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## 5 Patterns of American Jewish religious behavior

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Historically, Jews have been defined as a religious group and continue to be so defined by scholars. Thus, an overwhelming majority of Jews define themselves accordingly. In fact, most major surveys conducted on America's Jews that pertain to religion typically inquire about denominational affiliation, synagogue or temple membership, attendance at synagogue or temple services, and performance of basic rituals. This follows from the classic definition of religion as defined by the French sociologist, Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), who suggested that religion is “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”<sup>1</sup> However, these questions and their corresponding responses do not provide sufficient information on the religious beliefs or religious behavior patterns of American Jews. Indeed, such a perspective misses much of what most American Jews view as their religious needs and character. This essay goes beyond those data and examines American Jewish patterns of religious behavior as well as belief in a sociohistorical context. In an effort to unravel the meaning behind these actions or convictions, I examine and interpret the various patterns, their changes over time, and their relationship with the broader patterns of religious behavior and belief within American society.

In the mid-twentieth century, several sociologists studied the initial manifestations of these Jewish patterns. On the basis of field research conducted on the Jews of Yankee City between 1930 and 1935, W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole<sup>2</sup> suggested that “the progressive defection of successive generations of Jews from their religious system in a process apparently nearly completed among the children of the immigrants themselves” was much more apparent than the defections among other groups. It was their observation that “the religious subsystem of [the Yankee City Jewish] community is apparently in a state of disintegration,”<sup>3</sup> primarily because of an economic factor. If Jews were to successfully compete in the economic sphere, Warner and Srole argued, they had to break with the traditional religious patterns that tended to

be restrictive, such as Sabbath observance. Although they readily dropped those religious traditions that inhibited their successful participation in the competitive race, Yankee City Jews did not opt for mass identificational assimilation nor did their actions result in the disintegration of the Jewish community. As Warner and Srole noted, what developed was a process of basic change in the nature of the community:

[T]he process of change is one of a replacement of traditionally Jewish elements by American elements. In the religious system of the Jews there is no such replacement. The Jews are not dropping their religious behaviors, relations, and representations under the influence of the American religious system. There are no indications that they are becoming Christian. Even the F<sup>1</sup> generation [the native-born generation] can only be said to be irreligious.<sup>4</sup>

The Jewish community, according to them, was culturally assimilating but not disappearing. Even as Yankee City's Jews shed their traditional Jewish norms, they did not eliminate the religious element from the group's self-definition. They did not cease to define themselves as a religioethnic group, nor proceed to become solely an ethnic group, nor seek to eliminate the ethnic component of Jewishness in order to define Jewishness as solely a matter of religion, as Reform had done.<sup>5</sup> Instead, they embraced Conservative Judaism, which they perceived as a progressive form of Judaism that was also rooted in tradition. It provided them with a framework within which they could behave as Americans while espousing an ideological commitment to tradition, so as to maintain an explicit emphasis on the ethnic character of Judaism. In other words, their Judaism was as much an expression of ethnicity as of religion.

In the 1950s, sociologist Will Herberg performed his own analysis of religion in the United States at the mid-twentieth century, arguing that the Americanization of Judaism "was characterized by a far-reaching accommodation to the American pattern of religious life which affected all 'denominations' in the American synagogue. The institutional system was virtually the same as in the major Protestant churches."<sup>6</sup> Herberg then proceeded to provide a vivid portrait of that Americanization as it manifested itself in a variety of American Jewish religious patterns, including the organizational structure of the synagogue as well as the structure of the synagogue edifice itself, the patterns of worship, ritual observance, and Jewish education. He further suggested that "by mid-century, all three of the 'denominations' were substantially similar expressions of this new American Jewish religious pattern, differing only in background, stage of development, and institutional affiliation."<sup>7</sup> That Herberg's observations about American Jewish denominationalism were either incorrect at the time he made them or

that the denominational patterns have subsequently changed radically is evidenced in the detailed analyses of Lazerwitz, Winter, Dashefsky, and Tabory<sup>8</sup> and Waxman.<sup>9</sup> Nowadays, it is less likely that one's denominational affiliation is a matter of sociology rather than ideology. Contemporary American Jewish Baby Boomers in different denominations are much more similar to each other socioeconomically than they have ever been. Denominational affiliation is increasingly a matter of personal choice, presumably based on decisions about theological issues as well as a desire for structure in one's life and the lives of one's family members.

