

A NEW AGENDA FOR TOMORROW'S JEWISH COMMUNITY?

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What does it mean to be a Jew in the modern world; on the one hand, to carry on Jewish tradition and, on the other hand, to be open, receptive to, and influenced by the currents of Western Culture?

I. INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, Charles Silberman, the noted author and journalist, published his important book, "A Certain People."¹ Silberman's earlier books had been called *Crisis in Black and White* and *Crisis in the Classroom*. Most observers on hearing about the book automatically assumed it would be about a crisis in American Jewry. That was not at all Silberman's thesis. Silberman suggested a totally different view of Jewish life. He argued, first, that anti-Semitism was by and large unimportant except within the black community. Moreover, he commented that Jewish economic affluence was such that we should think in terms not of Jewish poverty but of Jewish resources. Finally, he described the internal health of the Jewish community as quite positive. Jews were in no danger of disappearing either because of paucity of births or because of a multiplicity of intermarriages. In other words, Silberman's thesis was celebrative of American Jewish life. His argument was that the Jews had really arrived in American society and, therefore, we should begin thinking in terms not of Jewish weakness but rather of Jewish power.

Since publication of Silberman's book

there has been a great deal of discussion of these issues—some under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee and certainly a great deal under other auspices.² There has been no question that Silberman hit upon a number of proper themes. Certainly, when one speaks of Jewish renewal, a great many positive developments have occurred that signify that Jewish culture and Jewish life in this country really do rest upon strong foundations. The renaissance of Jewish scholarship, for instance: over 300 universities offer majors in Judaica; or Jewish cultural production: witness the plethora of books on Jewish subjects published each year specifically by not only Jewish publishing houses, but by Harper and Row, Random house and others; also the development among younger Jewish families of informal networks, so-called *havurot*, of individuals and families trying to lead a more intensive Jewish life by grouping together around Jewish concerns; and in the field of Jewish education, a much-

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1. Charles Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today*, Summit Books, 1985.

2. For example, Silberman addressed the American Jewish Committee, National Executive Council, Miami Beach, Florida, November 1985. See also the following reviews of Silberman, *A Certain People*: Steven Bayme, "Crisis in American Jewry" in *Contemporary Jewry*, Volume 8 (1987), pp. 125-128; Nathan Glazer, "A Dream Fulfilled," *The New York Times Book Review*, September 1, 1985, pp. 1 & 17; Samuel Heilman, "Jews in the Land of Promise," *The New Leader*, October 7, 1985, pp. 16-19; Arthur Hertzberg, *The New York Review of Books*, November 21, 1985, pp. 18, 20-22.

maligned field: certainly the enormous development of Jewish day-schools in major cities around the country, offering intensive forms of Jewish education under all denominational auspices, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. These developments would not have been predicted years ago. They do signify real signs of Jewish renewal.

Yet, if Silberman is correct in positing that renewal is taking place, serious questions are raised about the depth of that renewal. How involved are Jews in their community? What are the real imperatives of Jewish life? What are the values that Jews live by? What are the ideologies of Judaism that Jews can speak about intelligently? In that sense some observers argued that Silberman was correct in positing a Jewish renewal that was "a mile wide" in scope but which was only an "inch deep." I would suggest taking it a step further and carrying the discussion onto a new stage. While the debate continues about the accuracy of Silberman's thesis, a number of new issues have come onto the Jewish agenda within the past three years that are not all touched upon in Silberman's book or in the considerable literature that has sprouted around it.

Three major issues have programmatic implications for the Jewish community. First the question of unity and disunity between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews. Second, the growing cultural alienation from Israel as the focal point of Jewish identification by American Jews. And third, the vision of Jewish leadership as we approach the end of the 20th century. We will discuss these three issues in detail, including the connecting links among them, and then suggest some of the possible directions to explore in the future.

