

Perspectives

Jonathan Sacks

In this issue we examine three of the debates that have been running through this summer's American Jewish periodicals: the continuing strife over American Reform's policy on personal status, a re-evaluation of Rav Kook's teachings fifty years on, and the university teaching of Jewish Studies. We also review the latest findings on Anglo-Jewish demography.

Two Nations: The Crisis of American Jewish Pluralism

Two issues ago we reviewed Reuven Bulka's *The Coming Cataclysm*, with its anguished prediction of a complete rift in American Jewish life. Bulka foresaw the day when Orthodoxy and Reform would separate into two religions, a mainstream Judaism and a new group whose members were not recognised as Jews.

The problems are substantive: not a matter of 'polarisation', but brute and unavoidable issues of personal status. There is the question of Reform conversions, often without *milah* or *mikvah* or recognisable acceptance of the commandments. There is the question of divorce without *get*, resulting in the children of second marriages being *mamzerim*. And there is the question of the patrilineal principle, by which the Reform movement accepts as *prima facie* Jewish the children of a marriage where *either* the mother or the father is Jewish.

The result? A situation could arise where there was a presumption against the halakhic permissibility of any marriage with a Reform Jew. Reform Jews in America would have become *non-Jews* or at least Jews whose halakhic status was in general open to doubt and in each particular instance called for investigation.

This would be a crisis that could not be averted by goodwill and tolerance alone. It would extend to the non-negotiable bedrock of halakhic Jewish self-definition.

Bulka's fears were widely echoed. Shortly afterwards, Rabbi Irving Greenberg wrote a powerful and provocative pamphlet entitled *Will There be One Jewish People in the Year 2000?* And by April this year, the editor of *Moment* magazine, a lively American-Jewish monthly, could write: "No question that has been raised in these pages over the course of more than 10 years we have been publishing has elicited a larger volume of correspondence that the question of religious polarization (alias the question of religious pluralism, alias the question of the approaching schism)."

Orthodox rabbis had explained to *Moment's* readers why they could not concede the legitimacy of Conservative and Reform. The response was extraordinary. Kenneth Wolman, a Conservative, let loose a long cry of rage: "Attacks upon us as *goyim*, as crypto-Christians, if you will, are an obscenity so immense as to represent an open invitation to the non-observant or not observant *enough* among us simply to get the hell out of Judaism altogether. If you'd called us kikes or painted swastikas on our synagogues, you could have done no worse".

Another Conservative, Louis J. Glick, asked: "Why? Why must Jews continued to discriminate against each other? When and where does it end? Did the Nazis inquire as

to your denomination before you went off to the camps? Do Arab terrorists ask who your rabbi is before they attack?"

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In a sensitive and conciliatory article (March 86), Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, Orthodox President of the New York Board of Rabbis declared that "we have now reached a stage where many of us are unable to speak to each other civilly, where religious rightists and leftists fling epithets at one another, where the extremism that manifests itself on both sides threatens to isolate Jew from Jew and to rend the fabric of Jewish peoplehood so that we will no longer be one people."

But though the danger was clear, few were interested in averting it. The situation was summed up in the words of Saadia Gaon from the *selichot* for the eve of Rosh Hashana: 'I turn to the right and there is no support; to the left and there is no encouragement'. Few of the Orthodox rabbinate were sympathetic to lessening the divide, while the Reform movement's decision to accept patrilineal descent as a determinant of Jewish status was a break from tradition so extreme as to evidence no desire for dialogue.

Rabbi Lookstein was not willing to let the tragedy run its course: "It is time, therefore, to devote ourselves to *ahavat Yisrael*; it is time for that virtue to be moved to the top of our list of priorities". Weight must be given to the values of *shalom bayit* – peace in the collective Jewish home – and to *kavod habriyot* – respect for every human being. But there must be a confrontation with the three substantive issues that lie at the heart of the problem: the Reform movement should reconsider its decision of the patrilineal principle; criteria of conversion should be evolved that are acceptable to all Jews, including Orthodoxy; and there should be an agreement that every marriage between Jews that is terminated by a civil divorce should also end with the giving and receiving of a halakhically acceptable *get*.

One of the problems he admitted, is that moderation and tolerance generate less energy than extremism: "The antidote to unwarranted hatred must be unconditional love. This must be the *passion* of the middle ground of our people. Somehow we must see to it that the passion of the middle overcomes the passions of the right and of the left, where passion is normally nourished more enthusiastically."

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Two months later, the intellectual leader of the Conservative movement, Robert Gordis, was himself declaring: "I urgently plead with the Reform leadership to reconsider its adoption of the patrilineal principle" (May 86). Though he

accepted the Reform decision as well-meant – an attempt to face up to the problems of intermarriage – the solution was no cure. The situation it confronted was that of a marriage in which the father was Jewish, the mother not, where the mother was not willing to undergo conversion and yet where one sought to count the children of such a marriage as Jewish. Not only did this go against the millenia-old halakhic norm of who is a Jew. It also made no human sense: if the mother “cannot bring herself to convert, her decision should certainly be respected, but clearly ‘raising the child as a Jew’ is virtually meaningless, and counting the child as a Jew is little more than a form of self-deception”.