Nevertheless, there are some important insights in Herberg's central thesis about religion in America at midcentury. When concurring with the theologian Reinhold Neibuhr, Herberg provides a conclusion that is reminiscent of Durkheim's theory of religion and society:

What Americans believe in when they are religious is . . . religion itself. Of course, religious Americans speak of God and Christ, but what they seem to regard as really redemptive is primarily religion, the "positive" attitude of *believing*. It is this faith in faith, this religion that makes religion its own object, that is the outstanding characteristic of contemporary American religiosity. . . . Prosperity, success, and advancement in business are the obvious ends for which religion, or rather the religious attitude of "believing" is held useful.<sup>10</sup>

This kind of religion, Herberg argues is, in essence, not religion but crass secularism, in that it is worship not of God but of the goals and values of American society, the "American way of life." Thus, even though there were increases in the rates of religious identification and affiliation, and increases in the percentage of Americans who placed importance on religion, it was not really religion and religious values but secular American social and cultural values that they were revering. Perceptive as he may have been, Herberg's critique was more theological than sociological and was a reflection of his personal spiritual transition from secularism to religion.<sup>11</sup> However, he was far from alone in deciphering the basic secularism of America's Jews, even as they continued to affiliate with American Jewish religious institutions.

Despite the many changes in American society and culture, including changes in patterns of identification and affiliation with formal institutions including religious ones, there are certain striking similarities between American Jewish religion at midcentury as depicted by Herberg and the more contemporary patterns. On the one hand, they do not manifest strong commitment to traditional Jewish religious ritual or belief. On the other hand, they are very strongly committed to the principle of social justice and the belief that it is the core of Jewish identity. For example, when a survey for the

*Los Angeles Times* asked respondents to indicate the quality most important to their Jewish identity, half of the respondents answered "social equality."<sup>12</sup>

On the heels of the first edition of Herberg's work, Herbert Gans, in line with Warner and Srole, again portrayed the religion of America as, actually, an expression of ethnicity, in his analysis of the acculturation and secularization of the Jews of Park Forest.<sup>13</sup> As he saw it, the temple was the center of most of the community's activities, but not because of its sacred status and the centrality of religiosity in the members' lives. On the contrary, it was the focal point because of ideological and institutional diffusion and its ability to adapt itself to the wishes and desires of its members. This is very much akin to what Peter Berger later portrayed as religious institutions being subject to consumer preferences.<sup>14</sup> As Gans saw it, in the case of America's Jews, the consumer preferences were essentially ethnic; that is, the temples, synagogues, and Jewish schools were, in the final analysis, manifestations "of the need and desire of Jewish parents to provide clearly visible institutions and symbols with which to maintain and reinforce the ethnic identification of the next generation."<sup>15</sup> At a later point, Gans broadened his analysis of both ethnicity and religion in America and concluded that they are "symbolic," in much the same way that Charles Liebman used the term, as distinct from ritualistic.

Rituals, Liebman argues, are *mitzvot*, meaning "commandments," where as ceremonies are symbolic acts that derive from and appeal to personalism, voluntarism, universalism, and moralism. He focused on the non-Orthodox, who constitute about 90 percent of American Jewry, and detailed how they create a uniquely American Judaism by both reinterpreting and transforming traditional rituals into ceremonies, and by producing entirely new ceremonies, all of which are performed within the context of the aforementioned modern doctrines or "isms." These isms, he concluded, "now have become major dimensions or instruments through which American Jews interpret and transform the Jewish tradition."<sup>16</sup>

Contemporary American Judaism is replete with the manifestations of the transformation of Jewish rituals into ceremonies. Perhaps one of the most prevalent is the Bar and Bat Mitzvah, which is traditionally a rite of passage at age thirteen for boys and twelve for girls, during which time the youngster becomes adult for the purposes of religious observances. In American Judaism, this ritual been transformed into ceremonious affairs where, even among Conservative synagogue members, approximately half have a nonkosher Bar or Bat Mitzvah reception.<sup>17</sup>

Another ritual that has been recently transformed is the gay marriage ceremony, during which the spouses wear *kipot* and *talitot*, the traditional skullcaps and prayer shawls worn by Jewish men and, more recently, by

some Jewish women. The ceremony is replete with the breaking of the glass, similar to the traditional ceremony, symbolizing the incompleteness of the joy so long as Jerusalem has not been ultimately redeemed.

