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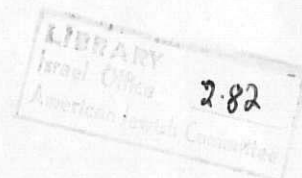
THE JEWISH FAMILY

A Background Paper  
on  
Jewish Views of the Family

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on  
Teaching the Jewish Family

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## THE JEWISH FAMILY

### Introduction

The Lord God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a help mate for him... Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh. (Genesis 2:18, 24) And God created man in His image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and have dominion over it..." (Genesis 1:27, 28)

In these verses from the opening chapters of the book of Genesis, we see clearly delineated the centrality and significance of marriage and children---the family---in human existence. Marriage is part of the natural order of things, the proper state for a man and woman who, as two sides of the same coin, find their greatest fulfillment when they are linked together by bonds of social, emotional and physical intimacy. Another essential and natural part of that order is the bearing and raising of children to sustain the species, to make sure that humanity endures to fill its role as steward of God's world, and by expressing love and tenderness in the nurture of another to experience the wonder of the rebirth of life and the immortal chain of being which is human existence.

The essence of Jewish faith is an affirmation that the world God created is good. Therefore everything that contributes to its continuance, to its growth, everything that is natural, is good.

The entire Jewish value system emphasizes the significance of marriage and the family. When a new-born child is ushered into the eternal covenant of the Jewish people and its God, we exclaim "just as (s)he has entered the covenant, so may (s)he attain to the life of Torah, marriage and good deeds." While it may be precipitous to concern oneself with the marriage prospects of an eight day old child, the prayer expresses the Jewish vision of the sort of life that a child should lead. It should have the eternal dimension of participation in the covenant between God and Israel; it should be a life concerned with the study of God's teachings and with incorporating them into practice; it should be a life of moral and compassionate behavior and it should be a full life shared with another with whom one may build a family and thereby contribute to the life of Israel and of humanity. So significant is marriage as a Jewish value, that the ideal character type in our tradition, the scholar-rabbi, is expected to be married. Synagogues and communities were loath to engage a bachelor rabbi, however distinguished his learning and piety, since bachelor status constituted a moral blemish, a symbol of an incomplete life. As it is stated in the Palestinian Talmud,

"A man without a wife exists without joy, without blessing, without good."

The rational order included children as well as mates. When God assures Abram and speaks of great reward for him, Abram's retort is, "What can you give me since I am childless?" Abraham's quest, his dream, is for a son by his wife Sarah, a child who will confirm his destiny and promise continuance and meaning for his line. So important to the pattern of Jewish existence is the concern of Abraham and Sarah for a child that the selection relating to the birth of Isaac was ordained as the Pentateuchal reading for RoshHaShanah, the Jewish New Year. Just as we acknowledge God's creation of the natural order on that day, so too we acknowledge God's providential activity in the creation of the people Israel on that day by emphasizing that God remembered Sarah and permitted her to conceive by Abraham. In fact, one way of understanding the Jewish people is as a cosmic family. Abraham and Sarah are the parents and we are all children. Every one who converts to our faith-fellowship becomes a new-born spiritual child of Abraham and Sarah as well. It is as individuals, each created in God's image, but each a part of a larger whole, the family, that we find our destiny and our meaning.

Affirming that Judaism extols the states of matrimony and parenthood, and looks with favor upon the family, is not to obscure the fact that the Bible is replete with examples of the problems which marriage and children and families bring in their wake.

We detect the first example of incipient tension between husband and wife in Adam's attributing responsibility for eating the forbidden fruit to the woman whom God had given him. No more tragic example of sibling rivalry can be found than the resentment of Cain toward Abel which culminates in the latter's death at the hands of the former. No more fascinating example of a family arrayed against itself can be found than in the home of Isaac and Rebecca which sees rivalry between the two sons, the favoring of each son by a different parent and the collusion of mother and son in deceiving the father and the other son. No more painful lament can be found than that of David who experienced the rebellion and subsequent death of his son Absalom: "Oh Absalom, my son, my son. Would that I had died for you!"

Families, then, do have their problems, but the benefits of companionship and sharing, of experiencing the wonder of the continuance of life, and the ability to nurture in love and to receive love in return, the sense that one participates in the ongoing stream of life of mankind and of the Jewish people, these, in the biblical view, were values which far outweighed the problems which must inevitably occur when people build lives together. Marriage, children, the family, were great goods, self-evident goods, rarely needing long and extended justifications.



### The Family Today

During the last two decades, there has been a clear change in attitudes towards marriage, to children, to the family. If as some scholars suggest, the nuclear family is a well-nigh universal phenomenon in all cultures, there is a small but increasing group of people in American society who are trying consciously to undermine this universal tendency by arguing against marriage, by refusing to have children, by advocating liaisons and arrangements which are not natural since they cannot contribute to the perpetuation of life, to continuance of the species. The family appears to be under attack and in decline. Books with reassuring and reaffirming titles as Here to Stay argue that the danger to the family as an institution is much overstated, but the existence of books with such titles indicates the instability the family is experiencing. If, as recent surveys report, most Americans intend to marry and have children, a growing number don't and claim they won't. Homosexual relationships have been lauded as an authentic alternative to the heterosexuality which has been dominant in virtually all cultures from time immemorial.

While some base their opposition to traditional marriage and the bearing of children on philosophical or psychological justifications, others have, without benefit of theory, either temporarily or permanently opted for a non-traditional lifestyle. Thus, the number of Americans who have been divorced grows from year to year, with a consequent rise in the number of single parent families dotting the landscape. Similarly, the incidence of unmarried heterosexual couples living together has more than doubled in the last decade. Thus, almost forty percent of the households in the United States are other than those of nuclear families.

More significant, perhaps, than the fact of changing relationships, is the distinct change in attitudes to marriage and to children which have developed in recent times. While most young people in actuality build or plan to build lives with spouses and children, there is an increasing acceptance of the rights of others to build their lives in non-traditional ways. In fact, according to Daniel Yankelovich's provocative recent study, New Rules, only twenty percent of Americans can be deemed to be straight upholders of traditional mores any more. The vast majority are either active advocates of an alteration of values or are passively willingly to live and let live, loath to view new forms of behavior as inherently wrong. Thus, in a survey taken in 1978, only 25 percent of Americans viewed women who elected to remain unmarried as sick, neurotic or immoral as contrasted with eighty percent some twenty-one years earlier. Thirty-seven percent thought premarital sex to be morally wrong as compared to an overwhelming eighty-five percent in 1967, twelve years before. Seventy-five percent felt it was morally acceptable to be single and have children. Fifty-two percent found nothing morally wrong with couples living together without marriage. Finally, only

twenty-one percent wanted to return to the standards of the past with regard to such matters as sexual mores, super housecleaning and women keeping to their home and not venturing into the marketplace.

To Yankelovich, the drive for self-fulfillment underlies this alteration of attitude. It is often maintained at the expense of values associated with the family, values which seem to stand in the way of self-fulfillment. As might be expected, such attitudes are most likely to be held by the young, the well-educated, the city dweller. Thus an atmosphere has been created in which there is growing acceptance, if not approval, of alternatives to traditional family living.

When this rabbi came to Manhattan in 1969, to serve as rabbi of a congregation there, he used to meet frequently with couples who came to inquire about marriage. Even then the majority were living together, some for long periods of time. In the succeeding decade this tendency has certainly become more marked. Most of the couples were professionals functioning within the world of corporations and institutions, part of the system, but having attitudes which clearly differ from those of their parents' generation. They were only the tip of the iceberg; rabbis are rarely approached by those who view marriage with a distinctly critical eye.

Jewish family living is threatened not only from without by new and inimical sentiments and attitudes. It is threatened from within, too, by the erosion of distinctive Jewish patterns of living. Since one of Judaism's pre-eminent goals is to provide for holiness in living, the home and family loomed large in the Jewish scheme of things, affording spiritual meaning and esthetic delight to Jewish parents and children. Public worship and scriptural study were but part of a sacred system which found its greatest realization in the home, in family sedarim and home Sukkot celebrations. The synagogue was a complement to the home; the home was the prime center for the soaring of the spirit.

Two scenes in the movie version of Philip Roth's Goodbye Columbus epitomize the crisis of the contemporary Jewish family. In one scene, Neil Klugman, the protagonist, asks his aunt with whom he lives why he and the aunt and uncle never eat together. The aunt, surprised at the question, stammers that since every one likes different food, there is no reason to do so. Later in the film, Klugman dines with the family of his wealthy girl friend in the splendor of her large suburban home. There, the family to be sure, dines together with a servant to attend to their needs, but there is still no communication at the table. These two scenes suggest a third, a missing scene. It depicts a Jewish family celebrating the Sabbath with rituals and symbols which bind all members together, giving them shared experiences and an avenue for communication, cementing them as a family in time and for all time.