Gordis spelled out the consequences: “If the patrilineal principle continues to be adhered to in Reform circles, marriages between the scions of Reform families and the majority of Jews the world over will be difficult and ultimately impossible”. He urged the Reform movement to reconsider and retract.

Most recently it has been the turn of Norman Lamm, President of Yeshiva University, to bring patient analysis to bear. He begins (June 86) with two ground-clearing exercises. First: what is religious pluralism in a Jewish context? Lamm reminds us that the classic Talmudic dictum on the disputes between the schools of Hillel and Shammai – “Both these and these are the words of the living God” – cannot be read as sanctioning any and every difference of opinion. It “implies a pluralism *within* the halakhic context only. It simply cannot be stretched to cover all ‘interpretations of Judaism’ as co-legitimate.”

Second: what of the issue of *recognition*? When there is talk of Orthodox rabbis granting or withholding ‘recognition’ of non-Orthodox rabbis, what exactly are we speaking about? Often, argues Lamm, we confuse three things. One is *functional validity*. Non-Orthodox communities constitute the majority of American Jewry, “they are also vital, powerful and dynamic; they are committed to Jewish survival, each according to its own lights; they are part of *Klal Yisrael*; and they consider their rabbis their leaders. From a *functional* point of view, therefore, non-Orthodox rabbis are *valid* leaders of Jewish communities, and it is both fatuous and self-defeating not to acknowledge this openly.”

In addition, Orthodoxy may acknowledge the *spiritual dignity* of non-Orthodox rabbis: “If they are sincere, if they believe in God, if they are motivated by principle and not by convenience or trendiness, if they endeavour to carry out the consequences of their faith in a consistent manner – then they are *religious* people.” It is only in a third sense that Orthodoxy cannot recognise the non-Orthodox rabbinate, namely its *legitimacy*. For this presupposes “the fundamental acceptance of halakhah’s divine origin, of *Torah min hashamayim*”. “I cannot,” says Lamm, “assent to a legitimization of what every fibre of my being tells me is in violation of the most sacred precepts of Torah”.

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What then of the practical issues, conversion and *get*? On conversion, Lamm reminds us of the sobering fact that while ‘Who is a Jew?’ has created a continuing storm in Israel, the issue there relates to at most a dozen questionable conversions a year. In America, by contrast, “the number is probably more in the order of a hundred thousand”. The

patrilineal principle has focussed attention on the problem, but in reality has not affected it. For even if the non-Jewish partners in a mixed marriage were to undergo a token Reform conversion they would still not be regarded as halakhically Jewish. In the final analysis, however, the problem is not irrevocable, because anyone involved can ultimately choose to undergo a halakhic conversion.

The real issue which resists solution is that of divorce without a valid *get* and the subsequent *mamzerut* of children from remarriages. The only solution Lamm can envisage is to revive the idea – mooted in the 1950s – of a national Bet Din recognised by all Jewish groups. Recourse to it would be voluntary, but local rabbis would urge their congregants to utilise it, and point out that if they choose not to, then “their status and that of their progeny may be in jeopardy in the eyes of a major segment of organised religious Jewry.” The dayanim who constitute such a Bet Din or any of its local branches would be chosen “on the basis of scholarship and personal halakhic observance, not institutional affiliation”.

Lamm also urges that Reform rabbis should insist, when remarrying someone who was married at an Orthodox ceremony, that he or she first obtain a *get*. He commends to American Reform the English practice outlined in the Jewish Chronicle by Sidney Brichto, namely that Liberal converts sign a document acknowledging that their conversion will not be recognised by the Orthodox and that divorcees are recommended to obtain a *get* and informed of the consequences of not doing so. And Lamm makes the further controversial suggestion, that Reform rabbis make it clear to those at whose weddings they officiate “that they do so according to *their* understanding of marriage law . . . and that by clear implication they are not acting in accord with Orthodox law, i.e., halakhah.” This would facilitate matters for those who follow the ruling of the late Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in disqualifying marriage ceremonies which are not undertaken in accord with the normative sense of ‘the law of Moses and Israel’.

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What emerges from the debate in *Moment’s* pages is a sense of profound anxiety about the route currently being taken by American Reform. The tragedy in the making is indeed of a Jewry divided into two nations. The key text resonating in the background is the Mishna in *Eduyot*: “Though one school pronounced it forbidden and the other declared it permitted, the schools of Hillel and Shammai did not refrain from marrying one another.” When two sections of Jewry can no longer intermarry, the schism is complete.

