The Jewish Family: Authority and Tradition in Modern Perspective*

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. . . the modern Jewish family can become . . . a social unit which retains generational differences, where children with such fundamentals of human relationship as love, interdependence, and respect for elders, and where parents and children mutually respect each other's needs for authority and independence.

THE title of this presentation is the same as the book that I wrote while on a post-doctoral fellowship at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem during the 1980–81 academic year. The central theme of the book, as well as this paper, is the relationship between parents and children in the context of traditional authority and individual autonomy.

My interest in this topic derived from the subject of Jewish political philosophy that we studied at the Institute. Throughout the study of various figures of political import—the king, the sage, the prophet, and the local community—the major theme was political authority, its sources, its dynamics in relationships, its role in maintaining social order, and its relationship to the autonomy of the individual. We asked such questions as: Is the individual permitted to disagree with the central authority system in Jewish life? Does Jewish law sanction intellectually honest disagreements? Is religious pluralism possible?

The relationship between the authority of Jewish tradition and the autonomy of the individual serves as the philosophical framework of this pres-

entation. It is closely related to both the traditional and modern Jewish family because the essence of children's growth and parents' functioning lies in the encounter between parental authority and child independence. My goal is to discover in Judaic classical sources a framework from which to understand this issue in the contemporary Jewish family. The perspective is conceptual, not programmatic; the translation into program needs to be done by those actively engaged in services to Jewish families. My focus is on the intact nuclear family, as the classical sources were addressed to families composed of two parents and their children. The intent is not to exclude the single parent family and the reconstituted family. Rather, it is hoped that through the research of traditional intact families, modern families with different structures can also derive insights and understanding of their goals, values, and functions. Professionals, too, can draw inferences from the classical sources that they can apply to the variety of families whom they serve. This presentation is divided into four parts:

 I. Traditional Authority and Individual Autonomy
 II. Authority and Independence in the Jewish Family
 III. Models of Authority—Autonomy Relationships in the Modern Jewish Family
 IV. The Professional Role

I. Traditional Authority and Individual Autonomy

The authority of tradition, according to Max Weber,[1] is based on a people's belief in the legitimacy and sanctity of what has always existed. Traditional authority is basically irrational because the force of the tradition defies logical changes in its rules. The answer to the question, "Why must we do it this way?" is, "Because we've always done it this way." The documents of tradition permit only its development within the framework of what was, but not serious questioning, disagreement or change. Weber apparently did not conceive the possibility that both tradition and authority might be rational.

In contrast to Weber, Karl Popper[2] suggests that there are two main attitudes possible toward tradition: to accept it as it is, uncritically—first order tradition, or to evaluate it critically—second order tradition. Tradition, in the first order attitude, provides order and stability in social life. Life is generally predictable, for people can orient their behavior in anticipation of responses from others that have been traditionally prescribed and structured. In this sense, traditions, theories and institutions function in similar ways. Second order tradition characterizes modern science which grows primarily by revolutionary changes in scientific theories. When the second order approach is applied to religion, it introduces evaluation and innovation, and challenge to its authority. Broadly speaking, pre-industrial societies tended toward a first-order attitude and modern society tends toward a second-order attitude.

In contrast to pre-modern societies, traditions and institutions in modern society are subject to greater rejection. Their taken-for-granted character has been eroded in the face of the pluralization of choices in the modern world. As institutions proliferate, they create many more programs for human activity, thus opening up numerous possibilities for individual choice. When choices abound, and the traditions and institutions lose their prescriptive character, the individual is thrown back upon himself to find his own answers to perennial human questions. This "subjectivization,"[3] even in matters of religion, opens up the possibility of choosing among beliefs and rituals, with the option of discarding the old and experimenting with the new.

Four Options for the Retention of Tradition

Peter Berger posits three options for those who want to retain religious tradition in the face of multiple choices. The *deductive* option reaffirms the authority of the tradition in defiance of the challenges to it. It is believed that the religious tradition is relevant for all times and places. The individual deduces religious affirmations that objectively validate his existence in the midst of secular society. In the *reductive* option, the individual interprets the tradition in secular terms because he feels a compelling necessity to partake in the modern consciousness. He translates into modern categories those religious traditions that speak of faith, ritual, and the spiritual. The tradition is thus reduced in the process of de-mythologization. In the *inductive* option, the individual turns to his experience as the ground of all religious affirmations. He searches for similar experiences in religious history

[1] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons, eds. and trans.). New York: Oxford, 1947.