II. JEWISH UNITY AND PLURALISM

Jewish unity has been a theme much discussed within the past three years. One view is that there is a primary polarization of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews, both

here and in Israel; polarization that has taken place both on the level of rhetoric, of stereotyping, of delegitimizing one group at the expense of another, and on another level, over concrete issues of Jewish identity. The so-called, "Who is a Jew" issue, or, as some have argued perhaps a bit more cogently, "Who is a rabbi in America" rather than "Who is a Jew in Israel." This question comes sharply to the fore in America in certain issues of personal status, in matters of divorce, remarriage, and patrilineal descent. Debates have taken place over whether these issues can be resolved, and whether, in broader, cultural terms, a Jewish community can be created in which all within it have real mutual respect and feeling of kinship. The prevailing stereotype among the Orthodox is that the non-Orthodox are less committed Jews, less involved, and weaker in their Jewish identity. Conversely, among the non-Orthodox, the prevalent stereotype is that the Orthodox are rigid, uncompromising, unbending and, perhaps most importantly of all, lacking in concern for the unity and welfare of Jews everywhere.

To discuss this complex question, we must begin with what we mean by Jewish unity. It has never meant that we are one Jewish people, slogans to the contrary. It has never meant a Judaism that has been or is monolithic. It has never meant a community in which agreement is the rule of thumb. If anything, the old saw, "where there are two Jews, you have three opinions," is a far stronger theme in Jewish history than the theme of "we are one." This former theme is by no means a recent one in Jewish history. As early as in Talmudic times, the rabbis were fond of saying there are seventy different interpretations of Jewish tradition. One ought not delegitimize another Jew because he happens to hold a different interpretation of what is correct and what is true. We have to recognize then that historically we have never been a unified, monolithic Jewish people.

Rather, pluralism has actually been the

norm in Jewish history. There have always been different Jews expressing different concepts of what it means to be a Jew. In that sense our response to the contemporary debates and contemporary polarization is to raise the question: what degree of religious pluralism do we want to encourage in America and what degree of religious pluralism do we want to encourage in Israel?

A successful pluralism has to have three major features. First, it encourages the view that each expression of Judaism—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist—contains both strengths and weaknesses, that no one movement has the complete answer, but rather that each of the movements has made major contributions to Jewish life and, as a result, members of each denomination ought to see those in other denominations as allies, as friends in building Jewish life rather than as destroyers of it. In other words, pluralism encourages a certain degree of modesty, a recognition that one cannot have the final truth because one happens to belong to a particular branch of Judaism.

To examine the implications of this criterion of pluralism for each of the denominations, let me begin with Orthodoxy. The Orthodox have compiled a commendable record in the education of their young. Jewish day schools are now the envy of the non-Orthodox community and have been emulated by Conservative and Reform leadership. The Orthodox family is extremely cohesive. Orthodox Jews enjoy a high birth rate and a low divorce rate, perhaps proving the proverb, the family that prays together stays together. When one enters into an Orthodox community, one is immediately struck by the intensity of commitment to Jewish life. Jewish values, issues and concerns permeate the day-to-day life of the Orthodox Jew. There is a strong commitment to, and a strong feeling of identification with, the Jewish people. And finally, some Orthodox groups have com-

plied a commendable record in outreach to unaffiliated Jews. Large numbers of adult Jews have rediscovered their Judaism in their adult lives and have joined up with Orthodox communities. Some parts of the Orthodox community are well-known for their hospitality, their willingness to accept people who want to join their ranks.

To be sure, Orthodoxy is by no means monolithic, and observers have frequently underestimated the degree of pluralism in contemporary Orthodox life. Hasidim, for example, are perhaps best known for their tightly-woven communities and their utilitarian relationship to the outside culture. In recent years, however, the modern Orthodox have succeeded in building their own subcommunities while maintaining closer and more positive ties to secular culture than their more right-wing counterparts. Modern Orthodox institutions have succeeded to the extent they have provided their members with strong communities fulfilling a wide range of social, cultural, and educational needs.

On the other hand, the Orthodox are plagued by a number of ideological problems. They have failed to confront the challenges of modern scholarship, in particular, modern Biblical criticism. Only recently have they begun even to debate the impact on Orthodox tradition and law of feminism and the drive for women's equality, involving some very grave matters, particularly the rights of women within marriage and in divorce.

The Conservative movement, similarly, combines both points of strength and points of weakness. Traditionally, the Conservative movement has fostered the academic study of the Jewish past, and to this day the Jewish Theological Seminary is probably the fountain-head of Jewish scholarship in this country. The problem with the Conservative movement, or as some have called it, its dilemma, is the wide gap between observance by its religious leadership and that by its laity. Sociologists have commented that if Conservative Judaism is truly devoted to living

by Jewish law, then it essentially failed to transmit that message to the hundreds of thousands of Jews who are members of its synagogues.

