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CELLULAR JUDAISM:

BLUEPRINT FOR AN UNDERGROUND SYNAGOGUE

by

Neil Kominsky

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for ordination and the degree of Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

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THESIS ABSTRACT

CELLULAR JUDAISM: BLUEPRINT FOR AN UNDERGROUND SYNAGOGUE

This thesis represents an attempt to explore the need for small, group-oriented, person-centered religious institutions on the American Jewish scene and to synthesize on the basis of contemporary psychological thinking and current experiments a model which could effectively meet this need. A survey of the American Jewish scene as viewed by a number of observers reveals that synagogues generally are doing little if anything to mitigate the increasing sense of anonymity in American society or to offer a meaningful style of Jewish life to their members. Erik Erikson's work on ego identity indicates that some external reinforcement is essential to the maintenance of a stable sense of identity, implying the difficulty of maintaining a Jewish identity in the absence of a rewarding communal existence. The Secord-Backman interpersonal congruency model suggests that frequent interaction with a group of highly valued people who share one's orientation is a useful identity maintenance strategy. A number of theoretical models and some actual experiments in congregational and communal settings have utilized the principle of frequent interaction in a highly valued setting, often relying on cells or havurot as the basic unit. In the light of these instances and the underlying psychological theory, a model has been created for a synagogue composed of a limited number of cells, units composed of ten to fifteen families who have committed themselves to sharing the experience of a mutual quest for a meaningful Judaism. The implications of a cellular synagogue for both laymen and rabbis are explored, and

an alternative model is presented which would represent a compromise between a conventional temple structure and a cellular approach. The cellular model is seen as an effective mode of Jewish living for a significant number, although not necessarily a majority, of American Jews and is offered as one possible answer to the lack of meaningfulness which many find in contemporary Jewish institutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has benefited in a variety of ways from the assistance of a number of people, for which I am most grateful. Before this study was actually conceived, I visited the Birmingham Temple and, with the assistance of Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine and a number of congregants, acquired much information which was of importance here. While preparing the study, I visited Congregation Solel, where Rabbis Arnold Jacob Wolf and Lawrence Kushner, as well as several members of the congregation were of immense help. Rabbi Kushner in particular contributed greatly to the formation of my ideas. Rabbis Max Ticktin and Daniel Leifer of the University of Chicago Hillel Foundation shared with me their own experiences with havurot, which were most useful. I have had occasion to discuss the ideas set forth here with many of my fellow students at Hebrew Union College and am particularly grateful to Roy Furman, Barry Kogan, and Nicholas Behrman for their frank and cogent criticisms and valuable suggestions. Dr. Stanley Chyet provided some important bibliographic guidance. Rabbi Norman Mirsky, my advisor, provided important assistance while permitting me a great deal of freedom in formulating and executing this project; his tolerance for my eccentric work habits far exceeded the call of duty and was much appreciated. My wife Susan has aided me throughout my work with useful ideas, questions and criticisms which have contributed much to the final product.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This study, although a rabbinic thesis, is not a purely academic undertaking. While proper scholarly research has been undertaken, and, I believe, defensible conclusions have been drawn, the whole project has another purpose beyond scholarship. Over the course of several years, I have found my conversations with fellow rabbinic students and rabbis turning again and again to the topic "what's wrong with our temples?" Agreement as to the exact nature of the problem was not always forthcoming, but one could count on a steady consensus that something was, indeed, wrong, that the current situation could not be cheerfully countenanced as a long-term prospect. Under these circumstances, my thinking has been turned increasingly to the attempt to design a mode of Jewish institutional organization which would overcome the faults which are built into the American Reform temple as presently constituted and offer a style of Jewish living which I and others might find more attractive and more viable than the presently available options. This thesis, the product of my thinking in this direction, thus represents a very serious attempt to delineate a practical alternative to normal congregational structure which might offer to both congregants and rabbis in the future an exciting and rewarding kind of Jewish enterprise.

Needless to say, I am not the only individual whose thinking has been turned in this direction. Indeed, one of the most encouraging aspects of this study has been the discovery of several other people

in various parts of the country whose diagnoses of the problem and conceptions of a solution, arrived at in relative independence of each other, closely paralleled the conclusions to which I was coming. As we explore some of the forms in which these ideas have been presented in Chapter IV, we shall note the fact that the idea of the small group, the cell, the havurah, as the basic unit for Jewish communal existence is receiving ever-wider circulation among those who concern themselves with the future of the American synagogue. It is truly an idea for which the time is ripe.

We shall begin our study with an examination of the problem which has given rise to this proposal, the crisis of religious life in America and, more specifically, in the American Jewish community. This will be followed by a theoretical consideration of the implications of the problem in terms of some contemporary psychological thinking. Thereafter, a study will be made of a number of innovative experiments which are instructive in their utilization of the sort of ideas we are concerned with, and, finally, a model will be offered, a "blueprint for an underground synagogue," which will attempt to meet the theoretical criteria we shall have established in the light of the problem and our examination of the various attempts to overcome it.

CHAPTER II: THE PROBLEM

The observation that religious institutions in America are in a state of crisis is hardly novel; indeed, it approaches the level of a cliche. Nevertheless, the nature of this crisis, particularly as we encounter it in our temples, is of some importance to us. We shall therefore attempt briefly to anatomize the difficulty, both from an institutional and an individual point of view.

The difficulties that temples are encountering in maintaining any real relationship to their members are well attested. Lenski, in The Religious Factor, cites a number of studies done in different cities during the late 1950's and early 60's which indicate consistently low rates of attendance at religious services by Jews except for the High Holy Days, ranging from 32% of the Jews in Detroit attending services at least once a month, to 22% in Marshall Sklare's Riverton study who attend services at any time other than the Holy Days.[1] No indications have been noted that attendance has increased markedly during subsequent years.

These attendance problems, however, would seem to be only symptomatic of deeper and more far-reaching difficulties. Bernard Z. Sobel has characterized well the distinction which is intuitively drawn in most American minds between the "real" world, that which truly matters and has real consequences in our lives, and everything else, including religion, which is not to be taken at the same level of seriousness.[2] In the absence of a conviction that a practice of Judaism

could, in itself, be important, temples focus their concern on themselves as institutions, fostering a self-serving materialism which Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf has sketched in his sarcastic portrait of the "Godless" synagogue.[3] Such a synagogue, Wolf points out, becomes the ultimate rather than penultimate value. Competition with other institutions for status, financial power, and membership becomes central to the congregational outlook. Individuals within the congregation vie for status, and their activities become tools in the quest for social prestige. Refusing to take itself seriously as a religious institution, the synagogue comes to bear a greater resemblance to a country club, plagued by low morale and marginal interest on the part of its members and paralyzed by its own essential dishonesty and lack of capacity for self-criticism. The total picture, while somewhat hyperbolic, is no fiction. Wolf touches on real problems and real impressions of the American synagogue which comprise the negative judgments made by many alienated Jews.

This institutionalism and failure of purpose, like the sparsity of attendance, may in turn be seen as a reflection of a still deeper problem. This is the basic failure of the American synagogue to communicate, either to the adults it attracts or to the children and young people it allegedly educates, any significant sense of Judaism as an important on-going religious enterprise. The causes of this failure might be traced to a number of different areas: to the inability of a traditional culture to adapt adequately to new circumstances, to a movement

which sought assimilation when it might have been seeking a new authenticity, to the erosion of the American culture's capacity to support any serious religious enterprise at this period of its history; in any case, the phenomenon is undeniable. The American Jewish religious institution in the year 1970 is essentially impotent because the Judaism it purveys to its constituency is without significant effect on the ways in which people live their lives. Any attempt to create a more vital institution must take this into account.

At an individual level, the "religious crisis" is equally pressing. A major factor in this is a broader circumstance, the increasing sense of anonymity and depersonalization which characterize so much of contemporary life. John Gardner has aptly labeled the problem here as a loss of the sense of community.[4] Less fluid social structures in the past have provided the individual with a far more secure sense of his own identity, constantly reinforced by social contact with people who "know who he is," than can be readily had today. In our highly mobile, technologically oriented society, the individual can feel a real threat to his identity as he is increasingly "computerized" in his dealings with institutions, as his sense of human contact diminishes. As Harvey Cox has pointed out,[5] this anonymity carries certain blessings with it, especially the possibility of more privacy than ever before, but at the same time, the privacy can be translated into a deeply uncomfortable sense of isolation.

Jewish religious institutions are, themselves, showing the effects

of these trends. Major urban centers tend to have one or more Reform temples with membership in excess of 1,000 families; indeed, a majority of all families affiliated with UAHC member congregations in April, 1968, belonged to congregations of 600 families or more.[6] Under these circumstances, the temple must, of necessity, become a rather impersonal institution, since the basic mechanics involved in serving the miscellaneous educational, ritual, and organizational needs of so large a membership are apt to leave little time for the "personal touch". Efficiency and financial stability become pressing considerations, even to the point of a computerized billing system for collecting temple dues, and the congregant who is more than a face and a name to the rabbi and other temple personnel is an exception. The synagogue under these circumstances uses people, as Rabbi Edwin Friedman has pointed out;[7] stress is laid on the individual's obligation to the institution, without much concern as to whether he is able to express himself meaningfully through the institution. For the average member, the opportunity for real involvement in Judaism through the temple is apt to seem minimal and unsatisfying. Altogether, the individual who is troubled by feelings of isolation, alienation, and anonymity engendered by the impersonal, highly mobile nature of American society is quite likely to find this situation duplicated in the temple to which he belongs, aggravating the problem instead of combatting it. All this does not, of course, even touch on the significant proportion of people within the American Jewish community who are completely unaffiliated with any religious institution

and whose isolation should thus be even greater.

