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Predicate Theology:
Exploring the Writings of Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis

by Neal Katz

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for Ordination

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Last, but certainly not least, is Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis. Over the course of this project, he and I have spoken at great length about his background, his influences, the development of Predicate theology, its applications, and more. It is nothing short of an honor to study the writings of such an important modern Jewish thinker and all the more so, to be able to develop a personal relationship with him. In addition to being the inspiration for my thesis, Rabbi Schulweis has also inspired my future rabbinate. His ideas are bold and engaging and I look forward to employing some of his ideas into my own rabbinate.

ABSTRACT

Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis, senior rabbi at Valley Beth Shalom in Encino, CA, is one of the most prominent Jewish thinkers of the past fifty years. He graduated from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1950 where he was deeply influenced by his professor, Mordecai M. Kaplan. Shulweis learned from Kaplan the value of non-conformism. Kaplan challenged his students to think beyond the Judaism of their day. Schulweis wrote, "[Mordecai] Kaplan's new perception [of reconstructing Jewish life and thought] directs us to ask not simply what Judaism *is*, but ask what Judaism *ought* to be."[1] It is within this framework that Schulweis develops his own theology.

Schulweis describes the "*is*" of classic Jewish theology as Subject theology. The theology that has been employed by most Jewish thinkers throughout time has the subject, namely God, as the focus of theological concern. This view is commonly expressed in the Biblical literature, rabbinic writings, most Jewish medieval philosophical texts, and traditional liturgy. This theological approach presents many problems for Schulweis such as its ineffective response to theodicy and most importantly, the natural alienation that arises when a modern worshiper prays to an unknowable, non-interventionist God.

In Schulweis' proposal of what Judaism "*ought*" to be, he promotes a shift of focus away from God as subject, and instead focuses on the predicates of divinity in what he calls Predicate theology. He claims that while human beings may not be able to know

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[1] Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975), 18.

God as a subject, we do have a sense of God's attributes, or divine predicates. Human beings may not be able to say that God is Just, Righteous, or Merciful, but they may say that justice, righteousness, and mercy are godly. Thus the focus is not on God, but on the human experience of godliness in everyday life. Predicate theology has many applications such as the creation of new liturgies, new synagogue programming, and new approaches to pastoral care. This paper will look at Schulweis' background, the development of his Predicate theology, its applications, critiques, and an analysis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

There is not one today who is not alienated or who does not contain within himself some small fraction of alienation.
—Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*

Franz Rosenzweig's admission that all people are at least in some small way alienated, still rings true in the modern world, some seventy-four years after his death. The modern liberal Jew can often feel spiritually alienated, with God's presence being obscured in clouds of personal, national, and natural tragedies. The presence of evil in the world begs the question of Divine justice and without a compelling theological response, the liberal Jew can often be further alienated from his or her religious community. It is this sense of alienation that has prompted modern Jewish theologians to search for new ways to bridge the gap between humanity and divinity.

Among these modern Jewish thinkers, Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis, senior rabbi at Valley Beth Shalom in Encino, California is a leading figure. In a seminal article on his theology, Schulweis invokes a paradigm set forth by his teacher, Mordecai Kaplan. He writes, "Kaplan's new perception [of reconstructing Jewish life and thought] directs us to ask not simply what Judaism *is*, but ask what Judaism *ought* to be."[1] All too often, alienation is the response to what Judaism "is" for the modern Jew, whereas the connection between Jews and godliness is what "ought" to be. It is to that end—the realization of a connection between humanity and divinity— that Schulweis seeks to

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[1] Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975).

alleviate the problem of alienation.

In doing so, Schulweis begins the formulation of his theological approach with some fundamental ideas. First, Schulweis claims that, "Judaism is not monolithic, and it demands not to be restricted."[2] Schulweis does not see his work as necessarily breaking with tradition, rather, he understands that the theology he will develop is part of an open canon of Jewish thought. Second, Schulweis refuses to be bound to any previous conception of God. He notes that, "religion is progressive and changing; it has no dogmatic certainty."[3] In this sense, Schulweis is not concerned with any conformism, rather, he will concern himself with a theological approach that works for him to bridge the gap of spiritual alienation.

To frame his argument for a new theology, Schulweis deals first with the "is." He suggests that nearly all traditional Jewish views of God are examples of Subject theology. Throughout history, Jews have related to God, described God, and communicated with God as the subject of their theological concerns. In this sense, when Jews pray, they acknowledge that God is a distant subject who is interactive, receives praise, and operates within the context of a covenantal relationship. When we understand God to be the Being to whom all are prayers are directed, we affirm God as the focus of our theological concerns. Schulweis argues that this conception of God is problematic for two reasons. First, we have acknowledged throughout Jewish history that God is ultimately unknowable. The human can never know God, yet he is expected to praise God as the

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[2] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 1 August 2002.

[3] ibid.

subject of the worship service which can lead to a sense of spiritual alienation. Second, the problem of evil in the world forces Subject theology to defend God. In times of trouble, "the theodicies of subject theology feel compelled to raise the divine Subject beyond the reach of the moral predicates."[4] When confronting evil, Subject theology must remove God from the "attack of the moral predicates."[5]

Schulweis then argues that modern Jews need to understand and encounter godliness in a direct and engaging way. He suggests that if we change the focus of God as subject to the predicates of divinity, we may be in a position to arrive at a new understanding of what is godly. While human beings may not be able to know God as a subject, we can come to know God's attributes, or divine predicates. These are moral qualities of God such as righteousness, justice, mercy, etc. These divine predicates are what human beings encounter each day. When justice is being served, or when we or others are acting in a righteous manner, we recognize those events as exemplifying divine attributes. Hence, human beings may not know if God is a just, merciful, or good God, but we may know that justice, mercy, and goodness are divine. Human actions of these kinds focus attention away from God as the Subject of our theological concerns to godliness being the predicate of our actions.

Schulweis' Predicate theology has a number of applications ranging from new liturgy to synagogue programming and from liberal congregational policies to influence

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[4] Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975).

[5] ibid.

on popular theological writings. To his credit, Schulweis' approach has few published detractors. Yet the critiques of Predicate theology that do exist are substantial in assessing the consistency of this approach. While Schulweis' Predicate theology is relatively new—his main essay on the subject came out roughly thirty years ago—it has had far reaching impact. Both directly and indirectly, Jewish thinkers, rabbis, scholars, and liturgists have responded to his notion of focusing on the predicates of divinity. While the idea of Predicate theology had been formulated prior to Schulweis, it is his clear and developed version which has evidently received the greatest attention.

This paper will explore the writings of Rabbi Schulweis in order to understand Predicate theology as he has developed it. In chapter one, I will look at Schulweis' personal history, along with key moments and people in his life that led him to the development of his Predicate theology. In chapter two I will discuss Subject theology—the classic Jewish theological approach—in order to understand the backdrop against which Schulweis develops his own theology. Chapter three details the development and principles of Schulweis' Predicate theology. In chapter four I look at applications of Predicate theology—it has been incorporated in a variety of ways into synagogue programming, communal pastoral care, and in the development of creative liturgy. Chapter five looks at critiques of Predicate theology. The bulk of this chapter will focus on two book reviews of Schulweis' Evil and Morality of God. In addition, I will discuss some of Schulweis' own self-acknowledged criticism. In the concluding chapter, I will analyze the development of Predicate theology and discuss some of its strengths and weaknesses as I see them. In addition to the thesis and bibliography, I have

created an appendix of seventeen pertinent writings by Schulweis plus two book reviews and a biographical sketch.

To understand Rabbi Schulweis's theological approach, one must understand the religious and academic environments in which Schulweis was raised. His parents love for the Jewish people, the influence of a prominent philosophy professor, his engagement with the writings of Martin Buber, and his personal relationship with Mordecai Kaplan all made lasting impressions on Schulweis and by extension, his theology.

- ONE -

HAROLD SCHULWEIS: BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Rabbi Harold Schulweis is one of the most distinguished leaders in contemporary American Jewish life. He has written numerous articles and widely published books and sermons. Also, he has received many awards of distinction and has spoken at most of the major institutions in modern Jewish life where he promotes his vision of an enriched and empowered Jewish life in the modern age. Schulweis' passions and visions for a vibrant Jewish life are deeply rooted in the worlds of Orthodoxy, Zionism, and philosophy in which he grew up.

Harold Schulweis was born on April 14,1925 in New York City to socialist-Zionist parents.[6] Growing up in New York, Schulweis was educated in the world of the orthodox yeshiva, but he admits that his parents were not religious. He says that even though his parents were not religious, they did pass on an extremely vibrant concern for Jewish people-hood.[7] Staying connected to his yeshiva background, Schulweis entered Yeshiva College (later to become Yeshiva University) in 1941. Before he completed his undergraduate work there1945, he became close with a teacher in the philosophy department named Alexander Littman. Schulweis says that Littman was influential in

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[6] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 5 December 2002.

[7] ibid.

helping him approach Judaism through the process of philosophical inquiry—giving him license to question foundational arguments in Judaism. This was an eye-opening experience and while Schulweis was deeply influenced by Littman and the approach of philosophy, he felt that he needed more in-depth study.[8] After Yeshiva College, he attended New York University (NYU) where he received his Masters degree in philosophy; he wrote his thesis on the works of Martin Buber. At the same time he was taking classes at New York University, Schulweis also was a rabbinic student at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). He graduated from his NYU Masters program in 1948 and was ordained by JTS in 1950. In 1972, Schulweis received his Doctor of Theology degree from the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California.

Schulweis recalls how impressionable he was in the mid-1940's. Prior to entering JTS, he recollects an event which was an impetus for him deciding to become a rabbi through the Seminary. Schulweis wrote of this event as though he were Mordecai Kaplan talking about Schulweis in the third person. He wrote,

> Schulweis, like others, read the New York Times of June 12, 1945 that the Reconstructionist Prayer Book that I and my colleagues had written was burned by rabbis from the Aggudath Harabonim at the Hotel McAlpin. And I was placed in *herem*, excommunicated, not to be spoken to, and most assuredly not to be read. It was a shock, even to those who opposed me, this burning. It was 1945, after the Second World War, after the episodes of the Nazis who burned so many books. And here we Jews were burning books. Still, I comforted myself into believing that progress was delayed because 500 years before, Calvin, unhappy with what he regarded as the heresy of Servetus, burned Servetus. I got away with murder because they only burned my book. What is a book among friends?[9]

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[8] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 5 December 2002.

[9] Harold M. Schulweis. "Mordecai M. Kaplan: the Founder of Reconstructionism." Jewish Spiritual Leaders Series. 2001. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/leaders/kaplan.htm. (9 January 2002).

Schulweis deeply admired Kaplan and his radical approach to Judaism. The fact that Kaplan's book was so troubling to elements in the traditional Jewish community engaged Schulweis' imagination. He said about Kaplan, "I truly enjoyed the non-conformism of Kaplan - the ability to liberate, not out of disrespect for tradition, rather out of great love for Judaism."[10] For Schulweis, Kaplan lived out what he meant. One of Schulweis' favorite ideas from Kaplan is the famous notion that, as regards modern Jewish progress, the past has a vote, but not a veto.[11] Schulweis learned from Kaplan that one can understand Judaism from an evolutionary approach, which meant there is a respect for the present tense, the "here-and-now," as opposed to the attitude of other teachers who are so often consumed with the "then." Kaplan reveled in contemporaneity.[12] One may claim that Schulweis is an heir to Kaplan's theological positions and that Predicate theology can be seen as an extension of Kaplan's work. While Schulweis continues to honor Kaplan as a mentor for helping him to re-think Judaism, Schulweis admits that, for him, Kaplan was never clear enough in his theology. "Kaplan was trying to develop a metaphysical theology to reconstruct Judaism. I was much more clear than Kaplan was in my theology and I was much bolder in my idea that God is not a person."[13] Kaplan's legacy then, is not so much in Schulweis' theology, rather, it is found in Schulweis' own non-conformism—he was liberated by Kaplan's

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[10] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 5 December 2002.

[11] ibid.

[12] ibid.

[13] ibid.

openness for change to seek out his own theology.

In addition to benefitting from the momentous influence Kaplan had on Schulweis while at JTS, Schulweis took the initiative and delved deeper into the world of Jewish philosophy. Schulweis said that for himself and his classmates, Maimonides was a cultural hero. This was because Maimonides taught that not all wisdom of the world was found in Judaism—truth and science were not particular to Judaism, they were universal. This universal approach spoke to Schulweis. The opposite approach, for Schulweis, was Yehuda HaLevi. HaLevi wrote that prophecy could only be given to Jews, that Israel was the only holy land, and that Jews were only ones who could receive salvation. For HaLevi, Judaism was particularistic and from there it derives its strength, not from the generality of philosophy.[14] While the struggle between particularism and universalism has been an ongoing tension in Jewish thought, Schulweis felt more engaged by the Maimonidean world view, which Schulweis felt was more welcoming of universal knowledge.[15]

Since his days as a student as JTS, Schulweis has held many different posts and honors over the long course of his career. He started out upon graduation from JTS as an instructor in philosophy at City College of New York from 1950-1952. After this, he moved west to be the rabbi at Temple Beth Abraham in Oakland, California from 1952-1970. After he left Temple Beth Abraham, Schulweis settled in Encino, California to become the rabbi of Valley Beth Shalom, where he still serves to the present day. At

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[14] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 5 December 2002.

[15] ibid.

Valley Beth Shalom, Schulweis has initiated a number of programs such as the para-rabbinic program, their Day School, and a *havurah* program which is now a national program, to name a few.[16]

Over the past fifty-two years in the rabbinate, Harold Schulweis has been deeply involved in the institutions and organizations of American Jewish life. He has served as an Adjunct Professor of Jewish Contemporary Civilization at the University of Judaism. He was a lecturer in Jewish Theology at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles. He also served as a faculty member of the B'nai B'rith Adult Education Commission. Organizationally, Schulweis has been a member of the Conservative Movement's Rabbinical Assembly throughout his career and served as their national secretary in 1978. In 1962, he became chairman & founder of the Institute For The Righteous Acts housed at the Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum in California. The Institute also houses a documentation and study center concerning rescuers of Jews in the Nazi era. In addition, Schulweis was the founding chairman of the Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers, an ADL program, in 1986.[17]

Schulweis has also been extremely active on the literary scene. In addition to serving as senior editor of the journal Sh'ma, he has also been a contributing editor to magazines such as *The Reconstructionist*, *Moment*, and *The Baltimore Jewish Times*. Schulweis has written a number of books on Jewish philosophy, poetry, theodicy, and life

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[16] Valley Beth Shalom. "Biography of Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis." Posted at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/shulbio.htm. (21 December 2001).

[17] ibid.

in the rabbinate. A few examples of his books include his philosophic work, Evil And The Morality Of God which was published in 1983. This book is Schulweis' in-depth theological treatise arguing against Subject theology in favor of a Predicate-based one. In God's Mirror, which was published in 1990, is a collection of articles and essays in which Schulweis develops certain points of Predicate theology and talks about life in the rabbinate. It also includes some of his poetry. His most popular book, based on sales, is For Those Who Can't Believe, published in 1994. In this book, Schulweis offers his Predicate theology to a wider audience than the Jewish community. Schulweis promotes his Predicate theology as being a methodology that can connect the non-believer or skeptic to the attributes of divinity.

Lastly, Rabbi Schulweis has been honored around the world for all of his contributions in the fields of Christian/Jewish relations, Jewish thought, work on behalf of Righteous Gentiles, and outreach programming. A list of his awards can be found in his biographical sketch in Appendix D of this volume.

Clearly, Schulweis has been a prolific writer and activist in modern Jewish life. His theology, as it will be discussed, lies on the line between mainstream and radical thinking. Yet, the various denominations of the non-Orthodox Jewish community have praised, read, and honored Schulweis. His writings cut across denominational lines and his more universal works, such as For Those Who Can't Believe, are also influential outside the Jewish community. His writings explore the depths of Jewish thought with a bold agenda to reshape the way modern Jews conceive of Judaism, God, and prayer. Schulweis is carrying on the Kaplanian tradition of being a non-conformist thinker with a

deep love and concern for the future of American and world Jewry.

To understand the development of Schulweis's Predicate theology, it is necessary to be familiar with classic Jewish theology. This approach, which Schulweis calls Subject theology, is the model against which he develops his Predicate theology.

- TWO -

SUBJECT THEOLOGY

With Subject theology, faith in God is faith in Subject itself, independent of its attributes.

— Harold M. Schulweis, "Predicate Theology"

Harold Schulweis labels classic Jewish theology with the title of Subject theology. Whether one is looking at a conception of God as expressed in the Bible, the rabbinical writings, medieval Jewish philosophy, or Jewish liturgy, the standard approach to encountering God involves referring to God as the principal of one's theological concerns. This approach is apparent in most Jewish writings about God. As Schulweis writes, "theological statements are traditionally expressed in terms of subject-predicate relations."[18] This means that God is the subject to whom predicates are attached. The meaning of subject, as Schulweis will use it, is best understood as a, "proposition that denotes the entity of which something is affirmed or denied."[19] For example, the subject, namely God, may have certain predicates or qualities such as being just and merciful. However, the classical focus of Jewish thought is not on these qualities of justice and mercy, but on the subject, God, who is the bearer and source of such qualities.

Throughout Jewish theology, God is often detached from His predicates as a

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[18] Harold M. Schulweis. *Evil And The Morality Of God.* Cincinnati (HUC Press, 1984), 116.

[19] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "subject."

means of protecting the Divine personality from attack. Meaning, in times of trouble, God must be protected from the charge that He is responsible for any evil. In order to do this, Subject theology often affirms the Jobian response that God's ways are unknowable to human beings. If God is to be understood as subject only, then issues of theodicy may be suppressed without addressing God's moral qualities. Karl Barth wrote that, "strictly speaking, there is no divine predicate, no idea of God which can have as its special content what God is. There is, strictly speaking, only the Divine subject as such and in Him the fitness of his Divine predicates."[20] Hence, God is the subject who contains His own predicates, which are assumed to be fit, and ultimately, human beings are unable to identify these predicates with any certainty in classical Subject theology. Such a chase to know God's predicates would prove fruitless. The theological approach of Karl Barth represents, for Schulweis, a clear proponent of Subject theology and Schulweis argues that most biblical theologians would agree with Barth.[21] In an exploration to understand Subject theology, one can begin by looking at the earliest Jewish sources in order to see that Jewish thought is primarily focused on the Subject-God, devoid of concern for His predicates.

Biblical and Rabbinic Subject Theology

The Hebrew Bible is the starting point for encountering Subject theology. While

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[20] Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975), 20.

[21] ibid.

the Bible does not present a singular and consistent theology, it does form the basis for later interpretation and theological developments. However, one can find an overarching theme running throughout the text, namely, the focus on God. The Encyclopedia Judaica clearly states that, "the whole of the Hebrew Bible has God as its concern."[22] In all but one of the books of the Bible, one will find God or God's laws as the focus of discussion. From the story of God's creation, to God's interaction with humanity, to God's covenant relationship with the family of Abraham, through the giving of the Torah, to the establishment of a monarchy, until the exile of the Jewish people from their land, God has been present throughout the Biblical narrative of the Jewish people. The relative lack of a coherent theological presentation in the Bible can be attributed to its time frame of pre-Greek philosophy. There was no concern in the writing of the Bible to offer a scientific discussion or presentation of God. The texts move from suggesting God's immanence to other texts talking about God's transcendence. Some texts clearly call God a singular being, while other texts refer to a multiplicity of gods. However, the attention paid to God is the earliest example of what Schulweis would classify as Subject theology.

Also, in the writings of the rabbis, one cannot find a systematic treatment of Jewish theology, but rabbinic era literature attests to the understanding of God as the focus of Jewish thought, activity, and prayer. Rabbinic prayer was formulated to affirm God as the noun-subject of concern. Jews bless a God who performs specific acts or commands human beings to perform specific acts. With regard to divine qualities, the rabbis engaged in many discussions on the nature of God. They gave God a voice and a

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[22] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. "Theology: Biblical Theology."

personality so that they might interact with God and by doing so, authenticate their theology and interpretive process. However, the qualities of God are still embodied in the heavenly Subject-God.

Medieval Subject Theology

As one follows the language of the Jewish relationship with God through to the medieval period, one will find that philosophers of this era continue the Subject theology approach of focusing attention on the God as a subject, as the bearer of certain divine attributes. For the medieval writers,"...God...is, in the main, impersonal, impassioned, and utterly beyond all human associations."[23] Hence, we will find an attempt to understand God through intellectualization and philosophy. In this quest, medieval thinkers such as Maimonides were careful not to associate any human action or characteristic to God. Hence, Maimonides claimed that all anthropomorphic references to God in the biblical literature were purely metaphoric in their usage. In fact, human beings cannot know anything about God in the way of positive attributes. For to know any of God's attributes would limit the Divine essence, and that is something which cannot be done. Thus, Maimonides asserts a theology of negation in which the human may come to know what God is *not* and also what is not God. In this sense, God does not become limited by anthropomorphic assumptions; God remains beyond our inquiry into His attributes.

Judah Ha-Levi also expresses an appreciation of the human desire to understand

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[23] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed., s.v. "Theology: Medieval Theology."

God. He understands the attributes of God to be categorized into three headings: creative, negative, and relative. These categorizations are designed to help foster human understanding of God while "these attributes neither touch on the divine presence, nor do they assume a multiplicity."[24] In a sense, human beings attempt to know God through categorizing attributes of God, which at best, fall short of actually describing God. Ha-Levi also asserts that human beings cannot ascribe positive attributes to God. Hence, while it is human nature to seek God's essence, we may only find answers in understanding what God is not, what God has created, and through relative attributes.

While not a Jewish philosopher, St Thomas Aquinas, dealt with this very same issue - attempting to know God through His attributes. Aquinas admits that humans beings can know "positive predications of God, but they fall short of representing Him."[25] In response to Aquinas' assertion that human beings can come to know some attribute of God, Schulweis asks, "how can we meaningfully apply such a predicate of perfection in accordance with God's nature when we know nothing of His preeminent nature except that it is infinitely different from any other?"[26]

The medieval thinkers have turned to philosophic discourse to try and understand God, but in no way to limit Him. From their discussion of God's attributes, one learns that no positive attribute of God can be truly ascertained. For Schulweis, the medieval emphasis on the un-knowability of God will be a foundation for his arguments on behalf

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[24] Harold M. Schulweis. *Evil And The Morality Of God.* Cincinnati (HUC Press, 1984), 117.

[25] ibid.

[26] ibid.

of a predicate-based theology, in contrast to the classical approach.

Prayerbook - In Praise of the Divine Subject

The most telling portrayal of a Jewish conception of a God as a subject lies in the prayerbook. Over the past two millennia, Jewish communities have collected Biblical texts, piyyutim, rabbinic texts, and theological pronouncements into a singular volume which is the traditional prayerbook. The traditional prayerbook represents a variety of theological approaches inside its cover. There are texts espousing religious naturalism and texts supporting henotheism, as well as verses which are mystical in nature. However, they are bound together in their grammatical formulations as prayers to the Subject-God. The texts bless the God who does this and the God who does that. As Schulweis noted, "The very language of our theological and liturgical forms focuses attention upon the subject..."[27] God is understood and represented as the source of everything in the universe from creation to human anatomy to natural events. Jewish prayers are focused on God as the noun that performs an action. In this classical formulation, the predicates, or qualities of God do not receive attention.

From the traditional service, we encounter two examples of subject-oriented prayer. In the morning liturgy, one reads, "Blessed be He who spoke and the world came into being, blessed be He. Blessed be He who created the universe."[28] In this text, the

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[27] Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975), 18.

[28] Phillip Birnbaum. *Hasiddur Hashalem.* (New York, Hebrew Publishing Company, 1977), 50.

subject of the sentence is "He," referring to God, who causes an action to occur. In this case, the action is creation. Classical Subject theology is reinforced in this text where the focus of the prayer is on God, yet any predicates of divinity are silent, that is, unexplicated.

In another example from the traditional liturgy, we focus our attention on the Subject-God who is recipient of our praise. The text reads, "In every generation we will thank Thee and recount Thy praise-for our lives which are in thy charge, for our souls which are in Thy care..."[29] Again, the prayer suggests that God is in charge of human lives and souls, and our attention in worship should be focused on Him.

Additionally, the modern liberal prayerbooks have retained this God-centered, Subject theology position for its prayer formulations. Dr. Henry Slonimsky, a liberal rabbi, wrote of Jewish prayer that "...these prayers are addressed to a God who is accessible to prayer, not just a Power but a power who is Shomeia Tefillah [*sic*], one who listens to prayers."[30] Here, one finds the classical model of God in the world of liberal Jewish prayer services as well. In the Reform Movement's prayerbook, one can find texts such as, "He is the Creator of day and night, rolling light away from darkness and darkness away from light"[31] and "O God and God of ages past, may our rest on this day be pleasing in Your sight."[32] These two text examples show how, even in the Reform

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[29] Phillip Birnbaum. *Hasiddur Hashalem.* (New York, Hebrew Publishing Company, 1977), 92.

[30] Henry Slonimsky. "Prayer and a Growing God." In *Gates of Understanding*. Lawrence A Hoffman. ed. (New York: CCAR Press, 1983), 72.

[31] Chaim Stern. *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook.* (New York: CCAR Press, 1975), 129.

[32] ibid, 136.

Movement's own prayerbook, one can find prayer language that embraces the classical theological formulation of Subject theology devoid of any discussion of predicates.

A third liturgical example can be found in the Reconstructionist prayerbook. Even while the Reconstructionist Movement has radically altered the Jewish conception of God in that they officially reject the notion of a supernatural deity, they nonetheless retain same focus on God in their liturgy. The prayers in the movement's prayerbook is based upon the same traditional liturgy such as, "Blessed are You, THE EVERLASTING ONE, our God, the sovereign of all worlds. Divine one, who gave birth to all, the merciful, subject of praise upon people's mouths, lauded and glorified upon the tongues of all who love and serve You."[33] A final example from the Reconstructionist prayerbook is the traditional text, "Blessed are you, COMPASSIONATE ONE, Maker of peace."[34] Granted, there are other prayer formulations in the Reconstructionist and Reform prayerbooks, still the bulk of the liturgy is based upon the traditional prayer service which, at its core, is a subject-oriented prayer service. While some of the prayers do mention God's work in helping humankind, the focus of attention is on God, because, as Nachmanides wrote, "By worshiping God, by obeying His laws...man becomes more perfect, more God-like."[35]

Preliminary Analysis and Schulweis' Critique

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[33] *Kol Haneshama, Shabbat Vehagim*. (Elkins Park: Reconstructionist Press, 1994), 180.

[34] ibid, 320.

[35] Louis Jacobs. *A Jewish Theology*. (New Jersey: Behrman House, 1995), 183.

Schulweis classifies the majority of Jewish thought throughout history as Subject theology, where the focus of Jewish texts and prayers is directed to a subject, namely God. The elaboration of such a system is necessary for Schulweis to critique its approach. From the Bible, through the rabbinic literature, medieval philosophy and thought, and throughout the liturgy, Jewish religious thought has promoted a singular God who is ultimately beyond comprehension, but knowable in some sense through His deeds. Attempts have been made to know God, but as Maimonides teaches, one can never know God, they may only know of God's negative attributes. Human beings cannot know God's essence at all, and they have trouble coming to know God adequately through the traditional divine attributes. In terms of prayer, traditional and modern liturgies acknowledge that God is the subject who performs acts, receives praise, and operates within the context of a covenantal relationship. When we understand God to be the Being to whom all are prayers are directed, we affirm God as the focus of our theological concerns. Schulweis argues that this God-concept is problematic for two reasons. First, there is the concern of distancing. If God is conceived as ultimately unknowable, as we have learned from traditional and medieval texts, and the human thus can never know God, then why is one expected to praise God as the focus of the worship service? This creates a spiritual distance between the worshiper and unknowable subject, namely God. This spiritual alienation is a major impetus for Schulweis' predicate theology.

A second concern for Schulweis is the problem of evil in the world. In a Subject theology model, Schulweis claims that the reality of evil in the world forces proponents

of Subject theology to defend God. Schulweis writes that in times of trouble, "the theodicies of Subject theology feel compelled to raise the divine subject beyond the reach of the moral predicates."[36] When confronting evil, Subject theology must remove God from the "attack of the moral predicates."[37] Here, we find Schulweis' major critique of Subject theology as it pertains to evil in the world. The theological orientation that focuses on the Subject-God is apt to defend that God from attacks when the issue of theodicy is raised. There is a dual use of God's moral predicates for the subject theologian. In peaceful times, the subject theologian talks of God's justice, mercy, and grace. But when something bad occurs, the subject theologian assigns that evil to human error, thus God is spared from attack. Schulweis argues that God's moral qualities or predicates should not be hidden from attacks, rather, God's predicates should be the focus of our theological concern.

In additions, Schulweis critiques Subject theology on the basis of pure grammatical convention. In its grammatical sense, God is a noun.[38] When the traditional prayer formulation is read, "Blessed are You, God, who..." the word God functions as a noun. The concern here is that by mere convention, a noun is seen as an independent, self-sufficient entity, which may or may not have relationships with others. Thinkers such as George Berkeley and Bertrand Russell, claim that this usage is a mistake—that a

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[36] Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975), 19.

[37] ibid.

[38] Harold M. Schulweis. *For Those Who Can't Believe.* (New York: Harper Trade, 1995), 132.

noun should be correlated with its predicate.[39] For example, the word "teacher" should not be seen as an entity devoid of correlation, rather, teacher should be understood in relation to students and school and learning. Similarly, one can also attach predicates to the teacher such as good or fair. However, in modern linguistic usage, one can merely say the word teacher and assume it to be an independent entity. This bias in favor of the independent noun creates a problem for Schulweis when speaking of God. Just as noun needs adjectives to qualify itself, so too a subject needs its predicates. When God is addressed as a noun-subject in prayer, it is by convention, assumed to be independent of its predicates. When the prayer speaks of a God who has brought forth bread form the earth, one does not know if that God is just or merciful or righteous. One can assume these qualities, but God as a noun inherits the linguistic bias of being treated as an independent idea. Schulweis will argue that this grammatical convention is alienating to the modern Jewish worshiper because it asserts a natural split between the worshiper and something that is foreign.[40]

In summary, Subject theology is a deeply rooted feature of Jewish religious thought and prayer which focuses nearly all attention on God, and very little or no attention on the predicates of divinity. Schulweis will argue that an inversion needs to occur whereby the exact opposite applies, so that the focus of Jewish thought and prayer will be on the predicates of divinity, and not on a distant, unknowable God.

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[39] Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975), 18.

[40] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 5 December 2002.

- THREE -

PREDICATE THEOLOGY

I am convinced that for many who intellectually and temperamentally are blocked from expressing their religious sensibilities because of the formulations and presuppositions of Subject theology, Predicate theology offers a way to relate positively to divinity, and its celebration in prayer and ritual.

— Harold M. Schulweis, *"Predicate Theology"*

Based upon his critique of what he calls "Subject theology,"Schulweis offers his personal approach of relating to God. Utilizing the same grammatical model in which he calls God a "subject," Schulweis turns his focus away from God per se, and focuses his energies instead on the divine predicates. What may appear at first to be a minor grammatical shift, has major impact on the way Jews relate to God through prayer and on the way Jews view other human beings.

Schulweis often demonstrates this shift of focus when speaking to college groups. He asks to group the raise their hands if they agree with the statements: "God is just; God is merciful, and God is good." He notes that few students agree with this formulation. Such propositions are an example of Subject theology, where the predicates of God are bound up in God's transcendent oneness. It is difficult for many modern, non-fundamentalist people to agree with these notions that God is just, merciful and good — especially in a post-Holocaust world. The inability to agree with these statements bolsters Schulweis' argument that people generally feel discomfort at the notion of

making bold statements about what God is like. As traditional theology has taught generations of people, God is ultimately unknowable - so how would one know if God is just or merciful? Schulweis then re-formulates the propositions and asks the students if they would agree that *justice, mercy, and goodness are godly characteristics*. At this point, "the response is largely positive and most often enthusiastic."[41] Schulweis suggests the reason for the enthusiastic response is, "because people do not experience the subject [God], they experience the predicates [of divinity]. In addition, it is because this notion of connecting with the predicates of divinity is a leap into another world about which most people have doubts."[42] This exercise suggests that Predicate theology, as Schulweis develops it, is not just a simple redirection of focus from the divine subject to predicates of divinity, but it is a serious and appealing conception of God which appeals to modern religious sensibilities.

Schulweis calls attention to predicates of divinity in order to encourage a search for, and potentially finding, a personal connection to God's attributes. He does not want Jews to be preoccupied with Elohim—God, rather they should be concerned with Elohut—godliness. Godliness is understandable and attainable. It is through a focus on the divine predicates that people will come to emulate those qualities.

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[41] Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975), 17.

[42] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 26 February 2003.

Precursors of Predicate theology

While Schulweis is a contemporary thinker focusing on the predicates of divinity, the discussion of God's attributes has been unfolding for centuries. Throughout the biblical text, God is described as possessing many qualities. Most notably, the text of Exodus 34:6-7 offers a list of God's qualities. The text reads, "God passed by before [Moses] and proclaimed, 'God, God, Omnipotent, merciful and kind, slow to anger, with tremendous [resources of] love and truth. He remembers deeds of love for thousands [of generations], forgiving sin, rebellion and error. He does not clear [those who do not repent], but keeps in mind the sins of the fathers to their children and grandchildren, to the third and fourth generation."[43] This text has been incorporated into the traditional Jewish liturgy, and the text is understood, through rabbinic interpretation, to expound the thirteen attributes of God. The way the Conservative Movement's Rabbinical Assembly Mahzor enumerates these are as follows:

(1) God (who is compassionate before you sin)
(2) God (who is compassionate after you sin)
(3) God of Power (who rules over all, Gentile and Jew)
(4) Gracious (to those with merit)
(5) and Compassionate (to those without merit)
(6) Patient (with the wicked, who may repent)
(7) Abounding in kindness (with those in need of kindness)
(8) and Faithfulness (rewarding those who do My will)
(9) Assuring Love for a thousand generations (when you do good deeds)
(10) Forgiving iniquity (when you sin deliberately)
(11) Transgression (when you rebel maliciously)
(12) and Sin (when you sin unintentionally)

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[43] Translation from *Navigating the Bible.* Internet edition. http://bible.ort.org/books/pentd2.asp?action=displayanchor&pentid=P2523. (3 January 2003).

(13) and Granting Pardon (when you repent)[44]

These attributes are largely associated with a rite of forgiveness in the liturgy, but the biblical author, and the rabbinic editors of this passage, show a great concern for understanding some of God's predicates. Since Jewish theology as a whole rejects the idea of a composite God, these enumerated attributes are meant to suggest some of the single God's qualities as experienced by human beings.

The notion of coming to know God's attributes may reflect a basic human desire, but philosophy lends itself to this goal as well. Aristotle suggests a difference between fundamental being and fundamental properties.[45] This distinction supports later attempts by Jewish philosophers to demarcate 'God as Subject' vis-à-vis 'God's Predicates.' This distinction is especially important in Subject theology when it deals with theodicy because, in the event of an evil act, the Subject theologian detaches God from his moral predicates to stave off an attack on God for allowing evil to occur.

Medieval philosophers took on this question of God's attributes initially as a defense against Christian trinitarianism.[46] The first to deal with this topic systematically was 10th century Babylonian scholar Saadia Gaon who held that God can have no positive attributes outside of existence, unity, power, and wisdom.[47] Saadia's argument on

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[44] *Mahzor For Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*. Jules Harlow, ed. United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 1978.

[45] *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "attributes."

[46] ibid. There are other debates in the Medieval Ages amongst Muslims and among philosophers of various traditions about the nature of subject and predicates in relation to Being.

[47] ibid.

applying attributes to God (even though he did note those four) suggested that by admitting attributes, God would become a composite God. In *Emunot v'Deot* (ii 5, 53) he argued that, "with the possession of attributes, differences in God must be admitted,"[48] The strength of Saadia's argument is somewhat lessened by the fact that he claims there can be no positive attributes of, yet offers four.

Later philosophers dealing with the question of God's attributes move away from trying to enumerate what they are, and suggest that God's positive attributes, extant yet unknowable, can be grouped into classes. Bachya ibn Pakuda, an 11th century Spanish Jewish philosopher separated God's attributes into two classes, those of essence and those of action.[49] Bachya denies the ability to know God through his attributes, only that the human mind can conceive of God's attributes as falling into one of these two categories. The 12th century Andalusian theologian, Judah Halevi, takes this a step further in dividing God's attributes into three classes which are creative, relative, negative. But again, all essential attributes must be taken negatively.[50] In addition to categorization, Halevi maintains that God is non-composite. In the Kuzari, he writes clearly that "all these attributes neither touch on the divine presence, nor do they assume a multiplicity."[51] For

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[48] *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "attributes."

[49] ibid.

[50] ibid.

[51] Harold M Schulweis. *Evil And The Morality Of God.* Cincinnati (HUC Press, 1984), 117. Harold Schulweis' endnote citation of this text in his book is mislabeled. The translated text comes from Book II: Section 2 of The Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel translated by Hartwig Hirschfeld. New York (Schocken Books, 1964), 85. A more recent translation of this quote that is likely to be published soon comes from the work of Professors Barry Kogan and Lawrence Berman. It reads as follows: "None of these attributes is an inherent quality belonging to the essence [of God] by necessity, nor does it become multiple because of them."

Halevi, attributes are used to praise God or show reverence, or one may even use them to talk about the inability of being able to admit to God's positive attributes.

The most famous classical medieval discussion of divine attributes is made by the 12th century Jewish philosopher Maimonides. Maimonides asserts that divine attributes exist and can be categorized, but they are unable to assist in positively knowing anything about God. Maimonides categorizes attributes into four classes. They are essential properties of an object, part of essential property, those attributes that indicate a quality, and ones that express actions or effects.[52] Maimonides, insistent along with all other medieval Jewish thinkers that God is non-composite, finds it impossible to say anything positive about God's essence. For to suggest that God is X, it implies the possibility of multiplicity in God. Maimonides creates a system of negative theology whereby a person may be able to discern what God is not. "For Maimonides, predicates such as 'goodness,' 'life,' and 'power' when applied to God are homonyms, veritable puns. They are properly understood as negations, signifying that God is not evil, not lifeless, and not powerless."[53] With regard to the attributes of God found in the biblical text, they say nothing about God's positive attributes.

The medieval philosophers are consumed with protecting God against any argument that would imply multiplicity in him. The culmination of these arguments is in Maimonides' negative theology which, while important, is limited in its appeal to the modern Jew who wishes to connect with the attributes of divinity. The only thing the

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[52] *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "attributes."

[53] Harold M. Schulweis. *Evil And The Morality Of God.* Cincinnati (HUC Press, 1984), 117.

medieval philosophers positively acknowledge about God is that he exists. Comprehension of God and positive identification of God's attributes are out of the question. The medieval God is what Schulweis refers to as the predicateless Subject. This will be a major factor in Schulweis' development of a theology which not only *does* allow people to discover God's attributes, it is hoped that once these attributes are made public, there will be a drive to emulate the predicates of divinity.

While the medieval debate focused on the inability to know God's attributes, the modern philosophical approach was much more open to the idea of, and saw the necessity for, knowing and connecting with the attributes of divinity. Seventeenth century Dutch Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza suggests that one may indeed conceive of God's attributes. He, "maintains that God is conceived by an infinite variety of Attributes, every one of which expresses His eternal essence."[54] Hence, it is precisely through God's attributes that a person may come to know God.

Given the change in attitude in more modern religious thought with regard to being able to know or experience the attributes of God, one philosopher, Feuerbach, shifted the focus of the discussion. Perhaps the most striking precursor to Schulweis' Predicate theology is the 19th century German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, who directly proposed the inversion, or shift of focus from subject to predicate. Schulweis writes, "we consider Feuerbach's inversion as a pedagogic and methodologic principle: '...that which in religion is the predicate we must make as subject, and that which in

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[54] *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "attributes."

religion is a subject we must make a predicate.'"[55] In Schulweis's agreement with Feuerbach's principle of inversion, Schulweis writes, "The first shall become last and the last first. The predicates are no longer seen as qualities which derive their meaning from the subject. The predicates are now the proper subject of theology. They assume a new status. We look to them to understand the character of divinity."[56]

Given the groundwork for the modern quest to connect with the attributes of God, 20th century Jewish philosopher Mordecai Kaplan sought reconstruct the way in which Jews experience God, His attributes, and Judaism in general. In terms of his theology, Kaplan was concerned with the salvation of humanity. He recognized the inherent alienation between man and God in the Subject theology system due to God's ultimate unknowability, and sought to re-focus the relationship. The traditional theological approach to God, wherein a person cannot know God or know his positive attributes troubled Kaplan. Schulweis summed up Kaplan's position when he wrote that,

> the problem may be stated thus: if there exists an antecedent Being, wholly independent of human beings of whom no spatio-temporal attributes may be legitimately predicated, and whose nature lies outside the realm of human experience, in what sense can such a Reality be said to be known by human persons, or be meaningful to them? The very incomprehensibleness, in human terms, of such a supernatural God denies the conditions for its confirmation or rejection.[57]

Hence, bereft of a connection with God beyond an acknowledgment of existence, human

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[55] Harold M. Schulweis. *Evil And The Morality Of God.* Cincinnati (HUC Press, 1984), 122.

[56] Harold M. Schulweis. *Evil And The Morality Of God.* Cincinnati (HUC Press, 1984), 122.

[57] Harold M. Schulweis. "Mordecai M. Kaplan's 'Soterics' as a Metaphysical Theology: An Analysis." Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/kaplan.htm. (18 December 2001).

beings rightfully feel disconnected. Moreover, the traditional notion of God as a supernatural deity was impossible for Kaplan to accept. Kaplan believed that modern science made it impossible to believe in a supernatural God, but he did believe that there is inherent value in retaining the ideal and name of God.[58] Thus, Kaplan set out to reshape the Jewish connection with God. Schulweis writes, "Kaplan's theological approach was based on the conviction that 'by shifting the orientation from the God-concept, a point intended to be outside human experience, to the idea of man, we are likely to make more headway with the problem of salvation.'"[59] Kaplan's non-conformism appealed to Schulweis and his suggestion for shifting focus, while not a completely new idea (Feuerbach had suggested this one hundred years earlier), empowered Schulweis.

Schulweis has been influenced by many texts and philosophers and his personal theology has grown out of a tension between traditional Jewish theology and modern sensibilities. While the Biblical text spoke openly about God's attributes, many medieval philosophers attempted to quell that discussion—they were concerned with potentially compromising God's unity if He could be seen as a multiplicity. Thinkers such as Spinoza and Feuerbach re-opened the discussion with their ideas of connection with God's attributes and a shift of focus that set the stage for later thinkers like Kaplan to suggest an outright reconstruction of Judaism. Granted, Schulweis was not influenced by

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[58] *Encyclopedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed, s.v. "Mordecai Kaplan."

[59] Harold M. Schulweis. "Mordecai M. Kaplan's 'Soterics' as a Metaphysical Theology: An Analysis." Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/kaplan.htm. (18 December 2001).

these thinkers only and certainly not in the chronological fashion in which they have been discussed here. Predicate theology is Schulweis' unique approach to God and prayer based upon earlier philosophical texts and the need for a new conception to understanding and experiencing God.

Schulweis' Approach

Schulweis' Predicate theology seeks to bridge the chasm between the unknowable God and the worshiper. The distance between human beings and God lends itself to a sense of spiritual alienation. As Schulweis writes, "the very moral distancing of God from ourselves raises deep resentments."[60] Human beings may not be able to know God, but they can experience acts of godliness in other people. If justice is a divine quality, then acts of justice performed by people exemplify godliness. Likewise, a righteous act teaches human beings nothing about God per se, but people may experience godliness in that righteous act. This approach concentrates theological concern on human beings experiencing and performing acts of godliness. Schulweis asks rhetorically about experiencing God, "How do I experience God?" His answer is that "without the knowledge of attributes, I have no clue how to experience God."[61]

The looming question in understanding predicate theology asks how do human beings *know* which of the attributes are divine. What are the predicates of divinity? Are they based in biblical or rabbinic writings or are they self-evident truths wherein human

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[60] Harold M. Schulweis. *For Those Who Can't Believe.* (New York: Harper Trade, 1995), 132.

[61] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 1 August 2002.

beings automatically know what is godly and what is not? Schulweis' answer is that no one truly knows what the predicates of divinity are, rather, a community must come together and collectively agree upon what they consider to be attributes of divinity. For Schulweis, each generation must discover for themselves what is godly - which human actions will emulate God's attributes. It is through this process of what he calls "discovery," that God's predicates can be known and passed on to the next generation to accept, reject, or modify. This theology maintains no moral absolutism - morality is part of the organic process of discovery in each generation. A critique can be made out the outset, that predicate theology allows any community to call anything it wants—godly, thus elevating any predicate to divine status. Assuming that communities would cherish just behavior, caring for one another, and being merciful, this seems like a safe approach. However, what if a community were to discover or decide that murder is a divine predicate, or stealing, or any other terrible act? How does Predicate theology prevent a community from "discovering" divine attributes which are in opposition to another community's "discovered" divine attributes? The answer is that it does not. Schulweis acknowledges that once the door is opened, it may swing both ways. He is not troubled by this because he does not see Predicate theology as a set of theological principles to which one must adhere. Rather, for Schulweis, it is a methodology.[62] Predicate theology promotes the process by which a community and its individuals decide for themselves what is godly. The concern about potential ill-use of this methodology has also been addressed by Schulweis. He said, "the claim of what is godly bears with it the

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[62] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 1 August 2002.

responsibility of consequence."[63] Predicate theology walks a fine line between being an engaging liberal religious philosophy and a methodology which could easily justify acts of evil. In the process of a community discovering what is godly, there are to be no absolutes and no limits. Agreement about what is godly is achieved by either overt or tacit consensus.

On the level of grammar, Schulweis makes the case that predicate theology takes on the same challenges of connecting the Subject with his Predicates as linguists have of promoting the noun as a co-relational word - not independent of its adjectives. The chief concern for Schulweis is that understanding a concrete noun as an independent entity creates a gap between subject and predicate. Schulweis quotes George Berkeley with regard to the problem of the independent noun concept. He writes, quoting Berkeley, that understanding a noun as a, "separate entity makes us 'apt to think every noun substantive stands for a distinctive idea that may be separated from all others: which hath occasioned infinite mistakes.'"[64] In an attempt to rescue God as a noun from becoming an entity in itself, free from co-relation with its predicates, Mordecai Kaplan, "insists that [the word] God be considered as a functional, not a substantive noun, a correlative term which implies relationship, e.g., as a teacher implies pupil and king implies subjects."[65]

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[63] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 1 August 2002.

[64] Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975), 18. This quote comes from George Berkeley's A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge. This Treatise was originally published in 1710 and can be retrieved from the Internet at http://www.maths.tcd.ie/~dwilkins/Berkeley/HumanKnowledge/1734/HumKno.pdf, 51.

[65] ibid, 20.

Schulweis agrees with Kaplan and linguists in his concern that God as a noun may suffer the same fate as any other noun i.e., not necessarily being connected with its predicates.

Elohim and Adonai

Schulweis bases much of his criticism of other Jewish theologies on the inability of those theologies to successfully deal with the question of theodicy. He finds that Subject theology extols a God who is beyond human understanding by doing what is religiously required (good), but not by doing what is morally or religiously prohibited (evil). A Subject God is whisked away from human experience in the face of evil; He is shielded against attacks of inconsistency. Schulweis believes that a better way to understand God, is to understand God as encompassing two distinct personalities. Schulweis begins his argument for a two-sided God concept in the Shema prayer—Hear Israel, the Lord (Adonai) is our God (Eloheinu), the Lord is One. In that prayer, Schulweis notes that God is referred to as both Adonai, the Lord, and in a different grammatical form, Elohim, God. Yet, they are considered by the prayer to be as one. For Schulweis, this suggests that God may be *one and two at the same time*. This division is important because it allows Schulweis the ability to create a God concept that is able to withstand many criticisms leveled against traditional theodicies and the notion of God as subject which lies behind them.

Schulweis notes that Adonai and Elohim are the names for the two separate characteristics of God's personality - unified in God, but distinct in human conception. Elohim is the morally neutral God of nature. Nature does not suggest what is moral or

immoral, it just *is* - and it operates without concern for human beings.[66] Schulweis notes that this idea of a morally neutral God of nature is mentioned by Judah Halevi. He quotes Halevi's book, the Kuzari, in which it is written that Elohim governs the world "without feelings of sympathy with one or anger against another."[67] Also, Schulweis offers a text from the Talmud to support this idea of moral detachment. He writes that, "in a remarkable passage in the Talmud (Avodah Zara 54b), the rabbis argue: If a man should steal a measure of wheat and sow it on his own property, by virtue of the law of justice this stolen seed should not flourish. But the sages observe: *Olam k'minhago nohaig*, nature pursues its own course." This personality of God is important for Schulweis in that acts of nature, which many people see as part of an interventionist God's plan, are really unconnected with the will of God. Nature moves along on its own course. A person's DNA which genetically predisposes them to some disease or a hurricane which destroys a community are both examples of a morally neutral nature which humans experience, but ought not ascribe to divine intervention. In one of his articles dealing with this very topic, Schulweis addresses his community after a damaging earthquake occurred in Southern California, destroying homes and business and causing numerous deaths. In his sermon, Schulweis speaks of the world of Elohim. He writes,

> The world of Elohim is not a court of justice. In this sense the world is not fair. But that is not the whole world nor is Elohim the whole of divinity. Were Elohim the only description of God's way we would be pantheists, equating God with

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[66] Harold M. Schulweis. *For Those Who Can't Believe.* (New York: Harper Trade, 1995), 107.

[67] ibid.

nature. We would submit to nature and live according to nature.[68]

The other facet of God's personality, still based on the Shema, is understood by Schulweis to be Adonai. For Schulweis, Adonai reflects the human experience with divinity, or as Schulweis writes, "Adonai necessarily involves human response."[69] Adonai is the ground of moral action. When human beings experience godliness, they encounter Adonai. "If Elohim relates to the whole of amoral nature, Adonai relates to that which human nature may do to control and repair nature."[70] In the article on the earthquake, Schulweis also explores the role of Adonai. He writes,

> But where is Adonai in the earthquake? In the energies and talents of His divinity as imaged in creation, in people in their individual and collective behavior to protect, sustain and comfort those who suffer. Adonai is present when we are present and it is through our godly behavior that belief in His existence and goodness is demonstrated. The rabbis ask in a Midrash (based on Deuteronomy 13:5) how it is possible for human beings to follow the devouring fire of God? The answer is that we are to imitate the attributes of Adonai. As Adonai clothes the naked, feeds the hungry, shelters the homeless, visits the sick, comforts the mourners, buries the dead, so faith in Adonai within and between us mandates us to emulate His qualities. The earthquake is not a moral judgment of God. It is the consequence of the amoral world of nature. A natural cause is not a divine moral intention, a natural consequence is not a divine curse.[71]

The division of Elohim/Adonai is understood as an is/ought proposition. They way the world "is" can be linked to the nature of Elohim, the wholly transcendent God of nature, unconcerned with human actions. The way the world "ought" to be is connected

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[68] Harold M. Schulweis. "Was God In the Earthquake?" Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/earth.htm. (9 January 2002).

[69] Harold M. Schulweis. *For Those Who Can't Believe*. (New York: Harper Trade, 1995), 111.

[70] ibid, 132.

[71] Harold M. Schulweis. "Was God In the Earthquake?" Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/earth.htm. (9 January 2002).

with Adonai's personality, a God concept which prompts human beings to righteous action. Human beings may strive to change the world according to what "ought" to be, but are often unable to change what "is" in nature. Thus, for Schulweis, the two aspects of God are distinct yet interdependent - and both are necessary. Schulweis suggests that at the root of spiritual despair is the dichotomy of these two aspects, without the human being recognizing their interdependence. "Without Elohim, the ideals of Adonai are fantasies. Without Adonai, reality is robbed of the real possibility of change."[72] Here, Schulweis is suggesting that Elohim represents the "is"—the way nature operates and Adonai is the "ought"—the strive toward godliness. These two interdependent dimensions of God are united in Shema. "The traditional benediction joins Elohim and Adonai"[73] God is still One, but now God is understood in terms of human experience - the God which transcends human action and the God which is involved in human action.

This division also allows for a more consistent view of God. When evil occurs, the Divine is not hidden from attacks of morality. God withstands the attacks because the Elohim aspect of divinity is not involved in distributing rewards and punishments. Yet, God is not removed from the human experience; God is experienced in acts of Adonai which are human acts of godliness. When human beings inflict evil on one another, it shows a lack of godliness on the part of the perpetrator. In the face of evil, human beings seek out Adonai for help in transforming evil into acts of righteousness. The power of this division suggests that in the worst of tragedies, such as the Holocaust, a victim may

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[72] Harold M. Schulweis. *For Those Who Can't Believe.* (New York: Harper Trade, 1995), 117.

[73] ibid, 132.

acknowledge the absence of Adonai in the Nazis and in the camps, but may still sense the existence of Elohim in the workings of nature. In good times, Elohim and Adonai are one, in dark times, there is a disconnect between Adonai's support and intervention and Elohim's charge of the universe. This disconnect prompts human beings to seek change. Schulweis likens this approach to the Aleinu prayer. "In the Aleinu, we say that 'on that day God will be One' meaning He is not one right now. We look to the Shema as a proclamation of aspiration—to unifying Elohim and Adonai."[74]

In times of personal tragedy, a person may acknowledge that it is simply an act of Elohim when cancer ravages a loved one's body, for Elohim is amoral, but Adonai exists in the righteous acts of the doctors and nurses and researchers who take care of that person. Schulweis wrote a poem dealing with this division which he called simply "ELOHIM - ADONAI." An abridged version of the poem reads:

> *Elohim creates day and night, light and darkness.*
> *Lion and lamb, bacteria and penicillin.*
> *Gives power to the fowl above the earth,*
> *To the great sea monsters below, to every living creature that creeps on the earth.*
>
> *Elohim the God of Omnipotence before whom we recognize our own impotence,*
> *"Canst Thou bind the chain of the Pleides or loose the bands of Orion?"*
> *Elohim the God of Omniscience before whom we recognize our ignorance,*
> *"Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?*
> *Can you number the clouds by wisdom?"*
> *Elohim before whom we bow our heads and bend our knees,*
> *the sovereign God whose power and reality we accept.*
>
> *But Elohim is not the whole of divinity. Alongside Elohim is Adonai.*
> *This is our affirmation of oneness. Hear Israel, Adonai our Elohim is One.*
>
> *Adonai the Lord of all that ought to be.*
> *Adonai revealed in the yearning and behavior of His human creation*

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[74] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 26 February 2003.

for justice, for fairness, for peace, for harmony.
Adonai in the vision of a compassionate society.
Adonai in the transformation of chaos and violence and
the void of the universe, into order, sanity, and love.

