24/457 September 17, 1993 Rosh Hashanah 5754

Sh'ma

A JOURNAL OF JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY

In this Issue

"The nature of the dilemma can be stated in a threeword sentence: I am lonely." So wrote Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik in The Lonely Man of Faith. This issue reflects on the human condition of aloneness which is powerfully felt by many during the Days of Awe.

Loneliness David Wolpe

Was there ever a man lonelier than Moses?

The leader of Israel is betrayed by those around him. His brother aids in building the golden calf. His sister gossips about him, and his people--for all the love he shows them--defy him. Only God proves a constant companion. Finally, Moses is betrayed by God, who forbids his entrance into the land. At that epochal moment when God announced that he would not enter Israel, no one stood by Moses' side.

Nivrah Adam Yechidi teaches the Mishnah. Each individual is created singly. In other words, everyone, from commoner to prophet, is alone.

This solitude before the infinite contradicts God's very first pronouncement on human character: "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Before we know the blessings of being human, its obligations and aspirations, we know its great curse--loneliness.

Always One

The same God who decided that it is not good to be alone, made it so that we can never completely escape that fate. V'davak b'ishto--man and woman cling to each other, but they can never dwell inside each other. They will always be separate, cut off, clinging because they cannot merge.

Loneliness is the seal of creation. Bounded by bodies, we pass the days meditating, musing, dreaming; but we reveal only a small fraction of our inner life with those around us. Most of what passes through our minds, and our hearts, is never shared.

We are not born with the recognition of our loneliness. Children do not know the difference between their thoughts and the thoughts of others. They do not understand internal and external. Everything and everyone seems to dwell inside the mind. But one day each of us says a magic word, "I". The first meaning of "I" is "not you". We are separate, uniquealone.

As the Hebrew poet wrote: Lo tov heyot adam levado/ aval hu levado ben ko vacho--it is not good for man to be alone/ but he is alone anyway.

The Blessings of Loneliness

Yet this great problem, this design flaw of creation, also has its point. Israel is to be a nation that dwells alone. Solitude is the school of character. It is alone that we begin to uncover the layers of ourselves, to tune the self so that it can meet others, sturdy in its selfhood.

Israel dwells alone because separation is also, in some sense, purity. Kedusha,

Inside	
Arlene Agus	p. 3
Tsvi Blanchard	p. 5
Eugene Borowitz	p. 7
Book Reviews	p. 8

holiness, means separation. To be lonely, to be alone, to be separate--these three ideas interpenetrate. One who cannot be alone will never take more than a racing dive into the depths of his own character. The deeper levels will remain unexplored. Although we may discover a part of ourselves through others--as Proverbs teaches, "Just as water reflects the face, so one human heart reflects another" (Proverbs 27:19)--to truly know ourselves we must also learn to be alone.

"Judaism teaches that loneliness is ultimate only in the absence of God."

A nation dwelling alone has each other. But even the community of those close to us does not erase our fundamental isolation. Prayers are couched in the plural; they tell us that we do not pray by ourselves, that we are part of a community. Yet now and again the essential singleness of the individual shines through, even in the prayers themselves. ""O Lord, open my lips." So begins the Amidah, for no one else can truly pray on our behalf.

The practice of *hitboddut*, singleness, is well known among Jewish mystics. It is the discipline of being alone and discovering the music of the unique soul that is too faint to be heard in society. That music can be our guiding rhythm, though its beat may not be heard by others.

There is despair in *hitboddut*, in this ritual practice of celebrating the privacy of all creation. For the general practice in *hitboddut* is not to stand alone and pray softly; it is not even to lift one's voice in song. It is to cry, and to scream out.

Is there a way out of the pain of loneliness? The romantic image tells us that love is the cure. Yet love is but a partial cure. As the lovers fall into each other's arms, and the movie house sighs, we are coaxed into believing that loneliness has been overcome.