Apart from institutional difficulties, Jews face other problems in attempting to relate to Judaism in any way which might be called religious. One important aspect of this is the syndrome which Dr. Alfred Jospe has dubbed "pediatric Judaism,"[8] a condition in which Jewish thinking and knowledge has been arrested at the eighth or tenth grade level at which the individual dropped his religious education. Under these circumstances, people who almost certainly have far better and more complete educations in secular fields find their understanding of religion to be literally "childish" and therefore not to be taken seriously. This is helped along by the conventional American conception of religion not as an ongoing, questioning search, but as a fixed set of accepted beliefs which are to be either held or lost. Thus, many young people and not a few older ones, confronted with any of the major theological difficulties of our times, may tend to classify themselves in the ranks of those who have lost their belief and hence must turn away from religion, an approach which must be regarded as the product of an insufficiently sophisticated model of Judaism.

The fear of loneliness in our society also leads many people to avoid doing things which will increase their sense of isolation, things which set them apart from the "average." One such source of feelings of isolation could be an active involvement in religion. . While a modicum of religious affiliation seems to be generally thought desirable, few people would wish to be considered "devout" or "deeply religious."

Thus, the individual who might otherwise be open to a serious religious involvement could well be inclined to hold back, feeling himself too solitary in his interest, unwilling to face the embarrassment of "being religious." This, too, contributes its share to the crisis in American Judaism.

The problem that faces us is thus a broad and complex one. In surveying the American Jewish scene, we find a sense of religious institutions which are not doing their jobs and of individuals who have failed to find their religious lives meaningful and rewarding at a time when the needs generated by the general social situation for such meaning and such rewards are great. As senses of isolation and alienation increase, the synagogues have been contributing to the problem rather than mitigating it. There is a need evident here for some new approach, some transformation of Jewish institutional life which will offer the individual attractive, desirable and authentic ways of being meaningfully Jewish in the last third of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Having reviewed briefly the nature of the problems we find with religious life in America, we shall now turn our attention to some considerations in terms of contemporary psychological thinking which may have relevance to a potential solution.

We start with certain postulates, beliefs about the nature and function of Judaism, on which our interest in a solution is based. The first of these is that Judaism is worth preserving, although not necessarily in its current forms. This represents not a scholarly deduction but a religious assumption, a belief that a tradition which has adapted in a nearly infinite number of ways to the vicissitudes of historical circumstance can once again adapt and once again offer to its heirs the kind of comprehensive, religiously satisfying outlook which it has offered in the past. In the absence of this assumption, all that follows would be a waste of time.

A second postulate is that, despite Alfred North Whitehead's famous definition of religion as what man does with his solitude, Judaism is a communal enterprise. Historically, Jews have, wherever possible, organized into highly structured communities and only rarely existed in isolation from other Jews. The vast network of interpersonal mitzvot--gathering in a minyan for prayer, visiting the sick, comforting the mourners, supporting the indigent--has ensured that Jewish existence has not been a matter of individuals alone, but of individuals as part of a community. The interpersonal warmth and concern which have naturally arisen from this situation have, I believe, been among the chief

rewards of being a Jew and have served to counterbalance the obvious disadvantages involved in being identified as a Jew. Clear recognition of the centrality of this communal aspect of Judaism thus appears essential to any viable model of Judaism for the future.

Our third and final postulate is that, no matter how desirable the survival of Judaism may be, this survival is contingent upon Judaism's ability to provide adequate religious, psychological, or social rewards to the individual Jew to ensure his participation. This postulate, although seemingly obvious, is ignored in practice by a multitude of rabbis and other Jewish spokesmen who insist on appealing to the individual's loyalty, to his sense of obligation, to his responsibility for the survival of Judaism as the justification for whatever particular demands are being made of him. While such loyalty and sense of obligation may indeed function as a motivating factor, it would appear that this could only remain true over an extended period of time if that toward which the individual feels loyal and obligated also excites his interest and enthusiasm and feels worthwhile to him. If the Jew enjoys his Judaism and feels that it contributes meaning to his life, we need have no worry for the survival of Jewish institutions; in the absence of these conditions, concern for the institutions alone is a lost cause.

Given our postulates and given the contemporary American situation outlined previously, what psychological factors ought to be taken into account?[9] One of the most central conceptions relevant to the problem we are examining is the idea of ego identity as put forth in the

in the writings of Erik Erikson. Erikson[10] deals with the formation of an identity in the context of his epigenetic scheme for the human life cycle. Here, identity formation is seen as the fifth of eight developmental crises through which the individual must pass in growing from infancy into maturity and old age. This crisis is precipitated by the marked physiological, psychological and social changes which accompany puberty, and so is seen to be the dominant psycho-social feature of adolescence. The adolescent is made uncertain by his changing body and changing social role as to exactly who he is, and it is his search for a sense of his own self-sameness and continuity in time which constitutes the identity crisis. As Erikson[11] points out, however, the process of identity formation is a life-long one, neither beginning nor ending with adolescence. Although an effective working resolution of the identity crisis is necessary in order for the individual to continue his psychosocial development, the identity which has been formed continues to change and evolve under the stimulus of the environment. It is in this sense that we shall be concerned with identity. An individual's Jewish identity, which may or may not have been firmly established in the process of growing up, is, in any case, continually subject to the influence of the social and religious environment in which he finds himself.

Since it will be central to the remainder of the study, a careful definition of identity is in order at this point. "Ego identity," says Erikson,[12] is the awareness of the fact that there is a selfsameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods and that these methods are

effective in safeguarding the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others." Thus, there are two significant aspects that contribute to the individual's identity. He must find within himself a sense of continuity which enables him to feel with some conviction that there has existed, currently exists and will continue to exist a "me" which does not disappear or change beyond recognition as the circumstances of his life change. In addition to this internal sense of identity, there is the external sense of identity, a confirmation of the individual's identity by his social environment, the existence in the minds of those people among whom he lives of a "you" corresponding to his "me." It is only in the agreement of the individual and his environment that a stable identity can exist.

The necessity of external confirmation for the maintenance of an identity is of major importance for us. This aspect has been stressed by Erikson in a number of places in his work. In Young Man Luther, he writes that the adolescent facing an identity crisis "must detect some meaningful resemblance between what he has come to see in himself and what his sharpened awareness tells him others judge and expect him to be."[13] Erikson clarifies this still further in Insight and Responsibility when he says that "true identity...depends on the support which the young individual receives from the collective sense of identity characterizing the social groups significant to him."[14]

Thus, the establishment and reinforcement of Jewish identity in the individual may be seen to be intimately connected with the way he

perceives others' understanding of that identity. Given a general society which places little value on a religious Jewish identity, the individual who would maintain such an identity against erosion will be in some measure dependent on "social groups significant to him" to provide him with external confirmation.

Erikson provides us with a useful framework for understanding the factor of social environment in the maintenance of Jewish identity. For a more explicit sketch of the dynamics which could be operative in such a situation, we must turn to another source. Paul F. Secord and Carl W. Backman, in their work on the theory of interpersonal congruency,[15] have been very useful in this respect. Interpersonal congruency is held to be the factor which permits behavioral stability to exist over time. This congruency exists when all three components of the interpersonal matrix are in agreement. These components are the self-concept of the subject (S), the subject's interpretation of elements of his behavior which are related to this (B), and the subject's perception of related aspects of the other person (O) with whom he is interacting. When S's perception of his own behavior and S's perception of O's behavior in the interpersonal situation both imply S's self-concept, a congruent relationship exists. If S conceives of himself as a nurturant individual and acts in a way which he perceives to be nurturant toward O, and if O then accepts S's nurturance or actively seeks nurturant behavior from S, the relationship is congruent. If, however, S perceives of himself as a nurturant individual, but sees himself acting

toward O in a manner which he does not perceive as nurturant, or if O does not seek or accept this nurturance, there is an incongruency in the interpersonal matrix. The basic behavioral postulates of the system are that 1) S tends to repeat and perpetuate interpersonal relationships previously characterized by congruency, and 2) when involved in a non-congruent matrix, S will tend to modify the matrix in the direction for greater congruency. Matrices are relevant to one another if they have one or more elements in common and are supportive if their shared component is in the same relation to each case (either congruent or incongruent). A matrix with great "centricality" -- that is to say, one with which a large number of other matrices are in supportive relation and in which O is a highly valued individual -- is most resistant to change and is apt to have a great effect on other, related matrices if it is forced to change. Change comes about by means of a three-step process involving: 1) creation of incongruency by some change in a previously congruent matrix, 2) formation of a new, congruent matrix involving a different S-component (self-concept) or a different self-behavior component, and 3) adjustment of relevant matrices to this change.

There are a number of strategies which are outlined as possible means of dealing with incongruency. One set of these strategies involves transformation of an incongruent O component. This may be accomplished by a) selective interaction with O's (interacting only with those O's whose behavior is congruent with the self-concept), b) selective evaluation of O's (placing a higher valuation on those O's whose behavior

confirms the self-concept), c) acting in such a way as to evoke responses from O which imply congruency, and finally, d) misperception of O's behavior in such a way as to interpret it as being congruent when, in reality, it is not. If S's behavior is the incongruent factor, this may be transformed by selective behavior matching (S's behaving in the particular matrix only in ways which are congruent with both S's self-concept and S's perception of O's behavior) or by S's misinterpretation of his own behavior in such a way as to see it as congruent. A final possible solution to the situation is a change in S's self-concept to bring it into congruency with his perception of his own and O's behavior. Since the self-concept is the element which will be involved in the greatest number of relevant matrices, it is obviously the hardest element to change, and is likely to be changed as a means of restoring congruency only after the other possible solutions have failed.