[2] Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. New York: Harper, 1965.

[3] Peter L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*. New York: Doubleday, 1979, p. 22.

in order to validate its meaning for him. Traversing back into history to establish the accuracy of his own contemporary experience ties the individual to his past and legitimates his current reality.[4]

There is a fourth option, the *integrative,* that transcends those of Berger, which I offer as potentially the most viable for the modern Jew. This option selects certain aspects of the other three options and discards the rest. It accepts as essential the priority of commitment to Jewish tradition from the deductive option, and rejects the requirement of total submission to traditional authority and the denial of reason in re-thinking the tradition. It accepts the use of reason from the reductive option, and rejects the elevation of reason above the tradition, for that leaves no room for the experience of the numinous. It accepts the significance of present experience from the inductive option, and rejects its anthropocentric thrust and the limiting of the tradition only to those events which parallel contemporary human experience. In the ensuing integration, the individual expresses his commitment to Jewish tradition but retains an intellectual openness to its inherent diversity. He utilizes analytic tools to understand the tradition in its own terms, and then translates it into his realm of experience. Commitment, reason, and experience are combined by the individual into a continuous effort at uncovering the past and integrating it with the present. One of the consequences of the integrative option is the elusiveness of attaining the final truth and completing the integration process, which conduce to living in a permanent state of tension and uncertainty.

The four options can perhaps be better understood when applied to a concrete phenomenon: the State of Israel. Those who adopt the deductive option view Israel as the holy land promised to Abraham at the dawn of Jewish history. The modern, secular state is not sanctioned by tradition. Redemption of the Jewish people and land will come from Divine intervention and not by human effort.

Supporters of the reductive option view Israel as a state among other nation-states with the right to create its own political, economic, and social policies autonomously. It is a Jewish state because Jews inhabit it. As a state, it is devoid of religious and spiritual endowments.

The advocates of the inductive option feel warmth and nostalgia when they visit Israel. They sense that Israel's magnetic attraction is different than that of any other country. In order to understand this emotional experience, they look to Israel's past to derive meaning from its history.

The adherents of the integrative option insist that the great challenge of Israel is to maintain both the dream and the reality of Jewish living. Israel is the public testing ground of the power and credibility of Jewish ideals. It shatters complacency with dreamlike Judaism. "Judaism must embrace all aspects of life—the army, the farm, the city, the hospital, the nursery school, the police force . . . The Israeli reality scales dreams down to a size where they can become useful and empirically meaningful; it provides the soil vital for the unfolding of a living Torah."[5] The integrative option challenges the modern Jew to combine the essence of the dream—the past—with the legitimacy of the reality—the present—with all their incompleteness and uncertainty. Israel serves as a laboratory for the reality testing of this approach to Jewish living in the modern world.*

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[5] *Israel: A Study Guide.* Jerusalem: Shalom Hartman Institute, 1981, p. 3.

* The integrative option serves as the ideo-

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[4] *Ibid.*

The individual who subscribes to the integrative option attempts to bridge the dichotomy between traditional authority and individual autonomy. His commitment to the tradition prepares him to accept its authority, but his openness to the pluralization of choices and the tradition's sanction of reason as one of its sources of authority enables him to take a fresh look at Judaic classical sources and tune in to their multi-dimensional approaches. The rabbis sanctioned multiple conceptions because they recognized the reality of intellectual diversity.** The modern Jew can feel free to explore the tradition with his own analytical categories, and with an appreciation for the differences in culture and history between then and now.

The pluralistic situation offers the committed Jew the opportunity to reaffirm his commitment out of choice and not out of habit. When one *chooses* to be Jewish, one's commitment is stronger and it infuses life with more meaning and joy. Similarly, the not-yet-committed Jew who chooses to live Jewishly, has selected that option from among many. It requires a courageous affirmation of commitment to the Jewish people, Jewish history, and Jewish values. For such individuals and families, enthusiasm, joy, and spirituality run high for they have embraced the tradition out of love.

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logical base for the mediating model of Jewish family life which will shortly be delineated.