How much room for manoeuvre is there? The hard fact is that while Orthodoxy is making demands of Reform, it has very little room to offer concessions in return. And while Orthodoxy must say, with Lamm, “No honourable person can afford to dispense with his or her integrity even in the pursuit of unity”, the appeal to integrity is exactly what will be made by Reform in defence of its continued rejection of halakhah.

It would be difficult to find more compassionate and open spokesmen for Orthodoxy than Haskel Lookstein and Norman Lamm – rabbis whose honesty and responsibility compel total admiration. But the dilemma seems insoluble. No-one expressed it better than Charles Leibman, many years ago:

"The doctrine of *ahavat Yisrael* . . . impels Orthodoxy to extend itself to the non-Orthodox. If non-Orthodox Jews were unorganised, the consequences of Orthodoxy's doctrinal position would not be contradictory. But when, in fact, about half of the non-Orthodox are organised in the Conservative and Reform movements, and the remainder are almost beyond reach of any religious group in Jewish life, then Orthodoxy is confronted with two mutually exclusive mandates – to promote faith and observance among non-Orthodox Jews, while giving no recognition and comfort to the only existing institutions which can reach those Jews."

The current predicament presents the contradiction in its most acute form. Orthodoxy cannot sit idly by, but it lacks the basis for effective action. The power to heal the breach lies clearly with the Reform movement of America. The challenge has been issued. And Lamm reminds us of the moral maxim which should be set against despair. If we agree that the problem *must* be solved, then we agree that it *can* be solved.

Fifty Years On: What Has Happened to the Teachings of Rav Kook?

In his concern for Jewish unity, no Orthodox thinker this century has gone further than the late Rabbi Abraham Isaac haKohen Kook (1865-1935), halakhist, mystic and first Chief Rabbi of Israel. Unity, for Rav Kook, was not simply an objective, one among many of the items on the Jewish agenda. It was the central core of his philosophy of Judaism.

Jewish existence, for him, aims at the sanctification of all life. Secularity is not an independent realm, devoid of or opposed to holiness. To the contrary: secularity lies only on the surface. Beneath the surface are sparks of holiness in culture, art, physical labour, sport, in science, languages and apparently alien political philosophies. What secularists do can be made holy. Their one mistake is to think of secularism as a form of meaning, a source of identity. True meaning lies only in Torah. Through Torah, therefore, we see the holiness of all things and the unity of all Jews.

This vision might seem too beatific, too vague to be relevant to any real and knotty problem. But Rav Kook lent it particular force by the stress he laid on *knesset Yisrael*, Jewish peoplehood as the focus of spirituality. Specifically, the recreation of a Jewish State in Israel – which he did not live to see – occupied the highest value in his teachings. Only by becoming a nation in the full political and territorial sense could Jews renew their culture. Jewish spirituality, cramped and confined in *galut*, would flourish again.

The builders of the second *yishuv* were, many of them, radical secularists, not irreligious but antireligious. Yet Rav Kook taught that Orthodox and secularist must live together; that both are engaged in the collective mitzvah of building the land. In a famous reply to those who criticised him for associating with the non-religious, he reminded them that in the days of the Temple, the holiest place on earth was the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest could enter it, only on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, and only after the most elaborate purification. But if repairs were needed to the Temple, the builders could enter even the Holy of Holies without any ceremony at all. The secularist *chalutzim*, said Rav Kook, are the builders repairing the fabric of the Holy Land.

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What, then, of the teachings of Rav Kook today? Nothing could seem more therapeutic to the current tensions between *charedi* and *chiloni*. The spate of vandalism this summer, which saw *charedim* attacking bus-shelters and their provocative posters, and the nightmare retaliatory attack on Yeshivat Chiddushei ha-Rim in Tel Aviv, raised the spectre of civil war. Where was the spirit of Rav Kook?

1985 marked the fiftieth anniversary of his passing. And the recently-founded journal of religious Zionism, *Morasha*, devoted an issue (Fall-Winter 1985) to reflections on his legacy. It could not have anticipated its relevance to this summer's events, but there was another and yet more dramatic reason for re-appraisal.

David Henschke put it simply: "All that has been written and said about the Jewish underground has not taken note of a significant point . . . that all those who were involved in this episode have been directly or indirectly influenced by the ideological system attributed to our illustrious leader, Rav Kook of blessed memory." His question is stark: "How did the Rav's clear vision lead to such moral confusion?" How has his pacific, tolerant thought come to inspire extremism, militancy and violence?

Henschke's answer is that Rav Kook's teachings were complex, "filled with an inner dialectical tension". To be sure, the building of the state was part of the Messianic process; but the reality of the new *yishuv* was far from the dream. Rav Kook himself resolved the discrepancy through a dialectical mysticism. But so subtle a scheme could hardly be the basis for a mass following. Indeed in the Rav's lifetime, though he had many admirers, he had few disciples. The following came in the lifetime of his son, the late Rav Zvi Yehudah Kook, and it came at the cost of a radical simplification of the vision.