Once Jews took for granted that families and children were among the normal goals of human life. Once Jews knew that their family life was suffused with a quest for kedushah which gave all family members a sense of purpose and an understanding of their place in the scheme of things. This is not the case today. Thus, it is important that the Jewish community articulate the importance of the family in the creation of full and meaningful lives and in the creation of a caring community. It is important, too, that there be a reassertion of the primacy of Jewish values if the Jewish family is to endure and to thrive. That family will be different in some ways from the family of a century or even of a generation ago, but in its broad contours it will remain steadfast to the ethos of our tradition.

## The Family in Jewish Tradition -- A Positive View

Jewish tradition regarded the family as axiomatic in the scheme of things, part of the divine order whose ideal was shelom bayit, a house of peace and contentment, an atmosphere of harmony and completeness. In the tractate Yebamoth of the Talmud this ideal is aptly expressed:

"He who loves his wife as much as himself, who honors her more than himself, who guides his sons and daughters in the right path and arranges for their marriages as they approach maturity, about him the Bible says, "And you shall know that your tent is in peace."

Shelom bayit was so significant a goal that God, as it were, permitted His name to be effaced in bitter waters in the Sotah ritual required of suspected adulteresses, so that husband and wife could be reconciled. The lesson was that no efforts should be spared to maintain or to restore domestic peace. Truth could be suspended; legal requirements could be relaxed. Most instructive in this regards is this midrash, this rabbinical homily:

Rabbi Meir used to preach on Sabbath nights. A woman came to listen to him. His drashah ran over (a rabbinic problem even in those days) and the woman waited until he had finished. She came home and found the light out. Her husband asked her: 'Where were you?' She responded, 'I was listening to a preacher.' The husband uttered an oath and said, 'Don't come back until you have spit in the face of that preacher'. So she remained away two, three weeks. Finally, her neighbors said to her: 'You really had quite a quarrel; we'll go with you to the preacher (for advice)'. When Rabbi Meir saw her coming, he understood the situation by means of heavenly inspiration and asked, 'Which one of you knows the art of curing a pain by spitting in the eye?' Her neighbors told the woman, 'Spit in his eye and you'll be able to return to your husband.' As she sat before him, she recoiled in fear and said, 'Rabbi, I don't know this healing procedure.' He responded, 'Spit in my face seven times and I'll be cured.' She did as she was bidden and he (Rabbi Meir) concluded, 'Go tell your husband that you have spit in my face, not once, but seven times.'

His students then said to him: Isn't this demeaning the Torah?' 'No,' Rabbi Meir replied, 'I am emulating God who, as Rabbi Ishmael proclaimed, felt peace was so important that He permitted His name to be blotted out in order to bring about peace between a man and his wife.'

If we have a picture of idyllic home life, it is perhaps to be found in the Eshet Hayil, the last chapter of Proverbs, traditionally recited on Sabbath eve by the husband in honor of his wife.

A woman of valor who can find?  
Her worth is far greater than jewels.  
Her husband gives her his confidence  
And he is well compensated (for it);  
She rewards him with good and not harm,  
All the days of her life.  
She seeks out wool and flax,  
And delights to work with her hands.  
She is like the ships of the merchants,  
As she brings her provisions from afar.  
She rises while it is still night  
To provide food for her household,  
And give instructions to her maids.  
She examines a field and buys it,  
From her earnings she plants a vineyard.  
She girds her strong loins  
And goes to work with a will.  
She samples merchandise to be sure it is good;  
Her lamp burns late at night.  
She puts her hand to the spindle whorl,  
And her fingers ply the spindle.  
She opens her hands to the unfortunate,  
And stretches out her arms to the poor.  
She does not fear for her family when it snows,  
For all of them are doubly clothed.  
She makes her own bedcovers;  
She clothes herself in fine linen and dyed wool.  
Her husband is well known at the gates,  
Where he sits with the elders of the city.  
She makes a wrapper and sells it.  
And supplies a sash to the merchant.  
Her clothing is of quality and elegant.  
She happily looks forward to the morrow.  
When she opens her mouth she speaks wisely,  
And kindly instruction is on her tongue.  
She watches closely what goes on in her household,  
And permits no one to eat food in idleness.  
Her sons rise to pronounce blessings on her,  
Her husband, too, sings her praises:  
"Many women have proved their worth,  
But you have surpassed them all."  
Charm is deceitful and beauty is fleeting;  
The intelligent woman (who reverences the Lord)  
is the one deserving praise.  
Give her the reward she has earned.  
And let the gates ring with praise of her deeds.



The first prerequisite for the realization of this ideal was a proper marriage, then, as now, no small task. Much of Genesis is occupied with the quest of Abraham's servant for a suitable wife for Isaac and with Jacob's servitude and travail in order to marry his beloved Rachel. These biblical stories and many others reveal the love and companionship of husband and wife, and to the Bible's credit, show as well the problems which inevitably come about when two people live together. Judaism is, after all, not for angels, but for human beings and as such even its most exalted ideals can only be imperfectly realized.

Probably no institution has been more idealized in Jewish life than marriage. It was viewed as the perfect state for human beings. Marriage imagery was employed in describing the intimacy and intensity of the relationship between God and the Jewish people. Thus, the prophet Hosea understands God to say:

I will betroth you (Israel) to me forever,  
I will betroth you to me in righteousness,  
and in justice, and in loving kindness, and  
in compassion. And I will betroth you to  
Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the  
Lord.

Every weekday, traditional Jews reaffirm this relationship with the Creator as they wind the tefillin straps around their arm and head reciting the same betrothal formula of Hosea.

Israel's relationship to the Shabbat, the cornerstone of the Jewish way of life, is also viewed as a marriage with the Sabbath serving as Israel's bride.

Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai taught: Shabbat stood before the Holy One, Blessed be He and said: Master of the Universe, every being, every thing has a soulmate, but I don't have a mate! The Holy One Blessed be He responded: The congregation of Israel will be your mate. When Israel stood before Mount Sinai, God told them: Remember what I told Shabbat: The congregation of Israel will be your husband. As it is written (Exodus 20) Remember the Sabbath l'kadsho, to keep it holy, which also means to betroth it in marriage.

Thus, in a cosmic sense, life without the bonds of love and sharing, which marriage represents, was an incomplete life. What was true in the world-order was true for individuals as well. Marriage was a necessary source of fulfillment and completeness, in providing companionship and love. The Jewish wedding service stresses this in the Sheva Berakhot, the seven blessings recited during the second part of the ceremony.

Grant perfect joy to these loving companions,  
as You did to the first man and woman in the  
Garden of Eden. Praised are You, O Lord, Who  
grants the joy of bride and groom.

Praised are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who created joy and gladness, bride and groom, mirth, song, delight and rejoicing, love and harmony, peace and companionship. O Lord our God, may there ever be heard in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem voices of joy and gladness, voices of bride and groom, the jubilant voices of those joined in marriage under the bridal canopy, the voices of young people feasting and singing. Praised are You, O Lord, who causes the groom to rejoice with his bride.

Jewish marriage is kiddushin, an act of sanctification. It places within a framework of specialness and exclusivity the total relationship of a man and a woman. It is a relationship in which sex is personalized in a union with a meaningful other, the person one loves and with whom one has chosen to build, amidst trials and triumphs, a life together.

Judaism understands and acclaims the reality and significance of love. The Song of Songs is a moving collection of passionate love poetry which was canonized in the Bible because the rabbis saw in the vital passion of human beings a reflection of the transcendent love of God and Israel.

It stands on its own as well as a celebration of love.

Oh, give me the kisses of your  
mouth  
For you love is more delightful than  
wine.  
Your ointments yield a sweet fragrance,  
Your name is like finest oil --  
Therefore do maidens love you.  
Draw me after you, let us run!  
The King has brought me to his chambers.  
Let us delight and rejoice in your love,  
Savoring it more than wine --  
Like new wine they love you!

I am dark, but comely,  
O daughters of Jerusalem --  
Like the tents of Kedar,  
Like the pavilions of Solomon.  
Don't stare at me because I am swarthy,  
Because the sun has gazed upon me.  
My mother's sons quarreled with me.  
They made me guard the vineyards;  
My own vineyard I did not guard.

Tell me, you whom I love so well;  
Where do you pasture your sheep?  
Where do you rest them at noon?  
Let me not be as one who strays  
Beside the flocks of your fellows.