** In the book's first chapter, there is a lengthy discussion of reason as the second source of rabbinic authority, along with the Sinaitic revelation as the first. See David Hartman's discussion in *Maimonides: Torah and Philosophic Quest*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976. A major rabbinic source for intellectual diversity is the case of *Zaken Mamre*, the rebellious elder. See *Deut.* 17:8–13, *Sanhedrin* 86b and 88a, and *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Rebels.

II. Authority and Independence in the Jewish Family

The modern Jewish family finds itself at the crossroads of the waning influence of tradition and the increasing inroads of modernity. The decline of authority is a consequence of the former, and the pluralization of choices is a feature of the latter. It, therefore, becomes more difficult for parents to impart a particular value system to their children when other systems are available. Yet, it is conceivable that the authority of the tradition and the autonomy inherent in the pluralistic situation can be bridged. How did Jewish tradition view this conflict within the context of the family? How did it conceive the relationship between the authority of parents and the independence of children?

A study of the classical Judaic texts dealing with parent-child relationships reveals that obedience to parental authority is the sacred norm permeating family life, but there is also a profound awareness of the child's needs for independence. The tradition's sensitivity to the child's needs counter-balances the requirement for unqualified obedience. Both thrusts obtain in the relationship and both are sanctioned by the law.

The authority of parents should be respected because they symbolize the most fundamental authority systems of Jewish life, and because of their needs as real people. Parents are equated with God in terms of the honor and reverence due them.[6] Respect for parents is ideally designed to serve as the relationship model of respect for God. God is the child's Father, once removed, even as He is the Father of the Jewish people.[7]

Parents not only represent God to their children, but Jewish tradition and

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[6] Kiddushin 30b.

[7] *Deut.* 14:1.

history as well. Hirsch interpreted the fifth commandment in this spirit:

> The knowledge and acknowledgement of historical facts depends solely on tradition, and tradition depends solely on the faithful transmission by parents to children, and on the willing acceptance by children from the hands of their parents. The continuance of God's whole great institution of Judaism rests entirely on the theoretical and practical obedience of children to parents, and *kibbud av v'em* is the basic condition for the eternal existence of the Jewish nation.[8]

Parents are the means for bringing God and Jewish tradition into the life of the family. Therefore, obedience to parents will enable the child to accept the tradition. Concomitantly, the authority of the parents is reinforced by the authority of the tradition.[9] Thus, as each reinforces the other, the child is exposed to a massive authority system that encompasses the entire Jewish past and is brought into the immediacy of the present.

Parents represent not only God and Jewish tradition to their children, but other authority figures as well. The Talmud states that "Honor thy father" includes one's older brother,[10] and this is extended to include scholars, the prophets and the aged.[11]

Parents are not only symbols, but people with real needs. The obligation to honor and revere them is translated by the Talmud into concrete forms: provide them with food, drink, clothing, and transportation; do not interrupt or contradict them, nor sit in their places at home. Obviously this applies more to adult children and aged parents than to young children and middle-aged parents who can fend for themselves. "The whole aim of this commandment is to secure positive support for aging par-

ents from their children . . ."[12] Parents' authority that deserves children's ministrations derives from the plain fact that they brought them into the world.[13]

The child's obligation to honor and revere parents is not merely a role requirement, but a means toward forming and maintaining a relationship. Certain *mitzvot* are related to acts; others are indicative of relationships. *Kibbud*, honor, and *yirah*, reverence, reflect the emotional bonds that a child has with his parents. Acts which express *yirah* require emotional distance and self-restraint; acts which express *kibbud* require emotional closeness and action. *Yirah* symbolizes parental authority and child obedience, whereas *kibbud* denotes the child's expression of love for his parents. In these two terms is characterized the child's relationship to his parents as moving toward and away, self-expression and self-restraint, emotional closeness and respectful distance. This model of parent-child relationships bears resemblance to other relationships such as friends, husband and wife, and teacher and student where both individuals can relate on the functional level, i.e, distance, and on the affective level, i.e. closeness. The child learns the fundamentals of human relationships in the context of his family.

Authority and Independence

Thus far, we have stressed the Judaic requirement that children honor and revere their parents and defer to their authority because parents symbolize God and Jewish tradition, history, and other formidable authority figures in the Jewish community. Parents also have real needs for physical comfort

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[8] Samson Raphael Hirsch on Ex. 20:12.

[9] Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is With People.* New York: Schocken, 1967, pp. 335–6.