Secord and Backman report findings in several experiments which are consistent with the congruency theory. One[16] is a study which finds that liked persons more than disliked persons are seen as attributing traits to one similar to those he attributes to himself. Another interesting finding[17] is that people tend to perceive their best friends as being similar to themselves, thus making interpersonal congruency easy to maintain. Friends tend to be similar to the self in actuality as well as in perception according to Newcomb's[18] finding that in a group of people coming together as strangers, similarity of attitude is a major factor in determining which individuals will become friendly. Manis[19] finds that

the individual's self-concept tends to be influenced over time by others' perception of him. All of these studies seem to support the assertion that others' perception of the self is of great importance in the maintenance of one's self-concept.

The individual who wishes to maintain a self image and behavior pattern which are perceived by him as religiously Jewish, with positive connotations, is thus apt to experience a congruency problem in his relation to the general social environment; while others may indeed agree that his behavior is religiously Jewish, the absence of the positive value judgment and, frequently, the presence of a negative judgment instead create incongruent relationships. In attempting to prevent or escape incongruencies, the American Jew must utilize one or more of Secord and Backman's strategies. He may attempt to increase the frequency of his interaction with people who share his value judgment (selective interaction with O's), and he may think very highly of such people, while holding a more negative opinion of those who have no use for his religious approach (selective evaluation of O's). Alternatively, he could attempt to evoke from others, by argument, demonstration, or some other means, responses implying the importance of being a religious Jew, or he could simply misperceive the attitudes of others, believing that they share his values when, in fact, they do not. These would all represent attempts to bring about congruency by changing the O component in the matrix. The behavior component could also be varied, so that the individual would undertake a "chameleon" strategy, offering

either positive or negative reactions to Jewish religious activity depending on the views of the particular people with whom he happens to be. This has the difficulty, however, that the S-component will remain incongruent with negative-implication behavior in this area, so that one incongruency is simply replaced by another. Under these circumstances, the possiblity would arise of a change in the third and most change-resistant component in the matrix, the self-image of the individual. When other strategies have failed, we might well expect to see our Jew surrender his religious orientation in order to achieve a self-image which is congruent with the rest of his world. Facilitating the use of other strategies in order to forestall the necessity of this one must be an important part of our approach.

The most practical strategies available in this situation seem to be selective interaction with O's and selective evaluation of O's. Neither of these approaches is to be viewed as an absolute; certainly any attempt to cut oneself off from all those with whom one disagrees or to deny any respect or liking to such people must be considered destructive and undesirable. Such absolutism, however, does not appear necessary. Asch[20] has demonstrated in a controlled experimental situation that the presence of even one ally is sufficient to enable an individual to withstand group pressure to distort his perceptual judgments while the removal of this ally greatly increases the tendency toward conformity. Similarly, in research for an undergraduate honors thesis at Harvard College,[21] I found that leaders of student religious organizations at

Harvard, aware that their religious orientation cast them in a distinct minority role in the university community, counted among their closest friends a majority who shared their religious involvement. These student religious leaders were not isolated from the rest of the university environment; a substantial minority of their friends were not involved with religion, and the leaders tended to be involved in a variety of other activities within the university which exposed them constantly to the prevailing religious apathy at Harvard. The religiously involved friends, however, seemed to provide a base of psychological support from which the subjects could operate without serious discomfort in the general social environment. Both of these studies suggest that the individual need not ghettoize himself in order to protect his minority religious viewpoint; a few close, highly-valued friends could provide adequate support to counteract whatever pressures might arise from the prevailing social climate.

The following conclusions might, therefore, guide us in our search for a viable style of religious life for the American Jew:

1) Some external confirmation seems essential to the maintenance of as important an identity component as a religious orientation.

2) With such external support, this orientation can be maintained even when the individual feels himself to be in a small minority.

3) The ideal milieu for the maintenance of a minority religious viewpoint would thus appear to be a close circle of frequently interacting people who value each other and their shared religious outlook

highly and are thus capable of providing each other with an adequate level of mutual identity reinforcement.

CHAPTER IV: MODELS AND EXPERIMENTS

We now turn our attention to those ideal models and actual experiments which, by their emphasis on a sense of intimacy and close community in a religious context, point us in the direction of the underground synagogue. Appropriately, we will begin with a consideration of the movement which has lent its terminology to this study.

The underground church represents a response in a Christian context to the same problems we have examined: the depersonalization of social and religious life in America and the increasing sensation that currently existing religious institutions cannot meet the needs of our time for a demanding, authentic, communal style of religion. The model evokes the image of early, pre-establishment Christianity, when the church was often literally underground, meeting in caves to escape persecution. Organized into cells, the faithful would risk their lives in the pursuit of their religious ideals, relying heavily on each other for support in troubled times. Adherents of the underground church today have sought to reestablish both the fellowship and the mutual dependence of this early model. The attempt is made to recast worship in a more spontaneous style, to celebrate worship experiences in the company of people with whom one is genuinely prepared to share his thoughts and his soul.[22] Emmaus House in New York's East Harlem slum, an outpost of the underground church under very loosely Catholic auspices, may be taken as an example of the underground church style. A mixed residential and non-residential community, the house centers its

program around fellowship, worship, and service to others, stressing involvement in the troubled neighborhood in which it is located.[23] No one is paid to do the administrative or housekeeping work associated with the institution, but members of the house community, who support themselves in a variety of occupations, undertake these tasks in their spare time.[24] The emphasis is on a voluntary, free ministry to each other and to the general community.

Many of these factors are defining characteristics of the underground church. The concern for authentic human interaction and a shared sense of community is central. The size of groups is kept small to provide better opportunities for involvement; as in the early church, the cell, a close group of mutually committed people is the basic unit. Members of the cells, acutely aware that their involvement places them in a minority within society, seek reinforcement from each other through group shared experiences, shared meals, shared tasks both within the church and in the community. Often rejecting the model of the full-time religious professional, members of the underground church stress their commitment to carry the work of the church into the world and into their daily lives.

Also of interest to us because of its mixture of religion with mutual commitment is the Mormon Church. Originating as a beleaguered minority and retaining their minority status except in Utah, the Mormons are notable for their tight organizational structure and for the heavy personal demands which are made on church members. Perhaps more

than any other group, Mormons stress the priesthood of all believers, and this principle is put into constant practice as volunteers shoulder the work of the Church, accepting religious and social responsibility for fellow-believers. An extensive world-wide missionary program, tireless efforts to enlist the involvement of nominal Church members, and a highly complex social welfare apparatus are all outgrowths of the firmly held belief that religion cannot be a once-a-week activity but must represent a complete, active style of living one's life. The Mormons and the underground church have much in common here.

The close, mutually interdependent religious community is, of course, hardly foreign to the Jewish tradition. The ghetto and shtetl existence of East European Jewry virtually assumed such a situation. The Talmudic dictum that all Jews are responsible for each other became, in the face of a hostile external environment, a necessity for survival. Providing for the needy was a community responsibility; who else was there to do it? Living in such a community left little doubt as to one's identity; one was not only a Jew, but a Jew of a particular town, the son of a particular family with a particular reputation. This style of social structure met many of the needs which are manifest in America today; indeed, confronted with the disorienting experience of immigration to a new society, newly arrived Jews sought to reestablish familiar patterns in America, creating landsmanschaften to provide for mutual aid and social contacts. The Hasidim, both in Eastern Europe and in the United States, have provided a model of a particularly close Jewish

community. Organized around allegiance to a tsaddik or rebbe, a a Hasidic community provides the believer with a firm sense of identity and social belongingness in exchange for his loyalty.

One aspect of this historical closeness and interdependence which has carried over into America is, as Rabbi Richard N. Levy has pointed out,[25] the morning minyan in the traditional synagogue. The "regulars" who attend these services are constantly aware of the contribution their presence makes to the requisite ten men without whom the communal prayer cannot take place. The sense of community created by the scant numbers who attend, the moderate hardship of rising early for prayers, and the awareness of mutual dependence reflect the historical Jewish situation and, simultaneously display the same concerns as the underground church of today.

An awareness of the peculiar religious needs generated by the contemporary situation has led a number of people to formulate models for a radically different style of religious institution which might be adaptable to these and future needs. These models, which vary widely in their degree of elaboration and the particular kind of structure they seek to create, are united by their focus on an enhanced sense of community as central to the ongoing religious experience.

Carl Rogers, writing in a general context on "Interpersonal Relationships: USA 2000," predicts a religious future uniting a number of elements which will be found repeatedly in our more specifically Jewish models:

> ... religion, to the extent that the term is used, will consist of temporarily held hypotheses which are lived out and corrected in the interpersonal world. Groups, probably much smaller than present-day congregations, will wrestle with the ethical and moral and philosophical questions which are posed by the rapidly changing world. The individual will forge, with the support of the group, the stance he will take in the universe--a stance which he cannot regard as final because more data will continually be coming in.
>
> In the open questioning and honest struggle to face reality which exist in such a group, it is likely that a sense of true community will develop--a community based not on a common creed nor an unchanging ritual, but on the personal ties of individuals who have become deeply related to one another as they attempt to comprehend and to face, as living men, the mysteries of existence. The religion of the future will be man's existential choice of his way of living in an unknown tomorrow, a choice made more bearable because formed in a community of individuals who are like-minded, but like-minded only in their searching.[26]

Rabbi Herman Schaalman, in a symposium on "The Future of the Reform Synagogue," also emphasizes community and the need to overcome loneliness.[27] This is to be achieved by forming smaller congregations than are currently prevalent and concentrating the efforts of more rabbis on fewer people in the attempt to achieve a meaningful, personal Judaism.[28] Schaalman's approach differs somewhat from Rogers' and from some other models which will follow in its assumption of the inevitable centrality of rabbinic leadership to a communal congregation.

Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf has created a portrait of a God-centered synagogue which is also of interest.[29] He calls for a limited membership--no more than 400 families--composed of people who are prepared to separate the superficial and the superfluous from their practice of

Judaism. In the absence of meaningless social activities and destructive preoccupations with fund-raising, members of the synagogue would be involved in more significantly Jewish activities, assisting each other in times of need, studying together, working toward social progress in the larger community, and keeping the synagogue itself on the course they had set for it. Like Schaalman's, this is a somewhat rabbi-centered system, emphasizing "...a patient and humble search for a master who is qualified to teach (and probably unqualified, therefore, to do much else)."[30] This is a Jewish learning-centered model, and the rabbi functions within it as master-educator.

Rabbi Stephen Forstein, in a student sermon preached in the Hebrew Union College chapel in 1964, offered a still more radical proposal, questioning the entire structure of a conventional synagogue.[31] A congregation would be composed of perhaps twenty people, including a rabbi, who, like everyone else, earnings his living in some other way than through his religious activities. Sharing the search for a meaningful religious discipline and the joy of a fellowship found in the course of this search, members would guard zealously against the conventional traps of congregational life: financial entanglement, social activities, the complexities of an educational program. The congregation's children would be educated in community religious schools, thus leaving the congregation free to exist without building, finances, or a single employee. The model is remarkably similar to that of the underground church cell.

Moving directly into the cellular mode of organization is a plan advanced jointly by Rabbis Wolf and Lawrence Kushner for Congregation Solel in Highland Park, Illinois.[32] As a means of overcoming polarization within the congregation between people with in-group and out-group sensations, the rabbis propose the organization of *havurot*, intimate groups of friends, encompassing whole families, who form themselves into a miniature religious community. Members of each *havurah* would undertake the obligations of addressing themselves to God (worship), to the Jewish tradition (Torah), and to their fellowman (acts of lovingkindness), meeting at least weekly, possibly more frequently, to carry out their purposes. The authors' stated goal for the *havurah* system is the reestablishment of a sense of religious purpose and personal commitment within a corporate synagogue of 500 families. An interesting aspect of this proposal is that it does not propose starting anew, but envisions the conversion of an already existing congregation of substantial size to a cellular model.

Rabbi Richard N. Levy's proposal, which was published several months before the Wolf-Kushner plan, is the most completely elaborated plan for a cellular synagogue published to date.[33] Levy sees his synagogue developing as a result of the gradual subdivision of small, intimate groups composed of people who are willing to share a religious quest in an atmosphere of close fellowship. The groups would attempt to reclaim the traditional functions of the synagogue as *bet t'filah* (worship place), *bet midrash* (study place), and *bet k'nesset* (meeting place).

Each group would carry on its own activities in these areas while also undertaking some portion of the division of labor of the congreagation as a whole: community action, educational projects, even pastoral assistance for fellow congregants in times of crisis. The rabbi would function as counselor-group leader-teacher, adapting his role to the wishes and needs of the congregation. Children would be encouraged to participate in congregational activities and might well desire the establishment of a children's group, which could serve the functions of a religious school. The goal of the system throughout would be to enable people to relate as whole persons to each other and to their Judaism. The model here could be taken as a full Jewish equivalent of the underground church.

Corresponding to the suggestions we have examined, there have been a number of serious attempts to create meaningful religious communities in an American Jewish context. Some of these have sought to create comprehensive living groups like Emmaus House, while others have assumed a more congregational model along the lines advocated by Wolf, Kushner, and Levy, and still others have aimed at the creation of an unusually committed subgroup within the context of a more-or-less conventional temple.

A notable example of the attempt to create a living community is the Havurat Shalom Community Seminary in Somerville, Massachusetts.[34] Formed as a seminary for the training of <u>haverim</u>,individuals who would be qualified leaders in the Jewish community who might, with additional classical training, be ordained as rabbis, Havurat Shalom regards living

in religious community as essential to its religious outlook. Some members of the havurah actually live in the building which houses it while many others live nearby. Unfortunately, it is difficult to make definitive statements about the havurah and the way it functions because constant reevaluation and discussion within the group seem to keep it in a state of flux. It does appear, however, that the model at present is very much tied to a student mode of existence and, while intriguing in its own right, the Havurat Shalom model does not appear to be applicable to the more general needs of the American Jewish community.

Another enterprise in Jewish communal living about which little information is available is Shlomo Carlebach's House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco. Judging by the somewhat journalistic and negative portrait of this institution conveyed in Midstream by Leo Skir,[35] the House of Love and Prayer purveys its founder's peculiar mixture of Hasidism and hippyness in rather haphazard and disorganized way, with a great deal of turnover in community membership. Inasmuch as Skir's approach to the situation is neither systematic nor thorough, his implied conclusions may be of limited validity. In any case, Carlebach's undertaking, like Havurat Shalom, seems to rely on relatively rootless student-type people and probably does not lend itself to extension into other areas. It appears, in addition, to be sui generis because of its dependence on the personality of its founder.

Perhaps a more generally useful model is that of the Bethesda (Maryland) Jewish Congregation. As Rabbi Edwin H. Friedman, the

the leader of the congregation, describes it,[36] it is quite an unusual enterprise. The rabbi is concerned with the congregation on only a part-time basis, earning his living by other means, and the congregation neither has nor desires a building of its own, meeting in a local church facility. The membership is composed of 100 families, and consideration is being given to closing the membership at 130. The congregation, which favors a non-supernatural approach to religion, has given up holding regular Friday night services and meets biweekly for a Shabbat evening Kiddush and coffee house; in addition, more-or-less traditional Saturday morning services are held for those who enjoy the feeling of the traditional liturgy. The congregation places great weight on its intellectual and religious integrity and is committed to experimentation in the search for ways of maintaining its integrity.

The congregation may be considered to be moderately successful in its experiment. It still exists after five years and appears to be serving the needs of its people and pursuing if not necessarily attaining such specific goals as assigning equal weight to adult and children's programming. On the other hand, 100 additional families have joined and left the congregation during these five years, which is due in part to the extraordinary rate of population transience in the Washington area, but which also indicates a substantial number of people whose needs were not met by the Bethesda Jewish Congregation, even though they were to some extent preselected by the congregation's open indication of the unconventional nature of its program. Also, speaking at Hebrew Union

College, Friedman reported that there was a tendency for the congregation to be divided into very close groups composed of people who had joined during a particular year, but that there was little overall sense of community. If we take the sense of religious community to be one of the central aspects in our search for a suitable model, the Bethesda Jewish Congregation does not appear to have instilled as broad a sense of community as we might wish.

The Birmingham (Michigan) Temple is organized more around a central ideological position than most of our congregations.[37] Under the leadership of Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine, it has become nationally known as a temple for humanistic Jews. Much of the congregation's sense of identity is based on this reputation and on the animosity it has inspired among more traditionally minded Jews. Members of the congregation seem to take a certain pride in having stood firmly by an unpopular position while under great pressure from the rest of the Detroit and national Jewish community. Although there has been no conscious attempt to create an unconventionally structured congregation, the relatively small size (180 families as of spring, 1968) and ideological isolation of the Birmingham Temple along with the general recognition of Wine as the generative personality behind the institution seems to have created a rather close-knit membership. The sharing of a position which is generally regarded within the organized Jewish community as scandalous may have functioned for the temple members in a way similar to the shared activities and concerns in an underground church model, binding

people together through common ground, common experiences, and common feelings. Certainly, the ideological radicalism of the Birmingham Temple is suggestive of the underground church tradition, although its antitheological bent is atypical.

Interestingly, the congregation we have examined which leans most notably in the direction of a cellular model of organization is also the best documented. Congregation Solel in Highland Park, Illinois, is, by fortunate accident, located in the community in which Sklare and Greenblum's Lakeville study was made.[38] This study, in which Solel is identified as the Samuel Hirsch Temple, and other information available[39] indicate a temple which prides itself on being unique and offering its congregants what is believed to be quite an unusual kind of religious atmosphere. Sklare's observation that the temple results from a shiduch of leaders who would not ordinarily be attracted to a synagogue and a very unconventional rabbi[40] seems accurate. Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf, who was the congregation's first rabbi and, for most its decade and a half of existence, its only rabbi, has impressed his personality deeply on the congregation. Wolf is very emphatic in stressing the independence of congregants and the fact that decisions are not always made in accordance with his wishes, but it must nonetheless be observed that Wolf's intensely personal, unsqueamishly traditional theology (e. g. a tendency to address oneself unabashedly to the question of "what God wants") is the lingua franca of congregational liturgy, discussion and writing. Similarly, the introductory pamphlet which is given to new members gives indication of the rabbi's centrality to the congregational consciousness;

not only is he mentioned in appropriate sections, he also has a tendency to crop up in the form of humorous references even where this would not seem to be obviously appropriate (e. g. purpose of the Legal and Insurance Committee: "in case, for example, the Rabbi tries to walk on the pond."). Wolf has now been joined in the congregation by Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, who holds the rather unstructured position of rabbinic fellow, and shares much of Wolf's appracoh. Both of these men, it will be noted, have written about designs for greater congregational involvement in meaningful religious activities. At present the rabbis and many congregants have focused their attention on problems resulting from the size of the congregation, which, with a closed membership of 500 families, seems to be too large to keep most members really involved. Although an unusually large percentage of members--estimates run as high as half--are actively involved in temple affairs, this record is felt by temple members to be inferior to the situation in the temple's earlier, smaller, less established days. Letters in the temple bulletin, which is a constant forum of congregational opinion, protest senses of loneliness, alienation, and disappointment on the part of many. It was in the light of this situation and dissension resulting from some politically controversial actions connected to temple activities that the Wolf-Kushner proposal for the establishment of havurot was offered. It was hoped that the opportunity for personal contact and real involvement with other people in a religious enterprise would offer a way of overcoming the sense of anonymity and alienation which was growing even within this extraordinary congregation.