If you do not know, O fairest of women,  
Go follow the tracks of the sheep,  
And graze your kids  
By the camps of the shepherds.

I have made you look, my darling,  
Like a mare in Pharoh's chariots:  
Your cheeks are comely with plaited  
wreaths,  
Your neck with strings of jewels.  
We will add wreaths of gold  
To your spangles of silver.

While the king was on his couch,  
My nard gave forth its fragrance.  
My beloved to me is a bag of myrrh  
Lodged between my breasts.  
My beloved to me is a spray of henna  
blooms.  
From the vineyards of En-gedi.

Ah, you are fair, my darling,  
Ah, you are fair,  
With your dove-like eyes!  
And you, my beloved, are handsome,  
Beautiful indeed!  
Our couch is in a bower;  
Cedars are the beams of our house,  
Cypresses the rafters.

Starting a marriage on proper basis was so important that Deuteronomy 24 exempts a new groom from the draft during the first year of marriage so that "he may bring delight to the wife he has taken." This delight had an obvious sexual dimension. It was the obligation of the groom to do all in his power to provide his wife with sexual satisfaction and fulfillment. Shabbat, the day of holiness, was preeminently a day of sexual delight most appropriate for relations between husband and wife.

In rabbinic Judaism, therefore, sex is a boon to be sanctified. In kabbalah, the sexual act in marriage takes on mystical significance. Iggeret HaKodesh, a remarkable kabbalistic work of the thirteenth century explains:

Know that the sexual intercourse of man with his wife is holy and pure when done properly, in the proper time and with the proper intention. No one should think that sexual intercourse is ugly and loathsome, God forbid! Proper sexual intercourse is called "knowing" (Genesis 4:1) for good reason. As it is said, "And Elkanah knew his wife Hannah" (I Samuel 1:19)...

We the possessors of the Holy Torah believe that God, may He be praised, created all, as His wisdom decreed, and did not create anything ugly or shameful. For if sexual intercourse were repulsive, then the reproductive organs are also repulsive. The Holy One, blessed be He, created them by His word. "Hath He not made thee, and established thee?" (Deuteronomy 32:6)...

Know that the male is the mystery of wisdom and the female is the mystery of understanding...

If so, it follows that proper sexual union can be a means of spiritual elevation when it is properly practiced...

...you will understand what the sages of blessed memory meant in saying that when a man cleaves to his wife in holiness, the divine presence is manifested. In the mystery of man and woman, there is God.<sup>4</sup>

Procreation, the perpetuation of life, was another overriding purpose of marriage. "He did not create it a waste, but formed it for habitation." (Isaiah 45:18) Procreation is an affirmation of the worthwhileness of life, that what God has made is good. It is amazing and overwhelmingly moving that the survivors of the death camps, with indescribable horrors etched on their bodies and minds, married and brought children into the world as soon as they could. In bearing and raising children we find intimations of our own immortality, and we testify to the ultimate victory of hope and goodness over despair and evil. Furthermore, for Jews, bringing children into the world is the most concrete refutation of the attempt to destroy the Jewish people root and branch. It is the strongest affirmation that the Jewish people lives, and continues its eternal covenant with the Master of the Universe.

Another principle of marriage is taharat hamishpahah, purity of the family. In an aggadic sense, this suggests sensitivity in speech and in deed between members of the family. In a technical legal sense, it refers to the separation of husband and wife during her monthly period of menstruation. It is a time when sexual relations are prohibited until the wife's immersion in a mikveh, a ritual bath of naturally drawn water. No area of Jewish law and practice has gotten a worse press in this century than the mikveh and the rules surrounding it. In many circles the mere mention of it can engender a hue and cry or an outburst of cackling. This is unfortunate.

By requiring a period of withdrawal from sexual intimacy each month, the concept of taharat hamishpahah gives each partner a chance for renewal, and allows each to reestablish intimate relations with new meaning and feeling. It is a means to secure that spontaneity never to be replaced by rote behavior, so that the sense of wonder in the other's personhood never be lost. Immersing in water, a symbol of life, after a period which signifies that the potential for the creation of life in the previous month was not realized, the Jewish woman returns to her husband with a heightened appreciation of life and its possibilities. Thus, despite the accretion of excessive restrictions--the necessity for separate beds during the menstrual period, the requirement that food not be shared at that time--the kernel of taharat hamishpahah can still afford the Jewish family much meaning.

Jewish tradition recognized that not all marriages are full of bliss. Thus, there is clear sanction for divorce in the Torah. Many of the leading talmudic authorities permitted divorce for virtually any reason, and this became Jewish law. Nevertheless, divorce was initiated only as a last resort. In Yebamot, we read of great sages who had problems with their wives.

R. Hiyya was constantly tormented by his wife. He, nevertheless, whenever he obtained anything suitable wrapped it up in his scarf and brought it to her. Said Rab to him: 'But surely, she is tormenting the Master!' 'It is sufficient for us', the other replied, 'that they rear up our children and deliver us from sin'.<sup>5</sup>

These aggadot do not suggest that divorce was in the offing. Operative was the sentiment that "he who divorces his first wife impels the Temple altar to shed tears over him."<sup>6</sup>



### Children

One of Judaism's supreme values is the raising and nurturing of children. Judaism placed major emphasis on the educating of sons, teaching them Hebrew letters at an early age and then introducing them into the world of Torah, the Bible generally and rabbinic literature at successive stages of development. Since true piety was the product of learning, study became a form of worship, as young men sought to apply themselves to religious texts to discern more fully the intent of Divine teaching. In the Jewish pecking order, scholars occupied the position of greatest status and parents would go to great lengths to raise up a son as a scholar and to marry a daughter to a scholar. It was the father's obligation to see that his son was brought into the covenant of circumcision, to arrange for his redemption where applicable, to teach him Torah, to teach him an occupation, to arrange for his marriage. Some authorities included teaching the son to swim as a specific obligation as well. Daughters were taught domestic occupations and lore by their mothers. Some knowledge of the Bible might be included in addition to the basic prayers, although some authorities felt that it was unwise to teach a woman Torah. A major concern was the proper dowering of daughters so that appropriate marriages could be arranged for them. In the case of orphaned girls, special societies existed to assure their marriagability.

In the following ethical will excerpted by Judah Ibn Tibbon, an outstanding Provencal Hebrew scholar and translator of the twelfth century, addressed to his son Samuel, we can see a wonderfully moving example of what gidul banim the raising of children, has meant in Judaism.

"My son, listen to my precepts, neglect none of my injunctions. Set my admonition before thine eyes, thus shalt thou prosper and prolong thy days in pleasantness...

Thou knowest, my son, how I swaddled thee and brought thee up, how I led thee in the paths of wisdom and virtue. I fed and clothed thee; I spent myself in educating and protecting thee, I sacrificed my sleep to make thee wise beyond thy fellows, and to raise thee to the highest degree of science and morals. These twelve years I have denied myself the usual pleasures and relaxations of men for thy sake, and I still toil for thine inheritance.

Therefore, my son! stay not thy hand when I have left thee, but devote thyself to the study of the Torah and to the science of medicine. But chiefly occupy thyself with the Torah, for thou hast a wise and understanding heart, and all that is needful on thy part is ambition and application. I know that thou wilt repent of the past, as many have repented before thee of their youthful indolence...

Thou knowest, my son! the trouble and expense I incurred for the marriage of thy elder and younger sisters. Never in my life had I undergone such dangers, thrice crossing the sea at great cost though my means were scanty. I pledged my books, I borrowed from my friends, though I was never wont to do so, and all this so as not to reduce thy share. Also, at thine own marriage, thou art aware that I did not sell thee for silver, as others richer than I have done with their sons. None of thy companions made a more honourable union. I took for thee the daughter of a cultured and distinguished lineage, all of them the 'seed of truth', learned and of high standing.

My son! Let thy countenance shine upon the sons of men: tend their sick, and may thine advice cure them. Though thou takest fees from the rich, heal the poor gratuitously; the Lord will requite thee. Thereby shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. Thus wilt thou win the respect of high and low among Jews and non-Jews, and thy good name will go forth far and wide. Thou wilt rejoice thy friends and make thy foes envious...

My son! I command thee to honour thy wife to thine utmost capacity. She is intelligent and modest, a daughter of a distinguished and educated family. She is a good housewife and mother, and no spendthrift. Her tastes are simple, whether in food or dress. Remember her assiduous attendance on thee in thine illness, though she had been brought up in elegance and luxury. Remember how she afterwards reared thy son without man or woman to help her....