Elohim/Adonai, acceptance and transformation,
the reality of what is, the reality of what ought to be the reality of what is yet to be.[75]

In terms of a Predicate theology, Schulweis' Elohim/Adonai distinction allows the change of focus from the Subject God to God's divine predicates to have use beyond liturgy. The wider impact of Predicate theology not only entails helping to strengthen the act of prayer into a more empowering act, it also aids in human conception of the role of divinity during difficult times.

On a different level, the Elohim/Adonai argument mirrors the subject/predicate one. Elohim can be seen as the "supramoral subject"[76]—unknowable, beyond understanding, and transcendent. Adonai can be seen as the predicates—the experiences of godliness in the world. Just as Elohim and Adonai must necessarily be interdependent as part of a unity, so it is with the Subject and its predicates. As mentioned earlier, Elohim without Adonai or Adonai without Elohim creates a spiritual gap. This gap exists with the subject/predicate model as well when Schulweis writes, "The schism of the subject and moral predicate presages the chasm between faith and morality and the alienation of man from God."[77]

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[75] Harold M. Schulweis. "Elohim - Adonai: Godliness and Immortality." Poem at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/poetry/godlines/elohadon.htm. (18 December 2001).

[76] Harold M. Schulweis. *Evil And The Morality Of God.* Cincinnati (HUC Press, 1984), 119.

[77] ibid, 121.

Analysis

Schulweis' Predicate theology is a theology which challenges the basic assumptions that virtually all traditional Jewish theologies claim. Traditional or Subject theology focuses its attention on an unknowable, distant God who has influenced the way Jews engage in prayer, act toward one another, and deal with issues of theodicy. The focus on godliness allows the modern person to engage a God concept which can be empowering in that it allows the person to experience divinity in the actions of real people. As the people come to understand their connection with the dissemination of divinity - by acknowledging and promoting acts of godliness, human beings may feel more connected with the divine. To a modern Jew, a focus on God's mercy or justice may seem less important than the tangible effects of justice and mercy in human interaction. Schulweis creates a theology through which this connection exists, one in which the predicates of God are real, sought after, and able to shape the moral stature of a community and the individuals who comprise it. Human beings connect with elements of godliness in righteous actions. In times of trouble, they are comforted by the Elohim/Adonai distinction which allows them to maintain belief in God even when the unity of God's personalities seems disconnected.

While Predicate theology is a radical and new approach to understanding God, it's roots lie in older works, both Biblical and philosophical, which promote the experience of the divine attributes. Schulweis claims he is "just the first one who puts it all together in a systematic fashion."[78] Predicate theology, by focusing on the attributes of divinity

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[78] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 1 August 2002.

rather than on the unknowable God, is a theology of empowerment and individualism. Given the general apathy of the modern Jewish community toward prayer and theological discussion, such a new approach is a welcomed one. Schulweis constructs a system in which individuals and communities discover the predicates of divinity, adopt them as sacred, and strive to emulate them. Social action, justice, human compassion, respect, mercy, and tolerance are just some of the predicates of divinity which a modern Jew can sense, feel, and experience. This tangibility of the predicates helps bridge the gap of alienation one may feel in a Subject theology system.

- FOUR -

APPLICATIONS OF PREDICATE THEOLOGY

I will speak to you out of the rhymes of the Masters; I will dance with you in the lilt of the violin; And make your heart leap with the bursting cadence of the organ; I will flood your soul with the flaming radiance of the sunrise, And bring you peace in the tender rose and gold of the after-sunset.

—Harold M. Schulweis, *"My Hereafter."*

The work of Rabbi Schulweis extends beyond the realms of theology and philosophy. As a congregational rabbi, he has been involved with, and written about, congregational life, pastoral care, active conversion, reinventing liturgy, and he pioneered the first synagogue-based *havurah* program. However, all of his work is founded upon the principles of Predicate theology and especially the view that the focus of Jewish concern should be on experiencing the attributes of divinity in the sphere of human activity. To that end, Schulweis has not only been a teacher of his theology, he is also a practitioner of it. Accordingly, the applications of Predicate theology extend beyond Schulweis. A number of prominent writers and thinkers have been influenced—directly and indirectly—by the principles underlying Schulweis' theological approach.

With regard to the influence of Schulweis, the applications of Predicate theology have been varied. One can see his influence in synagogue programming, active conversion policies, pastoral care, contemporary works of theology and most notably, one can find replications of Schulweis' approach in new liturgical texts. The impact

Schulweis has had in these areas of Jewish life can be categorized with three levels of influence. The first level would reflect Schulweis' implementation of his own views in areas beyond theology proper. On this level, one can clearly see the inter-relationship between Schulweis' philosophy and his own programs and writings. On the second level we find people who have specifically acknowledged Schulweis' influence on their own work. Finally, on the third level of influence we find modern writers and thinkers who appear to share a common outlook with Schulweis. Those working at this level do not explicitly link themselves to Schulweis' work, but the similarity in theological orientation suggests that there may be an indirect link.

Level I Influence

The foundational principles of his theology focus on the divine attributes in human action and the unification of the Elohim/Adonai characteristics of the singular God. Schulweis has written a number of prayers and meditations which incorporate these concerns. In a meditative poem entitled, "Nature Pursues its Own Course—In Sickness and Health," Schulweis illustrates his rejection of a divine role in illness and his embrace of the godly attributes of those who tend to his well-being. A selection from the meditation reads:

> *I do not believe that sickness is divine punishment*
> *a malediction thrust down upon me from above*
> *a chastisement meant to correct some transgression*
> *I do not believe that sickness is some mysterious test*
> *Strange compensation designed to build character.*
>
> *Rabbinic sages observed 'olam k'minhago noheg'*
> *- nature pursues its own course.*

a course independent of my doing or will
an amoral flow of events
indiscriminately falling upon young and old, good and bad.

Where then in this ill is divinity to be found?
In curative forces discovered within me, between us.
In healing powers that form scars
Life-sustaining powers within me
brought forth by men and women,
doctors, nurses, research people, social workers, aides
To relieve the pain – to lengthen the life
to deepen the moments of joy.

Godliness is in family and friends
who stand beside the bed, hold the hand,
bless God with their prayers, make her laugh.

Godliness is in ordinary forces, ordinary events of extraordinary power,
benevolent forces--within, without, between conscious and unconscious
To the Source of healing, the Ground of hope and courage, the faithful Physician,
the Life of the universe, my heart flows over. [79]

Here, one can see the centrality of Predicate theology's human focus as well as an implied acknowledgment of the Elohim/Adonai distinction regarding godliness. He writes that the ability to heal does not come from a divine source, rather, the divine attribute of healing is "brought forth by men and women, doctors, nurses, research people social workers,[and] aides." He encounters God through human actions which he deems godly. In addition, Schulweis admits that in illness, there is no divine intervention. This illustrates the Elohim facet of God—a facet which is amoral, transcendent, and unconnected with human activity. Likewise, the Adonai element is present in the godly actions of the people around him. This meditation is a clear

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[79] Harold M. Schulweis. "Nature Pursues its Own Course." Poem at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/poetry/sickness/nature.htm. (23 January 2003).

incorporation of Predicate theology's fundamental principles.

In another poetic mediation entitled, "Not Where But When—Birth/Brith," Schulweis plays on the idea that God is to be experienced in moments of human interaction. Schulweis often makes reference to the Hasidic story in which the rabbi is asked, "Where is God," to which the reply is, "wherever you let God in." When Schulweis references this tale, however, he makes a point of changing the word "where" to "when," so that the answer to the new query, "When is God" becomes "whenever you let God in." This change signifies that encounters with divinity are not spatially-based, rather encounters with divinity are temporal. In this poem he writes:

> *There are matters not subject to the senses*
> *taste, sound, smell, sight, touch*
> *Matters elusive to definition, yet known without doubt.*
> *Known to make us cry and laugh*
> *to move us to un-imagined heights*
> *to courage and self-sacrifice.*
>
> *Experiences -- like love or God*
> *Cannot be fingered, placed or poked.*
> *Of such things it is wiser to ask*
> *not where but when.*
>
> *Don't ask where is love*
> *don't ask where is God*
> *ask when is love*
> *ask when is God.*
> *Together we'll find*
> *the dawn of an answer.* [80]

The underlying theme in this text is that God can be experienced at anytime when interacting with another person. The application of Predicate theology here represents

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[80] Harold M. Schulweis. " Not Where but When - Birth/Brith." Poem at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/poetry/birth/notwhere_bot.htm. (23 January 2003).

Schulweis' commitment to experiencing God through a momentary act of godliness. This facet of Predicate theology is very much influenced by Martin Buber's conception of experiencing God in human interaction. God does not reside solely in one individual, rather, God is experienced in the in-between of two people.

Schulweis' Predicate theology has other applications outside of liturgy and meditative readings. He has incorporated his theology into his pastoral work as well. In his career as a congregational rabbi, Schulweis has encountered countless pastoral opportunities in which illness or tragedy has prompted theological inquiry by those affected. In moments of counseling, Schulweis will not bring up philosophy as a means of comfort; he notes that in such situations, "we make more mistakes in speaking than in silence."[81] But his pastoral encounters have often been the impetus for his dissatisfaction with traditional theological approaches. People are programmed in times of crises to ask *why* bad events occur. In times such as these, Schulweis write that, "[we must] suggest an alternative response in the pastoral situation—a different approach to the plaintive 'why.' The 'why?' which is so familiarly raised is a product of a certain type of theological conditioning. As long as in our liturgy, in our ritual and eulogy, we speak in the language of supernaturalism, we will inherit the questions which point to no answer..."[82] From this concern, Schulweis is driven to create new liturgies, meditations, and rituals which speak the language of Predicate theology, not the language of

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[81] Harold M. Schulweis. "The Wounded Healer." Sermon at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/wounded_bot.htm. (23 January 2003).

[82] Harold M. Schulweis. "PredicateTheology" *Reconstructionist*, 41:1 (February 1975).

supernaturalism which he finds to be distancing.

He applies the principles of Predicate theology to the pastoral encounter. He recognizes that the Elohim/Adonai distinction can offer a level of understanding and comfort to a person in need of pastoral care. It may be possible to ease theological suffering in times of crises should the sufferer embrace the notion that Elohim and Adonai are distinct parts of the same God. In difficult times, Schulweis asserts, the concern of "why" is a distraction from the reality that nature pursues its own course and all humanity can do in such situations is to interact with others in ways that exemplify the divine attributes. In his article concerning the Northridge, CA earthquake in 1994, Schulweis writes, "the Jewish answer to the question 'where is God in the earthquake?' is typically another question: where are we in the earthquake? What have we done to alleviate the suffering of its victims, to calm the frightened, shelter and feed those made homeless? What have we done and what will we do to anticipate and mitigate the effects of the turbulence? With Adonai, there is always something to be done."[83]

Here Schulweis applies his Predicate theology to the communal pastoral encounter. He believes that there would be less spiritual suffering in times of crises if people had a better theological grounding. The question of "why" in a time of crises presupposes a theological approach that is doomed to be inadequate. Because of his own outlook, he admits that never, in all of his personal illnesses, has he ever asked the

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[83] Harold M. Schulweis. "Was God In the Earthquake?" Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/earth.htm. (9 January 2002).

question, "Why me?"[84] His theological approach provides him comfort in times of personal crisis. Knowing the strength that Predicate theology affords him, he desires that his congregants would share his approach. He feels it would ease the spiritual suffering brought on by tragedy and senseless evil.

In an honest and moving sermon, Schulweis recalls a pastoral encounter after a young boy named Kenny had been killed in a car accident. Schulweis is meeting with the grieving father and recognizes that it would be inappropriate to discuss theology at such a time. But in the sermon, he recalls what he wanted to say. He writes,

> If I could speak to Kenny's father, I would tell him: 'I understand your anguish and grieving. But do not be angry at me, at yourself, or at God. What happened is a terrible tragedy but not a deliberate, planned design, not divinely intended to reward or punish. I know that this theological approach does not erase your pain. I cannot erase your pain. I cannot override the reality principle. The sages teach that if we pray for something that has already happened, that petition is a vain prayer. Time is irreversible. If you lose your limb, I cannot say, 'Grow!' I can ask you to search out prosthetics, I can ask you to appeal to Adonai, the Source of the recuperative powers within you and between your family and your community. I cannot erase the pain, but I can help to erase the guilt, the blame, the terror of a punishing, wrathful God. I understand your anger and resentment. But that response results from a theology that does not speak to me or my experience or my Jewish moral sensibility. God does not create theology. God creates in us the capacity to understand and to find explanations that will enable us to cope with life's challenges without the paralysis of irrational guilt and self-recrimination. The world pursues its own course. That we can accept but with resignation. We can use the memory and energies in you and your community to lift up those who are bowed down, to mend the torn fabric of the universe, to comfort the bereaved and to lift up those who are fallen.' Elohim and Adonai. Accept and transform.[85]

The elements of Elohim/Adonai can be a source of comfort to the spiritually

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[84] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 23 January 2003.

[85] Harold M. Schulweis. "Elohim/Adonai The Two Faces of God: Elohim and Adonai." Sermon Given at Valley Beth Shalom. 1991. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/adonai.htm. (21 December 2001).

wounded. In times of crisis, a person may lose faith in Elohim, yet they may be sustained by Adonai—by experiencing godliness in the way human beings tend to them. Likewise, if a person were to lose faith in Adonai by having no positive experiences with other people, their faith may be sustained by a Elohim—the transcendent God of the universe who exists, yet does not intervene. Schulweis' application of his Predicate theology has the potential for pastoral comfort, although he recognizes that it has limitations. Predicate theology should be understood and embraced before a personal tragedy occurs. In times of personal crisis, people will go to war against the theologies they learned from childhood—no matter how inadequate. However, Schulweis has shown that Predicate theology *can* be applied as a pastoral approach during communal tragedies.

Another first level application of Predicate theology can be seen in the programing that Rabbi Schulweis has promoted. Specifically, the *havurah* movement can be viewed as an extension of Schulweis' theology. While various *havurot* began springing up in the 1960's, they were unaffiliated with synagogues. This disconnection allowed the *havurah* groups to remain intimate as opposed to being one of hundreds or thousands in a larger synagogue setting. Liking the idea of a small, close-knit Jewish community, Schulweis proposed the first synagogue-based *havurah* program in 1970. Since its inception at Valley Beth Shalom, the Schulweis model of the synagogue *havurah* program has become a national movement. Schulweis sees the *havurah* program as an indirect application of Predicate theology. He said that, "[my] predisposition toward Predicate theology—toward focusing on interpersonal interaction—allowed me to see that the *havurah* program was a natural setting that could promote more collegiality

and interpersonal relationships than the sanctuary."[86] In a breakthrough article entitled "Restructuring the Synagogue," Schulweis lays out his proposal for a synagogue-based *havurah* program. An excerpt from the article follows:

> The complaint that the synagogue is cold and irrelevant will not be answered from the pulpit and not from the seminary. We are at a station of Jewish life, faced with an emerging character ideal, in which needed theological reconstruction, ritual innovation and liturgical creativity are nevertheless embarrassingly premature. Without the matrix of community, one cannot speak of peoplehood or of the wisdom, ethics and aspirations of that people. Without the concreteness of inter-personal relationship, the rhetoric of I-thou dialogue between man and man and between God and man is vacuous. At best, Judaism turns into a meta-language, a way of speaking.
>
> The primary task on the agenda of the synagogue is the humanization and personalization of the temple. To overcome the interpersonal irrelevance of synagogue affiliation is a task prior to believing and ritual behaving. To experience true belonging is an imperative prerequisite for the cultivation of religious and moral sensibilities. To read in Professor Leonard Fein's two and a half year study of reform congregations that "friendship patterns do not appear to play a leader's part in the determination of temple membership" is a tragic condition which cannot be compensated for by the most relevant of sermons and services. That sixty percent of the adult respondents in the study reported that they have very few friends, if any, in the temple, is a sobering revelation.
>
> ...I see one of the major functions of the synagogue to be that of the shadchan – bringing together separate, lonely parties into Havurot. In our congregation, a *havurah* is comprised of a minyan of families who are agreed to meet together at least once a month to learn together, to celebrate together and hopefully to form some surrogate for the eroded extended family....The how, where and when of *havurah* formation is not simply a matter of mechanics. They are informed by a philosophy. ...The *havurah* offers the synagogue member a community small enough to enable personal relationships to develop. It enables families to express their Jewishness without dependence upon experts, without the faceless relationship of the lecture hall or the appeals. Hopefully, the synagogue itself will gradually be transformed into a *havurah ha-Havurot*, a Jewish assembly in which Havurot meet for prayer, study and celebration, not as isolated men and women who have never experienced godliness, the joy of shared learning, the sense of community. One cannot continue talking about God, Torah and Israel to those who have no opportunity to experience elements of that sacred triad. The rabbi and cantor and educator cannot continue to serve as surrogates for the congregant.[87]

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[86] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 23 January 2003.

[87] Harold M. Schulweis. "Restructuring the Synagogue: The Creation of Havurot Within the Synagogue." Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/restruct.htm. (23 January 2003).

The *havurah* program was an extension of Schulweis' philosophy about the importance of close human relationships in creating and sustaining a meaningful Jewish community.

Level II Influence

Rabbi Schulweis' work has influenced numerous writers and thinkers since the middle of the twentieth century. A number of these authors and rabbis have acknowledged Schulweis in their materials as being influential from his sermons and writings. The level II applications of Schulweis' work involve examples in which people have directly quoted Schulweis or have reworded his arguments to support their point of view. These influences can clearly be seen in liturgy, but they can also been seen as influential in theology, proactive conversion policies, teaching children about God, and more. His is discernable throughout a broad range of writings on Jewish topics.

Schulweis' friend and colleague, Rabbi Harold S. Kushner, wrote a book entitled, Who Needs God? In it, he promotes the idea - to the potential unbeliever - that there is a place in modern daily life for sincere religious commitment. In his argument, he makes the case for a Predicate theology, albeit in a reworded fashion. In discussing God, Kushner writes, "'God is love,' 'God is truth,' and 'God is a friend of the poor,' we [should] concentrate on the predicate rather than on the subject. Those are not statements about God, they are statements about love, truth, and befriending the poor, telling us that those are divine activities, moments in which God is present." [88] Clearly, this is an idea

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[88] Harold M. Kushner Who Needs God? (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 222.

borrowed from Schulweis as Kushner acknowledges in his book. He promotes a fundamental principle of Predicate theology in conceiving of God in terms of the attributes of divinity instead of in a Subject theology fashion. In this book, Rabbi Kushner also discusses Psalm 146 which discuss attributes of divinity. In a rewording of that Psalm, Kushner writes that, "securing justice is a divine act, a manifestation of God's presence in human activity. So is feeding the hungry, supporting the poor, comforting the sick and lonely. They are not things that God does; they are things that we do, and when we do them, God is present in our lives."[89] Here is another reference to a Predicate theology which Kushner has inherited from Schulweis.

Another prominent rabbi, David Wolpe, utilizes Schulweis' approach in a different manner. In his book, Teaching Children About God, he uses Schulweis to promote the necessary refocusing of God talk. He writes, "The theologian Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis once remarked, 'If you ask me—is prayer heard? I'll ask you—are you listening?'"[90] From here, Wolpe builds on the shift away from God as the subject of prayer to a prayer's effect on the worshiper. A fundamental proposition of Predicate theology is the necessary shift of focus when conceiving of prayer. Here, Wolpe is influenced by this concept and applies it to discussing God with children.

Another area in which Schulweis is used to support other Jewish writers is in the discussion of proactive conversion. Schulweis believes that Jews have a universal message to teach the world, and they should actively seek out the unchurched and

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[89] Harold M. Kushner Who Needs God? (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 222.

[90] David J. Wolpe. *Teaching Your Children About God.* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1995).

actively try to convert them to Judaism. Schulweis writes, "Why not open our arms to those who seek a spiritual way of life? Are we not told in the classic text of Avoth de Rebbe Nathan (2ba) that Jews are urged to bring people beneath the wings of the divine presence exactly as Abraham and Sarah had done?"[91] Schulweis has even created a program at his congregation called Keruv, which is a committee that seeks ways to proactively reach out to potential converts. In an article discussing this topic, Rabbi Dana Kaplan was influenced by Schulweis' bold approach to reach out toward potential converts. Kaplan notes that, "Schulweis says that ideally 'a Jewish mission means to act out our belief that we are not a parochial, sectarian, ethnic clan, but a people whose faith and wisdom have endured for four millennia.'"[92] Likewise, one of the most vocal proponents of proactive conversion, Dr. Gary Tobin, was influenced by Schulweis. He notes that, "Schulweis...with an impeccable reputation as a thinker and doer in [the Conservative] movement, also supports proactive conversion. He exhorts American Jews to begin active conversion efforts for unaffiliated Christians."[93] Schulweis' stance has been controversial, but his vocal support of such a policy, remains influential to writers such as Kaplan and Tobin.

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[91] Harold M. Schulweis. "The Mitzvah of Conversion." Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/convert.htm. (23 January 2003).

[92] Dana Evan Kaplan. "Opening the Gates of the Jewish Community, A Consideration of Recent Proposals for 'Proactive Conversion.'" Conservative Judaism, Volume 52, Number 4, Summer 2000.

[93] Gary A Tobin. *Opening the Gates: How Proactive Conversion Can Revitalize The Jewish Community.* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 124.

Level III Influence

The third level of influence can be seen in various creative liturgies and writings that share a recognizable similarity with Schulweis' theological approach. There may be no direct link between Schulweis and the given author, but one may look at a piece of text or a creative prayer and notice a parallelism between the text and the approach represented by Predicate theology. One of the most radically different books of creative liturgy to be published recently is Marcia Falk's *Book of Blessings*. In it, she radically changes the prayer formulations, incorporates feminist liturgy, collects a beautiful mixture of meditative readings and poems, and offers new blessings for nearly every prayer in the traditional *siddur*. While she never explicitly says that she was influenced by Schulweis, Rabbi Rebecca Alpert draws a connection between Falk's prayers and Predicate theology. Alpert writes that Falk took an approach begun by Mordecai Kaplan and continued with Schulweis to radically reconstruct the prayer formulas. "Falk's rendering of blessings in the first person plural, and in the active rather than the passive voice, is a perfect way to explicate Kaplan's theological focus on the Jewish people as the center of Jewish life. Replacing 'you are blessed' with 'let us bless' captures that magnificently." [94] While Alpert discusses Falk in terms of Kaplan, she also notes in the same passage that Schulweis is an extension of the Kaplan approach. To that end, one can sense the indirect influence of Schulweis on Falk's work.

In one of Marcia Falk's reworded prayers, she writes, "Let us bless the source of

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[94] Rebecca T. Alpert. "The Poet As Liturgist: Marcia Falk's The Book of Blessings: Three Reactions and a Response." Reconstructionist Rabbinical College Website. http://www.rrc.edu/journal/recon62_1/falk3.htm (18 December 2001)

life, source of the fullness of our knowing. May we learn with humility and pleasure, may we teach what we know with love, and may we honor wisdom in all its embodiments."[95] One can see the rejection of the traditional second-person singular blessing—Blessed are You—which characterizes Subject theology. Here, Falk uses the first-person plural-active to give the blessing a sense of human ownership. In a rewording of the Shema, Falk writes, "Hear O Israel—the divine abounds everywhere and dwells in everything, the many are One."[96] Here, one can sense the acknowledgment of multiple facets of God's personality coming together as a single idea. This is a parallel with the Schulweis' Elohim/Adonai division in which two facets of God come together in the Shema. A final example from Falk again shows the similarity between her approach and that of Predicate theology. One of her blessings reads, "May the blessings of peace and kindness, graciousness, goodness and compassion flow among us and all the communities of Israel, all the peoples of the world. As we bless the source of life, so we are blessed."[97] This is a petition which requests that attributes of divinity such as "peace and kindness, graciousness, goodness and compassion," should be evidenced in the actions of people. One can see the shared outlook and approach Falk has with Schulweis. One may consider Falk's blessings to be indirectly influenced by Schulweis, or at least to recognize the shared common goals of each writer.

Rabbi Jack Riemer offers another example of creative liturgy which articulates a

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[95] Marcia Falk. *The Book of Blessings.* (Boston: Beacon Press. 1999) 168.

[96] ibid, 170.

[97] ibid, 298.

theology parallel to Schulweis' own. In a reading entitled, "We Cannot Merely Pray to You," Riemer writes:

> We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end war;
> For we know that You have made the world in a way
> That we must find our own paths to peace
> Within ourselves and with our neighbors.
>
> We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end starvation;
> For You have already given us the resources
> With which to feed the entire world,
> If we would only use them wisely.
>
> We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to root out prejudice;
> For You have already given us eyes
> With which to see the good in others,
> If we would only use them rightly.
>
> We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end despair;
> For You have already given us the power
> To clear away slums and to give hope,
> If we would only use our power justly.
>
> We cannot merely pray to You, O God, to end disease;
> For You have already given us great minds
> With which to search out cures and healings,
> If we would only use them constructively.
>
> Therefore, we pray to You instead, O God,
> For strength, determination, and will power,
> To do instead of just to pray,
> To become instead of merely to wish,
> For Your sake and for ours, speedily and soon,
>
> That our land and world may be safe,
> And that our lives may be blessed.
> May the words that we pray, and the deeds that we do
> Be acceptable before You, O Lord,
> Our Rock and our Redeemer.[98]

This text beautifully incorporates the Predicate theology notion that prayer without human action and interaction is pointless. The text recognizes that prayer to God is important, but has no efficacy without human activity. The prayer acknowledges that God is the source of divine attributes, but it is still the imperative of humanity to emulate those attributes to in order to experience godliness.

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[98] *Likrat Shabbat.* Sidney Greenberg and Jonathan D. Levine, eds. Bridgeport: Prayer Book Press, 1989.

Conclusion

Rabbi Schulweis has been an influential thinker and writer in the rabbinate for fifty-three years. As a disciple of Mordecai Kaplan, he was prepared to be non-conformist and intellectually honest. These traits allowed Schulweis to reconstruct his own Judaism and teach others to do the same. The development and promotion of his Predicate theology and his Elohim/Adonai model, has attracted his own set of disciples. Many Rabbis, Jewish community professionals, liturgists, and theologians have been influenced directly or indirectly by Schulweis' work. It is interesting to note that one area in which Schulweis has not been influential is in the domain of Reform and Reconstructionist liturgy. The liturgies of both movements are still reliant on a Subject theology approach. Surprisingly, the two Movements that one would expect to be most open to his novel prayer focus have retained largely tradition-based liturgies in their prayer books. Schulweis feels this is unfortunate, but he acknowledges that the two movements try to get around this by incorporating supplemental readings in the back of the books which are more appropriate to liberal Jewish movements.[99] There, one may find readings which reflect Predicate theology, but not in the main service. While Schulweis has been influential in many circles, he notes that there is still a deep reluctance to change the prayer service and embrace creative liturgies that are more theologically honest.

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[99] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 23 January 2003.

- FIVE -

CRITIQUES OF PREDICATE THEOLOGY

We cannot be satisfied with a theology that denies our Judaism utter priority and makes it merely an instrument toward some higher good."
—Eugene Borowitz, *"Rethinking Good and Evil: A Review."*

The works of Rabbi Schulweis have been widely read in academic and lay religious circles. As the previous chapter showed, Schulweis' theology has had an impact on the writings of major thinkers in the Jewish world. His work has also been the focus of important criticism. Two writers, Michael Goldberg, a rabbi at Congregation B'nai Tikvah in Los Angeles, and Eugene Borowitz from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York have each written reviews of Schulweis' book *Evil and the Morality of God*. Their comments form the bulk of the material critiquing Schulweis. While other books of his have also been reviewed, such as, *For Those Who Can't Believe*, the reviews have been of a non-academic nature. Thus, the bulk of this chapter will therefore examine and discuss the critiques of Goldberg and Borowitz. In addition, Schulweis himself acknowledges certain conceptual problems with Predicate theology which have pointed out to him by colleagues and friends. Due to the lack of material critiquing Predicate theology, Schulweis has never written a response in defense of his work. However, he has discussed some of his responses to criticism with this author, and these responses will be taken up in what follows.

Michael Goldberg's Critique

In his book *Evil and the Morality of God*, Schulweis argues that the traditional Jewish approach to God, a Subject theology approach, suggests that morality can be learned by coming to know what God considers moral. But since God is ultimately unknowable, how could a person truly know what God considers moral? Consequently, Schulweis has proposed a Predicate theology in which morality comes from an emulation of the Divine's attributes or predicates. A major lacuna in this proposal is knowing who decides what are God's predicates are? Are they known? Are they to be intuited? Can every person definitively agree on what God's attributes are? It is this situation that prompts Michael Goldberg to suggest that the lack of clarity as to what exactly is to be considered godly, is the same lack of clarity as knowing what God wants. He writes, "...predicate theology seemingly falls into the same trap that previously ensnared subject theologies. For Schulweis' account, too, is based upon a paradigm of perfection-moral goodness, which he takes to be self-evident and consequently in need of no explicit articulation. It just assumes that what constitutes morality is something plainly known by all."[100]

Goldberg continues that even if a community of Predicate theologians were to somehow agree upon God's attributes, there would necessarily be a lack of objectivity in their view of what they are. Goldberg argues that Predicate theologians are rooted in a tradition of biblical morality which presupposes any independent attempt to identify the

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[100] Michael Goldberg. Review of *Evil and the Morality of God*, by Harold M. Schulweis. *Theology Today* 41 (October 1984): 328.

attributes of divinity. Goldberg writes, "If those raised in the biblical traditions do in fact prize the sort of moral character marked by such traits as steadfastness, justice, and compassion, it is precisely because they have been schooled by those biblical narratives that depict a character called 'God' displaying those selfsame virtues as moral hallmarks."[101] Schulweis' argument that the attributes of divinity are to be *discovered* in each generation raises the criticism that such a process is circular—Predicate theologians will end up agreeing on what they were already taught to believe. Borowitz will discuss this concern as well.

Eugene Borowitz's Critique

Eugene Borowitz's review of Schulweis' book *Evil and the Morality of God*, offers a more in-depth critique of conceptual and practical problems with Predicate theology. His first criticism is similar to Goldberg's in that Borowitz is concerned with the loose criteria for declaring what is godly and by extension, what is good. Borowitz writes, "If in order to know God we must know good, then Schulweis' argument depends critically on our readiness to assert moral certainty."[102] Borowitz then discusses the Kantian notion that goodness is inherently known by rational beings and therefore it is possible for human beings to set the standard for what is to be considered good. He continues, "I would agree that our moral sense ought to be a critical determinant of our theology. But like many others I find that I do not share the utter ethical certitude of Kant

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[101] Michael Goldberg. Review of *Evil and the Morality of God*, by Harold M. Schulweis. *Theology Today* 41 (October 1984): 328.

[102] Eugene Borowitz. "Rethinking Good and Evil: A Review." Moment Magazine, vol.9, no. 9 (October 1984): 58,59.

and Schulweis. When I am pressed morally, I regularly find that my rational clarity about the good evanesces and I must rely on intuition."[103] For Borowitz, the lack of moral certainty poses a great concern for the applicability of Predicate theology in times of spiritual struggle.

Another concern for Borowitz is the claim that human beings have the capacity, independent of religious insight, to make moral choices. This claim by Schulweis supports the universal nature of Predicate theology as a methodology for creating a moral community. Borowitz claims that Schulweis' argument is that morality is either a human discovery or it is based in a religious tradition. To counter this claim, Borowitz writes, "Though [Schulweis] regularly deplores that tendency of philosophers to insist on either/or decisions, he himself adopts this stance in relation to our ethics and God's. If God's behavior in the Bible were always to be the standard of our morality, then, as the command to sacrifice Isaac and the testing of the just Job show, we would have to sacrifice our sense of good and evil. If our ethics are to have validity, then God also must conform to them."[104] Borowitz goes on to suggest that, unlike the Schulweisian world-view in which an ethical presupposition is not fixed for all time, there needs to be a natural mixture of ethical certainty *and* ethical confusion. While humanity may know enough about God's goodness, "human ethics cannot substitute for religious insight..."[105]

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[103] Eugene Borowitz. "Rethinking Good and Evil: A Review." Moment Magazine, vol.9, no. 9 (October 1984): 58, 59.

[104] ibid, 59.

[105] Eugene Borowitz. "Rethinking Good and Evil: A Review." Moment Magazine, vol.9, no. 9 (October 1984): 58, 59.

Continuing his critique, Borowitz turns to concerns of application. He sees Predicate theology as being universal in its application. Schulweis would agree with this point because he has stated that Predicate theology is merely a methodology of identifying attributes of divinity and setting those attributes as communal values. In this regard, Predicate theology is applicable outside of a particular religious tradition. There is nothing in this philosophy that makes a Jew stay Jewish, claims Borowitz, who writes tongue-in-cheek, "I find it difficult to see why, by [Schulweis'] standards, Ethical Culture would not make better sense. Our devotional particulars—ritual, worship, the reverence of tradition—do not efficiently enhance the supreme exaltation of ethics. If goodness is our focus, it seems a considerable bother to be diverted by the requirements of religious practice or even this demanding effort at theology. The defection of many Jews from 'organized religious life' in recent years has not infrequently been due to their seeing the choice before them in just these terms."[106] Here, Borowitz senses a slippery slope for Predicate theologians. With its universal methodology and presumed detachment from particularistic rituals, Borowitz feels that Schulweis may have done away with the need for Judaism altogether. It is on this point that Borowitz feels most strongly about the potential theological havoc that Predicate theology could wreak on Judaism. Borowitz wishes that Schulweis' approach would begin from within Judaism and lead to universal values, rather than promote a theology that makes a particularistic approach unnecessary. "For all the appeal of intellectual integrity, defining truth as universal - in this case, in Kantian philosophical fashion - necessarily relegates anything particular, like being

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[106] ibid.

Jewish, to a secondary level. One must exercise considerable ingenuity to validate specifically Jewish responsibilities, for they must now derive their value from bearing (and thus often distorting) universal values...Schulweis, with his well attested love of Jews and Judaism, could surely advance a thoughtful case for Jewishly pursuing general human goodness. But note the constraints he has now placed upon himself: by resolving theodicy in the manner he does, he must now undertake the task of - if the neologism may be permitted - ethnodicy, justifying Jewishness."[107] Borowitz concludes his critique with a grave warning about Schulweis' approach. He writes, "We cannot be satisfied with a theology that denies our Judaism utter priority and makes it merely an instrument toward some higher good."[108]

General Criticisms of Predicate Theology as Reported by Rabbi Schulweis

Borowitz's and Goldberg's critiques point to potential major flaws in Schulweis' Predicate theology. The concerns range from universal values undermining Jewish particularism to subjectivity in the "discovery" of divine attributes. In addition to these concerns, Schulweis himself has recognized potential problems in his theology. Congregants, friends, and colleagues have spoken with him privately and shared their responses. Schulweis suggests that these informal critiques of Predicate theology generally fall into one of two related categories. Either the person is concerned with God's neutrality, as understood in the Elohim characteristic of God, or they still desire

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[107] Eugene Borowitz. "Rethinking Good and Evil: A Review." Moment Magazine, vol.9, no. 9 (October 1984): 59.

[108] ibid.

the Subject God. On the first point, Schulweis said that, "I have found that people are troubled with my notion of Elohim as a neutrality. People long for the traditional Elohim which is conceptualized as a God of *midat ha-din* - divine justice."[109] Here Schulweis refers to his distinction of Elohim/Adonai as two parts of the same God. While Adonai is the God experienced in human action, Elohim is the transcendent God of nature, non-interventionist, and amoral. Schulweis suggests that people do not like the divided God idea; they want to have a singular conception of the deity, wherein the God of nature is the God we find in human action and vice versa. This is where the second, related problem comes in, the deeply embedded and still longed for Subject theology. Schulweis admits that ultimately, "people want a Subject God. They want a God that will hold them, be with them, and intervene."[110] While Schulweis seeks to shift the focus onto God's predicates, he admits that people still harbor the need for a God with a personality that cares for them. To all these criticisms, Schulweis admits that, "no theological approach is perfect. I admit there are elements of my theology that can be seen as problematic."[111] Even acknowledging the imperfect nature of his, or any other theology, Schulweis still affirms that his approach speaks most clearly to the hearts and minds of most modern liberal Jews.

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[109] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 23 January 2003.

[110] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 5 December 2002.

[111] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 23 January 2003.

CONCLUSION AND ANALYSIS

We shall never be able to do justice to our moral sense if we persist in trying to give substance to the word "God."
—Eugene Borowitz, *"Rethinking Good and Evil: A Review."*

Over the course of fifty-three years in the rabbinate, Rabbi Harold Schulweis has made a significant impact in modern Jewish thought and in American Jewish life. His writings in the fields of *havurah* programming, proactive conversion, pastoral care, and most notably theology have been widely read, debated, and incorporated into other rabbinates. Rabbi Yitz Greenberg writes of Schulweis that, "[He] is the best known pulpit rabbi in America. He has a philosophic mind of first-rate academic quality as evidenced by his book, *Evil and the Morality of God.* His stature as a leading voice of conscience in the American Jewish community has been earned over the course of decades."[112] Schulweis' yeshiva upbringing, combined with socialist-Zionist parents and a commitment to a philosophic approach to Judaism, gave Schulweis a solid basis from which to develop his ideology. Having been convinced of the importance of philosophy in college, Schulweis pursued a Masters degree in philosophy and taught the subject for two years after seminary. Of the various influences that shaped him, the mentorship of his teacher, Mordecai Kaplan, gave Schulweis the impetus and freedom to break away from traditional modes of thinking. Schulweis was heir to Kaplan's non-conformism, which

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[112] Harold M. Schulweis. *In God's Mirror.* Hoboken (KTAV Publishing House, 1990), ix.

allowed him to work from within the establishment of Jewish institutions, yet produce an immensely creative set of ideas.

Schulweis had always been troubled by the fundamental problem he saw in Judaism—its inability to respond effectively to the problem of evil. This inability to offer a consistent and realistic answer to the problem of theodicy led Schulweis to identify a basic problem with traditional Jewish theology. He saw that most Jewish theologies throughout history have been concerned with God, God's attributes, what one may know or not know about God, and how to communicate with God. All the while, God remains unknowable. For Schulweis, this created a situation of spiritual distance for the worshiper and theological inconsistency for the philosopher. Schulweis branded this form of theology "Subject theology" based on the grammatical system in which the word God is understood to be subject of the sentence. The problems that such a system creates led Schulweis to create a better model for experiencing God. In a postmodern, post-Holocaust world, Schulweis found that people are increasingly reticent to simply accept traditional notions of a Subject God. However, he found that people connected much more easily with many of the traditional attributes of God, or with the Divine predicates.

It was this shift of focus, from the subject to the predicate, upon which Schulweis based his theology. Schulweis did not invent this notion of a focus on the predicates. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) explicitly promoted this idea over 100 years before Schulweis. Kaplan sought such a focus as well, but Schulweis believed that Kaplan did not go far enough in this area. Schulweis proposed a modern Predicate theology which was to focus on such divine attributes as mercy, kindness, compassion, and justice to

name a few. The focus of Predicate theology is the experience of godliness in human interaction. Whereas one may not know God directly, one may experience godliness by seeing another person being just, or compassionate, or merciful. Another element of this theology is the distinction between Elohim and Adonai from which God can be understood as having two characteristics, one transcendent and non-interactive with the world and one present in righteous human actions. From this new theological stance, Schulweis went on to create new liturgy, promote synagogal programs that engender interaction, counsel his congregation with pastoral advice that encourages theological growth, and bridge the gap between an essentially unknowable God and those divine attributes which can be experienced.

Schulweis has had considerable success in applying his theology. In his own work, he created the first synagogue-based *havurah* program, written new prayers and meditations with a Predicate theology focus, and has written numerous books and articles presenting and developing his approach to experiencing godliness. He has influenced other members of the Jewish community as well. His works and ideas have been cited by authors in support of proactive conversion, *havurah* programing, teaching children about God, and popular works of theology. In addition, his ideas have been paralleled in new liturgies that can be found in the Conservative, Reconstructionist, and feminist prayer books.

Schulweis' Predicate theology has received relatively little critical attention, but the critiques that exist are substantive. Of major concern is Schulweis' "discovery" method for identifying Divine attributes. Schulweis maintains that what is to be

considered godly by any given community, should be mutually agreed upon by that group of people in each successive generation. Thus, not only will the community's understanding of Divine attributes change over time, it will also change from culture to culture given the natural variety in social mores. Another criticism of Predicate theology is the seemingly circular nature of the argument. It appears that the attributes to be discovered are based on the subjective ideas of people whose ideas of God's attributes come from biblical tradition itself. Thus, Predicate theology appears to its critics to function as an alternative path to knowing the Subject God. Schulweis also notes for his own part, that people are naturally more comfortable with a Subject God, a God who cares and intervenes, if they are capable of believing in a Subject God.

As I have mentioned before, the literature of critique on Schulweis is limited. However, there are other considerations to keep in mind when analyzing his work. One concern that has not been voiced in an extant critique concerns the nature of the Elohim/Adonai distinction. Schulweis claims that, based on the text of the Shema prayer these two distinct names of God signify one being or reality and this notion that the two names represent different and perhaps even opposing characteristics, could be understood to mean that God is composite. By having, in effect two personalities, Schulweis comes close to setting forth a dualistic God. There is benefit in such a composite God, because discrete elements of God can work interdependently and also in opposition to one another and therefore help to make sense of a wide variety of experiences people have of God. Schulweis may bring the two God elements together in the Shema, but the potential ease of letting his Elohim/Adonai concept slip into a dualistic God may be unsettling to Jewish

thinkers.

Another concern of Predicate theology, from this author's point of view, is similar to a common general criticism of halachic codes. It was said that a halachic code would allow any Jew to find out a particular ruling on a given topic without consulting the legal sources in the Talmud. Hence, the criticism of writing codes was that by doing so one allowed law to be cut off from its sources. Similarly, Predicate theology, by focusing all of its attention on God's attributes as experienced in human interaction, runs the risk of losing God in the process altogether. A sustained focus on the divine attributes in human activity could eventually lead to a humanism that cuts God out of the picture altogether. If the concern in human activity is with compassion, justice, mercy, and righteousness, or other such predicates of divinity, at a certain point, those attributes may become ends in and of themselves. A humanist might well desire that similar attributes be found within his community, but he certainly does not need a Divine being to be the source of such attributes. Schulweis' Predicate theology then, runs a risk of leading to such a conclusion. Without proper guidance, the attributes of divinity could easily become the attributes of humanity, which cuts the attributes off from their source and would represent a departure from Schulweis' intended application of Predicate theology.

Another analysis by this author was performed by way of experiment. This author brought a copy of Schulweis' sermon "Was God In the Earthquake?" to an adult study class at his congregation for review. Schulweis' spiritual counseling in the face of natural tragedies, which relies heavily upon the Elohim/Adonai distinction, met with some resistence. The members in the discussion pointed out, as Schulweis noted about his own

experience, that they rejected the notion of an impersonal, distant God such is Elohim. Likewise, they did not understand how the Adonai element can only be found in good actions. The congregants felt that removing God from any attack of evil by setting forth a dual personality system in which one element could never be held responsible for any activity, and another element only extant in righteous actions was a dodge from attacks of evil. By way of analysis, it would appear that the Elohim/Adonai distinction might work well in a pastoral environment, but under the scrutiny of lay-leadership, it was thought to be lacking. This reflects Schulweis' own observation that ultimately, people do not like the notion of Elohim as a neutral aspect of deity; they desire an active, interventionist God.

In the course of my research I have discussed some of these concerns with Rabbi Schulweis. One of the criticisms we discussed was Schulweis' process of "discovering" the divine attributes. Schulweis maintains that Predicate theology is merely a methodology, a way to discover the attributes of divinity. Once these attributes are discovered and identified, they are taught as norms to be emulated by the entire community. The scenario that plagues Schulweis' critics involves a community of people who decide that predicates such as anger, hate, or revenge are divine attributes. In theory, a fundamentalist could act in a way that harms other people in the name of emulating a Divine predicate, provided that it was discovered and identified within his community. Thus, two communities would have opposing notions of divine attributes. Schulweis acknowledges this problem, but he is not troubled by it. He admits that, "there is no

absolute, immutable declaration of the one right grouping of attributes."[113] He suggests that Predicate theology is a liberal and universal theology that can be adopted by any religious community. This is precisely what concerned Eugene Borowitz, namely that Schulweis does not promote a theology that is sufficiently particularistic to meet the needs of Jews. It is universal theology that does not demand particular ritual observance and thus begs the question for the necessity of Jewish identification. Schulweis acknowledges this concern and defends his approach as embracing universalism as well as particularism. He said that, "[I] do not claim any absolute proof that my attributes [of divinity, for example,] are the only ones. Nor is there any logical guarantee that my attributes of divinity are the right ones. I admit that other religions can claim their own conception of divine attributes, and while I may disagree with Christianity and Buddhism, for example, I consider my approach [to be] simply a different religious approach from theirs. The distinction between religious philosophies in Predicate theology is purely perspectival."[114] Thus, a Predicate theology approach, like any theological approach, reflects the outlook of the believer. The Jewish Predicate theologian identifies with a universal theological methodology, but has identified the divine predicates within the context of a Jewish community.

Rabbi Schulweis has said that one of his favorite biblical passages comes from Exodus 14:15, where, "God said to Moses, 'Why do you cry out to me? Speak to the

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[113] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 1 August 2002.

[114] ibid.

Israelites and let them journey forth!'"[115] He senses that such a command from on high, to concern oneself with the affairs of human beings rather than petitions to God, is at the root of a positive religious system. Building on liberal philosophical writings and human-oriented theologies, Schulweis has created an approach in wherein modern Jews are empowered to discover and embrace attributes of divinity. In a post-Holocaust environment, in which theologians like Richard Rubenstein declare that God is dead, Schulweis seeks to connect experiences of divinity with human interaction. Schulweis' masters thesis was on the philosophy of Martin Buber, and Schulweis certainly incorporated much of Buber's well-known I-It and I-Thou into his own work. To sense the divine in righteous human actions is to connect the modern Jew with the source of those actions, namely God. While humanity can never know God, humanity has the potential to know what is good and to strive for emulation of divinity. Predicate theology may be a methodology that can be applied to almost any community, but Schulweis admits that it is really designed for liberal religious communities.[116] In fundamentalist communities, there is a packaged approach to understanding evil and communicating with the Divine. So it is precisely those liberal religious communities, de-facto polydox communities, in which disconnected, individual theologies are accepted, that Predicate theology will most likely have its impact. It encourages an ongoing dialogue about discovering and emulating predicates of divinity. It is meant to connect the individual to a like-minded community that holds and promotes shared religious values. This, to my

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[115] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 23 January 2003.

[116] Harold M. Schulweis. Interview by telephone with author, 1 August 2002.

mind, is the strength of Schulweis' Predicate theology; it gives the modern and post-modern religious individual a credible connection to divinity.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR APPENDICES

Appendix A - *Sermons*

Appendix B - *Articles, Addresses, and Commentaries*

Appendix C - *Critiques*

Appendix D - *Biography and Honors*

ADONAI/ELOHIM

Sermon

by Harold M. Schulweis

Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu melech ha olam. Blessed art Thou Lord our God King of the universe. Who is the Thou addressed? The Thou is modified by two names of divinity that are distinct but inseparable. Adonai and Elohim, two aspects of the same divinity.

Shma Israel. Hear Israel Adonai-Elohim is One.

In what sense One? For many the two names of God rub against each other. For Judah Halevi in the eleventh century, as for Blaise Pascal in the seventeenth century, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Adonai) is not the God of Aristotle (Elohim). Elohim governs and manages the universe "without any change in His nature, without feelings of sympathy with one or anger against another" (Kuzari chapter 4). Elohim guides the world neutrally and according to the axiom of the prophet Zephaniah 1:12 "will do no good, neither will He do evil."

Elohim is the ground of creation and His name alone is heard throughout the first chapter of Genesis. Elohim creates all: the lion and the lamb, the wolf and the sheep, the bacteria and the infant. When Elohim saw everything that He had created He called it "very good" and the sages comment that "this goodness refers to death as well as to life, to the evil desire as well as to the good desire, to the dispensation of suffering and the dispensation of happiness, to Gehenna and Paradise, to the angel of death and the angel of life, to the dispensation of punishment and the dispensation of reward, to the kingdom of earth and the kingdom of heaven" (Genesis Rabbah 9).

Elohim is the metaphysical ground of all being, beyond the normal meaning of good and evil as humans understand it. Elohim needs no friendship with humankind and enters no covenant with human beings. Elohim is independent of his creation. As understood by Halevi, Elohim "neither benefits nor injures nor knows anything of our prayers or offerings, our obedience or disobedience". Elohim is wholly transcendent.

Elohim is the reality principle. One cannot pray responsibly without keeping Elohim in mind. Elohim remembered keeps our prayers sober, sane, anchored in reality. Elohim instructs us that we cannot pray for matters beyond logical possibility or contrary to natural laws. We cannot pray that time should be reversed or that the dead lying before us be resurrected or that the amputated grow limbs.

We cannot pray without Elohim. We cannot pray with Elohim alone. We do not pray "Baruch atah Elohim". Full throated prayer includes Adonai, the power that is discovered in the potentiality of reality. Adonai is the power that stretches reality to its limits and transforms it. Adonai is the ideality principle. Adonai first enters biblical recognition with the elevation of man who is charged with cultivating the earth (Genesis 2:5-8).

Before there was man, there was Elohim. After man, Elohim will be. But Adonai is Adonai only with man and woman. Human beings call for Adonai and Adonai calls for human beings. Adonai is correlated with humanity. It calls upon human beings to be co-creators and co-sanctifiers with Adonai.

One cannot pray Adonai without calling upon the petitioner himself or herself. One cannot pray to Adonai for peace with folded arms, locked legs and muted voice. One cannot pray to Adonai for health without responsibility toward the body and the spirit of the self who prays.

In crises beyond human control religious wisdom turns to Elohim and counsels acceptance. In crises within human control religion calls to Adonai and calls for transformation.

Elohim and Adonai are one. Without Elohim, prayer is fantasy. Without Adonai, prayer is submission to fate. So the first ten verses introducing the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22) refer exclusively to Elohim. This is the way

of the pagan world to sacrifice the child. It is only with the introduction of the angel of conscience, malach Adonai, that the knife is let loose. Abraham experiences the internal change from Elohim to Adonai, from passive acceptance to active transformation. And Abraham called the name of the place in which this transformation took place Adonai-yireh, Adonai sees.

The God of Abraham and the God of the philosophers are one. As the heart and mind are one. The God of Aristotle and the God of Judah Halevi are not opposing forces, they are sacred complements of divinity toward whose unity we strive. On that day the Lord God shall be One and His name One.

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ECHAD

Rosh Hashana Sermon, 1997

by Harold M. Schulweis

A personal note. This past summer I had the last of my wisdom teeth extracted by an oral surgeon. I tell you this not to apologize beforehand for any diminished wisdom in my talk, but to tell you that during the entire procedure I found myself repeating again and again the six words of the Sh'ma. On the doctor's table I was a Jew by extraction. I wondered about that reflex, that intuitive turn to the Sh'ma in my anxiety and I remembered how on other more serious occasions, how on the hospital gurney I turned repeatedly to the recitation of the Sh'ma. Why the Sh'ma? Why did I chose it above all other verses for comfort? What collective memory singled out the Sh'ma?

There are 5,845 verses in the five books of Moses. But only one verse -- the Sh'ma -- is chosen by the tradition to be recited twice daily throughout the year ("When you rise up and when you lie down".)

This is the verse first taught to the young child, and is recited on the death bed of a Jew.

It is the Sh'ma that is written by hand on the parchment of the mezzuzah on the doorpost of our house and written on the head and the hand of the cubicles of the tefillin phylacteries.

The Sh'ma is the only verse that according to our liturgical tradition must be recited with full concentration of mind and if there is no kavannah, then one has not fulfilled his duty.

And it is with the Sh'ma that we will conclude the Neilah on the Day of Atonement.

Of only one verse is it written that one must recite it so that it is audible to oneself -- "l'hashmia ozno" -- the ear must hear the sound of the lips. And that one should enunciate each of these words clearly, especially the last letter of the last word. You must dwell on the articulation of the "daled". How well I recall my zayde who when reciting the Sh'ma placed his right hand on his eyes in concentration and prolonged the last word e-c-h-a-d.

Why such a pervasive and persistent reiteration of the Sh'ma? And why the prolonged emphasis on the last word of the Sh'ma, "echad"?

Because "Echad" is the foundation of Jewish spiritual wisdom and my relationship to God. Because it holds the key to my self-understanding: who I am, whose I am, what is my task in life.

Wherever I turn, whether to the mystical or rationalistic aspect of the Jewish tradition, whether I turn to Halachah, to the law, or to Aggadah, lore, "echad" is the golden thread running through Jewish spirituality. "Echad" is the magnet that draws together all of the filings of our belief system and holds it together.

If I had to pick one word that would sum up the thrust and yearning of Jewish faith, it would be "echad".