It is not yet clear to what extent the havurah concept will succeed at Solel. I was present at the first meeting of one attempted havurah, a group of young couples who had expressed interest in participating in such a venture, but who had no particular previous affinity for each other. The result was a rather awkward, casting-around sort of meeting, as members sought ways of structuring the group, generally in some study context, to provide for an ongoing program. Only time will show whether this and similar groups will develop the level of intimacy and involvement which ideally characterizes a havurah.

Meanwhile, several groups already exist at the temple which offer havurah-like interaction, although originally structured for other purposes. Two groups with overlapping and shifting membership, both presided over by Kushner, are especially interesting in this regard. One is a group which assembles at 9 a.m. for a strikingly informal Saturday morning service, in which worshippers, casually attired, sit in a square of couches and comfortable chairs and react with great openness to the prayers, commenting on one, disagreeing with another, relating an experience to a third. The service is not dominated by the rabbis, and the Torah is read, often laboriously and after much preparation by members of the congregation. The service is followed by refreshments, and an atmosphere of unusual fellowship prevails.

The other group is Kushner's Saturday afternoon Talmud study session, which draws between a dozen and thirty people. Talmud passages are studied in English with comments and reactions offered by group

members, sometimes intensely personal in nature, concerning, for example, personal prayer habits. The atmosphere of involvement of people with each other and with the material at hand parallels that of the morning service and approaches what one might expect to find in a functioning havurah. Congregation Solel thus, although acutely aware of its own problems, appears to be moving more consciously in the direction of a cellular structure than any other congregation we have examined.

The possibility of a havurah-like group within a larger congregation, suggested by the existence of the groups we have just mentioned, has been explored in other congregations. Rabbi Eugene Lipman at Temple Sinai in Washington has a "kallah group" which holds a retreat at the beginning of the year and then continues meeting, with membership limited to those who were present for the retreat, throughout the year.[41] Lipman believes that a close relationship and serious involvement among group members have developed through this program, while the congregation as a whole continues on its relatively conventional way. Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn of Temple Israel in Boston reports the establishment of a rabbi's havdalah group for similar purposes, but, apparently, the mode of relationship and activity with the group more closely approximates an adult education program than a havurah at present.[42] Both of these programs, while not as radical as the total congregation experiments we have examined, are of interest in the potential they indicate for the development of a havurah program without

the need for total divorce from existing, conventional institutions.

There are a number of common elements and trends which we should note uniting our examples of communally oriented congregations. One is demography: Bethesda, Birmingham, and Highland Park are all high income, high education suburbs in areas with large Jewish populations. While the success of other congregations serving these areas indicates that not all residents of such communities would be interested in such an undertaking, it appears that this kind of community provides the population from which a communal or cellular congregation would draw its membership. A common element in the functioning of these congregations is the sense of being in a minority which unites them. These congregations are self-consciously different and unconventional, and they feel a certain integrity upon which their uniqueness is based. In part because of this, there is a tendency toward a strong sense of group identity. The congregations are relatively small, and members know each other, although in varying degrees in different temples. The combination of a sense of purpose, that is, a sense of group identity, and a sense of personal identity arising from being recognized and appreciated within the group gives rise to the extraordinary level of participation and involvement in these congregations, which is probably their most singular common characteristic. These congregations tend to have been led and shaped by rabbis with strong personalities who have contributed heavily of their own distinctive ideas to the congregational ideology. Such leadership may be essential to the successful development of an unconventional congregation; at least, we have not

seen a counter-example. The net result of all this is a Judaism which is alive to congregation members, not without its own frustrations and ambivalences, but adequately challenging and vital to offer greater satisfactions than most American Jews ever hope to achieve in their religious lives, satisfactions which suggest a better model for the synagogue of the future.

CHAPTER V: BLUEPRINT FOR AN UNDERGROUND SYNAGOGUE

Now that we have delineated the problem of Judaism in America, considered in a theoretical context the psychological aspects of an attempt to overcome this situation, and examined a number of models, actual and theoretical, for meeting the problem, we turn our attention to a proposed solution, a program to counteract the depersonalizing, alienating trends in Jewish life which we have traced as the source of our difficulties. What follows is a model for a small, highly personal, socially reinforcing religious environment which, in return for the high level of involvement it demands of each individual member, offers the reward of a meaningful, active religious life, a sense of caring and being cared for by those who share one's involvement, a sense of belonging to something which is centrally important to one's life. In short, we offer a blueprint for an underground synagogue.

It is recognized at the outset that this model is not suitable to everyone. Many American Jews would find its demands excessive, its rewards insufficient or unsought, its impingement on their life-style threatening or intolerable. Even for those willing to undertake the real burden of such an enterprise, sharing its values, eager for its rewards, there is no guarantee of success. The external problems may be insuperable, the goals unattainable, the whole model impractical. Yet, although all of this may be true, the possibility that it is not justifies the effort. We deal here with the creation of a variety of religious institution which is not currently available to most American Jews, and which portends

the possibility of a style of Jewish existence more fulfilling and more deeply significant to many than what they have at present. The model is devoid of theological assumptions and, thus, is readily adaptable for use by groups located anywhere on the belief-practice spectrum of American Jewry. It could and, one hopes, will, be developed in a variety of directions which are as yet unforeseen and modified to meet different circumstances. It is offered on the working assumption that it is feasible.

One more brief note is in order before we get into our basic description. It has been my avowed intention to incorporate from the models and examples cited in Chapter IV all that could prove relevant and beneficial to our blueprint, and the reader will quickly recognize aspects of a number of these models, as well as much that they have in common, which have been so incorporated. Beyond this, however, it is necessary to acknowledge my particular debt to the ideas of Rabbis Richard N. Levy and Lawrence Kushner. Levy's ideas, as set forth in his two articles,[43] have run parallel to my own thinking and greatly influenced me. Kushner, both in articles[44] and in personal conversations, has similarly had an important effect on my ideas. Indeed, it is impossible for me to unravel the strands of these two men's conceptions from what was "originally" my own, and one can only say that the whole work benefits greatly from their influence.

DESCRIPTION

The underground synagogue will be composed of a number of self-

contained cells or havurot. Inasmuch as the cell is conceived of as the basic functional unit of the congregation, we shall focus on that unit first and then proceed to examine the functioning of the congregation as a whole. The terms cell and havura can be used interchangably here. Havura, with its overtones of fellowship and community, illumines one important aspect of the model; cell, on the other hand, catches the sense of minority activity, of conscious "undergroundness" in the enterprise. The latter term will be used more frequently for brevity, but both sets of connotations should be borne in mind as central to the concept.

A cell should be composed of ten to fifteen families, preferably closer to ten. This minimum size is necessary for continuity of activities despite the inevitable absence from time to time of one or two family units and for the variety of personalities and ideas it permits within the group; a cell of more than fifteen families would be in danger of losing its primary positive characteristic, the closeness which arises among people who know each other well and relate to each other as whole persons. Members of the cell would meet together regularly, at least once a week, although more frequent meetings would be desirable if possible. This frequency is absolutely necessary to the establishment and maintenance of group feeling and on-going emotional contact among members. In addition to regular meetings, opportunities for more intensive contact, such as weekend retreats and day-long activities should be sought. All cell members would be expected to attend each cell activity except when unusual circumstances prevent this.

Each cell should strive to maintain a balanced program of Jewish activity. The classical model of Torah, mitzvot, and gemilut hasadim is a useful one for this purpose, especially if each category is understood in its broadest possible sense. Torah would include the study of multiple facets of the Jewish tradition, both in historical context and in relation to contemporary needs and circumstances. Thus members of a cell might decide to study and discuss together some aspect of biblical or rabbinic literature, to trace a theme or a problem through Jewish history, or to study contemporary theological approaches. Study would not, however, be a purely academic pursuit; it would be constantly viewed in the perspective of the life situations of cell members. The sharing of discussions on serious personal and religious topics would be one of the most important aspects of the cell's activities. In this setting, surrounded by haverim (cellmates will not do!), people would have the opportunity to explore problems of belief and concern which they have been unable to raise in more conventional company, to realize the extent to which others find the same difficulties, and to benefit from whatever resolutions others may have found. Torah would not be the passive ingestion of learning, but the on-going consideration of the ways in which Jewish tradition can be relevant to contemporary life.

Mitzvot could be understood as the expression of the ritual component of Jewish existence. Members of a cell would join together in discussing, understanding, and performing mitzvot. Assuming a liberal group, that is, one with a permissive rather than an authoritative approach

to mitzvot, members of a cell might take upon themselves certain mitzvot as a group undertaking. An entire group might decide, for example, to observe the Sabbath in their homes with the traditional benedictions before and after the Friday evening meal. Members of the cell with expertise or experience in this ritual might instruct those who were less familiar with it, or, if no member felt sufficiently competent, the rabbi might be called in as an educator and consultant to assist in this area. In any case the decision to undertake such a ritual obligation would be preceeded by study of the history and meaning of the ritual and perhaps of other practices under consideration, so that the realm of mitzvot would blend at its border back into Torah.

Gemilut hasadim may be defined as acts of interpersonal concern. Such acts, both internally and externally directed, would be central to the nature of a cell system. With regard to the larger community, cell members would be expected to express their religious concern for the well-being of their fellow-men by means of their active involvement in organizations and institutions which seek this goal. Thus, a tutoring project in an underprivileged area or a civil liberties court-monitoring project might be suitable cell activity. Alternatively, each member could enter a different area of activity, and the entire group would thus gain a broader knowledge of the community and the kinds of work being done in ensuing cell discussions. Equally important would be the interpersonal concern expressed within the cell. The traditional mitzvot of visiting the sick and comforting mourners would take on increased meaning within a group of people who were already relating to each other in so many other ways.