The Limits of Love

Yet love is but a partial cure for loneliness. Even the greatest love will at times reinforce singleness. It is when you are close to another that you realize how unbridgeable is the distance that still separates. Why is it so painful when someone close misunderstands us? Because it is an affirmation that the gap exists. In the wry, painful

words of Chekhov, "If you wish to understand loneliness, marry." Chekhov was not taking a cheap shot at marriage. The precise Russian anatomist of the soul was pointing to the pain at the heart of love which is always haunted by the possibility of loss, by the realization of ultimate separateness.

So where can we turn in our aloneness? Judaism teaches that loneliness is ultimate only in the absence of God. God can see inside us, can understand us at levels that elude our friends, our family--even our own selves. God overflows boundaries, and assures us that we are not alone.

When Jews have felt the absence of God, they have been desolate. Not only because physical protection has been taken away. But without God there is no supreme companionship of the heart. Listen to Lamentations Rabbah:

"I sat alone because of your hand" (Jeremiah 15:17). Pharaoh's hand attacked me, but I did not sit alone. Sennacherib's hand attacked me, but I did not sit alone. But when Your hand attacked (i.e., when the Temple was destroyed), I sat alone."

Lamentations Rabbah, proem III

Sh'ma a journal of jewish responsibility

Senior Editors Eugene B. Borowitz, Irving Greenberg,

Harold M. Schulweis

Editor Nina Beth Cardin Administrator Betsy M. Landis

Design Michael Cohen/Designs

Production Bambi Marcus

Contributing Editors Michael Berenbaum, David Biale, Elliot N.
Dorff, Arnold Eisen, David Ellenson, Leonard
Fein, Rela M. Geffen, Neil Gillman, Joanne
Greenberg, Lawrence Hoffman, Paula
Hyman, Deborah Dash Moore, David Novak,
Riv-Ellen Prell, Ellen Umansky, Elie Wiesel,
Arnold Jacob Wolf, Walter Wurzburger,
Michael Wyschogrod.

Sh'ma welcomes articles from diverse points of view. Hence, the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the editors. Donations to Sh'ma are tax-deductible. Sh'ma is available in microform from University

Book reviews are by Eugene B. Borowitz.

Microfilms Internat'l., Ann Arbor, Ml.

Address all correspondence, subscriptions and change of address notices to *Sh'ma*, c/o CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, Suite S-300, New York, NY 10016. Telephone: 212-867-8888; FAX: 212-867-8853.

Sh'ma (ISSN 0049-0385) is published bi-weekly except June, July and August, by CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, Suite S-300, New York, NY 10016. Subscription: \$29 for two years in U.S.; \$18 for one year; \$21 a year overseas; 10 or more to one address, \$9 each year. Retired or handicapped persons of restricted means may subscribe at half price.

Copyright @ 1993 by CLAL.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sh'ma, c/o CLAL, 99 Park Avenue, S-300, New York, NY 10016-1599.

Second-class postage paid at New York, NY September 17, 1993

This midrash ties in the first verse of the book of Lamentations, "How does the city (Jerusalem) sit Solitary!" To be truly alone is not to be enslaved by Pharaoh, or even to have your nation destroyed by Sennacherib. It is to be abandoned by God.

"My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" cries the Psalmist in the twenty-second Psalm. This is the individual alone in the universe. Without the nearness of God, the emptiness is overwhelming.

To see the difference God's presence make, even in difficult times, turn to the next Psalm, when the singer of Israel feels again close to God: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will hear no evil, for You are with me."

Was there ever a man lonelier than Moses? On the steppes of Moab, contemplating his death, knowing he would never enter the land, Moses must have felt the wilderness inside. For those moments, he dwelt apart from God, and he was alone.

Gradually, Moses walked up the summit of Pisgah, and saw the land. The Bible's narrative passes to silence. But we know that however great his sadness, Moses was not alone. For the final tribute to the greatest leader of Israel is that he saw God "face to face". Overcoming his isolation, trusting again, Moses knew that God was with him.