[10] Ketubot 103b.

[11] Abarbanel on Ex. 20:12.

[12] R. E. Clements, *Cambridge Bible Commentary.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 125.

[13] Sefer Ha-Hinnukh, Mitzvah 33.

and the dignity that accompanies age. By engaging in this paradoxical relationship of closeness and distance, children learn how to relate to others outside the family as part of their growth process.

Having firmly established the sources of parental authority, we can ask whether the child's need for independence is legitimated within Jewish tradition. How does the *Halakhah* resolve a clash, a "will struggle" between parents and children? Four cases of conflict are cited in the *Shulhan Arukh*, Code of Jewish Law, and, in each one, the law sides with the child.

> 1. *The Sabbath.* If the parent told the child to violate the Sabbath, he need not heed him because the honor of God supersedes the honor of parents.[14]
> 2. *Interpersonal Relations.* If the son wants to reconcile with an estranged friend and the father disapproves, the son need not heed his father.[15]
> 3. *Intellectual and Moral Development.* If the son wanted to study Torah in a particular Yeshiva which was located in a dangerous neighborhood, and the father refused, citing concern for his safety, the son may disobey and attend the Yeshiva of his choice.[16]
> 4. *Marriage.* If the father disagrees with the son's decision to marry a particular woman whom he (the son) has chosen, the son need not heed the father.[17]

One of the reasons for the preeminence of the child's preference (in the latter three cases) over the parent's is the limitation of filial obligations to the physical and integrity needs of the parents. Those matters that pertain to the growth needs and private life of the child cannot be overruled by parents.[18] To be sure, parents should be involved in the decision-making process, but the final decision is the child's.

The four cases seem to reflect the de-

velopmental process of the child. Sabbath observance is usually taught during early childhood, friendships take on greater prominence at the onset of adolescence, and marriage is the task and goal of the young adult. With his entry into marriage, the child has left his parents' home and has begun his life as an independent person. It is readily apparent that Jewish tradition recognizes the child's need for independence and grants it to him in areas that do not conflict with parents' needs.

Parental Obligations to Children

Independence is not only a function of the child's need to grow up and become a person on his own, but also a function of the parents' responsibilities to the child. The Talmud imposes six obligations on a parent: "The father is bound in respect to his son to circumcise him, redeem him (if he is firstborn), teach him Torah, take a wife for him, and teach him a craft. Some say to teach him to swim too."[19] Circumcision and redemption are meant to convey the transmission of covenant and memory, and the indelible essence of Jewish identity. Teaching Torah develops critical thinking, moral growth, and intellectual independence in the child. Preparing children for marriage requires that the home environment foster the psychological capacity to love, the assumption of responsibility for oneself and others, and interdependence among family members. Teaching the child a trade requires the provision of a source of economic dignity and independence, which is perhaps the most critical index of self-reliance in adulthood. Teaching how to swim prepares the child to deal with unpredictable crisis situations in a competent manner.

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[14] Lev. 19:3.
[15] Yoreh Deah 240.16.
[16] *Ibid.*, 25.
[17] Rama, *Ibid.*
[18] Baiur Hagra, *ibid.*

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[19] Kiddushin 29a.

It is apparent that the entire thrust of the parents' obligations to their children is to help them to grow up to become persons in their own right. They are to accelerate their independence through the developmental process. Yet, even as children strive for self-realization and parents assist them in this goal, they are bound to the restrictions of the family's authority structure. It is this interplay that reveals Judaism's sensitivity to the parent-child relationship in the family.

The parent-child relationship is perceived to be in exquisite balance. Neither can demand total obeisance. There is ample time and opportunity for authority and independence to co-exist during the child's growth process. Judaism has established a "check and balance" system to insure that parents will be served and their dignity preserved by children whom they will help to grow up to become independent persons. Parents and children need to depend on each other in order to grow from their interaction as a family unit and as individuals. Traditional Judaism makes this possible through its delineations of family structure.

III. Models of Authority-Autonomy Relationships in the Modern Jewish Family

One of the problems of the authority-independence model just described is that it has not been prominent in Jewish history. It is difficult to find the story of a Jewish family whose style of living consciously balances parental authority with child independence. Apparently, we can deduce that, in the traditional Jewish community, independence is not a value upon which much effort is spent. It is an assumed quality of the nurturing process which is part of the taken-for-granted character of everyday family life. Authority is the central concern, for it insures the transmission of fundamental values and the continuity of the tradition.