If thou wouldst acquire my love, honour her with all thy might; do not exercise too strict an authority over her; our Sages have expressly warned men against this. If thou givest orders or reprovest let thy works be gentle. Enough is it if thy displeasure is visible in thy look, let it not be vented in actual rage....

My son! Devote thy mind to thy children as I did to thee; be tender to them as I was tender; instruct them as I instructed thee; keep them as I kept thee, try to teach them Torah as I have tried, and as I did unto thee do thou unto them! Be not indifferent to any slight ailment in them, or in thyself (May God deliver thee and them from all sickness and plague), but if thou dost notice any suspicion of disease in thee or in one of thy limbs, do forthwith what is necessary in the case.

My son! Communicate with thy sisters constantly in thy letters, and inquire after their welfare. Show honour to thy relatives, for they will appreciate courtesies.

I enjoin on thee, my son, to read this, my Testament, one daily, at morn or at eve. Apply thy heart to the fulfillment of its behests, and to the performance of all therein written. Then wilt thou make thy ways prosperous, then shalt thou have good success...

...May He who gives prudence to the simple, and to young men knowledge and discretion, bestow on thee a willing heart and a listening ear! Then shall our soul be glad in the Lord and rejoice in His salvation!"

### The Jewish Family

The concern for children was reciprocated by the respect and reverence extended to parents by their offspring. The commandment to honor one's parents is at the heart of the Torah, listed fifth among the Ten Commandments and following those which emphasize our proper relationship to God. This juxtaposition was most reasonable for the rabbis who understood that there were three partners in the creation of a person---the Holy One, Blessed by He, the father and the mother. Thus, when a man honors his father and mother, the sages reported, "the Holy Blessed be He, says, 'I ascribe (merit) to them as though I had dwelt among them and they had honored Me'."

Indeed, our sages were unbounded in their praise of those who showed distinctive zeal in honoring and revering (a second commandment in Leviticus 19) one's parents.

It was asked of R. Ulla: 'How far does the honor of parents extend?' He replied, 'Go and see what a certain heathen, named Dama the son of Nethinah, did in Ashkelon. The Sages once wanted merchandise from him, in which there was 600,000 (gold dinarii) profit, but the key was lying under his father, and so he did not trouble him.'...

R. Tarfon had a mother for whom, whenever she wished to mount into bed, he would bend down to let her ascend, (and when she wished to descend, she stepped down on him) ...

When R. Joseph heard his mother's footsteps he would say, "I will rise before the approaching Shekhinah (Divine presence)."

Our rabbis taught: What is 'reverence' and what is 'honor'? Reverence means that he (the son) must neither stand in his (the father's) place nor sit in his place, nor contradict his words, nor tip the scales against him (in argument). Honor means that he must give him food and drink, clothe and cover him, lead him in and out.

Still there were limits. Both children and parents were under the rule of Torah. Thus our sages noted that the duty of honoring one's parents followed right after the commandment to observe the Shabbat. From this they understood, that if a parent orders a child to violate the Sabbath, or indeed any law of Judaism, he is not to be obeyed. While parents played a key role in selecting mates for their children, the codes say that the child's own choice takes precedence if there is conflict and that therefore they may disregard parental wishes. Nor does the obligation

to honor and revere parents require the child's siding with the parents at the expense of the spouse.

Love and reverence extended beyond the bonds of parents and children. At the end of Jacob's life, his beloved Joseph brings his two children to Jacob for Jacob's blessing. Jacob says to them, "By you shall Israel invoke blessings saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and Menasseh.'" And, in fact, to this day, parents bless their children every Shabbat eve with these words extended first across the generations, from grandparent to grandsons. The duty of honor and reverence was expected of children to their grandparents as well. The grandparents' home served as a center of family life, with children and grandchildren straining to return to visit for special occasions such as Passover sedarim, or Hanukkah celebrations and the like.

Love and affection among siblings was a constant in the Jewish family as well. Certainly we see this in the story of Simeon and Levi as they overreact in defending their sister Dina's honor. Just as with parents and children, so with brothers and sisters. Older siblings were to be honored by the younger ones, and the younger children were to be guided by their seniors. A letter from a Jewish woman living in Byzantium in the Middle Ages to her brothers in her native Egypt illustrates the affection and feeling which has been a normative ideal in Jewish life:

May this letter be delivered in gladness to my excellent brothers, Abu Said and Solomon, from your sister Maliha... May all blessings come and be gathered and accumulated upon the heads of my brothers, Solomon and Abu Said, gentle and most beloved brothers, from your sister Maliha. And heartiest greetings from my little daughter Zoe.

We are in good health, and trust in the Rock of your welfare that you, too, are well and safe, prosperous and free, in good heart without trouble and sorrows. But I, while wishing you all good, am not myself in good humour, for when I think of you, my heart sinks, my knees quiver, my limbs tremble, my strength dwindles, because I have been separated from you for many years and am desirous of seeing your faces. I should like to run to you like a lion, nay, to fly! Oh for the wings of a dove, that I could fly and join my brothers, and also our Master, the fourth. I am, however, not able to come, as the hour is not favourable. I was ready to go with this man, but I consulted a Torah scroll and obtained a disappointing answer which boded no good for myself. Thus I could not join them.



And for Heaven's sake do you not see that many Jews are being fetched from Byzantium by their relatives? Why does not one of you make up his mind to come over here in order to bring me back? You will understand that I am reluctant to engage strange people. If I should go alone, may God not deprive me of luck, but if anything evil should befall me during the voyage, it might be fatal to me, and I should die. For I have been devoted to you since your infancy....

It was within the framework of the Jewish family that the vast majority of Jewish observances were carried out. However important the synagogue and the activities of the community, it was in the family setting that the Jewish quest for holiness in living was most adequately realized. The Sabbath was far more than going to synagogue for prayer and study. It was a day set aside to be shared with those one loves most powerfully. Thus at Shabbat meals on Friday evening, the father would, in the presence of his family, laud his wife, bless his children, and recite the blessings over wine and hallah, acknowledging in joy and thanksgiving the specialness of the day. The mother would, somewhat earlier, light the candles in the presence of and with the participation of her daughters. During the course of the meal with its many courses, the family dressed in its Shabbat finery, songs of the Sabbath would be sung and parents would discuss the Torah with their children, often questioning them about the week's studies. This meal and a similar one on Shabbat afternoons drew all the family together and made them feel a closeness as they were bathed in the spirit of Sabbath tranquility. At the close of the Sabbath, the havdalah rite, bidding a farewell to the Sabbath with beverage, spices and twisted candle and distinguishing between its sanctity and the more mundane quality of the rest of the week, would provide another occasion for family to join together in celebration and song. Thus, in addition to its lessons about the need to emulate God and to rest as He rested, the Sabbath was special because it was a family day which restrengthened the bonds of love and sharing every week. What was true of Shabbat was true of all the Jewish holidays throughout the year. The family seder on Pesah was preeminently a home observance in which everyone could do his share, with children encouraged to participate by asking the Four Questions and by appropriating the afikoman, the last matzah to be eaten at the meal. Every holiday had its own special meals and observances for the home, in the family setting.

And when Jews marry and seek to create a meaningful Jewish atmosphere for themselves, the memories which draw them back most strongly are those of home, of a family together at a seder, of a Hanukkah party at which the youngsters run the gauntlet of grandparents and aunts and uncles who press Hanukkah gelt (silver dollars in my case) into their hands as they pass by, of Sabbath lights and white tablecloths for Sabbath meals. These Jewish qualities of the Jewish home are appreciated by outsiders as well.

I remember meeting a liberal Baptist minister on a boat returning from Israel. He lauded the home observances of the Jewish people and lamented that Christianity didn't have anything similar. He felt that they added something to the life of every Jew. In our faith, it is in the bosom of the family that we first and perhaps most significantly sense the spiritual dimension of life, the reality of God, and it is in the fulfilling of the mitzvot associated with the home and family that we reinforce the ties of familial love as we grow individually and collectively with a common purpose and common goals.

## The Jewish Family---Its Problems

Any picture of the Jewish family in times past or today must reckon with the fact that the ideals were rarely achieved in the fullest sense. Jews as merchants and peddlers were frequently on the road---from Shabbat to Shabbat or sometimes for months at a time---and this weakened the fabric of family unity. Even religious obligations could bring about separations. In the Hassidic world, dedicated followers of the rebbes would visit them on important occasions each year. Thus, it was that my grandfather was always with the Medzbizher rebbe on Rosh HaShanah and not with his family in his town of residence. Most significantly, dislocations or pogroms separated families and brought great sorrow in their wake. If a husband disappeared for whatever reason without a trace, then his wife would be declared an agunah, a chained woman, chained to her husband and unable to get a divorce or to remarry until the husband returned to issue the divorce or until evidence was presented to indicate that he had died. The problem of the agunah has been and is grave because of the nature of Jewish law. Only a husband could issue a divorce and, if he was absent or unwilling, the wife was stuck unless the husband could be convinced to give his wife a divorce 'voluntarily' or until some pretext could be found for invalidating the first marriage.