That was Moses' final lesson to his people: Throughout our lives, we may feel lonely. The promise of faith is that we are never alone.

DAVID WOLPE is author of the newly published Teaching Your Children About God.

Revealing god and concealing ourselves: deus revelatus et homo absconditus

Ariene Agus

I cannot repent in the plural. Not fully. Not if teshuvah means actual inner change.

As a literalist who believes that our performance during this crucial season of judgment will affect our mortal lives, I am moved by ritual drama and liturgical supplication to undertake each step of the Maimonidean process toward repentance: I do acknowledge and admit my sins. I do regret and resolve not to repeat them.

But, perhaps by design, the collective language of the liturgy brings me only to the threshold of change. It does not carry me across. Perhaps because of its powers of conscience and comfort the community serves as guide and goad but leaves me spiritually intact on terra firma.

By the onset of *neilah* true reckoning has still not taken place. My confessions have revealed nothing new to me, and certainly nothing new to my Maker. I still feel unworthy of forgiveness, having recoiled from stretching to my spiritual limits, its own punishment for a religious person.

Around me the congregation seems animated in anticipation of atonement, perhaps confident of impending forgiveness, or, perhaps, just in anticipation of food. That's when panic sets in. The gates to heaven are already beginning to close and my heart begins to sink with the sun.

Avoiding the Divine Encounter

Dirshu et Hashem b'himatz'o. Seek out God as He is

available. In this et ratzon, the traditionally propitious period of divine accessibility, I have treated God as a distant hope when what

...I have treated God as a distant hope when what I wanted was the immediacy of His presence.

I wanted was the immediacy of His presence.

I wanted it....but did not seek it.

"Who is He to whom Adam clings in passionate, all-consuming love and from whom he flees in mortal fear and dread?" asks Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik. Opening ourselves to an encounter with God is akin to entering the kodesh ha-kodeshim, the Holy of Holies. We are not sure if we will emerge alive. Whether it be womb or tomb.

And while mere participation in the act of public confession seems to mitigate one's guilt, confessing under the floodlights before God alone affixes you to a state of guilt that threatens to engulf the act of expiation. The dread is untempered by previous pardons.

But avoiding this moment of truth is riskier than facing it. I isolate myself in a corner, hide myself under my tallis and try to withdraw into myself.

On previous occasions when I have sought the presence of the Almighty I have typically found it difficult to break through, not because God is inaccessible, quite the contrary, but because I am. I hesitate to make the approach, feeling unworthy, terrified at the prospect of becoming vulnerable to the unknown, unprepared no matter when it is, and, absurdly embarrassed by the lack of parity in the relationship.

Haltingly, I abandon the prescribed prayers and begin to speak. Self-conscious of every syllable, my words choke on the obvious: what to say to the One who knows everything. By the time thoughts form into words they feel like worn, rusty phrases, even to me. Speech has been robbed of its conventional instrumental purposes and I fall silent, thinking too much. I start again.

Breaking Through

This time I force myself to keep on talking, free associating, feverishly speaking faster than I can think, emptying my mind of every available thought, until, finally, the rust runs clear and what begins to emerge are words that haven't been packaged or censored, thoughts that are completely new to me. The protective crust encasing my innermost feelings begins to crack, releasing with great force a torrent of emotions of every kind: scrutiny and salve, utter despair and creative imagining, laughter--LAUGHTER!--and unbearable grief, raw honesty as well as brazen accusations, the deepening encounter beginning to bridge what is with what ought to be.

With increasing intensity, I perceive shadowy inklings from beyond: patient receptivity and even interest, intimacy and immediacy, a looming presence that is

molten but fragile, and, most ironically, unseasonally unjudgmental.

My internal barriers begin to dissolve, piercing the invisible film that seems always to separate Creator and created. I know now that I am in the presence of God.

The experience is one of buoyancy, like being inflated with helium. One swells amid a rich sense of completeness,

of wholeness unlike anything one has ever known. It is a total experience: a sublime blend of the physical, the emotional, the psychological and the spiritual...the ultimate human experience.