There are ample examples of stress on continuity. Isaac and Jacob pledge to fulfill Abraham's destiny as father of the Jewish people; Aaron's children pledge to perpetuate the priesthood; Solomon, to continue David's dynasty. The ethical will literature recounts how fathers instructed their children to continue studying the Torah and observing the *mitzvot*.[20] In the East European shtetl, obedience was stressed and independence was not discussed. Parents did not view their primary goal as the development of their children's independence; it was an assumed fact of child-rearing. Authority was irrational; reasons for commands were not offered. "You were told you mustn't do certain things, but you were never told the reason why. But we understood that it just wasn't right. And we obeyed."[21]

Although the classical sources seem to support a balance between authority and independence, Jewish family life before the modern era did not. Instead, it has accentuated parental authority as a greater value than the fostering of child independence as a way of insuring the survival of the tradition and the group.

Authority in the Modern Jewish Family

Authority in the modern Jewish family has declined because of the weakness of the parental symbolic system. When belief in God, religious faith and practice, and tradition—the primary sources of authority in traditional communities—are questioned, parental authority must be drawn from within the nuclear family itself. These sources of authority are questioned because youth, self-reliance, and equality, but-

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[20] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 16, pp. 530-1.

[21] Zborowski and Herzog, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

tressed by the value of individualism, are esteemed over age, wisdom, and interdependence which are represented by tradition. In this cultural milieu, parents are thrust back upon themselves to devise ways of coping with the challenge to their authority and to confirm their identity as parents. As the confirmation of identity requires stable structures of plausibility, parents in nuclear families are quite alone in their efforts to gain the acquiescence of their children and to affirm the legitimacy of their role.

The problem of authority in the family is a microcosm of the problem of authority in larger social institutions. Institutions are perceived to be coercive, as they force the individual to act in prescribed ways. In a society comprised of stable institutions, parental authority is reinforced by the larger institutional order. In a society of rapid socio-cultural and technological change, new values, mores, and life styles constantly appear. When individuals begin to question the coercive, taken-for-granted character of institutional life, they initiate a process of "deinstitutionalization."[22] They create more alternatives and more choices. There are some people who can handle the greater opportunities thus afforded, while others become easily confused due to the paucity of external guidelines and internal controls.

Parental authority is intimately bound up with the stability of the institutional order. When the latter is weakened, so is the former. Not only is the restoration of parental authority a yeoman task, but many would question the value of this effort in the light of its possible futility. Moreover, new forms of relationships between spouses and parents and children, based on democratic principles,

have emerged. These structural changes affect both traditional and non-traditional Jewish families.

The variety of family structures with regard to the authority-autonomy dichotomy can be categorized into three models: authoritarian, egalitarian, and mediating. Each model is represented by a particular segment of the Jewish community: the Hasidic family; the assimilated family; and the traditional family.

The Authoritarian Model

The authoritarian model, a variation of the authority-independence model, stresses the central role of the parents' authority in the family and does not concern itself with actively promoting child independence. It is a carry-over from the patriarchal family which prevailed in pre-modern times and, most recently, in the East European *shtetl.*

The group in modern times that portrays this model of family orientation is the Hasidim. In the Hasidic family, the father views himself as the unquestioned authority figure, to whom his wife and children show deference. It is his responsibility to educate his children to be learned and pious Jews. He demands excellence from them in Torah study and bans secular culture from gaining entry into the home.[23]

The authoritarian model is not a viable option for the majority of Jews today. Most Jewish families could not envision themselves leading an existence that is self-insulated, authoritarian, and a cultural carry-over from pre-modern times. They prefer to be part of the larger society and deal with the implications resulting from the acculturation process.

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[22] Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, Hansfried Kellner. *The Homeless Mind.* New York: Random House, 1973.

[23] See Solomon Poll, *The Hasidic Community of Williamsburg.* New York: Schocken, 1969, for a fuller description of the Hasidic family.

The Egalitarian Model

The egalitarian model emphasizes equality among family members and parental responsibility to develop their children's independence. It is attuned to the child-orientation in Western societies. Parents tend to downplay their authority and the emotional distance that it evokes; instead they strive to develop closer relationships with their children by emphasizing common interests and goals.