Rav Kook's notion that the state has Messianic possibilities became transformed into the idea that it is part of a Messianic process "whose goals will be realised irrespective of the spiritual and ethical stance of the Jewish nation". For Rav Kook, the Messianic Age is endangered by moral or spiritual failure; for his successors it is assured regardless. This new Messianic determinism encourages neither realism nor self-searching. For Henschke, therefore, there has been a dangerous distortion of the Rav's philosophy on the part of his successors.

Michael Tzvi Nehorai contrasts Rav Kook's Zionism with that of R. Isaac Jacob Reines, founder of the Mizrach movement. For Rav Kook, Zionism was *redemptive*, or essentially Messianic. For Reines, by contrast, Zionism was a non-redemptive programme: in his words, an "attempt to improve the physical aspect of the nation and restore its dignity". Jews would be better off in their own land, but this of itself would not usher in a new spiritual era. Reines' non-redemptive position was partly tactical – to defuse Orthodox opposition to Zionism on the grounds that it was a human interference with the Divine Messianic scheme. But in part it was also realistic: Zionism had enough to achieve at the political level without taking on itself major religious objectives.

Thus Reines was prepared to work closely with Herzl; he was willing to support the Uganda scheme; he accepted the compromise formula that "Zionism has nothing to do with religion". Despite great pressure, he kept Mizrahi within the World Zionist framework, arguing that "entanglement can only make things worse".

Rav Kook's idea of the Zionist enterprise was wholly different. He started his own movement, *Degel Yerushalayim* (The Banner of Jerusalem), writing on one occasion that the formal exclusion of religion from the Zionist programme "makes all Mizrahi propaganda valueless . . . We, all faithful Jews, clearly know that only close association and identification of the entire nation with our Torah . . . will determine the success of Zionism immediately and forever."

Was Rav Kook's dream inherently unrealisable? Was it asking for too much too soon? Was it rooted in a proper assessment of history? Was there "no room in his outlook for any transitory historical situations" between *galut* and redemption? These are the questions raised by Nehorai's essay.

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Yosi Avneri turns from the dream to the reality. What were the actual relations between Rav Kook and the Second Aliyah pioneers? It is immediately clear that the Rav's show of tolerance towards the new secularist *chalutzim* was only achieved at the cost of great personal anguish. "It is sad," he wrote, "for me to spend even an hour in the company of the people, empty and estranged from the Torah as they are."

Nor was it always mere tolerance. In 1908 the first Histadrut conference was held in Ein Ganim on Shavuot and Shabbat. This public desecration of Shabbat and Yom Tov created a furore, the effects of which were still apparent three years later when Rav Kook addressed an Orthodox gathering on the incident. Though the desecrators are our brothers, he declared, "the nation's spirit shall not be silent; she will protest strongly and do battle with those sons, her destroyers." The Labour movement retaliated, one newspaper accusing the Rav of duplicity, now a friend, now an enemy of the labourers. The deteriorating relationship led Rav Kook to write, on the line in Kol Nidrei, "We authorise prayer with transgressors", the comment that "We do have to pray together with transgressors, but we are not obligated to invite them into our midst as labourers and leaders". When two guards of the Shomer society were killed in 1912 defending the Galilee, his pained ambivalence was expressed in the lament: "Beloved-hated brothers, sacred-profane souls, woe, what has befallen us."

In 1914 Rav Kook led a rabbinic delegation to the Moshavot of the north: Zikhron Yaakov, Degania, Kinneret and Merchavia. Its aim was to improve religious observance and education, and in some places it met with a sympathetic response. But in others the reaction was hostile or indifferent. Avneri also points out that the visit took place a full ten years after the Rav's arrival in Israel, and was not to be repeated for another thirteen years. Avneri's thesis is that Rav Kook did not initiate a serious relationship with the Second Aliyah and its leaders. He addressed the new settlers in his writings and speeches more than in interpersonal encounter. He was careful to avoid confrontation, but here and there his profound opposition to their lives and values shows through. The religious transformation that he envisioned did not happen, and the strain was evident whenever he turned from mysticism to reality.

Morasha is a journal whose sympathies, one would guess, would lie squarely with Rav Kook. These reassessments, all written by Israelis, are therefore all the

more striking in their negative evaluation of the impact of his thought fifty years on. They confirm Charles Liebman's judgement that "in the struggle for its goals, Rav Kook's conception of Orthodoxy has probably become institutionalised in forms he would have hardly recognised."