"Echad" is the singular attribute ascribed to God. It does not say Hear O Israel the Lord our God is omnipotent or the Lord our God is omniscient or the Lord our God is eternal. It says the Lord our God is "echad" is one. As the Zohar puts it, if you isolate any of the attributes of God: wisdom, mercy, justice and deify, you turn God into a idol. God is whole, entire, "echad" is one.

Echad, but not one in the mathematical sense, one as opposed to two or as opposed to three, or as opposed to twenty. To believe in Echad is to understand God as the Great Connection, the Nexus, the Binding, that links me and you within the great chain of being.

To recognize God as Echad is to believe that everything and everyone is connected, that we all belong to each other and in the deepest spiritual sense that we are, all of us, cosmically connected. To believe in 'echad" is to know that nothing is isolated.

If "echad" is the singular word of the Torah, there is one singular Hebrew letter that appears more often than any other letter in the Torah. It is the letter that begins each and every column in the scribe's Torah, except in the beginning where the letter is "beth" as in Bereshit, in the beginning. But aside from that, every column of the Torah begins with the Hebrew letter "vav", and "vav" means "and". "And" is a conjunction, a connection between sentences and ideas that unites nouns and verbs.

Pay attention to the "vav" in your life. Pay attention to the "vav" which unites you to the world. Listen carefully, because looked at superficially the world is filled with discordant notes, strident sounds, cacophonous voices that dramatize the division, the interruption, the separation, the disconnection, the disjunctions of life. The prayers that follow the Sh'ma each begins with vav. V'havta -- "and you shall love" -- v'hayah "and it shall come to pass" -- v'yomer "and the Lord spoke unto Moses".

"Echad" is another way of seeing. Rabbi Nachman believed that every leaf, every blade of grass and every tree prays to God. Look at that leaf. You may see it as an isolated, discrete, distinct, separate object. But look at the leaf deeper and wider. The leaf, the blade with veins and stems, is attached to twigs and branches, and the branches are part of the bough and the trunk. Down below are roots that absorb water and minerals from the soil beneath. Up above the chlorophyll in the leaf traps the stores the light of the sun. This leaf is connected to soil, to earth, to water, and to air.

With the vision of echad we see the intertwining, the deep interdependence of all things. And God is the Connective Tissue of the life of the world. Echad is the goal, the way to discover the unity behind the diversity, the oneness behind my fragmented self. Before I recite the Sh'ma in the morning I gather in one hand the separate fringes on the four corners of the prayer shawl that symbolizes "yichud" the act of unification. What stands in the way of "echad"?

"Echad" has a most powerful adversary. That adversary is idolatry. Idolatry like "echad" monotheism is a way of thinking, a way of understanding, a way of seeing the world, my family, myself. Idolatry is not what we learned in Sunday School, the worship of stones, stars, trees or mountains. The essence of idolatry is the worship of a part as if it were the whole -- the deification of a part as if it were the whole. Idolatry segregates. Here God, there man; here the sacred, there the profane; here divinity, there the satanic; here heaven, there hell; here this world, there the other world; here the god of Egypt, there the god of Mesopotamia.

The classic case of idolatry in the Torah is the worship of the golden calf. The people poured their precious possessions into the making of a golden calf. "Here it is. This is thy God O Israel." But idolatry is not a matter of a calf. It doesn't have to be a calf and it doesn't have to be gold. Idolatry can be a stone or it can be a wall. It can be a place, it can be an idea or an ideology. It can be a country. It can be a guru. Everything can be made into an idol. The Kotzker said even a mitzvah can be made into an idol. It is to deify a part of the world or a person, or myself as if this were the whole.

Echad warns against idolatrous thinking toward others and toward yourself: be wary of splits, bifurcations, polarization, hard disjunctives, either/or labels.

To believe in echad is to understand that God is in this world. And there is, for the Jew, no escape from this world to another, no escape from nature and history.

Echad means that God is connected with the world and especially with humanity, with you and me. Therein lies the uniqueness of Jewish spirituality. The unity and connection between God and man and woman is expressed in the core concept that follows from "echad". The correlative concept of "echad" is called "tzelem Elohim" the image of God. No other religious tradition takes more seriously the belief that God creates the human being

in God's image and in His likeness. God and the human being enjoy a unique spiritual kinship which lies at the heart of our ethics, and our law.

By way of illustration, why in Jewish law is the deceased buried as soon as possible after his death? Because the biblical verse in Deuteronomy 21:22 says "If a man commit a sin worthy of death and is hanged on a tree, the body shall not remain all night on the tree. But you shall bury him the same day. For he that is hanged is a reproach to God." (Killath Elohim) But why is it a reproach to God? The Midrash (Tannaim on Deuteronomy 21:22) offers an audacious parable.

"There were once twin brothers who were identical in their appearance. One was appointed king while the other became a criminal and was hanged. When people passed by and saw the criminal hanging, they exclaimed 'The king is hanged.'"

The analogy is awesome. God and the human being are portrayed as twins. To do violence to man is to desecrate God.

In Judaism, violence strikes the face of God. Know whom you put to shame, for in the likeness of God is he/she made." (Genesis Rabbah 24:8) That God and man may be considered as twins, even as a metaphor, expresses the deep union between divinity and humanity.

This spiritual twinship is basic to Judaism.

The twinship, the covenantal oneness between God and you does not mean that all is in the hands of God. The believer is not swallowed up by God. To believe in "echad" does not mean passivity, resignation. It means is Jewish tradition that God and man are interdependent. "Echad" means activism. We are, in the language of the rabbis, "shutafim l'kodesh baruch hu" -- we are partners with God.

That unified Jewish metaphor has tremendous political, sociological, ethical and psychological implications. Look at the calligraphy of the Sh'ma, the way it is written in the Torah and the way it is replicated in the stained glass window. Two letters are singled out to be written larger than others. The ayin and the dalet. It spells out the word "ayd" which means witness.

Would you know your moral identity? Who you are? What is your task in the world? What you are born to do?: the Jewish answer is you are a witness of God. As Isaiah 43 puts it "Ye are My witnesses that I am the Lord your God" to which one of the commentaries adds "This means that God says 'If you are My witnesses then I am God but if you are not My witnesses it is as if I am not God.'" God depends on our testimony. God depends on the testimony of our behavior. The answer to the questions we ask, Does God exist? Is God good?" is another question.

The question turns reflexive. In good Jewish tradition, it answers a question with a question. To the question "Does God exist?", I answer "Do you exist?" To the question "Is God good?", I answer "Are you good?" To the question "Is God compassionate?", I answer "Are you merciful?" To the question "Does God intervene?" I answer "Do you intervene?" To the question "Does God really care?" I answer "Do you really care?" The reality of God is proven behaviorally, not theoretically. I authenticate God not with my lips but with my limbs. I affirm God by the confirmation of my convictions. I verify God not by my rhetoric but by my righteousness. Verification is derived from two Latin words, "veri" which means truth and "facere" which means to make. We verify, we make truth, we authenticate God. We offer personal testimony and if we lie in our lives, we shame God. This human-divine interdependence is a consequence of our belief in the wholeness of God and our awareness that we are created in His image.

Because you are created in God's image, you can imitate God. How in the world do you imitate God who is described as a devouring fire? We come to the marrow of Jewish belief. Listen to the Talmud (Sotah 14a) "As God makes coats of skin to clothe Adam and Eve; so you who are imaged in God's form, clothe the naked. You

see to it that those who shiver in the cold are warm.

As God visits Abraham when he is sick so you who are created in God's image visit the sick and remove from the sick one sixtieth of his illness.

God buries Moses so you attend to the dead. As God comforts the mourners, you comfort the mourners."

By what right can I, mere flesh and blood, fallible, finite being, even think of imitating God? Because I am spiritually connected, because of "echad", because there is no ineradicable split between us. No original sin breaks the mirror of my divine image. I am God's active witness.

And with the vision of "echad" I know what my life career is all about. This is Jewish self-awareness. I need God. Who needs me? God needs me. I am needed by the One who inscribes me with His image.

Who am I? I am God's crucial witness. When I lift up the fallen, when I heal the sick, when I defend the innocent, when I comfort the frightened I affirm the divine image in me.

To believe in "echad" means that as a Jew, I cannot approach the divine by reaching beyond the human. I approach God through becoming human through polishing and burnishing the image of God within me.

It is to fall in love with the image within. To be one with God is to love God.

Following the Sh'ma the verse says "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. How in the world can one love God who is not a person, who has no arms, no legs no lips? One of the familiar commentaries says "Do not read it v'ahavta -- you shall love. But read it v'ihavta -- make God beloved. Act in such a way that when people observe how you behave, they will believe in Godliness, in goodness, in hope, in compassion, in love."

So what? Why does the ethical monotheism of Judaism loom so large? Real belief has real consequences. Belief is the mother of behavior.

If you believe that God is "echad" you cannot look at His creation or His creatures as if they were outcasts, pariahs who stand outside the boundaries of God's beneficence. If God is "echad", you cannot treat the poor, the foreigner, the stranger, the immigrant with laws different from those of the native born. If you believe God is "echad", you speak differently. If God is "echad" can we label His creation, the work of His hands, with the insult of shikseh or shegetz or schwartze or faggot or goy? We language God's world. Be careful of your language. You are dealing with God's one creation.

Listen to the language of our prophets who understood the consequence of God's oneness. Listen to the prophet Malachi(2:15) "Have we not all one Father? Did not One create us all? Why do we break faith with one another profaning the covenant of our Father?

Listen to the pleading of Job 31:15 "Did not He who made me in my mother's belly not make him? Did not One form us both in a womb?" Or the prophet Amos 9:7 "Are you not unto Me as the Ethiopians O children of Israel?"

With belief "oneness", your relationship to the world is effected.

Please take a second look at the marvelous stained glass window of the Sh'ma you will see the reflection of Jewish universalism. For the artist (Plachte Zwieback) surrounded the Sh'ma with eighteen different languages of that verse -- in French, Romanian, Spanish, Russian, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian, Latin, Greek, Portuguese, Italian, Swedish, English, German, Arabic, Korean, Italian, Hawaiian, Marathi.

"Echad" is the Jewish contribution to the world. Judaism is no provincial sect. It embraces all humanity, all cultures, all civilizations, all religions, all races, all creeds. And we are to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul and with all our lives.

Closer to home, if God is one, how dare I delegitimize those who think or pray or interpret the Bible or the Talmud differently. How can I denigrate them or their rabbis? How can I threaten them with excommunication or curse them with anathema? How dare I point to my own denomination and my own movement and my own Schul as if it is exclusively authentic and all the rest heresies. To raise my own denomination as the only authentic one, is it not the sign of idolatry? Idolatry is a worship of a part as if it were the whole.

All denominations are tempted to deify themselves and demonize all others. Did God create sects? Did God create denominations? Shall we reduce the oneness of Judaism into an ultra-sect? Therefore, I am very proud that we at VBS will this year be acting out our faith in "echad". We are launching the first pluralistic outreach for all those who seek to become part of Judaism. And the unique part of this outreach program is that the faculty will consist of Orthodox, Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist rabbis. And each spiritual seeker will choose his/her own rabbinic court and their own affiliation. We are not converting to any denomination, we are turning men and women to the wholeness which is called Judaism, a faith that believes in one God, in one Torah, in one people. Let them choose and live their choice with love. And I call upon you to help bring the seekers into the oneness of God and the oneness of people.

And me and you?

Let us not forget the "echad" in ourselves. Echad speaks to my own internal self. Idolatry is the worship of a part as if it were the whole applies to my own self as well. When I take a part of my self and say "this is who I am", whenever I ignore my wholeness, the complexity, the subtle interconnection of my talents and dispositions and temperaments, and place a label on one of them and say "this is who I am", there is the stigmatizing of idolatry. Whenever I interpret my stumblings and my errors and judge myself a failure or a loser or a sinner, I violate the sanctity of my belief in oneness. The gods of idolatry are blind and deaf. Shall I point to my failure and ignore the moments of success? Shall I dwell on mistakes and call myself stupid? Or shall I point to my victories and call myself "genius"? That megalomania is also idolatrous.

When I take a part of myself and say "this and only this is who I am", when I reduce the variety of gifts and talents of my humanity to the wholeness of my person and say "I am a business man" or "I am a provider and that is all" or "this is my career and that is all that I am". Then turn to the Sh'ma and remember "echad" -- your wholeness. You are more, much more, than the shape of your body, or the identification cards in your wallet. Do not be small in your eyes. For to believe in the oneness of God is to be enlarged. I am connected to one God. I will not shrink myself, I will not reduce God to an idol and depress the image in me.

Do not be large in your eyes, and swollen in your mind. Have we not seen the tragic consequences of idolatrous thinking: we read it in the biographies: this beautiful woman, this starlet, who sees herself only as a beauty, whose entire value is in her looks, in how she looks to others, and who then experiences age, wrinkles, graying hair, a thickening of her waistline and coarsing of her skin feels that life has betrayed her and turns suicidal. She is a has-been. Idolatry of the self is dangerous. Or this man who has sold his entire life to his career, to his job, and whose entire being is designed to prove that he has "made it", and who now ages, his energies lessened, his situation altered, his memory less sharp, finds his morale collapsed, the meaning of his life ruined. He has worshipped a small part of his self as the whole of his meaning, and looking back over his obsessions, he sadly writes his epitaph in water.

And what idolatry does to the self it does to others. It fragments people, friends, my spouse, my children into either/or categories. Either/or is the cruel seduction of idolatry. She, he, they are....either saint or sinner, either genius or dolt, either beautiful or ugly, either loyal or treasonous, either chosen or rejected -- this is the language of idolatry. When you put the either/or axe to others, you split them, falsify them, and reduce yourself.

Either/or splitting can apply to ideas and ideology as well as to persons. I have wrestled with these false options all my life. Either you love your people or you love humanity. Either you have fidelity to God or to human beings. Either your loyalty is to ritual or ethics. Either miracle or illusions. Either obedience or apostasy. Either/or split thinking is taunting. It reminds me of the cruel teasing of my aunt, "And who do you like more, your father or your mother?" She would not let me get away with both. She insisted either/or -- either Papa or Mama. Only once I answered "Not you Tante."

Idolatry thinks in terms of either/or hard disjunctives. "Echad" thinks in terms of both/and conjunctives. That both/and is the secret of monotheism, the unity in diversity, the quest for wholeness. "Echad" is our wish.

It is a struggle to find the both/and, to find the "vav" in our lives. But the prophetic tradition sensed the struggle. And every time we recite the Alenu we end with the words of the prophet Zachariah who says "On that day the name of the Lord shall be one". "Shall be one?" Yes, for the prophet God is so yet one, for there is bifurcation, so much exclusion, so much false either\or options that pace and negotiations and resolutions are beyond us -- and the dissolution of both\and results in warfare between peoples and within peoples and within the self.

As God is one, as God's name will be One, let us use our heart and minds to be one and to become one. Sh'ma Yisrael. Let us heal the fragmented condition of the world and the self and may the New Year bring us closer to Oneness.

Schulweis, Harold. "Echad: The Oneness of God." Sermon at Valley Beth Shalom Website. 1997. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/echad.htm. (9 January 2002).

GET OUT OF THE CAVE

Rosh Hashana Sermon, 5762--2001

by Harold M. Schulweis

This is not the sermon I prepared to present to the congregation. September 11 changed all that and much more. You don't select the sermon. Life selects the sermon. I looked at my original sermon and realized that it could not be given on this Rosh Hashanah. The night before I could not sleep. Nor did you. Insomnia is a Jewish trait. As someone once noted, "Jews can't sleep and they won't let the world sleep."

We have experienced events of biblical proportion. The skyline of my beautiful city of New York has been severely altered and in its place, a void. Human nature abhors a vacuum. Our task is to learn how to fill that vacuum. As you stare at the television set and watch the crash repeated over and over again, that grotesque, bizarre, surrealistic event that looked more like a science fiction monster movie than a televised photo of reality.

The earth was tohu vavohu: "It was unformed, empty and darkness was upon the face of the deep." An insanity. I remembered a strange story told by Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav, the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov who created the Hasidic Movement. The story tells of a king who called his counselors together and said "I've heard a terrible report that the harvest this year is of such a threatening character that if we eat of it, we will go crazy. It will make you insane. What are we to do? Not to eat of the harvest is to starve. But to eat of the harvest is to be mad." And he resolved "Let us eat because we must not die. But let us remember that we are all insane." Maybe if we remember that we are insane, we will someday be able to do something to return to normalcy.

We live in a global village. What happens in Islamabad has its resonance in New York City, what happens in Damascus reverberates in the Pentagon. The new awareness of globalization is deeper than economic, political and social change. September 11 ushers in a paradigm shift.

The world of negotiation, reason, pluralism, democracy, individualism, universal suffrage, free elections, free speech has been vitiated by a noxious miasma of hate, greed and envy; envy of capitalism, envy of our advanced science and our advanced technology.

How are we going to enter the 21st century after September 11? Will we ever be the same? This begins a different century. In the 20th century, the most terrible, horrible century in history left all of us as Jews saddened, angry, full of resentment, the secretion in a sealed vessel of prolonged impotence. A deep melancholy had descended upon us. Forty percent of a people decimated, one million five Jewish children slaughtered because of their Jewishness. Would we continue our lives as a normal people, this traumatized abused people, so bitterly disappointed by states and church? What do you do in such devastating times?

After the second destruction of the Temple the rabbis faced a new world. The Talmud Shabbat tells of a rabbi, Shimon Bar Yochai, who was sick and tired of hearing of Roman civilization, aqueducts, engineering, technology, statecraft, and saw them as products of a corrupt and corrupting civilization. He would have nothing to do with this civilization. He runs away into a distant cave with his son, Eleazar. There they buried a hole in the sand of the cave so that their clothes would not be worn out. They studied eternal truths: the Torah. They prayed and fasted. For twelve years they did not leave the cave , until one day they heard that the Roman emperor had died. They left the cave and to their horror they saw Jews plowing the fields and sowing seeds into the ground. Angry, they shouted, "You are giving up eternal life and dare to be concerned with the worldly pleasures of this moment? Everywhere they looked, everything their eyes beheld was burned up by their rage. They saw factory, a field, agriculture, and the material products were destroyed. A "bat kol, a divine echo was heard to cry out: "Did you come to destroy My world? Did you come to destroy the world? Go back into the cave." A telling tale.

In tragedy, the temptation is powerful to escape into a cave. For some it means insulating yourself into "the dahled amut shel halachah -- the four cubits of the law. For some, the cave means filling it with goods, toys,

with pleasures, games to distract oneself from the world outside. They will have nothing to do with the world. They live in a cave and act out the mantra: "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." Such is the seductiveness of the cave.

The story turned my thoughts to funerals and the shivah. Often when someone has lost a child, a parent, a sibling, a spouse, they don't want to be with anybody. They would have their own private grief and their own sorrows. They would enter a cave. They cover the mirrors because they would not even look at themselves. They want to be alone and away from everybody. They want the dark silence of the cave. But here the members of the community appear to help them say Kaddish. For Kaddish you need a community because in Judaism, you can do nothing holy without community. "Kedusha" requires "kehillah", communion calls for community. Even the seven blessings at the wedding are not recited without the presence of the minyan.

The mourner says let me alone. But the community replies "We're not going to let you alone". You are not abandoned and you are not alone. You are part of the community and we want you to know that. At the end of seven days a fascinating folk tradition emerged. At the conclusion of the seven days, the comforters take the mourner by the hand and take him or her out of the house, out of the cave into the streets and return the mourner to the marketplace. It is a gesture of the community declaring: "Your place is not in the cave. God is the King of the cosmos, not the King of the cave. If you retreat into the cave, it will not be your security, it will be your sepulcher. God is "melech ha-olam" -- "King of the universe." God is in the minyan. Do you recall My voice in the book of Leviticus: "I will be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel." Not in the sanctuary and not in the cave; not on a mountain, but in the midst of the Jewish people.

How are we to respond to tragedy? With the wisdom of two millennia. Globalization is not an alien notion in Judaism. Look at the Haftorah of Yom Kippur from the sixth century before the common era which the rabbis chose to be studied. In it, the prophet Isaiah speaks to a people who are in exile some place in Babylonia who complain "Where are You God? Look at us, we are fasting. Are You blind? We are afflicting our souls, are You blind?" And God says "Who needs your fasting? Did I ask of you to bow your head like a bulrush? Did I want you to spread sackcloth and ashes over your head, or beneath your feet? I want you to move out of the cave! Undo the bands of the yoke, deal your bread to the hungry, cover the nakedness of the impoverished, get out of the cave." As the sages in the Ethics of the Fathers declared, "One hour in this world with repentance and the practice of good deeds is worth more than the entire world in the future." Get out of the cave. Look about you. There are one billion chronically undernourished people in the world. One quarter of the world's population, ten billion children die every year from malnutrition. That is part of the Jewish agenda. There are people choking from the poisoned atmosphere, from toxic waters.

Ours is a global faith. Let us rid ourselves of small-mindedness. Let us return to the global Judaism that is our inheritance. Early in the book of Genesis, we were told to be the custodians of the universe. See to it that this world is protected and treasured. Judaism is a world religion. A world religion has to deal with the world and the religions of the world. We have to have some contact with Islam. One billion people. How can we have any contact with one billion people especially hearing what is preached in so many Mosques? I do not apologize for our anger and frustration. But we know that not all Muslims are cut of the same cloaks anymore than all Christians are cut of the same cloth. We cannot afford the luxury of cynicism. Abraham Joshua Heschel, my teacher, was severely criticized by his fellow rabbis when he decided to fly to Rome, to Vatican II in 1965 to speak with Cardinal Bea to urge the Catholic Church to eliminate the dreadful schema pledged to use their energies to convert Jews to Catholicism. Heschel's critics said, "We don't believe that you are going to succeed."

And Heschel responded; "Because you don't believe we should not try?" And we know what happened. We know that the Jewish aspect of the Vatican II revolution took place because of persistent Jewish-Catholic dialogue. For the first time in two thousand years a Pope entered into a Roman Synagogue and prayed and referred to Jews as "our elder brothers".

Despite its slow moving ways the Church recognized diplomatically the State of Israel. The Church introduced a new catechism which cleansed the most anti-Judaic aspects of Christian liturgy. How did it come about?

Because we refused to remain in the cave. We know better. Here in this very synagogue Cardinal Mahoney of Los Angeles not once but on two significant occasions, along with his Monsignori and his nuns spoke and prayed and chanted with us.

When I was ordained in 1950, I recalled being asked to speak together with a Catholic priest and a Protestant minister in an interfaith dialogue. The priest said embarrassingly "You know, you've got to build a platform for me that will be higher than yours." Both the minister and I in an ecumenical burst of surprise asked "Why?" The priest replied "Because we cannot give the impression that we are all on the same level." A deep disappointment but fifteen years later in Oakland, at my first congregation, Bishop Begin of Oakland, who prior to Vatican II would not step into a synagogue or allow his Catholic parishioners to enter the Schul, came to the synagogue and addressed a congregation filled with Jews and Catholics. If it could happen with Catholics, it can happen with Muslims. Slowly some mainline Muslim clergymen are becoming aware that their Koran has been hijacked. We will hear from more moderate Moslem leaders that according to the Koran, it is wrong to commit suicide, to murder innocent people, to abuse the concept of Jihad as if it refers to a war against other people. Jihad refers to the struggle against the interior evils that contaminate the world. Is this all rhetoric, all public relations? You say you don't believe. But because of our disbelief shall we not try? It is a beginning and out of beginnings worlds are created.

Beginning this October you will witness the beginning of this season's Keruv program, made possible through the generosity and thoughtfulness of Jess and Lil Beim. We offer six sessions on Judaism and World Religions. We will present leading scholars and practicing clergymen from Buddhism, Mormonism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam. I want you to be there and bring your Moslem friends. You don't have any Moslem friends? Make some Moslem friends and bring them here. I spoke to Dr. Nazir Khaja, after many many conversations, and said "Your picture is going to be in the papers. I want you to talk about the Koran as a religious person understands it. Because most people don't know the Koran or the Sharia." I knew he would face many pressures coming to the synagogue. He answered resolutely and bravely, "I will come." Religion owes humanity. Religion, throughout history, has done a miserable job in bringing God's people together. Religion must transcend it's divisive parochialism.

Why will we be doing this? Because the cave is not the place for Judaism. Judaism is a world religion.

On April 12, an evening chaired by Elaine Gill and her committee, will welcome the Princess of Bulgaria, the daughter of King Boris. The king was forced by the Sobranie, by the Bulgarian parliament, people like Demeter Peshev and by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church whose prelates said to King Boris "We will lie down on the track if you deport our Jews from Bulgaria because this was the obsession of the Nazis.

Fifty thousand Jews in Bulgaria were saved. We have to celebrate that. We must be here. Because we are vital citizens of a world religion. Get out of the cave.

Today, our children ask real questions. Why should we be Jews and why should we be loyal to Judaism? They live in a new world. Don't give them yesterday's failed answers. "Be Jewish so not to give a posthumous victory to Hitler." But do we affirm our Judaism because Hitler said "no". Are we Jews out of spite or out of conviction? We have to live Judaism affirmatively, not in spite of Osama Ben Ladin or Saddam Hussein. Out of the cave we have got to engage the mandates of globalized Judaism. Our children have to learn how profoundly compatible Jewish thinking is with global universalism. Let them hear the rabbinic words from the Tana D'bay Eliahu: "I call heaven and earth to witness that whether it be Gentile or Israelite, men or women, slave or maidservant according to the deeds that they do so will the Holy Spirit dwell upon them."

Let them understand the vision that led our rabbis to chose to read aloud the book of Jonah on Yom Kippur. Jonah is a Jewish prophet who doesn't want to preach to the pagans. He runs away from God. And the rabbis said that's a book you've got to read on Yom Kippur. Why that book on Yom Kippur? Because the prophet Jonah says I was going to run away far from Palestine. God only dwells in Palestine. So, I will flee from God's province, but Jonah is spat out onto the shores of Ninveh. Ninveh is the capital of Babylonia that is destined

to destroy Jerusalem in the 6th century B.C.E. Here is Jonah (Machzor page 413) who doesn't want to preach to the people of Ninveh. And when God saw their works that they turned from the evil way, these wicked people turned, did tshuvah. And God repented of the evil which He said He would do to them and He did it not. God repents. Why does God repent? Because people repent. Jonah is unhappy. "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly. And he was angry and he prayed unto the Lord and said 'I pray Thee O Lord was not this my saying when yet I was in mine own country? Therefore I fled beforehand unto Tarshish for I knew that Thou art gracious and compassionate and a long-suffering God." I knew You were a forgiving God and that if You may see that people changing, You will change. That's not good for Your reputation as an unchanging Deity. I want to protect Your immutability, Your power, Your word. But God explained "You are a fool Jonah. Do you think that I am a God because I am stubborn and punitive and vindictive. I am a soft God. I am the Mover of the universe who Himself is moved." That's a God few people understand. God forgives the penitent enemies of the Jewish people.

One final word. They have said that American youth is corrupt, that American youth is concerned only with sex, drug addiction, dissonant music, vulgarity, coarseness and selfishness. But look at what happened. Lines upon lines of young Americans enlisting to become inducted voluntarily into the defense forces. Lines upon lines of young people who gave blood.

There is a lesson for us here. Our children don't want to live in a cave. They yearn for idealism. They yearn for sacrifice, for altruism, for passion and they want to find it in Judaism. Don't spoil and don't overprotect them. Give them a Judaism of world prominence that makes a significant difference in the international community and they will not disappoint you. Jews want idealism. We have got to give them Jewish goals, Jewish purpose, Jewish idealism, Jewish humanitarianism, Jewish sacrifice.

I finish as I began. Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav said "I don't know what to do. If you eat of this harvest, you'll go crazy. If you don't eat you'll starve. So eat but understand that it will make us crazy. But eat and understand that you are insane and you may find a new path back to normalcy and greatness. We are a great people. And now is the moment, more than ever in the history of the world, when Judaism in its globalized form can introduce a renaissance of Jewish values, ethics and morality may we have a year of peace and purpose.

Schulweis, Harold. "Get Out of the Cave." Sermon at Valley Beth Shalom Website. 2001. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/getcave.htm. (17 February 2003).

I BELIEVE

Sermon

by Harold M. Schulweis

A cautionary word. The tragic record of intolerance in God's name against those who cannot or will not believe or practice as we do, the documentation of cruelty by those who raise the sacralized word to savage the lives of those who fall outside the circle of our definition, the history of religious beliefs baptized in the threatening waters of absolutism are reasons enough to temper the apodictic declarations of belief. I would gladly sacrifice a measure of passion and certainty in belief for a humbler, civil and sane body of principles. Theological modesty has pragmatic as well as moral reasons to commend it. Moshe Leib of Sassov taught that God created all things for a purpose, including doubt. Faith seasoned with a grain of doubt is necessary so that our beliefs are not used as excuses to humiliate others. Seek certainty and suspect it.

(1) "I believe..." what about the existence and character of God? With that self-admonitory caution in mind, I believe, with Franz Rosenzweig, that "truth is a noun only for God; for us it is an adverb." I know nothing of God as a noun. I know, from the collective experiences of my people, recorded in sacred texts and from my own experiences, only the gerunds of God: healing the sick, clothing the naked, housing the homeless, pursuing peace, loving my people and my neighbors. I am bound to testify to the verbs of God by the adverbs of my conduct. God is behaved.

The arguments for God's existence and goodness are not furnished by inductive or deductive logic. The evidence is in our mouths, hands and feet. Individually and collectively we are the verifiers of God's reality. "If ye are My witnesses, I am God; if ye are not, I am, as it were, not God." Religious beliefs are conditional. They demand our behavioral testimony.

God is nameless and it is blasphemous to pronounce it as if to say that we know His essences. On this, rationalists and mystics are agreed. It is equally blasphemous to deny the name of God's qualities, those attributes our tradition has ascribed to Divinity for us to emulate. How is God to be known, in what sense believed? "Did not your fathers eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is this not to know Me, says the Lord." (Jeremiah 22:15,16)

What does it mean that you or I believe? What does the answer tell me about you or myself? Not whether we believe or not, not whether we obey or not, but what kind of God we believe and what kind of imperatives we are prepared to obey, reveal the meaning of our faith. Have we not been persecuted by religious believers? Have we not been protected by those who deny belief? Jeremiah sought believing behavior as evidence of God.

(2) "I believe..." what about the locus of authority beyond self? I believe that the sources of authority that help form my life decisions are multiple and interactive. They are derived from inherited texts and commentaries, from the history of my people, from law and lore and from the sources of my Jewish conscience. They are the elements of revelation, understood not as fixed and final words cast down from above, nor as capricious projections thrown on high from below. Revelation involves an on- going process of listening and interpreting, receiving and giving, accepting and transforming. I accept revelation "like wheat from which to derive fine flour, or like flax from which to make a garment." (Seder Eliyahu Zuta, Chapter 2)

Which in revelation is divine and which is human? I do not accept the hard disjunctives insinuated in the question. I find it impossible and unnecessary to separate the two. To adapt a metaphor by William James: Does the river make the banks or do the banks make the river?

(3) "I believe..." what about the role of the diaspora? I believe that "ahavath yisrael" (love of Israel) is the correlative and consequence of "ahavath ha-shem" (love of God) and "ahavath torah" (love of Torah). The three-fold cords of love must not be torn.

Love of Israel evokes the metaphor of marriage between Israel and the Diaspora. The sanctity of that union is not lodged in the "I" or the "thou" but in the "betweeness" of discovery. Like marriage, that relationship vows fidelity to each other and to the transcendent vision of making whole the shattered vessels of the world.

A healthy union disavows the absorption of the other. The negators of the diaspora who find nothing but fault in the other, and the denigrators of Israel who ignore its democratic sovereignty, prepare the ground for a tragic separation. For either to run to a third party to impose its will on the other, is to destroy the confidence and confidentiality of the relationship. There are limits to dissent and love knows its borders.

(4) "I believe..." what about the nature and content of our covenant with God? I believe that the unique character of the biblical covenant articulates the distinctive nature of Jewish theistic humanism. The covenant runs both ways. One moral law in heaven as on earth. God does not exempt Himself from the rules and sensibilities of the compact. The reciprocity of the Jewish covenant encouraged the human holy dissent unparalleled in other theistic traditions.

While there is no biblical or rabbinic term for "conscience", its status and power within the covenant are instantiated throughout the prophetic tradition and in major portions of the rabbinic midrash. In moments of moral and spiritual conflict, particularly where two or more goods or rights clash, the inner witness to the covenant may rise to dissent even against an established law. That moral drama is played out as a sacred dissent against God in the name of God. Those wronged turn to the God within God as the court of last appeal. In numerous episodes recorded in the rabbinic tradition God recognizes the voice of moral conscience as His own. God honors the moral dissent without recrimination. The role of conscience implicit in the reciprocal covenant, demonstrates the condescension of God and the elevation of His human creation.

(5) "I believe..." what about death and the end of days? I believe in the wisdom of our tradition that operates with a far-reaching reality principle particularly evident in the understanding of death and the after-life. There is no denial of the sting of death. The late orthodox philosopher and talmudist, J. B. Soloveitchik, characterizes the tradition as abhorring death: "A corpse defiles; a grave defiles; a person who has been defiled by a corpse is defiled for seven days and is forbidden to eat any sacred offerings or enter the temple." His halachic sentiments are rooted in the strong life-affirmation of Judaism.

The Jewish reality principle extends to the status of the deceased. Revered in memory, the deceased have no duties to perform, no imperatives to follow, no deeds for which they may be praised or blamed. With stark candor the psalmist declares, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down in silence." The Jewish reality principle places a limit on mourning. Maimonides warns against excess of mourning. "He who frets over the way of the world is foolish." I do not understand the after-life literally or vertically. Gan Eden (Paradise) or Gehinnom (hell) for me do not refer to another place, another world, another time. The mourner's kaddish refers to none of these. It speaks of the mobilization of human energies to sanctify God's name here and now in our own time.

Despite the rich rabbinic literature and the daily prayers that speak of calling the dead to eternal life and refer to a celestial garden of Eden in practice the after-life does not appear to function as a major Jewish belief. Eulogies for the individual or consolations for the martyred victims of the Holocaust rarely if ever call upon the resurrection of the dead or the disposition of the soul in heaven as explanation or comfort. The yearning for another world I understand as a protest against the wretched status of the status quo. I believe in the immortality of influence that testifies to the ideals of the deceased and calls upon the living to keep faith with the noblest aspirations of those who sleep in the dust. "

Schulweis, Harold. "I Believe." Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website.
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THE SYNAGOGUE AS A THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

Sermon

by Harold M. Schulweis

The real questions, the hard questions of life, the questions of ultimacy are not questions about who or where or what or when but questions of what for, questions of purpose. That is true not only of individuals but it is also true of institutions like synagogues. The question is not how do you make a menorah; the question is not what is prayer; the question is not where is a mitzvah to be performed? The question is what do you need it for? What's a temple for? What's a menorah for? What is study for? What's a building for?

Very early in the prophetic, rabbinic and philosophical tradition of our people there was a struggle with the anomaly of building. Very early when God says to the people "make for me a sanctuary and I will dwell amidst them. The question is what for? Very early in the tradition when Solomon the wise was asked to build a house for God he said, "Will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold the heavens and the earth cannot contain Thee. How much less this house that I have built." And that question persists in the prophetic tradition. The book of Isaiah says it, "The heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is the house you have built for Me? Where is the place of My rest?" God says "I don't need your sacrifices and I don't need your prayers and I don't need your light and I don't need the burnt offering of the rams and I don't need the fat of the fed beasts. Do I depend upon your animal sacrifices for My meals, for My life? Do I need your menoroth, your candles for My light? I have no need neither of eating nor of drinking. I have no need of light for the sun and the moon give light to the whole world and I created them." Why then the vestments, the oil, the sanctuary, the ark and everything else?

One of the great philosophers is a man by the name of Adar Banal who lived in the fifteenth century. He explained it in a very interesting fashion. He said the sanctuary and the synagogue is needed to combat the idea that God is in the heavens. You have heard it said that God is a transcendent being but I want you to understand that God dwells on earth and He is concerned with history. This is the Jewish focus on the theology of imminence. Not the imminence of incarnation in which God invests Himself in the body of a person but the imminence in which God invests Himself in persons in community. The means that I will dwell with you. And with that preposition is the critical preposition in the Bible because out of this word "in" which means with is derived the noun "am" which means people. Why do I need this? Hosea says "I need to live in your midst because I want certain things of You." Says Hosea, "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice. I desire knowledge of God. I do not desire burnt offerings. What do I look for? What am I looking for?" says God? "I am not looking for your alabaster or your marble or your gold or your silver." Isaiah says "What do I God seek? What do I look for? I look on the poor and I look on those who are broken of spirit," And we, you and I are the inheritors of the prophets and the synagogue is the successor of the temple. You should know that the purpose of the sanctuary is not for God. God does not need our praise and God does not need our supplication. The synagogue is not the house of God. If the synagogue was the house of God you would call it the house of God. You would call it Beth Elohim but no Jew goes around saying "this is the house of God". This is called Beth Hachnessit which means the house for the assembly of the people. The synagogue is called many things. It's called "schul" because it is a school for adults. It is not called God's house. Even the word synagogue, which is not a Hebrew word but a Greek word, comes from the root which means synagaen which means to bring together. That is the function of the synagogue, to bring all of us together.

Why is it important that we are brought together? Why is it important that we pray together? Because when you pray together you don't pray the same way as when you pray by yourself. When you come together you think differently and you feel differently. The reason why it is important to pray together to have a minyan is that the function of prayer is to liberate us from the conceits of narcissism, from selfishness which is destructive of the world and of the self. It is the interesting in the Gomorrah that I quoted before. It says "what happens if there is no synagogue where you live and you want to pray? When should you pray? And the answer is significant. You pray at the same time that the people in the nearest synagogue pray because if there cannot be a synchronization of space let there at least be a synchronization of time."

In Judaism the synagogue is meant to be a place for meeting and Bubber correctly said, "All real life is meeting". It is found in a hundred different ways, this notion of meeting. You remember of the story of Levine who was an atheist. He did not believe in God or the synagogue. He has a friend by the name of Schwartz. Schwartz was a believer and he would go to schul. Very often Levine would go to schul. And they would make fun of Levine and say, "Levine you don't believe in God what are you doing here?" And Levine said, "Look Schwartz my friend believes in God and he talks to God. I come to the synagogue to talk to Schwartz". A very interesting point. I think that Levine is not right and yet there is something of truth. I want Levine in this congregation because I want Levine to come to schul and I want him to see Schwartz. If he sees Schwartz he already has begun a process of prayer because Schwartz may say to him, "My God I feel terrible. I am so sad, I am so hurt, I am so lonely." That is the beginning of opening Levine to God. You cannot pray in front of a mirror. That is a ritual liturgical law. The synagogue should have not mirrors, the synagogue should have windows. It has to have a window so that you can look out and see what the world is really like.

Why do you want to pray and why do you need a synagogue? Because the synagogue is to open up your eyes to the world. Synagogue is to make you feel.

In all of the discussions on the definition of what it is to be a Jew, whether is is matrilineal or patrilineal, I think the wisest and most important definition that came out was the one in which someone gave an existential definition of a Jew. A Jew is defined by what hurts him. And I would add to that that a Jewish institution is defined by what it does to alleviate the hurt. It is in this sense that I call the synagogue a therapeutic community. Every great synagogue is a therapeutic community. And if you ask me what kind of a synagogue is it and you give me an answer like it is orthodox or Chabad or conservative or reformed or reconstructionist, that's not the existential definition that I am looking for. I am looking for a definition which points to the way in which the synagogue extends itself to its fellow human beings and its fellow Jews.

Therapeutic is a good word. In Greek it means to support, to sustain and to serve. That is what we are here for as a synagogue. One of the important dimensions, not the only one but most assuredly an indispensable one, we are supposed to be concerned with God's children. And who are God's children? God's children are the fatherless and the motherless and the orphaned and the alienated, the stranger in our midst and the lonely and the homeless and the hungry. You have to point to something to define the synagogue. Don't tell me that this is a synagogue that is conservative. That doesn't tell me much - not enough. Whether you have an orphan or don't have an orphan, whether or not you have a mechitsa or you don't have a mechitsa doesn't tell me anything. You want to find out what a synagogue is I tell you what you do, listen to the announcements by the president. Don't listen to the sermon of the Rabbi, it's not enough. Don't listen to the rhetoric of ideology. Listen to what is being done by a congregation. Open up your literature. I know that you complain about the fact that you get a lot of literature from the schul. Well it's too bad but you've got to be literate to be a member of Valley Beth Shalom. You've got to be able to read because if you listen and see what is being written, you will see what this synagogue is. You'll understand it's theology, you'll understand its metaphysics, you'll understand its teleology - what its purpose is. For example, I mention just a few things but it's something that you have got to go out and explain to yourselves, your families and to your friends. This synagogue can point to a counseling center that takes care of over 125 human beings every single week. That's Jewish life. That's religious life because people come to this synagogue and go to the counseling center and to the para-professional counselors who are comprised of members of our congregation who have worked and studied and who give countless amounts of time and energy and heart and a sustained ear to help people who are in trouble. There is a developmentally disabled program which Steve Klatzker is in charge of. Since I mentioned the counseling center, I am delighted that Marcia Halperin is here who is the incumbent president of a counseling center and I trust you will have a chance to meet with her. We have a developmentally disabled program which should give you a tremendous sense of Jewish pride. This is a program which is housed in our congregation of young people and older people who suffer from all kinds of illnesses who are not quick and are not coordinated, who are slow and suffer sometimes from Downs Syndrome. But you have got to come to the Bar Mitzvah and to the Bat Mitzvah of these developmentally disabled youngsters and to see the triumph of the Jewish spirit.

In this congregation you can point to a thing called H.O.P.E. and I hope all of you know about it. It's an acronym for hospice, oncology, palliative in education and here every single week there are dozens upon dozens of human beings who have members of their family who are terminally ill and who come to receive support, advice and counsel from Oncologists, nurses, aides and from people who suffer from these illnesses. This congregation has a blood bank which is now led by Gwen Gertz. That means that when people in our congregation are in trouble and they need blood, they know that there are people who care and who have concern and have given blood for their recuperation. That's therapy.

There is a food bank in this congregation. You should know about it. It is run by Claire Schall. It is filled with cans and packages of food which are then distributed to people who are hungry. There are lots of people who are hungry right here in the midst of this valley.

We started here a G.A. - a Gambler's Anonymous program. It is for people who are in trouble, people who said to me "the only place I can find any kind of sucker would be in some basement of some church. They meet here and they are helped and help themselves.

We have opened a program under the inspired leadership of Toni Shy called Bikkur Cholim which is to visit the sick people. That is a blessing.

We have a havurah program whose function it is to unite people who are estranged from each other to break down the walls of privatism. Our havurah leaders have done a remarkable job.

We have an outreach program for the intermarried and for the Jews by choice. This evening there will be a table where the Outreach Coordinator can tell you about this program. There are many other things because the synagogue is a real world and it requires all kinds of help: fiscal responsibility, financial responsibility, ways and means, membership retention, a variety of things.

I have deleted other things because I want to leave this particular part to another evening. On Friday, December 14, we will be talking about the needs of singles of the divorced and the widowed. A new conception of family has emerged. I hope you will be able to come and join us at that particular time.

I want to conclude by telling you that there are a lot of people who think we are wrong. I know that there are colleagues of mine who think we are wrong. They say this is all secular world work. This all has to do with health, mental hygiene, therapeutic things. What does that have to do with real Judaism? That's not a new question, it's an old question. It wasn't discovered just in our time. If you look at the Gamora Shabbat, there is a wonderful discussion which begins like so, Rabhuna asks his son, "How come you don't attend the lectures of Rabbi Hisda?" And the son says, "Rabbi Hisda talks about hygiene, he talks about worldly things, he talks about health and I don't want to go to him. I don't want to hear. I want to hear somebody whose going to talk to me about Shabbat. And Rabhuna who is one of the great Rabbis of the Talmudic period says, "You call that secular? You call that worldly? All the more reason for going. You cannot separate the street from the sanctuary." Judaism understands the sanctity of the secular. He who says, this is from Midrash, "Torah is one thing and the affairs of the world are another thing is as if he has denied God". What is the purpose of the synagogue? Is it to study Torah and only Torah? Then read the Talmud. He who studies Torah exclusively and is only concerned with the study of Torah, only concerned with prayer is considered as if he has no God. That's atheism. Atheism is that practice in which you neglect God's imminence, the world in which God lives and you concentrate upon study or prayer.

The function of the synagogue is to make God beloved. You know that prayer that we recited today? You shall love the Lord your God. "Well", say the Rabbis, "don't read it that way "Make God beloved, make God loved." How do you make people love God? If you yourself act in a fashion that brings dignity to God. This is what Sheila Alperstein and Rhoda Barnhart and Bob Mirisch are involved in doing. It's much more than volunteerism. It is love. It is the love of a live vibrant community.

What does it mean to love the Lord thy God? Said Rabbi Bunham, "I have never understood what it means to love". And so he did what all good Hassidic Rabbis did. He went into the streets to find the definition. In fact, he went into an inn and he saw two Polish peasants at the bar drinking themselves into stupor and intoxication. He listened to the conversation. One said to the other, "hey do you love me? Do you really love me"? And the other said, "of course I love you". Then he said, "well if you love me tell me where it hurts me." And the other person said, "I don't know where it hurts you." And he said, "then you don't love me". And Rabbi Bunham came and told his Hassidim that is the definition of love when you know what hurts the other human being and you do something about it. That's what this synagogue is about and that's what this program is. Not volunteers, not doing people a favor. It is essentially a deeply Jewish and religious concern to teach the community to love. And I ask of you, all of you, and those of you who are not here well go and talk to them. I can't talk to them obviously. What do you talk about to your friends? What do you say to them, "how are you"? Why don't you say to them, "Look, I was in the synagogue and the synagogue is open to programs and you have some time and I have some time. Let's live Jewishly. Let's help other people." This is a place that is concerned them. If you go into the other room at the end of the service you will see that. You will be able to volunteer. Everybody contributes. The choir contributes tremendously to the joy and exhilaration of the synagogue. And I hope Ami that you'll be sitting out there because it is important that people join the choir. A congregation of this size and prestige should have five times the number of choir members. I know that you look good when you sing and you're all healthy when you sing.

I want to ask all of you to take this seriously because it is one of the ways in which you will find meaning in your life."

Schulweis, Harold. "The Synagogue as a Therapeutic Community." Sermon at Valley Beth Shalom Website. 2003. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/getcave.htm. (17 February 2003).

From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology

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In a paper presented at the Rabbinical Assembly in June, 1909, Mordecai M. Kaplan set forth in Kantian fashion his "Copernican revolution." He argued there that a deeper understanding of Judaism, and a more effective way to deal with the challenges to Judaism, call for an inversion of the claim that the Jewish people exists for the sake of Judaism. To the contrary, Kaplan maintained, Judaism exists for the sake of the Jewish people. That proposal reveals both the descriptive and prescriptive elements of Kaplan's reconstructionism. Kaplan's new perception directs us to ask not simply what Judaism *is* but ask what Judaism ought to be.

Theology with a New Perception

In this paper I want to take advantage of Kaplan's methodological principle (and for Kaplan reconstructionism is more methodology than doctrine) by applying it to our understanding of God. To paraphrase Kaplan's inversionary principle, I will be arguing that, better to understand the God-idea and more effectively overcome the obstacles to the acceptance of God in our lives, we must view theology with a new perception. Elohut, Godliness, the divine predicates do not exist for the sake of Elohim, God, the Subject, but vice versa. It is not the attributes of a divine Ego, but the divinity of the attributes which demands our allegiance. What I propose for consideration is adoption of a "Predicate Theology" as a viable alternative for those who are not persuaded by the arguments and claims of traditional "Subject Theology." I am convinced that for many who intellectually and temperamentally are blocked

from expressing their religious sensibilities because of the formulations and presuppositions of Subject theology, Predicate theology offers a way to relate positively to divinity, and its celebration in prayer and ritual. My proposals differ from Kaplan's theological claims in a number of important areas, but I believe they are in consonance with his orientation. While Dr. Kaplan cannot be held responsible for my errors, he is responsible, in larger measure than he can know, for encouraging my own theological reconstruction.

Two Ways of Seeing

God did not create theology. Men differ in temperament, in needs and wants, and their theologies reflect those needs. This should not mean the denigration of theology, but it should introduce a necessary measure of theological modesty in our claims. I have argued the importance of the God-idea before many diverse groups, especially in college circles, and for many years. I have noted an interesting response to two different ways of formulating the God-idea. In one form I ask how many could subscribe to the belief that God is just, merciful and good; that it is He who uplifts the fallen, heals the sick and loosens the fetters of the bound. The question is generally met with reluctance, at best with agnostic reserve and frequently with strong denial.

The other formulation asks how many would affirm that justice, mercy and goodness are godly; that uplifting the fallen, healing the sick and loosening the fetters of the bound are divine. Here the response is largely positive and most often enthusiastic. What is the meaning of these different reactions? Is it a response to style or to religious substance? Is it the aim of the theologian to prove the existence of the Subject God or to convince others of the reality of the divine predicates? Does my religious interest lie in persuading others that the divine Subject possesses certain qualities, or is it to identify, exhibit and name those qualities as themselves divine? Is the theological task to encourage faith in the Subject or to elicit faith in the Predicates of divinity? Which is more important religiously, morally and liturgically—to endorse faith in the "who" or in the "what" of divinity, fidelity to Elohim or to Elohut? And what difference does there appear to be in the minds of those who are willing to affirm (a) that that which heals the sick is godly while denying (b) that it is God who heals the sick?

The Grammar of Subject Theology

Theological statements are traditionally expressed in terms of subject-predicate relations. However God is portrayed, whether as Person, Being, Power or Process, one speaks of Him as a Subject to which there is attached a number of qualities. Here Orthodox, Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist prayer books alike follow the same subject-predicate formula: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God who. . . ." The very language of our theological and liturgical forms focuses attention upon the Subject who brings forth the bread from the earth, establishes peace in the heaven, reveals, rewards, punishes, judges and forgives. The language of Subject theology rivets our attention upon the divine Subject and frames the way we look for and at divinity.

The very grammar of our ordinary language is biased towards Subject theology. To say "God" is to use a concrete noun which insinuates the naming of some separate en-

tity. George Berkeley long ago warned that it is only grammatical convention which makes us "apt to think every noun substantive stands for a distinctive idea that may be separated from all others: which hath occasioned infinite mistakes." Despite Berkeley's strictures against the ontologizing bewitchment of language, for most people, "God" is a concrete noun which suggests a corresponding substance, something or someone which underlies the predicates assigned to Him. The Subject is independent of the predicates as the noun is of its adjectives. Modern philosophers have noted that this grammatical prejudice played an analogous role in classical philosophy which favored substantives over verbs and prepositions. Bertrand Russell argues that such linguistic bias led to the erroneous notion that "every proposition can be regarded as attributing a property to a single thing, rather than as expressing a relation between two or more things." It is to avoid such theological limitations that Kaplan insists that God be considered as a functional, not a substantive noun, a correlative term which implies relationship, e.g., as teacher implies pupil and king implies subjects.

Yet, the inherited language of traditional theology and prayer reflects the dominance of the Subject. And it is the Subject, whether described through the categories of classic or modern metaphysics or the biblical notion of a divine Personality, which is regarded as alone unqualifiedly real, objective and independent, and worthy of worship.

The Depression of the Predicates

What happens to the predicates of divinity within the systems of traditional theology? They live under the shadow of the Subject and at its mercy. Characteristically, theologians have qualified them out of their independent and affirmative meaning. They may be analyzed away as negative qualities, puns (homonyms), equivocal or essentially incomprehensible. All that is known for sure is that God is, or that God is He who is, i.e., that God is Subject. But as to His character, His attributes, these must be accepted with a grain of salt. The caution over ascribing literal meaning to the predicates of divinity derives from a sensitivity to the charge that in so doing we are projecting our own human values upon the Subject. Even the Biblical theologians, who will have nothing to do with the bloodless negative theology of the philosophers, tend to suppress the moral predicates of the living God. For they sense that to hold firmly to the moral connotation of the divine predicates, to cling to the positive and humanly comprehensible meaning of such attributes as goodness and justice and mercy is to risk playing havoc with the Subject.

Theodicies Defend the Subject

Most especially when confronting the gnawing problem of evil and the suffering of innocence, the traditional theologian feels compelled to mute the original moral meaning of the predicates. To defend the Subject, and that is the core concern of all theodicies, the moral predicates must be rendered inapplicable to the Subject. Reciprocal divine human covenant or not, moral *imitatio dei* or not, confronted by the patent immorality of events, the theologian grows aware that the danger to the Subject comes from the moral predicates within. For the Jobian outrage with which the theological defenders of God must deal is based upon earlier belief in the moral predicates of divinity. Reluctantly but in-

variably the theodicies of Subject theology feel compelled to raise the divine Subject beyond the reach of the moral predicates. The underlying strategy of traditional theodicies is to render the Subject invulnerable from the internal attack of the moral predicates. The warm and full-blooded intimacy with a personal moral God must be cooled. The moral attributes originally ascribed to the divine Subject are now discovered to be *qualitatively* other than the same moral attributes ascribed to human conduct. The meaning of God's goodness is not simply "more than" human goodness, it is "wholly other," apart from the connotation it possesses in the domain of human affairs. Over and again, relief is found in the assertion that the Subject's ways are not the ways of man, nor Its thoughts ours. It is a costly defense. For the denial of the human comprehensibility of the moral attributes of God is accompanied by the denial of human competence to make moral judgment. If "good and evil" in the eyes of God are construed as qualitatively different from that understood by man, then man's judgment and emulation of God's moral traits are invalidated.

Moral Predicates Challenge the Subject

Karl Barth articulates the root case for Subject theology in bold fashion. "Strictly speaking" he asserts, "there is no divine predicate, no idea of God which can have as its special content *what* God is. There is strictly speaking only the Divine Subject as such and in Him the fitness of His divine predicates." While few Biblical theologians flaunt the absolute autonomy and independence of the divine Personality as openly as Barth does, in the last analysis, and particularly before the onslaught of innocent suffering, they too resort to the same argument. God's ultimate retort to the Jobian plaint draws upon the inscrutability and freedom of He who is. The moral predicates normally assigned to Him must fade away. For faith in the moral predicates would mean the right to challenge the Subject. But it is the Subject who judges the predicates and who assigns it meaning. The divine Subject's disclosures cannot be questioned or held to any single, constant meaning by the standards of the moral predicates.

