptable, however, to be concerned for the old, the homeless, the very poor and the disadvantaged than to be worried by the political system that renders such disadvantages possible. I have had quoted to me again and again the sentence “The poor shall never cease from the earth” as a justification for Jews not wanting to change things. For those who use that verse in that way, failing to see its moral implications, there is no value in quoting in return the righteous indignation of Amos or the passionate denial of empty ritual by Isaiah – they would not understand.

What then motivated me to go back once again into party politics after such a long break? (I was active in the Labour Party at University.) It is hard to describe a group of disparate feelings, but I had and have a sense of urgency – that the world mood has changed over my adult lifetime from concern for social problems – however inadequately expressed – to a fashionable “hardness” and “toughness”. The new men are self-made, pulled up by their bootstraps, “get-on-your-bike” men. There is nothing wrong with that provided that it is understood that not everyone can manage these feats, that through no fault of their own some people are handicapped and disadvantaged, that there will always be the inadequate who cannot cope although ostensibly they have the same facilities as the rest of us. The new-found “realism”, the “Victorian values”, the fashion for thinkers to be of the Right rather than

the moderate Left, the acceptability of writers, journalists and intellectuals describing themselves as neo-fascists – all of these are frightening signs of a society that lacks tolerance and compassion in the same way as Amos’s Israel did.

There are particular points of government policy which offend me, of course. But much more offensive is the attitude underlying it all – help *only* for the deserving poor (don’t ask what happens to the dependents of the undeserving), pride in frugality, the gradual, slow starving of the higher education system, so that there will be little active and exciting intellectual life that could, just possibly, provide some interest for those without work.

Seeing this and sensing it, seeing the political system sharply divided so that the moderate Left was tested out by whether it would consent to come out of the EEC, whether it would back the hard Left in the constituencies on total nationalisation of everything and on vast public expenditure by local authorities whilst the moderate Right, the Tory “wets”, have the greatest difficulty in being selected to fight a seat unless they are “hangers and floggers”, I felt a strange disquiet. What should politics be about, after all? It cannot be *only* about slogans – toughness for the Tories, independence and self-help, whilst for Labour it is about nationalisation and the politics of envy. Politics is about the best way to govern our country, what values the government should hold, how most successfully to create a society which is contented and fulfilled, supporting its members in difficult times and encouraging them to help others beyond narrow boundaries. That is what politics should be about. Religion, or rather Judaism since it is possible to argue that Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism do not always share this emphasis, is at least partly a structure by which to organise society. It sets values, ethical and moral and we accept and apply them to every aspect of our lives – because they are part of Jewish teaching. The legal backbone of Judaism gives one an insight into the need for law, and perhaps more of a sense than adherents of other religions might feel, that effective changes can only come about through a change in the law.

I would not claim that Judaism has made me a Social Democrat. Indeed, sociologists and psychologists would probably argue that there is something about me which makes me both a Liberal Jewish sort of person and a Social Democrat sort of person. The two are not unconnected as expressions of my beliefs,

but one is not a precondition of the other. Judaism does, however, lead me to hold particular views which are generally an important part of Social Democrat policy. A good example of this is the Bill of Rights – where the strong Jewish legal tradition on the protection of disadvantaged groups (widows, orphans, etc.) makes the introduction into the British constitution of a Bill of Rights protecting various minority groups seem almost prophetic. People in other political parties and those who are members of none find the idea appealing, but it is central to Social Democrat ideas on constitutional reform, and my Judaism certainly leads me to great enthusiasm for it. There are other examples, too, such as the redistributive tax-credit proposals which particularly help families with children, and the strengthening of the present race relations legislation to encourage fair employment practice to a much greater extent. Both seem utterly in accordance with Judaism, though others may see other ways of reaching the same objectives.

Clearly I could not preach Social Democracy from the pulpit. It would be an abuse of position. Occasionally I talk about “political” issues although not usually on a “party” line. What is legitimate is to make the congregation more politically aware, to realise that they must as individuals take an interest in politics, and to encourage them to think about the issues. So some of my sermons have the ring of political speeches, and all my political speeches sound like sermons. The constituency party in its everyday running is not very different from the congregation, and responds in a similar way. For there are similarities between a mixed group united for political reasons and an equally mixed group united for religious reasons: they have a common cause, but there are the inevitable personality clashes.

Combining the two has not been difficult – the South London Liberal Synagogue has a fair number of SDP members who helped in the election campaign. The Wandsworth SDP has a few Jews who have promised to join the synagogue. The comments will continue, no doubt, but the acceptance will grow, so that by next time no one in the congregation will turn a hair – and perhaps by that time I will seem less of a political freak, as an SDP rabbi and female to boot.

Julia Neuberger, Rabbi of the South London Liberal Synagogue, fought Tooting for the SDP at the general election. Graduated in Hebrew and Assyriology at Cambridge. In 1977 became second woman to be ordained by Leo Baeck College. Now chairman of ULPS Rabbinic Conference. Married to civil servant, mother of two children.

Going Public about Private Joy and Grief

by Wendy Greengross

WHEN I WAS AT SCHOOL, I WAS told that before I spoke, I must ask myself: "Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?" and if my remarks failed to meet all of these criteria, I should stay silent.

This may have been a universal truth that my school really wanted me to learn, or it may have been a ploy to keep me quiet or fairly quiet during school hours. But I have mused on the saw and considered the wisdom of it from time to time and often wondered whether to follow this rather Victorian admonition.

The advice again comes to mind as I read "Hatched, Matched and Despatched" announcements. Are they really true, are they really kind, are they absolutely necessary? Do the devoted and adoring grandchildren or business associates really mean it when they say about the newly departed: "Always in our thoughts. We will never forget you"?

I know two things about a horse, as the saying goes, and I also know two things about grandchildren. One of them is that they forget surprisingly quickly; or the things they do remember may be embarrassing in their accuracy, and may well cause parents to feel that there are some things best forgotten. A five-year-old recently said, "I cried when Grandpa left, but not for long". As for business associates, "We will never forget you" seems to indicate more sinister memories that may well be etched for ever in their minds, as they wonder what happened to the stock or the bank balance, or why there were quite so many trips abroad.

It is also unfortunately true that those who are "never to be forgotten", after death, are often the same ones who seem to be the most forgotten when they were alive. They may have been cantankerous, difficult and demanding in their later years, and "sometimes in our thoughts" may have been a more accurate assessment for those who cared for them.

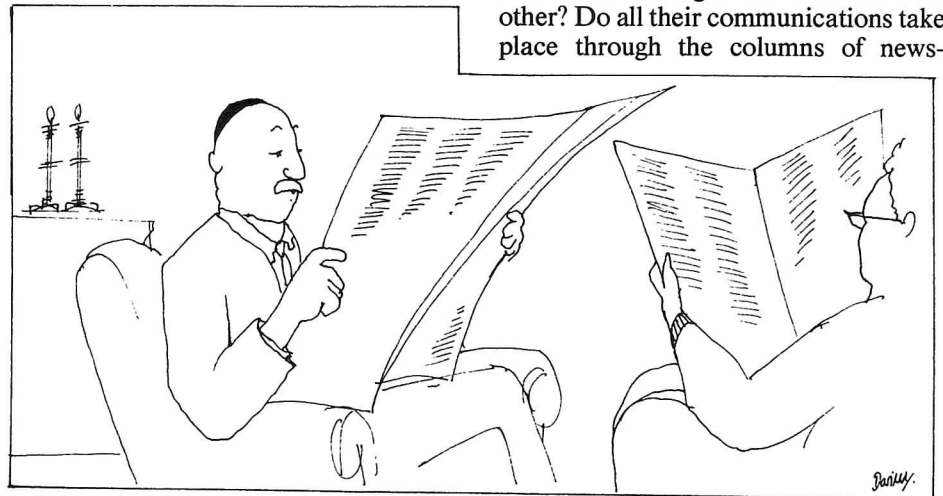
And what about tombstones that sometimes seem to praise the living rather than the dead. I recently found one which had the name of the surviving spouse duly described as "ever loving and devoted" writ in letters twice the size of those given to the name of the deceased. Perhaps more thought should also be given to the correct inscription. If only one adjective is to be used, is

"deeply mourned" the most appropriate?

I recently became embroiled in a seemingly insoluble argument as the parents of a girl in her twenties argued, remonstrated and pleaded, using every fair and foul trick in the book, to try to persuade her not to get engaged to the young man of her choice. He was Jewish, but either too short or too tall, too fat or too thin, too rich or too poor, certainly, too unsuitable to marry into *their* family. Three weeks later, I read that these same parents were "delighted" to announce their daughter's engagement. A change of heart, or just a save of face, and what sort of pressures did they feel to force them to emphasise their "delight", rather than make a straightforward announcement? And was that announcement kind and true and necessary?

daughter is actually engaged to someone Jewish, and the sombre tones of the marriage announcement. Marriages merely take place, sometimes they are solemnised, certainly they don't seem to be publicly accompanied by little squeals of joy. But then sometimes these announcements are testimony to the survival of marriage as an institution rather than as permanence in individual cases. Perhaps they are only for information. But if information is the purpose, why aren't divorces or separations also publicly announced?

I also find it difficult to understand the message behind: "The children of Mr. and Mrs. X wish their parents a happy anniversary," or "Mrs. Y wishes to thank her beloved daughters for their kindness in washing up last Friday night". Don't these loving relatives talk to each other? Do all their communications take place through the columns of news-



"Sadie, it says here our daughter's had a baby..."

It is practice rather than policy that dictates engagements are announced rather than marriages. But is it often a blessing in disguise, for the two sets of parents who manage initially to present a joint joyful front to the world, rarely have the same happy relationship after weathering the months of engagement and the trauma of where the young couple should live and what financial help they should get from each side. The final two obstacles which test the suitability of any parents to be in-laws are the number of invitations, and biggest, and worst of all, the seating plan.

This may account for the difference between the ecstatic tone of parents announcing to the world that a son or

papers? Perhaps they are of the ilk who sit and wait until their relatives go out, and then "pop" a note through the door saying, "We called but you weren't in". And why on earth does this message make us so defensive? I find myself apologising on the phone for being out when they called, explaining that I was working, or healing the sick, or doing other good works. Why is it that some people have the gift of making you feel guilty – so sorry I was out, please forgive me, I won't do it again.

But back to the social and personal, and to the thanks given so publicly. There are other explanations. It could be that the children of Mr. and Mrs. X want the world to know that it is their parents'

anniversary. If so, why not say so. It could also be that the children of Mr. and Mrs. X carry such a burden of guilt that they have to go to abnormal lengths to try to assuage the pain. Or it may be that Mr. and Mrs. X put the notice in the paper themselves to shame their children into some semblance of caring. And as for the public thanks for the washing up or sandwich cutting, these are sometimes made by those relatives who can't open their mouths without putting their foot in it. They are often the ones whose first sentence, giving thanks for help, is followed by a second one starting: "But you needn't have broken my favourite milk jug," or "But you shouldn't have left the tea cloths in the dog basket".

Little wonder that these people find newspaper communications far safer.

And what about the public thanks to the rabbi for attending the Shiva or the Wedding or the Barmitzvah? And what do we think about all the rabbis who don't get publicly thanked for doing their job? And then I ask myself, is the rabbi who is particularly sensitive or caring doing *more* than his job and deserving of special mention? And is it extra loving for a new father to thank his wife in the personal column for the birth of their new son? Whatever happened to old-fashioned pillow talk?

Thanks for condolences are another matter. When I have been on the receiving end, I've been very grateful to all the people who have managed to find time and words to express sympathy, and I have always wanted to write to each personally to say "Thank you". I often don't manage this and have had to send printed cards, usually with some personal message. On the other hand, I don't want or expect a reply to the letters of condolence that I write. If I get a reply, I am pleased.

But I don't look in the personal columns of newspapers to see if my letters were appreciated, any more than I look there for New Year's greetings from relatives or friends. I sometimes want to congratulate friends and relatives on special occasions or on particular birthdays, and I try to phone or write or send a card or perhaps even flowers or a present. The time, effort and expense are worth while. I want to give my good wishes and I want the recipient to know that I care and share their happiness. If I put an advertisement in the paper, it seems that I am announcing the achievement to the world, and my personal role, my love and my sharing, get left out completely.