The picture that emerges is of a man who sought too much, who invested Jewish national rebirth with Messianic categories that could not be fulfilled in the given historic conditions of the new *yishuv*. His hopes for religious awakening among the socialist pioneers were not to be realised. Instead of intensifying his work at the human level, he turned inward to his writings. These, too, sublimated the conflict in vague and mystical ambiguities, allowing a new generation to distort his teaching into a simplified and dangerous doctrine.

But the fact remains that there are other interpretations, both of Messianism (see Menachem Kellner, 'Messianic Postures in Israel', *Modern Judaism*, May 1986) and Rav Kook, which lead in a different direction. There is a strand in contemporary religious Zionism which is moderate and gradualist, committed to the democratic process and sensitive to the rights of non-Jewish populations. And there is in Rav Kook's writing a call to humanity as powerful as any in the whole of post-Biblical Jewish thought: "The love of mankind, love of every individual and all nations, the wish for their success and spiritual and physical progress, must beat in the heart and soul."

In May, in a striking gesture of realism and moral courage, leaders of Bnei Akiva in Israel called on Orthodoxy to seek conciliation with secular Jews, to influence without calling for coercion, and to aim at greater understanding of Arabs and other non-Jews within the state.

This, we should not forget, is the other face of religious Zionism. It too is the living legacy of Rav Kook.

Jewish Studies on Campus

One practical question which concerned Rav Kook was: what is the proper curriculum for higher Jewish learning? Repeatedly in his letters he stresses the urgency of a new kind of study that would revitalise the Jewish spirit. Eventually he established a yeshiva – *Merkaz ha-Rav* – which he hoped would pioneer a new curriculum.

He was convinced that "the Torah cannot be confined to research of practical halakhah alone . . . Aggadah, exoteric and esoteric Midrash, works of research and study of Kabbalah, Mussar, philosophy, grammar, liturgy and poetry . . . these too are fundamentals of Torah". The yeshiva would undertake study of history, criticism, philosophy and poetry, establishing a new and genuine *Chokhmah Yisrael*. It would share the agenda and counter the influence of German-Jewish 'Science of Judaism' so that Jewish scholarship was no longer the exclusive preserve of "those who sought the destruction of Torah and faith".

The yeshiva was to achieve the task of greater inwardness, animating halakhic study by integrating it with a broad range of other Jewish disciplines. But Rav Kook was interested in the way Jewish education might confront secular studies as well. He saw this as a process of *sanctification*. There was no absolute distinction between holy and secular. The task was "to view the secular from the

perspective of the holy". Where was this to be achieved, if not in the yeshiva? His surprising answer was: in the Hebrew University at Jerusalem.

The Rav was not alone in conceiving a positive interaction between Judaism and secular disciplines. In different ways, Samson Raphael Hirsch and Franz Rosenzweig addressed the same question, Hirsch in his day school, Rosenzweig in his adult-education centre, the *Lehrhaus*, both in Frankfurt.

Hirsch maintained that, under the rubric of *Torah im Derekh Eretz*, Jewish and secular study should both be pursued. This would produce Jews who could live – and earn a living – in a non-Jewish culture without bewilderment and crisis. The study of history and science would also deepen their understanding of Torah. And being well-grounded in Jewish values, students would be able to "enrich their minds with all that is good and noble and true" in European literature.

Hirsch envisaged an education which led outwards from a strong inner core of Torah study. Rosenzweig came from the opposite direction. The *Lehrhaus* was directed to the assimilated Jew, highly sophisticated in his general culture and deeply ignorant of the Jewish sources. Rosenzweig spoke of a new learning which moved "from the periphery back to the centre; from the outside in." Precisely because his students were already highly educated, their encounter with Jewish tradition would be creative, for they were to bring to their discussions all their existing expertise. "In being Jews we must not give up anything, not renounce anything, but lead everything back to Judaism."

Despite their differences, these three thinkers share a dual assumption: that a harmonious relationship is possible between Torah and secular study, and that Torah unifies and integrates the various secular disciplines into a single, rich religious culture.

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In the latest *Newsletter of the World Union of Jewish Studies* (Winter 1986) Professor Eliezer Schweid asks what has happened to this integrative concept. His reply is that the reverse has occurred. Jewish and secular subjects are studied side by side in Israeli universities and schools, but with no inner connection between them. Worse: even Jewish studies are fragmented into separate compartments – Bible, Talmud, history, literature, philosophy. Worse still: even these subjects are studied independently of their counterparts in general culture. Philosophy is one subject, Jewish philosophy another; history is one subject, Jewish history another.

Schweid recognises the difficulties in reversing this fragmentation. Hirsch, Kook and Rosenzweig all failed fully to realise their ambitions, and since their time the Jewish world has become vastly more heterogeneous and divided. Nonetheless the problem must be addressed, and not only for narrowly religious reasons. At stake is the very issue of a distinctive Jewish culture in Israel. European and American universities are rooted in their respective national cultures. Desiring to imitate these models, Israeli universities have not come to terms with the task of shaping their own national culture.