The Reconstructionists have only recently begun to emerge as a movement. For many years, Mordechai Kaplan hoped that Reconstructionism would serve to bridge the various religious movements. Only recently has it emerged as a fourth religious current. It is unclear what Reconstructionism's ideology currently is. It strikes many observers as eclectic. On the other hand, it is also a point of entry for many Jews who otherwise would remain unaffiliated.

Reform Judaism has traditionally prided itself on its emphasis on social action and on the ethical dimension of Jewish values. In more recent years, Reform has witnessed a greater return to tradition and to Jewish ritual. The debate between Zionism and anti-Zionism has disappeared from the Reform camp as Reform spokesmen and laity have become overwhelmingly supportive of the State of Israel, and indeed the State of Israel has become what some have called the "civil" religion of American Jews. That is a theme I will return to later. Yet, the dominant perception remains, even among Reform Jews themselves, that Reform Jews are somehow less committed, less involved than their Orthodox counterparts. As many Reform Jews have stated to me personally, they feel Reform is the last way station before one opts for secularism or even out of Judaism entirely.

I think the point to realize regarding all four of these movements is that all four represent reformulations of Judaism in the light of modernity. All four represent attempts to couch Judaism in distinctively modern terms yet retain a dimension of Jewish tradition and values. The dilemma of the modern Jew is precisely this question of what is the proper synthesis between tradition and modernity. All four of these movements are grappling with these questions. What modernity has done is to shatter the unity of our faith and

confront us with the dilemma of being a Jew in the modern world. In terms of the specific issue of Jewish unity, if we do not have a unity of faith, do we still retain a unity of people?

Recent events in Israel and the Diaspora may further challenge this unity of peoplehood. Proposed amendments of the Law of Return threaten Jewish unity by driving wedges, via legislation, between born Jews and those who have chosen to convert to Judaism under non-Orthodox auspices. Conversely, the absence of a uniform conversion procedure raises the specter of large numbers of individuals choosing, in good faith, to join the Jewish people, yet being rejected by other portions of the community.

Secondly, I think pluralism has to recognize some pragmatic realities, and one is that different Jews require different avenues or points of entry into Jewish life, what works for one set of Jews is not necessarily going to work for another set of Jews. At a time when we speak so much of Jewish alienation or disaffiliation, or of young Jews dropping out of the community, or of people being attracted to forces outside of the community, one has to recognize each of the movements as offering different points of entry for those who want to buy into the Jewish community and to find a Jewish identification that will speak meaningfully to them in terms of their particular and communal situation. Sadly, we don't do that. Each of the movements has been so vigorous in propounding its own ideology that it has also communicated the message that it is *the* entry point for Jews who are alienated.

This leads to the third point that if each of the movements is vigorous in propounding its own system, each must also recognize the intellectual integrity of the other movements. Each movement ought to acknowledge the spiritual authenticity and religious expression of the competing movements. Each must also recognize that when we call for pluralism we cannot call for ideological compromise. One can call

for ways of working together, of refraining from delegitimizing one another in terms of public rhetoric, but at the same time one has to recognize that a religious movement would not be faithful to its ideological principles if it could not defend and articulate those ideological principles with rigor and with intellectual integrity. To be sure, the Orthodox, by their own ideology, do not recognize the legitimacy of non-Orthodox formulations of Jewish teaching. Nevertheless, Centrist Orthodox spokesmen, notably Norman Lamm of Yeshiva University, have argued that the non-Orthodox movements must be recognized as "valid groupings," i.e. strong movements that represent large numbers of Jews, and their spokesmen be accorded a measure of "spiritual dignity."³

It is in that context that the question of Jewish religious polarization has occupied a great deal of the Jewish communal agenda in recent years. There are those who would argue that the degree of cooperation and unity far overshadows disunity. On the other side of the spectrum there are those who argue that disunity is actually an asset in Jewish life. It permits each movement to proclaim its own autonomy, to develop its own creativity, and what's more, and in perhaps a somewhat more cynical fashion, that some ideological controversy is desirable because it shows that people at least care about these issues.