With Subject theology, faith in God is faith in the Subject itself, independent of the attributes. The love of God is not justified by man's appreciation of His qualities, for that would set man above God and limit the freedom of God. The unconditional love of God is for the divine Ego, for the Personality. However God may appear to act, whatever moral contradictions may appear in His conduct, the height of faith demands acceptance of the Subject beyond the predicates.

The Schism Within Divinity

Inadvertently traditional theology is compelled to sever the Subject from the predicates of Divinity. For it, the proper subject of theology is the Subject. The moral predicates seem all too human. This separation of Subject and predicate is reflected in the growing tension between faith and morality, the divine and the human. In his *Meaning of God* and throughout his works, Kaplan expresses his sensitivity to the schism we have described by warning against the erroneous theological view which conceives of God and man as separate and distinct, "with man, on the one hand, enslaved by his physical self, by his

fellow man, or by his own tools, and on the other hand, God completely transcendent, in Himself absolutely, free, dispensing the gift of freedom."

The "Why" and the "Who"

The mind-set which allows the Divine personality to swallow up the moral predicates and frames God as the Subject, conditions the believer to see the world in a particular fashion, to raise certain questions and to accept only certain answers. To draw some of the implications of this orientation, let us examine a typical benediction informed by Subject theology. The prayer which proclaims "God heals the sick" entails a number of presuppositions. The liturgical language suggests a linear causal relationship between the Subject and the patient. In recovery, all praise is due the Subject. Should the patient fail to be healed or indeed die, theological explanation of the tragic event again must refer to the Subject alone. For however the competences of the physician and attendants may be involved in the cure or the failure, these are secondary factors which for satisfactory explanation must be traced to the sole agent who directly or obliquely heals or restrains the hands from healing. Which rabbi has not experienced the series of "whys" in such crises! "Why did he die?" "Why did he have to suffer?" "Why did it happen to him?" No explanation of the tragedy in terms of congenital or contagious disease, ignorance, neglect or accident is acceptable to the questioner. For these explanations are regarded as secular, naturalistic, human accounts which ignore the divine Subject who ultimately controls the destiny of men. "Why" questions are the consequence of "Who" formulations; and the latter legitimates only certain kinds of explanations.

Theodicy Subject Leads to Religious Masochism

Only answers which refer to the will or design of the Subject may put an end to the limitless "whys." And, insofar as many of the events to be explained patently violate the moral expectations expressed in the moral attributes of divinity, the situation can be saved only by mind-reading the intention of the inscrutable God. Somehow we are to be persuaded that the affliction is not truly bad or else that it is deserved. Our predicates are not His, but whatever His are they must be good. It is not for naught that so much of the theodicies of Subject theology lend themselves to exercises or religious masochism.

As a consequence of such Subject theodicy, the identification of the "acts of God" with those phenomena which are unpredictable, uncontrollable and inimical to man is irresistible. For it is precisely where men are incompetent and impotent to act that God's hand appears to be unmistakably revealed. Hurricane, earthquake and whirlwind appear as the unambiguous bearers testifying to the divine Subject's free will. Contrariwise, where men participate in the curative process, the acts of healing are merely human, at best derivative. The acts of God are not the acts of men, else we flirt dangerously with humanism.

The Perception of Predicate Theology

How different is it to invert the prayer that God heals so that it reflects the belief that that which heals is divine? The newer formulation directs our attention to the natural realm in

which transactions between man and his environment take place in the process of healing the sick. The vertical relationship between Subject and patient is horizontalized. We no longer look for "Elohut" in the unknowable designs of a supra-moral personality, but in the activities whose qualities we experientially discover as sacred. We learn that healing is dependent upon the nonhuman givenness of energies, the potentially curative powers which remain dormant without the will, competence and moral purpose of men. We come to recognize that actualization of these potencies depends upon the training, skill and dedication of researchers, medical practitioners, nurses and the manner in which a society chooses to dispense these powers. These activities manifest qualities of intelligence, cooperation, and responsibility which are not dismissed casually as merely human or simply secular or only natural. They are the significant signs which are daily with us, morning, noon and evening, and testify to the reality of "Elohut."

Good and Evil Not Personalized

In what sense are these signs of divinity? What makes them divine is not their lodging in some alleged Subject. They are sacred not because they inhere in any person or supra-person, but because they are instrumentally or intrinsically good. The discovered qualities of Godliness reside in no single thing but in relationships through which they exhibit their sacred character. Elohut or Godliness, then, describes the way the predicates of divinity are organized and coordinated. Sickness, suffering, death, according to the predicate view of divinity, are real, but their origin stems neither from a benevolent or a malevolent Subject. Good and evil are not personalized in the form of a God or a Satan. They are neither rewards nor punishments visited upon us by a mysterious Subject. The painful reality of accident, negligence, greed are neither divinized nor demonized. Blame, responsibility, guilt are not foisted upon another realm wherein the Subject needs be either exonerated or condemned.

Suffering and evil, fault and responsibility are taken seriously by predicate theology; but the latter invites different expectations and demands different human responses from those which are generated by Subject theology. The Job of predicate theology is sensitive to the evils which beset man, but his questions are not directed towards a plotting, purposing, supra-human Ego nor are his friends raised in a theological atmosphere which prompts them to decipher the hidden motives of a morally remote Subject. The Job of predicate theology and his friends look elsewhere for explanation and for response. They would examine the "how" and "where" and "what" which brought forth the pain of the situation, in order to call upon the powers of Elohut in and between them and the environment so as to bind the bruises and to act so as to avoid repetition of the tragedy.

Predicate Prayer

To reverse the Subject and Predicate of theology is no idle grammatical inversion. It proposes that we reflect upon the predicates of divinity as the proper subject of our theological concern. Not the attribute of the Divinity but the divinity of the attribute requires our attention. The form of our traditional Subject liturgy is focused upon an It or Thou or He. In the coin of the traditional benediction it is a "who" to whom all praise is due; a "who" brings forth the bread from the earth. Predicate liturgy would invert the formula

so that religious attention and appreciation is directed to the givenness of earth and seed and sun and water, to the preparation of the soil, the weeding, ploughing and nurturing of the field, the reaping, winnowing, grinding of the wheat, the kneading, seasoning and baking of the dough and to the equitable distribution of bread to those in need. "Brukhah elohut hamotziah lehem min haaretz." Blessed is Elohut which brings forth bread from the earth. The prayer form celebrates the reverent acknowledgment of those values and qualities which through human effort unite to satisfy the needs of man.

These divine qualities are not invented but are discovered in society. They are revealed not by or through some hypostatized existence above or beyond or beneath the world in which we live, but in and through our transactions with each other. They are located in the this-worldly hyphenated realm of I-thou-we which Buber has called "betweenness." They are disclosed in the values discovered through the relationship "between" self and other, "between" self and community, "between" self and the environment. The discovered attributes are as real as living, as objective as our social agreement and our community's acceptance of the consequence of their use, as significant as love, justice and peace are for our lives. And because discovery and confirmation of divine attributes are an on-going process coterminous with the life of our people, Elohut is not fixed forever. As long as the community of faith is open to life, no predicates reign immutable, no set of predicates can exhaust the changing and expanding character of Godliness.

The Category Mistake

But where is Godliness in all this discussion? Where is "Elohut" located? The question is itself inherited from the vertical view of Subject theology. On our analysis the question stems from what philosophers have termed a category mistake. Gilbert Ryle's questioner also sought to know where exactly the "university" is, even after being shown the faculties and facilities, the student-body and alumni. His query could not be answered, not because the "university" is not real or important or objective, but because "university" does not function logically like the term gymnasium which can be inventoried as an item alongside the laboratory. The university is not illusory, an imaginary, arbitrary invention. One can not point to the university because the university is simply not a thing among things but the way in which all that has been pointed out is organized and interrelated. The university is no mysterious entity beyond those events which have been exhibited. Analogously, Elohut or Godliness refers to the way the predicates a tradition discovers, accepts and names as divine are related. Elohut, like university, has a unitive function. Elohut, Godliness is One in that it unites and relates the godly attributes. Unlike Subject theology, the unity of the predicates is not maintained by virtue of their belonging to some independent Subject. The oneness of Elohut is found in the common relationship of all the predicates to goodness. Intelligence, compassion, justice, peace, etc., are named divine when they serve ends which the community of faith judges to be good.

Predicate Theology in a Post-Holocaustal World

Predicate theology is not for all persons. Some may think it too prosaic, too natural, too human. Others may think it denies the mystique of the wholly other Subject. But for many

others, living in a post-holocaustal world, the older consolations and mysteries of traditional theologies and theodicies take too high a moral toll. In this Nietzsche spoke for the modern consciousness: "To look upon nature as if it were proof of the goodness and care of a God; to interpret history in honor of a divine reason, as a constant testimony to a moral order in the world and a moral final purpose; to explain personal experiences as pious men have long enough explained them, as if everything were a dispensation or intimation of Providence, something planned and set on behalf of the salvation of the soul: all that is passed; it has conscience against it."

For too many the alternative to the traditional presuppositions and forms of Subject theology is simply the abandonment of the God-idea together with all of religious sensibilities. The twists and turns of traditional theology before the face of Auschwitz appear to them as desperate rationalizations, worse, as a betrayal of the moral stance. For them, to save God the Subject at the expense of faith in the moral attributes of divinity is to be left standing before a naked God. To have faith in the Subject alone strikes them as at least amoral. Feurerbach warned that devils too believe in God. What is important then is not faith in a Subject God but in the character of divinity which serves as a model for our own lives. The criterion of theological meaningfulness remains that of C.S. Peirce. The serious theologian must ask, "Suppose this proposition were true, what conceivable bearing might it have on the conduct of our lives?" After the traditional theodicies are over we are left with a God beyond morality. Belief in such a God, for many, makes no moral difference. Following Peirce's criterion, William James concluded "a difference that makes no difference is no difference." Predicate theology deserves to be considered by those who require a conceptualization of God which will reflect the primacy of a moral ideal respectful of man's moral capacities, one recognizing divinity in his creativity and demanding his responsibility. This is entailed in the shift from Subject to Predicate, from noun to adjectival characterization of divinity, from substantival entity to transactional process of the idea of God.

Two Difficulties

Aside from the problems which some have in identifying divine qualities as real without some substantival base, there appear two ancillary blocks to predicate theology. One of these is apprehension over its emphasis upon the moral essence of divinity which seems to reduce religion to ethics. The other difficulty questions the legitimacy of employing such terms as godly, divine and godliness to describe what are primarily ethical qualities.

I would answer the first question by pointing out that, while ethical concern and behavior must lie at the heart of the God-idea and of religion, there is far more in belonging to a community of faith than belief in a moral deity. Judaism includes ritual and liturgical reflection, an entire gamut of affective, cognitive and celebratory activities and a central fidelity to the career and destiny of our world people. Our discussion of the God-idea in no way is meant to reduce the religious phenomenon to ethical culture or philosophy.

As far as the use of terms such as divinity, Elohut and godliness, these are chosen for three reasons.

(a) There is a commonality of interest and value between traditional and modern conceptions of divinity which is expressed by allegiance to certain sacred terms. Godliness,

godly, Elohut express the nexus between my ancestors and myself. However critically different the many forms of Jewish theology may be, what they hold in common, and thus what is the essential core which unites them, are the moral predicates which are to be lived out in our lives. Analogously, the myths of the Bible, e.g., the Garden of Eden episode, the deluge and Tower of Babel, the miracles in Egypt, are differently interpreted by different generations. Although I may question their historical accuracy, they remain significant because the common moral intention of their telling can be translated in non-miraculous terms. Does a non-Orthodox interpretation of the Torah lose thereby its legitimation as a sacred text? The diverse theological forms in which the divine qualities are posited ought not eclipse the sanctity of the attributes which express our faith and direct our behavior.

From Secular to Sacred

(b) The briefest rehearsal of the history of Jewish theology from Philo to Kaplan will offer evidence that each reflective thinker of Judaism has proposed conceptions of God quite other than that which is found in the Biblical text. Maimonides' reconstruction of the God-idea might have been, and indeed was challenged, on the grounds that his notions of an incorporeal deity and of negative attributes were foreign to the Scriptural text. To establish monopoly on the use of God-terms would serve only to arrest theological freedom. To submit to a monolithic semantics would stymie theological response to the intellectual and moral demands of our people and would put a halt to theological progress.

(c) Terms like godly or divine are emotionally charged. They are used to express the ultimate significance which a community of faith attaches to certain qualities. The identification and naming of such predicates as divine mean to raise them out of the ordinary, "merely" secular into the realm of the sacred. The incorporation of values into the realm of Elohut, into the liturgical vocabulary of our faith-language is no casual act. The naming acts which call "peace" or "justice" divine are critical in articulating the conscious spiritual tasks and purpose of a people.

In his haunting novel *The Accident,* Eli Wiesel portrays the tortured spirit of Sarah, the prostitute-saint of the death camp. His hero cries out that "whoever listens to Sarah and doesn't change, whoever enters Sarah's world and does not invent new gods and new religions, deserves death and destruction."

Wiesel is a traditionalist, but he cannot endure the thought of theology and religion as usual after Auschwitz. Theological and liturgical sameness is not of itself a tribute to tradition, especially when that tradition records so much courage and audacity in propounding new ideas of God and new ways to commune with the divine.

Our proposals for predicate theology and predicate liturgy, despite the dispassionate and analytic character of its presentation, is one response to Wiesel's challenge. Its intention is to help those embittered by the absurdity of the Holocaust, and upset by the amoral tones of the defense of God after Auschwitz, to look again and differently at the face of Elohut. It is meant for those who cannot go home again using the old routes, but who may learn to believe and pray and celebrate again through another way. We are an old-new people and we require old-new ways to renew our connection with our ancestors' faith. From Elohim to Elohut is not a path away, but towards our spiritual renewal and reconciliation.

Harold M. Schulweis. "From God to Godliness: Proposal for a Predicate Theology." *Reconstructionist,* 41:1 (February 1975): 16-26.

JUDAISM: FROM EITHER/OR TO BOTH/AND

Harold M. Schulweis

INTRODUCTION

Jewish thinkers feel compelled to get at the "essence of Judaism." What characterizes the distinctiveness of the Jewish belief system? What is the Jewish position on the Messiah, resurrection, immortality, revelation, redemption? How does Judaism decide such issues as capital punishment, birth control legislation, pacifism, nuclear testing? And what, after four thousand years, is the answer to the question, "Who is a Jew?"

Those thinkers who know the character of Judaism find it difficult to present essences or definitive Jewish positions on these issues without qualifications. Many of the questioners, however, have little tolerance for the real universe of ambiguities and ambivalences. They want "yes" or "no" answers without "however" and "on the other hand" qualifications. It is tempting to surrender to the call for simple answers, and some yield to the pressure and pronounce positions in the name of "Torah-true Judaism," the "authentic tradition," or "normative" Judaism. They claim that while they articulate mainstream Judaism, the other dissenting voices are minor rivulets of little consequence or, worse, deviant paths to apostasy. Closer examination of the course of Jewish history and thought, however, reveals the windings of a broad river with multiple branches running into the sea. Another's tributary is my mainstream and vice versa. Open to the rich diversity of Jewish ideas, ideals, and practices, we observe that the streams of Jewish mysticism mingle with the waters of Jewish rationalism, Hasidism

and Kabbalah alongside Maimonides and the Haskalah, the analytic temper of the Vilna Gaon joined with the ecstatic passion of the Baal Shem Tov. That which yesterday was excommunicated as an aberration from Judaism is tomorrow celebrated as the vital undercurrent of Jewish faith.

To be faithful to the multidimensional character of Judaism is to make it difficult to respond simplistically, to offer answers with apodictic certainty and finality. To be open to the evolutionary character of the tradition presents an obstacle to those who would settle for doctrinaire denominational definitions. Judaism is an old-new religious civilization reflecting the ideologies, beliefs, and practices of a world people whose career extends across many continents and centuries. It mirrors a variety of responses to the challenges of different environments. Beside the still waters of Spain's Golden Age breathes the calm spirit of rationalism; with the catastrophe of the Inquisition and expulsion, the waters rage with expectations of messianic redemption and the fantasies of mystic salvation. Jewish theologies and philosophies respond to the different moods of a people lonely in the desert, joyous in the vineyards, frightened in the valley, exultant on the plains. Portions of Judaism are consequently this-worldly and otherworldly, ascetic and materialistic, ethnocentric and universalistic.

In this essay we have sought to avoid the hard disjunctions that cast Judaism into forced either/or options. We direct attention to some of the biases which split reason from emotion, law from spirit, ethnicity from religion, nationalism from universalism, ritual from morality. The polemical arguments between liberal and conservative viewpoints, and Jewish and Christian perspectives, have distorted the intriguing dialectical interplay in Jewish thought which allows seemingly contradictory elements to complement each other. We touch lightly upon some of the more celebrated illustrations of prima facie internal conflicts which, seen with a wider lens, are revealed as elements of the civilizational whole of Judaism.

EITHER/OR POLEMICS

Liberal authors characterize Jewish ethics as idealistic, universal, this-worldly, optimistic, rational, anti-ascetic, humanistic.[1] Writers of the Orthodox school depict the same subject matter quite

differently. To them it appears otherworldly, particularistic, largely concerned with ritual, law, and obedience to the divine will. With notable exceptions, Christian theologians find Judaism abounding in ceremonialism, legalistic, parochial, formalistic.[2]

These conflicting presentations of Jewish ethics spawn an array of polemics and apologetics. Each polemicist, hiding his own vulnerability, searches for the Achilles heel of the other. The apologist, defending his position through artful theological gerrymandering, assigns the best portions to his own jurisdiction while projecting the worst onto the lot of his adversary. Such battles have led to convenient but misleading dualisms: law vs. spirit, nationalism vs. universalism, formalism vs. inwardness, materialism vs. idealism, justice vs. love. Corroborative evidence is carved from the huge and manifold tradition, some citations exaggeratedly pronounced, others chipped away to fall unnoticed by the side. To the uninitiated, Jewish ethics then appears as an unrelieved paragon of virtue or a monstrous anachronism. He is either amazed by its contemporaneity or repelled by its primitive crudeness.[3]

Upon closer scrutiny, the student will discover that each interpretation is capable of producing an array of scriptural and talmudic quotations and utterances vindicating either position. As Professor Louis Ginzberg once noted, "The Devil can quote scripture and were he more knowledgeable he would quote the Talmud as well." Supporting quotations are easy to produce. For one thing, there is little apparent concern in the tradition for a systematic treatment of ethics or theology. Yet another factor militating against neatly packaged catechisms of ethics is the long and varied history of an old-new people.[4] It should not be surprising that different levels of civilization and divergent social and economic situations produce a diversity of ethical response. To seize upon one period or one disposition towards ethics as "typical" or "dominant" invariably misrepresents the organic whole.

To appreciate the holistic character of Jewish ethics, it is better to abandon these partisan, single-stranded characterizations which lay exclusive claim to represent the authentic tradition. We have before us two principal sources to draw upon in portraying the nature of Jewish ethics: the maxims and epigrams aphoristically strewn throughout the entire body of the literature; and the ethics, both implied and articulated, in the codes of law and ritual practice.

We cannot produce without distortion an undiversified Jewish system of ethics out of this civilizational complexity. A truer picture will portray a gamut of pluralistic moods and dialectical exchanges reflecting the richness of the Jewish experience.

LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE VIEWPOINTS

The Humanistic Bias

Most modern liberal ethicists attempt to demonstrate that Jewish ethics is optimistic, this-worldly, and peculiarly congenial to a naturalistic approach.[5] This version of Jewish ethics is bolstered by selecting such cheerful citations as follows:

Biblical

> Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.
>
> —Genesis 1:28

> And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him.
>
> —Genesis 1:27

> Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances which, if a man do, he shall *live* by them.
>
> —Leviticus 18:5

Rabbinic

> Every man will be held accountable before God for all the permitted things he beheld in life and did not enjoy.
>
> —Yerushalmi, *Kiddushin,* end

> God's commandments are intended to enhance the value and enjoyment of life, but not to mar it and make it gloomy.
>
> —*Yoma* 85a

> The spirit of God rests upon man neither in a state of gloom nor in a state of indolence, but solely in the joy of performing a duty.
>
> —*Shabbat* 30b

> Rabbi Samuel declared: 'He that fasts is called a sinner,' basing this on an interpretation of Numbers 6:11.
>
> —*Ta'anit* 11a

The liberal, humanistic strain is as unmistakable as it is one-sided. To cite but a few illustrations of what has been omitted by the liberal view:

PLURALISM

Biblical

Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.

—Genesis 3:17–19

. . . for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.

—Genesis 8:21

Rabbinic

Rabbi Jacob said: "This world is like a vestibule before the world-to-come."

—*Ethics of the Fathers* [*Pirke Avot*] 4:21–22

In order to be holy it is necessary to abstain even from things that are permitted.

—*Yevamot* 20a

This is the way of Torah: a morsel of bread with salt must thou eat, and water by measure must thou drink, thou must sleep upon the ground and live a life of anguish the while thou toilest in the Torah.

—*Pirke Avot* 6:4[6]

For two and a-half years, debate between the two rabbinic schools of Shammai and Hillel raged as to the merit of life. A vote was finally taken and it was decided that "it were better for man not to have been created than to be created, but now that he has been created let him investigate his past deeds or, as others say, let him examine his future actions."

—*Eruvin* 13b[7]

Rabbi Eleazer declared: 'He that fasts is called holy,' interpreting Numbers 6:5 for his support.

—*Ta'anit* 11a

Rabbi Judah the Prince said: "He who accepts the pleasures of this world is deprived of the pleasures of the world to come, and vice versa."

—*Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* 1:28, 43a

When confronted by such illustrations contrary to the humanistic mood, liberal theoreticians invoke quantitative and/or qualitative criteria for determining their true weight. Typically, the nineteenth-century Jewish philosopher Moritz Lazarus explained, "But in all the controversies, the party of energetic action and joyous living is represented by the best names and outnumbers by far its antagonists."[8] This optimistic bias sets aside the ascetic traditions of the Rechabites, Essenes and Nazirites, and the talmudic record which cites prominent and compelling rabbinic personalities who not only advocated but practiced a quite severe asceticism. Among the latter are Mar, son of Rabina, who sat in fast the entire year excepting a few festivals (*Pesaḥim* 68b),[9] and Rabbi Judah, the compiler of the Mishnah, who proudly practiced asceticism as evidence of his piety.[10]

The mystic saints in Jewish post-talmudic life who advocated asceticism, and the writings of a number of eminent Jewish theologians and moralists cannot be so readily dismissed. The tenth-century Ibn Paquda includes "renunciation of luxuries and love of the world" as the ninth fundamental principle of the religious "duties of the heart" in his influential work of the same name.[11] Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, the eighteenth-century author of *The Path of the Upright, Messilat Yesharim,* demonstrates that "abstinence is the beginning of saintliness," that man should therefore "avoid contact with worldly affairs as much as possible."[12]

The preceding illustrates how blinded we are to the half-conscious selection of sentiments and heroes we prefer. It was the philosopher Schopenhauer who cavalierly labeled Judaism as optimistic. But much of the optimism is the creation of thinkers who have absorbed the values of the Enlightenment. The age of confidence in human progress which experienced the joy of this-worldly life understandably found little interest in the talmudic heeding that there be "no unrestrained laughter in this world" (*Berachot* 31a). The essays composed and sermons preached in that hopeful era filtered the scriptural and talmudic sea for corroborative texts congenial to the spirit of their own age. Given the absence of structured ethical theory in Judaism and the casual and unsystematic form of ethics in traditional literature, these constructions selected from the classics were readily woven together to form an ethics claiming "major tendencies." By virtue of repetition and

the acceptance of this-worldly humanism by the contemporary Jewish audience, these interpretations were presented as the sole authoritative version of the authentic Jewish tradition. We know, however, that in the insulation of the ghetto and in moments of medieval catastrophe, for example, quite contrary versions were acknowledged as authentic.[13]

Ethical Absolutes vs. Contextual Relativism

Conservative interpreters of the tradition tend to stress the absolute character of revealed law. Liberal interpreters of the tradition point to the qualifications which beset the abstract law once it is contextually applied. On closer examination, the tradition appears as a "relative absolutism" wherein the general principles remain constant but are softened by consideration of the particular situations to which they are applied. Jewish ethics allows itself few immutable absolutes. The notable exceptions are the three absolutes which prohibit murder, incest, and idolatry. Whereas ritual ordinances of the highest importance may be transgressed in the interest of the conservation of health and life, the aforementioned cardinal sins are excluded. "We may cure ourselves with all [forbidden] things except idolatry, incest and murder."[14] Yet, in the face of the brutal Hadrianic persecutions, the rabbinic sense of realism attenuated even these absolutes. Consideration of the public or private character of the transgression, distinctions as to who decreed the transgression, the motivation of the transgressor, the number and nature of the public witnessing the prohibited act were introduced to qualify these absolutes.[15] In these ways, the rabbinic exercise of the law encouraged reason and experience to free men from blind obedience to unyielding categorical imperatives.

Religious and Autonomous Ethics

Jewish ethics belongs to the category of religious or theistic ethics. In philosophic literature, this category is contrasted with that of natural or secular ethics. The genesis of and sanction for secular ethics is said to lie in experience, intuition, human reason, and appeal to natural consequences, individual and social, physical and psychological.[16] Secular humanistic ethics prides itself on its autonomous and therefore uncoerced manner of arriving at the ethical

decision. Secular morality declares that it does not cringe before the voice thundering from above. It is not bound to the external constraints of the Other's Will. By contrast, theistic ethics legitimizes its moral philosophy by appealing to its Divine Source, by claims of revelatory experiences, or by virtue of the logic which derives ethical principles from those of theology. For its part, secular humanistic ethics dismisses theistic ethics as either arguing in circular fashion or as "pseudo-heteronomous morality" (Von Hartmann), that is, unreflected obedience to an external Divine Imperative. In response, theistic ethics maintains that the secular effort in ethics leads to the conceit of anthropocentrism and unbridled subjectivism.

Is Jewish ethics, then, autonomous or heteronomous, a product of human reason or divine fiat? The answer will not feed into the either/or framework. The hard-and-fast distinctions of heteronomy (subjection to the law of another) and autonomy are largely unknown in Jewish ethics despite the efforts of Moritz Lazarus and others to read the Kantian ethics of autonomy into the rabbinic tradition.[17] While Jewish ethics is traditionally believed to be derived from God's revealed will, its claimed origin does not contradict the free exercise of man's moral reason. The human intellect is a divine gift, and man's autonomous conscience is a manifestation of his divine image. Human moral discoveries may be seen as one side of the coin of revelation. If God's voice is to be distinguished from the ventriloquism of Satan, revelation must be examined by moral reason and adapted into moral law. If fidelity to the covenant is not servile acquiescence to supernatural power, reason and moral sensibility must be elevated to sacred status.

The instance of the universal Noahide laws is instructive. How do the rabbis understand the character of the seven Noahide laws which apply to mankind in general, i.e., the prohibitions against shedding blood, robbery, idolatry, adultery, blasphemy, and eating flesh from live animals, and the injunction to set up courts of justice? Are these laws autonomous, inasmuch as their origin is pre-Sinaitic and no special revelation of these natural principles is explicitly recorded in the Bible, or are they heteronomous, derived from God's will? The rabbis and the medieval Jewish philosophers insisted that these natural laws were derived from the biblical verse in Genesis 2:16 and are thus divinely ordained.[18] Maimonides

insists that only those who believe that these seven Noahide laws are revealed by God in the Torah will merit a share in the world-to-come, the desserts of the righteous gentiles of the world. Moritz Lazarus, however, argued that Jewish ethics is autonomous and was determined to show that "reason [as opposed to revelation] was the source of his [Abraham's] ethical instruction."[19] To support his Kantian bias, Lazarus quotes an oft-cited mishnaic passage: "Abraham observed the whole Torah before it was given." Heteronomists quote another *mishnah,* one which maintains that Abraham's practice was divinely ordained, on the basis of the scriptural verse, "because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws" (Genesis 26:5).[20]

The rabbis appear to be oblivious to the bifurcated realms of nature and the supernatural in the sense that contemporary theologians employ them, just as they did not see autonomous and heteronomous ethics as contraries. Natural law is congenial to divinity because "the earth is the Lord's." Chastity could be learned from the dove, modesty from the cat, not to rob from the ant, propriety from the cock, and "if they had not been written [in Scripture] they should have been written."[21] Man's discoveries in nature are no blasphemy to God but to His glory. The issues which are presented as hard disjunctives, either/or, are reconciled by viewing them as different aspects of the same thing. After all, the reason and ethics of man flow from a being created in the image of God. In the relationship between man and God, nothing divine is untouched by nature, and nothing natural is untouched by the divine. In the realm of ethics, that which God wills is good and that which is good is the will of God.

THE CHRISTIAN-JEWISH POLEMIC

Polemics introduce invidious distinctions. Apologetics return the compliment in kind. Christian theologians, from Paul onward, have for the most part felt the need to loosen Christianity from its antecedent anchorage, to prove its independence and its advancement over the "old" tradition. Ancient Israel is forever portrayed as obsolescent, "concerned with rites and ceremonies, with the maintenance of obsolete, useless and even harmless customs; it has been narrowly nationalistic; it has been socially and intellec-

tually unprogressive";[22] "The principle of love . . . and the principle of moral inwardness" are distinctive Christian contributions.[23] In defense of these harsh critiques, many apologists fall into the very either/or trap set by the polemicists and seek to deny the nationalistic, ritualistic, legalistic character of Jewish ethics. In such a debate, both extremes err. The distortion, common both to those who overrate and to those who berate Judaism, is the assumption that love of people and mankind, law and spirit, ceremony and inwardness, cultus and social consciousness are inherently incompatible. Both defenders and detractors tend to split what is organically whole in Judaism, each taking one or the other part of the disjunction as the essence of Judaism. To worship the part as if it were the whole is to sacrifice at the arena of idolatry. Within Jewish religious civilization, these segregated features strain and struggle but coexist. The following sections touch briefly upon the alleged contradictions within Judaism.

Nation and Humanity

The rabbinic mind sensed no contradiction in holding that Israel stands in special relation to God and holding that "the pious and virtuous of all nations participate in eternal bliss" (*Sifra* on Leviticus 19:18). The prophet who spoke lovingly of God's interest in raising the fallen tabernacle of David could still rebuke the "chosen." "Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel?" (Amos 9:7). For the rabbis, the same prophet who conceived of Israel as the Suffering Servant persecuted by the nations could still speak of God's blessing "Egypt, My people, and Assyria, the work of My hands" (Isaiah 19:25). The evident particularism in Judaic literature does not preclude the High Holy Day prayers that God impose His awe upon all mankind and that "all Thy works may revere Thee . . . that they may form a single band to do Thy will with a perfect heart." So, too, rabbinic law ordains that giving charity to the poor, burying the dead, attending funerals, eulogizing the deceased, consoling the bereaved are to be extended to the non-Jew as well as to the Jew.[24] The particularistic rabbinic imagination is capable of spinning a legend of ethics in which God chastizes the ministering angels singing a hymn of praise over the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea: "My children lie drowned in the sea and you would sing hymns of

triumph?" (*Megillah* 10b). To be sure, the danger looms that love of peoplehood may gain the ascendancy and degenerate into zealous ethnocentrism; but the risk is no more real than that universalism may turn into religious imperialism.

Ritual and Ethics

In the relationship between ritual and ethics, something of the polemicist's assumption seeps into the defense walls of the apologists. Theologians on the defense are found interpreting Jewish religion as "essentially . . . the emergence of ethical ideals out of a background of purely ritual and ceremonial observances."[25] The apology thereby accepts the strange logic which sets up ethics in opposition to ritual by placing each in a separate stage, one primitive (ritualistic), the other emergent (ethical). In truth, however, the hard disjunctives separating rite and righteousness, cult and conscience, are not so pronounced in biblical and talmudic literature. Within the breadth of the same biblical chapter, arational and amoral ritual law prohibiting the wearing of wool and linen together is coupled with the moral concern which enjoins the removal of young ones or eggs from the nest in the presence of the mother bird.[26]

The prophets condemn the hypocrisy and mechanism of ritual, but their vision aspires to sacrifice *with* mercy, adoration *with* charity, rite *with* justice, form *with* inwardness. Statute and ordinance of both ethical and ritual significance lay equal claim to divine sanction. The rabbis admonish man to be "heedful of a light precept as of a grave one" (*Pirke Avot* 2:1).

Ritual observance itself was invested with so great a degree of ethical purpose that the two were regarded as inseparable. "For indeed, what difference does it make to God how we slaughter an animal or of what kind of food we partake, except that He desires by such laws and regulations to benefit His creatures, to purify our hearts and to ennoble our characters."[27] Ritual observance is variously taken as a pedagogic means to instruct man in self-control, as obedience to divine law, as hygienic principles, as repudiation of idolatry, etc.[28]

While ritual frequently serves an indispensable function as an active reminder intensifying ethical resolutions, it is dispensable when its observance would violate ethical principle. "Even the

entire body of Biblical precepts and rituals are not equal to one ethical principle."[29] Respect for the personal dignity of a human being supersedes a negative biblical injunction.[30]

The obduracy with which ritual observance is often maintained strongly suggests that there is more here than ritual law for its own sake. Observance or abandonment of ritual is not solely an issue of religious ideology. Many a ritual came to be associated with the supreme virtue of loyalty, and often a history of martyrdom added emotive value to the ritual far beyond the initial intention. The rabbis wisely observed that "every commandment for which the Israelites gave their lives in times of persecution they now observe openly; the others have grown effete among them."[31] The religious struggle in the Hanukkah story was initiated by ritual struggles whose symbolic meaning was intertwined with the issue of loyalty to one's own people. To have the flesh of swine forced down one's throat was experienced as defilement of one's fidelity to people and covenant. In moments of religious persecution, "even to change one's shoe strap" may demand martyrdom.[32]

In much the same way, Pauline antinomianism and anticeremonialism may have given additional impetus to the conservation of rituals. The retention of many ceremonial laws, following the destruction of the Temple, was invested with a nation's survival value. The early Christian opposition to dietary laws and circumcision was considered a double-pronged attack upon the efforts to preserve the peoplehood of Judaism and the relevance of the tradition and rabbinic law. Ceremonial laws, more than the more abstract universal laws of ethics, were focused upon because they possessed indigenous national symbolism. Their importance reached unparalleled heights as unifying and stabilizing factors, especially after political sovereignty was lost or, as in the Diaspora, where both territorial and political integrity were absent. The value of Jewish rituals was not only significant as a response to religious imperatives, but as an expression of the ethics of loyalty as well. It became important for the rabbis to insist that Abraham, though living ages before the Sinaitic revelation, had observed all the precepts and regulations of the law,[33] though earlier tradition assured his justification by faith alone.[34] For the Pauline principle, setting up the justification of faith over that of works, sought its sanction from the merit of the pre-Sinaitic religious heroes of the

Bible such as Abraham. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace . . . not to that only which is of the law but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."[35] So the cleavage between ritual and ethical law was introduced to polemics over the issue of the justification by faith or by works. In this manner, ritual works may have been catapulted to a level of importance nearly eclipsing the sphere of ethics.[36]

Law and Theology

Partly because of this historical pitting of Christian creed and faith against Jewish deed and act, and partly because of Judaism's inherent distrust of abstract theory, it is law which identifies the dominant trait in the Jewish ethic. The Christian antithesis of faith and works finds its Jewish analogue in the debate over which is more important in the pursuit of the religious life: the study of the law or the practice of good deeds.[37] In the talmudic controversy over which is more important, study or doing, Rabbi Tarfon emphasizes study while Rabbi Akiva insists upon doing. But then "they all agreed that study was greater, for it led to doing."[38]

It seems more accurate, then, to speak of Jewish ethics as rooted in religious law than of its modern formulation as essentially "theologic."[39] Judaism's religious ethics is not theological in the sense that Aquinas's systematization of Christian ethics is theological. The problems surrounding evil, atonement, sin, free will in Judaism developed less as metaphysical or theological issues than as issues of moral law. The medieval endeavors to theologize Judaism, to extrapolate a system of belief, were mainly abortive.

The legal character of Jewish ethics does not lessen its implicit theocentric source. But while the legitimization of halachah, or law, was viewed as dependent upon the wisdom of a divine ruler who revealed His will, the theological implications were taken for granted and not made into dogma. The law was Judaism's applied theology. The aspirations of the Bible and ideals of the prophets were there; there was no question of enduring legitimacy. The law sought to rescue the ethical insights of the prophets from the mistiness of generalized goodwill and utopian imagination. The excitement and drama of prophetic denunciation and vision were translated into prescribed, detailed, concrete, daily activity. Goodness and virtue required more than the good intentions with which

the road to moral laxity is so liberally paved. If ideals were not to go up in the smoke of pious verbiage, fences must be erected to guide the wayward, and transgressors made to sense the reality of this-worldly punishment. "The task of prophecy," declares a talmudic passage, "was taken from the prophets and given to the wise men," to promulgate and enforce regulatory law.[40]

Such guiding principles of ethics as the conservation of health, life, and property and their use for the ennoblement of man and society were concretized into legal precepts. The issue of philanthropy, for example, was not left solely to the whim and caprice of the individual. Laws of tithing and restrictions even as to the generosity of the charity given were articulated. Man should not "squander more than one-fifth of his wealth, lest he himself becomes indebted to society."[41] The levitical formula "to love one's neighbor as oneself" was not allowed to waste away into pious declaration. The rights of adjoining neighbors were spelled out pragmatically in the Talmud. A property owner has a prior claim over any other person to purchase property adjoining his. If the owner, lacking neighborly feeling, ignores his neighbor's rights by selling the property to a third person, the latter may be compelled to turn over the bought property to the adjacent neighbor for the purchasing price.[42] Theological ethics embraced reality through the implementation of law in the daily activities between man and man.

It is undeniable that there are dangers of a law-abiding ethic turning into a monument of inflexible injunctions and prohibitions. The spirit may turn into an empty word and the law may congeal into an impersonal letter. Spontaneity and inwardness in ethical decision may shrivel into a deadening conformity to the book of statutes. Law as instrument can, with imposing power, turn into the end itself; the noble search for God's will may deteriorate to a prosaic casuistry. The Talmud itself cautions, "For those who make a right use of the law, it is a medicine for life; for those who make a wrong use, it is a drug for death."[43]

Many of these dangers have indeed engulfed the consecrated end of Jewish law. The further removed from the sovereignty of natural community, the more stringent grows the conservative impulse, the more timid the initiation of changes and amendments. Dependence upon the past for authentic rendition of the law and reliance upon the talmudic rabbis "greater in number and wisdom

than we" increased. The liberating character of classic rabbinic law was threatened.

The Word of God and the Commentary of Man

The Christian characterization of the Jewish law as oppressive, and of the Pharisaic rabbis as narrow-minded legalists, distorted the liberating and democratizing character of the halakhah. One of the consequences of the Pharisaic approach to Bible study was its popularization among the people. The democratization of learning weakened the influence of miracle-men and their charismatic magnetism. The text, not the prophet, was called holy, perfect, divine, and the text was open to all. Neither voices from heaven moving carob trees nor falling walls held still could detract from the law based on verse and chapter, and applied contextually by human intelligence.[44] Interpreters of the text, often locked in conflicting judgments, were equally regarded: "These and these are both the words of the living God."[45]

The law, in the hands of the rabbinic scholars, humanized revelation, allowed it growth, continuity, and change. God's wisdom was not exhausted with the theophany at Sinai. "Things not revealed to Moses were revealed to Akiva."[46] This, the rabbis explained, was due to the omniscience of His word. Divine truth, if given at once, would overwhelm a generation and congeal the hearts of a nation with fear.[47]

With such a concept of progressive revelation, the rabbis could free the people from priestly and patrician bibliolatry.[48] They could transform the pentateuchal *lex talionis* (the so-called eye-for-an-eye law of retaliation) into a complex code entailing monetary compensation in consideration for the pain, unemployment, medical expenditures, and humiliation suffered by the victim. They could, through the subtleties of hermeneutics, so qualify the conditions under which the biblical "stubborn and rebellious son," "idolatrous city," and "leprous house" were to be condemned that they became de facto unenforceable.[49] These laws, it was explained, were made to function for the benefit of jurisprudential theory. The cited biblical instances themselves "never were nor will be." The reason for their preserve was purely theoretical. Their purpose was for "you to study and receive thereby reward."[50] In this manner, halakhah was able to circumvent the

Deuteronomic law (15:1–2) which canceled all debts in the sabbatical year by the imaginative institution of Hillel's *prosbul* that authorizes a rabbinic tribunal to collect the debts. A verse from the Book of Psalms (119:126), "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work; for they have made void Thy law," was audaciously mistranslated to mean that for the sake of God there are times when it is permissible to set aside or amend the commandments of God enjoined in His law.[51]

Both/And

There are scholarly as well as pragmatic reasons to resist a characterization of Jewish ethics neatly tailored to our particular bias. The rabbis, judges, philosophers whose spirit is reflected in Judaism did not consciously sit down to create a uniform and unambiguous code of ethics. The civilizational character of Jewish ethics cannot be simply located. It is better apprehended when viewed as an indispensable part of an organic totality which weaves jurisprudence and theology, legend and philosophy into a religious civilizational fabric. Such a schema exhibits the generalized aim of Jewish ethical life: *kiddush ha-Shem,* the sanctification of God's name, binding heaven with earth, countenancing no rupture in God's universe, transforming the secular into the holy, knitting together the torn fragments of what was originally whole, praying towards the day when His name shall be One. Sanctification uses every means at its command: prayer and charity, piety and social action, body and soul, heart and mind.

The ethics of Judaism clings therefore to both prophet and priest; holds both the love of Israel and that of mankind; believes both in the world-to-come and in the imperatives to labor in this world; remembers the power of human freedom and recalls its frustrating limitations; is both God-centered and aware of the centrality of the self. These conjunctions are not taken by the tradition as paralyzing paradoxes throwing man into despair. They are complementary values, expressions of a healthy tradition, rooted in the twin principles of reality and ideality, in what is and what ought to be. They manifest the dialectic of love and wisdom which reflects the complexity and maturity of life. Mature living and mature religion is not either/or. Polarities need not turn into polarizations, nor dualities into dualisms, nor ideologies into segregating sects.

NOTES

1. See Samuel Schulman's popular essay "Jewish Ethics," reflecting the liberal reform approach to the subject, in *Popular Studies in Judaism.*

2. Notable among these exceptions are G. F. Moore and R. T. Herford.

3. Illustrations of the Kantian formulation of Jewish ethics are conspicuous in Lazarus's *The Ethics of Judaism,* Kaufmann Kohler's *Jewish Theology* ("The Ethics of Judaism and the Kingdom of God") and Emil Hirsch's "Ethics" in the *Jewish Encyclopedia.*

4. Biblical ethics alone includes a period ranging from primitive times to the second century of the common era. Not all of this is of one coherent mood. It contains period ethics of the priestly theocracy with those of the Prophets and Wisdom series. To this must be added the centuries of the talmudic era (ending about 500 C.E.), the philosophic efforts of the Middle Ages, the mysticism of Kabbalah, the romance of Hasidism, the period of Enlightenment, Reform, and the contemporary religious and secular philosophies. For the sake of economy and because works on Jewish ethics usually restrict themselves to the major sources of the Bible and Talmud, we have concentrated on these classic periods.

5. See Van Meter Ames's review of Israel Mattuck's *Jewish Ethics* for such a version. The review may be found in the *Menorah Journal,* Spring–Summer 1955.

6. Israel Mattuck's apology for this dictum seeks to soften its ascetic tone by asserting, "This should probably be interpreted not absolutely but relatively." *Jewish Ethics,* p. 139.

7. C. Montefiore, commenting on this pessimistic note, apologetically assures the reader that "the passage is clearly a record of some famous dialectical discussion, without any true bearing upon the arguer's *real* views about actual life." *A Rabbinic Anthology* (London, 1938), p. 539.

8. M. Lazarus. *The Ethics of Judaism,* vol. 2, p. 120.

9. *Berakhot* 30b, where Rabbi Johanan, Rabbi Ashi, and others assent to this mournful attitude.

10. *Ketubot* 104a.

11. Baḥya Ibn Paquda, *Duties of the Heart,* p. 17.

12. *Messilat Yesharim,* p. 122.

13. Gershom G. Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism,* pp. 244 ff., illustrates the wide influence of these moods in critical times.

14. *Pesaḥim* 25a.

15. *Sanhedrin* 74a–b.

16. Mordecai M. Kaplan, in his introduction to the English translation of *Messilat Yesharim,* pp. xiv–xxx, discusses the basic traits and divergent methods of approach to the problem of human conduct.

17. For a discussion of this issue in Jewish philosophy, see Felix Perles Königsberg's "Die Autonomie der Sittlichkeit in jüdischen Schriften," in *Judaica Festschrift in Honor of Hermann Cohen* (Berlin: Verlag Bruno Cassirer, 1912).

18. *Sanhedrin* 56a, end.

19. Lazarus, *Ethics of Judaism,* vol. 1, p. 118.

20. *Kiddushin* 4:14.

21. *Yoma* 67b.

22. Albert C. Knudson, *The Principles of Christian Ethics* (New York, 1943), p. 285.

23. Ibid., p. 39; see the New Testament critique of Pharisaic morality in such sections as John 7:22–24, Matthew 23:23–26, Acts 15:24–29, Romans 3:28–29.

24. Mishnah *Gittin* 5:8; Tosefta 5:4–5.
25. *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (1941), s.v. "Ethics," vol. 4, p. 175.
26. Deuteronomy 22:11, 22:6
27. *Genesis Rabbah* 44.1; *Tanḥuma, Shemini* 15b; ed. Buber.
28. See Moses Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed,* 3:43–49, for such ethical interpretations of Sabbath, festivals, dietary laws, among others.
29. Jerusalem Talmud, *Peah* 16a, as cited by J. Z. Lauterbach in his essay on the "Ethics of Halakah." He quotes similar talmudic passages, *Sukkot* 30a, *Nazir* 23b, in his notes on p. 271.
30. *Shabbat* 81b.
31. *Sifre Deuteronomy, Re'eh* 90b.
32. *Sanhedrin* 74b.
33. *Yoma* 28b.
34. *Mechilta, Be-Shallach* 6; ed. Weiss, 40b.
35. Romans 4:16.
36. For additional illustrations, see Lauterbach's and Kohler's articles on nomism in the *Jewish Encyclopedia.*
37. See *Pirke Avot* 1:17, 3:12, 3:22, 4:6, for consistent emphasis, giving primary value to works over wisdom and erudition.
38. *Kiddushin* 40b.
39. Lazarus. *Ethics of Judaism,* vol. 1, pp. 109 f. Emil Hirsch. s.v. "Ethics," *Jewish Encyclopedia,* passim. Kohler, *Jewish Theology,* p. 477.
40. *Bava Bathra* 12a.
41. *Ketubot* 50a.
42. See Lauterbach. *The Ethics of the Halakah,* p. 283.
43. *Shabbat* 88b.
44. *Bava Metzia* 59b.
45. *Eruvin* 13b.
46. *Numbers Rabbah* 19:6.
47. *Tanḥuma, Devarim* 1a.
48. For illustrations of the democratic "plebeian" character of the Pharisaic reforms through law, read Louis Finkelstein's suggestive chapter, "The Oral Law," in his two-volume *The Pharisees* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1946).
49. Deuteronomy 13:17, 21:18; Leviticus 14:34 ff.
50. *Sanhedrin* 71a. The rabbis' humanitarian employment of law and exegesis allows them to boast that a Sanhedrin (religious supreme court) that executes a person once in seven years is called murderous. Rabbi Eliezer ben Azzariah corrected, "once in seventy years."
51. Mishnah *Berachot* 9:5.

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THE MITZVAH OF CONVERSION

by Harold M. Schulweis

As far as intermarriage is concerned, the surest antidote is anti semitism. Anti-semites don't want anything to do with Jews. They want to keep them our of their neighborhoods, out of their businesses, out of their recreational clubs. Anti-semites don't want to marry Jews. In an anti-semitic society, intermarriage and mixed marriage are no serious problems.

In recent polls 87% of American non-Jews welcome marriage to a Jew. A Jew has become a desirable in-law. As the philosopher Walter Kaufman commented on the contemporary phenomenon of intermarriage, "They don't want to kill us, they want to kiss us." From a sociological point of view, intermarriage is a sign of tolerance, acceptance and love in an open society and the triumph of Jewish integration. So what's wrong with integration and what's wrong with intermarriage? Integration is desirable but assimilation is threatening. Intermarriage, absent conversion, threatens Jewish identity and Jewish continuity. Most mixed marriages without conversion end in the disappearance of Jewish identity. A celebrated demographic study in Philadelphia, 1984 reported that not a single grandchild of mixed married couples without conversion was identifiable as a Jew. In short, as an early Reform Rabbi David Einhorn put it "Every mixed marriage signifies another nail in the coffin of Jewish identity."In North America, more people have converted from Judaism to Christianity than from Christianity to Judaism. And overwhelmingly most people who intermarry do not convert at all. Social scientists like Dr. Egon Mayer have reported that:

1. Mixed marriage where no conversion has taken place by and large ends in assimilation. Children of mixed marriage have been marrying non-Jewish partners at a rate of 90%.

2. But conversionary marriage scores highest in every aspect ofJewish attitudes and Jewish behavior, particularly with regard to affiliation with a synagogue, religious practice and providingJewish education for the children.

3. In some ways there is more reason for optimism about Jewish continuity in families where the born Gentile spouse has converted to Judaism than there is in the typical endogamous family.

If that is the case, it would seem that the wisest way to deal with mixed marriage is for the Jewish community to engage in an active and serious conversionary mission. Come join us, become part of us. Why should Jews not follow in the footsteps of the first convert to Judaism, Abraham our father? Abraham himself was told "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house. I will make your name great and you shall be a blessing...and all the families of the earth shall bless you." This was Abraham's initial charge from God to become a great nation. And who was there in his time that was Jewish? There was no one. So, the rabbis comment, Abraham and Sarah made converts. And so successful a missionary was Abraham that God through him became known as King of the earth as well as King of the heaven.

Why not open our arms to those who seek a spiritual way of life? Are we not told in the classic text of Avoth DeRebbe Nathan (2ba) that Jews are urged to bring people beneath the wings of the divine presence exactly as Abraham and Sarah had done?

The logic is clear and so is the theology. Judaism is not an exclusive club of born Jews. It is a universal faith with an ancient tradition that has deep resonance for people today. The prophet Isaiah (42:6,7) declared "I the Lord have summoned you and I have grasped you by the hand. I created and appointed you a covenant people, a light for the nations." We read in the Talmud Pesachim 87b: "God exiled the Jews from their homeland for one reason; to increase the number of converts."The rabbis proudly inform us that Bityah the daughter of the Pharaoh and Yithro, the father-in-law of Moses, and Rahav and Obadiah were all Jews by choice. And we are told that Rabbi Akiba, that Rabbis Shmaiah, and Avtalyon were descended from proselytes. Every week we are bidden to read the entire translation of the scriptural reading along with a translation made by the Onkelos, the

Ger -- the proselyte. And most stunning of all, the book of Ruth identifies the king of Israel, David as a descendant of none other than Ruth the Moabitess. It is a blessing to have proselytes and we praise God in our prayers for "the righteous proselytes" three times a day.

Why not embrace the mitzvah of conversion with joy and pride? Conversion is not alien to Judaism. The idea that one can become a Jew by choice is a revolutionary breakthrough in Judaism. It declares that a human being's identity and salvation are not dependent upon biology or race or ethnicity, but is a matter of voluntary choice. Being Jewish is not restricted to the accident of birth but the willing acceptance of the fate and faith of a particular people. Judaism is a universal faith. The Torah begins not with the revelation at Sinai but with creation. The first human creatures, Adam and Eve, blessed by God were not Jews. And even at Sinai, as one Midrash declared, the desert was chosen, that this land of Israel or Egypt, because the wilderness belongs to everyone. Moses, says another Midrash, expounded the Torah in seventy languages because it was meant to be heard and embraced by all human beings. God and Torah are meant for all humanity. This is the sweeping theological implication of Jewish monotheism.

The mitzvah of conversion is not only evident in the Bible. It is instantiated throughout history. Jews in ancient eras converted non-Jews, not by coercion or bribery or deceit, but by offering testimony to the oneness of God and to the spiritual and moral uniqueness of God's word.

In matters of conversion, Jews were enormously successful in Roman times. The great Jewish historian Salo Baron estimated that Jews grew from one hundred fifty thousand in 586 B.C.E. to eight million in the first century of the common era. Baron makes the claim that two thousand years ago Jews were ten percent of the Roman empire.

Conversion of pagans worked and Jews worked hard to convert them. We read in the Gospel of Matthew 23:15, the hostility toward the activity of Jewish proselytizers "Alas for you, Scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites -- you travel over sea and land to make a single proselyte and anyone who becomes one you make twice as fit for hell as you are."

Judaism was successful in its conversionary efforts and Christians entered the missionary field and transformed the meaning of Jewish conversion into its own terms. The church declared "extra ecclesiam nulla salus" -- outside of the church no one is saved. If you would be saved you must convert to Christianity. Christians following Paul, further relaxed the rules of conversion. According to Paul, a convert did not need to observe the ritual laws of Judaism and they did not need to have themselves circumcised. Jewish proselytism persevered and continued until Christianity took over the Roman empire. Then Emperors Domitian, and Hadrian turned proselytism into a capital crime. In 313 C.E. Constantine declared Christianity the religion of the State in his edict of Milan and reenacted Hadrian's laws forbidding Jews to circumcise non-Jews. Those who join the "nefarium sectam" -- the nefarious sect, meaning Judaism, would be burned alive. This was incorporated in the Codex Theodosius.