Knowing God's Presence

Awareness of the divine is a palpable though nonsensory sensation. There is a certitude and a clarity so absolute that they render obsolete all ambiguity and leaps of faith.

The sensation is so exotic, so intoxicating that it leaves me unaware of any experience beyond itself, reluctant to let go and resume my normal life. As we repeat every day from Elul through Tishrei, "I have only one request to you, O God, to spend the rest of my life in Your presence" (Psalm 27).

This may sound like a feeling we observe in very different contexts: the modern, secular version of

epiphany found, in art, literature and poetry. But there the analogy ends.

For what happens during a religious epiphany is unmistakably not of your invention, be it an insight, an act of nature, perhaps a solution or a sudden awareness that enters your mind, that has been transmitted into your mind as though by spiritual modem. It is not simply a set of sensations, but a kind of conversation: something has been communicated from a transcendent source--from THE transcendent source--and it is exactly what you needed, whether you knew it or not, whether you sought it or not.

Returning

Inevitably, I do emerge from the contact but I have changed, my inner turning, my *teshuvah* achieved. And, as I recede reluctantly from this privileged, yet humbling state, stunned, flooded with emotion, I cover my eyes and take three steps back.

Moments pass. I become gradually aware of having

been oblivious to the life around me. The experience of ALL, of EVERYTHING, evidently demands that one, at least temporarily, suspend, negate the rest of one's life. A heightened life of the self necessitates a kind of death of the self.

And so the contact with the root of all being, the cause of all causes, the ultimate source of all life, is also

the contact with death. Life and death. Everything and nothing. And all of it contained in God.

All and Nothing

There is a mystical conception of calling God: AYIN--nothing, nothingness. God is AYIN in the sense that infinite existence cannot be confined within semantic or intellectual categories, and is therefore no-thing; nothing. This divine nothingness nonetheless is the creator of all that exists. And in choosing *lashuv*, to return and stand before God, a person enters the liminal state which connects life and death.

A similar liminal state characterizes the process of mourning, where again there emerges a complex relationship between the individual and community: for though grief is an entirely solitary experience, the mourner deliberately engages in it in the presence of many other people. And, like the process of *teshuvah*, the

external actors serve to deepen and elaborate one's internal drama.

And, as on Yom Kippur, though life in a house of mourning is entirely circumscribed and static--one wears the same clothing, sits in the same room and intones a traditional liturgy--the ambience is far from static. Quite the contrary. Both the mourners and the people close to them often undergo dynamic change and growth. As though death itself were generating life.

Not Loneliness, but Only-ness

Not only in God does the unknown exist; each of us has within us a dark place of AYIN, an internal Holy of Holies, foreign and forbidding, sealed and concealed. It is precisely to this transformative inner sanctum that the process of *teshuvah* beckons us. And the radical discontinuity that actual change entails demands of us a death-like detachment from all familiar sources of security: self-definition, family, community, confidence in the future.

But it is frightening only in prospect. Immersion in God can be described as divinely-enhanced inwardness. Not loneliness, but "only-ness". Not emptiness but fullness.

"I will seek out God's face and ask for an answer of the tongue....The human being prepares his/her heart and from God comes the reply" (Ohila prayer). As we leave the safe harbor of community, we turn our sights upward, to the One who never slumbers and never sleeps, who waits, pen ever poised over the Book of Life, should we return and reveal ourselves.

(Lacking a comfortable alternative, I refer to God in the masculine with deep regret.)

ARLENE AGUS is founding director of the Poretsky Foundation.

Countering Ioneliness

Tsvi Blanchard

On Rosh HaShanah, Yom HaDin, the Day of Judgment, do you stand as an individual, alone before the Divine Judge or as one sheltered amid the community of Israel? On the one hand, your particular sins as well as the degree of your guilt and responsibility is individual. Guilt is inextricably linked with the personal. It depends on inner intent and one's ability to act otherwise.