I would suggest that the problems of disunity are quite real, both in Israel and in America, and they are directly related to the theme of the collapse of modern Orthodoxy. Modern Orthodoxy as a movement was developed and nurtured as a bridge between Judaism and Western culture. It was seen as ushering in a new era, one in which Jews could firmly identify within their tradition, yet be open, receptive and influenced by the currents of

modernization. Within the last twenty years, certainly 1967 may be a very good benchmark, developments within the Orthodox world have witnessed a sharp turn to the right. Yeshiva University, once considered a flagship of modern Orthodoxy, today has as its primary intellectual influences on the faculty individuals who delegitimize the culture of modernity and the effort at synthesis. The same is true of the rabbinical leadership in Israel. In other words, the weakness of modern Orthodoxy has undermined the bridge between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews and has contributed to polarization of rhetoric and relationships between one movement and another.

I would say in assessing the issue of Jewish unity and polarization that it is important to distinguish between attitudes of Jewish leadership and attitudes of the rank and file. Survey after survey of attitudes of rank and file American Jews, and to some extent those of Israeli Jews as well, indicate that the rank and file Jews are not that concerned with these issues. The recent furore over who is a Jew in Israel revealed why so many Israelis failed to comprehend why an issue that affected so few individuals could become such a core and vital question for American Jewish leadership. They are far more concerned with such basic questions as do Jews live in my neighborhood? Or, are members of other religious movements part of my society, than they are with the ideological issue of Who is a Jew and what is our attitude toward other members of other Jewish movements? Where the issue is crucial is on the leadership level. We have, in other words, an interesting conflict over what is important in Jewish life. Are the ideological factors with which the leadership is concerned more important than the structural factors which concerns the rank and file, such as: who are my friends, with whom do I work, who are my business associates and who are my social acquaintances. If one were to go back to Silberman, he would argue that

3. See, for example, the exchange between Norman Lamm and Aaron Twerski in *The Jewish Observer*, Summer 1988, pages 13-26.

social factors are far more important and as a result polarization is probably not that crucial an issue. On the other hand, I would argue that what makes Jewish life interesting are the ideas Jews profess. In that respect the ideological voices today point to increasing polarization. The policy response must be to encourage and nurture a pluralistic Jewish community.

III. AMERICAN JEWRY AND ISRAEL

A similar set of issues confronts my second major theme, that of the growing cultural alienation of American Jews from the modern State of Israel. We have gone through a number of phases in attitudes of American Jews towards the reality of the State of Israel. For many, Israel long served as a transcendental imperative for American Jews. It was the answer in terms of Jewish identity. Israel was the noble dream being created by a group of young, vigorous, intelligent Jews who wanted to create a Jewish state and a Jewish homeland that would essentially be a beacon unto the gentile world. Perhaps 1967 was the capstone of this period, in which, Israel has served as a cohesive force for American Jewish identity.

What did it mean to be an American Jew? It meant to be inspired by the State of Israel. Certainly the triumph of Zionism, a dream which some 80 years ago or 85 years ago was regarded as utopian nonsense, represented one of the most significant revolutions and most significant success stories in the entire history of the Jewish people. The victory of Israel in the Six-Day War against all odds and against a horde of surrounding enemies served to inspire the American Jew with a sense that to be a Jew was not to be necessarily a victim of persecution. To be a Jew meant to be a proud standard bearer of the Jewish tradition in its current incarnation and in its current phase of Jewish sovereignty. In the aftermath of 1967 Jewish life, certainly in America, was infused with a far greater degree of Israeli

content than ever before. Jewish educational programs on all levels—children, adolescents and adults—became infused with the theme of Israeli society as the basic center or the basic area of concentrating one's Jewish identity. It could manifest itself in terms of trips to Israel, seminars for college students and for adolescents, special one-day programs of Israeli content in Jewish schools. It represented itself around the dinner table; one rarely had a Jewish discussion in which the State of Israel did not play a major role.

It is this definition of Israel as the centerpiece of American Jewish identity in which the themes of Israel provided so much of the programming for American Jews that has begun to undergo a serious reevaluation. Especially since 1982, Jews have begun questioning to what extent their identity is a reflection of the inspiration and models coming out of Israel. Certainly, the Lebanon war in the summer of 1982 created all sorts of analogies with the American experience in Vietnam. Occupation of the territories, something that had been going on since 1967, became much more of a front-page issue in the aftermath of 1982, and began to give rise to the analogy which rings so harshly in our ears today, of comparing Israel with South Africa. On the religious phase the entire question of Who is a Jew perpetrated by the Lubovitcher Rebbe in Crown Heights, and his Haredi supporters in the Knesset, raised the specter of Khomeniism for modern Israel. And, finally, the election in the Knesset of perhaps the one Jew who has been delegitimated by nearly all American Jews, Meir Kahane, symbolized to American Jews the dilemma of identifying with an Israel which contains within its midst, on a leadership level, someone who is so alien to American culture, to American values and American traditions.