That was then. But why is Judaism so constrained today? Why do we tremble at the relationship between Jews and non-Jews and see it only as catastrophic as opposed to seeing it as a remarkable opportunity to follow Abraham, to offer a unique faith and wisdom and spirituality to the tens of thousands of unchurched who hunger for spirituality and search all kinds of cults and religions to satisfy that spiritual hunger?

I have met with many non-Jews who have turned some to the University of Judaism, some to Hebrew Union College, some to synagogues and temples to satisfy that hunger for an authentic, moving and relevant faith. When I meet with them I ask them what attracts them to Judaism? They have instructed me. I list some characteristic answers I receive from these searching non-Jews:

1. I admire in Judaism the encouragement to inquire, to question, to seek for answers. I see this in the synagogue every Sabbath when the rabbis engage in a dialogue with questioning congregants. This I never experienced neither in my home nor in my church school.

2. I love Judaism because of its absence of authoritarianism, its lack of dogma and doctrine; in short, its intellectual freedom.

3. I am attracted to Judaism because it does not maintain that salvation comes only to those who are Jews. I was raised in a tradition in which those who do not believe in the principles of Christianity are doomed and damned to hell and perdition. I was never comfortable with that. I understand that Jews regard all righteous people as having a share in the world to come, no matter their faith. I like that. Jews don't save souls; they save lives.

4. I'm attracted to Judaism because of its emphasis on the family. I have been with Jewish friends and I note the emphasis upon the primacy of the family, the warmth of the family, and the centrality of the family.

5. I like the Jewish emphasis upon the deed rather than upon the theological doctrine. You are what you behave. Faith is in your hands and legs, more than in your mouth.

6. I love in Judaism its remarkable common sense. It does not demand of me to flee to "miracles" and violate my sense of logic and of nature.

7. I admire the fact that Judaism does not see sin as something that is inherited. I like that there is no concept of original sin.

8. I love in Judaism that there are no infallibilities attached to its religious leaders, not in Moses nor in the rabbis.

Their testimonies move me. My rabbinic colleagues have spoken similarly of their pleasant surprise at the openness and the acceptance of very basic Jewish attitudes by so many of these people.

One would expect that a community that is so concerned with its own perpetuity, that is so aware of the erosions of assimilation and intermarriage would reach out actively and enthusiastically in the spirit of "keruv" and embrace these people who quite seriously enjoy and are sustained by Jewish wisdom and faith. There are many non-Jews out there. Given the fear of mixed marriage and the promise in conversion, what is the stumbling block before a Jewish conversionary mission? One of the obstacles I suspect has to do with our own disbelief that there are healthy and normal non-Jews who find in Judaism such spiritual uplift and such insight. We never suspected it. Why does she or he want to convert? Is there something wrong with them? For many Jews there is such a profound incredulity, doubt and ignorance of the value of Judaism that they can only suspect that the converts have something wrong with them or that they entertain some ulterior advantage.

It is difficult to understand such a choice, a free choice of an individual who is not a Jew to become a Jew. It is a little different but not entirely from the attitude of some of the rabbis in the Talmudic era. We read in the Talmud (Yebamoth 47) that if someone seeks to convert to Judaism he is addressed as follows: "Why do you seek to convert? Do you not know that Jews at the present time are persecuted, oppressed, despised, harassed, afflicted? And if he says "I know and yet unworthy", he is accepted forthwith.

The idea of choice and of conversion is upsetting to some Jews because they feel Judaism is less an ideology than a biology, a matter of chromosomes, not choice.

A number of years ago an Orthodox rabbi and professor of philosophy Michael Wyschograd published a book called The Body of Faith. The book argued that Judaism is a "carnal election". God chose the route of election through the body of Jews. God chose to elect "a biological people that remains elect even when it sins." The Jew is corporeally chosen.

This metaphysical biology is evident in the Tanya, the 18th century classic authored by the founder of Chabad, Schneur Zalman, that distinguishes Jewish souls from the souls of Gentiles. The souls of Gentiles emanate from "unclean husks which contain no good whatsoever." All the good that the nations do are only for selfish

motives. In the sixth chapter, the Tanya asserts that from the lower grades of the "klipoth" -- "altogether unclean and evil" -- flow the souls of all the nations of the world and the existence of their bodies and also the souls of all living creatures that are unclean and unfit for human consumption.This metaphysical racism runs counter to the spirit of many pro proselyte passages in the Talmud, and the Book of Ruth.One must pause to appreciate the lure of that biologistic understanding of Judaism. Choice is chancey. You can choose one thing one day and then something else another day. But if you are wary of that kind of freedom of choice and want absolute security, then you will find comfort in supernatural election and in a genetic understanding of Jews. Necessity is surer than choice. So, for example, the Aggadah (Avodah Zadah 2b) declares that God did not consult with Jews as to whether or not they would accept the Ten Commandments. But instead God suspended a mountain over Israel like an upside down vault saying "If you accept the Torah it will be well with you. If not, then you will find your graves." It is not we who have chosen. It is God who has chosen us. And this offers a tremendous sense of security. It leads to the principle that "A Jew however he has transgressed remains a Jew". This is taken to mean that a Jew is a Jew not because of any ideology. A Jew is a Jew by virtue of biology. A Jew is a Jew through the womb. As far as legal status is concerned, whether the mother or the father believes or whether the father and mother observes or whether the infant is covenanted are irrelevant. What is crucial is not the faith of the parent or child but the birth of a child from the womb of a Jewish mother. A non-Jewish infant who is converted before the age of thirteen can, when he or she reaches the age of majority protest the conversion. But that is not the case for an infant who was born of a Jewish mother. This genetic bias, this biological interpretation of Judaism is supported by others, including Yehuda Halevy and the Zohar.

In a more vulgar fashion the idea of Jewish "carnal election" has filtered down to Jews who have no theological beliefs at all. You hear it from those biased against conversion "You cannot really convert a non-Jew to a Jew because Jewishness comes with a mother's milk" because "A Gentile remains a Gentile."In my judgment this bias is one of the blocks in preventing a national or international Jewish movement to educate, invite and embrace non-Jews into the fold. We are paying a terrible price for that prejudice. The importance of conversion to Judaism is not is not simply as a matter of numbers, a strategy to stem the hemorrhage of intermarriage. The biological view of Judaism that opposes conversion affects our own Jewish thinking. It is important for Jewish self-understanding, pride and dignity to regain the rabbinic idea of Jewish mission. If Judaism is a world religion, as I believe it is, then it has something of invaluable import to offer the world. If we could open our synagogues, our temples and our universities to those non-Jews who seek knowledge and insight into Judaism, it would affect not only the Jews by choice but also those who are native born, Jews by birth alone. Attention to those potential converts outside the Jewish circle will change the way in which the inner circle thinks of itself.

Conversion to Judaism is not for the sake of the survival of a group or for ethnic comfort. Becoming Jewish is not a matter of convenience for those born of Jewish parents. Judaism is not a matter of culinary taste, a familiar dialect or insider jokes. Conversion to Judaism is not an accommodation to the preferences of habit. In a loving conversion, the chupah is not a cover for our embarrassment within the family. The chupah is turned into a sacred canopy that covers bride and groom with the transcendent Jewish mission to reflect God's image in the world. Genuine conversion affects the native born and the Jew by choice. Conversion means that Judaism is not genes and chromosomes but a free, reasoned and passional choice. It is to fulfill the covenanted promise of our father Abraham, the first convert.Jewish mission does not mean denigration of other religions or the vulgar promotion of evangelical enthusiasm, cake and circus conversion. Jewish mission means that we act out our belief that far from being a parochial, sectarian, ethnic clan, we a people whose faith and wisdom and ethics has endured for four millennia. To those who thirst we declare with the prophet Isaiah: "Ho everyone that thirsteth come to the waters -- even he that hath no money -- bring wine and milk and drink."

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MORDECAI M. KAPLAN'S "SOTERICS" AS A METAPHYSICAL THEOLOGY: AN ANALYSIS

by Harold M. Schulweis

The critics of Mordecai Kaplan's philosophic efforts were persistent in their accusations of his purported neglect of metaphysics. Of what value is "an account of the psychological and ethical consequences" of affirming a theology without the metaphysical substructure which deals with "things as a whole" and without the belief that there is "something ontological, some affirmation...concerning the ultimate nature of things." A theology that does not offer God as "the only tenable explanation of the universe,"[1] and that does not deal with the problems of theodicy, sin, resurrection, and proofs for the existence and attributes of the Deity, is no theology at all.

The task of this article is to analyze Kaplan's "soterics" as a metaphysical theology. Not that his metaphysical analysis concerns itself with being qua being, nor with speculation over ultimate or first principles, nor with the traditional schoolman's preoccupation with the transcendental nature of God, freedom and immortality. But in his theory of salvation, we confront an empirical metaphysics, a philosophic anthropology that searches for the pervasive traits of the natural world and of human nature. Upon these concepts of maximum generality, Kaplan constructed an ethics and theology. The root metaphors of Kaplan's metaphysics are biological and organic, not mechanistic or discrete; its method, scientific; its conclusions, probabilistic, heuristic, in principle verifiable. His metaphysics stresses growth, creativity, process; his theology is naturalistically and humanistically oriented.

Before analyzing Kaplan's soterical approach, it must be set in historical perspective. It arose as a response to the insolubility of the traditional problem inherent in positing the existence and character of a supernatural God. The problem may be stated thus: if there exists an antecedent Being, wholly independent of human beings of whom no spatio-temporal attributes may be legitimately predicated, and whose nature lies outside the realm of human experience, in what sense can such a Reality be said to be known by human persons, or be meaningful to them? The very incomprehensibleness, in human terms, of such a supernatural God denies the conditions for its confimation or rejection. The supernaturalist's claim turns impregnable not by virtue of its irresistible logic but because of its "logically meaningless" formulation. The religious naturalist enters the scene unable to accept a supernatural God on faith. Like Kaplan, he may hold at least one unverifiable presupposition. But while his assumptions are heuristic principles or hypotheses, subject at all times to questions and rejection should they prove unworkable or fruitless, the claims of orthodox theologians have actual ontological references, in which the Being referred to is given absolute existential status not subject to doubt. The religious naturalist is convinced that the source of the meaningful attributes of God is discovered through experiences between human beings and between the rest of the natural world, experiences which are often the same but can vary from group to group and from place to place. In the very search of mankind for God, the religious naturalist seeks his clues as to the nature of the divine itself. He may come to know that when men claim to have experienced a revelation of a supernatural Being, they often confuse the reality of the experience with the experience of Reality. He may come to know that "the Ethiopians make their gods black and snub-nosed, while the Thracians give theirs red hair and blue eyes" (Xenophanes); but he dismisses none of these. For the religious naturalist also knows that the process of reifying man's characteristics, values and ideals reveals its sancta, aspiration levels, success criteria, and ethical rationale.

Kaplan's theological approach was based on the conviction that "by shifting the orientation from the God-concept, a point intended to be outside human experience, to the idea of man, we are likely to make more headway with the problem of salvation."[2] To cite Feuerbach: "If we are to understand religion, we must take as subject what has been taken for predicate and vice-versa."[3] The human being as an "animal symbolicum" pictures God and therein enters the world of possibility, oughts and should-be. In worship he extols those elements which better his life and seeks strength to eliminate the evils which plague it. In his struggle to find himself through this symbolic dimension, he can become more truly human and, thereby, appreciate the divinity in and between him and the world.

The truly revolutionary character of Kaplan's soterical approach, however, is not in this general application of his naturalism, but in his humanistic interpretation of personal salvation. The quest for divinity in the world at large entails discovery within oneself of that which will better his personal life. "From out of my depths, I call unto Divinity." Only to the extent to which one consciously realizes every humanizing potentiality in himself and others, will he attain a measure of personal salvation and an experience and understanding of Godliness. Kaplan's soterics is the study of the nature and method of achieving this end. Soterics and the Growth Imperative

It is Kaplan's belief that soterics can be a framework for salvation for all people regardless of varying personal viewpoints, because it is based on two elemental and compulsory factors in human nature itself: the will to live, and its corollary the will to maximum life. The latter, the principle of self-realization is centered in the development of the productive personality of the self on every level:

a. On the level of vitalities, the self is an organism of biogenic needs (hunger, sex, etc.) and socio-genic needs (the socially acquired needs such as belonging to a group, having status). The ascetic, other-worldly philosophies that deny these primary and secondary needs are, from the point of view of soterics, inimical to healthful growth and salvation. b. On the level of reason and intelligence, the self functions as a mediator of conflicting interests in order to harmonize and channelize the variety of experiences impinging on it. Like the Aristotelian "mean" and the Platonic "sense of justice," the rational exercise allows each impulse a measure of gratification consistent with the total welfare. It is the crucial instrument recognizing the innate potentialities of the self and its enlargement. c. On the level of morality, the self is said to "harbor the values of the spirit of holiness," "the kingdom of ends."[4] On this level, courage supplies the emotive charge that transforms man's ethical, intellectual commitments into action. The dramatization of the search for self-actualization is celebrated through ritual and prayer; and the realm of purposes is recognized, articulated and made conscious.

Soterics is a this-worldly "normative science of human life in all its aspects, from the standpoint of verifiable experience."[5] It is a form of art in which the diverse levels of human living, as described above, are integrated and each dimension given its weight according to the desired goal of the total health, happiness and creativity of the individual. The religious personality is conceived as an artist molding his self into the highest form, impelled by the soteric imperative, as described by Plotinus: "Withdraw into your self and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful; he cuts away here, he smooths there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also: cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to all that is overcast, labor to make all one glow of beauty, and never cease carving your statue until there shall shine out on you from it the godly splendor of virtue, until you shall see the perfect goodness established in the stainless shrine."[6]

In his conception of salvation as the attainment of the maximum good through the development of the inherent possibilities or potentialities of the organism, Kaplan has been more influenced by the contributions of recent psychiatry than by the romantic, idealistic metaphysics of self-realization. An increasing number of philosophically oriented psychologists such as Fromm, Horney, Sullivan, Goldstein, have leaned heavily on the urge in man to self-realization in order to justify the goal and direction of their therapy. They appear to be as concerned with the re- education of the individual personality towards this end as with treatment aimed at simple adjustment to existing condition.

Kurt Goldstein, a psychiatric pathologist, refers to the observation that "an organism is governed by the tendency to actualize as much as possible the individual capacities," and argues that this tendency is "the only drive by which the life of the organism is determined.[7] Karen Horney concurs: "Man, by his very nature and of his own accord, strives toward self- realization,....and his set of values evolves from such striving."[8] Erich Fromm articulates the same concept when he states the aim of psychiatric therapy to be "the optimal development of a person's potentialities and the realization of his individuality"[9] his justification being the belief that "all organisms have an inherent tendency to actualize their specific potentialities."[10]

The relationship between health and salvation (i.e. self- realization) is not entirely new in religious philosophy. It is no mere etymological accident that the term salvation in so many languages is integrally related to the idea of healing.[11] The central idea of salvation is "making whole," a "re-establishment of a whole thing that was broken, disrupted, disintegrated."[12] This has been given a naturalistic cast in Kaplan's soterics. The integrated development of the self-productive personality is understood in religious terms as the quintessential ingredient in spiritual growth and the realization of the divine principle in man.

At this point, certain questions may be raised: First, if the realization of "maximum life" is inherent in the nature of man, why the need for Kaplan's "soterical imperative" to bring it about? Why recommend any action in accordance with human nature, since it is apparently that which no one can avoid doing? The answer may lie in understanding that the drive for maximum life or self-realization is a generalized one inherent in human nature, but it comprises many specific levels of activity on the part of the self which requires mediation. Self-consciousness and the use of reason are necessary for at least two reasons: to learn the best and surest way to satisfy specific impulses and to learn how to integrate the demands of any one impulse to the total welfare of the organism at any given time. Thus, for Kaplan, the degree to which the individual can succeed in attaining his salvation depends upon the extent to which he has both sensitivity and self-awareness. The need to possess these traits is what persuades Kaplan to call for the "artistic dimension" in man to achieve his measure of the divine.

Second, is the concept of self-realization too ambiguous to be of value as a basis for soterics? Whether one acts one way or the other, some natural capacity will be realized. For the goal of actualizing all the latent capacities of man, no methodological directive is offered so as to judge conflicting directions of fulfillment. As Henry Sidgwick, commenting on the self-realization theories of Green and Spencer, put it: "The sinner realizes capabilities, in this broad sense (of self-realization) as much as the saint."[13]

In answer it should be said that the concept of maximum life of self-realization is not the sole characteristic of man, but rather represents that which is essentially human in man's nature. Salvation does not depend on the fulfillment of any and every impulse indiscriminately, but the fulfillment of the potential of an organism in such a healthful fashion as will aid the individual in achieving the maximum good. How this maximum good is defined will depend on the individual's culture and its institutions at any given state. In a complex society such as ours, where differing criteria of self-realization co-exist, the problem of choosing from particular modes of behavior is aggravated. Horney and Fromm, for example, invoke "creativity," "spontaneity" or "productivity" as standards to distinguish behavior leading to healthy development from behavior leading to stagnant or self-destructive conditions. Unfortunately, these concepts (creativity, etc.) are in turn defined as that which is self-fulfilling or that which leads to further growth and development. Clearly the argument is circular, and the need for clearly-defined criteria is not obviated. The proponents of the self-realization theory seem to have a pragmatic solution to this problem, implying experimentation and trial and error. While the positive characterization and criteria of self-realization remain ambiguous, the negative aspects (ill-health, anxiety phenomena, etc.) are more precise. Where self-realization is not in the direction of general health and well-being, the organism will manifest symptoms of disorder. Be it a subjective report of unhappiness, or a specialist's diagnosis of neurotic traits, or the appearance of psychosomatic ills, something will raise a red flag. Whether growth is healthful or inimical, therefore, is not a matter of caprice, but is rooted in the constitutive demands of the organism.

Further, there are curative powers in the organism, such that, when the proper corrective directives are applied by oneself or a specialist, the organism will respond with well-being. Karen Horney points to "curative forces inherent in the mind as well as the body, and that in cases of disorder of body of mind, the physician merely gives a helping hand to remove the harmful and to support the healing forces."[14] In the language of Kaplan, the "psychoanalyst and the artist have in common the giving of new form to what is, by identifying what is and eliciting from it that which can and ought to be."[15] Yet even if we establish a degree of internal consistency in the theory of self-realization, the existence of an urge to self-realization is far from being accepted as a verified datum by the entire scientific world. The consequences of this doubtful status for soterics will be further discussed dealing with the more fundamental principle, the will to live.

The Will To Live

If the self-realization principle of soterics is characteristic of the distinctively human species, it may be said that the will to live it common to all living forms. The nature of this Spinozistic "endeavor to preserve one's own beings," however, is not clear. Examples of its manifestations offered by Kaplan lead one to assume that it is intended by him as an empirical datum. "The healing of a wound, whether in a tree or in a living being, is a manifestation of an organic urge."[16] Since it is innate and, in its original form, "not meant to be conceived of as a conscious purpose of living beings,"[17] it would appear in human beings as a generalized instinct, a complex, purposeful, motivating force, "a faculty of acting in such a way as to produce certain ends without previous education in their performance."[18]

Kaplan would ground both the will to live and the will to examine life (self-realization) in human nature, in the organism itself. These data are intended to serve as a reliable, generic base for a normative universe of discourse among all mankind, regardless of the differing forms of specific societies. Thus, while given societies would supply varying norms in the achievement of salvation, the entire world would still be in a position to judge their efficacy.

As for the self-realization principle, agreement to the existence of a general self-preservative urge in organisms is far from settled in psychological literature. Fromm may state that "the desire to live is inherent in every organism and man cannot help wanting to live regardless of what he would like to think about."[19] But another eminent psychologist, Menninger, argues that "the best theory to account for all the presently know facts is Freud's hypothesis of a death instinct."[20] And Muzafer Sherif writes what might apply to both the preceding: "Such dramatic-sounding instincts as the instincts of death and destruction cannot be subjected to the check of controlled investigation."[21] Therefore, from an empirical point of view, considerable doubt is cast upon the urge to self-preservation as the grounds for normative unity. The difficulty with this self- preservation urge lies in making it a generalized designation of reactions to specifically bodily demands or deficits which, in fact, may only coincidentally have self-preservative value. To reify as motive that which may well be a contingent by-product is as unwarranted as the claim of a purposeful perpetuation of the species on the basis of a mating or sex instinct.

Further, the will to live, unqualified, may easily be perverted into a pathological drive, an unfettered egoism destructive of the nobler social values. It is in this respect that Kurt Goldstein views the self-preservative drive as "essentially characteristic of a sick people," as symptomatic of "anomalous life, of the decay of life." While it may be that "sometimes the normal organism also tends primarily to avoid catastrophe...this takes place under inadequate conditions and is not at all usual behavior."[22] Anticipating such difficulties, Kaplan has sought to argue that the self which is being preserved includes the higher "ideal self" of social values as well as the self of the vitalities. "The truth is," he writes, "that the will to live is bi-polar. It is as given to self-spending as to self- preservation."[23] By thus subsuming the socially imposed nature of the self under the single category of the preservation of self, Kaplan intends to avoid the embarrassment which confronted those Idealistic philosophers who formulated reasonably similar self- realization theories (Bosanquet, Green, Bradley, Royce). But some strength is sapped form the effort to make self-preservation stem from the original nature of the organism itself. There is a measure of truth in Mill's statement that "every respectable attribute of humanity is the result not of instinct but of the victory over instinct."[24]

Even were there no question concerning the empirical status of these life urges, a major gap in the position would exist all the same. The empirically verified character of human nature in no way entails or guarantees agreement that human nature ought to be fulfilled. In any normative system there is a logical priority of value to fact. Were it established that a death instinct does in fact operate, it is doubtful that Kaplan would legitimate it as a normative base. Kaplan assigns a telic significance to the will to live and the will to self-realization, namely, that their purpose lies not simply in their fulfillment. That argument does not make the leap from the descriptive to the normative any the less unwarranted.

Presupposition Of Soterics

Nevertheless, it would be regrettable were our difficulties with both the will to live and the will to maximum life to cause us to overlook the genuine contributions which soterics may make as a "common hypothetical method of achieving salvation," as Kaplan puts it. Recognizing the problems, it appears reasonable to suggest the abandonment of these "wills" treated as verified data, and their adoption as hypothetical outgrowths of a metaphysical substructure, the basic presuppositions of Kaplan's ethics and theology. This metaphysical substructure would contain at least three major presuppositions:

a. There exist certain universal biological, psychological and social needs and interest in man. b. The integrated gratification of these needs and interests is a value; c. The world is so salvation-conditioned as to enable their gratification.

Such metaphysical presuppositions are, of course, not subjects for verification in the scientific sense because the nature of these presuppositions has nothing to do with truth or falsity but rather with pragmatic efficacy. Unlike the unverifiable propositions of supernaturalism, they make no claim to ontological status. Their use is regulative and heuristic, not substantive and constitutive. They are subject to rejections should they not prove fruitful.

Soterical presuppositions may be vindicated on the same grounds as are the principles of induction or of the uniformity of nature made by science itself. It has more than once been pointed out that "all knowledge which on a basis of experience tells us something about what is not experienced is based upon a belief (an inductive principle) which experience cannot confirm or confute, yet which...appears to be a firmly rooted in us as many facts of experience."[25]

Kaplan's claims understood as regulative invite several observations. First: Requisite for the construction of a universal ethics, "a kind of valuational Esperanto," is the recognition of certain universal needs (innate) and interests (acquired). This might well direct the attention of soterics to such well-accepted but simpler biological drives as hunger, sex, and thirst, and to such social-psychological interests as status and role-taking. The generalized formulations of the will to live and the will to maximum life would be considered hypotheses subject to further study. Investigation in this direction may also lead to a clearer understanding of the nature of the self, a basic category in the soterics of Kaplan; for the essence of value appears to be judged in terms of the activities and behavior contributory to the actualization of the self's natural tendencies. It is the self which experiences desires and impulses and seeks their satisfaction. It is the self which, in a manner of speaking, is also experienced, becoming an object unto itself, in that it evaluates the consequences of its behavior and organizes its value system. The self might be said, then, to contain the material, formal, final and efficient causes of its being. This is the distinctively humanistic element in soterics, protraying as it does the self as an active agent, an artist creating its salvation, in proper contrast with the passive role of the self which awaits other-world salvation.

Further study into this vital category is made necessary by soterics, since the self is so complex and multifunctional in nature. What is the proper balance in the assignment of value to the varying aspects of the self as both an egoistic and altruistic being?

Second, therefore, in stating that the source of value lies in the integrated satisfaction of the needs and interests of the organism, Kaplan proposes an indissoluble relationship between salvation and health. Physical and mental hygiene and the religious ethics of soterics are not related by analogy alone. What is healthful and what is moral are integrally related. With the successful advent of psychiatric therapy, that relationship between mental and moral hygiene has been reinforced. Many an unethical act is understood as a manifestation of illness, e.g. compulsive gamblers, sadists, alcoholics, psychopathic murderers, kleptomaniacs. These vices are now increasingly examined as illnesses. Murder and theft are evil but they are additionally understood in terms of their consequences for the total functioning organism. The penetration of psychiatry, its methods and therapy into the fields previously monopolized by abstract analyses or dogmatic theology is in keeping with the soterical

emphasis on total (mental, physical, and moral) health as a central concern for personal salvation.

Third, the soterical presupposition of a salvation-conditioned universe so patterned as to contain the means of satisfying man's craving for self-realization elicits a natural piety towards those powers within the universe. Appreciation of the distinguishable powers for human salvation does not eliminate the reality of evil. It affirms not that Reality is good, but that goodness is real.[26] The "givenness" of societal and non-human enrivonments which man takes as contributory to value denies the theological claim that the universe is essentially hostile to human ends. In the same spirit as Kaplan, Van der Leeuw extols the universe experiences as good by pointing to "water and trees, the fruit of the fields and beasts in the forest (as) bringers of salvation; the force issuing from their power transforms the gloom of life into joy and happiness...Culture too is 'salvation,' that is, a deed which is willed or volitional."[27]

Kaplan refers to this presupposition as a soterical "inference" an acknowledged "willed faith" pragmatically understood. Much as adequacy, intersubjectivity and consistency serve to vindicate the inductive principle, so the purposes of salvation justify the sentiment that "man's cosmos is en rapport with the human will to salvation."[28] The moral optimism of such a salvation principle is, like the principle of induction, motivational and directive. It offers a structure of expectancies creating belief in the possibilities of human experience that serve to inspire people to achieve that end. This morale is intended to keep persons strong. Kaplan asserts that "insofar as the belief in God makes a difference in a person's life or in the life of a group, it must have consequences in the domain of effectiveness."[29] How can a working principle that sustains human endeavor, whether in science or religion, not incline us to interpret reality as somehow amenable to the aspirations of men?

Morale In Reconstruction

John Stuart Mill stated unequivocally the problematic in the naturalist's reconstruction of traditional supernaturalism: "It needs to be considered whether in order to obtain the effective morale resulting from supernaturalist faith, it is necessary to travel beyond the boundaries of the world which we inhabit; or whether the idealization of our earthly life, the cultivation of a high conception of what it may be made, is not capable of supplying a poetry, and in the best sense of the word a religion, equally fitted to exalt the feeling and, with the same aid from education, still better calculated to ennoble the conduct, than any belief respecting unseen powers."[30]

Once a man is informed that faith in a salvational cosmos is an instrument which gains for us moral optimism and strengthens our hearts, does his awareness reduce the efficacy of prayer? Will anyone recite "geshem" (the prayer for rain) knowing full well that no palpable favors will ensue, that it may only serve to direct his feelings of gratitude to an indispensable natural force? The religious naturalist must recognize the problem. It is too late for him to turn back and pretend that neither philosophy nor science has made its inroads. Those religious personalities committed to a naturalist position cannot afford the luxury of bemoaning the loss of a certain type of morale attendant on the supernaturalist's faith, the more so since many other consequences of such belief are entirely disfunctional. The reconstructing naturalist needs rather invade new areas of morale and plan new interpretations of symbols and rites so as to compensate for the loss of comfort and ease afforded by facile conformity to convention. The observation of the sociologist, Robert Merton, is of interest in this respect: "Those functionalists who...attend only to the effects of such symbolic practices (rituals) upon the individual state of mind...neglect the fact that these very practices may on occasion take the place of more effective alternatives. And those theorists who refer to the indispensability of standardized practices or prevailing institutions because of their observed function in reinforcing common sentiments must look first to functional substitutes before arriving at a conslusion, more often premature than confirmed."[31] It is towards such a fruitful direction that soterics impells us to explore.

In the midst of public religious apathy, in the sight of piece-meal emendations, false sentiments and half-truths, the religious naturalist needs base his morale on the wisdom of the past and the vision of a future. "The suns shines today also. There is more food and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts, let us demand our own works and laws and worship."[32]

(1) Milton Steinberg, "Theological Problems of the Hour," Rabbinical Assembly Proceedings, Rabbinical Assembly of America, New York 1949, p. 378.

(2) Milton Steinberg, The Common Sense of Religious Faith, (pamphlet), Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc., New York, 1947, p. 12.

(3) From an unpublished manuscript, by M. M. Kaplan, entitled The Art of Being Human.

(4) L. Feuerbach, quoted in H. Hoffding, History of Modern Philosophy, Macmillan, London, 1915, vol. II, p. 277.

(5) The Art of Being Human, manuscript, p. 60a.

(6) Ibid, p. 33.

(7) Plotinus, The Essence of Plotinus, Mackenna tr., Oxford University Press, New York, 1934, p. 49.

(8) Kurt Goldstein, The Organism, American Book Co., New York, 1939, p. 196.

(9) Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth, W. W. Norton, New York, 1950, p. 15.

(10) Erich Fromm, Psycholanalysis and Religion, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1950, p. 74.

(11) Ibid. p. 20.

(12) Saos in Greek; salvus in Latin; heil in German. Interestingly, too, soteriology, in the study of hygiene, refers to laws of health.

(13) Paul Tillich, The Relation of Religion to Health, paper presented at University Seminar on Religion, Columbia University, 1945-6, p. 349.

(14) Lectures on the Ethics of T. H. Green, H. Spencer and J. Martineau, Macmillan, London, 1902, p. 64.

(15) Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth, p. 348.

(16) M. M. Kaplan, The Art of Being Human, p. 112.

(17) M. M. Kaplan, "Towards a Philosophy of Cultural In-tegration," in Approaches to Group Understanding, ed. Bryson et al., Harper & Bros., New York, 1947, p. 603.

(18) M. M. Kaplan, "The Need for Normative Unity in Higher Education" in Goals for American Education, ed. Bryson et al., Harper & Bros., New York, 1950, p. 308.

(19) William James, Principles of Psychology, Henry Holt, New York, 1931, vol. II, p. 383.

(20) E. Fromm, Man For Himself, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1938, p. 13.

(21) Karl Menninger, Man Against Himself, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1938, p. 13.

(22) Muzafer Sherif, An Outline of Social Psychology, Harper & Bros., New York, 1948, p. 20.

(23) Kurt Goldstein, The Organism, p. 197.

(24) M. M. Kaplan, The Need for Normative Unity, p. 312.

(25) John Stuart Mill, "Essay on Nature," in Three Essays on Religion, Henry Holt, New York, 1874, p. 46.

(26) Bertrand Russell, Problems of Philosophy, Oxford University Press, 1948, p. 69.

(27) All the more puzzling is Henry Wieman's claim that Dr. Kaplan identifies the universe with God or goodness and is thus "forced to defend his belief in the goodness of the universe against the facts of evil." Review of Religion, XIV, no. 1.

(28) G. Van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and in Manifestation, Allen and Unwin, London, 1938, pp. 101, 104.

(29) M. M. Kaplan, The Future of the American Jew, Macmillan, New York, 1948, p. 193.

(30) M. M. Kaplan, The Art of Being Human, p. 75.

(31) J. S. Mill, "The Utility of Religion," in Three Essays On Religion, p. 105.

(32) Robert Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1949, p. 37.

(33) Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted in Morris R. Cohen's A Dreamer's Journey, Beacon Press, Boston, 1949, p. 180.

THE NATURE OF GOD AND THE NATURE OF MAN

Outreach Lecture II

by Harold M. Schulweis

THE IMAGE OF GOD

Should I begin by talking about the Jewish conception of human nature or the Jewish conception of divine nature? Do I begin with God or with man? The more I thought about the choice the more I realized that it doesn't make much of a difference because in Judaism they are intimately correlated. My teacher, Abraham Joshua Heschel, had a similar concern when he was to teach young people about theology. He concluded "If you were to ask me what I should teach first to young people about Jewish theology, I would say teach the concept of man."

I think he was eminently correct. If you look at the Bible as he did you will see that the Bible is not a book about God, it is a book about man. "It depicts God's anthropology rather than man's theology." The central issue in the Bible is man. And what is the essential claim in the Bible? It is the infinite importance of the human being. What can human beings do and how shall they act?

To put it another way, Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk said "All my life I have struggled to understand who man is. Now I know. Man is the language of God." The single biblical verse links God and the human being is found in Genesis 1:27. We discover there the root concept (tzelem Elohim): "And God created the human being in His image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them." Nowhere in the Bible is any creation of God spoken of as made in the likeness or the image of God. Nowhere is God's concern and personal involvement in creation as clear as it is in Genesis 2:7 "The Lord God formed the human being out of the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the human being became a living soul." At our last session we said that Judaism abhors the deification of man, the fear of apotheosis, but equally Judaism fears the demonization of human beings. The Psalmist dares declare "You are but little lower than God"? The exaltation of the human being is evident in the basic rituals of rites of passage, how we celebrate. Consider the birth of a child. In Judaism the child is not born with any inherited stain. The child does not carry in him or her the guilt of an original sin. By way of contrast, the idea of baptism is quite different from that of the covenant of circumcision. The idea of baptism in Catholic interpretation an exorcism. The sponsors of the child are asked by the priests to renounce the power of the Satan and his principalities. The infant is understood as born in the womb of sin and must rid himself of that inherited innate blemish which can only be atoned for, expiated by accepting the suffering and death of the Savior.

Ritually in the Catholic tradition the priest blows on the infant's face ordering the spirit of Satan to depart. The priest moistens his thumb, touches the ears and nostrils of the infant as he asks the sponsors to renounce the power of Satan. Those who are baptized are saved, those who refuse are stigmatized by the inherited sin that remains indelibly inscribed in the unredeemed soul.

The Brit, the circumcision of the covenant, takes place on the eighth day and it has a totally different understanding of the infant and the human than that which is presupposed in baptism. Prior to baptism, the child born of Christian parents is a pagan. By contrast the Jewish child is born not a pagan but as a Jew even before or without the rite of circumcision. The eight day old boy carries no baggage of sin into the world. He is considered born innocent, created and sustained in God's image. No eternal damnation hovers over him. Indeed when the infant is brought into the room on the eighth day for circumcision, all those present rise to greet him with "Baruch habah" blessed be he who comes because the child comes with no malediction attached to his soul but with benediction. Here Jewish legend is revealing. According to rabbinic imagination the infant cries on exiting the womb because the unborn child pleads with God not to enter this world. "I am well pleased with the world in which I have been living. Why do you desire to have me enter this impure sperm, I who am holy and pure and part of Your glory?" God responds to the unborn infant "The world which I cause you to enter is better than the world in which you have lived when I created you. Go into the world for it is for this that I have created

you." The human child is created in God's image and that is the religious spiritual basis of his or her self esteem. The body in which the infant is born is not corrupt. It is good - and so is the libido of human beings. Sex is good and no where even in the more ascetic traditions within Judaism is celibacy praised.

The human being is born with the potential for a moral and spiritual competence. He has the capacity to think, to feel, to care and to act. The child is born to a task, to an ultimate purpose and meaning which is beyond that of career or vocation. That purpose is to help God repair the world, to mend the tattered fragments of the human condition, to release sparks of divinity lodged in husks of despair. God and man in Judaism are not adversaries, certainly not enemies. They are co-creators, partners in the creation of the universe that is incomplete. The covenant takes place on the eighth day because the child has lived through the Sabbath of creation but now is additionally co-responsible with God in forming and shaping a society in the image of God.

Similarly, at the wedding the seven central blessings for the bride and groom revolve upon the idea that each of them is created in the image of God, in His likeness. Therefore, they are to treat each other as inviolable personalities with gentility, respect, and love. And when at the conclusion of the wedding the glass is broken it is to remind the bridegroom and the bride that there is in the world hunger, homelessness, jealousies, war and they who have been blessed by the greatest gift that God can give His divinely imaged persons, that is the gift of love, are mandated to enter the world and bind the wounds of humanity and to bring together the shattered lives of humanity.

And so in death the deep respect and dignity assigned to the human being is equally evident in the rites of the funeral. The deceased must be buried as soon as possible. The rabbinic reason for this haste is based upon a fascinating interpretation of a verse in Deuteronomy which reads that we are not to allow a criminal to hang over night because it is a "reproach to God". When the rabbis ask "why this hanging is considered to be a reproach to God" they answer with an audacious parable. Once there was a king who had a twin brother. The twin brother was sentenced to death for some crime and was hanged on the gallows. People would come in the marketplace point to the corpse and say "The king is dead". The parable is awesome. The king here is God. The human being is God's twin. To hurt the human being, to desecrate the human being is to blaspheme God. But the important point of this parable is the intimate relationship between God and the human being that is central in Judaism.

WHEN IS GOD?

Each of us is created in God's image. Where is this image of divinity to be found? Where is God? The angels having learned that God intends to create the mere mortal with His image, are jealous. They plan to hide the divine image from the human being. So they plot together. One angel suggest that the image of God be hidden beyond the reach of human beings, perhaps on the highest mountains. Another suggests that it be sunk beneath the seas. But the shrewdest of the angels tells them that is not good advice. For man is ambitious and he will climb the highest mountains and plumb the deepest seas. "Let us hide the image of God in him because that is the last place in the world that he will look for divinity." Does it not say in the book of Deuteronomy 30 "It is not in heaven that you should say who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it unto us. Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say who shall go over the seas for us. But the word is very close to you. In your mouth, in your heart to do it."

To find God, to understand Godliness, will not be accomplished by introspection, by isolation, nor by contemplation on a mountain top. It can only be found in relationship. God is not in me or in you but "between us". God is in the intimate relationships the nucleus of which is I and Thou. A point that Martin Buber has made with brilliance in so many of his essays and books. The notion of "betweeness" is a powerful insight of Judaism and I will illustrate it with a religious exercise that I have used with my children. When they were quite young and persisted in quizzing me as to where God was, I asked my daughter who was then six or seven to play this religious game with me, though I didn't call it a religious game. I asked her to touch my arms, which she did. Then to touch my chest, which she did. And then to touch my nose which she did. Then to touch my chest, which she did. I then asked her to touch my love. She stopped for a moment, hesitated and then reached out to

touch my arms and my chest. I pointed out that she had already done so. Now touch my love. She could not. Then she smiled.

For me, this was the beginning of her journey to understand God. I hoped that she would understand from this that there are many things in the world that are very real, perhaps the most real, things that we really care deeply about most important things, but which cannot be touch, probed, pushed or located in space.

The question "where" should be replaced by the question "when". Not where is God but when is God. Look to time not to space. Look to happening not to location. Touching my love does not come from another world different from the one in which we live and breathe. It intimates a transcendence not of the other-worldly. It is something that is experienced in relationship with another. It became clearer to me that love is not located in me or in you but between me and you. Love is not in the subject or in the object but between them. Like the experience of Godliness, love points to a relationship with another. It also becomes clear that if you would believe in God you must love. It is very difficult to speak about love of God without entailing the experience of the love of a human other. Chasidic: "He who says he loves God but hates his creatures, is a liar."

As a parent "betweenness" teaches me that love cannot be manipulated. I cannot make my daughter love me nor can she make me love her. Love is a relationship that cannot be manufactured or forced. Therefore the Bible does not command that we love our parents but that they be respected. God cannot force people to love Him. As a parent I learned from the touch my love game that the game can only work if there is a loving relationship between myself and my child.

Relationship means that if there is to be communion with God there must be community and that is central to Judaism. In Judaism, individualism is venerated but the individual is seen as not someone who can be cut off from the community but must be understood as an integral part of community. To be a Jew is to seek community. For as the great Rabbi Hillel put it "If I am not for myself who will be for me? But if I live only for myself what am I?" If you and I are created in God's image, then we can begin to understand or at least ask what it is that you and I have in common with God.

Here we come upon a very important Jewish notion which is called the imitation of God. The Jewish philosophers and theologians, mystics and rationalists all agreed that no one knows what God is in Himself or in Itself. What we do know of God from the testimony of our people in the Bible and in its religious literature are the attributes of God which are to be humanly emulated.

IMITATING GOD

The rabbis ask "How are we to understand the biblical verse in Deuteronomy 13:5? 'After the Lord your God ye shall walk'?" Is it possible to walk after the Divine Presence given that God is a devouring fire? It means to walk after God's attributes. As He clothes the naked do thou clothe the naked; as He visits the sick do thou visit the sick; as He comforts the mourners do thou also comfort the mourners; as He buries the dead so do thou also bury the dead."

To believe in God is not a theoretical matter. To believe in God is to behave Godly. You prove God's existence by demonstrating your own reality. When you act with mercy and decency you present the best argument for God's goodness. God is in our feet, our hands, and our mouth. We ourselves are existential evidence of Godliness.

Is God real? Are we real? Is God loving? Are we loving? Don't look for proofs of God's existence in abstract logical argument. You are the concrete witness.

Isaiah 10:12 said, "Ye are My witnesses saith the Lord" to which the rabbis boldly commented "God says 'If you are My witnesses I am as it were God. But if you are not My witnesses then I am as it were no God.'"

To believe in Godliness is to act out the verbs of God. What is God? Where is God? We answer by acting out His attributes. Healing the sick, feeding the hungry, lifting up the fallen, pursuing peace, loving thy neighbor. That is the proof of the reality of the verbs and adverbs of God. God is not a static Noun but a series of dynamic Verbs. The Hebrew biblical word for God is "Adonai".

It is a conflation of three states of being -- "was - is - will be". What is it to know God? The prophet Jeremiah 22:16 declared, "When the king judged the cause of the poor and the needy then it was well with him. Was this not to know Me saith the Lord?" (Halo Hee Ha-daath Oti).

COMPLETING THE INCOMPLETE: THE MESSIAH

God created the world. But the rabbis understood that God created the world incomplete. Everything is incomplete, including ourselves. As the Talmud puts it, "Wheat needs to be ground, the mustard seed needs to be sweetened, the lupine needs to be softened, the human being needs to be perfected." Created in the image of God, we partners with God in the creation of the universe are mandated to help complete the world, to repair it and to do it here and now.

This emphasis upon remaking the world here and now may explain the resistance of the rabbis to the idea that the messiah has already come. The philosopher, J.B. Soloveitchik pointed out that Judaism has always held that it lies within our human power to renew ourselves, to be reborn, to redirect the course of our lives. The human being is "his own creator and innovator; his own redeemer, his own messiah who has come to redeem himself from the darkness of his exile to the light of his personal redemption."

A Chasidic tale speaks of the man who one day burst into the rabbi's room announcing with excitement that the messiah had come. The rabbi opened the window, looked outside and then shut the window. "No" he said, "he has not come." What did the rabbi see when he opened the window? He looked into the marketplace and saw cheating, exploitation, bickering, violence, hunger and he knew that the messiah had not come.

Where then is the messiah and when will he come? The Talmud Sanhedrin 98a reports a dialogue between Elijah and a rabbi.

RABBI: When will the messiah come?
ELIJAH: Go ask him.
RABBI: Where is he to be found?
ELIJAH: At the gates of Rome.
RABBI: How will I recognize him?
ELIJAH: He sits among the wretched who are laden with sickness and binds their sores and their wounds.
RABBI: But when will he reveal himself?
ELIJAH: Today. (But messiah did not reveal himself and the rabbi remonstrated with Elijah.)
RABBI: But you told me he would reveal himself today. He has not come.
ELIJAH: Today, if you will it.
RABBI: What is he waiting for?
ELIJAH: He is waiting for you.

The tone and the insight of this Talmudic passage is one that is carried through the rabbinic tradition. In the Avoth de Rebbe Nathan 31, we find this reading: "If there is a sapling in your hand when they say to you "Behold the messiah", go and plant and afterward greet him." Such stories reinforce the notion that the idea of a messiah and a messianic era is in each of us and that era will be brought about by all of us, through all of us, and here and now.

THE HEREAFTER

I am often asked about the Jewish view of the world to come. Surely the Prayer Book and the rabbinic tradition clearly refers to gan Eden and gehenna, paradise, hell and the resurrection of the dead. Still, Judaism has been criticized and defended as being predominantly this-worldly. There is an overall this-worldliness in the Torah. The five books of Moses do not speak of an afterlife. At their death the biblical heroes are spoken of as "being gathered unto their people". The book of Psalms 115 declares "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord but the earth has been given to the children of men." It goes on to say "The dead cannot praise the Lord nor any who go down in silence. But we will bless the Lord now and forever."

A Chasidic story captures the this-worldly character when it speaks of a pious man who ascends to heaven, enters paradise and is puzzled by the fact that he cannot find any righteous people, any holy men or women. He is dejected. But a divine voice explains "You think My son that the righteous are in heaven. No, heaven is in the righteous." It is we mortals who make heaven or hell on earth.

The Jewish concern is less with life after death than with the apprehension over death during life. The Bible asks us to choose life here and now. But there are many who choose death, those who are dead to the challenge and possibility of life. The psalms are concerned about those who have mouths that do not speak, eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear, noses that do not inhale, hands that do not touch, feet that do not work. The poet Keats proposed an epitaph we would hope to avoid: "Here lies a life that was written in water." Not death, but not having lived is the worry of the Torah. The Torah is concerned with those who feign muteness, deafness, and paralysis while alive, those who would escape this world and its potentialities for another world. The rabbis put it succinctly in The Ethics of the Fathers "Better is one hour of repentance and good works in this world than the whole life of the world to come; and better is one hour of bliss in the other world than the whole life of this world."

To forsake this world here and now for another world there and then is to deny the meaning of the divine image with which we are created. It is to trivialize the eternal life that is planted in us.

MAASIM TOVIM: DEEDS OF GOODNESS

Judaism is an activistic tradition. It places great importance upon prayer, belief, study and fasting. They are means to an end. None of these is a surrogate for human intervention in life. Prayer is no substitute for work. When the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chasidism was asked how one is to bow before God in prayer he answered "Bend down, but not too low and not too often. Because if you bend too low and too often you may forget how to raise your head." Raising your head is necessary so that you can see the world around you and you can recognize your own responsibility to do something about it. It is for this reason that the house of prayer must not be windowless. The Jewish sanctuary must have a window so that we see the real condition of the world. The Psalms say that we dwell "in the shadow of the Lord". The rabbis interpreted this to mean "When we are bent over the shadow of God contracts but when we ourselves stand erect, the shadow of God is expanded." Again we hear the theme of the interdependence of the human being and God is asserted.

Like prayer, so study is central in Judaism. Study is a sacred act but it too is no substitute for an ethical life. In Hebrew the word for knowledge and the word for love are the same "daat". To know is to love and to love is to know. While study is most important the Talmud (Avotah Zarah 17b) quotes Rav Huna: "He who occupies himself only with the study of Torah is as if he has no God".

In the Talmud a debate ensues as to which is greater, study or action. Rabbi Tarfon said "Action". Rabbi Akiva said "Study". The sages decided study is greater only if it leads to action. The this-worldly emphasis of Judaism grows out of fear that concentration upon the next world displaces the opportunities, responsibilities and obligations of this world.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

This emphasis upon this world and upon the divine image implanted in the human being will help explain the age old Jewish passion for social justice. There are religions that take a rather cynical attitude toward this world. This world for them is viewed as hopelessly evil, with neither purpose nor meaning to it. It is a vale of tears and thus the preferred conduct for man is quiescence and non-action. Its cynicism resonates in the book of Ecclesiastes.

There is no possibility of progress. One generation comes, one generation goes. The world remains as ever and there is nothing new under the sun. The kingdom of heaven is not in this world. That attitude tends toward a deprecation of this world as "maya" and illusion. "Live therefore in this world but be not of this world. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's." (Matthew 22:21)

The uniqueness of Judaism is its repudiation of moral neutrality. The fact of evil leads some either reject the world or resign to its power. But Judaism insists that we accept the world and make it over.

That transforming power is expressed in the kiddush, the ceremonial sanctification of the wine or Sabbaths and festivals is illustrative. Wine for some was considered to be the drink of Satan, to be poured contemptuously onto the earth. For others, wine was the joyous loss of moral inhibition, the intoxication of pagan orgies. In Judaism the cup of wine is neither rejected nor abused, but is lifted up, elevated, sublimated to high order. Wine is consecrated when it is associated with high purpose, the sanctification of life. Kiddush is sober intoxication, joy with purpose. Wine rejoices the heart to rejoice the heart of others.

Whether it is prayer, study, belief or fasting, the teleology, the purpose, the aim must contain some superordinate moral value.

That is the legacy of the prophetic tradition, epitomized in Isaiah 57, and read on the Day of Atonement. The prophet challenges the people "Why do you fast and why do you pray and why do you bring sacrifices? What is it for? And he answers "Is not this the fast I have chosen? To loose the fetters of wickedness, to undo the bonds of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free...is it not to deal your bread to the hungry and that you bring the homeless to your house. When you see the naked that you cover him and that you hide not yourself from your fellow human being." All the other activities are subordinate to the great mission of repairing the world. And that mission takes place here and now and through you and me. What is our task? What is the meaning of my existence? Isaiah 1:17 sums it up: "Seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

COMPASSION

The God of Torah, the laws of the tradition, the conscience of the prophet all converge on one central attribute of God. And it is the central attribute which we are to emulate: "rachmanuth" or compassion.

The Bible is written not from the point of view of the powerful but from the interest of the disenfranchised, the disinherited, the defenseless. The one Biblical verse repeated thirty-six times deals with the imperative "not to oppress the stranger", "to know the heart of the stranger" "and to love the stranger". One is to honor one's parents. One is to listen to one's prophet. One is to revere one's wife but one is to love the stranger.

This is a revolutionary notion. The Egyptians had no love for the stranger and the Greeks coined the term "barbarian" for the stranger. The Bible warns of the coarsening of the heart and compassion fatigue. (Deuteronomy 15:7) "Do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy brother." And who is your brother? Does it include the non-Jew, the heathen, the pagan? We read in the authoritative compendium of laws by Moses Maimonides in Matnat Aniyim 2:7 "One is to feed and to clothe the poor of the Gentiles together with the poor of the Jews. One is to visit the sick of the Gentiles and bury the deceased of the Gentiles together with visiting the sick and burying the dead of the Jews.

Jewish ethics as Jewish law is based on the root idea of the image of God. One is obliged to sustain uplift the fallen with sensitivity. And so to continue with Maimonides (10:4) "whoever gives to charity to the poor with a surly manner and a gloomy face completely nullifies the merit of his deed even if he gives him a thousand golden pieces. He shall give it to him cheerfully and gladly and speak to him graciously and comfortingly as it is written in the book of Job 'Did I not weep for him whose day was hard? Was not my heart grieved for the poor?'" (Job 29:13) It is the same Job who understands his goodness for "he delivered the poor that cried and the fatherless and him that none to help him. The blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon me and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Job understood his God given soul "I was eyes to the blind and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor and the cause which I knew not I searched out and I broke the jaws of the wicked and plucked the spoil out of his teeth".

This this-worldly responsibility and compassion is not only found in the rhetoric of the Bible but it has entered in to the collective conscience of Jews who take their tradition seriously. Sociologists comment on the voting behavior of Jews which defy the prediction that the affluent will vote according to their bank account. When it comes to immigrants, the poor, self-taxation or public welfare, the Jews vote not their economic interest but the interest of the submerged members of the community.

The heart must be trained. On the doorpost of the Jewish home is a mezzuzah. It is a book that contains two parchments of the Torah. It is placed not inside the home but outside the home. One commentator explains "It is placed outside the home so that if a stranger, a poor man or woman with her heart dejected and eyes downcast because she comes to you for tzedakah, for charity, will look up at the mezzuzah and be reminded that she is created in God's image, that she is a child of God and will not enter your home ashamed.

THE QUESTION

If I must conclude, let it be not with an answer but with the question.

In Judaism the question is sacred. On the Passover, which celebrates the birth of the Jewish people and the exodus from Egypt, there is a Passover Seder, a Passover meal that is accompanied by a liturgy for the home. In that liturgy is found a description of four sons which actually refers to four different kinds of people. The first son is called "chacham" -- wise. The second is called wicked. The third is called simple. And the fourth is called after one who cannot ask a question. The last is the most worrisome. For while he is physically emancipated, he is intellectually enslaved and his inability to ask is a sign that he is not free.

The youngest is given the honor of asking the question. For the youngest is most often the last to be allowed to question. But a question is important, so important that the Talmud says that if you are alone and have no one at your Seder table, you must ask yourself the question. For the question is not for the purpose of receiving information. The question means that you are no servile creature. Slaves ask no questions. Free men and women do. Should you come to the Synagogue on a Sabbath morning you will find at the heart of the service questions and answers. The rabbi offers an interpretation of the Bible and he is questioned. The rabbi is a teacher and there is a common text between the teacher and the student.