He has three suggestions to make. First, that Jewish Studies departments should be more responsive to contemporary issues in Israeli life. Second, that there should be an integration of the various Jewish disciplines with their

general counterparts: Jewish history should be studied alongside world history, Jewish literature along with Western literature and so on. Third, that university faculties such as Education and Law should be linked with the Jewish Studies department so that what they teach is rooted in the Jewish tradition.

These are important proposals. Schweid is one of the great thinkers in contemporary Israel, and this is merely the latest expression of his long-standing concern with the state of Israeli culture. His view is that a national culture can only be creative if it is in contact with its past. Israeli secularism has committed a grave error in severing its roots with the Jewish tradition. Schweid believes that even a non-religious Israeli must be open to Jewish religious experience if he is to achieve personal depth and creativity. His strictures on the university teaching of Jewish Studies carry conviction.

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Schweid's concern is with Israel. Ironically it is in America that the great explosion in Jewish Studies has taken place. On the latest estimate there are Hebrew and Jewish Studies programmes in no less than nine hundred colleges and universities in the world, a major proportion in America.

This fact would have the German pioneers of modern Jewish scholarship turning in their graves. Steinschneider described his task as being "to give a decent burial to the literary remains of the Jewish past", and Leopold Zunz once predicted that by 1918 it would be almost impossible to obtain a Hebrew book. They were convinced that they were studying a dying tradition. A hundred and fifty years later, the Jewish academic world is very much alive.

In the latest issue of *Judaism* (Spring 86), the editor Robert Gordis invited a number of leading Jewish academics to evaluate this phenomenal growth. What have been its achievements? What are the problems?

All the contributors stress that the university is essentially a place of disinterested scholarship, not a context for meeting Jewish communal needs. Thus Marvin Fox: "Jewish Studies in the university setting cannot, and should not, be thought of as a method for solving Jewish problems or for addressing specifically Jewish concerns. It is not our task to repair the failures of Jewish education, nor is it our function to build Jewish loyalty or deepen Jewish faith in our students. This work . . . should be carried out by the Jewish home and by Jewish schools, seminaries or yeshivot."

So vehemently and so often is this disavowal made, that it is clear that the American Jewish community *does* harbour such expectations: it *does* want the campus to function as some kind of secular non-denominational yeshiva. Indeed, almost all the academics, having made their point then proceed to backtrack: though their task is not to serve the community, they *do* serve it. Jewish academics are a valuable adult education resource for local communities, argues Norman Stillman. University programmes attract Jewish youth because of their non-dogmatism, says Robert Chazan. Jewish students enrol in such courses because they are 'in search of their identity', despite Nahum Glatzer's caustic remark that academics are not interested in such people because they are "quite busy working with students who are ready to find other things than themselves".

No-one crusades for the campus more passionately than

Michael Fishbane of Brandeis. One could be forgiven for thinking that he sees university teaching of Jewish Studies as a new religious denomination, or at least as the modern heir to the *keter Torah*. It will "indirectly challenge monolithic, privileged or otherwise politicised notions of Judaism within the community." It may "generate new constellations of what was, and is, possible in Jewish life". It should "serve to safeguard the manifold dynamics of Jewish religious destiny against all attempts at its reduction or trivialisation." It might "develop and sustain a more self-conscious, honest and responsible religious life for the individual and the community."

This is fighting talk, as if university was the home for prophets, and institutionalised Judaism a place of corrupt priests. How, then, does the university relate to the various American-Jewish seminaries which teach institutionalised Judaism? Robert Gordis posed this question to all the participants. Significantly, none of them answered it.

The *Judaism* symposium sheds interesting light on the academic problems raised by the rapid growth of Jewish Studies – the struggle to find qualified teachers, shape curricula and methodologies, and define the very nature of the enterprise ('Are we teaching religion, history, philosophy, theology, sociology, literature or what?' asks Marvin Fox).

But the tension between 'Jewish Studies' and 'Judaism', campus and community, deserves reflection. Fishbane makes a telling point when he quotes Isaac Bashevis Singer as saying that Yiddish would become an academically respectable subject when there would be no Yiddish speakers around and it became a dead language. Is this the relation between 'Jewish Studies' and 'Judaism'?

Is the sudden interest in the academic study of tradition a search for a religionless Judaism? Is the university the functional equivalent of the *bet ha-midrash* for a thoroughly secularised Jewry? Has the professor succeeded the psychoanalyst as America's most recent rabbi-substitute? The academics themselves are clearly uncomfortable and ambivalent about the situation.