For others, the problem was not as cataclysmic as the question of igun. Though permitted, divorce was a rarely selected option because of the stigma which was attached to it. People continued to stay together because of community pressure, financial need or the absence of any alternative. If marriages were made in heaven, there were some which were hell on earth.

In marriage and Jewish life generally, Jewish women had carefully defined roles. Lauded and protected by the tradition, they were essentially to be tenders of the hearth, keepers of the home, first of their father's and later their husband's. Thus, they were generally denied formal education, although they absorbed from their mothers basic Jewish teachings and prayers and such skills as sewing and cooking which were necessary to the household. They were placed in separate sections of the synagogue where they could participate, albeit passively, in worship services. They were exempted from many mitzvot which required fulfillment at a specific time though they were obligated to pray and to avoid violating any of the tradition's negative commandments or prohibitions. The view of Philo, the great Greek-Jewish philosopher of Alexandria of 2000 years ago, would find echoes throughout our tradition:

Marketplaces, council chambers, law courts, confraternities, and meetings of vast crowds, life under the open air with its words and actions, befit men both in war and in peace. For women,

on the other hand, the domestic life that abides within is appropriate, the maidens taking as their interior boundary the middle door, whereas those who have attained to full womanhood take the outer door. For the nature of communities is twofold, the greater and the smaller; the greater we call cities and the smaller households. As to the management of both forms, men have obtained that of the greater, which bears the name of statesmanship, whereas women have obtained that of the smaller, which goes under the name of household management. A woman, then, should not meddle in matters external to the household, but should seek seclusion. She ought not to be found in the thoroughfare under the eyes of other men like a streetwalker, except when she must go to the temple, and even then she should take care not to go when the market is full, but when most people have gone home, and so like a free-born lady of true breeding quietly offer her oblations and prayers for the aversion of evil and the enjoyment of goods. That women, under the pretext of affording dutiful aid, should dare to sally forth against men reviling one another and locked in combat is most reprehensible and shameless. Even in wars, expeditions, and dangers threatening the entire community, the law does not deem it right for them to be found, having in view what is proper, which it was minded to maintain unaltered always and everywhere, considering it to be in itself a higher good than victory, freedom, and every form of success.

The task of women was to facilitate the growth and development of their children and to encourage and support the activities of their husbands within the home. Nevertheless, we know that there were many who leaped out of the framework. The Bible has many examples---prophets like Miriam and Hulda and judges and women in action like Deborah. Even in rabbinic times there are occasional figures like Beruriah, the wife of Rabbi Meir, whose learning and good sense were frequently marked and whose sage counsel was often of inestimable value to Rabbi Meir himself. Jewish women frequently had significant roles in the world of commerce in the Middle Ages and in the shtetlach of Eastern Europe. There, in order to free the husband for Talmud study, women, in addition to raising large broods, ran the family stores or businesses. Economic need encouraged immigrant women to work when they came to these shores as well.

In the past two decades, the traditional role of women in Judaism and in all historic cultures has come under attack. More women have asserted that they do not want to subordinate their search for fulfillment in careers of their own to serving as stays for their husbands or full-time mothers and housewives. In this, they were in part rebelling against the exper-

ience of their own mothers who as the first generation born and raised in America generally did not work after marriage but dedicated themselves to home and marriage, and frequently, volunteer community concerns. For some of today's women, the refusal to accept the traditional role assigned to women, has meant opposition to marriage, or marriage without children. For most, however, it has been accompanied by a desire to have it all, to marry, have children and pursue a career. This has given rise to new home patterns with husbands called upon frequently to share more totally in the management of children and household. Thus, many women have returned to work on a full or part-time basis almost immediately after the birth of a child. This has necessitated the development of all sorts of child care arrangements, with continuing concern about finding suitable centers or individuals to watch the child.

The growth of the two career family and the new assertiveness in women has meant that there is less willingness to tolerate what seem to be unacceptable or intolerable situations. Thus, both husbands and wives are much more apt today to initiate divorce proceedings. Obviously, there are often weighty reasons for divorce. But, one may look at the galloping rate of divorce, approaching the rate of marriage in some cases, and wonder at the seriousness of purpose with which some of the couples have attempted the always difficult task of building one home out of two discrete lives. Recently, a woman told me that she was divorced from her husband although, during much of the divorce process and since the divorce, she had been living with him. Having gone to a public welfare lawyer to arrange the divorce, she had effected a reconciliation with her husband but had neglected, after one unsuccessful attempt, to get that information through to her lawyer. And so the divorce became final.

Within the Jewish religious life, many women have grown increasingly restive with their assigned roles in the old order. In Orthodoxy, at least of the modern variety, this has led to an insistence that women be given as equal an education as possible as boys, and be permitted, nay encouraged, to study the jewel of Jewish learning, the Talmud. Accepting the norm that women's roles are separate but equal, Orthodox women have perforce acknowledged that they must sit in separate sections of the synagogue, but a few have advocated and developed separate women's minyanim, in which they can read the Torah and lead much of the service. In addition, Orthodox girls are increasingly celebrating their bat mitzvahs at programs held within the precincts of the synagogue at which they deliver divrei Torah at a time other than during a religious service. Some voices within the Orthodox community have advocated greater change, urging that women become rabbis and judges and that divorce rules be modified to eliminate the problems women experience when a marriage breaks up.



In the Conservative movement, the issue of greater rights of religious participation for women has been an abiding concern since the movement's inception, moving from mixed seating, to equal education for boys and girls, to the introduction of the Friday evening bat mitzvah, to the granting of aliyot to women and the transfer of the bat mitzvah to Shabbat morning, to the counting of women in the minyan. At this point, the only bars to theoretical equality of women within the movement are the issues of ordaining women as rabbis and investing them as hazzanim, although there are women serving in both capacities in Conservative congregations. While there are still congregations with limited participation for women, many more have, within the past decade, moved to positions of almost complete equality, and others have, to some degree, liberalized their position on women's participation. On the issue of divorce, the Conservative movement acting upon halakhic precedents, many of which had been suggested by Orthodox scholars as well, introduced the use of an ante-nuptial agreement and rabbinic annulment to eliminate the problem of the agunah for its adherents. The Reform and Reconstructionist movements have maintained virtual equality for women since the ordination of women rabbis by their rabbinical schools in the early 1970's.

Rites of passage have been altered as well by the new sensitivity to an enhanced position for women. More and more is the birth of a daughter heralded by the simhat bat (re-joicing over the daughter) ceremony which can either accompany the traditional naming or take its place. At weddings, there has been a movement away from the bride's passivity during the ceremony. Thus, one will find that a double ring ceremony in which the bride also gives a ring to the groom is most widespread. In addition, there has been some movement to a more equalitarian ketubah, marriage contract, in which responsibilities of each partner to the other are adumbrated. At some weddings, the bride has broken a glass just like the groom, suggesting that she too is aware that the role for every Jew is to be God's partner in perfecting the world.

And of course, in homes, we may find that some women have taken the lead in religious roles once reserved for men---like reciting kiddush or leading the grace after meals in a group setting. In the growing number of homes where no adult men are present---the homes of single parent families and of single women---such assertiveness is essential if such households are to experience Judaism's basic home observances.

Jews have justly been proud of their record in educating their sons. Even in this matter, family unity was often ruptured. Boys were frequently sent away to yeshivot as young adolescents to become, from then on, only occasional visitors in their homes. Whatever their good qualities, these academic settings could not provide adequate substitutes for parental love and closeness and the warmth of the home. At best, the

yeshiva bakhur might eat certain meals with families in the town, always as a guest, never as a part of the family he visited.

In our time, the traditional concern for education is attested by the incredible number of Jewish Nobel Prize winners through the years and indeed every year. Yet the fulfillment of the traditional commandment to teach one's child a vocation has not been paralleled by the fulfillment of the commandment to teach one's child Torah. Instead of learning for its own sake, the study of Torah today has become a means to the end, that of the bar mitzvah celebration, which in its self-indulgence has justifiably come in for more criticism than any other aspect of contemporary Jewish life. Furthermore, Jewish education is often at the periphery of the interests of the child or of his family, and can easily be scrapped should any problems arise. The child senses by the second or third year of his Jewish school that his or her parents are really not concerned about Judaism and this rubs off, and leads to indifference. The school is virtually powerless to counter this; this is a problem as well in Jewish day schools. In these schools, however, the number of hours devoted to Jewish and Hebrew studies in a setting in which Judaic subjects are theoretically co-equal to English and math, affords the school a chance to serve as a countervailing influence to the world of relative Jewish indifference in which the student lives.

