

3/49, MARCH 2, 1973

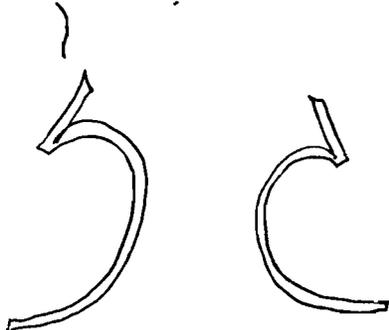
Hebrew State survive but could not themselves read Hebrew; they had sacrificed for Jews all over the globe but had forgotten to live Jewish lives that sacrificed anything beyond funds. They had demonstrated for the rights of Soviet Jews to have *tefillin* and *Shabbos* and *kashrus* and *Yeshivos* and synagogues and *Siddurim* and Bibles, but they themselves had not used their own *tefillin* or kept their holy days or maintained uniquely Jewish homes or supported intensive Jewish education or frequented their synagogues or opened their own *Siddurim* or Bibles.

With time on their hands, Jewish men and women began to think – and to study Torah. Before long, their eyes were opened up and they noticed in their midst day schools and *yeshivos* struggling for survival – and the energy they had once spent in supporting Israel they now began spending in support of these institutions.

In the end of days . . .

With their indefatigable strength and will, America's Jews mobilized all their energies into saving themselves from destruction. The resources of the Jewish community, once dedicated to overseas needs, were now turned around and focused on American Jewish

CAN'T WE EVER SEE
EYE TO EYE ON
ANYTHING ?



educational needs. Hadassah and Mizrahi took joint responsibility for the fundraising of every day school in the U.S.A.; UJA opened a network of 25 *yeshivos* throughout the country; ORT rehabilitated Jewish youth by opening 50 intensive Jewish summer camps. 52 Federations voted unanimously to fund Jewish educational needs from kindergarten through university.

The entire army of executives, fundraisers and consultants returned to work. The bustle and excitement were felt again in the Jewish offices, the stilled telephones began to clang again, the stopped typewriters clattered, and the vast, complex and talented machinery of American Jewry sprang to life – all devoted to one cause: a crash program to raise the spiritual level of Jewish life. .

It was a time of joy, a time of laughter. Federations gave dinners to honor young Jews who committed themselves to Jewish learning and to *mitzvos*; UJA gave its Man of the Year awards to poor and unknown scholars; every day school and *yeshivah* in the country ended the year without a deficit.

That was the year Messiah came.

The secret weapon in Jewish survival

Charles S. Liebman

(The following document, published here for the first time was a speech delivered by Rabbi Bryant Wilson Jr. to an annual conference of Jewish sociologists some time around the start of the Twenty First Century. It should be of special interest to both historians and sociologists of religion.)

My friends. I am deeply honored by the invitation extended to me to address this august body of scholars and teachers. You are the true successors of the *talmedai chachamim*, the disciples of the wise and the masters of our tradition.

Your works in the field of data collection, surveys of Jewish attitudes and psycho-social inventorying of the Jewish community represents more than the major focus of contemporary Jewish scholarship. Your invitation to me, I gather, came not because like most rabbis I too hold a Ph.D. in social psychology. Rather, you felt I had a special message for you in my capacity as a man of the cloth.

The various transvaluations of Judaism have been accompanied by shifting institutional and ideological

foci. Primitive Judaism with its anthropomorphic Gods centered around cultic services in a Temple. Judaism gradually evolved into a supernaturalistic religion transferring activity from the Temple to the synagogue. The Temple itself, as many of you know, was destroyed a number of times, although portions of the edifice still remain and can be seen in Israel.

The rise and fall of Jewish basketball

With the spread of enlightenment and knowledge, Jews, of course, ceased believing in a supernatural God. The synagogue gradually lost its relevance to Jews but the dynamics of Judaism found new outlets for expression. In this country the synagogue was transformed into a community center and Jews were able to express their ultimate concerns, their sense of identification in art classes, basketball leagues, swimming and dramatics. The prophetic tradition also found its institutional outlet in such organizations as the Liberal Party, the Americans for Democratic Action, and later the Students for Democratic Society and the Black Panther movement.

Unfortunately, as has always been true, the masses of Jews rejected the prophetic voice. The Jews hardened their hearts and turned away from their true leaders. The results were tragic. The best of our youth were forced away from Judaism because the "elders" would not listen.

The pessimists cried that Judaism was dead. On the one hand the masses had lost their interest in Jewish basketball leagues while prophetic voices were now outside the institutional camp. But those who believed that Jewish forms of expression no longer existed underestimated the vitality of the tradition. They overlooked the unquenchable thirst of Jews to live, and the imagination and creativity of a new generation.

Questionnaire as answer for Jewish survival

You, the unheralded leaders of Judaism provided it with glorious renewal. You were the first to realize, albeit unconsciously, the possibility for Jewish expression and identification that lay in filling out questionnaires.

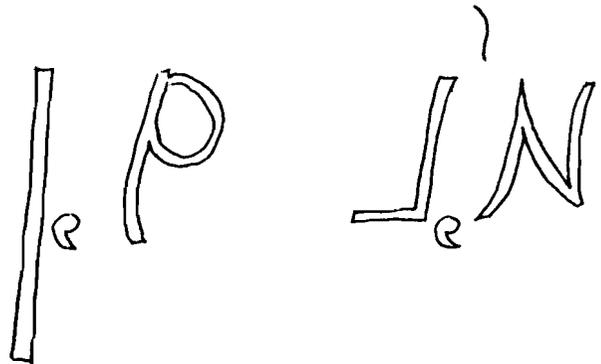
By your own estimates, questionnaires on Jewish identity and attitudes are now administered to at least half of all American Jews two or three times a year. Your ultimate goal, to reach every American Jew at least once a month, is, I confess, messianic. But it is not for you to complete the labor. You have begun the work, and it is your vision which guides us all.

Each Saturday morning, as I stand before a random sample of the Jewish population in my neighborhood, and instruct them in filling out the questionnaires, I am acutely aware of my debt to you who devised them. I am conscious of how I stand in a great line of the Jewish tradition. How, like the Biblical Moses of the Sinai myth, I too communicate the essence of Judaism — self-identification and self expression — to our people.

Synagogues, community centers, philanthropic agencies still exist. When I wander through older Jewish neighborhoods of suburbia I am caught up in nostalgia for these older institutions which we recall with fondness. But it is to you that we owe our vision of the future. Thank you.

(Editor's note — Judaism, to which the author refers, was a religious sect which existed for over three thousand years. Jews, followers of Judaism, may still be found in various parts of the world. However, they bear little resemblance to the author's description and we cannot dismiss the possibility that at one time there were two different religions in America, both of which bore the name Judaism but had nothing else in common.)

EVER NOTICE HOW
SOME PEOPLE
ALWAYS COME IN LAST?



But humperdink doesn't sound Jewish

Henry Bamberger

(Translator's note: Before his death in 1969, Prof. Heinrich von Sitzplatz was Professor of Cross-Cultural Studies at the University of Entweder am Oder.