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If, willingly or otherwise, university Jewish departments have a quasi-religious role thrust upon them then it will not be 'objective' or non-denominational. If Judaism is taught as a civilisation, then what emerges (if unintentionally) is a kind of Reconstructionism without ritual. Significantly, Norman Stillman notes that those most secure in their religious identity – yeshiva *bachurim* – "seem to take few or no Judaics courses". Nor will it be an effective religious surrogate. Jacob Haberman quotes Thorstein Veblen, who wrote that the gifted Jew secures immunity from intellectual stagnation "at the cost of losing his secure place in the scheme of conventions into which he has been born . . . He becomes a disturber of the intellectual peace, but only at the cost of becoming an intellectual wayfaring man, a wanderer in the intellectual No Man's Land."

So higher Jewish education takes place at yeshivot, rabbinical seminaries and universities, no sector in genuine dialogue with the others though each may be parasitic on the others' creativity. Who will undertake the task of putting the pieces together to form a coherent whole? Who will perform the 'synthesis', the integration? Fishbane is right when he says this is a religious, not an academic, undertaking.

It is not a trivial one. At stake in Israel, according to Schweid, is the future of national culture. At stake in America is the future of Judaism. In the past it was theologians or 'thinkers' who performed the role. It was Hirsch or Kook or Rosenzweig who thought the problem through and provided models for its solution.

We badly need such thinkers today. And the transcending irony is that, despite the proliferation of yeshivot on the one hand, Jewish Studies programmes on the other, we have fewer now than we did even twenty years ago. We have become a culture of specialisms. There is no space left for the generalist: no career space, no intellectual space.

Jewish Studies ultimately needs the existence of Judaism if it is not to be another *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, a sophisticated burial rite. And Judaism ultimately needs the existence of grand, synthesising theorists. How to encourage such theorists, when on the campus they would lack respectability, in yeshiva they would lack acceptability, and in a rabbinical seminary they would lack utility, is the religious-cultural problem of our time.

We *must* solve it. Otherwise there is a new Hassidic tale in the making. It is told: When the Baal Shem Tov saw tragedy threatening Jews, he would go into the forest, meditate, light a fire, say a prayer, and the evil would be averted. His disciple, the Maggid of Mezeritch, would go into the forest and say: 'Master of the Universe, I no longer know how to light the fire, but I can still say the prayer'. In the next generation, when tragedy threatened, Moshe Leib of Sassov would go into the forest. He could not light the fire; he did not know the prayer; but he knew the place. By the next generation, Israel of Rizhin would say: 'Lord, I cannot light the fire or say the prayer. I cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is tell the story, and this must be sufficient.'

In our time, if we cannot light the fire or say the prayer or find the place or tell the story, we believe we can create chairs of Hassidic Thought, and tell the story of those who told the story.

This is *not* sufficient.

Anglo-Jewish Demography

For the last twenty years, the small Statistical and Demographic Research Unit at the Board of Deputies has done brilliant work in providing the data to back or refute our impressions about the changing face of Anglo-Jewry. Many of these findings are brought together to form a composite picture of *British Jewry in the Eighties*, (S. Waterman and B.A. Kosmin, 1986): compulsive and compulsory reading for all communal planners.

As Simon Rawidowicz put it, we are an ever-dying people, always writing our own obituary. Is Anglo-Jewry dying? Are assimilation, intermarriage, divorce, polarisation – the lachrymose litany of half the sermons uttered in the last decade – rampaging through our congregations, tearing the very fabric of Jewish life? The brief answer provided by Waterman and Kosmin is: Yes, but very slowly.

The Anglo-Jewish population is certainly in decline. Currently estimated at 330,000, it may have fallen by 25% since its peak in the early 50's. The most dramatic figures concern marriage rates. "Only half of those Jews born in the later 1950s and early 1960s who would statistically have been expected to marry in synagogues in the early 1980s actually did so." No-one knows why. Some emigrate, some

have only civil marriages, some merely live together, some marry out and some do not marry at all. Statistics are not available to tell us the proportions.

Divorce has increased: the rate in 1980 was twice what it was 15 years before. But it has risen less sharply among Jews than in the general population. Nonetheless, one in 6 Anglo-Jewish children will experience family break-up before the age of 16. And it is disturbing that only half of the Jewish couples who marry in a synagogue and then divorce obtain a *get*.

The community is ageing. The numbers of Jews over 65 is projected to be the same in absolute terms in 20 years as it is now, but it will be a larger proportion of the total population, and more heavily weighted towards the over-75s.

Part of Anglo-Jewry's population loss is Israel's gain. The number of British born Jews in Israel doubled in the 60's and doubled again in the 70's. The *aliyah* rate is about 750 a year, of whom about half succeed in making Israel their permanent home.

Of those who remain, most live in London. Greater London has some 200,000 Jews, or about two-thirds of British Jewry. The greatest concentrations are in Barnet, Hackney and Redbridge. In no area, though, are Jews the majority of the population. The only other community with a significant Jewish infrastructure is Manchester, with a Jewish population of 30,000.