The ideology supporting this model is based on the egalitarian principle which suggests that roles should be demarcated along horizontal lines.[24] The decision-making process is sometimes structured by the family council meeting in which everyone expresses ideas, and decisions are arrived at democratically, based on the principle of one person-one vote. The effect of this structure is to eliminate the hierarchy of the family's authority system and substitute instead the notion of equality among its members. The egalitarian model characterizes the assimilated Jewish family. The ideology of feminism has been absorbed by the mother as a guide for her relationship to her husband and children. Self-actualization is the prevailing goal for all family members, even if it leads to assimilation into the larger culture. Ties to the organized Jewish community are tenuous, as is the commitment to distinctive Jewish behavior. Pluralization is the cultural, prevailing norm. The family feels comfortable in re-arranging its social structure because it is not significantly influenced by traditional forms of Jewish family life. It sees itself as living in the present and refuses to be burdened with the weight of history.

The egalitarian family is more attractive than the authoritarian family for modern Jews. It is *au courant,* loose, sophisticated, open, innovative, and therefore inviting. Yet, in terms of the interests of the Jewish community, the absence of close ties to Jewish life, the superficiality and infrequency of Jewish behaviors, and the low fertility rate inevitably contribute to assimilation and intermarriage. As such, this model does not bode well for Jewish survival.

The Mediating Model

The mediating model takes, as its starting point, Peter Berger's definition of mediating structures as "those institutions which stand between the individual in his private sphere and the large institutions of the public sphere."[25] The family is one such institution as it attempts to reduce alienation in the public sphere and anomie in the private sphere by supplying the individual with social supports that provide meaning and identity to his location in society.

In the mediating model, the Jewish family, in addition to mediating between the public and private spheres, mediates between tradition and modernity, between the memories of the past and the realities of the present. It tends to be traditional in its orientation. Its outlook on the world is colored by Jewish traditional values and its conduct is regulated by ritual practices.

It has no denominational label; therefore, it encompasses any family that struggles to mediate between the conceptual and behavioral demands of Jewish tradition and the ideologies and life styles of modern society. The mediation process is difficult and ever-

[24] E. W. Burgess, H. J. Locke, and M. M. Thomas, *The Family: From Institution to Companionship* (3rd Ed.). New York: American, 1963.

[25] Peter L. Berger, *Facing Up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics and Religion.* New York: Basic Books, 1977, p. 132.

challenging, for it requires the translation of Jewish values and concepts into a modern vocabulary with which to confront values and concepts that are antithetical to the tradition. The family experiences marginality in its continuous dialogue with tradition and modernity.

The pluralization of these two worlds affects the relationship between parents and children. There is an integration of authoritarianism and democracy, between the controls imposed by parents, and the children's participation in family decisions. Parental authority is introduced more softly, and children's independence is accentuated more deliberately than in the other models. The family strives to maintain a balance between the emotional needs of the parents and the developmental needs of the children.

The mediating family insulates itself enough from the larger society in order to preserve a Jewish traditional way of life, but it is open enough to permit many of the society's cultural patterns to enter. It associates with other families who have similar concerns. Through these structures of plausibility, it reinforces its identity as a family that is both traditional and modern at the same time, in the midst of a significant struggle to integrate conflicting ideologies in order to provide a viable direction for its future.*

In sum, the paucity of legitimations from Jewish history regarding the viability of the authority-independence model in real life led us to propose three

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* It is in this sense that the integrative option for the retention of religion, discussed earlier, serves as the essential vehicle for insuring the viability of the mediating family. As the integrative option requires a dialogue between the present and the past, with the latter's translation into the former, so too does the mediating family foster interaction between Jewish memory and secular reality in its efforts to live in both worlds.

contemporary variations. These models can also be categorized as ideal types, for they hardly exist in pure form. The authoritarian family permits some egalitarian forms of decision-making. The egalitarian family may not be totally assimilated, and may introduce some mediation into its Jewish experiences. The mediating family may be egalitarian in some respects and authoritarian in others.