The initial manifestations of the privatizing and personalizing of American Judaism were evident in the Havurah, a late-1960s movement that represented alienation from the institutionalized synagogue and its substitution in the form of countercultural prayer and study groups. In one of the few ethnographies of a Havurah, the Kelton Minyan, Riv-Ellen Prell provides important insight into its basic objective. As she found, its members sought to synthesize Jewish religious tradition as they understood it with their own modern American norms and values, and the Minyan functioned as the place where prayer and study were meant to be experienced in an egalitarian manner.<sup>18</sup> However, things did not always turn out as they had been envisioned, as Prell's analysis of the "prayer crisis" – members' inability at times to accept or find meaning in certain liturgy – clearly demonstrates.

One of the Havurah movement's founders and spiritual gurus was Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, who, having been ordained as a Lubavitch-trained rabbi, parted with Orthodox Judaism and developed his own non-Orthodox brand of Hasidic spiritualism in the hopes that it would bring about a "Jewish Renewal." As he saw it,

Jewish Renewal is based on the Kabbalah, Hasidism, and other forms of Jewish mysticism. These sources support a transformational and developmental reading of our current place in history. . . . Restoration is ultimately not a viable option because of the impact of the paradigm shift. . . . This expresses itself in the emergent voices of the emerging cosmology, in which old reality maps are scrapped and new ones emerge that are, if not identical, at least parallel to the intuitions and traditions of Jewish mysticism . . . augmented and at times even reshaped by feminism. . . . This in turn leads to a kind of healthy planetary homemaking and is concerned about ecology. This also calls for an eco-kosher *halakhah* and ethic. In order to become the kinds of Jews/persons who can effect the needed changes, the intra- and interpersonal work related to meditation and liturgy that are the laboratory of the spirit need to be renewed, and this leads to making prayer and meditation into a science as well as an art. Hence the need for a davvenology that is (1) an art and a science, (2) based on the Kabbalah, and (3) a generic empiricism.<sup>19</sup>

Among Schachter-Shalomi's proteges is Arthur Waskow, who was an early 1960s antiwar activist who adapted Hasidism to his social and political ideologies. He is currently a rabbi and director of a center committed to

spiritually healing the world, and he is also a leader of the Alliance for Jewish Renewal. He introduced an alternative Passover Haggadah, *The Freedom Seder*,<sup>20</sup> which transformed the Jewish Seder ritual into a universalistic one. He later created a unique Jewish festival commentary, *Seasons of Our Joy*.<sup>21</sup> In all of his works, he puts a Jewish–Hasidic–spiritual cloak on his political and social radicalism. For example, in his more recent work, *Down-To-Earth Judaism; Food, Money, Sex, and the Rest of Life*,<sup>22</sup> Waskow adopts Schachter-Shalomi’s concept of *ecokosher* and argues for expanding the definition of *kosher* to include not only food but every kind of product that Jews “ingest.” Rhetorically, he asks a series of confrontational questions, such as whether it is kosher to use newsprint in a Jewish newspaper when it was created by cutting down an ancient forest, or whether a bank that invests its money in an oil company that pollutes the ocean is a kosher place for either an individual or the United Jewish Appeal to keep accounts. Moreover, Waskow’s views on sexuality are anything but traditional. He asserts that a religion that sanctions sex only within marriage is not a realistic one, and instead he looks for ways in which Judaism can celebrate all human sexual relationships, whether within marriage or without, whether heterosexual or homosexual.