In Britain, Jews identify by joining a synagogue; increasingly so, in fact. There has been some polarisation, but less than might have been imagined. Since 1970, 'central' Orthodox has seen its share of synagogue membership fall from 72% to 66%. Reform has risen from 12% to 16.5%. 'Right-wing' Orthodox has doubled and now stands at 5.3%. Despite predictions of the vanishing middle, it is clear that 'central' Orthodoxy will be numerically dominant for the foreseeable future.

If the decline is anywhere evident, it is in the fact that only 6 new United Synagogues have been founded in the last 25 years. Its largest congregations are already past their peak membership, and growth now belongs to the outer suburbs.

How many of the members attend synagogue regularly, once a week or more? The Redbridge Survey put the figure at around ten per cent of the population. More interesting was the finding that by far the most regular attenders were retired men and 'barmitzvah boys' (10-14). Men in their 30's were the worst attenders.

In education the shift has been from part-time classes to the day school. In 1967 there were 9,000 children in day schools; there are now 14,000. *Cheder* has correspondingly declined. From serving two-thirds of children then, it now serves half. Two facts stand out. One is that the Jewish education of girls is consistently neglected relative to boys. In Redbridge in 1978 over 20% of teenage girls had had no Jewish education whatsoever.

The second, also revealed by the Redbridge survey, is the extraordinary statistic that Jewish secondary school education had a *negative* effect on religious behaviour, as measured by synagogue attendance. Every other form of education had a positive impact – yeshiva, primary school, part-time classes, private tuition and adult education. The authors' comment is restrained: "Considering that secondary education in a Jewish day school usually follows a primary day school education the results are disturbing, particularly considering the disproportionate per capita

resources that are expended on this type of education."

The figures for occupational distribution show a disproportionate Jewish presence among doctors, accountants, university teachers and taxi-drivers. Jews have above-average representation in law, dentistry, pharmacy, clothing, and estate agency. The younger generation are moving into new areas such as the caring professions. This upwardly mobile population shoulders a considerable voluntary burden, financial and human, in providing Jewish social services. These now carry a budget of over £20 million a year and employ 2,000 people, backed by 4,000 volunteers.

This, then, is the shape of Anglo-Jewry in the Eighties. The Research Unit has, on slender resources, laid the groundwork for rational communal planning. Barry Kosmin, responsible for so much of it, and now departed to America, will be sorely missed.

What the report reveals is that we know next to nothing on two critical fronts: first, why synagogue marriage rates have halved; second, why and how Jewish secondary schools fail. Sound decision-making depends on information. It is a principle of halakhah and of common sense that we do not rely on presumption where we can clarify the facts. Research should be sponsored into these two areas. Without it, religious and educational policy will be a leap of faith, or of folly.

Notes

Moment magazine is published monthly. Subscription details from: *Moment*, 462 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02116, U.S.A.

Morasha: A Journal of Religious Zionism is published three times a year, and is obtainable from: *Morasha*, c/o Dor Hemshech, 515 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022, U.S.A.

Judaism is published quarterly. For details write to: *Judaism*, 15 East 84 Street, New York, N.Y. 10028, U.S.A.

Modern Judaism, mentioned in passing, is an academic journal of great distinction, now in its sixth year. Subscription information from The Johns Hopkins University Press, Journals Division, Baltimore, Maryland 21218, U.S.A.

We hope to review other journals in subsequent issues of *Perspectives*. America has a great many at the moment, almost all of them lively and extremely well-written.

British Jewry in the Eighties, by S. Waterman and B.A. Kosmin, is obtainable from the Board of Deputies, Woburn House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 0EP.

The quotations from Charles Liebman come from his 'Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life', reprinted in *Dimensions of Orthodox Judaism*, ed. Reuven P. Bulka, Ktav, 1983, and his 'Religion and the Chaos of Modernity' in *Take Judaism for Example*, ed. Jacob Neusner, University of Chicago Press, 1983 (p. 162).

Rav Kook's views on education are mainly to be found in his letters, *Iggrot ha-Reiyah*. The quotations come from volume I, pp. 187, 148. His remarks on the Hebrew University are to be found in *Chazon ha-Geulah*, pp. 266-273. Samson Raphael Hirsch's educational views can be found in *Judaism Eternal*, trans. Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld, Soncino, 1959, vol. I, pp. 155-220. Essays by Rosenzweig on education can be found in Nahum Glatzer's *Franz Rosenzweig*, Schocken, 1970, pp. 214-250.

An introduction to the thought of Eliezer Schweid is provided by Michael Oppenheim ('Eliezer Schweid: A Philosophy of Return') in *Judaism*, Winter 1986, pp. 66-77. Two of Schweid's books are available in English: *Israel at the Crossroads*, Jewish Publication Society of America 1973, and *The Land of Israel: National Home or Land of Destiny*, Associated University Presses, 1985.