The three models illustrate different ways in which Jewish families deal with the tensions generated by the interaction of parental authority and child independence. The authoritarian family tries to follow its patriarchal ancestors by asserting paternal control and denying children's independence as an active concern. The egalitarian family deemphasizes parental authority and permits children's greater independent initiatives. The mediating family attempts to juxtapose the past and the present, tradition and modernity. It is a constant struggle, permeated with failure and uncertainty, for value conflicts are not always mediated successfully. The mediating family model has the best potential for Jewish survival in modern times because it occupies the middle ground, and is attractive to Jews who want to be nurtured by the richness of Jewish tradition and also reap the benefits of modern culture.

IV. The Professional Role

As professionals, our task is to help Jewish families ask and answer these questions: Which values should characterize our relationship as a family? What kind of adults do we want our children to be when they grow up? How should we relate to Jewish tradition? How do we live in the modern world and, at the same time, not cut ourselves off from the past? What are our purposes as a Jewish family? Each family will need to

struggle with these questions in its own way. Answers will not be easily forthcoming, nor will they be final. The quest for clarity of purpose is a continuous process for the family that negates the extreme options of insulation and assimilation and instead, chooses integration.* The task of integrating the past with the present, traditional Jewish values with contemporary secular values, an ancient language with a modern language, requires serious attention and considerable effort. It encompasses educational, experiential, and social components that need to be fused if the family is to develop a vision of its future through a dialogue with the past.

Families who incline toward the integrative option, who want to connect with the Jewish past in a way that does not compromise their orientation toward modern culture, will need help from professionals. These families will require a specialized Jewish education, particular Jewish experiences, and belonging to Jewish social groupings.

To facilitate the intensive study of classical Judaic texts, parents must be freed from some of their responsibilities by staggering work hours, providing day care services, baby sitters, or bringing the classroom into the home. This learning requires the organization of time and place with regularity, and a partial restructuring of economic and social arrangements.

Maximizing the educational effort requires the meticulous preparation of texts on central themes in Jewish thought, accompanied by probing questions for discussion. These materials could take the form of pamphlets on selected subjects that may also include classical sources in philosophy, political and social science, and psychology.

In the actual teaching process, participants are encouraged to think for themselves, to come up with their own interpretations of the texts, and to offer their insights based on their intellectual grasp and life experiences. Everyone's contribution has value. The teacher encourages continuous probing to enhance the variety and depth of interpretations.

Along with Jewish study, the professional and the agency offer families the opportunity to experience different aspects of Judaism by living them *in actu*; the Shabbat, festivals, memorial observances, prayer, rites of passage, giving *tzedakah* and visiting Israel. These experiences are given new dimensions of meaning when families participate selectively in the ancient rituals based on their readiness, refine them and put in their own difference, and use their own vocabulary to achieve understanding. The professional is urged to exercise self-restraint in the temptation to impose his own ritual forms onto their experiences. He realizes that they are trying to find their way; his task is to help them by offering his knowledge, expertise, and the availability of options.

The social dimension refers to the creation of a sense of belonging to a community. It is intertwined with the educational and the experiential, for textual study and cultural experiences take place in groups. The community that is formed is a new community of the Jewish spirit, consisting of a group of people who meet and share in order to deepen their Jewish identities and visions. It transcends geographic boundaries and agency memberships. The call goes out to all Jewish families in the area—extended families, nuclear families, single-parent families, intermarried families, reconstituted families, non-affiliated families, and even singles to create their Jewish future by committing themselves to study and practice

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* The term "integration" is used interchangeably with "mediation."

together, and in the privacy of their own homes.

The professional's own zeal must be communicated if he is to ignite a spark of enthusiasm for this project. If he truly values Jewish families and believes in the possibility of their growth, he will serve them with dedication and sharpen his skills to help them translate their visions into reality. The ideal is achieved when the entire community dedicates itself to an active, formal quest for meaningful Jewish living.

In conclusion, this paper has presented one person's vision of what the modern Jewish family can become—a social unit which retains generational differences, where children learn such fundamentals of human relationships as love, interdependence, and respect for elders, and where parents and children mutually respect each others' needs for authority and independence.

Parent-child interaction is conceived in the broader framework of the interaction between tradition and modernity. Jewish tradition is to be understood in pluralistic terms, available for the individual to grasp on his own intellectual and experiential level. Each family member is encouraged to relate to Jewish tradition according to his level of comprehension. As the family translates the tradition into the language it understands, the tradition becomes a life force that guides the family in the resolution of its value conflicts and in its planning for the future.