To be sure, all of these analogies are severely flawed. Lebanon was not Vietnam. Territories are not South Africa and Meir Kahane is effectively counterbalanced

by Israel's democratic structure. Yet the implications became very powerful for many American Jews. Namely, are we witnessing an Israel that continues to serve as a beacon and an inspiration, or are we witnessing an Israel with which we have an increasing amount of discomfort and difficulty identifying.

The recent controversy over proposed amendments to the Law of Return reflect the growing ambivalence American Jews have about their relationship with Israel. By mounting such a concerted and well-publicized lobbying effort, American Jews were signaling the necessity for continued engagement with an Israel State albeit with misgivings concerning the State's internal ethos and values. At stake in the minds and hearts of the Jewish leaders who are protesting the proposed amendments were long-range considerations about the future of Israel in terms of its values and public policy that might attenuate ties between Israel and American Jewry.

Several qualifications are in order. First, is the exception of the Orthodox themselves in America. They see what is going on in Israel and they by and large continue to like what is going on. They certainly have discomfort about many of these issues, particularly in terms of the occupation, but by and large the general shift to the right in Israeli society that has been a fact of Jewish life since 1967 and certainly since the election of the Likud in 1977, that Israeli shift to the right has been paralleled by what I spoke of earlier as the Orthodox shift to the right. In that respect the Orthodox look at Israel and like what they see.

Secondly, and I think this is the critical point in terms of the policy discussion, the questions of Jewish support and identification with Israel are primarily a subject of discussion on the metapolitical level rather than the political level. In terms of the political level, as we all know, when our friends are under siege, we tend to rally around the flag. And in that respect

we continue to argue that Jewish support for Israel remains strong, and with all of the agonizing over the current conditions in Israel we never want to see that translated as political weakness or as a crack in the wall of American Jewish support for Israel. It is rather on the metapolitical level that the question of Israel as the beacon of American Jewish identity has to be further discussed and further analyzed. In other words, even as American Jews continue to support Israel's security requirements, they question the degree of their cultural, religious, and spiritual identification with current Israeli realities.

Certainly, one of the things that we are currently beginning to talk about is what do we mean by a real partnership between American Jews and Israel? What do we mean by a new era in the relationship between American Jews and Israel? Does it move beyond Israel as the centerpiece, or Israel as the beacon of Jewish identity? Are we talking at the same time, a la Charles Silberman, of a Jewish renewal in this country? Does not this mean that we are talking in terms of bi-centralism? Others would argue Israel remains the center, but Diaspora Jews, particularly American Jews, can no longer be regarded as the periphery, but rather must be seen as partners with differing agendas yet with common interests. It is in that respect that some of the exchange programs that have been developed over the last few years represent attempts at developing metapolitical connections and metapolitical dialogues between Israelis and American Jews. When one group takes the other for granted or one assumes that the other has nothing to say in terms of concrete and substantive recommendations and suggestions, then we know we do not really have a partnership. It is the nurturing of that partnership that will allow us to continue to go down a certain road in Jewish history, continuing to build ties between us, yet at the same time realizing that ultimately if we are to work out our Jewish identity, we must have a strong Jewish

identity here and a strong Jewish identity in Israel.

I offer one anecdote to illustrate simply the tensions in the "partnership." I returned recently from the AJC Academicians Seminar in Israel. In our final evaluation session one of the American academics, one of the most thoughtful in the group, said "I'm afraid that one of the things that I consistently get the message from here in Israel is that if I'm going to work out my Jewish identity, it's got to be on my own terms. I wish my Israeli friends good luck, but ultimately their situation is not my situation." It's a problem. The minute we communicate that message, then we're talking no longer of a partnership between our communities, but we're talking of what I call the increasing cultural alienation of American Jews from Israel. In other words, classic Zionism posited a disappearance of the Diaspora. Herzl argued that those Jews who wanted to be Jewish will move to Israel and the rest of the Jewish world will be free to disappear, enter into gentile society. For some, he argued, even conversion was desirable. That classic Zionist theory has clearly run its course. The Diaspora, if you will, is here to stay in terms of a vibrant, coherent American Jewish entity and probably it is true for other segments of the Diaspora as well. The challenge then is overcoming cultural alienation and developing a true partnership.