Members of a cell could provide each other with emotional support and comfort through every variety of personal crisis. An individual would never feel himself alone at a time of need, because it would be assumed that haverim would be available to be called upon in precisely such situations. Certainly, the ever-increasing background of frank discussions and shared experiences would fit the members of a cell ideally to be of assistance to each other. This natural development might conceivably be amplified by the use of sensitivity training techniques within the group, bringing in an outside trainer, perhaps the rabbi of the congregation if he has ability in this area, to assist members in deepening their understandings of themselves and each other. In any case, the relationships which would develop among the members of a cell would tend to be extraordinary in their depth. What Carl Rogers has described as a helping relationship[45] would obtain within the cell, as each member sought to promote the health, well-being, and growth of his haverim. This relationship would be characterized by a constant attempt to "confirm the other," a phrase Rogers has borrowed from Buber,[46] implying an openness to the unique potentialities of each individual, a willingness to assist in the process of becoming. This special kind of relationship would, in itself, be one of the chief rewards of involvement in a cell.

In addition to the activities we have discussed, which would be characteristic of all cells, each cell would develop its own area of specialization. A cell's specialty might represent a division of labor for the congregation as a whole; its work could correspond in this sense to

to the work done by the various committees in the structure of a conventional temple. Thus, one cell might specialize in liturgy and worship, preparing creative services and seeing to the general worship needs of the congregation. (This assumes that the entire congregation worships jointly; we shall discuss other options later.) Another cell might be responsible for educating the children of the congregation, developing curriculum and actually conducting the educational process themselves A third cell could organize educational programs for the adults of the congregation which would supplement the specific Torah activities of the individual cells. Activities which would be undertaken as gemilut hasadim might well fill the role currently played by temple social action committees, and a cell could readily come to regard social action as its specialty. Whatever field of specialization a cell would choose, it would be expected that the members of the cell, through study and experience, would develop a level of real expertise which would be of benefit to the congregation as a whole.

We began our description by indicating that cells were to be made up of family units. What role, then, do the children play in our model? A child should be considered to be a member of his family's cell. Joint family activities are to be seen as an integral part of cell programming. Beyond this, the degree of integration of a given child or adolescent into a cell would depend largely on his own maturity and interest. By the time an individual is capable of holding up his end of the group's discussions, probably around mid-adolescence, he should be included in

virtually all cell activities. The important fact here is that children must be recognized by the group and treated as valued, unique individuals, whose readiness for and interest in fuller participation must be understood on a purely individual basis. The underlying assumption for all of this is that children will want to get involved. This is one of the cardinal postulates of our system. If the parents are genuinely involved and interested in the cell and find real satisfaction in it, this involvement and interest should be in large degree contagious. Precisely to the extent that no attempt is made to force children into this system, it is to be expected that they will find it interesting; even when they are too young to participate intellectually, the warmth of the group is apt to provide a highly pleasurable social environment. While adolescent rebellion may lead some individuals to reject the group and its activities, it is to be hoped that, if the parents are wise enough not to make an issue of it, the youth will eventually be attracted back by the benefits of the system. If not, one must simply recognize the individual's need and right to go his own way in peace.

THE CONGREGATION

A congregation would be composed of a limited number of cells. Just as it is necessary to limit the size of the cells in order to permit them to fulfill their function, it is also necessary that the congregation as a whole contain itself within those limits which will permit each congregant at least a passing acquaintance with each other congregant. Under these conditions, a sense of involvement in a group larger than the cell

becomes possible, and the sense of anonymity which characterizes most larger congregations and which could destroy the functional effectiveness of a cellular congregation is combatted. For this purpose, the total membership of the congregation should be closed at two hundred families, or perhaps somewhat less, the figure representing a tension between the desire for smallness on one hand and the need for enough members to ensure financial stability on the other. If the congregation could limit its financial needs in the areas of building, etc., which will be discussed further on, it would be possible and desirable to remain even smaller. The congregation should be directed by an executive committee consisting of a rotating representative from each cell. This would ensure contact among the cells, provide guaranteed liason between each cell and the overall congregational structure and prevent the creation of an "establishment" of perpetual leaders who would take the responsibility of guiding the affairs of the temple off the shoulders of the congregants.

The congregation would undertake those activities which require a "critical mass" of people for implementation and are thus beyond the capacity of individual cells. It is not always clear, however, whether a given activity is best suited to be undertaken by a cell or by the congregation, and many programs could be handled either way with appropriate adjustments in style. The cells must be considered autonomous for this purpose, and congregation-wide activities would occur by agreement among the cells. The congregation might, for example, choose to conduct a religious school of sorts for its children. This would permit a

higher degree of curricular and staff organization than individual cells could manage. Cells might, however, despite this, choose to educate their own children instead, incorporating this as another dimension of their family activities. Another area for possible congregational involvement would be the more ambitious aspects of adult education, bringing in speakers, organizing relatively formal courses, or focusing on a special interest area which would have to draw on the congregation as a whole to find an adequate following. Levy's suggestion[47] that educational sessions be centered around the preparation of papers by participants which would then be published in a temple bulletin of real intellectual content is a promising one in this area.

One area which would certainly require congregational attention would be the provision of physical facilities suitable to the needs of its membership. In view of the expense of building or acquiring a facility and the relatively low rate of usage such a facility would get even in an active congregation, consideration should be given to some kind of rental or shared-facility arrangement, as has been done by the Bethesda Jewish Congregation,[48] or to a combination of such facilities with the use of members' homes where practical. Should the congregation decide that a building is necessary, as well it might for the convenience of having its own facility constantly at its disposal, care must be given to staying within the financial means of the congregation, lest the financial burden of a building give rise to pressure for more membership, which would in turn require expanded facilities, and thus the entire nature and purpose of the

congregation be sacrificed to the necessities of this cycle.

One facility which is considered to be a luxury item at best in most temples but which would verge on a necessity in a cellular congregation would be a readily available retreat center for use by cells or other groups within the congregation (e.g., youth) for weekends and other intensive types of experience. Access to a camp suitable to year-round use, such as the Oconomowoc facility used by the Chicago-area temples would be ideal. In any case, the utility of this sort of experience appears so integral to the nature of a cellular congregation as to require some attention in this direction.

Another area of congregational concern would be that of securing whatever professional services were deemed necessary, in particular those of a rabbi. While we shall discuss later the options in this area, it seems clear that if a rabbi is to be paid any significant salary, the resources of an entire congregation are necessary. Another possible professional on the temple staff would be a trained encounter group leader, whether on a full time or consulting basis. This is also a role that a qualified rabbi might fill.

Assuming permanent facilities of some sort, the congregation would maintain a "drop-in" coffee house, where members could find other members when they felt like talking, where projects could be discussed and worked on, where the rabbi and/or the group leader could be found for consultation much of the time. This would also offer the young people of the congregation a suitable, friendly environment in which to meet, talk, think, or just feel at home. Obviously, in a society full of busy people

with multiple obligations, not everyone would find the time to drop in frequently, but it could very well become a "second home" for people seeking a high level of social and intellectual contact and is worth pursuing in that light.

We have already noted that adolescent children of cell members should be integrated as far as is possible into the cells. At the same time, there is the possibility of congregation-wide youth programming, perhaps in the form of one or more separate youth cells, in which the young people could enjoy a more complete peer relationship than they would find in a family cell. The whole question of the status of youth within the congregation requires careful consideration. If traditional life cycle events are observed, they should take on meaning in this context. Thus, Bar Mitzvah might be taken to connote the attainment of some kind of recognized associate status in the congregation, and Confirmation, perhaps a year before high school graduation, would mark admission to full membership. Whether this would be within the structure of the family cell or as part of a young people's cell would be an open question. In any case, it is desirable from the point of view of implanting a taste for involvement in such situations in the future, that the young congregant who leaves home for college should have had the experience of full involvement in cell and congregational activities first.

One of the most flexible areas for experimentation within the structure of a cellular congregation is that of worship. An infinite variety of approaches to worship is possible. It might be that the congregation would choose to worship as a whole as a unifying factor, a sharing of a

larger sense of community. On the other hand, the closeness of cell members may lead them to feel that worship is most meaningful and most expressive within the smaller group. Thus it would be possible for cells to worship individually and the entire congregation never to meet for this purpose. Yet, in the interest of congregational unity and the cultivation of broader loyalties and feelings than those for the specific cell, some kind of congregational communality seems desirable. One solution to this conflict could be found in some kind of alternating system, interspersing cell and congregational services. Another possibility, particularly if individual cells have developed distinct theological or liturgical positions, would be for cells to meet separately for worship and assemble afterward for sermon, discussion, and oneg shabbat. Solutions to this problem would ultimately have to arise out of the needs and characteristics of the specific congregation.

We must ask at this point if it is not possible for a cell to exist in free-floating form, independent of any congregation. It appears that this is indeed the case. A cell which would be prepared to be entirely self-contained, educating its own children, substituting its own leadership for whatever services would ordinarily be provided by professionals for a congregation, could very possibly be an immense success. This must always be considered as an option. On the other hand there are positive benefits and binding forces within a congregational structure which should not be overlooked. Although members of different cells would know each other less well than they would know their own haverim, they should, at the same time, be far from unacquainted and have much in common. The

sharing of an experience in Judaism which is distinctly different from that of most other people, the sense of being involved in a great and important experiment, a similarity of ideas about what Judaism can become, all are conducive to compatibility and friendship among congregants, increasing their desire for unity. Beyond this, the practical advantages of a larger constituency, in terms of flexibility of programming and the ability to provide more services to individual members and cells, will, in most situations, serve to make the congregational model the more desirable one.