Schachter-Shalomi and Waskow may be unique, but their influence is significant. They were among the major figures in the neo-Hasidic and mystical movement that emerged alongside the Havurah movement.<sup>23</sup> Most of those involved in the Havurah movement were not as radical as Waskow nor as neo-Hasidic as Schachter-Shalomi, but they were interested in spiritualism in nontraditional ways. It was within that context that *The Jewish Catalogue* was written. Patterned after the *Whole Earth Catalog*, a work that was very popular in the 1960s counterculture, *The Jewish Catalogue* quickly became a bestseller and a publishing phenomenon in American Judaica<sup>24</sup> and was the first of two additional such catalogs. In a critical review, Marshall Sklare expressed his disdain for the “new personalism” represented in the work. Although, he asserted, “in most areas of life discussed . . . the relevant Jewish law is scrupulously reported, where applicable . . . the dominant stress quickly shifts to the experiential side of the subject in question, the side connected with issues of personal style, of taste, and aesthetic pleasure.”<sup>25</sup> It was not just one book that Sklare was reacting to; for him, it was another line in the transformation of American Judaism that had begun in the Palmer, Massachusetts branch of Conservative Judaism’s Camp Ramah, then to the *havurot*, and then to the creation of a guide for the privatization of Judaism. It was not this book that disturbed him so much as its further impact on American Judaism. Whether or not Sklare was correct in his specific criticisms of that volume is beside the point. In the final analysis, the empirical evidence appears to confirm the transformation, the privatization of much of American Judaism. This is even the case, to some degree, with some

varieties of Orthodox Judaism,<sup>26</sup> such as the “nominally Orthodox,” who are much more selective in their ritual observance and religious beliefs than the “centrist” Orthodox, who in turn are more selective than the “traditional” Orthodox. Although there are neither Orthodox who overtly assert the non-binding character of *Halakha* nor any who overtly legitimate nonconformity with basic requirements of dietary and family purity rituals as well as Sabbath, there are those who are selective in their own personal conformity with Orthodox beliefs and norms and are thus described as “behaviorally modern Orthodox.”<sup>27</sup>

The increased personalism and privatization of not only Judaism but religion in general appears to be a phenomenon that transcends America's geographic boundaries and is, in fact, much more pervasive in other, mostly Western, countries. The political sociologist, Ronald Inglehart, has conducted comprehensive cross-national surveys, and his analyses reveal broad international patterns for which he provides a penetrating sociological explanation. In his analysis of survey data gathered in twenty-five industrial societies primarily in Western Europe and the United States between 1970 and 1986, Inglehart argues that “economic, technological, and sociopolitical changes have been transforming the cultures of advanced industrial societies in profoundly important ways.”<sup>28</sup> Following Maslow's need hierarchy, according to which the need for food, shelter, and sex are on the lowest rung and must be satisfied before a person can move up the pyramid to its apex, self-actualization, Inglehart maintains that individuals are most concerned with the satisfaction of material needs and threats to their physical security. “Materialist” values, which are characteristic of less secure, economically and otherwise, societies, Inglehart avers, are values that emphasize material security. In the area of politics, these would focus on such needs as strong leaders and order. In the realm of economics, the values emphasize economic growth and strong individual achievement motivation. In the area of sexuality and family norms, the emphasis would be on the maximization of reproduction within the two-parent family. Within the realm of religion, the emphasis is on a higher power and absolute rules. However, once the basic material needs are satisfied and physical safety is ensured, individuals strive for “postmaterialist” values; these entail the satisfaction of more remote needs, many of which are in the spiritual, aesthetic, and interpersonal realms. Their focus becomes self-fulfillment and personal autonomy, rather than identifying themselves with their families, localities, ethnic groups, or even nations. The “culture shift” is manifested in a declining respect for authority and increased mass participation; an increasing emphasis on subjective well-being and quality-of-life concerns; an increasing emphasis on meaningful work; greater choice in the area of sexual norms; declining confidence in established religious institutions, as well as declining rates of church attendance; and an increasing



contemplation of the purpose and meaning of life. This shift, which entails a shift from central authority to individual autonomy, has taken place in a "postmaterialist" society, that is, the West in the late twentieth century.