We are not yet fully into announcing

examination results and successes and I am surprised that this has not been exploited by the papers. A few fictitious announcements about success in Grade II music exams and GCE carpentry could surely trigger a spate of proud parents announcing that their offspring have qualified as doctors, accountants or dustmen, although if present trends are pointers to the future, they would be named as healers of the sick, tax avoidance consultants and refuse disposal operatives.

I say this because it would seem that euphemism and twee euphemism are in. Birth announcements nowadays don't tell us that a baby or babies have been born. Parents gleefully, happily and gratefully tell us of joyous arrivals and safe deliveries, which leave me with images of the Victorians who covered up piano legs.

I remember that a few years ago, some papers carried an embargo on any words other than a straightforward announcement of fact. They even refused to allow grandparents and great grandparents to be mentioned. The Marketing Manager reading this and taking up my ideas for increasing revenue, could suggest to a few proud Boobas and Zaidas that they place separate birth announcements; and then other relatives and friends could follow suit to swell the column inches and the coffers by adding their own happy comments. It would save them the bother of going out and buying a card, and balance the duplicated lists of death announcements from devoted friends. And is there any difference in the quality of friendship between those who use the Social and Personal columns and those who use plain and cheaper facilities further back in the journal?

Keeping in contact with humanity and in touch with roots can be quite hard work when so many interests take us away from the practice of Judaism. The Personal column helps us to keep in touch. If we know who got engaged, was born or died, we maintain the myth of remaining a part of the wider community and caring about others.

The medium may be the message, and it doesn't really matter what you say, as long as you are seen to say it and seen to spend a lot of money in doing so.

Dr. Wendy Greengross is a doctor, counsellor, former "agony aunt" on The Sun and Radio Four's "If You Think You've Got Problems" slot, and author of the recent pamphlet "Jewish and Homosexual".

THE HAGADA OF PASSOVER enjoins every Jew to think of him/herself as one of the original Red Sea pedestrians. The idea is that we break down historical barriers, and empathise with Jews from antiquity, part of a Jewish community beyond time. This is the essence of the Am Yisrael concept, the principle that there is a unified People of Israel. Today, Am Yisrael is interpreted geographically: we are One People because we have something in common with Jewish North Africans and Iraqis and Chinese. While we seek to break down barriers of space, barriers of time re-emerge.

We can express our link with the distant elsewhere, and possibly with the ancient past, but Anglo-Jewry seems incapable of bridging a more prosaic divide, the generation gap. If I can think of myself as if I came out of Egypt with Moses, or as if I am Ethiopian or Yemenite, then surely I should be able to feel as if I came out of Auschwitz, or the East End, or the Shtetl. As parts of Am Yisrael, the link between the student and adult elements of Anglo-Jewry should be strong. In reality, it is weak.

Most Jews of student age in this country are not students, but the example of student-adult relations should be of wide interest, because the next generation of Jewish leadership comes from the campuses, if it comes from anywhere. Anglo-Jewry has three tactics for dealing with students: they temporise, polarise or patronise. The first tactic is learnt from Machiavelli, who advises his "Prince" to treat most problems with the ultimate weapon: procrastination. Temporise long enough, he says, and the problem will go away. Present-day "princes" of our community use this Machiavellian tactic to great effect. If noisy Jewish students are giving them trouble, they apply the ultimate weapon and ignore them until they are no longer students, no longer noisy and no longer a threat. But, unfortunately, by then most of them will no longer be involved in the Jewish world either. By the time most of my contemporaries reach "macher" age, they will be ashamed to be associated with Israel, embarrassed to engage in communal affairs, and confident of the chances for successful assimilation. At least a quarter of them will not be married to Jews.

Temporising, then, is not a foolproof tactic. The second popular approach involves emphasising the issues and attitudes dividing the generations. Adult Jewish institutions are desperately keen to ignore young people. Those who are not students tend to keep quiet. Students can occasionally make a noise, for

STOP PATRONISING STUDENTS

Michael Marmur demands ammunition in the campus war for Jewish commitment

instance on the question of Zionist enthusiasm. The Jewish Establishment responds in an ingenious manner, encouraging the most extreme and outlandish views to be expressed, so that the message can be safely ignored. An example of this syndrome is provided by the Board of Deputies, which had until last year one favourite student speaker, a young man who could always be relied upon to be rude, wild and outrageous. His method of articulation was entertaining, and his message extreme. He was, therefore, not a threat to established Board opinions, and could be enjoyed as a stand-up comedian. He told the adult community what they wanted to hear: that young Jews had no serious opinions on matters of communal interest.

Such collusion helps the status quo, but it doesn't help our community. The third tactic is no more constructive: students are often patronised to an extraordinary degree. One could understand being ignored, but in fact the establishment goes to exceptional lengths to claim its commitment to the "coming generation". An almost scientific law of Anglo-Jewry states that whatever receives the most lip service is at the bottom of the real list of priorities. Jewish students are forever told that they are down on the barricades, at the front of the propaganda war, the community's own S.A.S. battling in hand-to-hand, life-or-death encounters with the anti-Zionist infidel. Backs are patted. Tributes are made. But across the spectrum of Jewish student concerns, these words of encouragement take on a hollow ring. Take for example the structure of Zionist politics and Aliyah services (the majority of olim are under 30). These are not exactly consumer-based. Young people would call for a Zionist movement in this country free of political wranglings and vested interest, but they would be laughed out of the Zionist court as naive and unrealistic. The fact that the Zionist enterprise was nothing without a bunch of naive and unrealistic under-30's is forgotten. Youth was the engine room of Zionism. Now it is treated as a minor department tucked away on the second floor of Balfour House. We are patronised, so we lose interest.

In other areas, too, a gulf exists between lip service and actual support. In the anti-Zionist campus confrontation, active Jewish students would like their parents' generation to see that what hits the campus today rebounds on the wider community tomorrow. To give an example, the new generation of anti-Zionist Labour politicians, some now in Parliament, learnt their business on the campuses. Future trends, we can prophesy, are insidious and unpleasant. To cite a notable instance, the claim that Zionists and Nazis collaborated during the Second World War is currently gaining credence in universities and polytechnics around the country. In 10 or 15 years such historical revisionism will have penetrated society at large, unless concerted and high-level attempts to preserve the truth are made. So far on this issue the Union of Jewish Students has received heart-warming messages of solidarity from the adult community: hardly a word against the slur has been written by any of the fine academics to be found here, in Israel, or elsewhere. The profound and vital task of preserving the name of those who perished is left to overworked and underqualified students.

The Nazi-Zionist link is not unique among examples of student anti-Zionism, and such issues are significant for many reasons. Not only do they re-surface in the wider community in later years, not only do they affect adversely central opinion, not only are they an affront to Holocaust survivors: they also alienate the very Jewish students whom we wish to lead the community in years to come: of the foremost proponents of the Nazi-Zionist collaboration claim, most are Jews. Many other Jews, balanced and normal, grow to hate any talk of Zionism, Israel and often (by association) Judaism. By demoralising and intimidating Jewish students, anti-Zionist activity gives Anglo-Jewry a suspended death sentence. Only vigorous education, discussion and rebuttal, can get the sentence overturned, or at least commuted to the status quo.

Some Jewish students react differently to the anti-Zionist assault. They discover a Jewish identity and commitment which, say, synagogue life never gave them. But even such people realise that one cannot stay for ever reactive, simply a victim of epidemic paranoia. They sense educational and cultural needs. What help do they receive from the community? Every campus is notionally under the jurisdiction of a regional chaplain, though in practice quality and consistency vary greatly, and in all cases chaplains are Orthodox. Apart from this, the only organisation committed to visiting students around the country is



Lubavitch. They offer a small core of devotees the chance of a coherent, all-embracing lifestyle, and they give a wider circle the chance of contact with "Glatt Kosher" Jews. For their relentless and painstaking commitment to students the Lubavitch can only be admired. But is there not something significant in the fact that students – considered a "fringe" group – are often left to be dealt with by a "fringe" faction of Anglo-Jewry? Is the Reform movement contented that if our students seek rabbinical or personal advice it is almost bound to come with a black hat and side-curls?

Most Jewish students do not identify as Jews. Those of us who do feel that the time has come to assert the positive, substantive aspects of "Jewishness" are bored with forever degrading ourselves in the pursuit of transient and often irrelevant political successes. We will continue with the political fight – indeed we will try to do it more efficiently. But we want to explore what it is that we are so keen to defend: Zionism, the uniqueness of the Jewish intellectual and communal heritage, mysticism, matzo balls. This is the real campus war: the battle for Jewish commitment.

We need ammunition. One admirable example of constructive aid is provided by the Yakar Centre in Hendon, run by Rabbi Michael Rosen. He and his wife are invaluable resources: they do not patronise, temporise or polarise. They come to students, and students come to Yakar. They simply muck in and help us, avoiding high rhetoric, because they turn the idea of "Am Yisrael" into reality, creating a bridge across the generation gap. In every community where there is a student presence, in every Jewish institution verbally committed to students, in every concerted educational push, in every fund-raising extravaganza, such bridges must be built, in the name of Am Yisrael, the Jewish People, as Klal Yisrael, the Jewish totality.

The community has before it a decision; it can temporise, polarise and patronise its students; or it can see students as a legitimate and energetic part of the wider Jewish enterprise. We can defend our vested interests, preserve the present position. Or we can express our belief in Am Yisrael in an active way, and invest in the Jewish future: "Choose life! – then you and your descendants will live".

Michael Marmur is reading history at Oxford. He is a leading member of the Union of Jewish Students.

"A Jew must eat kosher but may think trefe . . ."

WHO NEEDS JEWISH THEOLOGY?

by Alan J. Unterman

THERE IS AN ON-GOING DEBATE about the role of theology in the overall picture of Jewish religion. Even a superficial acquaintance with Judaism would indicate that, whatever the role assigned to Jewish theology, credal formulae are much more alien to Jewish consciousness than, say, to Christians or Buddhists. Can one really imagine a Christian or Buddhist equivalent of the Jewish layman's view that a Jew "must eat kosher but may think trefe"? On a more sophisticated level there are those who have argued that theology, in the sense of an explicit system of teachings on the nature of the divine, on man, on the relationship between the divine and human, and on the nature of the world, is at best secondary to Jewish religious experience. The controversial Israeli thinker, Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, has put forward the view that what essentially characterizes Judaism is the response of man to the divine command. In other words the halakhic system of mitzvot is the essence of Judaism. Theological ideas, according to Leibowitz, are merely the more general aspects which Judaism shares with any other religion, not the specific characteristics of Jewish religion.

On a more academic level, Professor Jacob Neusner, in the USA, has argued that it is the halakhic laws of Judaism which, historically, were the main carriers of Jewish ideas. An example which Neusner takes is the first work of Rabbinic Judaism, the Mishnah, edited and published by Rabbi Judah the Prince and his colleagues at the end of the second century C.E. The Mishnah devotes very little space to non-halakhic topics, and one has to search very hard for anything even loosely describable as theology. Neusner sees the ordering of the material in the Mishnah, and the division of its six orders into agricultural and liturgical matters, the festivals and Shabbat, marriage and divorce, civil laws, sacrifices, and the laws of ritual purity, as conveying a whole outlook on the divine and the human. All this is very distant from the kind of explicit system of ideas we associate with theology.

In contrast to the foregoing many modern Jewish thinkers have advocated the importance of an explicit theology of Judaism, which would put its main ideas

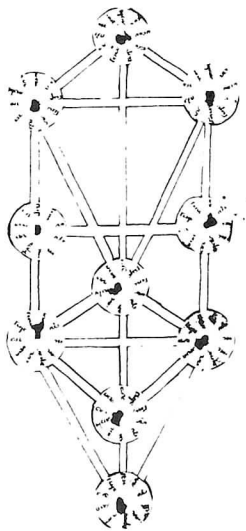
and teachings into a consistent and comprehensive framework. Thus Rabbi Dr. Louis Jacobs calls Jewish theology "an important branch of Jewish thought" (*A Jewish Theology*, p.vii), and dismisses a theology-less Judaism as "religious behaviourism" (*ibid*, p.6). None of the great Jewish intellectuals of modern times, from S. R. Hirsch through Buber, Rosenzweig, Kaplan to Heschel envisaged Judaism bereft of theology – although their own interpretations of aspects of this theology differed markedly.