THE RABBI

It is clear that a rabbi's position in a congregation of this sort would be quite different from a conventional rabbinate. The question has wisely been raised as to whether a full-time rabbi would be desirable at all. The Bethesda Jewish Congregation, at the instance of its rabbi, has decided that part-time service is preferable.[49] Forstein[50] also raised this question and argued for a part-time, volunteer rabbi as a means of freeing a small congregation, indeed, a unit closer to the size of a cell, from the burdens of dues and financial difficulties. There are distinct merits to this proposal. A part-time rabbi, whether paid or volunteer, would give the congregation maximum flexibility in terms of size by reducing drastically the minimum budgetary requirements. Moreover, a rabbi who earns his living elsewhere and devotes his energies to Judaism and the temple in his spare time presents a viable identification image for the congregant: like the congregant, he has limited time available and must make some sacrifices in giving his religious commitments priority;

like the congregant, he can only justify his involvement on the basis of the intrinsic rewards of his activity; like the congregant, he is a Jew for his own sake, not a "professional Jew." The rabbi could thus set a particularly meaningful example for other congregants. Such an approach, however, has important disadvantages as well. If the congregation expands beyond two or three cells, it could become an impossible burden for a rabbi who is otherwise employed. It is also possible that the congregation would benefit significantly by having someone who is free to devote the major portion of his time and energy to the needs of the group, particularly inasmuch as this is one thing which other members would be unable to do. In a practical vein, it might prove all but impossible to find qualified leaders who, having obtained the education requisite to the position of rabbi, would choose to earn their living in some other way, presumably necessitating further education in that direction, while engaging in the rabbinate as an avocation. This, like other questions, would require different answers in different congregational situations.

The rabbi's primary role would be that of consultant to the congregation, to the cells and to individual members on matters of Jewish knowledge and of human relations. He would function as a catalyst and a "troubler of Israel," posing questions, introducing ideas, playing the devil's advocate, assisting the cells in expressing their own natures in Jewishly authentic ways. Since the entire cell system is focused on the relative autonomy and self-sufficiency of each group, it is not desirable for the rabbi to play the priest to the extent that he would in an ordinary congregation. While his particular Jewish expertise would be at the

disposal of the congregants, it would not be assumed that his was a special and unapproachable genre of religiousity, unattainable to the layman. Rather, it is the rabbi's task to convince the congregation that they as well as he can live an authentic Jewish life and that the efforts of the cells can produce an authentic Judaism. Since it would be physically impossible for him to be present with all the cells all the time, or even most of the cells most of the time, his value to the congregation must consist less in his ability to be a vicarious Jew in front of the group and more in his capacity for facilitating effective Jewish expression by congregants, even in his absence. Preeiminently, he must be able to maintain the understanding that the congregation, including the rabbi, is composed of a group of peers, engaged together in the search for a meaningful expression of their Judaism. It is necessary that the rabbi and his family belong to a cell, since they, too, are entitled to the rewards of fellowship and mutual learning that derive from the cell experience, but the rabbi must at the same time be somewhat detached and free-floating in order not to be a total outsider to other cells as they require his assistance and consultation. This role has some distinct implications as to the kind of rabbi who could fill it. As Arnold Jacob Wolf commented with regard to Solel in a Hebrew Union College chapel sermon in December, 1969, there is a need in such experimental situations for a rabbi without authority hang-ups. The rabbi must be prepared to acknowledge the legitimacy of his congregants' freedom and to recognize that cells may often choose to move in their own directions without, or against, his advice. His ability to accept

this is central to the functionality of the congregation. The rabbi should also be highly skilled in human relations and psychology in order to be able to assist the cell members in their relationships and to offer help in whatever crises might arise. Ideally, he should be well-qualified as an encounter group leader; failing this, an awareness of his limitations and a willingness to bring in competent professionals in this area are essential. Above all, the rabbi must have an openness and flexibility of approach which will permit, encourage, and impel the congregation to move in experimental and innovative directions. His ability to do this will be one of the ultimate determinants of his success in a cellular congregation.

PROBLEMS

There are a number of problems and dangers built into our model which bear discussion. The first of these is, granted the desirability of a congregation such as we have described, how can one be started? Alternative approaches present themselves here. One approach would take advantage of the natural propinquity of an existing group of friends sharing common interests. Levy sees this as the best approach to the situation.[51] The group, having turned its attention to the idea of a cellular approach to Judaism could, fairly easily, with a little expert help, or even some not-so-expert but creative leadership, begin to develop itself in the direction of a cell. If the group grew by attracting like-minded people, there would come a point at which it was becoming too large for all the members to meet and talk together conveniently. This would be the point at which

to subdivide into two cells. The process would repeat itself, and, in this manner, a congregation could be created. Similarly, a congregation, at the point at which it reached its preset membership limit, would have to turn its attention to the creation of a new congregation. This could be done by organizing additional applicants for membership into auxiliary cells with the understanding that they would be trained and assisted by the congregation and that, when an appropriate number of such cells had been formed, they would be cut loose as a second congregation, ideally with financial assistance in the form of a portion or all of their own contributions to the congregation which would have been held for them until they separated. One would then expect close and friendly relations to persist between the congregations, so that the relationship could be maintained to their mutual benefit.

The alternative method of organizing the congregation would be a more public approach. Some kind of publicity, an announcement in a community newspaper or something of the sort, would be put out, describing the nature of the congregational enterprise and inviting applications for membership. A limited number of applicants could be accepted, totaling no more than two cells to start with. Others would be placed on a waiting list until the congregation was ready to expand. This system suffers from a lesser degree of natural attraction and compatibility within the group, but successful encounter groups are often composed of strangers, and it is thus not an impossible model for the formation of a cellular congregation. Particularly under these circumstances, it would be necessary

to stress the nature and demands of the enterprise, so that those who sought a more conventional variety of Judaism would be able to direct their attention elsewhere. Some kind of probation period for new members would be a useful concept, providing them with the opportunity to understand the system before they were required to decide whether to make a full, active commitment. The problem of orienting new members could be met by the establishment of training cells, in which experienced members of the congregation could assist new members in understanding the approach of the congregation and the functioning of a cell.* After an appropriate period of training, a training cell might become a regular cell within the congregation and a new training cell could be established.

In addition to the problem of organizing the congregation, there are a number of dangers which would be present. One of the largest dangers is that of accidentally developing into a perfectly conventional congregation. This could be avoided only by bringing unconventional solutions to predictable problems. The question of financing the congregation, for example, is of the utmost importance. Any kind of assigned dues structure would seem to be basically inconsistent with the voluntaristic style of the congregation. A more suitable approach would be to ask the members to pledge what they are willing to give and to plan the budget accordingly rather than vice-versa. Expenses can also be held down by the willingness of members to shoulder the work of the temple, even maintenance responsibilities, themselves rather than pay people to work

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* I am indebted to my wife Susan for this idea.

for them. We have already pointed out the importance of holding down the cost and centrality of a building to preserving the character of the congregation. Similarly, limits on the size of the congregation must be firmly set and adhered to, lest what started as a bold experiment end up simply as a fashionable temple with a no-longer-deserved reputation for innovation.

The congregation must also be wary of permitting itself to develop into an impenetrable in-group. This is a difficult danger to avoid, as an innovative congregation has a natural tendency to regard itself as somewhat superior. At the same time, the viability of the congregation depends on its ability to welcome and incorporate interested newcomers up to the point at which the membership limit is reached. The problem can, to some extent , be met by turning pride in the direction of missionary zeal rather than snobbery. In the interest of "spreading the gospel," congregational activities should, wherever possible, be open to guests, although cell activities may often be so intensely personal as to preclude this.

The personal dangers inherent in the model represent a more serious problem. What is to be done, for example, for the man who finds that the demands of the congregation are simply more than he can accomodate to, given the prior demands of career and family? We can only conclude that our system is not suited to his needs. A deeper problem still is the potential for being hurt which is built into the openness-demanding cell situation. An individual who genuinely opens his heart to his <u>haverim</u> renders himself extremely vulnerable; callousness, insensitivity, and

gossip are potentially disastrous here. Beyond this, the distinct possibility exists that involvement in so demanding an enterprise could even endanger some marriages. Partners who become unequally involved in the congregation may experience marital difficulties. Encounter groups have been known on occasion to place great, even unbearable, strains on some participants' marriages; it is easy to envision similar possibilities in a cellular congregation. Neither of these disturbing possibilities can be ruled out. Qualified, psychologically sophisticated leadership can reduce the dangers in this area by alertness to the possibility, but that is the best that can be done. It is necessary to recognize that as deep an involvement as a cellular congregation represents can present dangers in this direction, and the decision to become involved in such an enterprise must be based on the conviction that the rewards offered are, on balance, worth the risks involved.

The dangers for the rabbi are also substantial in this setting. As we have noted in our survey of experimental and innovative congregations, there is a marked tendency for the personality of the rabbi to become a dominant factor in the congregation. This is easy to understand; it requires a rather strong personality in a rabbi to withstand the pressure to accept the conventional rabbinic role in a conventional congregation. The important task is controlling the influence of this personality. There is no harm in the rabbi's providing a model of a viable Jewish life-style for the congregation--indeed, this is a positive good--as long as that life-style is understood to be attainable by the rest of the congregation. If

the congregation is to retain its intellectual integrity and independence, congregants must always feel free to question the rabbi's viewpoints, to examine his values, to measure his actions on the same scale as their own. The rabbi should be no more than first among equals, and preferably, simply an equal among equals. The clearest necessity in this situation is that the congregation must ultimately be self-sufficient. If the personality of the rabbi is so deeply stamped on the congregation that the congregation could not function without him, the entire enterprise is doomed to failure. If more than one such congregation exists, a periodic exchange of pulpits between rabbis for a period of a year would be a helpful approach to this problem. In this way, both congregations and rabbis would benefit from a periodic change of perspective, and the responsibility for continuity would be placed squarely on the congregation, where it belongs.