For institutionalized religions, this has meant they can no longer count on traditional allegiance. In modern society and culture, religion's ability to locate us and provide that order and meaning is greatly diminished. As Peter Berger puts it, the intricately interrelated processes of pluralization, bureaucratization, and secularization that are endemic to modernity have greatly shaken the religious "plausibility structures."<sup>29</sup> Although "a rumor of angels" prevails, it is but a rumor in modern society, and it coexists with a "heretical imperative." In other words, the pluralistic character of modern society impels us to make choices, including religious ones.<sup>30</sup> We are no longer impelled to believe and act. We choose, even when we choose to be religiously Orthodox. From the standpoint of traditional religion, Berger points out that this is heresy because it "comes from the Greek verb *hairein*, which means 'to choose.' A *haireisis* originally meant, quite simply, the taking of a choice."<sup>31</sup>

The growth of fundamentalism and *haredism* in advanced Western societies in no way disproves Inglehart's thesis. He argues that it is precisely the conditions of postmodernity that foster religious fundamentalism, which is typically reactionary and arises as a defense mechanism in reaction to the deep fears and anxieties inherent in the situation. It is, as Inglehart suggests, a reaction to the growth of postmaterialism,<sup>32</sup> and, in most advanced societies, fundamentalists are a minority who can, at most, slow down some of the impact of postmaterialism. It may be predicted that the greater the size of the fundamentalist constituency in a given society, the more it will be able to have an impact on consequences of postmaterialism in that society. In their most recent study, Inglehart and Wayne Baker found that, although attendance at religious services is declining in postmaterialist countries, including the United States, close to half of the Americans surveyed say that they often think about the meaning and purpose of life, and fully half rate the importance of God in their lives as very high. They found that allegiances to the established religious institutions are continuing to decline in postmaterialist countries, but spiritual concerns are not.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, during the closing decades of the twentieth century, there was a significant increase in spirituality in the United States as a whole. As reported by the Religion Editor of *Publishers Weekly*,

[I]n February 1994, the Association of American Publishers . . . had already reported that the sales of books in the Bible/religion/spirituality category were up 59 percent nationally over sales for February 1992.

Earlier, in June 1992, *American Bookseller*, the official publication of the American Booksellers Association, had devoted six pages to this emerging pattern, declaring that “the category’s expansion is indisputable.” An even earlier Gallup study had projected that the largest sales increase in nonfiction books in the twenty-first century would be in religion/spirituality books (82 percent growth by 2010 over 1987), to be followed at a considerable distance (59 percent) by second-place investment/economic/income tax books. As if in preparation for that predicted pattern, the American Booksellers Association in 1995 opened for the first time a special section of its annual convention and trade show for what it categorizes as “religious/spiritual-inspirational” books.<sup>34</sup>

It is not only in books but in television as well that Americans demonstrate a deep involvement with spiritualism. One highly popular weekly show – indeed, it was among the ten most-watched television shows in the country in 1999 – was *Touched by an Angel*, a show that featured the well-known singer and actress Della Reese as an angel who oversees the work of her angels in the field. Each week, these angels, who look like ordinary humans, would help people who are in trouble, undergoing a crisis, or otherwise unhappy by convincing them that God loves them and that, if they only seek Him out, He will respond and help them to change their lives for the better. The numerous references to God and His mercy were completely out of character with what American prime-time network television had previously been. It simply had not been considered proper to mix religion, which had been relegated to the private sphere, into the mass media public sphere in any serious way. This was not just mysticism or spirituality, but rather traditional Biblical notions about God and His ways, something that the mass media have long avoided like a plague.

In 1999, Andrew Greeley and Michael Hout analyzed survey data from the past several decades and found that an increasing majority of Americans responded affirmatively to this question: “Do you believe there is a life after death?” Between 1973 and 1998, the figures rose from 77 to 82 percent. In fact, the increases have been across the board, among various religions as well as among those claiming no religious affiliation, and have been the greatest among America’s Jews. These figures appear to indicate an abandonment of secularism and a return to religious consciousness and religiosity.

In the summer of 2000, Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, an Orthodox Jew, was nominated as the Vice Presidential running mate on the Democratic ticket. He so frequently made reference to God and traditional religion that he was asked, by a number of national organizations – including a Jewish

one – to tone down those references, lest he weaken the separation of religion and state. Nevertheless, his very nomination suggests that traditional religion is viewed positively among the American public. There has also been a proliferation of books about Kabbalah and, as a book critic for the widely circulated Jewish weekly newspaper, the *Jewish Week*, found, “new titles are coming from Jewish publishers and university presses as well as mainstream commercial houses that only a few years ago would have found the subject too much on the fringes.”<sup>35</sup>