This argument about the place of theology in Judaism is not merely a question of historical or academic interest. The anti-theologians are well aware of Biblical and aggadic expressions of religious ideas, as well as of the writings of the Medieval Jewish philosophers and the speculations of the mystics. The pro-theology party recognize the important role which halakhic praxis has had throughout the various phases of Jewish history.

What then is at issue? One way of understanding the debate is to see it as an evaluation of the importance of the different facets which make up the complex features of Judaism. A theology of Judaism, seen as central to the Jewish religious nexus, does not leave the rest of Judaism as it is. It acts as a selection mechanism, emphasizing the centrality of certain aspects of Jewish lore, and de-emphasizing, or ignoring, other aspects. It may also have a profound effect even on the details of Jewish practice. It is no accident, for instance, that Maimonides's codification of the halakhah in his *magnum opus* the *Mishneh Torah* ignores a number of laws which have a magical rationale, or gives them a different interpretation (cf. *Yad. Rotzeach* 12: 5-6). Maimonides's philosophical rejection of magic is well known (cf. *Guide For The Perplexed* 3:37), and there can be no doubt that his theological views coloured his halakhic outlook. The same may be said of Rabbi S. R. Hirsch, often thought of as an arch-conservative in halakhic matters, whose approach to Jewish ritual is clearly affected by his rejection of the Kabbalistic tradition and the many customs and practices it introduced.

Hirsch, in the Eighteenth Letter of his Nineteen Letters on Judaism, calls the

Kabbalah "magical mechanism" because of the way he believed it had been misunderstood by its practitioners. In his halakhic compendium Horeb he ignores a number of laws and customs, arguably because his theological views found some of them too tainted by this mechanism, and out of phase with the type of German Orthodoxy he espoused. Though Hirsch explicitly denies the applicability of a term like theology to the ideas of Torah, nevertheless his own theology of Judaism, in its widest sense, helped determine the total picture of Jewish life that became the Hirschian ethos.



Kabbalistic systems; a search for a theology or a "magical mechanism".

What may be argued about the interaction of theology and halakhah in the case of a Maimonides or a Hirsch is even more true of the Kabbalists and the Chasidic mystics. Kabbalah, in its most important form, is built around a speculative theology. Many of the customs, and even the laws, of Judaism are presented in the writings of the Kabbalists in a form which blends in with their mystico-theological assumptions, and which differs markedly from their form in the Talmud and the early codes.

All of this is not meant to denigrate the role of Jewish theology, but to bring out the way it acts in changing the wider canvas of Jewish life, and redrawing the portrait of Judaism. For every theology there is a corresponding Judaism. The rejection of any explicit theologizing, then, is itself a force for conservation. At the same time, however, it also seeks to draw a picture, albeit one drawn implicitly and without the systematic matrix presented by theology.

The main support for an anti-theological approach to Judaism comes today from within the Yeshivah world. Not

only do the Yeshivot not encourage a theological attitude to Judaism, they also generally avoid the intensive study of the aggadic portions of the Talmud. For them Judaism is defined in its totality by the halakhic framework, and the resistance to a consistent structure of theological ideas allows all the various pieces of the Jewish picture to co-exist side by side. The rejection by the Yeshivah world of Kabbalah, Jewish philosophy, and the enterprise of theology is thus a well worked out position having a rationale of its own. It separates the intellectual outlook of the Yeshivah student



from any of the patterns of thought current in the non-Jewish world, and thus safeguards the *sui generis* nature of Torah. By contrast Jewish theologians invariably share in the thought fashions of their age (e.g., Aristotelianism and Maimonides, Hegelianism and Hirsch).

Just as it would be a mistake to view anti-theology groups as "religious behaviourists" or "magical mechanists", since there is an intellectual underpinning for their position, so it would be a mistake to view the pro-theology party as simply introducing alien, or foreign, assumptions into the Jewish outlook. Historically both positions are found within Judaism, and the difference between them is a real difference of religious approach. What we have is a series of Judaisms in search of a theology or, in some cases, of a rejection of theology.

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ISRAEL AND THE LEBANON: A RABBI'S DUTY

DOW MARMUR in a robust paper of continuing relevance stated his position – and how he got there – to the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis in November 1982.

I FIRST BECAME CONSCIOUS OF MYSELF as a Jew through Zionism. In Poland post-War where I then lived, Zionism stood for Jewish continuity and renewal, pride and hope. The establishment of the State of Israel was anticipated in my circles with near-Messianic fervour.

Ironically, however, on 15th May 1948, when Israel was proclaimed, my parents and I had just arrived in Sweden. That is not how I would have liked it, but, at the age of 13, it was not for me to make the decisions. The seven years that followed were years of catching up with school and with life, leaving little time for Zionism, or for Judaism for that matter. But in 1955, I was offered a post at the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm and I was back in the world of Zionism. But now I also realised how ignorant in things Jewish I was; less than two years later, I was a student at the Leo Baeck College.

At the College, I came under the influence of Ignaz Maybaum and discovered Reform Judaism. I regarded Reform, not Zionism, as holding the key to the future of Judaism. Perhaps wanting to leave everything associated with my early years behind, I saw Reform and Zionism in terms of the classical antagonism between them. The reason why I did not return to Sweden after graduation was primarily because I had made public pronouncements critical of Zionism and, therefore, I would be a danger – so the leaders of the Jewish community said, and I have documents to prove it – to Zionist, and thus, Jewish education.

Once I became a congregational rabbi in Britain, I came back to Zionism. I left it the first time because of the impact of the Swedish way of life. I left it the second time under the influence of Reform as it then was. I regained it finally in response to the needs of the community I served, when I realised that on its own, despite all its enthusiasm for and commitment to Reform Judaism, the congregation, any congregation, could not safeguard the future of Judaism. I had revised my views from college days.

For all the excellent work that we are doing in our congregations, it is not sufficient for Jewish survival. Even the achievements we can call ours have frequently only come about because Israel is there as a source of inspiration and vitality. Zionism recognises the centrality of Israel; my experience of Jewish life in Britain similarly makes me recognise the centrality of Israel; therefore I am a Zionist. The old world of Reform Judaism has had to give way to the new reality of Reform Jews.

Being a Zionist does not mean that I refrain from criticising Israel or Zionism but, whatever I may have to say in this connection, it is always rooted in the conviction that Israel stands in the centre of contemporary Jewish existence. By this I means more than just support for Israel. It is one thing to admire Israel and wish her well from the "outside", as it were; it is another to regard oneself as an insider. I am an insider. What I learnt as a Jewish child in Poland and what I know as an adult Jew and as a Reform rabbi have come together to form the fundamental orientation of my Judaism. It has grown stronger over the years, irrespective of which government is in power in Israel or what are the conditions of Progressive Jews in the Jewish State.

After this confession of faith – for I do not believe that arguments make sense unless the arguer's faith is disclosed – let me try to state my position.

I have already said that Israel is central to my Judaism; that I do not believe that Judaism could survive if – *chas vechalila* – Israel disappeared, or ceased to be a Jewish State. This means that security is paramount. As much as I have argued in favour of *bittochen*, trust in God, not just *bittachon*, defence, I nevertheless recognise that Israel has to defend itself, for it only needs *one* successful invasion of Arab forces to finish the Jewish State for all times.

I have always regarded the PLO as a threat to that security: we saw what the

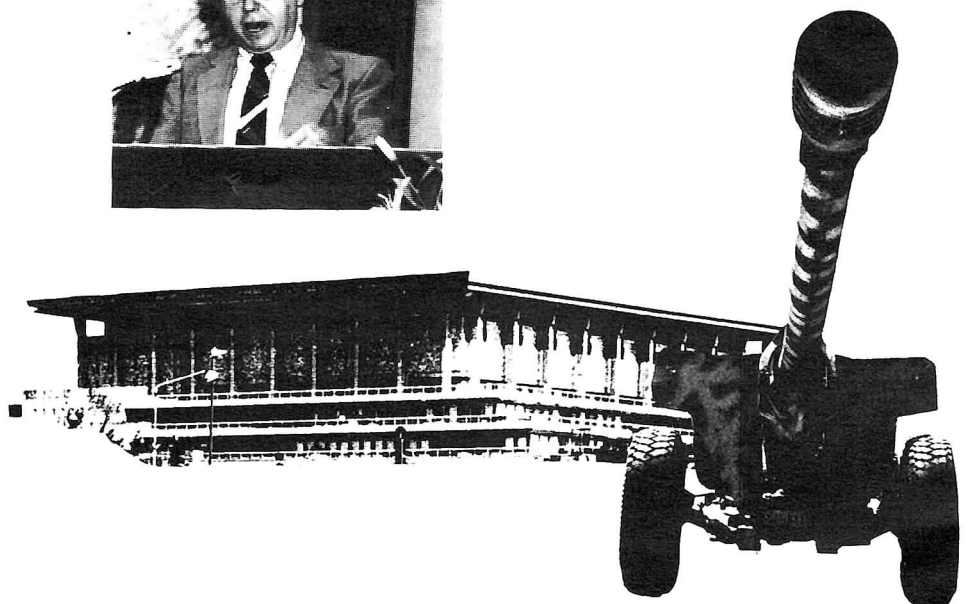
PLO did to fellow Arabs in Jordan and in Lebanon to realise what it would do to Jews, given a chance. Therefore, an action to destroy the PLO cannot, as such, be morally wrong. Whether it is justified at any price, is, of course, more debatable. That is why I was much more in sympathy with Israeli activity in Lebanon in July than I was in August, but the end result – a dispersed PLO – is an achievement which, in the long run, may save more lives than were lost in the Lebanon War.

On these grounds, I have found the criticism of Israel in our Progressive circles sometimes unbalanced. To say, as several colleagues have done, that we should have taken PLO pronouncements about peaceful intentions – for example, the Avneri interview with Arafat – at their face value, while questioning every statement by the government of Israel, seems to me to reflect an incomprehensible attitude. At least one ought to be able to give as much benefit of doubt to Sharon as one does to Arafat! When that does not happen, I begin to wonder whether we have not, unconsciously, adopted the criteria of our opponents in judging fellow-Jews. I know that this is a common shortcoming in religionists – the sociologist Peter Berger, for example, speaks of the defenders of religion choosing the weapons of its detractors – but it is nevertheless painful: it reveals a deep and alarming split among us.

That is not to say that criticism should be stifled, but there is a place and a time for it. I have spoken over the years critically of Israel to members of my congregation, but I have done so in a context in which I know that my words would not be misunderstood or abused. Indeed, I see one function of "Pro Zion"* to be such a critic, especially now when our own credentials are beyond doubt, and our basic commitment is there for all to see. But most, if not all, of those who have chosen to criticise Israel in public have not shared such commitment as insiders. Therefore, I am left with the question whether the old anti-Zionism of Progressive Jews has not found here an opportunity to surface. I don't know the answer, but hope that one will emerge in the course of our discussion. I am anxious to know whether we can agree on a broad affirmation of Zionism as an ideology, and whether we recognise the *State* of Israel as central to our Judaism.

As for me, a further reason why I affirm the Jewish State is because it is a democracy. I would find it impossible to identify with a Jewish State that did not comply with the standards of Western democracy. The State of Israel does. The present government has been democratically elected; the opposition has total freedom; the Knesset is a free and democratic parliament.

*The organisation of Progressive Jewish Zionists.



Now, many Jews in this country do not like the Begin government. I am one of them. But then I am a socialist and ideologically opposed to right-wing politics. (I am amazed, though, how many Jews are inconsistent: they are ardent conservatives in Britain, because it serves their economic and class interests, but yearn for a socialist government in Israel). My opposition to the government of Israel in no way changes my attitude to the State of Israel. It would, if the state ceased to be democratic. Neither do I feel that I have any right to tell Israelis how to vote. If I feel sufficiently strongly about it, I should go on Aliyah and become a voter. One hundred thousand votes more for the opposition could change the face of Israeli politics. One hundred thousand socialist-liberal Jews from the Diaspora – Jews like you and me – could achieve the result. If we decide to stay away, we have to take the consequences and only criticise such issues that affect Jewish life in the Diaspora.