Even as Jews have stressed the importance of the reciprocal obligations of parent to child and child to parent, they have spoken of t Saar gidul banim, of the pain of raising children, of stubborn and rebellious sons such as Absalom and Adonijah, both rebels against their regal father, David. Not always is the obligation to honor and revere fulfilled to any real degree. Dr. Ernst Simon, for many years the head of the Hebrew University's School of Education, once said that the best we can hope is for our children to be somewhat like our hopes for them. Replication is impossible.

We can see the pain of rearing children worked out most poignantly at the turn of the century, on the threshold of modern times, in Sholom Aleichems' Tevye stories. The struggling dairyman has five daughters and none makes the sort of marriage or life choice which brings Tevye nahat, full satisfaction. One marries a poor tailor, another a revolutionary, a third, a Gentile, a fourth, a crass upstart and the fifth commits suicide. Thus, the kind of rebellion of today's children---into marriages with non-Jewish partners, into career choices which don't fit in with America's capitalistic spirit, into a serious encounter with Judaism, or l'havdil, into flirtations with other cults, have their models in earlier generations of Jewish life.

Finally, when we idealize the extended family, we should realize that there have always been occasions, most pervasively in this era, when families were separated by choice and not by constraint. Children left to find fortune and freedom in the goldene medinah and sometimes never saw their parents or siblings again. Fathers or, more rarely, mothers would leave the home to come here to earn enough money to bring the rest of the family over. In the meanwhile, the separation could endure for years or the father could disappear, thereby abandoning his family to a life of even greater misery. Today, when life's buzzer hits sixty-five, couples opt for retirement, moving away from their families---children, grandchildren, sometimes aged parents---to Florida or Arizona or California. It is difficult to square most of these decisions with vaunted Jewish family solidarity. One result of the hegira to Florida has been the growing unwillingness of parents, in most congregations, to schedule their child's bar or bat mitzvah in the winter, since as they note, the grandparents will not return from Florida before March 15.

The growth of the havurah movement in American Judaism can be seen as an attempt to provide a surrogate for the missing extended family. While, in one sense the development of these religious fellowships is a reaction to the bigness and the perceived lack of spirituality of the typical American synagogue, in another sense, the havurot have responded to the need to create a caring family with which to celebrate both life's significant moments and the cycle of the Jewish year. Thus, havurot have thrived in college towns and large cities where students and young singles congregate, and in places like California where many families have settled without relatives nearby. With shared meals and shared study, shared worship and shared weekends, and with the active participation of all members of the group, (equalitarianism is a basic principle of all havurot) these groups have provided surrogate and/or extended families for many while deepening their Jewish loyalties at the same time.



## New Alternatives in Jewish Family Living

During the past two decades alternatives to the nuclear family have become the common style of many Americans, and of many American Jews. Any curriculum on the Jewish family must reckon with the options and attempt to relate to them.

Most common is the single parent family, normally the result of divorce, but occasionally a result of death. Divorce often leaves one parent, most commonly the mother, charged with raising the children, while the former spouse has visiting rights, generally over weekends. In such families conflict over the Jewish education of the children is quite widespread as the less committed parent often uses this issue as a lever to employ against the former partner. The conflict may be over the type of Jewish education to be sought, or over whether there be any Jewish education at all. Frequently, in Jewish supplemental schools, there is a problem with Shabbat or Sunday classes which impinge on a parent's visiting time and cause problems even if the parent is supportive of the child's Jewish education. Thus, in large metropolitan areas, weekend classes (the best time for supplemental Jewish education since the children are not tired after a full school day) are increasingly problematic. Sometimes, the problems are graver. In one case, a Kramer versus Kramer-like court fight, I was asked to testify in support of the father's desire that his daughters receive a Jewish education. After the divorce a few years ago, the mother whom I had known to be Jewish and who had been a moderately active member of my congregation, had opted for Unitarianism and was educating her children in the church's Sunday school. The court initially decided for the mother; that decision was reversed after a time. Another problem case involved the child of a Jewish mother and her former husband, a Christian, who was bitterly opposed to his son's receiving a Jewish education. Every time he saw his son, he threatened to terminate the relationship if his son continued in school. This naturally caused the nine year old great upset. Finally, the court told the father to desist.

The Jewish community and the Jewish educational system have to be sensitive to the needs of these families---by sensitizing themselves to the special problems which accompany single parenthood, by assessing lower membership fees for single parents than for the dual parent family, in developing programs which include single parents as well as nuclear families, in teaching mothers competence in leading home observances such as kiddush and birkat hamazon, in developing havurot for them and in promoting group observances such as communal sedarim and Shabbat meals at reasonable rates. Furthermore, the community should provide avenues for such formerly marrieds to meet others who are unmarried through a variety of singles programs and dating services. In this manner, the community's goals should be two-fold: to do all it can to integrate single parent families into

communal life without a stigma attaching to them, and to hold aloft the Jewish ideal of marriage and to see if it can emulate the Almighty and facilitate matchmaking.

There are couples who marry but refuse to have children. For some, the decision derives from the notion that children hinder their self-fulfillment as individuals. For others, the world seems too overcrowded or too bleak a place for children. Such attitudes go counter to the Jewish ethos which, mandating that man and woman be God's co-partners in building the world, understands procreation as a basic part of that role. There is need to emphasize that the gift of children and the raising of them is a rare opportunity to express and to receive love and to participate most fully in the wonder of creation. Furthermore, as Milton Himmelfarb and others have emphasized, the birth and nurture of Jewish children form the most concrete refutation of Hitler's plan to destroy the Jewish people root and branch; it is a reaffirmation of the continued existence of Am Yisrael, and its triumph over death and destruction. Jewish law permits birth control in some circumstances (if practiced by the woman and not the man) and it sees the birth of two children as sufficient fulfillment of the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. However, more than two children per family are needed if Jewry is not merely to continue at its present numbers, but also if it wishes in some small way to replenish the numbers lost during the Holocaust. Zero population growth is not a proper stance for Jews or Jewish community; they have not been overpopulators. Rather, they have been practicing negative population growth. One may fairly wonder if the world would benefit if the special intellectual and moral qualities of the Jewish people were less in evidence than today.

Our Jewish community is most ambivalent on the issue of Jewish population growth. Few communal institutions have treated families with many children as boons to be cultivated, by providing special reduced rates because of the financial burdens assumed by the large family. An intelligent communal policy would require drastically lower payments for the Jewish education or Jewish camping experience of the third or subsequent child in a large family. The community should recognize that the two-career families are here to stay, and should introduce day care programs which would affirm that the community wants to assist working women---married, divorced, widowed---and their families by providing intelligent nurseries with Jewish programs for Jewish children.

One of the great transformations in contemporary society involves the way many people view living together outside of marriage. According to Yankelovich, a majority do not consider this morally wrong.

No Jewish authority will say that such behavior is ideal. A proper relationship involves a life of sanctification, of



commitment to build together in holiness, of ties that bind, of marriage. Nevertheless, there exists within the biblical and rabbinic tradition the notion of a meaningful long-term relationship outside of marriage, a relationship lacking huppah and kiddushin. This is the relationship of man and concubine, the relationship of Abraham and Hagar. While the term concubine has a most perjorative sound in our time, it does suggest some analogy to living together today. Although Maimonides roundly condemns any form of sexual activity outside of marriage, others admit that it can be valid in certain circumstances. Thus, Ravad of Posquieres, a frequent opponent of Maimonides' viewpoint commented:

The term kedeshah surely denotes a woman who is prepared for sexual relations and makes herself available to all men. However, a woman who gives herself exclusively to one man is not liable to punishment at the order of the Jewish communal court, nor does she transgress any prohibition of Jewish law, for she is a pilegish, a concubine, of the kind mentioned in the Bible.

Nahmanides agrees but adds an interesting twist:

No, taking a pilegish was permitted and practiced in Israel in biblical times... And if you would argue that, though it is permitted by the Torah, it has been prohibited by rabbinic enactment, in what place is this ruling to be found in the Talmud, or what community court promulgated it, and in what era was it decreed?...But if he wants her to be his pilegish so that they live together but without undertaking full legal entailments toward one another (which will mean that she is not forbidden to other men), and he therefore does not perform any marriage rites for her, why, he may do so....