Whatever else the rise in spirituality in American culture may mean, however, it does not mean a return to religiosity in the sense of normative, institutionalized religion. As both Robert Wuthnow and Wade Clark Roof argue, the contemporary spirituality is largely a search or “quest” by the individuals of the Baby Boomer generation and their children to find “purpose” and “meaning” in the individuals’ personal existence. As Wuthnow suggests, the sacred has been transformed into something fluid. The Baby Boomers are the first to have “opportunities to explore new spiritual horizons,” and in the past two decades they sought it within themselves, in their “inner selves,” rather than within the church.<sup>36</sup> On the basis of his analyses of religion and spirituality among Baby Boomers, Roof argues that Americans’ ideas and practice of religion is motivated by a search for a sense of spirituality and personal fulfillment. Americans are looking beyond traditional religious institutions and identities and are on a spiritual quest, borrowing different elements from a variety of practices now available to them in the ever-expanding spiritual marketplace.<sup>37</sup> The rise in spirituality was, thus, part and parcel of the pattern of personalism and privatization that is increasingly characteristic of American religion, in general, and American Judaism, in particular.

The increased personalism and privatization present powerful challenges not only to established religious institutions but also to all institutions. For Jews, these are challenges to the very unity of the Jewish people. As Charles Liebman has penetratingly analyzed it, the privatization of Judaism weakens the basic nature of ethnic Judaism. The “new spiritualism” thus weakens the basic Jewish notions of peoplehood, community, and solidarity.<sup>38</sup> His argument appears to receive support from a broad analysis by political scientist Robert Putnam, who amassed a wide array of empirical evidence indicating that Americans are increasingly less likely to be involved in civic activities and are detached from social groups such as community. They are less likely to join parent–teacher associations, unions, political parties, and a host of other social groups, all of which, he argues, has serious implications for the future of American society.<sup>39</sup> For Jews, it also has serious implications for Jewish peoplehood and the Jewish community.

The connection between commitment to tradition, commitment to institutions, and commitment to the group are apparent in the intense involvements in the haredi community with charity and social welfare, or *zedaka* and *gemilut hasadim*. For example, Netty Gross reported on a major study of volunteerism in Israel by Benjamin Gidron of Ben-Gurion University, who had found that “nearly 45 percent of ultra-Orthodox Jews volunteer . . . compared to 15 percent of secular Israelis.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the greater propensity for charity is not limited to haredim. As the Guttman Center 2000 study of Israeli Jews found,

Comparison of the civic and social priorities of the various sectors highlights an interesting phenomenon that has been noted in earlier studies: “religiosity” is associated with altruistic social values. For example, “contributing to society” is very important for 64% of the religious/strictly observant, as compared to 55% of the traditional/somewhat observant, 48% of the non-religious/somewhat observant, 41% of the non-religious/non-observant, and only 33% of the anti-religious. A similar pattern is evident for “being a good citizen” and “understanding another person’s point of view.” . . . The altruistic Jewish values of “helping the needy” and “giving charity” are also more important to the religious/strictly observant (81%) and the traditional/observant-to-a-great-extent (as high as 70%) than to the non-religious/non-observant (31% and 16%) and the anti-religious (28% and 12%). The pattern noted above, that religious and traditional respondents attribute greater importance to helping others than do the non-religious and anti-religious, recurs here. However, there has been a significant rise in the importance of these two altruistic Jewish values among Israeli Jews in general – from 32% to 42% (“giving charity”) and from 41% to 56% (“helping the needy”).<sup>41</sup>

In a similar vein, my analysis of American Jewish Baby Boomers indicates that patterns of charity vary denominationally. Of the Orthodox Baby Boomer respondents, 80.5 percent reported contributing to Jewish charities, compared with 56.4 percent of the Conservative, 43.5 percent of the Reform, and only 40.7 percent of the denominationally unaffiliated. Almost 95 (94.4) percent of the small number of Reconstructionists in the sample reported that they contributed to Jewish charities. The significance of affiliation within the three major denominations becomes even sharper when family size and family income are considered. Orthodox Baby Boomers reported larger families and lower annual family incomes than those who are Conservative or Reform (an average of about \$10,000 a year less than the Conservative and \$20,000 less than the Reform). However, 70.8 percent

of the Orthodox reported contributing \$500 or more to Jewish charities, as compared to 18 percent of the Conservative and 15.7 percent of the Reform. Of the unaffiliated, only 11.4 percent reported contributing \$500, and none contributed more than \$1,000 to Jewish charities.<sup>42</sup>