The Law of Return is one such issue: if its present definition of “Who is a Jew?” is altered, millions of Jews *outside* of Israel will be directly affected. Therefore, non-Israeli Jews have a duty to speak out, not only a right to do so.

A conclusion – on moral grounds, if you wish – that forces itself upon me after Lebanon – has to do with Aliyah. If I ever felt morally compelled to consider going to live in Israel, it is now – for I know that my presence and my vote there could make a substantial difference to the way the country will be shaped and directed. I feel more and more embarrassed to give Israelis advice on how to choose the right politicians from the comfort and security of the pulpit of the North-Western Reform Synagogue in London.

One of my many misgivings about religionists moralising about politics is that we so easily confuse high-mindedness with naivete. It is so easy to sound good and high-minded when one does not have to decide, even at the ballot box. But when such decisions have to be made in real life things may look different.

Something else, too: we who are so morally concerned may wish to bear in mind that Menachem Begin has led an exemplary life as a politician – in matters of women, money and what have you. He is also a warm and practising Jew. That cannot always be said of his opponents whom we moralists so eagerly advocate as the more suitable leaders of the Jewish State.

Our Right to Criticise

There are, of course, situations when it is legitimate to voice one's opposition without having to put forward alternatives. When the character of Israel as the state of the Jewish *People* is at stake, we are all involved, as in the case of the Law of Return. The initial reluctance of the Israeli government to set up a commission of enquiry after Sabra and Chatila was another such situation. For here open government and democracy were at stake. The *Jewishness* of Israel was in danger. And I do believe that we have reason to protest when the Jewishness of the Jewish State is threatened.

Which brings me to the government's West Bank policy. For if Israel treats the West Bank as a *Bantustan*, Israel will have ceased to be Jewish on moral grounds; if it gives the Arab population equal rights, it will cease to be Jewish on grounds of politics and demography. Therefore, it seems legitimate for us to say why we do not believe that the Bible, *our* Bible, can be read like the protagonists of extremist nationalism want to read it: as a justification of occupation, perhaps even annexation. Precisely because the Jewish State is central to all Jews, it is vitally important for us that it stays Jewish. Precisely because the Bible is the heritage of all of us, it is important that its integrity be preserved. On both grounds, we are duty bound to protest against the West Bank policy of the Begin government.

Similarly, if rights of Progressive Jews are threatened in Israel, we must protest, because nobody may deny the centrality of Israel to other Jews. Pluralism, too, is part of democracy and of Jewish tradition.

There are, therefore, quite clear criteria for criticism: we *do not* seek to interfere in principle in the process that brings about a democratically elected government, since we in the Diaspora have no right to participate in such elections; we *do* criticise any move to jeopardise the Jewishness of Israel, for then we are all directly affected, wherever we may live.

As rabbis, we have a special responsibility, because the people to whom we minister look to us for clarification and guidance. What should that responsibility be in addition to the personal self-disclosure referred to at the beginning of this address?

First of all: to clarify the issues as best we can. The situation is complex and has many ramifications. It is important that we present it clearly. Our responsibility

is to our congregants, not to the media or to the non-Jewish world. When one is asked, one has to answer; when one's sermon is reported in the press, that is inevitable – but to rush into print of one's own accord, or to offer oneself for media exploitation is another matter.

A second responsibility is to help our people to evaluate the situation in the context of our perception of Judaism. If that perception is anti-Zionist, let us say so. If it is Zionist, then nothing can be said that questions the centrality of Israel. I am prepared to accept avowed anti-Zionists in our midst and argue with them; I have greater difficulties with those, who under the guise of a lofty moral tone and alleged love of Israel express their anti-Israel prejudices.

A third responsibility is to encourage Jews to support Israel. It has become fashionable at present to denigrate fundraising. Let us bear in mind that many of our congregants will use such criticism as a welcome excuse for not giving, and a Jew withholding his worldly goods to the detriment of *K'lal Yisrael* should never be able to say that he does it on his rabbi's advice or because he follows the rabbi's example.

A fourth responsibility is to provide structures through which identification with Israel is possible. I don't mind which structure we choose, as long as it is legitimate and responsible. I would have thought, however, that for us Progressive Jews the organisation that seeks to combine Zionism with Progressive Judaism – Pro Zion in this country – should be foremost in our minds. It is not so at present.

RSGB and ULPS support for Progressive Judaism in Israel is negligible, and their commitment to Pro Zion likewise. Neither do we have an outstanding record in the realm of conventional fund raising or educational involvement. Which leaves me with the very uncomfortable feeling that many of our members might be very close to becoming, or remaining, a bunch of out-of-date assimilationists. It is for us, rabbis, to make sure that does not happen, and that the Lebanon War is not used as a convenient excuse for it.

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TWENTY YEARS AGO THE CONDITIONS in London's privately-rented housing sector were at the forefront of the news. Aided by his links with the Profumo Affair, the name of Peter Rachman had become a byword for slum landlordism and the term Rachmanism entered the English language. After the Milner-Holland Committee Report on London's rented housing and Labour's 1965 Rent Act, conditions in this declining sector of the housing market slid back into relative obscurity.

Recently however, private landlords are coming back into the forefront of political concern and with them Jewish residential property interests. There are, of course, a very large number of non-Jewish private landlords and it is impossible to be precise about how far Jews are over-represented in the world of residential property. They do however appear to play a prominent and, on occasion, notorious role. Examples are not hard to come by.

The two largest British residential property empires, Freshwater and Berger, are both Jewish and both have come in for considerable criticism over the years for their alleged failures adequately to maintain and repair their properties. William Stern achieved notoriety when his empire – an off-shoot of Freshwater – collapsed in 1974 with debts of £140 million. He attracted further attention when it was revealed in the course of the scandal over the Crown Agents' £200 million losses, that they had made £40 million loans to Stern on the basis of unsecured personal guarantees. In the course of the Crown Agents' Inquiry, and his subsequent bankruptcy hearings, Stern came under considerable criticism for his so-called "Rolls-Royce" existence which he enjoyed even as an undischarged bankrupt. The luxury home in Golders Green, his children's private schools and the timely sale of his house and possessions to his father before his spectacular £118 million bankruptcy all excited comment.

Then again, there was the scandal over Sir Eric Miller's conduct of the Peachy Property Company. When the truth became known, Sir Eric committed suicide – significantly he chose the Day of Atonement. Another victim of the mid-1970s property crash was Harry Landy, of the London City and Westcliffe Company. The Anglo-Israeli Bank to which he and LCW were connected lost some £2 million.

Most recently, the notorious Berger empire is back in the news. Thought by many to be the largest British private

landlord, exceeding even the Freshwater empire, its size can only be surmised. The huge number of Berger-controlled companies have made detailed investigations difficult as it is virtually impossible to identify all their companies, let alone the properties they own. Estimates run to as large as 25,000 plus. The Bergers are also extremely secretive and uncommunicative about their operations. They refuse to be interviewed and all the media have had to go on is the poor conditions in many of their properties and the complaints of their tenants about their inability to get essential repairs done.

The Berger family are unique even in the Jewish property world. As members of the Chasidic Satmarer sect, they run their empire not for private profit but for the benefit of three registered charities, the aims of which are the promotion of "traditional Judaism". A number of chasidic schools and community organisations in North London receive extensive support from these charities. Their tenants are getting restless, however. They are also finding a collective voice. A Berger tenants' group has recently been established and as well as lobbying MP's and local councillors, they recently demonstrated outside the Berger family home in Stamford Hill.

Even though the problems of the Berger empire appear to stem from their chaotic and ramshackle business organization rather than from deliberate exploitation, there is clearly something of a contradiction between the Bergers' chasidic charitable endeavours and their behaviour towards their tenants. How is this contradiction to be explained? The most likely answer is that the Bergers have two codes of conduct. Towards their fellow Satmarers their attitude and behaviour would seem to be governed by the religious principles of brotherly love, social justice and mutual help, and charity. Their attitude and behaviour towards their tenants seems, on the other hand, to be based solely on commercial principles of profit maximization. The two spheres of religion and commerce appear to be kept separate and distinct.

This contradiction is not confined to the Bergers. Nor is it confined to Jewish landlords or to their treatment of non-Jewish tenants. It is an interesting fact, probably little known outside the Jewish community, that many of the tenants of the large blocks of flats owned by Freshwater, Peachey and London City and Westcliffe, to name but three companies with extensive holdings in Central and North Western London, are also Jewish. Many of the blocks built in

As Others See Us

A series in which Jews are put into focus by non-Jews

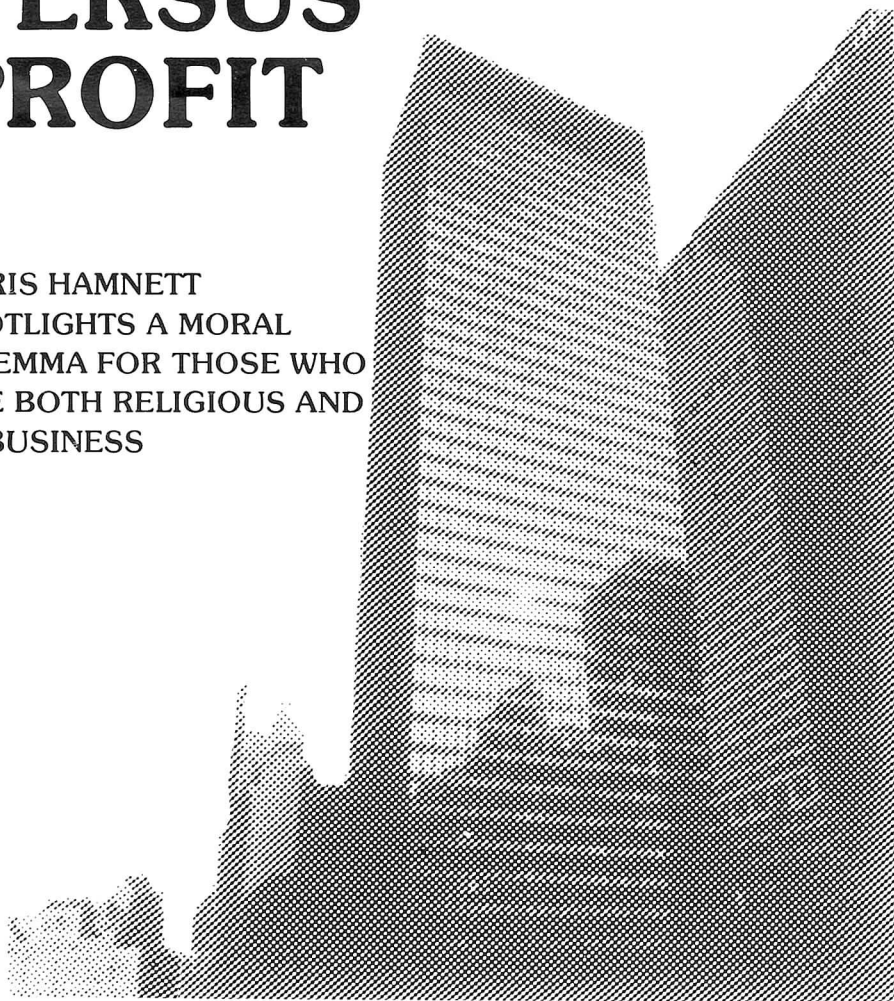
Hampstead, St. John's Wood, Swiss Cottage, Belsize Park and the Hampstead Garden Suburb were built in the mid-to-late 1930s and many of their tenants were refugees from Nazi persecution. Landlord and tenant alike are Jewish but this has not helped the tenants of these blocks in the struggle against rapidly escalating rents, declining maintenance and the sale of their flats.

There is, however, another even less well appreciated irony regarding London's privately-rented sector. The largest private landlord in Britain immediately post-war was not Jewish. It was the Church of England. The Church Commissioners owned some 40,000 properties including virtually all of Paddington and Maida Vale. This area formed part of the estates of the old Bishops of London and under the Church Commission it was developed in the 19th century for housing. Post-war, however, Paddington had become one of London's major red light areas and the embarrassment this caused the Church Commissioners reinforced the economic basis of their decision to sell off much of their rented property. In 1976, they were on the verge of selling off their Belsize Park estate to the Rossminster Group who subsequently achieved notoriety for their tax avoidance schemes. Fortunately, the tenants kicked up a storm of protest and more than 300 properties were sold to a tenants' association. More recently, the Commissioners have been accused of engineering the gentrification of their Maida Vale estate and in 1981 they announced that they were to sell their 2,000 properties in the estate to sitting tenants. Their collective market value is well over £60 million and the proceeds of the sale will, like their previous sales, go to the acquisition of commercial office property of which the Church Commissioners are a major owner and developer.