Another major problem for the rabbi is suggested by Philip Slater[52] in his discussion of trainer-group relationships. This is the tendency, apparently built into the psychodynamics of intensive interaction groups, to rebel against the leader and attempt, literally or symbolically, to expel him from the group. The obvious coalescence of this syndrome with the frequency of rabbinic firings and near-firings in American temples suggests a potentially difficult situation. The rabbi must be psychologically sophisticated enough to recognize and understand this pattern when it appears and flexible and secure enough to roll with the punches. If it is necessary in order to preserve the functionality and autonomy of the groups,

he may even be required to withdraw from the congregational situation, either temporarily or permanently, without engendering bitterness in himself or the congregants. This, clearly, is no easy task, on either an emotional or a practical level. A group trainer, after all, is not permanetly dependent on a single group for his livelihood. This would be one important advantage in a volunteer or part-time rabbi who supports himself by other means. More serious still, however, is the problem of the rabbi's emotional investment in the congregation, a problem which is not totally soluble. There appears to be no way in which a rabbi can meet the needs of a cellular congregation while maintaining a stance of detached professionalism; although some approaches to encounter groups cast the trainer in this position, the permanent nature of the congregational arrangement militates against the success of such an approach here. Congregants have a right to demand that the rabbi contribute deeply of his humanity and his feelings just as they do; his failure to do so erects a barrier which threatens the entire system. Consequently, the rabbi must be peculiarly vulnerable in this situation, with little way of protecting himself should the dynamics of the group turn against him. He, like the prospective congregant, must simply assess the risks and the rewards and decide whether the whole situation is worth it.

FUNCTIONS OF THE SYSTEM

Having delineated at length what we regard as the dysfunction of the status quo, and having based much of our argument for a cellular model on the rewards of the system, we ought, at least briefly, to consider

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what the specific rewards of a functioning underground synagogue would be.

To begin with, the individual who might well become discouraged in a personal, isolated search for a meaningful Judaism has the resources of a group of similarly oriented people to draw on. The group nature of the cell's activity should tend to counteract discouragement and enable the individual to discover within himself the satisfactions of an active, rich Jewish life. The individual's commitment to Jewish values and to the maintenance of a religiously Jewish life-style is constantly reinforced by his frequent interaction with a group of very highly valued others, enabling him to withstand more comfortably the otherwise erosive effects of the apathetic general social environment. This interaction with others confirms in the individual his sense of being a unique, valued human being and strengthens his own sense of positive identity. His children grow up in an environment in which Judaism really matters, in which religious questions are taken seriously by relevant adult identity figures. The child is gradually inducted into a high-value group focused on living Judaism and finds his own opportunity for positive identity confirmation by living in this way. He will understand, at an intuitive as well as intellectual level, what Judaism can and should be, instead of being lectured about it in irrelevant Sunday schools which have no visible connection to the real world; this, and this alone, should be the basis for his own desire to live a Jewish life. The cellular Judaism model has immense survival value because of the rewards it offers. When Judaism truly becomes

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a matter of doing what you want instead of what you are supposed to do, no one need worry about its survival. Only a moribund structure is in danger; a living, vital Judaism should have no difficulty sustaining itself.

AN ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL

In addition to the cellular structure we have just described, there is an alternative model which we shall consider briefly. This model consists of one or more cells operating within the context of a larger, more conventional congregation. The approach would be of use in small communities, where, with only one temple and a limited number of Jews, it would be indefensible to exclude from the opportunity for religious expression those members of the community who have a legitimate preference for more normative, less demanding religious styles. The alternative model would also be worthy of consideration when the rabbi and prospective cell members are unwilling to sacrifice the material and logistical advantages of a large congregation, yet wish to experiment seriously with a more demanding variety of Judaism.

Each cell would function approximately as it would under our previous model. Cell members, however, as members of a large congregation, would participate in its services--at least most of the time--send their children to its religious school and involve themselves as they chose in general temple activities. This kind of a concentric circle arrangement exists either formally or informally in many congregations. The group tends to be characterized as the rabbi's hasidim and is generally much more active than other temple members. Thus, Lipman's

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study and retreat group seems to approach the functioning of a cell rather closely. Gittelsohn's formally similar havdalah group, however, does not, by the rabbi's report, seem to generate the same sense of closeness, perhaps in part because of the absence of a retreat as an opening basis. In any case, the possibility of moving in this direction within some existing congregations is open.

The advantage of this approach to a cellular model is that it does not require a complete break from currently organized Jewish institutions. The rabbi can be financially supported at a level that a smaller group could not hope to achieve, and the facilities of a large congregation for meetings, communications, and education would be at the disposal of the cell. The dangers, however, are significant. The in-group sensations aroused within the cell members could lead to either hostility or disdain for the larger temple, which would make their continued functioning within the congregation difficult. External resentment of the cell's "cliquishness" on the part of other temple members could also aggravate this situation, and the danger of the rabbi of the temple, inevitably overburdened to begin with, neglecting other responsibilities as an increasing proportion of his energy was demanded by cell activities could complicate the situation beyond viability. Altogether, this must be seen as a somewhat risky alternative for thosewho are unwilling or unable to break away from a conventional temple, incorporating the frustrations of continuing to work within such an institution and, perhaps, for that reason, offering less satisfaction and a dimmer prospect for success than a "pure" cellular system.

APOLOGIA

It may be appropriate at the end of a study of this sort to offer something of an apologia for the axioms and personal biases underlying the work. The model which we have examined is both religious and Jewish in its orientation; the question has rightly been raised as to whether the same goals, in terms of interpersonal contact and communication, could not be achieved in secular context, thus rendering the religious and Jewish frameworks so much excess baggage. We shall therefore consider briefly the justifications for advocating cellular Judaism instead of a secular model offering similar rewards.

Religion is understood here, in Tillich's sense, as man's way of relating to his ultimate concern. When functioning effectively in people's lives, it is an integrative viewpoint providing the values and the perspective to unify one's life. It is clear that religion does not serve this function for most Americans today, but it also seems clear that nothing has replaced it. A sense of perspective and of ultimate values is hard to maintain in twentieth century America; this failure of religion to perform its traditional function may well account for the prevailing anomie in our society. Be that as it may, however, we are in no position to attempt an objective proof of the need for religion. Large numbers of people will indubitably continue to live without any significant religious orientation and feel themselves to be better for it. At the same time, though, we should not neglect the fact that the underground church exists and serves the needs of its adherents, as evidenced by their continued support.

Religion is available in other contexts, as in the small group experience; the underground church represents a belief that these two factors enhance each other. The ability to hold such a belief in the light of experience is, it seems to me, full justification for this kind of a religious approach.

Granted, then, that the cellular model is religiously feasible in a Christian context, what makes our system Jewish? The two criteria on which I depend in this context are compatibility with the Jewish tradition and current utility to Jews as a means of religious expression. I believe that we have adequately demonstrated the compatibility of a cellular approach with Jewish tradition in Chapter IV. The community orientation of East European Jewish culture, the group nature of such mitzvot as prayer, and the centrality of external confirmation for Jewish identity, in the sense of being known and recognized by one's fellow Jews, all serve as foundations for a cellular approach. Similarly, the emphasis on the dignity and worth of each individual, stretching from Biblical and talmudic literature through Martin Buber, provides a place for the underground synagogue within a Jewish value structure. This is not to say that Jewish tradition leads inevitably in this direction or that only the Jews could have developed such an idea. Indeed, both of these assertions are patently untrue. We are simply arguing for the coherence of our system with Judaism.

The desirability of this proposal hinges on its utility. Despite the weakening of Jewish institutions in contemporary America, the continuing power of certain practices and observances points to the need for a

reestablished sense of community. The Holy Days, Passover, Bar Mitzvah, marriage and funeral ceremonies continue to attract large numbers of otherwise non-observant, acculturated Jews because of their continuing emotional content and identity implications. With the exception of the Holy Days, each of these observances has traditionally been associated with extended family and close community ties which no longer really exist. The underground synagogue, by reconstituting an environment in which identity confirmation can take place underscores those identity elements which still exist and encourages the development of new ones. This may be seen as improving the survival value of Judaism precisely to the extent that it offers a more rewarding Jewish life.

This brings us to the ultimate assumption upon which we have been operating: that the survival of Judaism is desirable. As we pointed out while postulating this point in Chapter III, it is the sine qua non of our system, for there is little point in attempting to facilitate the survival of Judaism unless it is worth preserving. This represents a value judgment and, as such, as not really subject to proof. All one can do in this circumstance is stand on the personal commitment to the value of Judaism implied by the completion of a rabbinic thesis. In brief, this thesis assumes as its basis my own subjective experience that the active practice of Judaism has provided in my life and in the lives of others to whom I have spoken a sense of meaning, identity and personal enrichment which I have not encountered in other spheres of involvement. Participation in the Jewish tradition and acceptance of Jewish identity are thus, for me,

self-justifying; given more attractive modes of Judaism and leadership moving in this direction, I believe that this could be true for others. Historically, Judaism has offered the Jew a number of different styles of relating himself to his God and his people. These styles have changed, remaining unified primarily by the continuity of Jewish history and Jewish identity. It is in this light that our focus must be understood. We are not recommending Judaism as a suitable vehicle for promoting cellular social organization, but the cell as a mode of perpetuating Judaism in a form which can be vital and significant for our period of history.

PROSPECT

What we have offered here is neither presented nor regarded as Divine writ. Our underground synagogue may be asking a level of commitment that not even a minority of the American Jewish community is prepared to meet. Certainly, it is unlikely to appeal to the majority of American Jews. But, measured by numbers, Judaism has never been successful. We can measure our success in a Jewish framework only by the quality of reward offered to those few who may care to involve themselves. If a few are so inclined, the model's survival power is self-contained. The model is presented in the belief that cellular Judaism can offer a significant number of American Jews of all orientations, who are currently alienated from existing institutions and styles, the opportunity for a meaningful, rewarding Jewish enterprise. This enterprise could meet the needs for personal contact and religious reinforcement, for genuine involvement and concern that our times are generating. The

the underground synagogue is not the answer to the problems of American Jewry; it may well be an important answer.

NOTES

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