As for you, Rabbi Johah our teacher, may God give you life, prohibit the pilegish to the people in your community, for if they know that she is legally permitted, they will become licentious and immoral, and they will have intercourse with their women while they are still menstruous.

We see that what is legally permitted is hardly acceptable morally. It seems to me that it is important to recall the opinions of Ravad and Nahmanides in dealing with this issue. We might acknowledge that long-term non-marital relationships are not absolutely contrary to Judaism even as we must state that they do not conform to the Jewish ideal of holiness in living. Rather than condemn people with such living arrangements who care deeply about their mates, we must urge them on to aspire to a higher level of commitment which is what is represented by kiddushin, by marriage.

In contrast to non-marital sex, extra-marital sex faces complete disapproval in Jewish tradition. Adultery is plainly prohibited in the Ten Commandments for it interferes with and destroys a relationship which has been raised from the casual to the holy, sanctified in the presence of the community and in the mystical presence of the Almighty. A marriage implies that each partner extends to the other a totality of trust and commitment which is difficult in the best of circumstances to maintain. Sexual intimacies with others can easily undermine that trust engendering in its place rage and suspicion, and creating new objects of desire which can supplant one's spouse. Extra-marital relationships can also weaken the bonds of respect and love which have developed between parent and child.

Nor can Judaism sanction group sex activities in which both partners participate willingly with other couples. Overt, conscious agreement still fails to reckon with the unconscious and with the feelings of anger and contempt which can be evoked. Furthermore, Judaism's goal is to make of the natural something sacred. Casualness or promiscuity either among marrieds or non-marrieds reduces sex to the level of the commonplace, and treats it solely as an activity we share with other creatures.

With incompatibility sufficient grounds for divorce in Judaism, there is no reason for people to feel trapped in unsatisfactory marriages. If a marriage is unraveling and cannot be put together, then the Jewish remedy, however hesitantly taken, is divorce, openly agreed to, rather than adultery furtively carried out.

One of the most controversial issues in Jewish life has been the matter of homosexuality. Jewish religious and legal tradition through the ages have been unequivocally opposed to homosexual behavior. "You shall not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; it is an abomination." (Leviticus 18:22) The rabbis understood homosexuality to be the root of Sodom's corruption when the population sought to carry out homosexual rape on Lot's guests. Hence, sodomy became another name for homosexuality. A midrash explains that the generation of the Flood was so morally corrupt that it proposed formal marriage contracts for homosexual relationships and thus, condemned itself to be wiped out. Interestingly, the Torah nowhere explicitly prohibits lesbianism, apparently because it was not a real issue then although such relationships are barred by the rabbis by analogy with male homosexuality.

Judaism saw that which was natural as good. It viewed as natural those things which contributed to the maintenance and continuance of life. Male and female genitalia were complementary to each other. With heterosexual activity, there was always the possibility of renewed creation and life. Homosexuality was contrary to this natural order and therefore wrong.

In recent decades avowed gays and others have argued that homosexuality is a valid alternative life style. They have denied that it is a manifestation of psychological illness but rather have contended that it reflects a congenital predisposition. As such, they claim it is natural and should therefore not be subject to condemnation or to attempts at reorientation.

There are many who view homosexuality as an illness which therefore should be treated and not accepted. Even if the tendency to homosexuality were congenitally based, traditional Judaism might respond that it is the goal of our tradition to channel our impulses to sanctified behavior, that just as the yetser hara, the impulse toward evil (the life force) needs to be channeled for constructive purposes, so the tendency to homosexuality which is part of the yetser hara must be channeled to heterosexual impulses for the rebuilding of families and life. That this must have been done in Jewish life is not open to doubt. In many periods of Jewish history, the rabbis had so little fear of homosexuality that they saw nothing wrong with two bachelors sleeping under the same blanket because homosexuality was rare among Jews and the enforcement of such preventive rules was unnecessary. If homosexuality is a predisposition with which one is born, then clearly it was curbed in Jewish history for the sake of relationships which could foster both companionship, the family and the continuation of both Jewish people and of all humankind. If it is a learned response, then there is no reason for the Jewish community to encourage education in applied homosexuality.

Thus, it seems clear to me that neither Jewish religious tradition nor Jewish family policy can view the gay movement with favor. This doesn't mean that we should take the lead in denouncing such behavior or attempt to rid the world of homosexuality, Anita Bryant-style. It does mean that we should not sanction as valid the existence of gay synagogues any more than we would the founding of synagogues whose *raison d'etre* would be to attract specifically adulterers, idolators, or shell-fish eaters. The "Shabbat violators" congregation makes as little sense as the gay synagogue.

Gays should be welcome in Jewish life just as other Jews are. We should not discriminate against them any more than we do against every other Jew whose upholding of Jewish ethical and ritual behavior is imperfect in one respect or another. We simply cannot acknowledge that the gay lifestyle is a valid alternative to the traditional Jewish lifestyle of husband, wife and children---the Jewish family.

Of all the challenges to the Jewish family, none is more threatening than intermarriage, the marriage of a Jew with a Gentile who has not converted to Judaism.

Having reached a rate of forty percent or more, intermarriage is now a commonplace on the American scene. Most Jewish-



Gentile marriages do not lead to the full integration of the Gentile partner within Judaism although a growing number of Gentile spouses do convert to our faith.

The majority of Jewish-Gentile marriages therefore do not result in the creation of authentically and exclusively Jewish families. Rather, they transgress the Jewish view that our unique people with our unique destiny can only be maintained when Jew marries Jew. While the Torah and the Prophets have no absolute ban on intermarriage, the ban of Jew marrying non-Jew became a norm during the Persian period of Ezra and Nehemiah and was fully outlawed in Hellenistic and rabbinic times.

This has remained the Jewish viewpoint until this century. It has been questioned in our time, however. De facto, it has been challenged by the action of the Jewish community in giving positions of honor to Jews who not only married non-Jews, but even allowed their children to be raised in other faiths. De facto, it has been challenged by a small number of Reform rabbis who will co-officiate with ministers or priests at intermarriages, frequently held in non-Jewish houses of worship. These positions however, have been widely criticized in Jewish life.

Finally, the classic position on intermarriage has been undermined by the thousands of well-meaning Jews who have attended wedding ceremonies of Jews and Gentiles sanctified by Christian clergy with or without the participation of certain rabbis. By their presence, these Jews have tacitly indicated their acceptance of intermarriage is just one more unpleasant but inexorable part of the Jewish scene. So widespread is this air of acquiescence that I was once lambasted by a cousin, a pillar of a Conservative synagogue, because I had politely, I thought, demurred from attending the nuptials of his niece who was marrying an unconverted non-Jew. Why wouldn't I attend, he inquired. After all, the food was strictly kosher. I indicated that while the food was kosher, the marriage was clearly not. Thus, any attendance at the wedding would be improper because it could be construed to indicate that I, in some way, approved of what was transpiring.

The easiest thing for Jewish communal and religious leaders to do is to denounce intermarriage. Any objective assessment must acknowledge that no amount of outrage or intensive educational programming can eliminate intermarriage fully in a society which is open in virtually every sphere to Jews and in which Jews are encouraged to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural worlds.

We know that, by and large, the more extensive the Jewish education, the more intensive the degree of Jewish living in one's parental home, the better the chance that a Jewish youngster will accept the overriding significance of Judaism and Jewish identity. With a strong Jewish education and powerful Jewish experience,

he should as well understand the importance of marrying a Jewish spouse to maintain personally one's position in the mighty stream of Jewish history. But there are no guarantees. Nevertheless, it seems that as a matter of policy for a meaningful Jewish future, we can expect of our Jewish leaders that they reflect in their lives and their families an unequivocal commitment to Jewish continuity.

With regard to intermarriage and intermarrieds, we should observe the distinction between the deed and the doer, proposed by Beruriah, R. Meir's brilliant wife. Thus, while opposing intermarriage, the community should try in every possible manner to draw intermarried couples into the community with programs especially geared for them. There are many who, while remaining unconverted, do nevertheless identify with the Jewish world and Jewish life.

Most concretely, the Jewish community must spare no effort to bring these intermarried families into the Jewish community by converting the Gentile partners. Such conversionary efforts are viewed, at best dubiously, at most, negatively, by Orthodox leadership. Most Orthodox rabbis disdain conversions where marriage is a motive, although many authorities have historically adopted a more lenient attitude where other reasons for conversion could be cited as well. In fact, there exist ulpanim for conversion in Israel under Orthodox auspices where a significant percentage of the clientele are actual or potential spouses of Jewish citizens of the Jewish state.