On the other hand, you share your sinfulness with others. You are not the only one who has lied and been insensitive. We can say *hatanu* (we have sinned) because where wrong action is concerned we have all been in

many of the same places. Paradoxically, we can "share" our sins, but our individual *guilt* for those sins causes us to stand alone.

But "being an individual" is not the same as "being alone". Western culture seems to have passed beyond the

"If we pay attention to the individuals in the community around us, we will discover that for too many being alone can cross over into being lonely."

flirtation with Robinson Crusoe who is an individual because he is alone. We even recognize that the sense of individual guilt for

misdeeds is itself the product of one's socio-historical situation. We are keenly aware that other societies have understood it differently.

Yet, for all our attention to the self and personal responsibility as *social* constructions, we are sensibly wary of neglecting the subjective/personal realm. The twentieth century has surely shown us how dangerous it would be to collapse into a collective identity where shared guilt and responsibility leave no room for individual accountability with its tasks, rights and obligations. Hence we surrender neither side of this tension. We live Rosh HaShanah, as throughout the year, with the dialectical tension between self and community.

One and One and One and One

Listen to that same tension in the discussion of the mishnah in Rosh HaShanah (16a). The topic is the Divine judgment of humanity which takes place on Rosh HaShanah. The text reads: "On Rosh HaShanah, all creatures pass before Him as b'nei maron."

What does this enigmatic term mean? The talmudic discussion of it a few pages later offers three interpretations.

- 1. as a flock of sheep. The reference here is to tithing sheep, i.e., giving one out of ten sheep to the Levites or the poor. For this purpose, the sheep are counted one by one, marking the tenth in order to tithe it. The Talmud is suggesting that on Rosh HaShanah we pass by one-by-one just like sheep being tithed.
- 2. as at the pass of Bet Maron. The reference here is to a particular mountain pass so narrow that if two people are talking together, when they reach the pass they must separate and go through it individually. Again, the phrase in the mishna is interpreted to mean that however much we enter Rosh HaShanah together, when we reach

the judgment, we must separate and be reviewed one by one.

3. as the soldiers of the house of David. The army of king David is imagined as passing in review as it sets out to war. The soldiers passed in review individually. Here too the idea is that the mishnah presents us as standing individually in judgment on Rosh HaShanah, however much we may otherwise be a unit.

All three interpretations have the "creatures" of the mishnah proceeding one by one. Here we come before the Divine Judge on Rosh HaShanah as individuals.

But the community side of the tension asserts itself in the gemara as follows: "Nonetheless, they [the creatures passing in judgment on Rosh HaShanah] are considered/reviewed with one single glance."

In addition to passing by individually, we also are looked upon as if we are one group. Although our actions are judged individually, we are still seen as one people.

We find the same tension echoed in traditional liturgy. Although responsibility for sin is individual, we confess in

the plural [hatanu]. But since it is the first person plural (we have sinned) we are unified into a community. The tension between the individual and community is balanced because in fact we are unified as a community of sinners. In another example from the liturgy, we see that this tension is balanced only because the unified, community side is our ideal. We ask that we be made into an aguda ahat, a single "band" [to do the Divine Will]. We have to ask for this because we have not yet achieved it. We are reminded that communal unity [in the service of a religious vision] is an ideal and not a fact.

Crossing Back from Loneliness

In this vein, I want to briefly consider how contemporary Jewish life reflects temptations which are rooted in the lived experience of this tension between self and community. If we pay attention to the individuals in the community around us, we will discover that for too many being alone can cross over into being lonely. And, as a community we must speak to the pain that is felt when self is not truly joined to community. Here are some of the real voices which I, and many others, have heard on Rosh HaShanah.

I am on the outside looking in at your community-which doesn't really include me. I am here because I "must" be here. Dealing with something in my past, or perhaps my family, compels me to come here to be with you. I could try and push my way in, but in fact I don't really belong here. I have done something, or worse, am something you would not accept or welcome. My aloneness is lonely because you make no place for me as I am.