Throughout the tradition we find priests, prophets, patriarchs, princes questioned. The quest is not only to ask for information. The question has a hook on it. The question challenges power. What is particularly astounding and unique is that in Judaism the question is at times asked even of God. God can be challenged and the challenge is not regarded and lèse majesté -- injured majesty. It is no treason to question God's way. More than simple blind obedience is asked of a believing Jew. Consider if you will the amazing religious audacity that is recorded in rabbinic literature in which Moses hearing that the Holy One stated that He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children rises in opposition to God's words. Listen to the language and the tone. Moses declares "Sovereign of the universe, many are the wicked who have begotten righteous men. Shall the latter bear some of the iniquities of their fathers? Terach worshipped images, yet Abraham, his son was a righteous man. Similarly King Hezekiah was a righteous man though Achaz was his father, a wicked kind. So also King Josiah was righteous, yet Amon his father was wicked. God is it proper that the righteous should be punished for the

iniquity of their fathers?" Consider the moral nerve of the question. The statement is found in the Bible and indeed in the Ten Commandments but that does not stop Moses from exercising his moral conscience and appealing to God. What is remarkable is that the Holy One says to Moses, "Moses you have taught Me something. By your life I shall cancel My words and confirm yours. As it says in the book of Deuteronomy 24:16 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers.'" This is not an isolated text but it is a tribute to the Jewish appreciation of the human being who has the moral competence and is encouraged to question. Moses does not question God as an adversary. Moses expresses the conscience of the Torah and appeals to God against God in the name of God. Therefore, God registers no insult or anger against the challenge of conscience. On the contrary, God recognizes in the holy dissent of the religious personality His own mastery. The God within God acknowledges with pride the courage and the moral rightness of the one who seeks the heart of divinity. I have been a Jew for many years. And I have never from asking questions of myself and of the sages of tradition. Where there are questions, there is life, and the hopes of discovery. Judaism offers many answers - but it knows full well that there are many answers yet to be discovered. I invite you to join the eternal quest, to add your questions to mine. Judaism is a search based on trust that there are answers and based on conviction that answers lie within us -- we who are created in God's image.

P.S. -- THE JEWISH REALITY PRINCIPLE

Let me conclude with a word about the realism in Judaism. Every religion teaches us what it considers to be real. Is it "really" that way? We asked of our parents or our teachers is this "really" the way it is. Whether it refers to miracles, the ingathering of the animals in Noah's ark or the swallowing of Jonah in the whale or the splitting of the sea or of the affliction of the ten plagues, the question asked is this what reality is about? Questions about God, prayer and Bible are about the religious understanding of reality. What is religion telling me the world is really like? What can I trust? Whom can I trust? What can I expect? What can I hope for me? What in me is real? What in the world is truly real? And how accordingly to choose and to live? For me, one of the uniquenesses of Judaism is its refusal to accept literally biblical accounts of alleged supernatural miraculous events. Throughout the Bible there is a strong opposition to magic and to magicians. In our age when people desperately seek short cuts and they are especially vulnerable to magic it is important to understand the reality principle within Judaism. Let me give one of dozens of illustrations from the Bible and from the way in which the rabbis understood reality. In the book of Numbers the people of Israel are punished for their transgressions. God sends serpents to poison them. Moses prays for the people and he is told by God (Numbers 21:4-9) "Make thee a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole and it shall come to pass that everyone that is bitten when he sees it shall live. Then Moses made a serpent of brass and sat it upon a pole and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man when he looked unto the serpent of brass he lived." Surely this is prima facie, an account of a supernatural miracle. Yet, uniquely the sages of the tradition do not acknowledge such a literal interpretation. Instead they ask "Do brazen snakes kill or spring to life? This passage they insist cannot be literally understood. What it means is something else, something metaphorical, namely that when the Israelites directed their thoughts on high, not to the serpents of brass but to God and to the principles above, they were healed. Otherwise they pined away. And this interpretation is found in the Talmud Rosh Hashanah 3:8. To add to this is the fact as recorded in the Bible that though the figure of the serpent was turned into an icon and brought into the temple itself, King Hezekiah rose and broke the icon into pieces. For this dismemberment the king was praised for he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. (II Kings 18:4)

All of this derives from a unique Jewish understanding of the miraculous. In Hebrew the word for miracle is "nes" which means sign. But a sign is not something that violates the laws of logic or of nature. But "sign" is that which is significant, an event, an experience that elicits our wonder and our marvel in the daily. Therefore Jews pray for the signs which are daily with us evening, morn and noon. Those signs are a result of human and non-human interaction. It is we who discover the signs of the ordinary and it is we who discover certain moments of our life as of ultimate significance: the birth of a child, the love of two people, the bread that we break together, the wine that we sanctify are all signs.

This event this evening is a sign and it is for us to interpret it. I hope it will be remembered as a significant moment in which is exchanged ideas and ideals, hopes and aspirations, and faith that will strengthen our lives.

Schulweis, Harold. "The Nature of God and the Nature of Man." Lecture at Valley Beth Shalom Website. 1997. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/outrchii.htm. (9 January 2002).

RESTRUCTURING THE SYNAGOGUE: THE CREATION OF HAVUROT WITHIN THE SYNAGOGUE

by Harold M. Schulweis

It is now some 20 years since our teacher, Abraham Joshua Heschel, alav ha-shalom, addressed this assembly and spoke these strong words: "The modern temple suffers from a severe cold...the services are prim, the voice is dry, the temple is clean and tidy...no one will cry, the words are still born." The criticism was directed against the metallic services, against the lugubrious tones of the ritual master of ceremonies intoning the Siddur pagination.

For us, it was neither a novel nor a pleasant criticism. The complaint has long entered the acerbity of folk humor. A penetrating Jewish anecdote tells of a nouveau riche young man who invited his European traditionalist father to his modern temple. The son was proud of the decorum and, indeed, when the rabbi informed the congregation that they were to rise for the silent meditative prayer, there was a silence. With pride the son whispered to his father, "What do you think about that?" Papa responded in Yiddish, "A mechayeh! Der rav steht un zogt gornisht un alle heren zich zu."

What do they want of us rabbis? Are we not warm enough? The services are cold. Shall we raise the thermostat? The prayers lack relevance. Shall we experiment more? Should we add guitar or flute or harp to the organ? Should we gather new prayers from the liturgy of our Jewish theological trinity -- Joan Baez, Rod McKuen and Kahlil Gibran?

Somehow the criticism and the apologia seem misdirected. The remedies fail. All the best intentioned creative efforts, liturgical innovations, and theological reconstruction fail to warm up the frozen pew.

Our creativity and experimentation, I shall argue, are premature. Criticism of the services deals only with symptoms, and symptomology is not etiology. The complaint about the "coldness" of the synagogue points only to the tip of the iceberg. No amount of pulpit charisma will thaw out the frigidity below. Heat rises from below.

I propose that we turn from symptom analysis to character analysis. Whom are we addressing? What nexus is there between them and us? What fidelities to Jewish life and Jewish values have we as leaders the right to assume?

We are confronted with a new character ideal, with a radically different kind of Jew, the newest sociological phenomenon in our history. We face the emerging "psychological Jew". Our rhetoric, our allusions, our claims presuppose a set of experiences, values and basic categories which, in fact, belong to another Jewish typology. We appeal to "God, Torah and Israel" and experience the shock of non-recognition when the triadic sancta are addressed to our new audience. We sense vaguely that we have lost the power to bind and to loosen, to move our people, to seriously affect their behavior.

Out of frustration, we may scapegoat our audience, and murmur at their ignorance or indolence or apathy. More often, we turn our complaints inwards, against ourselves. We begin to doubt our competence, to question the adequacy of our charisma, our ability to lead. Once again we have fallen back on symptoms.

RELIGIOUS TYPOLOGY

Most of us are familiar with two Jewish typologies: the religious and the ideological Jew. They are wholly other than the psychological breed. My grandfather was a religious Jew. The repertoire of his responses was informed by the wisdom and ethics of his community. No act was too trivial or too private to escape the impress of communal approbation or opprobrium. From "nagel vasser" to the order of putting on and lacing his shoes, every gesture responded to a communal norm. The right shoe first, for "the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly"; the left shoe laced first as a mnemonic for binding the phylacteries on the arm.

The rhythm of his private life was synchronized by the three prayer coordinates of communal prayer: shacharit, minchah, maarev. For my zayda "too early" referred to the community's time limit. P.M. and A.M., for him, meant "post-maarev" and "after minchah". Erev Shabbat, my grandfather was transformed into a Thomas Alva Edison, winding a cord around the key of his alarm clock which in turn was twisted around an electric bulb, an ingenious "shabbos zayger". Saturday night he was a Galileo looking to the heavens for a sign from the stars which would permit him to smoke again.

My grandfather enjoyed the therapeutic power of his community of faith. When my grandmother grew ill, the synagogue authorities offered a prayer whose very formula embraced the community. "May she be healed together with all the sick of Israel." When she died, the vocabulary of consolation was again tied to the community. "May God comfort you together with all of the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." When the festival of Sukkot penetrated the seven days of mourning, my grandfather's rabbi had only to remind him "Haregel mevatel gezarat shivah" -- the festival cancels the seven day mourning period -- and he abided by the norm. No resentment was felt, no protestation that the community was interfering with his private sorrow. He knew that the immortality of his wife was linked with the eternity of her people. "Ain ha-zibbur met." A community does not die. That kind of Jew is a rarity in my congregation. I am not my grandfather's rabbi.

THE IDEOLOGICAL JEW

The other typology with which we are acquainted has rejected the sanctions and proscriptions of the rabbinate. The "issur-heter", "kasher-treif" dicta are, for the ideological Jew, the language of ritual claustrophobia. For him the metaphors of "meshiach", "techiat ha-metim", "gan-Eden", "im yirzat hashem" only manifest Jewish impotence, innocence, acquiescence. The ideological Jew may be Zionist or Socialist, a Bundist or atheist. His heroes are not the rabbis, but secular figures -- a Karalnik, Zhitlowsky, Jabotinsky, Dubnow, Ahad-Ha-Am, Ber Borochov.

However different from the religious Jew, the ideological Jew shares with him an ultimate fidelity to the Jewish community. The speaker cries out "dos Yiddishe volk", the will of the people to exist, and the cry resonates in the soul of the ideological Jew. In common, both typologies respond to the corporate needs and voice of the Jewish people. Their leaders can appeal to the survival and continuity of the people. They can make claims upon the religious and ideological Jew.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL JEW

The psychological Jew is "sui generis". He is radically different from the other familiar types. He is on principle a privatist. For this post-religious, post-ideological Jew, all community is suspect. He may not have read Freud or Marcuse or Brown, but a meta-psychology has filtered down to warn him that civilization is regressive. Psychological wisdom counsels that community, whether in the shape of religious faith or political ideology, robs him of his private satisfactions, his privacy and individualism. In our times, the danger to ourselves comes from the suffocating demands of community. And while community in part is useful, it must be kept at a safe distance lest it drain our energies and desiccate our joys.

Consider the religious community. It holds claim on what we eat, where we eat, when we eat; when we fast and when we feast; when and who and where and how we marry; when and who and where and how we mourn. Consider the secular community. Its ideology calls for sacrifices in the name of "classless society", "the proletariat", "the ingathering of the people", "redemption of the land". The ideological community, no less than the religious community, presses for commitment. And commitment is precisely what the psychological Jew, the special case of the psychological man, seeks to escape. As the salmon said to the hen, when the latter invited him to dine at an inn featuring lox and eggs, "I must decline, dear hen. For from you they only want a contribution; from me they want a commitment."

The emerging privatist has accepted this meta-psychological wisdom as a way to achieve his salvation. His posture is that of detachment from the draining enthusiasms of the community. Fear of being absorbed by the

community has extended to marriage and the family. The popular and sophisticated arguments for relationships without the burden of commitment and responsibilities are extensions of self-conscious privatism.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL JEW AND THE SYNAGOGUE

He may join the synagogue. But his affiliation is not motivated by religious or ideological faith. There are "psychological" advantages in joining. It is good for the child to celebrate his rites of passage. It is wise for him to identify with a group. The psychological Jew of the seventies is not the assimilationist Jew of the thirties. His reality principe accepts the fact of antisemitism, and he knows that all efforts to cut off his nose to spite his face are wasteful. The fear of being discovered is too enervating.

Psychological wisdom, not communal loyalty, leads him to join a negative community. For even in affiliation, he is a Jew by double negation, i.e., he is not not a Jew. He is not a believer and not an atheist. He is not a Zionist and not an assimilationist. He is neither a Jewish loyalist nor is he vulnerable to conversion. His style is that of deconversion. He defuses all passionate attachments. His peculiar toleration of all is a consequence of his refusal to take any single option seriously enough to live it out "with all your heart and all your soul and all your might". Passion for communal causes, religious or secular, is anathema.

Sigmund Freud, a paradigmatic psychological Jew, considered conversion from Judaism in order to avoid the "cumbersome" Jewish wedding ceremony. He was dissuaded from such an act by his friend Breuer with two major words out of the vocabulary of privatism: "Zu compliziert". One must somehow disentangle oneself from the web of communal commitments while living within society. There is an art of disrelating even in the heart of the institutions of community.

PRIVATIZING THE SYNAGOGUE

Inadvertently, for he is no passionate champion of causes, the psychological Jew manages to privatize the synagogue. Ineluctably, the character of the synagogue, its programs, educational philosophy, ethical action, the role of its professional leaders are shaped in the image of the psychological Jew. Illustrative of that transformation is the modern phenomenon of the Shabbat Mincha Bar Mitzvah. The request to have the Bar Mitzvah at 5:00 P.M. is not motivated by the parent's affection for the plaintive "nusach" of "atah echad v'simchah echad". He knows that his son will have no Haftorah to chant, but more important to him he knows that it will be "his" Bar Mitzvah. The congregation will not attend, only "his" guests. Who needs the witness of the community at this private affair? Who needs the expense of a Kiddush for the "free-loaders"? He will have "his" Rabbi and "his" Cantor all to himself, and this private use of the "klay kodesh" is of paramount import to the congregant. The psychological Jew is reluctant to share the rabbi with others.

At the hotel reception, the psychological Jew finds no anomaly in serving shrimp or bacon hors d'oeuvres. From his perspective, the entire celebration is a private affair. He will provide for the rabbi and his wife a special plate of tuna. I am not critical of tuna fish. I predict, however, that conservative rabbis will go down in medical history as possessing the highest mercury count in our population. The treatment of the rabbi is most assuredly not intended to mark disrespect. It is simply an outgrowth of the psychological Jew's refusal to view the rabbi as a representative of the Jewish community. He has become a private man engaged for private purposes. He has been transfigured into a ritual maitre d', a master of ceremonies.

Whatever the psychological Jew touches falls apart into private pieces. He will be indignant at the synagogue's public stand on almost all social issues. Whether the stand is endorsed by Boards of Rabbis, synagogue councils, Jewish committees and congresses, his argument echoes the depth of his privatist outlook: "No one can speak for me." And he can speak for no one. He recognizes no collective wisdom or corporate voice, because he has rejected community. He may insist that taking a public stand will split the congregation. From my perspective, however, the psychological Jew is fragmenting the Jewish community into unrelated, unrelating entities.

The rabbi then is addressing not a Jewish congregation but an audience of Jews. He commits "a fallacy of composition" who assumes that an assembly of Jews is a Jewish assembly. A congregation is made up of people who share experiences and values which transcend their private perceptions. An audience is comprised of separate egos who have come together for reasons of their own and dissolve into discrete bodies after the event is over.

The rabbi is faced with a profound "mechitza" between one affiliate and another. The empirical test of the segregated pew is tragi-comically witnessed on the Day of Reconciliation. To sit in a seat which is ticketed to another, to pick up a synagogue machzor from another's lectern is to experience the primal howl of the "territorial imperative".

The complaint that the synagogue is cold and irrelevant will not be answered from the pulpit and not from the seminary. We are at a station of Jewish life, faced with an emerging character ideal, in which needed theological reconstruction, ritual innovation and liturgical creativity are nevertheless embarrassingly premature. Without the matrix of community, one cannot speak of peoplehood or of the wisdom, ethics and aspirations of that people. Without the concreteness of inter-personal relationship, the rhetoric of I-thou dialogue between man and man and between God and man is vacuous. At best, Judaism turns into a meta-language, a way of speaking.

THE TASK OF THE NEW SYNAGOGUE

The primary task on the agenda of the synagogue is the humanization and personalization of the temple. To overcome the interpersonal irrelevance of synagogue affiliation is a task prior to believing and ritual behaving. To experience true belonging is an imperative prerequisite for the cultivation of religious and moral sensibilities. To read in Professor Leonard Fein's two and a half year study of reform congregations that "friendship patterns do not appear to play a leader's part in the determination of temple membership" is a tragic condition which cannot be compensated for by the most relevant of sermons and services. That sixty percent of the adult respondents in the study reported that they have very few friends, if any, in the temple, is a sobering revelation.

The Gerrer Rebbe was appalled at his hasidim who did not know what had happened to one of their peers. "You study together, and pray together, and celebrate your festivals together and you don't know if he is sick or well?" To adapt the Gerrer's concern to our own, if our congregants do not know each other, mean little to each other, can we expect them to pray together, to learn together, to act together?

THE SHADOW OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL JEW

The psychological Jew, like the religious and ideological Jew, does not exist in a vacuum. Each typology has his non-Jewish counterpart. The general literature abounds with the cries of loneliness, anomie and alienation which haunt the footsteps of the psychological man. Psychological man has outshrewded himself. Privatism has soured into isolation; individualism into a cage of solitary confinement; cool, analytic detachment into numb affectlessness. The children of the psychological man have begun to openly reject the insularity of the privatist and to search for some sense of community. The hidden hunger for relationship, for the celebratory and affective is shyly repressed by the psychological man. But here and again, in the flirtations with encounter and sensitivity groups, one discovers evidence of a deeply felt need for community.

If the exhaustion of the life style of psychological man is correctly read, we have a new opportunity to restructure the synagogue and to offer the searching Jew a community which yet does not ignore his autonomy. For he will not return to the pseudo-community of the establishment synagogue. He will not be bound by mailing lists, raffles, public lectures, pulpit-centered celebrations of the gesellschaft.

We are challenged to decentralize the synagogue and deprofessionalize Jewish living so that the individual Jew is brought back into a circle of shared Jewish experience. My experience with the havurazation of the synagogue strengthens my conviction that we can help the psychological Jew meet his genuine needs for autonomy and

help overcome his depersonalization by providing a way towards authentic community. I see one of the major functions of the synagogue to be that of the shadchan -- bringing together separate, lonely parties into Havurot. In our congregation, a Havurah is comprised of a minyan of families who are agreed to meet together at least once a month to learn together, to celebrate together and hopefully to form some surrogate for the eroded extended family.

PHILOSOPHY AND METHOD IN FORMING HAVUROT

The how, where and when of Havurah formation is not simply a matter of mechanics. They are informed by a philosophy. The questionnaire which is sent to each member seeks to determine such matters as the interests of the family and the age and number of children. While our philosophy of pluralism encourages each group to discover its own chemistry, its own pace, we set as ideal a Havurah with a balance of social, cultural and celebratory ingredients. We have found that children are flesh and blood ties which, in many instances, shape the character and concerns of the Havurah.

Where shall the Havurah meet? Location is important. We forever meet in board rooms, conference rooms, classrooms, social halls. But our homes are off limits, the private domain not to be penetrated by others. Members of synagogue committees, men and women who have worked and worshipped together for decades, have never entered each others' homes. The ethic of privatism has erected tall fences to keep all others out. Yet it is within the ambience of the home that we gain personal insight into the personality and uniqueness of the other.

What shall we discuss? Who will be our teacher? The synagogue, ever responding to the demands of the psychological Jew, has become a caterer in all things. Consequently, the congregant has become increasingly passive and dependent upon the professional in all things. He is helpless without experts. But after attending hundreds of lectures, symposia, sermons, panel discussions, forums -- how is it that so little seems to stick? Seals are fed by caretakers who throw out fish which are gulped down whole. Nothing is chewed, assimilated, digested. Men and women are not seals. They will not learn by being fed. They will not learn until they themselves teach. In the Havurah, each family takes it upon itself to prepare and lead a discussion on some matter of concern which the group has decided upon.

We lift a page from Franz Rosenzweig's Freies Judisches Lehrhaus in Frankfurt. He knew Jewish learning for most modern Jews cannot start from a knowledge of Torah and then lead from there into life. The direction is the other way around: from life as it is experienced, with all its doubts and fears, back to the center. For such learning "he is most apt who brings with him the maximum of what is alien...not the more specializing in Jewish matters...[but] the one is groping his way home."

What shall the Havurah study? Let them begin with themselves; with their uncertainties and disbeliefs and dreams of Judaism. Let them pierce through the false outer conformity in which all believe, all practice and all enjoy Judaism. Such external compliance is no blessing. Theirs is a satisfaction born of small expectation.

Rosenzweig did not take Jewish experts to teach at the Free Jewish School. He asked physicians and lawyers, businessmen and artists to form the faculty on the grounds that "Jewish learning included Jewish teaching". The Havurah, on a rotating basis, learns and teaches itself. To reach this end requires a struggle against a variety of fears. People are afraid of revealing their not knowing or their not believing or their not behaving. They choose muteness and revel in the experts' articulateness. Such diffidence must be overcome. The motto of the Havurah must be the obverse of the instruction of the Haggadah: Though we, all of us, are not all wise and do not know, and do not understand the entire Torah, it is our mitzvah to start learning. I can testify to some remarkable self-discoveries of insight and intelligence by haverim consequence to breaking down the obstacles of false shyness by the group.

The stone of fear and shame has dammed up all kinds of sensitivities and intuitions in our laymen. The rabbi may release that lay energy by refusing to play the part of the ubiquitous, omniscient authority. He will provide

the group with bibliographies, essays, articles, propose themes for discussion, but he will not be their cultural vicar. He will see later that the same resistance to their initial calls for the rabbi to be the ritual vicar can be better managed within the context of the Havurah.

The involvement of the Havurah in self-growth brings them to the rabbi with different requests. They have been discussing abortion or capital punishment, the Bible or the rites of passage, and have come up against certain obdurate problems. Here is where the rabbi's sermon may become a contemporary responsum. The sermon need no longer be the rabbi's mind-reading of questions the congregant may be asking, but a dialogic response to Havurah inquiries seriously posed.

The Adult Education program similarly promises to be more than a smorgasbord of speakers and can reflect the needs and wants of the Havurot. The author invited to speak will have his books studied by the Havurah so that when he lectures they will listen differently and he, if he is informed beforehand that he has been read, will lecture differently.

THE CELEBRATORY HAVURAH

The Havurah is no book club. Cerebration must not eclipse celebration. The Havurah must be encouraged to celebrate the rhythm of the Jewish calendar. From the pulpit I have never succeeded in getting many of my congregants to build a Sukkah. The Havurah has succeeded. One needs the encouragement and help of other families and the goal of a family dinner in the Sukkah to motivate such activity. I know what it means for children to see 10 Jewish males with hammers and nails and saws helping to build a Sukkah; for children to see their mothers gather flowers and fruit to decorate the Sukkah; to see Jews celebrating life without the rabbi and outside the Synagogue, in one's own back yard.

These past Passovers, since the formation of the Havurot, have further demonstrated to me that theological seriousness requires an existential matrix. Formerly, it was I who planned the Seder for others, I who decided which Haggadah to use, to include or delete the ten plagues or the narration of Moses' life or "pour out Thy wrath upon the nations". They, the laity, only came and sat and ate and listened. And even when they came to the synagogue to hear me discuss the theological issues at stake in preparing for a Seder, Passover was my problem and the excitement of making a decision was all mine. These past years, when many of the Havurot plan their own Sederim, they begin to wrestle with the Haggadah and with the decision to add and to delete. Out of the need to know the songs of the Seder, there emerged the professional preparation of a Passover cassette of songs and commentary. The Havurah has taught itself to sing. "At P'tach lo". The cantor's task is to open their mouths in song.

THE PERSONAL DIMENSION WITHIN THE HAVURAH

A member of the Havurah has moved into a new home. Who will officiate at the Hanukkat ha-Bayit? The omnipresent rabbi, of course. With the emergence of the Havurah, the joy of such a mitzvah is shared by the Havurah. Each family brings something to the home: salt, honey, challah, wine; and they recite a psalm or write a poem of good wishes. Not the rabbi, but the new owners of the home compose a statement in which they explain to what end they wish their home dedicated. The rabbi may be more eloquent, but nothing can substitute for a statement which comes out of the natural and personal sentiment of the participants.

Is the rabbinate rendered superfluous? Is the rabbi needed less with the rise of the Havurah? To the contrary. The rabbi becomes important to the community only when the community itself shares his interests and participates in the sancta of our tradition. The "Jewish distance" between rabbi and the psychological Jew made the rabbi indispensable as a functionary, but insignificant as a guide. He is needed everywhere but only to do that which others cannot or care not to do for themselves. It is a noble saying which declares that nine rabbis do not make up a minyan, but ten laymen do. But we who have often arrived at the crowded homes of mourners have painfully observed the muteness of the assembly of Jews who come to life only with his presence and his ritual competence; de facto, ten laymen do not necessarily comprise a minyan.

THE EXTENDED FAMILY

It is by now axiomatic that the modern family has shriveled to a nucleus of two, plus child or children. In increasing numbers, the Havurot have begun to share personal experiences and to demonstrate the kind of concern for each other once associated with the extended family. I think, for example, of the Bar Mitzvah which one Havurah catered itself. They were discontent with the impersonalism of the commercial maitre 'd, the canned "traditional" candlelighting ceremonies conducted by the hired band leader, etc. They resolved to help celebrate the Bar Mitzvah of one of their Havurah families. They brought the dishes of food, the wines and flowers; and on the Shabbat, the families of the Havurah participated in the service, shared the pulpit and were very much an extended mishpacha.

There was a death in the Havurah. The widow had few members of the family around her, most were in the East. I saw who was at the funeral, who took care of the children during the black week of the shivah. The widow remained within the Havurah and it is the Havurah who "made the widow's heart to leap with joy".

We can no longer depend alone upon temple committees to visit the sick or comfort the bereaved. With the best of intentions, committee members of Bikkur Cholim and Nichum Avelim rarely know the sick they visit or the bereaved they mean to comfort. It is different with the members of your Havurah.

The burden of pastoral visitations falls upon the rabbi alone. I recall visiting a woman in the hospital who complained that although she had been affiliated with the temple for over a decade, no one had visited her throughout her three-week stay at the hospital. "But I am here", I answered. "I mean no disrespect, Rabbi", she replied, "but you are not the congregation." She would, I am certain, have had no cause for her justifiable complaint had the Havurah been in existence and had she been part of a Havurah.

Since the creation of the Havurot, now several years in existence, our people are offered opportunities to express their Jewishness in a more natural and personal setting. During the recent economic depression in the aero-space industry, a number of engineers found themselves quite suddenly without employment. I know of Havurot who drew together to help their haverim, making contacts for them with employers in related fields, assisting them in the writing of resumŽs, offering counsel and support to the families involved.

The Havurah offers the synagogue member a community small enough to enable personal relationships to develop. It enables families to express their Jewishness without dependence upon experts, without the faceless relationship of the lecture hall or the appeals. Hopefully, the synagogue itself will gradually be transformed into a Havurah ha-Havurot, a Jewish assembly in which Havurot meet for prayer, study and celebration, not as isolated men and women who have never experienced godliness, the joy of shared learning, the sense of community. One cannot continue talking about God, Torah and Israel to those who have no opportunity to experience elements of that sacred triad. The rabbi and cantor and educator cannot continue to serve as surrogates for the congregant. No one can feel for him, or think for him; no one can cry his tears or sing his songs.

My grandfather came to the synagogue because he was a Jew. His grandchildren come to the synagogue to become Jewish. My grandfather's synagogue and his rabbi had a different function from ours. The synagogue whose audience is the psychological Jew is no longer the consequence of his Jewishness; it must become the cause of his Jewishness. Sabbath services will not celebrate his fidelities until he has labored six days outside the synagogue. When he enters the synagogue, having begun to taste the joys of Jewish growth with other families, he may understand what it is that the rabbi is talking about. He will be prepared for creativity in Jewish theory and practice. Having experienced the warmth of the Havurah, he will heat up the synagogue from below.

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RITELESS PASSAGES AND PASSAGELESS RITES

Harold M. Schulweis

Even when the rabbi believes he has the answers, he must know the *Fragestellung,* the form the question takes. The answering text must respond to the context of the questioner's life situation. Questions often conceal more than they reveal. The rabbi must learn to read between the lines. Who is the person who asks this question?

But "in order to answer a question, one must have something in common with the questioner" (Paul Tillich). Here the graduating rabbinic student begins his career at a decided disadvantage. The world of the seminary in which he has been immersed is not the world of the synagogue, and neither one is the world of the individual Jew. And it is the individual Jew—not some abstract metaphysical construct—whose questions or silences must be compassionately understood and addressed.

For the most part, the three worlds—seminary, synagogue, individual—have nonintersecting agendas, isolated from each other. So the task before us is to make connections, to integrate the public and private agendas of Jewish living. This requires the cultivation of mediating structures and the development of mediating roles within the synagogue community. It calls for building bridges between communal wisdom and the values of individualism, between tradition and modernity.

The historian Jacob Katz describes the theory of traditionalism as the belief that public and private life can be regulated by law, and that meaning and values are derived from "the total reliance

on the distant past" (quoted in Charles Liebman's "The Sociology of Religion and the Study of American Jews," *Conservative Judaism,* May–June 1981). Despite the modernity of its scholarship, the rabbinic seminary is largely, in Katz's terms, a traditional institution.

By the same token, the world of the synagogue, despite its modern dress, operates on the basis of a traditional outlook, reflected in the manner that its ritual and liturgical life is conducted.

But the world of the individual Jew, whether within or without the synagogue, is increasingly non-traditional. He or she owns a private agenda of personal hopes and fears that have little in common with the traditional public agenda. The individual's concerns range over the disharmonies of marriage, the disenchantment in raising children, the deaths of parents, fears about personal illness and death, the weightlessness of his or her career, the unarticulated hopes for interiority. The Jew's modernity is expressed in a fundamental voluntarism of thought and deed: Free to choose, the individual finds deeper pride in choosing than in chosenness. This Jew is suspicious of "groupism," of the imperatives of Jewish law, and of his or her implication in the fate of the community. "Modern consciousness," Peter Berger reminds us (in his *The Heretical Imperative*), "entails a movement from fate to choice." Voluntarism, individualism and pluralism create the atmosphere the individual Jew breathes.

The rabbi breathes the same air. Upon seminary ordination, the rabbi is thrust into a world very different from the one he is leaving. From the seminary, he carries the assurance that he is the authoritative teacher, the decisor, the judge of *issur ve-heter,* of that which is forbidden and that which is permitted. He has law on his side, and the law has its mandates. In a revealing paragraph of his *Guide for the Perplexed,* Maimonides characterizes the law and, by implication, the traditionalist model of the rabbi.

> Whatever the law teaches, whether it be of an intellectual, a moral, or a practical character, it is founded on that which is the rule and not the exception; it *ignores the injury* that might be caused to a *single person* through a certain maxim or a certain divine precept. For the law is a divine institution and (in order to understand its

> operation) we must consider how *in nature* the various forces produce benefits which are *general,* but in some solitary cases they also cause injury. . . . We must consequently not be surprised when we find that the object of the law does not fully appear in every individual; there must naturally be people who are not perfected by the instruction of the law, just as there are beings who do not receive from the specific forms *in nature* all that they require. . . . From this consideration it also follows that the laws cannot *like medicine* vary according to the different conditions of persons and times; whilst the cure of a person depends on his *particular* constitution at the *particular* time, the divine guidance contained in the law must be *certain and general,* although it may be effective in some cases and ineffective in others. If the law depended on varying conditions of man, it would be imperfect in its totality, each precept being left indefinite. For this reason it would not be right to make the fundamental principles of the law *dependent on a certain time or a certain place;* on the contrary, the statutes and judgments must be *definite, unconditional,* and *general* (in accordance with the divine words, "as for the congregation, one ordinance shall be for you and for the stranger"; they are intended . . . for *all persons* and *all times*).
>
> —*Guide for the Perplexed* 3:34 (emphasis added)

In this formulation, the fate of the individual is secondary to the judgment of the law. In a traditionalist society, where obligations and practice of the rules and customs are natural, the analogy between law and nature seems more convincing. But that is quite remote from the world of the Jew of modernity, who will not submit his lot to the generality of the law or consent to suffer injury because of the law. The ethos of modernity does not cultivate easy acceptance of the dictates of the group or of the law. The Jew of modernity may be polite enough to say nothing, to act out personal unhappiness by abstention, but in confessional moments admits resentment at being told when, where, how and what to eat; when, where, how, and whom to marry; when, where and whom to mourn. The rabbi cannot simply mandate the behavior of the individual Jew by citing from traditional texts; quotational Judaism falls on deaf ears. If he seeks to persuade, it is not on legal arguments that he must rely, but on the wisdom of the law or its therapeutic benefits, its advantages for the well-being of the Jew and his family.

THE RABBI CAUGHT BETWEEN

A *mara de-atra* with the power to "bind and to loosen" implies a community of consent, a community of common beliefs, settled convictions, shared practices. Without such a common network of belief and conduct, the authoritative voice loses its resonance. The rabbi feels compelled to turn ventriloquist, to acquire the talent to so throw his voice that a dialogue of *she'elot* and *teshuvot,* of questions and responses, appears to be taking place. The rabbi finds himself answering questions that were never asked. For real questions emerge from a real community, a *kehillah* of common faith and practice—whereas the rabbi faces an audience of separate individuals. With the community transformed into an audience, the synagogue becomes theater, the *bimah* a stage, the cantor a vocalist, and the rabbi a monologist.

So it is that the rabbi is caught between the traditional and the modern. His training is in and for the world of tradition; the demands he confronts, if he is lucky enough to be confronted with demands, are of and about the world of modernity.

Take, for example, the arena in which rabbi and individual Jew relate most personally; namely, the rites of passage, from birth to death.

The energies and intelligence of the rabbi trained by tradition are concentrated on the performance of the rite, not on the process of the passage. De facto, the rabbinic focus is upon the proper performance of the ritual act, not upon the emotional and spiritual growth of the individual involved in the passage. The rabbi sees himself and is seen by others as dealing with the technicalities of performing a proper *milah* circumcision, not as a specialist in working with parents to understand the religious and moral meaning of the *berit* covenant; with the proper writing of the *ketubah* and the rites of wedding, not with the spiritual preparation for the marriage; with the *tevilah* and *milah* (ritual immersion and circumcision) of the proselyte, not with the emotional and attitudinal changes involved in becoming a Jew by choice; with the prescriptions and proscriptions of the *levayah* (funeral), not with the internal dynamics of grieving and mourning. The layman has learned to approach the rabbi as he approaches the bench. The rabbi, like the judge, hands down decisions—how, when, where

the rite is to be done. The layman receives *not the how of the passage but the how of the rite; not the rite as it expresses the meaning and significance of the passage, but the mechanics of the rite itself.*

As for the passage—that may be left outside the Jewish religious domain, to secular agencies, to psychological or spiritual groups unrelated to the Jewish juridical process. The rabbi deals, in short, with passageless rites.

DIVORCE

Consider how the Jew who seeks a religious divorce experiences the rabbinic court, the Beth Din. The entire focus of rabbinic energy and time is concentrated on the correctness of the form, the writing of the twelve lines, the presence of qualified witnesses, the legally appropriate delivery of the *get,* the document of divorce. As for the passage from the status of *kiddushin* (marriage) to that of *gerushin* (divorce), the Beth Din appears to have nothing to say or to do with helping the couple cope with the trauma. What Jewish wisdom or ethic is imparted by the Beth Din to the pained parents who are clearly in need of spiritual counsel and support? What has the court to say to the frightened children whose loyalties are pulled in different directions? Is it not clear that *passageless rites are as religiously scandalous as riteless passages?*

Religiously scandalous—for if the emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions of the passage remain extrinsic to the halachic process, the process of applying Jewish law, then the halachah is trivialized, is made into an irrelevant protocol that will be derided as empty legalism. If, for example, the passage is not regarded as organically part and parcel of the halachic process, the *get* is impersonal and pro forma, indistinguishable from the civil divorce. (Indeed, the civil courts these days sometimes demonstrate more concern for the human issues of the divorce than the religious courts do.) Perhaps, in premodern times, the expectations and needs for individual attention and personal wisdom may not have been felt as deeply as they are today, or perhaps they were ignored, or perhaps they were satisfied by the close-knit community. But today?

The split between rite and passage is symptomatic of the split between tradition and modernity, between the public agenda of

tradition and the private agenda of the modern individual. If the schism is to be overcome, an end must be put to the view that tradition and modernity are hard disjunctives requiring either/or choices.

Hard disjunctive choices between tradition and modernity, between halachah and aggadah, between law and ethics are not found where the relationship between each of these pairs is understood as dialectical, not oppositional. The law is for the sake of the people, and the people is for the sake of the law. But their complementary relationship calls for an expansion of the domain and interest of the halachah. It is not the retraction but the enlargement of halachah that promises to restore the unity of rite and passage. Enlargement suggests a way to combine attention to the individual's emotional and spiritual needs with the more traditional legal concerns that bind the individual to the structure of community.

It is not enough to tell stories of the ethical sensibilities of a Chatam Sofer, Chafetz Chayyim, or Israel Salanter. The gifts of unique leaders inspire us, but they do not solve the problem of how to make our institutions respond to the moral, spiritual and emotional needs of our time. Their tales show us how to integrate such dimensions into the contemporary practice of Jewish law. Appropriate mechanisms and vehicles must be established as indispensable elements within the halachic process that will enable it to respond to the questions Jews ask—and to the questions Jews are reluctant to ask out of fear there are no answers, at least from within the halachic system. The forms and apparatus of tradition must be stretched, not shriveled.

THE "WHY" OF HALACHAH

This calls for a serious evaluation of the teleology of halachah. Moses Maimonides' contrast of the character and function of law and the judge as opposed to medicine and the physician must be reconsidered. Jewish men and women are bleeding. The rabbi must be as much physician as lawyer. Ways must be found to pay attention to the individual in pain and to prescribe medicines according to the particular ailments. If Judaism is a way of life, not simply a catalogue of rites, the practice and teleology of halachah must be greatly enlarged.

The rabbi is mistaken if he sees it as his task to present himself to his modern congregant as the unconditional defender of tradition. The apologistic role forces a false choice upon the congregant. Doubts turn into heresies. Moreover, for all that his seminary training has focused on the tradition, the rabbi himself is not immune to the ethos of modernity.

The rabbi properly points out the perversions in our society that transform individualism into privatism, expressivity into anarchy, interiority into irresponsibility. But the rabbi cannot dismiss as the conceits of modernity the cries for personal help, spirituality, and moral relevance. It was, after all, no antinomian figure but J. B. Soloveitchik himself, who bemoaned the shallowness and mechanical forms of "the majestic community"; no anti-traditionalist but Abraham Joshua Heschel who chastised the sages for having neglected the individual in the Jew. It is not enough to demand the individual's deference to community and tradition; what of the rights of the individual, the obligation of the tradition to the individual Jew?

To dismiss the Jew of modernity as a feckless soul fallen prey to the culture of narcissism turns a deaf ear to the genuine cry for attention and the mounting disaffection with many of the public institutions of Jewish life.

"If I had the power, I would provisionally close all synagogues for a hundred years. Do not tremble at the thought of it, Jewish heart. What would happen? Jews and Jewishness without the synagogue, desiring to remain such, would be forced to concentrate on a Jewish life and a Jewish home." We do not have to approve of Samson Raphael Hirsch's proposal in order to appreciate his frustration. He understood that sanctuary Judaism is no surrogate for Jewish living.

But the contemporary home is no oasis of Jewish life. In the words of the sociologist Arnold Gehlen, the Jewish home today is "underinstitutionalized." The Jewish individual is left to his or her own devices to create Jewish ambience and content—yet the individual Jew cannot do it alone. The Jewish individual who comes from the naked Jewish home into the synagogue finds it an alienating institution. Coming without a whiff of Jewish nostalgia, the individual enters an impersonal megastructure that only heightens his or her estrangement. Too many of today's grandsons and

granddaughters neither know nor feel nor believe nor practice what the synagogue leaders insinuate is the belief and the praxis of all congregants. Even public honors turn into private disgrace; called to the Torah for an honor, they are embarrassed in front of family and friends. (We may recall here the earlier rabbinic innovation, which established the role of a professional *ba'al keri'ah,* reader of the Torah, so as to lessen the humiliation of the layman who could not himself read from the Torah.) In any case, it is more than synagogue skills that they require.

Bibliography is not the answer. Classes in adult education do not meet the needs of the individual Jew, for they do not respond to the problems of estrangement, of discomfort, of doubt, of lack of a sense of real belonging. As Rosenzweig understood, "Books are not now the prime need of the day. What we need more than ever are human beings—Jewish human beings." The founder of the Frankfurt *Lehrhaus* was expressing no anti-intellectual bias. But he understood that Jews need Jews to be Jewish. Belonging is essential to behaving and even to believing.

OUTSIDE THE SANCTUARY

Jewishness cannot begin nor end in the sanctuary. It must be experienced outside the threshold of the synagogue, *pro fanum.* Jewishness is brought into the synagogue from without. By contrast, sanctuary Judaism only manages to supplant the individual; it sponsors community celebrations of what were once family traditions, it purchases prayer shawls and skullcaps and prayer books, all once proud private possessions, now inscribed as temple property. The individual becomes a passive auditor, an attender of services.

For the individual Jew caught in the interstices of the underinstitutionalized home and the overinstitutionalized synagogue, a halfway house must be built. The individual needs mediating structures.

The synagogue havurah is the liveliest illustration of such a mediating institution. It provides the individual with an association small enough to see and hear him, large enough to move him beyond privatism. The synagogue havurah is a single example of what religious leadership can do to create a nonthreatening environment, a peer group with whom the individual can express

doubts and fears, and taste the joys of decision and choice. It is only one model of the way the lonely individual Jew may take her first steps towards the larger institutions of her people. Through the havurah she has the opportunity to experience peoplehood, Torah, and *gemilut chasadim*—acts of redemptive loving-kindness. The synagogue is thereby humanized, personalized, rendered accessible.

Nor is the havurah the only mediating institution we can imagine and invent. *If Jews need Jews in order to be Jewish, then the rabbi needs Jewish allies.* He needs lay colleagues who can help him relate Judaism to Jews face-to-face. Realistically, no rabbi has the time or energy to engage the individual Jew person-to-person and to sustain such a relationship. The rabbi therefore needs to enter into a collegiality with lay leaders dedicated to serve the synagogue community as para-Judaic counselors. He needs to train fellow *ba'alei bayit,* landlords, not as custodians of the temple building or its material contents, but as his own allies in fostering the spiritual life of the individual Jew.

Before every congregational rabbi lies a significant untapped reservoir of lay people who want to do more than serve on fiscal committees or join the critics' circle. There are altruistic men and women in every congregation willing to learn in order to teach, to solicit Jews for spiritual contributions to their own lives and to the lives of their families and their community. Yet is there, outside the philanthropic organizations, a laity that operates on such a person-to-person model? Is there a cadre of competent and compassionate Jews trained to serve individual Jews?

Such a cultivated cadre of men and women would serve as mediators who would create a blood-and-flesh nexus between the synagogue and the individual, and between the rabbinate and the laity. They could enter the homes and the lives of diffident individuals who are too intimidated to enter the corridors of the megastructure by themselves. The para-rabbinic or, if you will, para-Judaic counselors would help bring the Sabbath and festivals into the home, not through classroom exercises but personally, not as abstract and threatening norms but as comforting and natural ways. They will have been trained to help make the rite of passage more than a routinized pro forma exercise, to make it instead a vital stage in the Jewish growth of individual and family.

The rabbi cannot do it alone; he is not ubiquitous—nor ought he to be, for he is not the community, and it is community that is wanting and wanted. But the rabbi can tap the creativity and altruism of the laity as partners in the sacred task of making Jews. Alone, the rabbi becomes as indispensable as a master plumber—and as meaningful. He is called upon, mostly in emergencies, to perform his mysterious rituals; when his work is done, he is expected to leave so that his employers can go about their normal business.

Experience with pararabbinic counselors has convinced Jewish leaders that through these lay people the rabbinate can achieve a new level of relevance. The rabbi's authority and influence increase as the lay leaders begin to understand through their own involvement how complex and critical are his tasks and aspirations. The counselors do not replace the rabbi, they extend his scope and influence. The lowering of the *mechitzah,* the partition, between seminary, synagogue and individual is imperative in our times. To do so, mediating structures and the training of mediating religious leaders must be placed high on the agenda. The relevance and credibility of the Torah, "which makes wise the simple and restores the soul," is a correlate of the new collegiality between professional lay Jewry that reaches into the lives of individual Jews where they are.

Harold M. Schulweis. "Riteless Passages and Passageless Rites," in *In God's Mirror*. Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House,1990, 178-187.

SUFFERING AND EVIL

Harold M. Schulweis

> If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the mother-bird sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the mother-bird with the young; thou shalt in any wise let the mother-bird go, but the young thou mayest take unto thyself, that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest prolong thy days.
>
> —Deuteronomy 22:6

Elisha ben Abuya, observing a child climbing a tree to gather eggs from a nest in obedience of both his father's request and the cited scriptural ordinance, saw the youngster fall from the tree and die. The shock of the death of such an innocent child who dutifully followed the prescriptions of the Torah led this second-century rabbi to the painful conclusion: "There is no judge and no justice." It was such an event, the rabbis speculated, that caused him to turn apostate. Other accounts explaining his loss of faith suggest analogous cases involving the suffering and death of the righteous.[1]

No event sears the soul of the believer more deeply than the discrepancy between an act and its consequence, whether that discrepancy be among the righteous who suffer or the wicked who prosper. And no problem clings more tenaciously to the whole of Jewish literature than the apparent contradiction between the existence of evil and the presence of a wise, powerful, and just God.

Many Jewish solutions to the problem of evil have been put forward. But for reasons that may become apparent, a justification

of God's ways or a theodicy is much harder to come by in Judaism than in other theologies.

Unde malum?—"from whence evil"—if there be a God? The Greek philosopher Epicurus formulated the problem as a tight dilemma: "God either wishes to take away evils and is unable; or He is able but unwilling; or He is neither willing nor able."

It would seem that to resolve the dilemma, one or more of the traditional attributes of God—wisdom, power, benevolence—needs to be deleted or seriously curtailed. Traditional theologies of all faiths have been aware of the consequence of reducing God's attributes, and have acted to protect the status of the deity.

In arguments used by traditional theologians, what man calls evil is good in God's eyes. And suffering, pain, and death occasionally end up as the consequences of man's erring belief or behavior, and are therefore just punishments. Invariably and inevitably, the divine image is sustained, and it is man who is diminished. God's omniscience, omnipotence, and benevolence can seemingly be held inviolate only at the expense of man's ignorance, impotence, or malevolence.For this reason, traditional justifications of God's ways tend to read like cases of conflicting interests, clashes of personalities in which God and man are adversaries.

Jewish religious literature incorporates each and every argument employed in these traditional expositions. But there is one significant, indeed revolutionary, difference. This is the cry of resistance never completely stifled, which echoes from the earliest biblical documents down to contemporary writings, and by which the Jew openly resists being shoved downward in the balancing between him and his God. It is the unprecedented struggle in which the Jew asserts nothing less than his moral equality with his Father.

THE MORAL PARTNERSHIP

> And Abraham drew near, and said: "Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city, wilt Thou indeed sweep away and not forgive the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from Thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?
>
> —Genesis 18:23–25

Right wouldest Thou be, O Lord,
Were I to contend with Thee,

Suffering and Evil

Yet will I reason with Thee;
Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?
Wherefore are all they secure that deal very treacherously?
Thou has planted them, yea, they have taken root;
They grow, yea, they bring forth fruit;
Thou art near in their mouth,
And far from their reins.

—Jeremiah 12:1–2

Awake, why sleepest Thou, O Lord?
Arouse Thyself, cast not off forever.
Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
For our soul is bowed down to the dust;
Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
Arise for our help.
And redeem us for Thy mercy's sake.

—Psalms 44:24–27

How long, O Lord, shall I cry,
And Thou wilt not hear?
I cry out unto Thee of violence,
And Thou wilt not save.
Why dost Thou show me iniquity,
And beholdest mischief?
And why are spoiling and violence before me?
So that there is strife, and contention ariseth.

—Habakkuk 1:2–3

Thou that art of eyes too pure to behold evil,
And that canst not look on mischief,
Wherefore lookest Thou, when they deal treacherously,
And holdest Thy peace, when the wicked swalloweth up
The man that is more righteous than he?

—Habakkuk 1:13

As God liveth, who hath taken away my right;
And the Almighty, who hath dealt bitterly with me;
All the while my breath is in me,
And the spirit of God is in my nostrils,
Surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness,
Neither shall my tongue utter deceit;

THE HOLOCAUST

Far be it from me that I should justify you;
Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me.
My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go;
My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.

—Job 27:2–6

The vast protest literature in the Bible, of which the above are samples, is echoed throughout Jewish writings, through the Midrash and Talmud, medieval poetry, the parables of the Hasidim, through the intimate conversations with God of Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev to the fierce anger of Yossel Rakover writing his last testament amidst the flames of the Warsaw Ghetto: "I believe in the God of Israel even though He has done everything to destroy my belief in Him. I believe in His laws even though I cannot justify His ways . . . I bow before His majesty, but I will not kiss the rod with which He chastises me."[2]

The religious audacity first articulated in the biblical hero may come as a shock to those whose image of the believer is of one who always submits to the will of God.[3] Traditionally, the man of faith may be depicted as once-born or twice-born; he may be subject to doubt or conflict; but once in the presence of God, kneeling is his posture.

The voice of rebellion in Jewish literature, however, is authentic. It is not considered blasphemous; indeed, it is canonized. The indignation rises from within the religious framework. Expressions of its tensions are therefore not debates but internal conflicts. Out of personal anguish, the sufferer defies but does not deny.

From where stems the moral courage of the Jew, the right to resent? That privilege is based on an unusual arrangement between God and Israel, in which both parties agree to a unique set of terms. The everlasting covenant, entered into by Abraham and his seed with God, unites the two in a moral partnership. Man is to keep the commandments of the Lord, true, but it is also understood that the pact of "righteousness and justice" is undertaken with the Lord.

Both sides are mutually responsible, and a miscarriage calls forth sanctions against either transgressor.[4] This covenant, setting forth the moral responsibilities of both parties, gives Abraham and his descendants heart to dissent even against so awesome a co-

signatory as God. So long as man is a partner with God in sustaining the moral universe, protests can be hurled from below as well as from above.

MAN'S MORAL COMPETENCE: RELIGIOUS AUDACITY

Man's status as a moral agent is thus asserted along with his capacity to distinguish good from bad, happiness from adversity, saintliness from sin. Both man and God are released from the amoral decrees of fate, the *moira* of the pagan world.

God is free to change His decrees, to repent of His decisions, to alter the course of events. And man is freed from passive silence: he may now appeal from God to God. "I will flee from Thee to Thyself, and I will shelter myself from Thy wrath in Thy shadow; and to the skirts of Thy mercies I will lay hold until Thou hast had mercy on me. I will not let Thee go until Thou hast blessed me."[5]

The God of Israel can be thus addressed because He is not only the metaphysical God of power and wisdom but also the moral God of justice and mercy. In his anger the religious rebel does not turn away from God but towards Him. God Himself prays, "May it be My will that My mercy may suppress My anger, and that My mercy may prevail over My other attributes."(*Berachot* 7a)

The same defiance is kept alive in the postbiblical tradition. It is not Noah, accepting the decree of the deluge and hiding his impotence in a shelter for himself, who is admired by the rabbis. They praise instead Abraham and Moses, who draw near to God and contend with Him on the grounds of justice. Abraham challenges God's exile of his people, demands confrontation with those who have accused Israel of sin, and successfully silences the Torah from testifying against them. Moses rebukes God for keeping silent before the slaughter of mothers and children.

Rachel dares contrast her compassion and forbearance with God's zealousness so as to move God towards charity.[6] Even Elijah "speaks insolently towards Heaven," accusing God of wronging the sinners; and the Holy One admits His responsibility and error.

In one rabbinic interpretation, Moses is seen as figuratively seizing hold of God's cloak and refusing to let go until "the Lord repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His errant people" (Exodus 32:14).[7] On another occasion Moses "hurls words

against the Heavens" and "remits God's vow for Him," for, while the Lord cannot break His word, the righteous may break it on His behalf.[8]

The extraordinary intimacy and audacity allowable within the relationship between Israel and the deity is incomprehensible without a clear perception of their covenant. This unique "contract" explains the Jew's respect for man's moral dignity as well as his more revolutionary faith in God's responsiveness to the call of justice. Moses in prayer attributed to God greatness, might, and awesomeness. But the prophet Jeremiah deleted the attribute of awesomeness from God because "aliens are destroying His temple"; Daniel, observing the captivity of the people, similary reduced the attribute of might from God. The rabbis were perplexed. How could Jeremiah and Daniel abolish the attributes established by Moses? Rabbi Eliezer offered an explanation: "Since they know that the Holy One insists on truth, they would not ascribe false attributes to Him" (*Yoma* 69b).

What is more, in the *Din Torah,* the tribunal or justice to which the Holy One is summoned by man, God cannot lose. For when justice triumphs God is the victor. In His apparent defeat, when the voice of law and righteousness is heeded and the Heavenly Echo is ignored, He rejoices, *Nitzchuni Banai,* "My children have defeated Me" (*Bava Metzia* 59b). In Israel, man does not acquiesce as do the angels, but like Abraham's grandson Jacob-Israel, he girds his loins to wrestle with God and is allowed to prevail (Genesis 33).

Rabbinic tradition holds fast to the basic thrust of biblical literature—the moral impulse. A rich storehouse of speculations concerning God and man is found in the Talmud and other rabbinic writings such as the Midrashim, in their informal, discursive and often conversational commentaries. Of course, the unsystematic and digressive style makes it difficult to cull a well-ordered consistent rabbinic position on given topics. Nevertheless, it is beyond dispute that the rabbis sought a personal God, one directly and primarily involved with man whose purpose for the universe is integrally related to man's salvation. Their major concern was with God's providence, justice, love, and mercy.

THE RATIONALIST INFLUENCE OF MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

It was not until the advent of medieval Jewish thought that a metaphysical view of the universe was introduced, which in turn

had great effect on the efforts of Jewish philosophers to justify God's ways. Under the influence of medieval interpretations of Aristotelian philosophy, the goal of theologians like Abraham Ibn Ezra, Abraham Ibn Daud, Gersonides, Hasdai Crescas and Moses Maimonides was to search out God as the principle of explanation of the universe, the very essence of the nature of the world. They paid most attention to God's unity, His incorporeality, His power, eternity and wisdom.