There is a strange parallel here with the Bergers. The Church Commissioners are responsible for funding the salary of Britain's Church of England clergy and the maintenance of church property. This requires an income of tens of millions of pounds annually and accordingly the Church Commissioners have engaged in a major post-war programme of investment restructuring. They have sold off hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland and tens of thousands of rented houses and re-invested in higher-

FAITH VERSUS PROFIT

CHRIS HAMNETT
SPOTLIGHTS A MORAL
DILEMMA FOR THOSE WHO
ARE BOTH RELIGIOUS AND
IN BUSINESS



yielding commercial property. Like the Bergers, they need a healthy income to pay for their religious good works. If this means rack renting their tenants, so be it: that is the logic of profit maximization in a capitalist society.

Again, there appears to be something of a schizophrenic split between religious principles on the one hand and commercial behaviour on the other. Rather than the former being extended throughout all spheres of life, they appear to be narrowly confined to the distribution of money. How it is earned in the first place is quite another matter.

It remains an open question as to whether the Church Commissioners have divested themselves of the bulk of their residential property post-war because of the embarrassment it posed for them or because it was a low-yielding, essentially unprofitable asset. It is revealing that the Church Commissioners have held on to their high-rent luxury properties. The ones they have sold have been the less profitable ones. Like the Bergers, they appear to be caught between reli-

gious imperatives on the one hand and the necessity of making a profit on the other.

The moral of all this is quite clear. There are no doubt numerous commercially-ruthless Jewish landlords but there are also numerous commercially-ruthless Christian landlords. Neither seem to see any conflict between their business interests and their religious beliefs. Profiteering from the renting and sale of people's homes seems to be seen as a separate and distinct activity from attendance at church and synagogue.

Any attempt to single out Jewish landlords as in some way more rapacious or unscrupulous is entirely misplaced. To do that would be a classic example of scapegoating. The problem is much more fundamental and revolves around the role of housing as a commodity to be produced, sold and exchanged for profit. As long as the imperatives of profit maximization exist, we will see many landlords – Jewish and Gentile alike – attempting to make a profit out of people's homes.

The root of the problem for Jew and Christian alike seems to be the virtual impossibility of attempting to conduct the whole of one's behaviour on religious or ethical principles in a society where making a living often seems to involve making a profit at someone else's expense. In these circumstances it becomes easier to understand why religious principles appear to be effectively limited to what you do with your money once you have made it. Until such time as it becomes possible to organise ourselves in ways where religious principles can be extended into the conduct of all spheres of human life and activity, these contradictions are likely to persist.

There is however another, and possibly a more fundamental explanation of this contradiction which goes beyond the economic organization of society to the bases of human behaviour itself. I refer to the seeming tendency to behave in a loving and caring way towards one's immediate family, friends, relatives and colleagues – and possibly to the members of one's own particular sect or social peer group and in quite another to those outside the immediate social circle. Many of the most notorious Nazi death camp personnel were reputed to be kindly, family-loving people when "off duty". Similarly, the Lebanese Christian perpetrators of the Sabra and Chatila massacres would not presumably behave in the same way to their own families or Christian communities.

We see the same thing closer to home in the Protestant and Catholic killings in Northern Ireland. What seems to be seen as acceptable conduct in one sphere would be condemned as appalling in another. There would seem to be two separate and distinct spheres of human behaviour with two separate and distinct codes of conduct. To the extent that this is correct, the contradictions implicit in the Bergers' behaviour or that of the Church of England are based on a fundamental division between codes of behaviour for those in the "in-group" and those outside it. Until everybody, Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic, Israeli and Palestinian, behave towards one another in the way they would treat their own family and friends, the contradictions will continue.

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ARTHUR KOESTLER LIVED 100 metres from the Westminster Synagogue; but, when invited to speak there, he made it quite clear that he lived an immeasurable distance from synagogue, the Jewish community, and Jewish life. He was involved in Exit, a group which insisted upon the right of suicide for anyone. Arthur Koestler wrote the introduction to the pamphlet stating the aims and purposes of the group.

His total commitment to its principles made his final teaching to the world an almost inevitable one. Plagued by pain and the knowledge of a short period of ever-increasing suffering before he would be overwhelmed by his terminal illness, Arthur Koestler entered into a suicide pact with his wife, and the two of them exited with dignity from a world in which he could no longer bear to live.

Arthur Koestler was true to his own life and principles. A turbulent and creative life had confronted him with many cross-roads where a difficult choice had to be made, and he never compromised: the middle way was never taken, and emotional involvement was brushed aside by the absolutes of ice-cold logic. He had joined the Communist Party in 1931 and visited Russia a short time later. Many of his friends tried to ignore the lesson of the Stalinist purges in 1938 and 1939. Koestler looked at the issues, and broke with Communism – *The God that Failed* contains his description of that break, and his own great novel *Darkness at Noon* (1940) gives insights into the tragedy of the individual crushed by the system.



Arthur Koestler.

He was a scientist as much as he was a writer of genius, and all of his work contained the quest for truth and its application in the world. Involved with Palestine and Zionism, Arthur Koestler came to a similar cross-road situation, described in novels and historical statements (*Thieves in the Night* (1946) and *Promise and Fulfilment* (1949)). Another "god" had failed him, and his icy logic saw only two alternatives – *aliyah*, total

"WE MUST REJECT THIS SUICIDE"

Cynthia Koestler should still be living

by Albert H. Friedlander

involvement with Israel which could only be achieved by settling there, or total involvement with the *galut*, i.e., assimilating and abandoning one's Jewish identity.

Koestler chose the latter option. The ultimate European, the man of many languages immersed himself in an environment where – without rancour or enmity – he simply cut off all ties with Jewry as such. And then, in the end, he cut off all ties with life.

The news had broken on a Friday and, that Saturday, we mourned for Arthur Koestler in the Westminster Synagogue. He had been a neighbour; and his writings had instructed many of us. Yet it was difficult to overcome a deep-seated anger at this exit from life as it was announced to us through the various media. The august *Times* reported that a teen-aged daughter was left after the suicide of father and mother. The next morning, it printed a retraction. Yet it seemed to many of us that the Koestlers had at least disciples, if not children, and that, in some way, there had been a betrayal of life here that was difficult to accept. How could we understand the action of a man we had admired so much?

Certain aspects of this tragedy could be viewed within the context of the Jewish tradition. The sermon that Saturday morning reviewed "*m'abed atzmo la-daat*" – "one who intentionally destroys himself" in the manner of Samson, Saul, Ahitofel, the martyrs of Masada and of all times – acts of desperation which received qualified approval within Jewish tradition. Yet the basic teachings of Judaism abhor the taking of one's own life. The renegade historian, Josephus, summarizes some of these in his account of his refusal to commit suicide – which could, of course, be considered a highly subjective testimony. But Chanania ben Teradion, burned upon the pyre by the Romans, is enjoined by his students to open his mouth, breathe in the fire, and thus die more easily. His rejoinder was "The One Who has placed the soul into the body shall remove it, and no one may destroy oneself!"



Cynthia Koestler.

It was difficult to use these arguments against one's neighbour. Arthur Koestler was beyond the judgment of those who are alive. In a classic sermon by Abraham Cronbach, the Hebrew Union College professor who buried Julius and Ethel Rosenberg,* Dr. Cronbach pointed out that death atones for all things – whether or not the couple being buried were guilty or innocent, it was right and proper to mourn them, to express grief, and no longer to pass judgment upon those who were now before a Higher Court. So, too, we could not judge the act of suicide, not knowing the pain and anguish, the thought processes involved, the various contributing factors which led to the double suicide of the Koestlers. Grief could be expressed. And anger. Somehow, as much as anything else, we had to look at ourselves and seek for the reasons for the anger and bitterness which filled so many of us when the news arrived.

There are many studies of suicide within our society, from the classic studies of psychologists to the searching account by A. Alvarez with its particular focus upon the artist in our time. On that morning, there was little time to explore those dimensions, or to achieve full understanding. There was the need to celebrate all that the Koestlers gave to us; but we could not rid ourselves of our anger. Partly, it resided in the fact that

*Executed for treason in the U.S.A.

Arthur Koestler's wife had joined him in death. We could almost understand the suffering of the husband – but what about her? With his powers of persuasion, he could have shown her that she would be more truly bound to him in life than in death: there were tasks as literary executor, there were ways of utilizing the anguish for the dead to serve the living. If hers was ultimate despair, could his great talent not have assuaged it? If hers was a calm acceptance of his reasoning, could he not have fought against the gift of a life to place upon his funeral pyre? Was there blindness there? Selfishness – accepting the ultimate gift? In the end, we cannot know, and we cannot judge. But we do know that he walked down that road to darkness without looking around, knowing that she would follow. Somehow, this was wrong; this had to be wrong. We cannot, will not, understand this.

Our anger on that day was not only directed against the protagonists of the tragedy; it was also directed against us. Our hold upon life is more frail than it was in the time of our ancestors. Too much has happened. Judaism still celebrates the goodness of life, the total sanctity of life itself; but evil is endemic to our surroundings, despair a commonplace, and blindness is sometimes celebrated as virtue. We are angry and afraid because something within us responds to the act of suicide.

Recently, in a private conversation, Elie Wiesel mourned the suicide of a great Jewish writer, Piotr Rawicz, one of the novelists who examined the Holocaust experience. He listed five or six others who had committed suicide in recent years. "Those who have looked at the ultimate darkness are no longer immune," he said. There is danger if we look back, and we must look back. Somehow, we must find our way back to life, to the celebration of life. And so we must continue to argue with Arthur Koester, who was swallowed up in the darkness at noon. We must see that light follows darkness. Rejecting his rejection of life, we can then rediscover the integrity of his pursuit for knowledge, his firm assertion of the powers of the mind against totalitarianism, and the wit, grace and elegance of his literary explorations. We should remember it, and be grateful, and be without fear.

Rabbi Dr. Albert H. Friedlander is the rabbi of the Westminster Synagogue and Dean of Leo Baeck College. He is an authority on Holocaust theology and frequent lecturer on this topic to German audiences.

WANTED –

NEW LEADERSHIP FOR BRITAIN'S JEWS

insists WALTER GOLDSMITH

A FASCINATING BY-PRODUCT OF this year's general election result was to throw a revealing light on the new status of Jews – and their attitudes – in this country.

There are many who are surprised that the Conservative government was elected with such a strong endorsement, considering the difficult period of the last four years and the considerable concern over unemployment. But without wishing to be too controversial, I would like to suggest that there is indeed a move towards what is unfortunately referred to as "the Right". I prefer to describe it as a shift in the centre of gravity towards greater personal freedom and self-reliance. And I believe that the Jewish community, and indeed the parallel but rather later arrived Asian community, are well to the fore in moving in this direction. I believe that such a move is a natural one. It reflects a recognition that the free enterprise system, which certainly no previous Conservative government has worked so hard to stimulate, is absolutely in our interests.

Free enterprise is not just the only economic system which can be proved to work.

But it is the only system which, by its very nature, allows the maximum freedom, whether social, political, economic or religious.

Although not all capitalist countries are democratic, all democratic countries appear to be capitalist. Political freedom cannot be preserved where economic freedom is eliminated.

Free enterprise is the only system which gives the individual the opportunity to advance and better himself and

his family through his own efforts, his energy and skill

It is the system which most effectively generates the wealth needed to fund a caring society.

It is the only system where rewards depend upon a freely negotiated contract between the providers and users of goods and services, allowing full scope to the talents and efforts of the individual. It is not primarily dependent upon rank or social status.

There is also a parallel between the emergence of Asians in this country whose success against racial prejudices can be largely put down to their readiness to adapt to the opportunities provided by the free enterprise system.

Although free enterprise is an untidy system in that human beings cannot be corralled, the fact is that, given freedom, human beings will always create inequalities. Nonetheless the free enterprise system is certainly the one most reflective of the human desire for creativity.