IV. JEWISH LEADERSHIP

This leads me to my third theme, namely who would carry out such a partnership. And that raises the question of what is Jewish leadership, where is it going, what do we want to see in terms of American Jewish leadership of tomorrow? In this area we have also gone through three stages. As an immigrant community we tended to choose our leaders from the periphery of Jewish life, namely from those who had succeeded in the gentile world, had minimal Jewish connections,

but were nationally known, recognizable names for everyone in American society. A classic example, of course, is Justice Louis Brandeis. Brandeis was a leader from the periphery, one who discovered Jewish life very late in his career, yet for the Jews he was a major asset because he was a Jew who had succeeded in the American legal profession and had risen to the heights of the Supreme Court. That leadership from the periphery, I understand, is historically characteristic of almost all minority groups, especially immigrant groups who are unsure of themselves in the new society and want to establish that they are loyal productive citizens of the new community in which they have entered.

The second major phase, certainly the one that characterized the war-time years, was leadership by great rabbis who had become ambassadors to the gentile world. Stephen Wise, Abba Hillel Silver, and others effectively utilized their pulpits to promulgate Jewish values, concerns and interests onto American society.

Jewish leadership in the third generation became a much more Federation-oriented leadership rather than a rabbinically-oriented leadership and, as a result, much less ideologically concerned and much more concerned with creating consensus in Jewish life. That Federation model of leadership, by and large, is prevalent today. Jonathan Woocher has argued that Federation leaders of today articulate the "civil Judaism" of American Jews, namely, a common denominator of values which all Jews can agree to, such a Jewish peoplehood, support for Israel, identification with America.⁴ It is that civil religion of American Jews that Woocher suggests shapes most of the attitudes of today's Federation leaders. It is

4. See Jonathan Woocher, *Social Survival*, Indiana University Press, chapter 3. In other words, even as American Jews continue to support Israel's security requirements, they question the degree of their cultural, religious, and spiritual identification with current Israeli realities.

a form of Judaism, in which they are involved, which does not express itself in any ideological or any ideational values that will cause conflict or dissension within the community. One of Woocher's examples is that today's Jewish leaders are far more interested in the civil questions of Judaism than in the religious questions of Judaism. They are far more interested in the questions of anti-Semitism, of Israel, of Jews and the elections, than they are in the ideals, values and history of the Jewish people. This raises the question of what kind of leader then are we looking for? We have gone through a number of different models, yet we have no consensus either on the lay level or on the professional level as to what kind of leadership does the community need?

I think there are a number of issues that have to be discussed in this area. First what are the values of Jewish leaders? What do they believe in? Where is their current mind-set? Are their attitudes and values "in sync" with the rank and file Jews? Are the leaders leading the community or are they reflecting ideologies and values that are totally dissonant with what the Jewish communal agenda is all about? One obvious question, is whether the agenda of Jewish Communal organizations are "in sync" with the leadership attitudes prevalent in those organizations? In that respect a study of Jewish leadership attitudes is almost a prerequisite to any attempt to grapple with the issue of what are the ideological values of the leaders.

Secondly, on a philosophical level what kind of leader do we want? Do we want strong ideologists? Do we want consensus politicians? Do we want leaders that will move their constituencies towards other values and other goals? Jewish tradition and general thought provide a wealth of models of what we mean by a leader. Within our agencies, within our community, we have very little discussion of what leadership actually means.

Thirdly, on both lay and professional levels what training programs ought to come into being? Or, if they exist, how should they be enhanced to create a leadership that will bring us into the 21st century? On the professional level this applies to rabbinical schools and to schools for Jewish communal service. The newly founded Wexner Foundation has been actively trying to develop programs to create the professional leadership of tomorrow by enhancing the various settings and institutions where these leaders are trained. The same thing applies on the lay level. What programs exist to train our leaders for tomorrow and in what ways do we want to see those programs enhanced?