I am here but at the margins. I want to be here because you are my community. And I know that you do

not reject me. However different my body, my values or my situation may be, you think of me as part of your community. But I am not a full partner. My voice is tolerated but not taken seriously. I speak but am not really heard. My aloneness is lonely because you do not grant me the full presence that comes with power.

I am here to seek a community that once existed but now is lost. I need to be here with you. Somehow we are on the same path in search of a community which once was.

We are together at Kol Nidrei. Some of us listen while others speak as representatives of the now vanished kahal which possessed the power to prohibit and permit. We recite traditional prayers, reaching out together for our inheritance. But we fall short because we can no longer tell the stories which gave these prayers meaning. My aloneness is lonely because, while we may be together in the present, I need us to be together in the past.

I am here losing myself in a community which only pretends that it is a community. Let me remind you of an important cliche: modernity has meant that individuals have become atoms, lacking any real personal significance in society. This is too painful to bear. So together we take race, religion, ethnos, class or nation and build a pseudo-community. Although I want "the real thing", I believe that we are only acting as if we are a community. At all costs I cannot speak these words for to do so would force me to see that my "community" is an illusion. My aloneness is lonely because I feel that I am nothing without you.

Responding to the Voices

I hope that we will respond to those voices. How? *Tachlis*: We have to build a community which finds a

"I am here because it is only in being with you that I can wrestle with my aloneness."

place for all Jews, outsiders included, and sees to it that each one has an important voice, not only a place at the margins. We need to continue seeking a living community which really feels itself part of the chain of Jewish existence stretching from our past into our future. And that community must be more than a wish or slogan. It must help all Jews discover that we want a community in which each of us can also "stand alone".

Here is the voice that lives the tension of passing before the Judge of the World k'vnei maron-one by one-while also knowing that we are-all considered together in a single glance.

I am here because it is only in being with you that I can wrestle with my aloneness. I am myself-with-you. Because I am in this community I can also stand aside from you and find my own place. I am together with you, because we share our Jewish fate and our Jewish responsibility for the world. However different our individual understanding of our community may be, we are partners in the covenant we have inherited as a community. I am alone but not lonely because it is only when I remain truly connected to you that I can stand apart from you.

TSVI BLANCHARD is a Senior Teaching Fellow at CLAL — The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

Other thoughts

Justice ginsburg, another "terminal jew?"

Eugene B. Borowitz

Ahad Haam, returning from his first Zionist Congress said he felt like a mourner at a wedding. Amid the general ecstasy that the Jewish people would now practice politics he was depressed that no one seemed very much concerned about Jewish culture. His experience came to mind as I pondered my reaction to our community's elation at Ruth Bader Ginsburg's joining the Supreme Court.

I, too, have been celebrating. I have rejoiced with Americans everywhere that a person of such intelligence, character and obvious judicial temperament has been appointed to our highest court. With feminists I have cheered a heroine of the ongoing struggle to attain equal rights and our nation's further progress toward genuine job equality. And like most Jews I've swelled with pride that another bookish, industrious, smart Jew has attained

public eminence. This "little" Jew typifies the glory of our modernization in courageously going where Jews (and women) weren't wanted and by dint of discipline, character and accomplishment winning the respect and admiration of colleagues.

Loss Despite Loyalty

So why the "mourning?" Because while most Anglo-Jewish newspapers have been uncommonly quiet about Justice Ginsburg's Jewish involvements, one normally

reliable
paper said
her son was
married
under
Christian
auspices. I
assume he
is a loyal
Jew in his
own way, as
the expres-

Our community leaders'...standard of Jewishness seems exhausted by personal character and liberal ethics.

sion goes, but one not much concerned about religion; his parents, many papers have said, are not members of any synagogue. I imagine that his wife has some religious connections and so the non-Jewish ceremony--and so, too, my surmise that Justice Ginsburg's grandchildren will not be raised as Jews.