I believe that it is in the interests of diaspora Jews, just as it is in the interests of all immigrant or minority groups who are prepared to advance themselves, to promote and defend free enterprise at every opportunity. That is why I am personally delighted to see the election of a government dedicated to this aim.

Against this background, I believe that this is now an opportune time to review our position as a Jewish community, our status in Britain. It is appropriate to consider how we can play a more effective part in contributing to the development of Britain in the 1980s and at the same time explore how, consistent

Walter Goldsmith is Director General of the Institute of Directors. He is a former chairman of Wembley and District Liberal Synagogue.

with that contribution, we can also be more supportive of Israel.

Let us begin by examining the term "diaspora". I liken it to a botanical term, the "diaspore". A diaspore is a part of a plant that can be dispersed and produce a new plant. This is to use an accurate analogy with Jews. Seeds have been scattered and like seeds we have flourished when we happened to fall on fertile ground. Where we have fallen on barren or hostile ground we have desperately tried to move on. Where we have flourished we have produced strong and vibrant roots – roots of a nature that makes the term "expatriate" totally inappropriate.

The roots are below the surface, but above the surface we have grown and flowered.

In all walks of life, British citizens who are Jews are making significant contributions to their country. Not least in public life – where a Jew is now Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary and Education Minister, where a Jew is chairman of the BBC, and is chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, of the Property Services Agency, of the English Tourist Board, of the Press Council – none of these are "expatriate" jobs. Many of the country's finest business organisations are headed by Jews.

But do we really maximise these resources on behalf of the Jewish community in this country? Given our commitment to Israel, do we help sufficiently to influence opinion? Given the misunderstandings of Israel's position – not just over Lebanon but over the West Bank realities, do we even do enough to restore the balance? Do we rely excessively on propaganda rather than sober debate, based on factual information?

I believe that as a community we have broadly failed to realise our potential to play a full role in the broader environment.

When a crisis of confidence arises and

we look for overt leadership – where do we find it? There are those who often purport to be our leaders – qualified through religion or research, or even money-raising objectives. Enormously dedicated as they mostly are, and each making significant contributions, are any of these recognised generally as our community leaders?

It would be interesting to conduct a poll amongst the community as to who were considered the leaders. The answers, I am convinced, would be diverse.

It would be diverse because our organisations, while pursuing their objectives with great commitment, do so too often in isolation – frequently in contradiction. I believe it is time that the Jewish community in Britain "got its act together".

While I recognise and indeed pay tribute to, the contribution and sincere conscientiousness of the Board of Deputies, it is not powerful enough. It has not been accorded high enough status in the Jewish community or in the country. I believe it is inadequately constituted and does not carry sufficient weight at either executive or official level. It lacks the support and commitment of too many sections and interest groups in the community and has not attracted leadership of a high enough calibre.

I believe that the time has come for the establishment of a Jewish Community Council. It would be financed and constituted by representatives of religious and other important Jewish institutions, with the addition of members elected from distinguished individuals in the community, based upon their influence, their potential contribution and their leadership ability. The individual members would be elected by the representative members and the total council would not exceed 60. To this body would be delegated the leadership of the Jewish community.

The Council would operate through a professional executive staff led by an appointed Director. The Director would

spearhead the implementation of policies, act together with the Chairman as spokesman to the media and government, establish links with other relevant institutions and enable a rapid authoritative and incisive response to events.

Through the Council, the Jewish community would demonstrate its clear commitment to this country, while acting speedily in the event of threats, such as growing anti-semitism, and place responsible authority behind our clear entitlement to influence the attitude and policies of the British Government towards Israel. It could conduct a constructive dialogue with communities in other countries – particularly the U.S.A. and Israel.

Such a Council would not have allowed the British government to get away with such falsely based statements during the Lebanese conflict, would have drawn its attention to the risks of anti-Semitism created by such statements, presented the case against the PLO more convincingly and organised an effective counter to the desperately biased media.

No longer could publicity-seeking rabbis or those who claim leadership status through such dubious criteria as wealth leap up and claim to represent the Jewish community. I believe we need clear leadership and should see that it exists.

I suggest that the wider development of factually-based and sober debate would create a groundswell of responsible lobbying which could not be suppressed or "picked off". This would be effectively complemented by the focus on the issues through a powerful, intellectual and professionally-serviced Jewish Community Council – clarifying the leadership issue.

We could then display clearly that we are strong and cohesive as a community, and that we are British patriots while reflecting our right and responsibility to support Israel.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews



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Scene Twelve. Int. the cafe (day)

It is hot indoors too, despite a big ceiling fan. The premises are rather shabby and run down without looking actually dirty or neglected. A number of tables, some occupied: tiled floor, white walls with perhaps some posters, etc. A dairy bar sells tea, coffee, cold fruit juice from bottles, milk, sandwiches, rolls, Danish-type pastries, Israeli-made chocolate bars, etc. A uniformed woman serves. She would probably look Moroccan.

Malca enters, looks around anxiously. She focuses on someone.

Her view: a woman sits alone at a corner table by the window. She has a cup of coffee and is bent over some paperwork. A briefcase is on the floor beside her. She is Ruth Bar David, about 55, a very sympathetic-looking woman when we see her face, obviously a kibbutznik by her simple clothes and strong, homely face. She has a decisive manner, as one used to making decisions which carry authority, but she is obviously kind, understanding and patient.

Malca approaches her somewhat timidly.

Malca: Ruth Bar David?

Ruth (who has not noticed her approach, looks up and smiles) Yes. And you're Malca. Sit down, you must be worn out! I'm so sorry I couldn't come to you – really, I am so busy! But if I'd known there would be a *khamzin*, we could have met halfway.

Malca (who actually is very tired) It's all right, I'm fine. (She sits opposite.)

Malca: Grapefruit juice, please.

Ruth walks briskly to the counter. Malca sits with closed eyes as if gathering strength. Ruth returns with two bottles of juice and a glass.

Malca: (opening her eyes) Both for me?

Ruth: I'm sure you need them! (She sits opposite Malca and watches while she drinks the contents of a whole bottle.) Better?

Malca: Much, thanks.

Ruth: Now then. Do you feel like launching straight in? I don't think either of us has got very long.

Malca: (takes a deep breath) I've told it so many times, it's begun to sound peculiar, even to me . . . The problem is actually very simple.

Ruth: (her chin on her hands) I'll bet it isn't.

Malca: (startled) Oh, but it is – I think it is. My baby is six months old on the 20th, so of course the baby-nurse is supposed to take over the mid-morning feed.

Ruth: How do you get on with her?

Malca: Is that – I mean, why do you ask?

Ruth: Because I think it's relevant.

IT'S MY BABY

*The tug of war
between a mother and her kibbutz*

by Lynne Reid Banks

Lynne Reid Banks, author of the *L-Shaped Room* and a clutch of subsequent best-sellers, is married to an Israeli sculptor. Now back in London, she coped with her early years of motherhood on a kibbutz.

A RUCHAT ESSER" – "ELEVENSES" was commissioned by Israeli TV and will be shown for the first time later this year. It deals with the tensions and conflicts aroused on a kibbutz when one of the inhabitants cannot accept the rules observed unquestioningly by the rest.

The particular issue this play deals with – a mother's right to determine the schedule of her baby's first months – probably no longer troubles kibbutzim, as suggested right at the beginning of the play – but other conflicts

have arisen in its place. There must be many couples where one partner cannot imagine any kind of life except that of a kibbutznik, while the other cannot bear the limitations to personal freedom it imposes.

The play is fair in its portrayal of both the strengths and weaknesses of the kibbutz way of life. While feeling enormous sympathy with Malca (the baby's mother) one also senses the triviality of the issue she has picked and her blindness to the good in Hannah, the head of the baby house.

Malca: (after a moment) I'd rather not go into that. She does her job according to her lights and I'm trying to do the same with my job, as a mother.

Ruth: Go on.

Malca: You see, I'm a teacher. From a few days after the 20th, I shall be free in the mornings, I mean I can make my own schedule, until school starts again in September. I can put in my extra hours in the laundry or the kitchen and I can easily be free between 10 and 11 to do the feed. And I want to keep that feed and drop the 2 p.m. one instead.

Ruth: Why – so very particularly?

Malca: It's my favourite time with him. In the early mornings I'm often too tired to really enjoy him, and in the afternoons after school too. At the evening feed, he's usually pretty tired, and besides, I've been with him all the afternoon so it isn't so – special. Then, in the mornings he's going to start solid foods, and – and I want to give them to him. It's part of his growing up that I want for myself. That feed is the most important. (Trying to convey her feelings without losing control.) The one when I can love him best.

Ruth: (nods) I see. Well?

Malca: Well . . . that's all. But I'm not allowed.

Ruth: Not allowed to do what?

Malca: To drop the wrong feed.

Ruth: (with a surprised laugh) The "wrong" feed? What an odd thing to say! Who says which feed is "right" or "wrong"?

Malca: Hannah – the baby-nurse – has put a ban on the whole idea.

Ruth: (leans back for a moment, her hands on the edge of the table) But she hasn't that right.

Malca: (breathless with hope) Hasn't she?

Ruth: (lightly) Certainly she hasn't. It's a matter for your Education Committee, and they surely won't refuse you such a trifling thing.

Malca: They don't think it's trifling. They have refused.

Ruth: Then your Secretariat should over-rule them. There is evidently something personal here. I've never heard of such a thing, or not for years.

Malca: (after a moment) Please. Let me get this straight. Are you saying that there's nothing in – the rules of kibbutz education, laid down by the Movement,

which says I can't decide which feed to give up first?

Ruth: Of course not! The rules are for the benefit of people, it's not the other way round. The whole of our educational system has been worked out pragmatically, according to what seems to work best, for the benefit of the babies, the mothers and the kibbutz, in that order.

Malca: I believe my baby would benefit if I went on feeding him. I know I would. But would the kibbutz suffer? That seems to be the question.

Ruth: My dear, why on earth should the kibbutz suffer if you and your baby are happier and more satisfied with each other?

Malca: Is *that* the criterion?

Ruth: As far as I'm concerned.

Malca: In that case, why are there any rules at all?

Ruth: (after thinking for a moment) Ah. Well, it *is* a system different in its essence from the systems of nuclear child-rearing. The kibbutzim have evolved it partly to fit the ideology of communal living. We think it works pretty well when we look at the results. You're a teacher, you tell us. What do you think of the – how shall I say, the – end product?

Malca: They're wonderful kids – the ones I teach – self-reliant, unneurotic, individual, and almost entirely –

Ruth: What?

Malca: I was going to say – good. I know it sounds silly –

Ruth: It's true enough. We don't produce much delinquency. (Smiles). It does work, you see. I don't just say that

because we produce the best officer-material and so on, I don't judge by that. But look at our children compared to city children. Look at our children compared to children of other cultures. Most of the problems child-psychologists worry about don't even exist on a kibbutz. *But* It goes against the conditioning of mothers who were brought up "outside". That's why there have to be rules – of a sort. But the rules are *our* rules, made for ourselves by ourselves. As soon as we stop agreeing with them, they have to be changed. They *have* been changed, very drastically changed, since I had my children 30-odd years ago. And they'll change more. People like you will change them.

Malca: I've got no ambition to upset the whole system. I just want more control. *I want to say when my baby can come and go, when to feed him, what to hang on his cot . . . (Pause. Then it bursts out.)* She wouldn't let me take him out of the baby-house till he was six weeks old! Even on nice days, I had to sit there for two hours in the afternoon . . . I didn't feel he belonged to me. Once, I got so bored and lonely, and I longed so much to have him to myself in our own flat, that I defied her. I wrapped him up and took him home through the rain, and we played with him and had a wonderful time, relaxed and natural . . . Except that it wasn't, because . . .

Ruth: Because you were worrying all the time about the row there would be when you took him back.

Malca stares at her for a moment and then puts her head into her hands.

Ruth: (gently) Oh, don't cry.

Malca: (indistinctly) She spoils everything! All my joy in him! She's like a shadow over us –

Ruth: Tell me. How many babies are there in your baby-house altogether?

Malca: (still muffled) Eleven.

Ruth: Eleven little vulnerable scraps of life. If one gets an infection, they will all get it. She carries an enormous responsibility.