The special challenge of medieval Jewish philosophy was to square the rationalistic philosophy of Aristotle with the claims of biblical revelation and talmudic authority. It sought to harmonize the logical, objective orientation of Greek philosophy with the personal and ethical approach of the biblical-rabbinic tradition. God and man are no longer equal partners in running the universe. Gersonides, intent on retaining human free will, limited God's foreknowledge to the universal laws of nature and excluded His knowledge of particular events. He thus attempted to keep the scales balanced. While man as an individual is free, his freedom is severely limited as a member of the species man. And God's wisdom and providence are restricted to the human species as a whole.

Though Maimonides states that when individual man exercises his intelligence he receives divine providence, this is a far cry from the biblical and rabbinic idea of God's conscious and deliberate extension of His personal mercy. Once again human freedom and divine control need to be accommodated. Crescas moves to protect the absolute sovereignty of God in a system of determinism which virtually eliminates man's free will.

In all these medieval thinkers, God and man are cast as rivals, each contending for natural or supernatural rights as if the attributes of one can only be attained at the cost of the other.

Judah Halevi aptly labeled the difference between metaphysical and moral theology as that between the "God of Abraham and the God of Aristotle." "There is a broad difference indeed between the believer in religion and the philosopher. The believer seeks God for the sake of various benefits, apart from the benefit of knowing Him; the philosopher seeks Him only that he may describe Him accurately, as he would describe the earth."[9]

There is, of course, considerable overlapping between both

approaches in Jewish writings. But it is instructive to note that the rabbis saw in God the guarantor of the values revealed to and accepted by man. From this stance, the resolution of the problem of evil touches the very heart of faith. In metaphysical theology, however, the problems wrought by evil are secondary to sustaining the logic of the world order.

THE LOGIC OF EVIL

Medieval Jewish philosophers frequently distinguish between two kinds of evil which befall man—moral and physical. Moral evil includes those which people willfully inflict upon each other—robbery, murder, war, excessive eating, drinking, and passion.[10] They are taken to be a function of man's free will when exercised in ignorance. Were man to use his reason to the fullest, he would maintain the correct course of behavior in harmony with the ultimate principles of the universe.

Physical evil afflicts man from sources outside himself, such as earthquake, storm, and disease. Here free will does not seem involved. A scientific account of the origin of illness appears to ignore the hand of God in all things. The medieval religious philosophers have two favored vindications of God's role in the presence of such physical evil. First is the principle of privation,[11] the analysis of evil as a negative term and nonexistent.

Evils such as blindness and death are not positive attributes of life, and God had nothing to do with them in a direct manner. God creates only positive properties. Blindness is the absence of sight; deafness, a failure to hear; disease, the absence of health; muteness, the privation of speech. He who blows out the light creates nothing. Metaphysically, evil, like darkness, is what is not. God, who makes and forms, is therefore responsible only for what is.

The second oft-invoked metaphysical principle chides the human being for his egocentrism in believing that the world was created for his benefit. Many a medieval metaphysician, noting the fullness of God's universe, invokes the principle of plenitude. Out of God's infinite being and inexhaustible perfection there flows a chain of being in which every conceivable diversity and potentiality of kinds exists. Man's self-centered view of the universe would have it limited to those things which are serviceable for him. His metaphysical astigmatism, thereby, robs the universe of its pluralism,

the grandeur of its perfection. If lions and snakes and bacteria did not exist, the universe would be an impoverished structure. Better that one animal should eat another than that a unique creature be denied existence.

The twelfth-century Jewish philosopher Abraham Ibn Daud uses this principle when he argues that without a graded series of being our world could not have emerged; for all minerals would have been plants, all plants, animals; all animals, men; all men, angels. Without imperfection there would be a universe only of God and angels.[12]

And Maimonides, using another variety of the same principle of plenitude, shows how metaphysical wisdom can offer its own solace. Man calls death a destructive evil. Such a misleading error could be avoided would we but understand: "In accordance with the divine wisdom genesis can only take place through destruction, and without destruction of the individual members of the species the species themselves would not exist permanently."[13]

In general, for these philosophers the issues of morality appear secondary. They are prepared to concede that there are limitations in the ordering and preserving of the world. Left alone, the contrary elements in the sublunar world might destroy each other. The "higher causes" of the heavenly spheres maintain an equilibrium which may unavoidably bring about some accidental evil to some element in the universe—to man, as much as to any other form in the great chain of being. These are the inevitable consequences of running the best of all logically possible worlds. But the original intent in the creation of the universe is good; and the physical evils are accidental by-products of divine beneficence and wisdom.[14]

Both the righteous and the wicked man are viewed as subject to the general providence which God exerts. But the righteous have a special stance which they earn in proportion to the exercise of the divine faculty of reason. The righteous man who actively employs his intellect has the instrument with which to control even those harmful events determined by indiscriminate laws of the universe. Wisdom is the salvation attained by the righteous man.[15] Interestingly, both Maimonides and Gersonides maintain that while Job was a great man, he is not to be described as intelligent, wise, or clever.[16] "It is of great advantage that man should know his

station and not erroneously imagine that the whole universe exists only for him."[17] David Hume, in his *Natural History of Religion,* observes the changing weights placed upon God's attributes as a result of differing ends: "The higher the Deity is exalted in power and knowledge, the lower of course is He depressed in goodness and benevolence."

THE RABBINIC VIEW

For the rabbis, the impersonal, objective explanations of evil offered by the systematic philosophers would be wholly inadequate to explain individual or collective history. Casual laws, like blind fate, are devoid of moral intent; therefore their importance in understanding the world is superficial. If man searches deeply, he discovers that nothing simply happens; tragedy is not the result of a morally capricious or indifferent cause. There is an ultimate explanation of events which lies in a purposeful God. "All is in the hands of heaven, except the fear of heaven."[18]

Most of the rabbis seek explanations of suffering that free God from the possibility of indictment by man. If man suffers, there is good reason. "If a man sees that painful sufferings visit him, let him examine his conduct" (*Berachot* 5a). "There is no death without sin and no suffering without transgression" (*Shabbat* 55b).[19] And if self-examination fails to reveal man's moral failure, let him attribute his suffering to neglect of the study of Torah. Moreover, even if he is a diligent student, he may attribute his pain to God's "chastisements of love."

Many are the modes of punishment for transgression, such as disease, war, accident, sentence by a tribunal; but all can be traced to the just exercise of divine will. When, after the destruction of the Temple, capital punishment could no longer be decreed by the Jewish courts, many rabbis contended that the punishment continues through natural agencies: "He who would have been sentenced to stoning, falls from the roof; he who would have been decapitated is either delivered to the [Roman] government or robbers come upon him; he who would be sentenced to strangulation is either drowned or dies from suffocation" (*Ketubbot* 30a–b). This insistence on the just hand of God behind all events encouraged many rabbis to find ways of erasing apparent moral inconsistencies or injustices in life. Should we discover a righteous man suffering, we

need not deny either his goodness or his suffering. We may explain the punishment of the righteous as evidence of the wickedness of his father. Inversely, if an evil man prospers, it may be the merit he inherits from his parents' good deeds.[20]

Other rabbis repudiate the doctrine of reward or punishment as running counter to their sense of justice. They vindicate God by assigning higher meaning to the circumstance. The suffering of the righteous is, in fact, a badge of honor, not a stigma of transgression. "The Holy One brings suffering upon the righteous of the world in order that they may inherit the future world" (*Kiddushin* 40b). "Sickness and death help purge the lesser iniquities of the righteous so that the abounding happiness that is treasured up for them shall be unalloyed."[21]

Saadia Gaon, the tenth-century theologian, explains the case for unpunished evil: God pays off evil men for their petty virtues with trifling this-worldly rewards. Even the devil must be given his due. But this transaction in the outer vestibule of the universe only helps clear the path for the full measure of justice to be exercised against the evil-doers on the nethermost rung of the next world.[22]

Extending their horizons to include both worlds, some of the rabbis thereby can assure ultimate justice. The topsy-turvy moral disorder of this world must not lead us to despair of God's ultimate righteousness. "God does not deprive any being of his full reward." "He who says that God remits only part of a punishment will himself be punished" (*Pesachim* 118a, *Midrash Genesis Rabbah* 9).

While some biblical explanations treat Israel's expulsion from the land as divine punishment for its iniquitous ways, rabbinic theology lifts that disaster to the higher dimension of martyrdom. Israel is exiled for God's sake and suffers because it is witness on His behalf. "For Thy sake are we killed all day long" (Psalms 44:22, Isaiah 43:12). Collective suffering is a badge of courage and religious testimony: "God's rod comes only upon those whose heart is soft like the lily"; the yoke is placed upon "the strong and not the weak"; the potter does not test defective vessels lest with one blow he shatter them. Suffering is the mark of Israel's election.[23]

Taken as a whole, rabbinic theodicy adheres to the basic principle that the world is well conducted by a supernatural moral power.

Suffering is either a disguised blessing or an overt malediction.[24] The face of justice embarrassed in this world may be saved in the tribunal of the other world.

RABBINIC UNEASINESS WITH TRADITIONAL THEODICIES

The biblical view which holds man to be the *shutaf lakadosh baruch hu,* a partner with God, is a magnificent conception, but it generates unique irritants. The partnership between God and man, working together to improve the world and dually accepting responsibility for it, frequently involves conflict over jurisdiction. What if God and man disagree as to who is innocent or what suffering is? If a righteous man suffers grievously is God to be accused or is some way to be found to indict man?

Rabbi Meir, upholding the sovereignty of the divine will, states that God "will be gracious unto whom He will be gracious," and may reward or punish the undeserving. But such an appeal to the inscrutable ways of God did not satisfy everyone. If God alone knows who is truly evil, and if God alone can judge man, then the unique moral structure of Jewish religious civilization collapses. If man is morally incompetent to distinguish the righteous act from the wicked one, he is also legally incompetent. Many rabbis were fearful of such an anarchic situation.

"Should someone whisper to you: But is it not written, 'contend not with evildoers . . . ,' then you may tell him: Only one whose conscience smites him says so" (*Berachot* 7b). A man of good conscience must contend with the wicked and judge them. He cannot bury his head beneath the skirts of God's other-worldly justice. "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked; but such as keep the law contend with them" (Proverbs 28:4).

The rabbinic tendency to take what appears evil and see it as disguised good may quiet the rage of a Job; but it suggests equally a suspension of all human judgment. Involuntarily, such a theodicy is akin to the false prophecy against which Isaiah inveighed: "Woe unto them who say of evil, it is good, and of good, it is evil; that change darkness into light and light into darkness; that change bitter into sweet and sweet into bitter" (Isaiah 5:20).

COMMONSENSE REALISM IN RABBINIC TRADITION

Nurtured in a tradition which provided them experience in making moral judgments and decisions, some rabbis refused to surrender

reasonable common sense and this-worldly ways of estimating good and evil. They refused to see in suffering and death anything but affliction, or to transform righteousness from an intrinsic good into sin. They refused to deny that evil can occur without sin.

"Are your sufferings welcome to you?" ask some rabbis. "Neither they [the sufferings] nor their reward," respond their colleagues. With deliberate repetitiveness and dramatic irony, the Talmud reveals how the very rabbis who earlier had preached the doctrine of divine chastisements of love (*yesurim shel ahavah*) to comfort sufferers were unable to accept it when they themselves were stricken.[25] Maimonides too found the doctrine of the afflictions of love offensive both to the intellect and the emotions. God does not cause those He loves to suffer, nor does He test the loyalty of the believers with trials of pain. Such doctrines, he argues, are unscriptural, ignorant and absurd.[26]

Similarly, evidence arguing strongly against the notion of inherited punishment is adduced from the Bible itself. "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deuteronomy 24:16).[27]

Nor are all the rabbis willing to transform martyrdom into a blessing. When Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon defied the Roman authorities by reading the Torah in public, Rabbi Yose chastised him for his carelessness. "I talk common sense to you, and you say 'God will have mercy' " (*Avodah Zarah* 18a).

In 135 C.E., during the Hadrianic persecutions, wild and capricious decrees called for such a widespread risk of life that the rabbis were moved to define mandatory martyrdom. At the same time, they discussed criteria for exempting men from such a fate. Distinctions were drawn between decrees which called for private as opposed to publicly coerced transgressions. The source and motivation of the decrees were likewise taken into account before martyrdom was chosen over accommodation.[28]

Death may testify to man's saintliness or heroism, but its evil is neither to be denied nor absolved. Death, counseled Ben Sira (*Exodus Rabbah* 29b), may be preferable to a lingering disease, but it is not thereby transformed into an intrinsic good. If adversity is good, what sense is there to pray and work for its elimination in the messianic era?

Why portray the world of the future in which there will be no need to require blessings over evil tidings, since there will be no evil (*Pesachim* 50a)? How could death be other than evil if God Himself will slaughter the angel of death?[29]

ORIGINAL SIN AND ITS INHERITANCE

Many of the rabbis also refused to accept a verdict against man. Did Moses and Aaron deserve to die, even if they were not perfect? Does God punish twice for the same sin? Therefore, concluded the rabbis, "there is death without sin, and there is suffering without transgression" (*Shabbat* 55b).

While some rabbis accepted the explanation that death is born of Adam's sin and that we all participate in his original sin, others denied its moral implications. The angel of death, the latter argued, was created on the first day, before Adam was even fashioned.[30]

In another Midrash it is stated that Adam himself did not deserve to die for his transgression. He died because God, foreseeing that Hiram and Nebuchadnezzar would declare themselves gods, decreed their death, and thereby rendered all men mortal. Why then were not the innocent such as Adam, exempted from this punishment? The answer: lest the wicked, observing the immortality of the righteous, feign piety and perform insincere repentance for ulterior motives (*Genesis Rabbah* 9:5). These fragments of moral philosophy repudiate the notion of original sin and the claim that death is the just punishment of the evil.[31]

As if to ensure the equality of the heavenly tribunal with the earthly court, there are rabbis who insisted that God Himself does not take advantage of His perception of the secret inner intentions of man's heart. He restricts His own judgments to the public, overt acts of man. "The Holy One combines only intention which bears fruit with deeds [i.e., intentions which are followed by action]; but intention which does not bear fruit, He does not combine with deed" (*Kiddushin* 40a). The human court can take heart from such knowledge of the jurisdictional propriety of the divine court and with confidence judge the publicly observable acts of men.[32]

In summary, rabbinic theodicy, which is predicated upon the divine, moral causation of all events in which man is also a free moral agent, carries with it the warmth and intimacy of a personal God who is the author of justice in the world. But it also bears the

sign of strain. The moral dialogue of biblical Judaism can—and often does—emerge as a clash of forces.

Consciously or not, Judaism's justification of God's ways is torn between two ideas that it wishes to maintain equally: *the sovereignty of God* and *the dignity of man*. How well the rabbis recognized this conflict can be seen in their characterization of prophecy. Elijah's prophecy is unsatisfactory in that, while he insists upon defending the honor of God, he ignores the dignity of man. Jonah's prophetic stance seeks to defend the son but ignores the claim of the Father. Jeremiah is the ideal prophet for he insists on the honor of both Father and son—God and man. He achieves this delicate equilibrium by simultaneously chastising and exonerating the ways of God and man (*Mechilta* to Exodus 12:1).

A God endowed with the traits of personality—acting, willing, loving, judging—is both wonderfully approachable and painfully vulnerable. Job's familiarity with God is so close as to enable him to speak of Him as "mine adversary" and to demand that "He set aright a man contending with God as a son of man setteth aright his neighbor" (Job 16:20–21; 31–35). The simile is striking: God and man are both persons, and each has moral claims upon the other.

AFTER AUSCHWITZ: THE CHALLENGE OF ADVERSITY

While easy converse between God and man presents no problems in times of peace and tranquillity, in times of adversity that very intimacy jeopardizes the sovereign perfection of God. The personal God is too close for comfort in moments of despair. If God is to be protected from the Jobian critique, His relationship with man must be formalized. Job must be put in his place and the forthrightness of the earlier dialogue broken off. God, in the epilogue, does indeed appear to Job out of the whirlwind, with all His awesome omnipotence: "Hast thou an arm like God? And canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?" (Job 40:9f.). God is thereby lifted to the heights of inviolability and Job discovers the limitations of dialogue. He now knows that, at best, he can only be a silent partner, and he learns to lay his hand upon his mouth forever.[33]

Similarly, in modern times, Martin Buber's human-divine encounter is severely shaken by the atrocities of the Nazi Holocaust. He is led to ask: "Can one still speak to God after Oswiecim and

Auschwitz? Can one still, as an individual and as a people, enter at all into a dialogue relationship with Him? . . . Dare we recommend to the survivors of Oswiecim, the Jobs of the gas chambers, 'Call to Him, for He is kind, for His mercy endureth forever?' "[34]

The confidence and trust of the original dialogue shrivel into paradox. Buber advises us to await the voice of "our cruel and merciful Lord."[35] We are presented not with a theological diffidence which limits man's knowledge of God's attributes but with the shocking assertion that the moral character of God is unknowable in principle. God is no longer simply "righteous and just" in the manner that Abraham knew Him, in the manner which assured him that God and he shared the same moral universe of discourse. Now Buber speaks of God as "super-good."[36] We have reason to wonder whether our moral language is the same as that which God employs. Stripped of the moral certainty axiomatic in the biblical dialogue, we may well panic. We do not know whether it is God or Moloch who addresses us.[37] After Auschwitz, Buber entertains a God who is the "Absolute Personality,"[38] what he himself calls a "paradox of paradoxes" because an absolute has no personality and is beyond love, desire, and will. And yet without personality there can be no dialogue with the Absolute God. The original innocence of the dialogue fades before the scandal of outrageous injustice. God is said to be "hiding" and man is counseled patience until His unpredictable revelation. What He may say we cannot know for "His coming appearance resembles no earlier one . . ."[39]

The painful truth appears to be that the Nazi atrocity has severed the dialogue. In its place, a mysterious monologue is awaited. After Auschwitz, only one voice speaks, and man is reduced to listener.

A PERSONAL GOD: STUMBLING BLOCK OR ROCK OF COMFORT?

As in Job and Buber, so Jewish theodicy is tossed like a shuttlecock, from a personal to an impersonal God. Yet whether we turn to God as Super-person or Person, toward a good God or one who is supergood, whether the goodness is understood or mysterious, all the traditional explanations invoke a personal God. All events occur through the agency of a deliberate, personal will. Metaphysical and moral theologians may quarrel as to the intent of that

will—but all agree that true explanation entails a purposive agent, a personal cause.

The insistence upon a personal God is held to guarantee the objective status of moral values. Feared most are the twin heresies of atheism and pantheism, which are inimical to Judaism. Atheism proposes a rudderless world, wherein God is irrelevant to any proper explanation of history. In pantheism, where God is identified with nature, evils of all kinds are assimilated into the natural system, and nature reigns with an indiscriminate hand. Moral distinctions between good and evil, order and confusion are dismissed as human biases, as functions of man's self-centeredness.[40]

If good and evil are not to be blurred, as they are in pantheism, their separate reality must be maintained. The distinctions drawn between them seem best to be kept intact by finding their sources. Good is most readily personified as flowing from a divine power, but the tendency to personify experience suggests an analogous path to the source of evil: Satanic power. Each seems as real as the other.

Behind every experience to which moral adjectives are assigned, there lies a substantive noun to which it properly belongs. The inclination to forge experiences, events, transactions into things and nouns has an ancient and modern history to which philosophy will readily attest. "Good" and "bad" are transformed into "the good" and "the bad," and further transformed into "God" and "Satan." This metamorphosis generates demons as readily as angels. Little wonder then that the rabbinic tradition felt the need to combat the doctrine of *shtei rishuyot,* two competing divine powers.[41] However, it is no light task to trace good and evil to a common divine matrix so as to avoid the heresy of dualism, while adhering at the same time to the real distinctions between these two aspects of moral behavior. Where distinctions are held to be objective, differences frequently give birth to contending deities.[42]

"WHY?" IS NOT THE SAME AS "WHAT FOR?"

Why does theology bog down when confronted by the challenge to explain evil? Scientific answers will be accepted for questions concerning impersonal events—"Why did the metal expand?" But where personal events are involved, we insist upon a different type of explanation. Birth, sickness, and death demand explanations

heavy with personal intent. To answer a question such as "Why was my child blinded?" with a medical report appears to demean the seriousness of the tragedy. The objective answer will be met with another, "But why did it happen to *my* child?" This sort of question is limitless, and each scientific answer only postpones a further one. Only that answer which is compatible with the tacit assumption of the question is acceptable. The question grows out of a mode of thinking wherein serious events can be explained only by conscious, purposively causal agents. Only a universe peopled with motivations, deliberate actions and purposes is regarded as adequate to account for important personal affairs. Hence, we speak of an "act of God" or the "will of God." While such an explanation of adversity may have its initial advantage it frequently leads to resentment against the One Person who, if He were but willing, could have averted the disaster.

It is self-evident that traditional theodicy limits its scope to one kind of theological view: God is a Person who punishes and rewards with sickness and death, with health and long life. Unless we are willing to challenge that underlying assumption, the gnawing problem of evil in God's world remains insoluble.

TOWARD AN ALTERNATIVE THEODICY

Traditional Jewish theology does not equate God with nature, nor does it set God apart from nature. Rather, it allows God to incorporate and transcend nature. A view of God's envelopment of nature is felt necessary to assure belief in His power and control of the universe. In the rabbinic approach, this total embrace of nature implicates God as responsible for all natural events, including disease and nature's disasters. He is involved in every natural catastrophe.[43]

A new approach to the relationship between God and nature sees the latter as belonging to the realm of *chol,* or the nonholy. Nature itself is morally neutral, neither hostile nor friendly to the realm of values. Understood as a system of morally ambivalent energies, it is beyond the judgement of evil or good. "The world pursues its natural course and stolen seed sprouts as luxuriantly as seed honestly acquired" (*Avodah Zarah* 54b). To conceive of God's running nature as we conduct our affairs only leads to the embarrassment of defending God each time lightning strikes or

gales devastate the innocent. It leads us to strain for occult moral purposes behind every natural tragedy, and to associate God's activity with havoc and catastrophe.

God is not nature. Physical evils require no justification of His ways, for the ways of nature are not identified with the ways of God. There is no need to search for "deeper" explanations for drought or flood in defense of God.

In this view, nature is the source of potentialities for man's sustenance, health, and security. Nature is not a conscious moral force, but it can be used for conscious moral ends. With natural piety we seize hold of nature. "Is it not our own substance? Are we made of other clay? All our possibilities lie from eternity hidden in its bosom . . . we may address it without superstitious terrors; it is not wicked. It follows its own habits abstractly."[44] And the Jew follows God, not nature. Divinity is not larger than nature, but is discovered *within* nature, in the acts of men who transform the uncommitted powers of nature to consecrated ends.

This position suggests an interesting analogue with that of Gersonides' critique of Maimonides. Maimonides had insisted that God created matter out of nothing, and that were matter co-eternal with God, existing before creation, it would limit God's power and freedom. But Gersonides disagreed. Eternity, he argued, does not constitute divinity. Therefore, let matter be eternal; it does not reduce the majesty of divine creation. Creativity is not in the manufacture of matter, but in the shaping of its raw, chaotic substance into an intelligible universe. As Gersonides was convinced that longevity is no mark of divinity, we are convinced that largeness is equally irrelevant to the character of divinity. In separating God from nature, we do not reduce divinity but clarify its essential meaning.

Physical evil requires no justification. This does not mean that the tragedies wrought by nature are not real. But unfortunate physical accidents which befall man ought not to be converted into events derived from cosmic purpose. If we trace our tragedies to hidden divine causes, we cast a shadow of disillusionment upon an omnipotent personal God who has betrayed us. Such resentment and frustration are needless; because God conceived as Person fails us, we need not repudiate divinity.

THE HOLOCAUST

GOD CREATES THE WORLD INCOMPLETE

A more positive approach is to see that man and the universe are incomplete. Nature is not law to be followed; it is power to be controlled and organized for moral ends. Endowed with freedom of will man encounters divinity in his effort to overcome sickness, ignorance, and greed. In his transactions with his environment he discovers the attributes of divinity which are essential to his health and moral maturity—love, justice, knowledge, and compassion.

These predicates of divinity are real and effective. But the ideals of peace and love, while they move men to action, are yet to be realized. In what soil can these values be rooted so that their significance is preserved? And what will endow these values with power? The Greeks secured them in a world of ideas, and the Jews in a Person, God. A potentially split world ensues, leading to a strained relation between the secular and the sacred, between person and Person. When man heals and cures, the glory is God's; when man hurts and destroys the blame is his alone. To praise God as a Person distinct from man for the good achieved by human effort and benevolence appears artificial and the assignment of evil to man exclusively appears unjust.

The Nazi Holocaust dramatizes our dilemma. That men who sin are punished is understandable; but that millions of innocents should be destroyed is not. What role does God play here? Is His permissiveness morally justifiable? If the monumental catastrophe belongs to man, what relevance does God have if He washes His hands of the whole matter and sets Himself apart as a spectator?

To save His relevance and to give dimension to our tragedy it is felt that God should be called upon as the controlling Cause of all significant events. But to do so is to rip open the wounds of Job and then to fall back upon the God that hides His face. But the concealed God holds a double-edged sword. In the defense of Adolf Eichmann, his lawyer Dr. Robert Servatius used classic theological overtones when he raised the question: "Do you not believe that irrational factors, transcending human understanding, are responsible for the fate of the Jewish people?" That which is meant to justify God's ways is now used to justify man's. The wicked, as easily as the good, can hide behind the Hiding God.

TIKKUN OLAM: PERFECTING THE WORLD

Depicted as Person, endowed with the traits of personality—willing, desiring, punishing, rewarding—divinity will forever require defense. We call for a different conception of God. We experience divinity not as a Person nor "He who" but as "That which." *That which* cures the sick, loosens the bonds of the fettered, upholds the fallen, supports the poor, we identify as godly.These revelations are not arbitrary, neither being cast earthward from heaven nor capriciously invented. They are discovered, tested, and affirmed in this world through our individual and collective interactions with nature, human and nonhuman. Activities are godly and real without being objects, things, or persons. Evil and good are encountered in the world, not as the effects of contending supernatural powers, but as distinguishable events which frustrate or contribute to our moral maturity.

The moral dualism in the world we experience is the tension between what is and what ought to be—between *chol* (neutral and uncommitted energy) and *kadosh* (energy dedicated to ideal ends). The monotheism of Jewish tradition is expectant. The world is incomplete. "The Lord shall be king over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be One and His name One" (Zechariah 14:9).

That which works to overcome the tension which ruptures the moral world is divine. Godliness is revealed to us in terms of values we can understand as human beings. Godliness is that feature of the world which penetrates the dumbness of nature and makes it speak the language of moral intent.

In our view, no segregated area exists where divinity may not be found. Moral evil and moral good are not supernaturalized. They are both in the same world, where men may be blameworthy or praiseworthy, but divinity is blameless. For divinity is neither person nor omnipotent will. Divinity, by our meaning, designates those energies and activities which sustain and elevate our lives. Such an understanding of divinity requires no justification in the presence of evil.

NOTES

1. *Kiddushin* 39b. From *Chullin* 142a, the rabbis opine that this turning away came when he saw the tongue of the scholar R. Judah Nachtum in the mouth of a

dog, or that he saw Chutzpith the interpreter dragged along by swine during the Hadrianic persecution and then commented in sorrowful disillusionment, "The mouth that uttered pearls licks the dust." Thereupon he went forth and sinned.

2. Zvi Kolitz, "Yossel Rackover Speaks to God," *The Bridge* (New York: Pantheon, 1958), vol. 3.

3. See, for example, the reactions of Barry Ulanov and Elisabeth Orsten to the "blasphemy" of the Jobian stances in two separate essays published in *The Bridge*, vol. 3.

4. Genesis 17:10 ff.

5. Ibn Gabirol, *The Royal Crown*.

6. *Lamentations Rabbah*, introductory proems.

7. *Berachot* 32a. The Moses legend is based on the text in Exodus 32:9–14, in particular on the verse in which God exclaims to Moses, "Now, therefore, let Me alone that My wrath may wax hot against them."

8. See *Berachot* 32a; also *Ta'anit* 23a, and *Mo'ed Katan* 16b, where David is given the power to annul God's decree.

9. *Kuzari* 4:13.

10. Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* 3:2.

11. This argument is used most effectively by Saadia, Abraham Ibn Daud, and Maimonides. The intent of this argument is to keep God uninfected by contact with the physical basis of evil. The logic of separating God from matter has taken on a variety of forms, including the doctrines of demiurges, emanations, angelic intelligences which serve as middlemen or buffers between God and matter.

12. See Isaac Husik, *A History of Mediaeval Jewish Philosophy*, pp. 229 ff.

13. Maimonides, *Guide* 3:12.

14. The view of Christian Science and some Hindus that suffering, illness, and death are illusory and unreal is foreign to Jewish belief.

15. See Gersonides, *Commentary on Job* 41–42.

16. Maimonides, *Guide* 3:22; Gersonides, *Commentary on Job* 1.

17. Maimonides, *Guide* 3:12.

18. *Megillah* 25a; also *Berachot* 33. In *Bava Metzia* 107 we read, "All is in the hands of heaven except cold and heat."

19. R. Isaac declared, "Let one always pray for mercy not to fall sick, for if he falls sick, he is told, 'Show thy merits and be quit of this disease' " (*Shabbat* 32a). See also *Mechilta* 95b.

20. *Berachot* 7a, where R. Jonathan, in the name of R. Yose, argues that this explanation was the secret wisdom God revealed to Moses.

21. From the traditional confession made on the deathbed (*Viddui Shechiv Mera*). A variety of justifications for the "chastisements of love" are summarized by the fifteenth-century theologian Joseph Albo. See his *Sefer Ha-Ikkarim*, vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 117 f.

22. See Saadia's *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* in *Three Jewish Philosophers* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960), p. 135. Also *Nedarim* 41a and *Lamentations Rabbah* 5:1, where Akiva sees reason for rejoicing in the Temple's destruction: "If they that offend Him fare so well, how much better they fare who obey Him."

23. *Song of Songs Rabbah* II, 16:2; *Genesis Rabbah* 32:3, 54:1.

24. *Sifre* 73b, *Ta'anit* 82.

25. *Berachot* 5b. Note that R. Chiyyah and R. Yochanan, who have previously been cited in this passage as having advocated the doctrine of "afflictions of love," reject it in their suffering.

26. *Guide* 3:17, 24.
27. More explicit is the formulation of Ezekiel 18. See also *Numbers Rabbah* 19:33, where Moses is credited with "instructing" God against visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children.
28. *Sanhedrin* 74a–b. See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei ha-Torah* 5:4. "He who sacrifices his life for religious precepts when not required by the law to do so is guilty of a deadly sin." See also *Ketubbot* 3b.
29. From the last chorus of the Passover song *Chad Gadya.*
30. *Midrash Tanchuma, Vayeshev,* sec. 4.
31. The mystic theorists of the old Kabbalah and Zohar sometimes identified evil as existing in a metaphysical domain. Evil is here viewed as independent of man, "woven into the texture of the world or rather the existence of God"; see Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism,* p. 36.
32. See *Sotah* 37b and *Sanhedrin* 43b, where not the "secret things" but those overt acts of sin are to be judged and punished by the community.
33. In his *Answer to Job,* C. G. Jung analyzes the Job story as a conflict between an amoral, unconscious power and a moral, conscious finite son.
34. "The Dialogue Between Heaven and Earth," in *Four Existentialist Theologians,* ed. Will Herberg (New York: Anchor Books, 1958), p. 203.
35. Ibid.
36. Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God,* pp. 60–61.
37. Ibid., pp. 118 f.
38. Ibid., p. 60.
39. Ibid., p. 61.
40. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics,* Appendix to pt. I.
41. *Berachot* 33b, *Chagigah* 15a.
42. K. Kohler, *Jewish Theology,* pp. 195 f. The author deals with the personification of angels, messiahs, and Satan.
43. Albo, *Ikkarim,* bk. IV, pt. 1, p. 66.
44. George Santayana, *Reason in Religion,* p. 133.

Harold M. Schulweis. "Suffering and Evil," in *In God's Mirror.* Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House,1990, 73-95.

THEOLOGICAL COURAGE

Rabbinical Assembly Address - 2000

by Harold M. Schulweis

This is less an address than a rabbinic confession. Confession is good for the soul, if not always for the reputation. But before whom better to confess than before one's colleagues?

Late one night, after Yom Kippur I received a frantic telephone call. As soon as I arrived at the home which was already filled with family and friends, I was told the tragic tale. I had known the family well. They were at synagogue services during Neilah. Their son Kenny, a teenager whom I had known from classes, insisted that he start out early for a post-Yom Kippur breaking of the fast with some friends in Malibu. His parents insisted that he should wait until the Neilah services were over. Kenny obliged them. As soon as the shofar was blown he rushed off in his car and somewhere on a winding road a drunk driver plowed into his car. Kenny was instantly killed. When I walked into the bedroom Kenny's father was sitting on the bed, his head buried in his hands. He looked up at me. His face grew pale and his fists clenched and he greeted me with a torrent of obscene curses. He cursed me and God and the synagogue and himself. Why in the world had he insisted that Kenny wait till the services were over? As if God cared. It's all a lie. I was false, God was false, the synagogue was false. The whole thing was stupid and cruel.

The room filled with people. Kenny's father's rage continued, everyone drew deadly silent. I had never been cursed this way before. I sought to speak to him. He was unresponsive. Kenny's father was inconsolable. "Tell him to leave", he said, referring to me.

His wife took me into the kitchen and repeated over and again "The whole thing is senseless. You knew Kenny. Kenny was a love, sensitive, kind, talented. It's not fair." She was embarrassed by her husband's curses and saw how upset I was. Before I left, she took hold of my arm and whispered "Rabbi, don't take it personally."

I did take it personally. The curses attacked the core of my rabbinic being. Kenny's father cursed me because he felt he was cursed by God. I was his rabbi and in his eyes, I stand for God and I failed him. I tried to calm myself. I told myself that this was a natural reaction to tragedy and that time would heal. His "Why me?" does not require an answer. "Why" means "woe". "Why me" is not a cry for cognition but for recognition. What seems required from me to be present, to place a supporting arm around his shoulder. When I put my arm around his heaving shoulders, Kenny's father threw it off. More than an arm was called for. Kenny's father wanted from me an honest Jewish theology.

Kenny's father's reaction was extreme but hardly unique. In my experience, it was the reaction of many people -- the parents sobbing over the infant's crib death, the husband of a young woman afflicted with cancer, the children mourning the death of a father killed in an airplane crash. And all were left with guilt, shame, blame and anger. Should I not take it personally? Do I bear no responsibility for their reaction? Did I dare to think? Is there something wrong with conventional "theodicy", the defense of God in the face of evil that leaves bitter ashes on the tongue of the mourners.

Somehow the bereaved have inherited a theology that insinuates that nothing happens by accident, that nothing happens without someone being guilty of some transgression, that every misfortune is an "act of God", that catastrophe is "bashert", fated, destined, decreed. Inherited a theology from whom? Do I not bear some responsibility for these conclusions? Have I not led the High Holiday services in which we recite "On New Year's day the decree is inscribed and on the Day of Atonement the decree is sealed: who shall live and who shall die, who by fire and who by water, who shall be brought low and who shall be exalted? And then the conclusion: "Repentance, prayer and righteousness avert the evil decree. However I twist it homiletically, I'm left with "Decree, gezerah. Is that my understanding of Kenny's death, that it was a decree, a verdict, a sentence from on high?

I thought forward toward the funeral. Will I have Kenny's parents recite "Baruch dayan emet" -- blessed is the truthful judge". Is this death the sentence of a truthful judge? Will I include in the funeral the tzidduk hadin -- the prayer defense of God. "The sheltering Rock, perfect in all His works, for all His ways are just. Who dares to say to Him 'What are You doing, You who rule above and below, You who take away all life and gives it -- who brings down to the grave and up from there.'"

Will I at the funeral read out loud in the presence of the assembly the psalm 90: "In Your eyes we are consumed; in Your wrath we are overcome. You set our sins before You; our secrets are before Your presence. Your wrath darkens our days; our lives expire like a sigh." No consolation, no comfort here. Better read it in Hebrew I thought. They may not understand its meaning. But I do. And that troubles me.

I have studied the conventional defense of God by many of the sages in the Talmud Berachoth. It is predicated on the belief that suffering implies transgression; that tragedy is either punishment or reward; that suffering is either a chastisement of punishment or a chastisement of love. In any event, it is traced back to divine decree. Do I believe it? Can I speak that way to Kenny's parents?

It is one thing to look at a text and another into the pained eyes of the afflicted. To repeat the arguments to Kenny's father and his wife is to rub salt into their wounds. Shall I, for example, tell them that the suffering is meant to test their mettle or that sufferings in this world are hidden blessings enabling them to inherit the treasures of the world to come?

Should I use the classic medieval silver lining arguments, tell them that without poverty, there would be no charity; without illness there would be no motivation to heal; without the accident there would be no test of human resilience; without the Holocaust there would be no State of Israel. I have heard the argument, at birth: deny a child vision, hearing and the ability to speak and you have a Helen Keller. But this has conscience and common sense against it. It is a perverse thinking that would justify every aberration, paralysis, deformity as good in God's eyes. Of course, some people sometimes can turn a tragedy into a blessing but does that justify God's hand in the catastrophe? To justify unwarranted suffering turns God into a cruel and sadistic designer and the believer into a masochistic worshiper.

I could, of course, resort to the plea of theological ignorance. I can declare that God's ways are inscrutable and that while I do not know His will, it is all for the best. I can hear Kenny's father's sarcasm. "Come now rabbi, not that I need you to answer the questions, you turn agnostic on me. Now that I need explanations, you hide yourself in the sanctuary of ignorance?

I took it personally because it's not Kenny's father that bothers me; not his curses, not his anger but that I have failed him and that conventional theology has failed me. The rationalizations do not square with my sense of reality or morality.

Never mind Kenny's father. Before I can speak to Kenny's father what do I say to myself? Am I stuck with conventional theology? Must I take it or leave it? It is a critical conflict in my own life as a rabbi and as a Jew. What am I to do if some aspect of Jewish theology seems incredible, worse, immoral? It lies at the root of belief and its branches are thorns in the side of prayer.

Am I alone in this conflict? Am I the only one with a moral sensibility? Have I no predecessors in the tradition? Surely I am part of that great tradition of Judaism which honors and venerates the moral question. That question canonized in Abraham's heroic criticism of God at Sodom and Gomorrah I have preached and heard it preached often. Abraham, on moral grounds will not accept the verdict of God to destroy the whole of Sodom and Gomorrah, "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justly? That be far from Thee to do after this manner to slay the righteous with the wicked, that the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from Thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth not do justly?" (Genesis 18:25) That heroic challenge is not regarded as heresy in the tradition. Abraham's cry is no act of treason, no lése majesté, no betrayal of God. On the contrary, Abraham's appeal to God elevates God who will not countenance injustice.

No! I am not alone in my spiritual discomfort and in the Jewish urgings for theological courage. I take heart from the record of the rabbinic moral dissent in Midrashic literature. Midrash Numbers Rabbah records a series of clashes between Moses and God, all of them concluding with an appreciation of the courage and morality of the religious hero and the instruction of God. To cite one stunning example of many, when Moses hears the second commandment that includes the statement "I am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation", Moses rose to declare to God "That is not fair. Sovereign of the universe, many are the wicked who have begotten righteous. Should the righteous bear the iniquity of the wicked?" Then Moses brought forth arguments against God's statement "Consider Sovereign, that Terach worshiped images but Abraham, his son, was a righteous man. Consider that Achaz was a wicked king but his son Hezekiah was a king of great righteousness. Consider Amon, a wicked king, but Josiah his son was a man of righteousness. Is it proper then that the righteous should suffer because of their fathers?" How does God respond? The Holy One said "You have taught Me. --limaditani. By your life Moses, I shall cancel My words and confirm your words. As it is written 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children; neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers.'" (Deuteronomy 24) Moses knows that the biblical statement attributed to God violates moral sensibility. He knows that the deepest honor of God is not a passive acquiescence to injustice but a morally courageous response with huge theological implication. God did not create robots but human beings in His image. Tradition must be earned. Jacob must wrestle with the angel of God in order to find a nobler identity, a higher morality and a new revelation. Wrestling with the angel he emerges with a new understanding. No longer shall you be known as Jacob but as Israel "for you have wrestled with God and with man and you have prevailed."

My birthright is at stake as well. Belief in God is not delivered on a silver platter. It requires from me theological courage. I am a rabbi representing a Jewish world view challenged theologically by Kenny's father. And not with this question alone but with related questions about the morality of theology, the efficacy of prayer and the role of the miraculous. I can, of course, dismiss the question as the outcry of the afflicted. I can ignore the call for Jewish understanding. I can pretend that Judaism is not interested in theology, in belief -- only in deeds and performances. Lo hamidrash hu ha-ikkar elle ha-maaseh. But is that responsive and responsible response to the deep questions of my and their questions? Would I reduce Judaism to an orthopraxy, a ritual behaviorism and focus my attention only on the ritual and liturgical laws of mourning.

Evading or avoiding the kinds of existential questions in our people leaves in its wake a religious black hole. I fear that emptiness. The Jewish absence of belief creates a vacuum -- and human nature abhors a vacuum. And that vacuum, left alone, will be filled with superstition and theurgy. As C.S. Lewis observed "He who ceases to believe in something does not believe in nothing -- but believes in anything."

Too many Jews cease to believe. Too many Jews have become theologically mute, have joined the growing legion of the fourth son -- "sheaino yodea lishol". Kenny's father has compelled me to wrestle with my own theological conscience. Do I have a credible Jewish theology that can speak to me so that I can answer Kenny's father and myself?

With deepest respect, let me share with you the way of my personal theological journey. In Judaism there is one God. There is no devil to scapegoat, no anti-Christ to blame for evil. Judaism is an ethical monotheism. God is one. But not coincidentally throughout the prayer and the Bible there are two names for this one God, two names that appear side-by-side. Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu -- two names for a single God: Adonai and Elohim. And in the celebrated Sh'ma once again two names appear side-by-side. "Sh'ma Israel Adonai Elohenu, Adonai Echad". And again the last words of Yom Kippur declare the identification of the two, seven times "Adonai Hu Ha-Elohim". Why not one name? Shma Yisrael Adonai Echad. Why two? I believe that the duality - not dualism - reveals two faces of one God, two understandings of the nature of one God, two aspects of divinity of one God that helps me understand the world and myself, and grapple with evil.

Elohim is the first name of divinity introduced in the first chapter of the first verse of the first book of the Bible. "Beresheet barah Elohim". The name Elohim is used exclusively in the first chapter of Genesis. Here Elohim is the Creator of nature. The Creator of all things that are below and above the earth is the work of Elohim.

Lions and lambs; serpents and doves; butterflies, and eagles. Elohim is the logic of the universe, the principle of causation in nature.

Nature is morally neutral. Elohim is the Creator of mountains and valleys, sunshine and darkness, earthquakes and droughts and floods and hurricanes. Nature is amoral. Not midat hadin, the measure of justice, but midat ha-teva, the measure of amoral nature. Here I am impressed by a remarkable passage in the Talmud Avodah Zarah 54b. There the rabbis ask, "If a man stole a measure of wheat and sowed it in the ground. It would be right that the wheat not grow. After all, it is stolen. But, say the rabbis, the world pursues its own course. This is the way of nature.

Further, the rabbis ask, "If a man have intercourse with his neighbor's wife. It would be right that she should not conceive. But nature pursues its own course. And out of an adulterous relationship a child is born.

This bespeaks a Jewish reality principle. Because it suggests to me a new missing category in Jewish theology that applies to "chol", to amoral events. "Olam k'minhago noheg". Elohim understood as the non-judgmental Author of minhag olam means that not everything that happens in this world is a din, a judgement from a moral judge. DNA is not din. The DNA we inherit is neither praiseworthy or blameworthy. It is simply a fact. A remarkable but nevertheless an amoral fact. Neither "din" nor "rachamim". The shifting platelets beneath the earth that produces earthquakes are not judgements. They are not moral decrees. Earthquake is not God's verdict. The hurricane is not a punishment. A volcanic explosion is not a punishment. All of these are consequences of geological and atmospheric phenomena. They may be traced to the Elohim olam k'minhago creation. But crucially, consequences are not judgements and causes are not curses. When causes and curses, consequences and punishment are confused, every event is turned into a divine moral gezerah. Then every accident points to a sin punished. When John Kennedy Jr.'s plane crashed media pundits began speaking about the Kennedy curse. Then, cause is turned into a supernatural curse and consequence into a divine punishment.

When recently the Alaska Jet airline went down, did we call for the passenger list to determine the ratio of righteous people to evil people in order to explain the crash? We called for the Black Box to determine whether or not the cause was human or mechanical. Newton's law of gravitation is not Moses' law of revelation. Gravitation refers to "what is". Revelation refers to what "ought to be". Olam k'minhago noheg. Elohim as the Ground of all that is expresses the Jewish reality principle: there is accident, there is contingency, there are natural laws in the universe that have causes and consequences, not curses or blessings, not punishments or rewards.

Hold on! Elohim is part but not the whole of divinity. To stop at Elohim is to be caught in the webs of idolatry. For idolatry is the worship of a part as if it were the whole. Elohim is part but not the whole of divinity. Something crucial is missing -- Adonai! We are first introduced to the idea of Adonai complementing Elohim in the second chapter of Genesis: "No shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprung up because Adonai Elohim had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no human being to till the soil." For there to be vegetation one needs something that is given and something that is to be transformed. Therein lies the crucial partnership between nature and humanity. (Shutafuth la kadoth baruch hu b'maase bereshit)

This lies at the heart of the Midrash in Tanchuma 19:3. In that celebrated debate between Tineus Rufus and Rabbi Akiba, Rufus, the pagan, asks of Akiba, "Which is greater, the work of God or the work of man?" Akiba brings a sheaf of wheat and a loaf of challah before Tineus Rufus. "Clearly" Akiba says "Challah the work of man is greater." How do I understand Akiba's response? Is it a denigration of God? By no means.

Akiba is here rejecting the split thinking of either/or. Either God or man. Either above or below. Either Elohim or Adonai. What Akiba insists is that both are involved in the benediction of creation. God and humanity. In the motzi benediction, "Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu melech haolam ha-motzi lechem min haaretz" Elohim is revealed in sun, seed, water and soil, the raw material which none of us has created. Still the raw sheaf of wheat is inedible. One needs to have God-given human intelligence, human competence and purpose to till the soil,

to pull the weeds, to water the ground, to grind the wheat, to bake the bread. The Motzi blessing expresses appreciation of the transaction between God and man that transforms sheaves into bread. It blesses the union of facticity and ideality.

It is the same with the kiddush. Baruch atah Adonai Elohenu melech haolam borey pre ha-gefen. Blessed art Thou Adonai Elohim who creates the fruit of the vine. But note the blessing is not made over the grape (though it will not stain the tablecloth) because the blessing of divinity requires the transaction between physical nature and human nature. The term "Adonai" is not introduced in the Bible until the human being is present. Why? It flows from that Judaic theologically revolutionary verse in Judaism (Genesis 1:27). "And God created the human being in His own image, male and female created He them." Of no creation is it said that the divine image is implanted in it except for the human being. If we are formed in God's Image, where else should one search to find the Image of God except in the human being? What is closer to God than the only creation whose divine spirit is blown into his nostrils? Transcendence and immanence are married in the tselem.

This is powerfully expressed in an imaginative Midrash. The angels hear that God intends to create the human being in His image. The angels are jealous and plot to hide the divine image. One angel suggested that the tselem be hidden in the mountains above. Another suggested that man is an adventurous soul and will most likely climb the mountains. Another angel suggested that it be hidden beneath the oceans. But a wiser angel suggested that man loves to explore hidden places and is apt to find the image in the waters beneath. They then conclude that the surest place to hide the divine image is within the human being, himself or herself because that is the last place in the world that man will look to find it. It is the first place to look. Not in the heaven above or beneath the seas.

Adonai God is found and expressed in our hearts, minds and hands. It is because of the tselem, the potential divine image in man that we are enabled to imitate the qualities of God, to visit the sick, to comfort the bereaved, to clothe the naked, to shelter the homeless. We are not paralyzed by the curse of original sin, but free to choose and to change.

If Elohim is the source of all that is, and is found in nature; Adonai is the source of all that ought to be and is to be developed and cultivated, in the human being, by actualizing the potentiality which is the divine image of the human being.

All of this is part of Jewish theology, the world created by Elohim is incomplete. Everything in the created world has to be perfected. In the language of the rabbis in Tankhuma, and in Beresheth 11:6 "The mustard seed needs to be sweetened, the lupine needs to be soaked, the wheat needs to be ground, and the human being needs to be repaired."

We are to repair the creation of Elohim through the transforming power of Adonai that lies potentially with us and between us human beings.

Elohim is the real. Adonai is the ideal. And when we recite "Hear O Israel, Adonai our Elohim is echad -- we mean that the real and the ideal, are one, "is" and "ought" belong together.

All of this is background for my own understanding.

If I could speak to Kenny's father, I would tell him "I understand your anguish and your grieving. But do not be angry at me or at God, at the synagogue or yourself. For this event is a deep terrible tragedy but it is not a judgement, it is not a deliberate planned design. "Olam k'minhago noheg". That does not erase the pain. I have no magic wand to wave, neither for you, nor myself. No miracles, no faith healing, no magic. The Jewish reality principle does not allow me to pretend that the pain is unreal. No matter how I desire it, I cannot erase the pain.

But I can erase the guilt, blame, terror of a punishing wrathful God, the tearing of the flesh. I accept the tragic without guilt or blame or shame. Religious life includes acceptance over that which I have no control.

The integrity of the Jewish reality principle teaches me that I cannot reverse this tragic event by prayer. The Chazal has taught me that time is irreversible. I cannot pray for that which has already happened. The rabbis in Berachoth say he who prays for that which already was prays a vain prayer. One cannot pray, having lost a leg, to grow a limb. But there are things that I can do. I can search out for a suitable prosthetic. I can in crises reach out toward Adonai to appeal to the curative and recuperative powers within me and among us as members of the community: the tselem in "me" and "between us".

I can pray. With Adonai-Elohim theology I pray reflexively "ani mitpallel." When I ask: "Does God care?" Adonai responds: "Do you care?" When I ask: "Does God intervene?" Adonai asks: "Do you intervene?" I am able to internalize the question because God's transcendence is immanent within the tselem. I am a corollary of God because God's image resonates in me.

I can call upon my spiritual intelligence, upon resilient powers to rise above despair. I can for the sake of my family and friends refuse to lay a heavy stone upon them and myself. There are faith attitudes toward adversity that I can cultivate in my prayer. The Mourner's Kaddish is not recited supine. The ritual posture calls for me to stand on my feet. There are things I can do. There are God-given capacities that I can realize in facing tragedy. Like Job (29:13) I can be father to the poor and eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. I can cause the widow's heart to sing with joy.

Adonai is the response of the tselem within me to the given world that surrounds me. The Midrash Tehillim comments on Isaiah's declaration: "Atem aydai neum Adonai v'ani el". "You are My witnesses, says Adonai and I am God". When you are My witnesses, I am God and when you are not My witnesses, I am, as it were, not God." We are the verifiers of God's goodness. "Verificare" -- to make true.

Colleagues, this theological approach may not be yours. I am not pleading for any particular theology, but I am pleading that we do not abandon Kenny's father to cursing God and Judaism in the dark.

And not just Kenny's father, and not solely our need to respond to the existential problems of evil. There are other religious root questions seething in our people. There is a spiritual hunger in our people that leaks out through closed lips. There is hunger for a responsible, sane spirituality. We must not be mislead. We are a thinking people and ours is a thinking faith. There is a spiritual yearning for more than red strings around the wrist, or the wearing of "kamea" amulets, more than a surrender of critical reason and a submission to the theurgy of gurus.

In matters such as synagogue affiliation and attendance, marketing techniques and liturgical aesthetics will not fill the vacuity of belief. Behaving and belonging alone will not cover the nakedness of believing. Behaving and belonging call for believing. Liturgy cries out for theology. The presupposition of earnest liturgy is a credible theology. You cannot urge "pray" without guiding people to understand the character of the God addressed in prayer.

There is a hunger for authentic Jewish answers to such questions as the efficacy of prayer, the literal account of miracles, and revelation. You and I know that there are profound Jewish answers. There are authentic alternative Jewish theologies. But sadly they are not heard in the course of Jewish schooling.

How long shall we rabbis bear the litany of the complaints of adults who only recall their elementary religious school education as boring, irrelevant, unbelievable? How long shall we hear that college is "the disaster area" of our youth. Of course, disaster area. They enter college theologically unprepared, without a credible mature Jewish theology. They enter the college intellectually vulnerable before the caricatures of Judaism portrayed by Spinoza, Kant, Hegel and Fichte who reduce the philosophy and spirituality of Judaism only to obedience and observance. That our teacher, Abraham Joshua Heschel called the "Halachic heresy" -- to teach "dinim" and "minhagim" isolates from the philosophy of Midrash and aggadah.

Once when they were young they did ask questions about reality, about serpents and donkeys who speak, about the ethics of the akedah and the miraculous brazen serpent. They sought from Judaism guides to identify what is real and what they can trust. But they were not answered. And if they were answered it was with the dead hand of literalist dogma or pushed aside with the whisper "shpeter" i.e. "later". And later never comes. Certainly not in college.

Three weeks from tonight they will sit muted around the Seder table, "sheayni yodea lishol" -- the fourth son who cannot ask, not because he is simple or naive, but because he has long lost confidence in the moral and intellectual credibility of the response. Who were his teachers? Largely "dovray ivrith". But linguistic fluency is no substitute for theological lucidity. The Hebrew teachers were taught and teach how to translate. They too were not taught how to answer.

The theological black hole creates a muteness. Our deepest challenge At p'tach lo -- open them up.