For all of their beneficial qualities, the postmaterialist values conflict with the traditional religioethnic bases of the Jewish community. Although membership in the American Jewish community was always voluntary, from the legal-political perspective, it was much less voluntary before the denominational institutions of America were overtaken by what Berger calls religious free enterprise and consumer demands, which are today guided by individualistic values. Religious authority has declined even as the so-called spiritual quests of the Baby Boomers intensify. Spiritualism is consistent with postmaterialist values; institutional religious loyalties and religious authority are not. It is for these reasons that Reform and Reconstructionism are the denominations most appealing to those Jewish Baby Boomers that wish to identify religiously. Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism reflect and reinforce many of the postmaterialist values to a greater extent than the more religiously conservative denominations do. In addition, Reform Judaism, in particular, has incorporated, in a nondogmatic manner, many more of the rituals and customs of traditional Judaism than it had in the past and, thus, attracts those who, for one reason or another, find those rituals and customs appealing.<sup>43</sup> Orthodoxy and, to some extent, Conservative Judaism, by contrast, profess the notion of religious law, tradition, and authority; in this way, they do not speak to those for whom the values of individualism are primary.

Nevertheless, these denominations are not immune to the impact of the larger culture. Conservative Judaism was, from its inception, a bold attempt to enable adherence to tradition while not restricting participation in the larger American society and culture. As Elazar and Geffen indicate, however, many have opted out of the denomination altogether and most of those who have not have religiously liberalized it from within.<sup>44</sup> Within Orthodoxy as well, although the dominant trend is one of increasing fundamentalism,<sup>45</sup> there appears to be an opposite, although smaller, movement within Modern Orthodoxy. Both in the United States and in Israel there are increasingly organized public challenges by individuals and groups within Orthodoxy to the established rabbinic elite and their interpretation of correct Jewish law, Halakha. In the United States, these manifest themselves in the now-annual conferences of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) and Edah, an organization whose motto is “the courage to be modern and Orthodox” and that seeks “to give voice to the ideology and values of modern Orthodoxy and to educate and empower the community to address its concerns.”<sup>46</sup> These

conferences attract many hundreds of attendees and appear to grow larger each year. Although they are not quite as organized, there have been similar developments in Israel.<sup>47</sup> What the impact of these developments will be on the broader Orthodox community remains to be seen. It is also not clear that the numbers of such Orthodox have actually increased. It may well be that they are the same proportion of the Orthodox population that they had previously been; the change is that they are now more vocal and attempting to organize. Be that as it may, it alone is a reflection of the larger cultural patterns of postmaterialism.

Since September 11, 2001, however, there may have been another significant shift, this time in the opposite direction. The bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City, the subsequent anthrax terrorism, the "Al Aksa Intifada" with its suicide bombings, and the increasing struggle with Iraq appear to have shaken the sense of complacency that characterized much of the West in recent years. There is now a significantly heightened sense of fear and anxiety concerning the future of global terrorism. There is a decreased sense of security in the United States, and there have been increased manifestations of civic involvement, some of which Putnam himself indicated shortly after the destruction of the Twin Towers.<sup>48</sup> For America's Jews, the shift is much more profound. In addition to all of the aforementioned stresses, there is a sense of growing anti-Semitism "out there," as eloquently and powerfully expressed by Jonathan Rosen in *New York Times Magazine* article after September 11.<sup>49</sup>

All of this has almost certainly impinged on the religiosity of America's Jews. The questions that remain are how long-lasting will the effects of these events be and to what extent will they slow down or even reverse the trend of postmaterial culture, including religion and spirituality.

### *Notes*

1. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [1912], trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 44.
2. W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups*, Yankee City Series, vol. III (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).
3. *Ibid.*, 199–200.
4. *Ibid.*, 202.
5. Chaim I. Waxman, *America's Jews in Transition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 15–17.
6. Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, rev. ed. (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1960), 191.
7. Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, rev. ed. (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1960), 195.
8. Bernard Lazerwitz et al., *Jewish Choices: American Jewish Denominationalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

9. Chaim I. Waxman, *Jewish Baby Boomers: A Communal Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).
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