Malca: (hands down, fierce) I don't ask her to be responsible for Lotan! He's mine, and I will be responsible for him!

Ruth: You mean you want to have him at home. (Gently) You see, it's not simple at all. Because you do want to upset the whole system.

Malca stares at her. Ruth looks at her watch.

Ruth: (breaking the mood) My dear, I must go. And you must catch your bus or you'll have to wait hours. Now. What has been settled?

Malca: Will you give me official permission to keep on with the 10 o'clock feed?

Ruth: Of course, if you really need it, though I'm astonished it's necessary.

Malca: Oh, it's necessary.

Ruth has risen and is collecting her things together.

Ruth: Fine. Well, is that all then?

Malca: (Agitated, rising too) But I need something I can show her.

Ruth: Won't she take your word for it?

Malca: No!

Ruth: So?

Malca: You must write a letter! I mean – please, if you will.

Ruth: (After a moment) All right. If you're sure it's needed. Now forgive me for rushing away – (she offers Malca her hand).

Malca: But you haven't got her name!

Ruth: Oh yes. I'll make a note of it.

She gets out a scrap of paper and a pencil from her briefcase.

Malca: Hannah Shapiro. (Ruth scribbles it and puts it loose into her briefcase.) Will you write it soon? The posts are so unreliable.

Ruth: (Cheerfully) Oh, they're not so bad. Goodbye, Malca. Don't worry. It'll all come right. (Shakes her hand.)

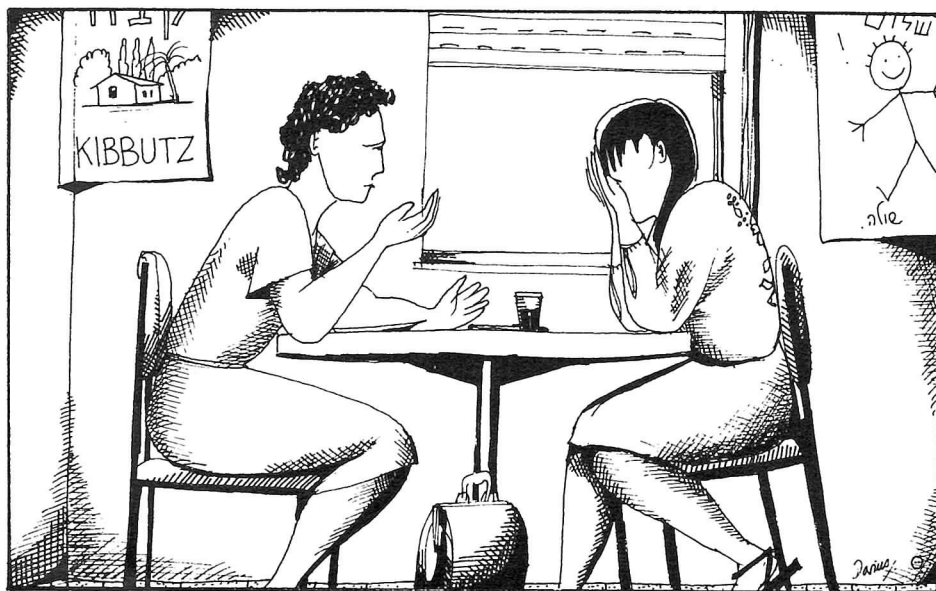
Malca: (Like a child) Do you promise?

Ruth: Oh dear! Well, I'm not the almighty. But I'm sure it will all work out for the best. Shalom!

She smiles warmly and waves as she exits. Malca is left standing near the table. A slow smile comes over her face.

Malca: (Under her breath) I've won.

She closes her eyes for a second. Her face wears a look of peace – and triumph. She opens her eyes, takes a breath, gathers up her things and runs for her bus. Camera tracks her to the door which she leaves swinging.





Simone, the woman who faced the truth . . .

TRUTH IS NOT A COSY VIRTUE. Unlike generosity or love, it doesn't make life slip down more easily. It was something I underrated when I was a student preferring togetherness, emotional excitement and group feeling.

I have in fact only come to treasure it, by seeing what devastation results from its absence – how cheap and how vulgar everything becomes. In the East religious truth is suppressed, but in the West it is subtly distorted.

Some of these distortions never seemed worth a great fuss before. Glibness is not a major sin, nor is a little rhetoric something to get hot under the collar about. Now, I think these things do require a fuss, because they become as deadly as the platitudes fed by religious establishments to both sides in the First World War. They look innocent, but the payment can be the murder of the innocent.

Lately I have been listening to sermons, not giving them. I have been horrified by the way sentences are lifted from sacred and ancient texts, and then applied to contemporary situations without any indication of the social and political differences let alone the textual difficulties. This distortion always appears when group feeling is touched, especially chauvinism, which is not the same as national feeling. In the pulpit an opinion cannot be answered, and it is protected from criticism. It is all the more important that no tricks are played to excite the lowest common denominator of feeling.

On another level I have noticed a sleight of hand in apologetics. The speaker or writer wants to give comfort, but on a level where there is little comfort to be had. So golden linings are discovered in the darkest tragedies, and everything is made to turn out for the best in what, we must face it, does not obviously seem to be the best of all possible worlds. The tragedy of the Holocaust has been so profound that it has resisted sentimentalisation so far. But this will take place, and I give it at the most another decade. The first traces are apparent in modern prayer books.

I think it is because truth is such a cold virtue, that I avoided one of the greatest writers on spirituality that the Jewish people has ever produced. Many years ago I picked up books about her, read a few pages, and nearly threw them at the wall because they were so irritating. The irritation has not grown less with the years, but looking at these old volumes I see I have underlined sentence after sentence – not because I liked them, which I didn't – nor because I like her, which I don't – but because they are to me self-evidently true.

Her name is Simone Weil, and she should not be confused with the Simone Weil of the European Parliament who is, I think, very distantly related. She came from an upper-class Jewish family in Paris but her knowledge of Judaism was nil or superficial. With such a background it is not surprising that she disliked what she didn't know. Like many young people who grew up in the thirties she was socially conscious, went to the Spanish Civil War, and became a Trotskyite. It is interesting that Trotsky, like everybody else, found her views irritating. No one seemed to get any "nachas" from her.

She flirted with the Catholic Church, but irritated them, too, because she never quite toppled into baptism, and died in England during the war a member of no religious institution. Even her death stumps her admirers. She decided to eat no more than the rations allowed in occupied France. So she starved to death. Was it martyrdom? Or a wilful desire not to eat? Or just anorexia nervosa? No one knows or can ever know.

Her writings are fragmentary, and were notes for herself not intended for publication. They are often biased and occasionally wilful. But they are compelling, because they tackle the great themes head on, which few are prepared to face, let alone think through. These include the location of God in the direst affliction, how a God of goodness could create what we experience as evil, and how and if religion, as opposed to religious trivia, can be taught. All these are the unanswered questions left by the tragedy of the Holocaust.

These are some of the sentences I have underlined and pondered over again

and again, in trains, in airports and at religious meetings – especially the last.

"We are as mediocre and as far from God as it is possible for creatures endowed with reason to be . . . The love is in proportion to the distance."

"The essential contradiction in the human condition is that man is subject to force and craves for justice."

"It (i.e., from God) is a power which is only real in the world in so far as it is exercised. The sole condition for exercising it is consent."

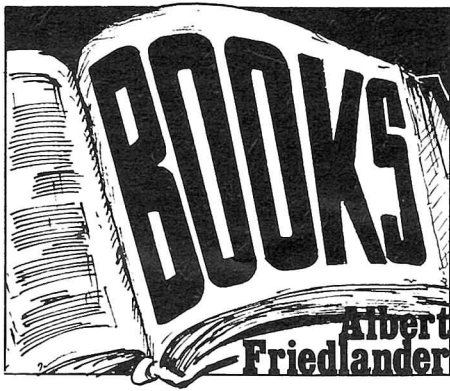
None of these sentences has any consolation in it, and indeed she regarded "the consolations of religion" as a sort of spiritual debauchery.

Two small paperbacks published by Collins give a good selection of her work. They are, I understand, becoming quite popular, which would have surprised her even more than it surprises me, for there is nothing very comfortable in them.

But I think I know why people buy them, against all their sympathies and prejudice. Sometimes I am sitting in a meeting. Wave after wave of religious words fill the air. Inflated words are like inflated money. A lot of them gets you very little. It is then I turn to the few uncompromising words of that opinionated writer Simone Weil and, provided my blood doesn't start to boil and I throw the book out of the window, I find a sentence or a paragraph and say "it's only got one thing going for it – it's true!"

Rabbi Lionel Blue is convenor of the Beth Din of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain. He is the author of "To Heaven With Scribes And Pharisees" and of "A Backdoor To Heaven". A frequent broadcaster, he also writes a cookery column for the Catholic weekly *The Universe*.

This issue's cover picture is "Old Peddler", a woodcut created by Jakob Steinhardt in 1934. Steinhardt was born in Poland and settled in Israel in 1933, eventually to direct the Bezalel School of Art. This print is part of the permanent collection of the Ben Uri Gallery.



Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust by Yaffa Eliach, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, 266pp., \$16.00.

There are countless ways of remembering the *Shoa*, the time of destruction. One way is of focusing upon the heroism and decency of the victims, of remembering acts of basic goodness. Yaffa Eliach interviewed survivors and re-tells their stories. There is loving care and reverence in this oral history, which has a constant refrain running through the text – “I heard it at the table of the rabbi”. Yet it is a sad book, and depicts an ultra-Orthodoxy which many of us can admire, but only at a distance. The attitudes, the theology, and the simplistic way of understanding the world is strange to us; but in a world where all of the environment was hostile, that community was entitled to close itself to everything except its private vision. One can revere, respect and remember.

Spiritual Resistance: Art from the Concentration Camps, 1940-1945 Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981, 237pp., \$35.00.

This is an outstanding collection of the work of Jewish artists which bring us material and information about these artists which has long been required for an understanding of that period. Kibbutz Lohamei Haghetat, a centre of documentation and museum visited by too few of us when we are in Israel, supplied some of the art and information through the dedicated work of Miriam Novitch; and Tom Freudenheim, a leading authority on Jewish art but also curator of great American museums (Baltimore, Worcester) and at one time in charge of museum work at the National Center for the Endowments of the Arts in Washington, served as the technical consultant and advisor for this book. Essays by Tom Freudenheim, Miriam Novitch and

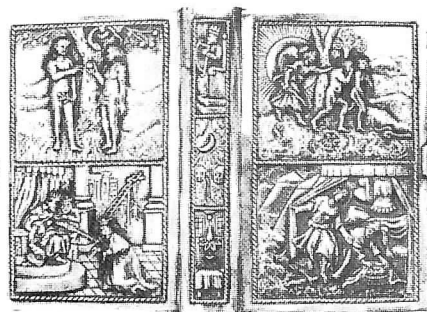
Lucy Dawidowicz give us both an historical perspective and an insight into art which stands upon its own merit, but which is again an epic of good triumphant against evil, a testament to life. This is a book to be cherished.



Aldo Carpi de Resmini: *The Famished*.

The Art of World Religions: Judaism by Michael Kaniel, Blandford Press, Poole, Dorset, 1979, 160pp., £5.95.

One of a series of art in different religions, this work offers a short survey of Jewish art from earliest times to the present. There is an interesting commentary dealing with Biblical and post-Biblical attitudes to art, reminding us that the “prohibitions” did not inhibit the rich creativity which showed itself within the synagogue, in the Jewish home, and in the literature of the centuries. From the wall paintings of Dura Europos to the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, there is much to see



Part of a silver prayer book cover depicting Bible scenes. Amsterdam 1726.

and admire – particularly in the art work integral to the synagogues of our own time. Clear and well-printed illustrations make this an enjoyable volume. The silver spice boxes were fascinating, particularly that of a large bird on a tree (I would have liked to have seen a fish, as

well); and the ritual art was well represented. Yet I would have preferred to see more contemporary art.

Hitler und die Endlösung by Gerald Fleming, Limes Verlag, Muenchen, 1982.