Technically speaking, Justice Ginsburg does not qualify for Leslie Fiedler's jarring self-description, "terminal Jew." The eminent literary critic wrote recently that he suddenly realized that, having long lived by the universal standards of high culture, he would be the last Jew in his family. None of his children, much less his grandchildren, was Jewish and thus they would never know the verbal, bookish, ethnic hubbub which had so shaped him. This pained him in ways he had never anticipated but he resigned himself to it as another, and not the worst of those regrets that one accumulates over a lifetime.

Of course, the Ginsburg Jewishness will survive the Justice through her son and her daughter. Perhaps their family will be one of those that recapitulates the gloomy data of the 1990 Population Survey that 50% of us intermarry (with dire Jewish consequences in the third generation).

Defining Jewish Responsibility

I am disturbed by the short-sightedness implicit in our community leaders' judgment that the Ginsburg accession is "good for the Jews." By that they specifically mean that she will likely be a steady judicial force for the

liberal social agenda they--and I--identify with Jewish social ethics today. But their standard of Jewishness seems exhausted by personal character and liberal ethics. I believe they and most other Jews care very much more about Jewish continuity than that but they don't say so. Surely it would be impolite, even impolitic now to say something so particular, so ethnic. But the situation is not much different at other times for our culture achieves its veneration of tolerance--for which Jews adore it--by an exaggerated esteem for individuality. So most of us have settled the conflict between the American ethos of individualism and the Jewish demand for selfhood-amid-the-folk by giving the impression that we only need be Jews in our generation and, thus, that by living it now, we have fulfilled our Jewish responsibility.

Jewishness-for-now is surely better than assimilation but it won't do if one seriously cares about being a Jew. It violates the covenant of the generations which is at the heart of our Jewish experience. When we turn to tradition we acknowledge the living power of our past. So Jewish action today needs also to feel the pull of our future, one which extends to messianic reaches. Our acts also need to be measured by that criterion. No human being can ever guarantee that today's deeds will secure a given future but some things we can do are more likely to get us there. Our liberal community leadership needs to find a way to give Jewish continuity its proper place in making their public Jewish judgments. And individual Jews need to face up as early as they can as to how serious they are about being Jews. For if they are, they need to act on the ineluctable importance of the next generations' Jewishness to their own personal Jewishness. At the least, we all need to make that as plain to our family and other Jews as we can. Which, I suppose, is what I am doing here.

EUGENE BOROWITZ is founder and Senior Editor of Sh'ma.

Book Reviews

WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD

Daniel C. Matt, ed. Ktav

Non-Orthodox *tzaddikim*--spiritual role models, if you insist-seem rare, perhaps because we don't easily idealize leaders. Hershel Matt, z"l, deserves better. True, his writings only hint at his gifts of soul. But read, e.g., his "*Kavvanot* and Prayers," and be brushed by his glory.

BECOMING BROTHERS

Howard and Arthur Waskow. Free Press. \$22.95

This journey of siblings learning to love each other acquires special interest since one is a leader of our community. The history is evocative; the decisive role of death poignant; and why one becomes "our" Arthur and the other assimilates, a mystery.

LANGUAGE IN TIME OF REVOLUTION Benjamin Harshay, California, \$25.

The "revolution" is an essay on Jewish modernization as secularization, heavy on culture but impervious to what happened to religion. The "language" is the revival of modern Hebrew. Alas, I found little here not well explored elsewhere.

It is with the seasonal feelings of awe and anticipation that we begin a new year with you. We have freshened up our look a bit, but our goal is still the same: to make you a part of the best Jewish conversation around. For, ultimately, it is you and your responsiveness that gives Sh'ma its energy and character. As always, we look forward to hearing from you.

May the new year bring sweetness and health, peace and prosperity to you, Israel, and all humankind.

Sh'ma

Second-Class Postage Paid at New York, NY

99 Park Avenue, Suite S-300 New York, NY 10016-1599