Finally, what do leaders need to know in order to be leaders? This is an area where we are far behind the corporate world in continuing education for people in leadership positions on both staff and lay levels. We have no consensus as to what leaders need to know about their Jewish heritage. What do they need to know about civil issues? What do they need to know in terms of organizational and management skills? We all have a sense that we need leadership, yet we have no clear vision of what we are looking for within that leadership.

No one can doubt that the American Jewish community confronts enormous challenges and opportunities as it approaches the close of the 20th century. Whether it will foster Jewish renewal or whether it will experience increased erosion will, in large measure, be a function of its communal leadership. Over many years a considerable infrastructure of communal institutions has been created to address the critical issues and public affairs of the Jewish community. The continued vitality of these institutions will, in large measure, turn upon the quality and caliber of the leadership they recruit and retain.

In that context, we must examine the following policy questions:

1. Does the Jewish community require its leadership to articulate a new agenda?
2. What do Jewish leaders need to know in order to lead?
3. Given the changing demographics of work and family, will we be able to draw upon the best talents in the Jewish community for leadership positions?
4. Given the diversity within the Jewish community, can we create a leadership that is itself pluralistic and accepts and advocates the desirability of pluralism?
5. What are appropriate models of lay-staff relationships?

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, let me note that I would suggest as a common theme, running through each of these three areas of Jewish unity, alienation from Israel, and Jewish leadership, is what we mean by a modern Jewish identity. What does it mean to be a Jew in the modern world; on the one hand, to carry on Jewish tradition and, on the other hand, to be open, receptive to and influenced by the currents of Western culture? At the root of the Jewish unity issue I suggested that the real problem was the collapse of modern Orthodoxy. As long as there was a movement trying to build bridges between traditional Judaism and Western culture, the modern Orthodox served as a central focal point not allowing either the right-wing Orthodox or the non-Orthodox to go their separate ways. With the collapse of modern Orthodoxy we have witnessed polarization. The same phenomenon applies in terms of cultural alienation from Israel. For a long time Jews saw their modern identity as embodied by Israel as a shining beacon, as an inspirational example. In the absence of that transcendental imperative, where Israel can no longer serve as that given form of inspiration, the challenge becomes, what is meant by being a Jew in the modern world? The same applies to leadership. If we had role models of Jews who worked in both civilizations, of Jews

who embodied both characteristics of what it means to be a modern Jew, then we could talk more coherently about what it means to be a Jewish leader.

In this respect while there has been much talk in the Jewish community about alienation, disaffiliation, and Jews joining the cults, what it all revolves around is how sure-footed are American Jews in articulating their own identity of what it means to be a Jew. Part of our difficulty with our Protestant and Catholic friends is that they have far less hesitation in speaking meaningfully out of their own traditions in today's society. Orthodox Judaism is experiencing somewhat of a resurgence in America, particularly in its right-wing formulations, precisely because the Orthodox speak out of a sense of being anchored in strong values, of being certain in what they want to see. For some they speak powerfully. For many they do not. The challenge to those who do not ascribe to right-wing Orthodoxy is whether we can speak to the broader American culture with the same degree of authenticity and sincerity about our Jewish values.

I began with Silberman, so permit me to conclude with him. I do think his thesis has to be seriously revised in terms of many of its premises. It emphasizes far too much the forms of Jewish life and too little the content of the community. But its major contribution to American Jewish thinking is very clear. Silberman is urging us to move away from the survivalist agenda that has dominated so much of our thinking for the past twenty years. Issues of anti-Semitism, assimilation, and intermarriage, are all very important issues, and obviously we have to continue paying attention to them. Silberman is telling us that ultimately these issues do not presage the disappearance of American Jews. One can take the *Newsweek* and *Look* magazine articles of the 1970s and consign them to the dust bin. Jewish life in America does rest upon strong foundations. Therefore, if the survivalist agenda is no longer

the most important or the most central agenda for American Jews, what exactly should we be looking at?

One can agree or disagree with some of the issues that are outlined in this article, but I think the common challenge they raise is if our survival is not in doubt, then let us address the question of what kind of Jewish community we want. If we need not worry about our disappearance, and we don't have that many enemies from without that are

going to overpower us, then let's ask another question of what kind of Jews we want to be in a modern era. It is to this set of metapolitical or metaphysical questions that Silberman provides a very strong impetus. Let us also keep in mind, the survival issues because, obviously we have to keep on our guard. But at the same time let us move beyond that to questions of the quality of Jewish life.