There are a number of German-speaking readers in our congregations; and until this important text appears in English, we can only give the warmest recommendation to them to obtain a copy of this fine historical study by Gerald Fleming. In a world which still has pseudo-historians who proclaim that Hitler was not involved with the death camps, a finely-documented and crystal-clear text such as this one is a basic need for historians and lay people. We owe Professor Fleming much for a work which can be appreciated as a small classic. It will become a standard text.

On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition by Blu Greenberg, JPSA, Philadelphia, 1981, 178pp., \$11.95.

We have too few texts dealing with a topic which has become one of the major areas of inquiry in contemporary Jewish thought: the role of women in Judaism. Feminism has opened the door to aspects of Jewish creativity which have been successfully ignored through the centuries. It is not only the prayerbook which still reinforces stereotypes created by a male-orientated structure; almost every expression of the Jewish tradition obscures the intellectual contribution of women. The essays in this work cover basic issues – divorce, abortion, equality, survival tactics – and rise out of the author's commitment to both feminism and Orthodoxy. There is still a basic need for a similar book written from a Progressive point of view, dealing with women rabbis, with creative responses that break new ground instead of attempting to remain within Halakha. However, as Blu Greenberg notes, there is “limited information . . . thinking is unfinished . . .” and the book is concerned with finding a response and challenge within all of Judaism. Her work clearly arises out of an American scene which has made more progress in this field than we see here within Anglo-Jewry. It should challenge our thinkers to produce a proper text reflecting the slow but inevitable changes within Reform Jewish Life.

MOSES TRANSFORMED

by Jonathan Magonet



שמות ב

והבארו לבת-פרעה ויהיה לה לִבְנֵי וְהִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה
 11 וַיֹּאמֶר כִּי מִדְּרָמִים מִשִּׁתְּרוֹ: וַתֵּן בָּנִים הָאֵם וַיְהִי
 מֹשֶׁה וְצָא אֶל-אֶחָיו וַיֵּרָא בְּסַבְלָתָם וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי
 12 מִכָּה אִישׁ-עֶבְרִי מֵאֶחָיו: וַיֵּן כֹּה וְכֹה וַיֵּרָא כִּי-אֵין אִישׁ
 13 בְּדֹךְ אֶת-הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּשְׁמְדוּ בְּחֹל: וַיֵּצֵא בְּיוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי וַהֲגָה
 שְׁנֵי-אָנָשִׁים עֶבְרִים נָצִים וַיֹּאמֶר לְרִשֶׁע לָמָּה תִּכְהַרְעֶךָ:
 14 וַיֹּאמֶר מִי שְׂמֶךָ לְאִישׁ שֶׁר וַשֵּׁפֶט עָלָיו הַלְהִרְגֵנִי אַתָּה
 אָמַר כָּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ אֶת-הַמִּצְרִי וַיֵּרָא מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִן

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out to his brothers, and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian man smiting a Hebrew man, one of his brothers. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

Exodus 2: 11-12

THESE TWO VERSES BELONG TO our collective memory of childhood Bible stories. The young Moses, saved from the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter, grows up in the palace. But remembering his origins, he goes out one day to see how his people are faring. There he is struck by the injustice of an Egyptian taskmaster striking a Hebrew. He looks about to make sure that no one is watching, then strikes the Egyptian, killing him, and buries the body in the sand, hoping no one has seen this – only to be betrayed by his own Hebrew "brothers". The story is so familiar it seems hardly worth giving it a second look. And yet the precise wording of the two verses before us raises a far wider range of interpretations.

The first question arises over the meaning of "*vayyigdal*" in verse 11, usually translated as "he grew up" or "after he had grown up". Modern scholars, as also the authors of the Midrash, noted that the same verb occurred in the previous verse, describing how "the child

grew up" and his mother took him to Pharaoh's daughter. There it seems to mean that he was weaned, whereas in our verse it suggests that he grew up to become a man. Brevard Childs in his Exodus commentary notes that this is one of a number of examples in this chapter of a verb being repeated within a few sentences, in each case the second use having a slightly different meaning. The Egyptian "strikes" the Hebrew, but when Moses also "strikes" him, he actually "kills" him. All such repetitions demand further explanation, and there is a significant difference in the noun attached to the verb in each case. Verse 10 speaks of "the child" who grew, whereas our verse speaks of "*Mosheh*", as if to say it was as Moses that he grew. Perhaps it was this change that Rashi had in mind when he quoted the Midrash to suggest that the first use of the verb refers only to his physical growth, while the second one to his growth in "greatness" – "Pharaoh appointed him to have charge over the palace". In fact Midrashic legend will go on to elaborate considerably the achievements and power of Moses. It may be argued that these stories are mere fanciful embellishments of the biblical narrative, or conversely that they actually reflect a whole range of ancient oral traditions about the origins of Moses, authentically preserved in Rabbinic circles. Certainly they expand on the otherwise tantalising hints in the Biblical text that cry out for explanation: what is the significance of his being brought up in the palace? Why does he have such ease of access to Pharaoh?

That he was a man of significance in Egypt seems clear; the Midrash spells out some of the implications.

Something that alerted the Rabbis to a hidden meaning in a text, just as indeed it has done for the modern critical schools – though with quite different consequences – is the presence of apparent redundancies or unnecessary repetitions. Twice in our sentence it speaks of Moses' "brothers": he went out to his "brothers" and saw their burdens, then saw an Egyptian man hit a Hebrew man, "from his brothers". The word "*ach*", "brother," can also mean a "relative" who is more distant than a brother, though it carries a sense of their mutual responsibility for each other. Yet why does it occur here twice? Abraham Ibn Ezra (1092-1167), the great Bible commentator of the Spanish Jewish world, has a remarkable reading: "He went out to his brothers – the Egyptians, for he grew up in the palace of Pharaoh". But after he realised that the one being struck was a "Hebrew", one of his family, he identified with him instead as "one of his brothers". Ibn Ezra's reading brings out poignantly the dilemma of Moses who was the child of two cultures and peoples – it also suggests an element of Moses' character that emerges from this cryptic sentence, that when confronted with "an Egyptian man" and "a Hebrew man", both of whom are his brothers, it is with the victim, the underdog, that he identifies – and pays the price for that choice with exile from his "homeland".

Is Ibn Ezra's the "correct" reading of the text? On one level there can be no "correct" reading, merely a reading that is more persuasive than others to the particular reader. Nevertheless there is support for his interpretation in the phrase "he looked upon their burdens". Rashi notes that the literal expression is "he looked 'in', 'within,' their burdens", he identified himself with them and suffered their sufferings. However this is not the first time the word for "burdens" has appeared. In 1:11 we read: "They (the Egyptians) placed upon 'him' (a singular suffix referring back to the collective noun 'people', Israel) taskmasters to afflict 'him' (Israel) with 'their' (the Egyptians') burdens". *B'sivlotam* means the Egyptians' burdens the first time it appears in our story, so it could also mean that here. Moses went out to inspect the "burdens" of his "brothers", the Egyptians, and only then does he come to see where the real burden lies.

Was Moses a coward? Modern translations of verse 12 leave little doubt about the matter. The New English Bible reads: "He looked this way and

that, and seeing there was no one about, he struck the Egyptian down". The Jerusalem Bible reads: "Looking round he could see no one in sight, so he killed the Egyptian". The Good News Bible: "and when he saw that no one was watching". Even the new Jewish Publication Society of America translation reads: "and seeing no one about", whereas the old 1916 edition has the more literal rendering "and he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian". Nehama Leibowitz in her commentary on Exodus draws attention to a Jewish commentator who found the earliest interpretation of this verse within the Hebrew Bible itself. *Isaiah 59: 15-16* reads: "The Lord looked and it was an evil thing in His eyes that there was no justice. *He saw that there was no man* and was astonished that no one intervened, so His own right arm brought victory, and His own righteousness sustained them." For *Isaiah* the sentence must be taken literally. Moses saw that there was no "ish", no one acting as a "man". In many places in the Bible "ish" means a man of some status or significance, not merely a "human being". In the previous verse, we have met "men" who were labelled as "Egyptian" or "Hebrew" – but neither of these "men" were prepared to intercede in the beating of the Hebrew. Neither the Egyptian found it wrong, nor the Hebrews tried to help their brother. There was no "ish". In contrast, in the end Moses will attain that status, and indeed regain the "greatness" of his earlier days in Pharaoh's palace. "The Lord gave the people favour in the eyes of Egypt; also *the man* Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of the servants of Pharaoh and in the eyes of the people." (*Exodus 11: 3*).

Brevard Childs points to the skill of the author of this passage who is "able to picture a whole range of strong emotions by means of objective, descriptive language. In each case there is a marked underplay. Moses goes out to his brethren and looks on their toil. The implied sympathy shifts immediately to passionate anger, then instinctive caution." Perhaps we can go further. We have here the record of the transformation of the life of a man, and the establishing of a commitment to justice and freedom that was to change the world. In just two verses.

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THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT AFTER the Lebanon war, which split Anglo-Jewry as no other event since the creation of the State of Israel, the community as a whole shifted uneasily back into line behind the Likud government. I find this regrettable, not only because of the barren political outlook it indicates, but because of the spacious arguments which have been successfully used to stifle dissent.

The first is that we in the diaspora have no right to comment on Israel's internal affairs – which means, logically, that we have no right, either, to comment on South African apartheid or the Soviet Union's treatment of Jewish refuseniks.

The second is that comment is permissible, but only in the Israeli media. This view was put forward both by Dick Hirsch, the Executive Director of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and the new President of Israel, Chaim Herzog, to delegates at the recent World Union Conference in Jerusalem. By all means express your anxieties to *Ha'aretz* or *The Jerusalem Post*, they said, but not to *The Los Angeles Times* or the *Washington Post*.

The corollary of such an argument is that favourable comment, too, should be withheld from non-Jewish newspapers. Why is it permissible for JIA leaders or the Chief Rabbi to write to *The Times* supporting the war in Lebanon, but not for distinguished scholars or statesmen to express their reservations?

That such sophistries should be proposed, and solemnly accepted by those who like to think of themselves as opinion-formers, confirms what many of us have long believed but been reluctant to say openly: that talk of the "equal partnership" between Israel and the diaspora is one of the emptiest platitudes of the 20th century.

MIND YOU, PROGRESSIVE ZIONist bodies like Pro-Zion and their American and European counterparts, have done nothing to halt this trend whereby diaspora Jewry, instead of recognizing the correctness of

Leo Baeck's analogy of the two foci of an ellipse, passively accepts instead a Zionist evaluation of history which contemptuously accords second-rate Jewish status to the diaspora.

Initially I welcomed the formation of Pro-Zion. Its endorsement of the so-called 1968 Jerusalem Platform, affirming the centrality of Israel and the ingathering of Jewry, did not bother me, since my observation is that most Zionists appear to express that affirmation by holidaying in Natanya. Here was the opportunity, I thought, for Progressive Jewish values and ethical concerns to be heard in Zionist circles.

Instead of this, alas, Pro-Zion has allowed itself to become one more venal constituent of the World Zionist Organization, which for vote-grabbing proclivities, makes Tamany Hall look like a Festival of Light. It is a matter of melancholy distinction that Pro-Zion officers should be to the fore in this country's truncated Zionist Federation, not for what they represent but because they stepped into the breach left by the defection of Herut and Mizrachi.

Until such time as Pro-Zion issues a statement categorically rejecting further settlements on the West Bank (one would like, too, some comment about the moral erosion which occupation is having on the character of the Jewish State, but to expect that would be positively messianic), I shall desist from joining Pro-Zion, taking comfort from Groucho Marx's remark that any club which would have him as a member . . .

NORMALLY A "LONER", I HAVE been to three conferences in the past six months, which is my usual ration for six years.

Perhaps a veteran conference attendee can advise me about a problem. I simply cannot acquire the American knack of taking in the name on the lapel badge, looking its owner squarely in the eye, extending a firm handshake and booming, "Hi there, Dick," all in the same flowing movement. I snuffle and peer short-sightedly at the name tag, idly divert my thoughts about the front to which it is attached if the delegate is female, and bang the top of my head coming up with the owner's chin coming down as he/she bends solicitously to discover if I am having a seizure on his/her lapel. Perhaps Albert Friedlander can tell me how he does it.

Rabbi David Goldberg of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue was one of the Ben Azai columnists in the Jewish Chronicle.