We hear about "baale tshuvah" those who seek apodictic responses and mandates to obey and observe without question. God bless the "chozrim b'tshuvah". But I see, hear and meet a much larger potential constituency who have questions ignored. Young and old within us, who with our encouragement, can become "chozrim b'shelah", "baale shelah", those who seek to return with a recovered question. They are new spiritual seekers of our times, who ask not only "how", "when", "where" but "what for". "What for" is the major "fragestellung" of our new age. The questions they ask are not only factual, but teleological. And therein lies the province of Jewish theology. My two teachers at the Seminary Mordecai M. Kaplan and Abraham Joshua Heschel held different theological approaches to Judaism. But both bemoaned the absence of Jewish theology, the poverty of the God-ideas in our people's lives, the shallowness that reduced the spirituality of Judaism to "pots and pantheism". When Heschel addressed the Solomon Schecter Day School principals, he said, it is demeaning to reduce the philosophy of Judaism to "shor shemogach et haparah" -- to the ox that gores a cow.

We must not succumb to the negators of Judaism -- a la Spinoza who maintained that Judaism is legalism, unconcerned with truth or ideas that addressed the existential promptings of the heart.

We enter a new era of search and choice that calls for a theological revival; to open up the prematurely buried questions of the muted and to resurrect the hidden texts of courageous Midrashim and pluralistic theologies from great Jewish thinkers.

We are products of a Jewish Theological Seminary. We must teach the teachers of our Hebrew Schools and our congregants a "blat" Heschel, a sugyah Soloveitchik, a "maamar" Kaplan, a "machlokes Buber and Rosenzweig; a "drash" of Rav Kuk and a "perush" of Samson Raphael Hirsch. Their theological "chidushim" should not be wasted. We need their spiritual courage and pertinence. We need a chevrah Aggadah in our communities to restore our theological dignity.

The Haggadah of freedom insists on raising the question. Slaves do not question. The road to Jewish revival begins with reverence for the question.

My zayda used to say "Fun a kashe ken men nisht shtarben"-- from a question, you cannot die". He was only half right. "Fun a kashe, ken men leben" -- from a question you can begin to live again.

They are there in and out of our congregation. Together we can open them up. Let them learn to ask and together let us dare to answer.

Schulweis, Harold. "Theological Courage." Rabbinical Assembly Address at Valley Beth Shalom Website. 2003. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/synthera.htm. (17 February 2003).

THE TWO FACES OF GOD

by Harold M. Schulweis

There is chutzpah in attending to the Achilles heel of faith that has led so many to hubble and desperately reach out for crutches. Who are we to deal with one of the perennial problems of theology when so many before us have stumbled?

I do not regard this effort as audacity but as part of the tradition that recognizes the sanctity of the question. We cannot bury the difficult questions for fear that dealing with them will weaken our belief system. We cannot continue to evade or postpone the questions or drown them with ritual orthopraxy.

I take courage in my hands and here the counsel of my mother who in Yiddish once said "Fun a kashe ken men nisht shtarben."

I believe that we must resurrect the prematurely buried questions of our youth and wrestle with them. For in the course of such wrestling with the angel we will discover our own religious vitality and a deeper meaning in our life.

The root problem we will be dealing with is called theodicy, a term invented by Leibniz in the 17th century which he took from the Greek "theos" and "dike" -- the justice of God. In Jewish thinking this theodicy is called "tzidduk ha-din", the justification of God in the face of evil.

The problem is inescapable, pervasive. It comes early and stays late with us. It hovers over our understanding of prayer, miracles, sin, redemption. It is, in short, a profound root problem with many branches.

Raymond, at age eight, wrote this letter: "Dear God, I prayed a whole week. I got left back. Thanks. Raymond." Raymond in his young anger is questioning the efficacy of prayer -- does it work? -- and the goodness of God -- would it hurt him to have given him a passing grade?

Susie prayed for a Cabbage Patch doll. She didn't get it. She asked her Sunday School teacher whether God hears prayers and answers them. The teacher assured her that God does hear and answer. Susie asks "Why then didn't God answer my prayers?" The teacher, well trained in such matters answered "God did answer. He said 'no'." The answer may have postponed further questions. But the answer did Susie no favor. Religious answers have an afterlife of their own. Years later when Susie mother was hospitalized with a serious illness, Susie prayed but her mother died. What is she to think? Did God say "no"? Was it because Susie was not good or because her mother was not good or her father was not good? This kind of theology gives rise to anger and frustration. Did God say no to those who prayed in Auschwitz? in Hiroshima? in Bosnia? "God said 'no'" is too facile an answer. And it did not consider Susie's theological life.

When I was an adolescent I read a novel by Nathaniel West called Miss Lonelyhearts which included a letter to Miss Lonely Hearts.

Dear Miss Lonelyhearts,

I am 16 years old now and don't know what to do and would appreciate it if you could tell me what to do. When I was a little girl it was not so bad because I got used to the kids on the block making fun of me but now I would like to have boyfriends like the other girls and go out of Saturday nights but no boy will take me because I was born without a nose, although I am a good dancer and have a nice shape and my father buys me pretty clothes.I sit and look at myself all day and cry. I have a big hole in the middle of my face that scares people, even myself so I can't blame the boys for not wanting to take me out. My mother loves me but she cries terribly when she looks at me.What did I do to deserve such a terribly bad fate? Even if I

did do some bad things, I didn't do any before I was a year old and I was born this way. I asked papa and he says he doesn't know but that maybe I was being punished for his sins. I don't believe that because he is a very nice man. Ought I commit suicide?

Sincerely yours,
Desperate

It is not a question for Ann Landers or Abigail Van Buren. It is a theological question - religious question. Of course the question "Why me?" is not like other factual questions - "Why is the sky blue? Why does metal expand when heated?". "Why me?" is not so much a call for cognition, as it is a cry for recognition. "Why" means "woe" and to the cry of "woe" - what is required is not a good theological answer but a compassionate response. What is called for is the presence of a caring friend, the comfort of a supportive arm, the consolation of an embrace.

But we are not off the hook with emotional response. More than psychology is called for. There is a crisis of faith. "Why me?" expresses a crisis of faith, a challenge that shakes the foundation of conventional belief. The question "Why me?" presupposes a theology: universe of design in which whatever happens - for good or for bad - is a result of divine judgment. If you scratched the itch, "Why" means "who" and "what for". We are raised to believe that things just don't happen. There are reasons. Am I being punished? Is this accident, sickness, death a reward or punishment? The "Why me?" question is especially severe for monotheism. For when we recite the Shma - that ends with echad - it means reality is one - that nothing and no one else can explain tragedy. There is no power greater than God to blame. When you say there is One God, it means there is no primordial force, no diabolical other, no Satan, no demon, no other God but God to ultimately explain our predicament.

A positive note.

The question "Why me?" has Jewish resonance in the Netaneh Tokef, the major prayer of the High Holy Days. "On New Year's day the decree is inscribed and on the Day of Atonement is it sealed. How many shall pass away and how many shall be born; who shall live and who shall die; who shall attain the measure of man's days and who shall not attain it; who shall perish by fire and who by water; who by sword and who by beast, who by hunger and who by thirst, who by earthquake and who by plague, who by strangling and who by stoning, (who shall have rest and who shall go wandering, who shall be tranquil and who shall be disturbed, who shall be at ease and who shall be afflicted, who shall become poor and who shall wax rich, who shall be brought low and who shall be exalted?) But repentance, prayer and righteousness avert the severe decree."

It has disturbed thoughtful men and women and not a few of them have come to me with a sense of frustration and protest and resentment. This letter I received from Martha before the Day of Atonement.

"Until this morning I have spent the High Holidays, if not in the spirit of fear and trembling before a God of justice, then at least in the sure knowledge that it is appropriate to review my actions of the past year, to give real thought to my failures and to resolve to be a better person and a better citizen.) Until this morning I knew the central liturgy of the holiday well but before this year I had approached it in an abstract, intellectual manner. This year I could not do so. Several months ago I had surgery for cancer and I felt very keenly as I approached these days that in a real sense my fate for the coming year has been written if not in a book of judgment then in my own body. I look forward to health but I may not be granted it. As I read, the questions of the service were familiar. 'How many shall pass away and how many shall be born; who shall live and who shall die?' But the response - "repentance, prayer and righteousness avert the severe decree" - for the first time carried a terrifying implication. It seemed to me as I read this that my own liturgy was binding my fate to my behavior, that my illness, seen in this light have been the result of some terrible unknown transgression, and that the ultimate punishment for failure to discover and correct it could be my death.

I do not believe this - not with my head nor with my heart. Nevertheless, as a committed Jew who takes language very seriously and believes in community prayer, I would be forced to repeat the central cornerstone over and over should I attend services for Yom Kippur. It seems today that my choice is a terrible one: to flagellate myself emotionally by joining my congregation or to spare my feelings is isolating myself from my family, my friends, my community. It is a choice I never believed I would have to make.

I know there must be others in our congregation who sit suffering silently, as I did today, who wish to join Jews around the world at this time but find the price too high to pay. I do not write expecting an easy answer; Holocaust literature has taught me that there may be no answer at all. I write instead because I must, because to muffle my sadness and my anger will destroy something in the commitment that I have worked so hard to build. I write with pain hoping that from the expression of my dilemma will grow some insight, some way to cope.

With respect & affection,
Martha

How do I respond to her letter? Do I think that her cancer is linked to her behavior? Do I trace her suffering to sin? She is asking about the way religion deals with reality. Do I believe that the pain and the terror and death are manifestations of God? It is a prayer that gives me much difficulty. Common moral sense convinces me that there are misfortunes that befell Martha that have no bearing whatsoever upon the character or conduct of the afflicted.

More personally I recall one of the early funerals that I officiated when I first came to Oakland. They brought in a small casket no larger than a crib. Within it was the body of a deceased child. Is this God's will, His judgment? Did I believe that there was any sinfulness in this child or in her family, that there was any guilt or blame to explain this tragedy? Did God judge her? What does God have to do with her illness and the torment of this child's parents? The question haunts me. It is a root question having many forms.

Do I believe that 1.5 million Jewish children died in the Holocaust because of some punishment or reward? Do I explain Hiroshima as God's will? How does God fit in the explanation of the devastation wrought by natural evils: earthquakes, volcanos, floods, hurricanes? Are these "acts of God" as the lawyers call it?

How does your view of God fit into your understanding of reality? Let's go back to the sources: the Bible and the Prayer Book. While a sacred literature of our people insists that God is one, it is curious that more than one name of divinity used. In the Bible and liturgy two names of God are used. One is Elohim which is translated as God, the other one is Adonai which is translated as Lord. Every benediction incorporates both. Baruch ata Adonoi Elohenu. (2) And in the prayer that we recite twice daily both of those names appear as one. Shma Israel Adonoi Elohenu Adonoi Echad. (3) At the end of the Yom Kippur service there is the concluding sentence which is repeated seven times in a crescendo out loud "Adonai hu Elohim" - the Lord is God.

Why two names for one God?

To me it suggests that there are two faces to God, two dimensions to divinity which are one and yet distinct. Both dimensions portray reality = religious reality.

E L O H I M

We notice to begin with the first time we come across the term "Elohim - God" is in the opening chapter of Genesis. There the word Elohim is used exclusively. Elohim refers to the God of creation, the God of nature, the God of natural laws: the God who is the reality principle of the world that explains the way things are, not the way things ought to be. But the God of the laws of physical gravitation not the laws of moral revelation.

The distinction reminds me of an incident at the Oakland airport when a mother sending her child off on an airplane for a visit to her grandmother stood beside me as I was about to board the same plane. She had somehow discovered that I was a rabbi and was assured that nothing tragic would befall the plane since I was a clergyman on the same plane with her daughter. I did not disabuse her of her new found joy but I am convinced that she was holding on to a dubious theology. Why? Because when the 707 goes down, you look for the black box - not the ledger that tests the moral character of the passengers aboard. A ledger of the virtues and vices of the passenger list will not explain or justify the success or failure of the flight. Why not? The laws of gravitation are indifferent to the character of saint or sinner and those laws are the creation of Elohim. That is a reality principle in the tradition, that is frequently ignored but I want to take a moment so that we understand what that reality principle means. It is important to understand Jewish prayer and Jewish response to evil.

Judaism is not wishful thinking, it is not magic, not fantasy. It is real. To believe in God, a real God is to believe in reality. I offer you a Talmudic discussion found in the Talmud (Avodah Zarah 54b) in which the fairness and character of the world is being discussed. The rabbis in the Mishnah and Talmud are being challenged by the philosophers in Rome. They ask "If your God has no desire for idolatry why doesn't He abolish it?" In other words, why doesn't God intervene? The answer they give is that people worship sun, moon, stars, planets, etc. But all these are needed in the world. Should God destroy the universe on account of fools who make these into idols? Nature pursues its own course. The rabbis respond, "Suppose a man stole a measure of wheat and went and sowed it in the ground. It would surely be right that the wheat should not grow but the world pursues its natural course." The rabbis go on to give another illustration. "Suppose a man has intercourse with his neighbor's wife. It would surely be right that she should not conceive but the world pursues its natural course." The world pursues its own natural course means that nature is not a court of justice!

DNA is not moral judgment -- DIN. Nature itself neither validates nor proscribes thievery or adultery. That is mature, realistic view of reality. That is consonant with Talmudic tradition which tells you that you can't pray for anything you want. Prayer must follow limits of reality. Prayer is not rubbing Aladdin's lamp, you pray with. So the Talmud in Berachoth declares: "If after conception I pray that the embryo in my wife's womb should be a male -- that is considered Tefillat Shav -- a vain, foolish prayer. Hatzoek L'shavar Harei Zu Tefillat Shav -- you can't pray about something that has occurred." If you look back, you become like Lot's wife: a pillar of salt. History is irreversible. You can't pray the dead spring to life. You can't pray that the amputated should spring limbs. You can pray for courage, for prosthetic limbs - that within parameters of our control. But you can't pray against reality and the source of that reality, Elohim. This aspect of nature which is beyond human control belongs to God as Elohim. (PAUSE TO EXPLAIN)

So from this perspective of Elohim: while every event has a cause, not every cause is morally intentioned. Every event leads to a consequence. Earthquake, fire, deformity, cancer may be explained in terms of natural causes and natural consequences: but not in terms of rewards and punishment for behavior. Martha's DNA or her inherited genes or chromosomes are neither morally praiseworthy not blameworthy. The child born of addictive parents, for example, suffers as a consequence of substance abuse by its parents but those consequences are not divine judgments. Causes and consequences are not curses nor cures.

When consequences are taken to be divine punishments, when causes are taken to be divine intentions, when natural events are taken to be divine designs, we open a door to a conflict of faith that, I am suggesting, can be avoided. Let me illustrate the nature of that conflict. If the AIDS victim is a child and it is interpreted as a divine judgment, we are naturally going to protest the judgment. Let me illustrate this from the Midrash. In the book of Exodus we read that the iniquity of the parents will be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. In the rabbinic Midrash Moses argues that it is not just to conduct the world in this fashion, to visit the iniquity of the parents upon the children. He argues on the basis of history. Moses says to God, "Terach was an evil man but he produced Abraham, a moral figure. Achaz was a wicked king but he produced a noble king in Hezekiah. Amon was a wicked king but he produced Yosheahu who was a good king." The response that God gives to Moses' objection are

fascinating. He saysAnd in Deuteronomy 24:16 "The father shall not be put to death for the children."

Why do guilt, accusation, blame seem to follow every tragedy? In part because of a naive, primitive presupposition: every event is judgment. When I suffer heart attack or my child is affected with a congenital defect or my wife is hurt in an automobile accident, or my family is caught in fire, storm, earthquake it is a judgment of God, "an act of God". It fills me with guilt/ blame. It turns me either into a masochist blaming myself for every misfortune or into an angry atheist, shaking my fist against the Heavens: God is dead.

A cause is not a curse and a consequence is not a judgment. AIDS, for example, is a consequence of acts/ but consequence is not a punishment. This is part of the reality principle which the rabbis explain with the phrase "nature pursues its own course" which belongs to the character of God as Elohim. Yehuda Halevi (11th century) Kus am distinguished the God of the philosopher as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob writes: "Elohim governs and manages the universe 'without any change in His nature, without feelings of sympathy with one or anger against another." Elohim guides the world neutrally ad according to the axiom of the prophet Zephaniah (4:12). "He will do not good, and neither will He do evil."

Don't stop listening. Please don't leave me here.

Let me caution you that I have not completed describing the whole of divinity. When I speak to you of Elohim I only speak to you of one half of divinity, one face of divinity, but it is an important half. There is the world of accidents and events which confront us whose cause may be traced to the God of creation. Over these we have no control. As the rabbis put it "We are born by dint of force and we die by dint of force." No one asked us when to be born, to whom to be born, with what to be born and no one asks us when, where and how to die. Knowing this I must understand that the things which happen to me over which I have no control are not things about which I can ask "What did I do to deserve this?" Nature pursues its own course. Theology should not pour the salt of blame on open wounds of tragedy.

What did I read/ say/ eulogize at the funeral of that small child that I referred to earlier? I opened the Bible to the section in which King David (II Samuel) discovers that his child is dead. "He then arose from the earth, washed, anointed himself, changed his apparel, came into the house of the Lord and worshipped, came to his own house and when he required his servants set bread before him and he did eat. When the servants wondered what he was doing saying, 'You fasted and wept while the child was alive but now when the child is dead you rise and eat bread' David answered with the wisdom of acceptance. 'While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept for I said who knows whether the Lord will not be gracious to me that the child may live but now that he is dead wherefore shall I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him but he will not return to me.'"

Nature pursues its own course and there are times to acknowledge the futility of fasting, weeping, praying to change nature's natural course.

Acceptance is a part of spiritual wisdom. It is not defeat but a wisdom that accepts nature without neurotic, masochist guilt, blame, and shame as if what happened was the result of a judgment of her inadequacy, of her sinfulness.

ADONAI

But acceptance does not exhaust the human response to events nor does Elohim exhaust the full character of divinity. There are times when acceptance is in order and there are times when acceptance is premature, poor psychology and poor theology.

Here enters Adonai!

If Elohim is the term first encountered in the creation of the universe (Genesis chapter 1) -- Adonai Lord is

first encountered when the human being enters the picture as active participant (Chapter 2) -- when God created earth and heaven there was no shrub of the field, no grasses that sprouted because "The Lord God Adonai-Elohim had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil" (Genesis chapter 2). When man enters the picture, Adonai the Lord of humanity is discovered. Genesis 4:26 "Men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Adonai) only with the birth of Enosh (humanity), the son of Seth. We pray Adonai over that which we can change, over that which we can make a difference. In prayers of petition we don't pray BAURCH ELOHIM. You need both Elohim and Adonai because you need to know the world as it is, the world of Genesis I, and the world as it ought to be, the world of Adonai, the world of the ideal. But real and ideal, Elohim and Adonai are complementary. "Ought" without "is" tends toward reliance upon fantasy and human passivity. "Is" without "ought" tends toward a pantheism that deifies the status quo and is oblivious to the reality of transformation.

There are times when one turns one's face to Elohim but to Adonai - not to the God of creation but to the Lord of transformation. At Martha's bedside I do not lie to her, I do not contradict the doctor's prognosis. Judaism is not Pollyanna. I open her up to spiritual reality. I go back to Ecclesiastes Rabbah 5:6 to the frightened and dying congregant. It is based on a description in the Bible (II Kings: Chapter 20) depicting a confrontation between King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah. "When the king was ill the prophet Isaiah was summoned by God to the king's bedside. Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz approached the king and told him 'Set thy house in order for thou shalt die and not live.' The king is angered and responded 'Son of Amoz finish your prophecy and go for I have this tradition from the house of my ancestor that even if a sharp sword rests upon a man's neck he should not desist from prayer.' With that Hezekiah turned his face from Isaiah to the wall and prayed to the Lord." A rabbinic comment on Hezekiah's response elaborates the king's rebuke of the prophet. "The king said in effect 'it is customary that a person when visiting the sick should say 'may mercy be shown upon you from heaven'. When the physician he tells the sick 'Eat this and do not eat that, drink this and do not drink that.' Even when he sees him near death he does not say to him 'Set thy house in order' because this might upset him. You however tell me 'Set thy house in order for thou shalt die and not live.' I pay no attention to what you say nor will I listen to your advice. I hold on to nothing else than what my ancestors said." In the Bible, Isaiah the very prophet who prophesied Hezekiah's imminent death is chosen by God to tell the king that the Lord has heard his prayer, seen his tears and has added fifteen years to his life. Hezekiah triumphed over Isaiah's doomsday prophecy.

Notice that the response of King Hezekiah was not the response of King David. In the instance of David the child was no longer alive. The religious wisdom left to him was that of acceptance. David rent his garments, mourned his loss, recited his acceptance "The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away." This is the world that pursues its own natural course.

But Hezekiah while dangerously ill was not yet dead. There were options left to him and it was right for him not to cave in to Isaiah's judgment.

When is acceptance in order, when is transformation in order e.g. whether or not the use of heroic measures with the terminally ill, whether pulling the plug means to extend life or prolong death involves us in the deep choice of acceptance or transformation, Elohim or Adonai.

"True wisdom" said the poet "is the ability to act when it is necessary on the basis of incomplete information." The prognosis of physician is not the last word. There are transformative curative powers of Adonai which exist within him and between him and the world. Like acceptance, hope and trust are forms of reality and of wisdom. The Talmud states that forty nine doors of understanding out of fifty were opened to Moses. When someone asked how Moses could continue without the fiftieth door, it was answered "Seeing that it was closed to him Moses substituted faith." Wisdom balances acceptance and transformation.

"Hope must never die too far ahead of the patient." In Greek the mythology of Pandora's Box, hope comes from the box of curses -- not so in the Jewish tradition. There is a wonderful life affirmation that is filtered down into Jewish folk stories. You may remember the story of the poor man who was gathering sticks of

wood in the forests, packing them in a torn sack, throwing the sack over his bony shoulders and then stumbling. The sticks scattered to the earth. Frustrated the poor man cried to God, "Send me the angel of death and take me from this earth for I am sick and full of sorrow." His prayer was promptly answered and before him appears the angel of death asking "Did you call for me?" "Yes. Yes", stammered the frail man. "Listen - angel - could you help me gather up these sticks?"

ELOHIM&ADONOI

We need both. Sally needs both Elohim and Adonoi, both acceptance and transformation to confront her tragedy. Acceptance acknowledges our limitation and frees us from affects of guilt. Cancer is real but it is not punishment. Cancer is real but it does not signal guilt. Cancer is real but it does not mean that this is the last or only word. Sally's cancer is fault free. It is not a sentence of Adonoi, it is the consequence of Elohim -the God of nature, the ground of Being. Talmud Sabbath 55b "There is death without sin and suffering without iniquity."

When I sit with Martha -- I would dearly love to wave a magic wand to heal her with faith. But Elohim - reality principle - stops me from the lure of theurgy. Maimonides, in one of his rulings:

> One who recites a spell over a wound or recites a verse in Torah to cure the sick or places on an infant to induce it to sleep. Repudiate the Torah. For they use the words to cure the body wherein they are only medicine for the soul. This is consonant with the Talmudic dictum that it is prohibited to live in a place where there is no doctor.

The Elohim factor, the reality principle, keeps faith and prayer from theurgy and magic. Magic is not concerned with the reality or morality of the petition. Magic is concerned only with getting the end. When Susie of the Cabbage Patch Doll asked is she can pray for anything, she should have been told she cannot. When she asks whether she can pray for an "A", she should be introduced to the distinction between prayer and magic. To pray for an "A" is to pray for a result, is granting the prize independent of the moral meaning of the end or the reality means to achieve it. She must be informed that the meaning of study is not the getting of the "A" but the mastery of the subject. If the end is the "A", cheating on the exam may be justified. What can Susie rightly and realistically pray for? For the patience to study, for the understanding as to why she is studying. If I would put it boldly, prayer that is not magical always appeals to the petitioner and her community to do something about the petition. To pray for peace without doing anything about it is like praying for health while resting on the couch eating a hot pastrami sandwich.

The Adonai principle of ideality needs to be rooted in the soil of reality.

In a private meeting Martha asked what "meaning in my life" remained for her. For her as a young mother all meaning was tied to raising up her children and family. "Meaning for me", she asserted, "is in raising her children to be strong, to help them learn how to cope with the abrasiveness of live to teach them to face the challenge of adversity. Now that my death is imminent, meaning for her had disappeared."

It is here that we spoke about Adonai, the capacity of men and women to accept the "given" and to transform it. You Martha want to teach children character and how to live. "Your children Martha know how sick you are. In your sickness, you teach them lessons they will cherish the rest of their lives. Sick and suffering you teach them how to love, how to cling to faith, living you teach and dying you also teach." A rabbinic legend concludes the righteous are informed of the day of their death so that they may hand the crown to their children."

Please note I am not saying to Martha that the meaning of her sickness is that it offers her this teaching role to her children. In a desperate search for meaning, people seek to justify suffering e.g. poverty leads to charity, sickness to research. Let a child be born mute and deaf and blind and you have Helen Keller. This has it wrong. That we can make something noble or meaningful out of tragedy does not explain the cause or

justify the tragedy suffering.

I didn't lose my child in order to become compassionate. God didn't test me in order to sensitize me. The Holocaust did not happen so that Israel should be created. But the creation of Israel is the godly response to genocide, not the cause of the Shoah. We experience godliness - the Adonoi dimension - when we transform "what is" into what "ought to be". I direct Sally to the second part of the prayer -(Tshuvah, Tefillah, Tzedakah) inner transformation, prayer and acts of kindness refer to the powers of Adonai, even in extreme conditions.

Elohim is not the last word. What can I do after the tragedy to regain my dignity? There is always something to be done! That is I have seen after tragedy I can volunteer my services to those afflicted. I can help wipe away the tears of the widow and orphans and help raise the fallen. Even after my death, my organs can be willed during my life to open the eyes of the blind and give new heart to the crippled. That is the Adonai response to death. In life, with life to gain "organic immortality". Salvage out of the catastrophe some measure of meaning.

When I declared the oneness of God, the Lord our God is one: both real and ideal are one. Adonai is found in our human capacity to change/ repair/ mend/ transcend/ transform. In Judaism, everything that is created there is the need for transformation. That is the core of tikkun olam. "The mustard seed needs to be sweetened, the lupine needs to be soaked in water, the wheat needs to be ground and the human being needs to be repaired."

This transaction between Elohim and Adonai, between the given and transformal, is expressed in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine. In tanchuma (Tazria 19:5) Tinnus Rufus challenges Rabbi Akiba sheaves of wheat or loaves of challah, not to deprecate God but to find God's expression in the transaction between the given: the soil, sun, water, seed and that which is transformed by human effort -- to tell the soil, plant, seed, water, harvest, grind and bless the bread. The motzi blessing is not over sheaves. The kiddush is not over wine.

There is a time to accept/ and a time to reject/ a time for waiting and a time for dancing/ a time for speaking and a time for keeping silence/ a time for fighting and a time for seeking peace. Both God and Lord are reflected in me! Need both for harmony, balance, wholeness, integrity. In me are Elohim and Adonai.

WISDOM & HOPE

I am created in the image of Divinity. That is in the image of Elohim and the image of Adonoi. In me are energies, powers that are given to me, my DNA, my libido; my drives = morally neutral. They are neither rewards or punishments. In me is the image of capacities to transcend, to overcome, to repair, to transform, to create "a second nature". If Elohim in me is id and libido, Adonoi in me is ego and superego.

Hope turns me towards the power to transform, to draw upon the curative forces that enable me to conquer despair and cynicism and surrender. In the words of J. B. Soloveitchik: "We have real capacities. We are created in God's image and in the image of the Lord. In Elohim & Adonoi - we know that we are our own redeemers, our own creators, our own messiahs to rescue ourselves from the darkness.

Schulweis, Harold. "The Two Faces of God." Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/faces.htm. (21 December 2001).

WAS GOD IN THE EARTHQUAKE

by Harold M. Schulweis

Following the 6.7 on the Richter scale earthquake in our community, the children of the Day School and Hebrew School were brought together to talk about their fears. The re-iterated question they asked was "Why is God so angry at us?" Much the same question was asked by their parents.

Where did that question come from? Are we teaching our children and adults a theology that leads them to believe that where there is smoke, there is God's fire? Are we teaching them that catastrophe, indiscriminate disasters are, as the lawyers say "acts of God"? Are we in our theological teaching preparing the ground for guilt, accusation, self-recrimination? Is that the healthy minded, realistic tradition of the Jewish faith?

The quake shook the foundations of a belief system. How do we who believe in one and only one God explain the "dybbuk" that entered our houses, flung open drawers, shattered furniture and glass, collapsed chimneys and foundations?

I shared with the questioners my belief which is grounded in the Jewish tradition. Two familiar names of divinity stand side by side in our prayers and in our Bible. One name is Elohim, the other is Adonai. Different, yet one. Hear O Israel the Lord (Adonai) our God (Elohim), the Lord is One. The names that describe one divinity are different. The name Elohim in the first chapter of Genesis is used exclusively. Elohim is the God of nature, the life of the universe, the author of all creation. Elohim is the God who creates lion and lamb, light and darkness, the eagle and its prey. Elohim is the Jewish reality principle "Nature pursues its own course", our sages taught, and Elohim is the ground of nature. Nature includes earthquake, hurricane, tornado, sun, moon and mountains. Through the eyes of Elohim the whole of existence is "very good". One can command nature only by obeying it, understanding its ways.

The world of Elohim is not a court of justice. In this sense the world is not fair. But that is not the whole world nor is Elohim the whole of divinity. Were Elohim the only description of God's way we would be pantheists, equating God with nature. We would submit to nature and live according to nature. But Judaism knows another dimension of Divinity, Adonai. It is the name that is introduced in the Bible with the creation of humanity (Genesis 2:5; 4:26). If Elohim refers to that which is, Adonai refers to that which ought to be. If Elohim is the source of all that is given, Adonai is the power that transforms givenness, repairs the broken shards, mends the torn fabric, holds back the chaos.

Why the earthquake and where is God? There are powers, energies, colliding forces that scientists identify. Theologians have no better or alternative explanation. The laws of tectonics that the seismologists describe, theologians may trace to Elohim. In that sense and only in that sense Elohim is in the earthquake. Elohim is a-moral, revealing the transcendent power out of the whirlwind as we read in the concluding chapter of the book of Job.

But where is Adonai in the earthquake? In the energies and talents of His divinity as imaged in creation, in people in their individual and collective behavior to protect, sustain and comfort those who suffer. Adonai is present when we are present and it is through our godly behavior that belief in His existence and goodness is demonstrated. The rabbis ask in a Midrash (based on Deuteronomy 13:5) how it is possible for human beings to follow the devouring fire of God? The answer is that we are to imitate the attributes of Adonai. As Adonai clothes the naked, feeds the hungry, shelters the homeless, visits the sick, comforts the mourners, buries the dead, so faith in Adonai within and between us mandates us to emulate His qualities.

The earthquake is not a moral judgment of God. It is the consequence of the amoral world of nature. A natural cause is not a divine moral intention, a natural consequence is not a divine curse.

The Jewish answer to the question "where is God in the earthquake?" is typically another question: where are we in the earthquake? What have we done to alleviate the suffering of its victims, to calm the frightened, shelter and feed those made homeless? What have we done and what will we do to anticipate and mitigate the effects of the turbulence? With Adonai, there is always something to be done.

If we are paralyzed by the shock and after-shocks of the earthquake, it is because we have split apart Elohim and Adonai, as if they were separate Gods. Left with Elohim alone, we incline toward passivity. Left with Adonai alone, we tend to ignore the principle of reality. In the Sh'ma we proclaim the unity of both, the nexus of the real and the ideal, of nature and morality. That unity is to be achieved by binding Elohim and Adonai together. That unification calls for deepening our belief and behavior. "On that day Adonai will be One and His name One" (Zechariah 14:9). Toward this end I pray:

"Blessed art Thou O Lord our God King of the universe whose strength and might fill the world" Elohim creates day and night, light and darkness. Lion and lamb, Bacteria and penicillin. Gives power to the fowl above the earth, To the great sea monsters below, To every living creature that creeps on the earth.

And Elohim said, It is very good. All existence is good in the eyes of Elohim, the God of the first chapter of Genesis, Elohim who spoke to Job out of the whirlwind.

Who laid the cornerstones of earth? Who shut up the sea with doors When it broke forth and issued out of the womb? Who caused it to rain on a land where no man is? On the wilderness, wherein there is no man?

Elohim the God of Omnipotence before whom we recognize our own impotence, "Canst Thou bind the chain of the Pleides or loose the bands or Orion?" Elohim the God of Omniscience before we whom we recognize our ignorance, "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you number the clouds by wisdom?" Elohim before whom we bow our heads and bend our knees. the sovereign God whose power and reality we accept.

But Elohim is not the whole of divinity. Alongside Elohim is Adonai. This is our affirmation of oneness. Hear Israel, Adonai our Elohim is One.

Adonai the Lord of all that ought to be. Adonai revealed in the yearning and behavior of His human creation for justice, for fairness, for peace, for harmony. Adonai in the vision of a compassionate society. Adonai in the transformation of chaos and violence and the void of the universe, into order, sanity, and love.

Adonai in the mending of the universe, the repair of the world, the binding of bruises, the gathering of fragmented sparks buried in the husks of the world. Adonai revealed in the discovery of the self created in the image of Adonai-Elohim, the Lord God, who breathed into our nostrils and made us a living soul.

Elohim/Adonai, Acceptance and transformation, the reality of what is, the reality of what ought to be the reality of what is yet to be.

Schulweis, Harold. "Was God In the Earthquake?" Article at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/earth.htm. (9 January 2002).

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED FROM THE CLINTON AFFAIR

National Public Radio commentary, February 12, 1999

by Harold M. Schulweis

I have learned from the Clinton affair how unprepared our technologically sophisticated society is to deal with moral issues, and specifically how to transmit moral wisdom to our children. Parents ask "What are we to say to our children about the conduct of the most powerful leader of our country and the world?" I suggest they sit down with their child before an open Bible and ask "What are we to say about David, the king and psalmist, who was revealed to be a murderer and an adulterer?" Moreover, what are we to say to children about the patriarchs and matriarchs who are revealed as men and women flawed, fallible, yet capable of moral heroism and acts of unsurpassed fidelity.

Let them recover the wisdom of Ecclesiastes who observed "There is no righteous person upon earth who does good and has not sinned."

The reality principle of the Bible will help them understand that it is foolhardy to expect from any single person or leader, whatever his celebrity and power, to be the model to be emulated. They will then understand the Bible's fear of idolatry, the deification of any man or woman.

The Bible does not compartmentalize its figures into saints or sinners, heroes or villains. It knows that the sinner can have dimensions of moral character. And this is as true of King David as it is of Oscar Schindler.

Further, if we cannot deal with the Clinton affair it is because we have reduced the complexity of moral character into a matter of sex alone. Character is a multifaceted quality which includes not only sexual attitudes but also projects and programs rooted in compassion for the weaker vessels of society, protection of the persecuted pariahs, and defense of the voiceless.

In the face of bitter partisan acrimony, I note the wisdom of the sages who warned that when the kettle boils over, the boiling water spills over all its sides. No one, "managers" or defenders, emerges from this trial by ordeal unscathed. "If a man spits in the air, it will fall on his face." Genuine patriotism calls for a transcendent vision of harmony and purpose beyond the parochialism of partisan politics.

Schulweis, Harold. "What I Have Learned from the Clinton Affair." Radio Address archived at Valley Beth Shalom Website.1999 http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/clinton.htm. (18 February 2003).

RETHINKING GOOD AND EVIL A REVIEW

EUGENE BOROWITZ

Evil and the Morality of God by Harold M. Schulweis, with a foreword by Chaim Potok. HUC Press, 1984, $15.00, hardcover only.

Before World War II only the rare American rabbi devoted himself to philosophy. In the decade after the war, a group of rabbis—some of whom were of German descent—began to express interest in a philosophy of Judaism. In due course, some abandoned the Jewish quest in favor of the general field. Others made their way to academe, yet kept their commitment to Jewish speculation. Only a few entered and remained in the congregational rabbinate. Harold Schulweis is surely one of the most notable of this group, and we may now share in his intellectual life through his recently published study of theodicy, *Evil and the Morality of God*.

I hope the book will find the thoughtful readers it merits. We do not often come across religious writing such as this, writing in which acute intelligence and moral passion appeal to the reader with precision and brevity. (The book totals 168 uncluttered pages.) Besides gaining great insight into the problem of evil, the discerning mind can learn here two intriguing tangential lessons. First, why did Richard Rubenstein's death-of-God argument never become central to Jewish discussion? And—to disclose my own agenda—second, why have Jewish philosophers for some years now been less concerned with God than with the human condition and with the balance of human and Divine elements in Jewish authority?

Schulweis shapes his argument about the problem of God and evil elegantly, recognizing that both cognitive and personalistic interests motivate religious thought. He devotes two chapters to the classic medieval formulations of the problem. One deals with the responses to evil envisioned within the context of God's omnipotence. The other does the same within the context of God's omniscience. These formulations are both rejected on the grounds that they load sufferers with guilt, and also shatter the continuity between God's standards of morality and our own.

The author then turns to three modern treatments—first to the founders of the two great streams of process theology, Charles Hartshorne and Henry Wieman, and then to Paul Tillich's modified idealism. The former two recommend themselves at the least as calling for a finite, developing God. But they and Tillich are rejected as unbiblical for subordinating moral concerns to aesthetic or intellectual ones.

The personalists, Karl Barth, Martin Buber and John Hick, do not fare much better. Because they speak of God in personal terms, they do establish close contact between God and people. However, they also make God morally incomprehensible; since one cannot hope fully to understand even another human being, how much less may one make claims upon the Divine Person? Once again a terrifying chasm opens up between our moral certainty—so great that we stake our lives on it—and what may be said of God.

The Schulweis critiques explain why the author seeks another way of speaking about God. They also prepare us for his own daring proposal: We shall never be able to do justice to our moral sense if we persist in trying to give substance to the word "God." Instead, Schulweis creatively takes us beyond Ludwig Feuerbach's insight that God-talk is human projection. He advocates surrendering our old ways of thinking of God as a "thing." Instead we should utilize the term "God" only to exalt and emphasize the human attributes we esteem. Mercy, justice, creativity ought not be left to their prosaic sense; they are too important to our lives for that. We demonstrate the special status these godly attributes have in our lives by calling them "God." And we proclaim them One because goodness must be the criterion of all our human activity.

By defining God as the good of which we are capable—and often

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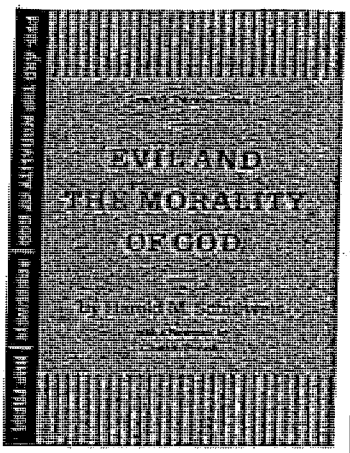

do—Schulweis has sundered God from any connection with evil. Evils come because nature is amoral, as science indicates, and because people often deny their own moral capacity. Schulweis's God has nothing to do with bringing evils—but has everything to do with our ability to recognize them for what they are and with summoning us to surmount them. The book concludes with some pages defending the religious viability of God conceived as a word to describe our human moral ideal. The author argues for the worshipfulness of his God and for the consequent desirability of religiosity as against secularity.

Obviously, the rabbi-philosopher makes demands upon his readers. Why not? Though one certainly needn't be erudite to be a good Jew, and though there is much to be learned on the level of popular teaching, surely some Jews need to be thinking at the very highest levels about what we can truly believe today about God. What a joy it is to know that in some congregations, at least, the living fabric of Jewish life is woven with threads of the highest intellectuality.

Thus far I have not mentioned Schulweis's treatment of the Holocaust. My omission indicates more about his book than about my biases. I found in his book less than 10 references to the Holocaust, only two of which were even of page length (one of them engendered by dealing with Buber's treatment of the theme). Two reasons may be adduced for his reticence, one historical, one intellectual.

I suggest that his volume represents the position Schulweis had come to by the late 1960s. If nothing else, the paucity of bibliographical references after 1970 bears this out. More important, the argument fits very well into Jewish thought of that period, thus explaining an otherwise puzzling phenomenon: why Jewish intellectuals did not debate Richard Rubenstein's particular formulation of the death-of-God argument. Rubenstein had derided our belief in God as "the ultimate, omnipotent actor in history"; after the Holocaust, he argued, such a belief was inadequate. But it had already been some decades since such a God had been talked about at the Reform and Conservative seminaries. Instead, precisely because of the problem of evil, teachers at these schools had long been exploring new ways of thinking about God. *Evil and the Morality of God* splendidly illustrates the best level of their thinking about a finite (as distinguished from an "ultimate, omnipotent") God—had any of them had the ability and courage to formulate it as thoughtfully as Harold Schulweis has here.

And that explains why, even after much Jewish community discussion focused on the Holocaust, Schulweis feels it is incidental, not critical to the formulation of the problem of evil. Any real evil, no matter its size, constitutes a major theological issue for a God who is good. Once one faces this issue seriously, new cases of evil may add to the thinker's personal anguish, but they cannot and do not, either by their special poignancy or by their extent, change the nature of the problem. Alone among contemporary Jewish philosophers, Emil Fackenheim has argued that the Holocaust constitutes a qualitatively new level of evil and thus necessitates abandoning all our previous theodicies and radically restructuring our thinking about Jewish and human existence. (We would have benefitted from Schulweis's confrontation with this post-1970 contention.)

Still, I share the view of that segment of the Jewish community that has not found it valuable to continue working with this ethically defined way of thinking about God. Two lines of thought, one universal, the other particular, have led me—and others—to this conclusion.

If in order to know God we must know good, then Schulweis's argument depends critically on our readiness to assert moral certainty. As in Kant, the thinker knows goodness with such assurance that this knowing sets the limits for what rational beings can accept in their religion—not excepting their concepts of God. I would agree that our moral sense ought to be a critical determinant of our theology. But like many others I find that I do not share the utter ethical certitude of Kant and

Schulweis. When I am hard pressed morally, I regularly find that my rational clarity about the good evanesces and I must rely on intuition. Thus, I believe it evil always to treat the unwanted fetus, or monstrous birth, or utterly vegetative terminal patient either as disposable at will or as absolutely entitled to the extension of life. But if you ask me to state the line between the extremes—worse, if you confront me with a troublesome case—I cannot easily say what constitutes goodness.

Unfortunately, ethics itself has become an area of great uncertainty. Instead of religion now accepting humbly whatever role ethical rationality delimits it to, it now commends itself as providing transcendent qualitative guidance to our questing ethical sensitivity. I think that explains why many thoughtful Jews, while not denying the legitimate religious claims of morality, cannot agree with Kant, Schulweis and others that "the concept of religion [must be constituted] within the system of philosophy." (I refer here to Hermann Cohen's penultimate book. Indeed, the great Jewish neo-Kantian's construction of God satisfies so many of Schulweis's criteria and, to my mind, does so with so much philosophical sophistication, that Cohen's almost complete absence from this book leaves a considerable void in it.)

Permit me now some words explaining my version of the utter discontinuity between human and divine morality that Schulweis so decries. Though he regularly deplores the tendency of philosophers to insist on either/or decisions, he himself adopts this stance in relation to our ethics and God's. If God's behavior in the Bible were always to be the standard of our morality, then, as the command to sacrifice Isaac and the testing of the just Job show, we would have to sacrifice our sense of good and evil. If our ethics are to have validity, then God also must conform to them. For those who share my mixture of ethical certainty and confusion, the actual situation, however, seems otherwise. We know enough of God's goodness that we are right to base our existence upon it. But we do not know it so well that we can easily apply it to troublesome cases. Even less does it equip us to explain God's structuring or conduct of the universe. As we see life, much is clear—but not so much that we can avoid mystery. From this purview human ethics cannot substitute for religious insight even as the latter must remain in constant tension with what we do know of goodness.

Some comment also should be made about Schulweis's argument that his refined God remains worthy of our devotion. I find it difficult to see why, by his standards, Ethical Culture would not make better sense. Our devotional particulars—ritual, worship, the reverence of tradition—do not efficiently enhance the supreme exaltation of ethics. If goodness is our focus, it seems a considerable bother to be diverted by the requirements of religious practice or even this demanding effort at theology. The defection of many Jews from "organized religious life" in recent years has not infrequently been due to their seeing the choice before them in just these terms.

That brings me to the second, the Jewish argument. For all the appeal of intellectual integrity, defining truth as universal—in this case, in Kantian philosophical fashion—necessarily relegates anything particular, like being Jewish, to a secondary level. One must exercise considerable ingenuity to validate specifically Jewish responsibilities, for they must now derive their value from bearing (and thus often distorting) universal values. Cohen and the German liberals sought to make such a case. They argued everything from a superior Jewish idea of God to a unique identification with it to racial talent for ethical religion. Mordecai Kaplan shifted the debate by making a case for the primacy of the group even in healthy individualism. Schulweis, with his well attested love of Jews and Judaism, could surely advance a thoughtful case for Jewishly pursuing general human goodness. But note the constraints he has now placed upon himself: by resolving theodicy in the manner he does, he must now undertake the task of—if the neologism may be permitted—ethnodicy, justifying Jewishness.

For all that many of us in the Jewish community love rationality and truth, they no longer speak to us with the imperious quality they bore when we moved from the ghetto to the university. Philosophers today rarely teach a wisdom one can love. Instead we find much of Western culture problematic. In the midst of this reassessment of what "universal" (read, "Euro-American") reason can teach us, our Jewishness has addressed us with unique appeal. Negatively, as we think of what the Holocaust might have cost us and the world, and positively, as we recognize the ultimate wisdom in Israeli idealism and our own practice of Judaism, we have come to another commanding source of value: Jewish tradition. We cannot be satisfied with a theology that denies our Judaism utter priority and makes it merely an instrument toward some higher good.

I think that, or something like that, explains the outstanding Jewish phenomena of the decade following the death-of-God discussion, the return to Orthodoxy and, for liberals, the concern with mysticism and the founding of *havurot* largely focused on liturgy. A theology that speaks essentially to our ethical commitment would not have produced such results. If that reading of our recent history has merit, Schulweis's impressive study must be seen as articulating where we once were, rather than where we are now tending. ✱

Borowitz, Eugene. "Rethinking Good and Evil: A Review." *Moment Magazine*, vol.9, no. 9 (October 1984): 57-59.

MICHAEL GOLDBERG'S REVIEW OF EVIL AND THE MORALITY OF GOD

Evil and the Morality of God
By Harold M. Schulweis
Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College Press, 1983. 168 pp. $12.95.

In this fresh treatment of the problem of evil, no matter that Harold Schulweis has not provided an adequate solution; after all, who has? What he does supply instead is an invaluable analysis of the bedrock reason for evil being so problematic in the first place-and for traditional theodicies being in the end so unconvincing. Schulweis perceptively suggests that the stumbling block to faith and theology alike is nothing other than the thoroughgoing moral character of the God spoken of in Scripture and liturgy, and hence he wisely asks, "Could it be that the major irritants of ... faith lie within the corpus of monotheism itself?" (p. 3). In framing his response to that rather disturbing question, the author draws heavily from his own background as both a formally trained theologian and an active congregational Rabbi, and therein lies the book's true power and contribution. At once avoiding the rather hard-hearted stances frequently encountered in academic works on the subject and the somewhat soft-headed approaches often found in pastoral pieces, this volume unflinchingly acknowledges the existential suffering of the believer and the philosophical perplexity of the theoretician as each being legitimate and real.

Nevertheless, many theodicies, in Schulweis' view, seem bent on denying that very point as they employ strategies apparently aimed at explaining evil by explaining it away. Assigning the failure of such theodicies to the underlying theologies, Schulweis astutely notes that theologies in turn reflect certain paradigmatic notions of perfection that shape their respective conceptualizations of God and the world. These various ideals of divine perfection are typically taken to be virtually self-evident, are thus left generally unarticulated, and are subsequently utilized in a theological sleight-of-hand that transforms our common linguistic usages, most notably those pertaining to the meaning of "goodness."

To make his case, Schulweis leads us through a sure-handed survey of the theological constructs of such diverse figures as Aquinas, Maimonides, Hartshorne, Wieman, Tillich, Barth, Buber, and John Hick. Whether they, be -metaphysical" theologies (and theodicies) linking divine goodness to ideas of perfect being (or becoming), or more "personalistic" ones matching such goodness to conceptions of perfect subject (or personality), Schulweis concludes that such projects share a common modus operandi that sacrifices the specifically moral character or God's goodness for the sake or sonic theoretical Weltanschauung. But sacrificed as well is the God or biblical faith-and whatever comfort the believer might take or credibility the theologian might have.

Consequently, Schulweis advises that our concern ought not be with talk about sonic abstract Subject termed "God." totally exalted beyond human comprehension, but with various concrete predicates enabling human beings to speak intelligibly or "godliness." In such a scheme: the religious contention [therefore becomes] ... that the humanly comprehensible qualities of goodness, love, intelligence and creativity are godly: that they themselves are worthy or adoration, cultivation, and emulation in the lives of the believers. In Feuerbach's formulation [in The Essence of Christianity], God does not love, He is himself love, He does not live, He is life, He is not just but justice itself', 'not a person, but personality itself' (pp. 122-123).

For Schulweis' "predicate theology," divine goodness is firmly lodged within the ken of human beings and so, too, is ungodly evil. Rather than being ascribed to a single supernatural subject's inscrutable will, evil by contrast is attributed to several different sources within the world of human understanding, such as, the realms of society and nature. Furthermore, evil is not re-described so as to appear wholly innocuous, but instead retains its own terrible integrity, thereby allowing human beings to retain the opportunity to find real godliness through "acts of encouragement, compassion, mutual aid, and cooperative effort..."(p. 138).

Paradoxically, however, this new predicate theology seemingly falls into the same trap that previously ensnared various subject theologies. For Schulweis' account, too, is based upon a paradigm of perfection-moral goodness-which he takes to be self-evident and consequently in need of no explicit articulation. It just assumes that what constitutes "morality" is something plainly known by all.

If those raised in the biblical traditions do in fact prize the sort of moral character marked by such traits as stead fastness, justice, and compassion, it is precisely because they have been schooled by those biblical narratives that depict a character called "God" displaying those selfsame virtues as moral hallmarks. Moreover, even the Feuerbachian claim that "God is ... love" is largely unintelligible-and unjustifiable-when removed from the broader context of the scriptural stories. While story-rooted considerations such as these may not resolve the problem of evil, they nevertheless set the boundaries for any discussion of theodicy that may ultimately prove worthwhile.

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Goldberg, Michael. Review of *Evil and the Morality of God*, by Harold M. Schulweis. *Theology Today* 41 (October 1984): 327-328.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF RABBI HAROLD M. SCHULWEIS

Education
B.A., Yeshiva College, 1945
M.A., New York University, Philosophy
M.H.L., Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950
ThD., Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, CA, 1972

Activities
Senior Editor, Sh'ma
Contributing Editor to The Reconstructionist, Moment, The Baltimore Jewish Times
Instructor of Philosophy, City College of New York, 1950-1952
Former Adjunct Professor of Jewish Contemporary Civilization, University of Judaism, Los Angeles
Former Lecturer in Jewish Theology, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles
Faculty member of B'nai B'rith Adult Education Commission
Rabbi, Temple Beth Abraham, Oakland, CA, 1952-1970
Rabbi, Valley Beth Shalom, Encino, CA, 1970-Present

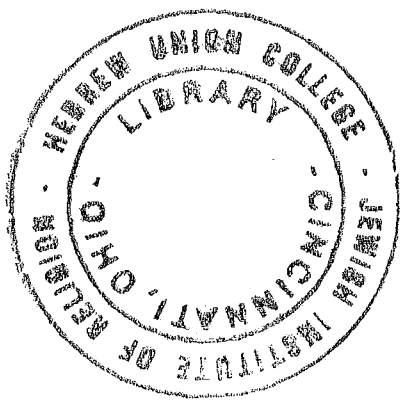
Programs initiated at Valley Beth Shalom
VBS Counseling Center (Para-Professional Counselors)
Para-Rabbinic Program
Synagogue Havurah Program (now national)
Family Empowerment Program
Valley Beth Shalom Day School
Mazon - The Jewish Response to Hunger
Food Bank (Local)
Outreach to the Developmentally Disabled
Outreach to Jews By Choice

Literary Contributions
Approaches To The Philosophy of Religion, Prentice-Hall,1954
Evil And The Morality Of God, Hebrew Union College Press, 1983
In God's Mirror, KTAV, 1990
Passages In Poetry, Jewish Music Commission, Valley Beth Shalom, 1990
For Those Who Can't Believe, Harper Collins, September, 1994

Organizations
Secretary, National Rabbinical Assembly of America, 1978
Chairman & Founder, Institute For The Righteous Acts, 1962
Documentation And Study Center On Rescuers of Jews in the Nazi Era
Founding Chairman, Jewish Foundation For Christian Rescuers/ADL, 1986
Appearances: "60 Minutes" on Their Brothers' Keeper, January and August, 1990

Honors & Awards

Jewish Theological Seminary, Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa, 1975
Hebrew Union College, Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa, 1983
University of Judaism, Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa, 1990
Recipient, United Synagogue Social Actions Award, 1965
Recipient, Invitation from Federal Republic of Germany to tour West Germany, 1965
Recipient, Israel Prime Minister's Medal, 1975
Recipient, Akiba Award of the American Jewish Committee, 1988
Recipient, Human Relations Award of the Valley Interfaith Committee, 1991
Recipient, Maurice Eiesendrath Bearer of Light Award of the UAHC, 1991
Recipient, Martin Buber Award of the American Friends of Hebrew University, 1992
Recipient, Crown of the Good Name Award of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, 1994



Valley Beth Shalom. "Biography of Rabbi Harold Schulweis." Posted at Valley Beth Shalom Website. http://www.vbs.org/rabbi/hshulw/shulbio.htm. (21 December 2001).