Jewish authorities are increasingly pointing to the fact that Judaism was a proselytizing religion two thousand years ago and asserting that a more open and positive attitude to would-be proselytes today is both a necessity and a desideratum. It is a necessity because it presents the one Jewishly constructive way to deal with those who have opted for intermarriage. It is a desideratum because it affords the community the opportunity to create committed, caring Jews and living Jewish families out of a Gentile and his or her religiously indifferent Jewish partner. It is a desideratum because the presence within the Jewish community of those who have freely chosen Judaism can have a leavening affect on born Jews who have taken Judaism for granted. It is a desideratum because it again affirms that Judaism is a religious fellowship potentially open to all rather than a club content just to insist upon belonging and giving.

Thus, while Judaism must oppose intermarriage for the sake of the integrity of its vision and the perpetuation of its people, it should at the same time, remain open to intermarrieds, sparing no effort to bring into Judaism those prepared to undertake its serious and weighty commitments. It should also maintain an interest in and concern for those intermarrieds who, while predisposed to Judaism, are unwilling or unable to cast their lot totally with the Jewish heritage.



### The Family and The Jewish Future

Except for a small number of critics who see the traditional family as inimical to their vision of a radicalized world, most authorities know that families are essential to continuance of social growth and continuity and individual development. The health and strength of the family are thus intimately linked to the health and strength of the society and the world in which they live. Judaism as a religion which has put great emphasis on family activity understands just how important are these family roles.

In a functional sense, the family serves to keep the group and its world alive by providing for the continuing replacement of deceased members with new births. It cares for the total needs of newborns who, from every vantage point, are incapable of fending for themselves for many years. The family historically constituted an economic unit in which parents nurtured children until the children were old enough to assist in maintaining and furthering the patrimony and then, after assuming its direction, of caring for their elders when the latter could no longer work themselves. Sociologists and anthropologists also see the bonds of family as socially necessary in order to provide acceptable channels for sexual expression while restraining and curbing unbridled and aggressive sexual activity. In this view, incest taboos limit destructive sexual competition within the family and impel younger family members to seek partners outside, thereby opening the family to the larger community and establishing links between families.

The family was thus a pillar of the social order and social structure and its importance continues today. Nevertheless, not all of its traditional roles are as relevant now. As society has become more complicated and complex, the educational role of the family has been diminished, supplanted increasingly by school and now television. Similarly, less and less youngsters have family farms or businesses to assist in running or family crafts to learn, and even in those cases when such exist, the upcoming generation is less apt to follow in the proverbial parental footsteps. Finally, the existence of government and private pension programs has reduced the family's role as the economic stay of the elderly.

Thus, the functions of family today may not loom quite as large as in times past, but in many circles, there is renewed appreciation for the importance of those basic functions which remain and which can rarely be adequately fulfilled by others.

Most important in this regard is the parental role in nurturing and loving. Children need continuous loving interaction with one or two adults to develop feelings of confidence and trust which will enable them to grow emotionally and intellectually. Studies have shown that children who are not held,

who have not experienced warm, loving responses from adults can have stunted growth intellectually and physically and can even have their chances for physical survival impaired significantly. For full development, someone has to be there. For a specific child, someone has to see that child as the apple of his or her eye. For some experts, this implies that there is need for a regular, constant maternal presence during the first three years of a child's life so that the child develops the emotional security which is needed if it is to have self-confidence to develop greater separateness and individuality. Others assert that what is decisive is the quality of the love and nurture lavished on the child in the time the loving adult (and there is no reason why it can't be the father as well as the mother) is with the child. Pointing to the successful kibbutz model, they note that parents there spend a few hours each day nurturing the children while nursing and educational bureaucracies attend to the physical and educational needs of the children. Mary Jo Bane in Here to Stay states that there are surprisingly small differences between the amount of time working mothers and non-working mothers spend exclusively with their children. One study in 1965 showed that the typical non-working mother spent 1.4 hours per day on child care which was generally unstructured and unplanned. Working mothers especially of the middle class, on the other hand, are largely careful to structure time exclusively for their children, reading to them more and planning specific activities with and for their children.

But whether part-time or full-time parental nurturing will do, most students of the family agree that no day care center or sitter can supplant the love and emotional support which a parent can lavish on its offspring. When a child knows he has love and support, he begins to acquire the confidence needed to strike out on new paths, to continue the process of exploration, to develop a strong and independent personality of one's own.

In the family, the child is dependent on those with greater power. He learns that he cannot have everything he wishes. Thus, the child learns to accept authority and to understand that his acceptance within the family and within the society will be determined in part by the degree to which he conforms to the societal norms. Authority can be imposed by fiat, without explanation. In such cases, independence and creativity are curbed. One does what is expected without seeking or expecting understanding. In other cases, especially in our time, permissiveness has run rampant so that the child has no sense of limits, but rather a sense that in him all meaning rests. Thus permissiveness has become a basic prod for the cult of self-fulfillment, of egregious narcissism.

Ideally, the imposition of authority should be accompanied by explanation and discussion. A child should learn that the rules he is expected to observe are for his good as well as for the welfare of other members of the family or community. He or

she has to understand that there are others who have legitimate needs as well as he and that he must learn to live with them. Thus, he must compromise and accept less than everything he desires. This process of growth in self-discipline and self-control will not be without conflict with parents and siblings. Where there is a real effort at communication then the sources of conflict within a family can be uncovered, leading hopefully to a peaceful resolution.

As children are raised, they internalize the norms of their family and through them, of their community. They will, from time to time, harbor thoughts or feelings which they know consciously to be unacceptable in terms of family standards. As a result, they will feel guilt. This guilt can be sublimated and redirected into socially acceptable activities. Some guilt is useful as a check on impulse and excess. It reinforces once again the notion that not all wishes are equally valid, that there are deeds which are simply wrong and which ought not to be carried out.

Thus, through love and care and example, the child in the family setting learns to live as an increasingly independent entity within the context of a mini-society. By watching others, by directions from its parents, by means of its experiences, the child learns acceptable behavior in eating, toileting, sleeping and interactions with others. It becomes a person with resources and abilities which enable it to move into larger contexts to continue to grow intellectually, experientially and socially.

Contemporary students of the family have tended to play down the formal educational functions of the family, emphasizing instead its overwhelming significance as the hot-house of emotional growth. While this is probably overstated in terms of general culture, it is certainly grossly inaccurate with regard to the transmission of Jewish religious culture.

Since Judaism demands, in Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel's apt phrase, "a leap of action," formal classroom education can never supply the student with a full sense of the spirit of Jewish life, just as a musical score on a sheet of paper can only provide the sketchiest outline of what the music will sound like when played by a symphony orchestra.

Judaism is a system of sanctified deeds, a system which is theoretically coextensive with life. The home is the place where these acts are preeminently carried out. Time is sanctified with candles, wine and hallah and festive meals on the Shabbat; holidays, with their distinctive observances always affording some distinctive role for children, impress on the heart and mind a feeling for Jewish living which no amount of classes can truly replicate. A child's Jewish identity is formed because in a regular manner (and the more regular the better)



symbols, actions, songs and stories--all associated with the heritage of Israel--are introduced into the Jewish home, adding awe and beauty and delight. It is these home experiences which the child should encounter from birth which give birth to a natural Jew. For such people, a Jewish school provides the intellectual underpinnings and understandings for an identity which has virtually been formed. The school reinforces in the public world of peers the worthwhileness of the Jewish identity one already has acquired. Only in rare cases, can the charisma of teacher or headmaster or rabbi provide a countervailing influence to the Jewish blandness of most contemporary Jewish homes and effect positive Jewish change. In the overwhelming number of cases, the familial atmosphere determines the strength or weakness of the child's commitment to Judaism and Jewishness.

With family so important in the transmission of Jewish identity, the Jewish emphasis on formal schooling for children in this country put the car before the horse somewhat. When Jews lived in totally Jewish environments, the school was an important adjunct, a part of that environment. In our time with Jewish home life so minimally Jewish in most cases, there is need to afford individual and families the experiences of Jewish living. One of the reasons for the success of Ramah and other Jewish religious/cultural summer camps for youth was that they provided a total experience in living Judaism. The weakness of the camp program was that it too easily was treated as a summer idyll with no relevance to the real world back home, or with no possibility of application in that world. Furthermore, the success of Jewish camping was reduced because it failed to address the entire family. What is needed is the expansion today or introduction of meaningful experiences for the entire family so that it can be inspired to introduce deeper levels of Jewish commitment into the home.

In emphasizing the importance of the family in the development of the child, we should not skirt its significance for the adult members as well. The ties of companionship and love between husband and wife, with each learning to transcend his or her own immediate needs to find meaning in bringing delight and consideration to the other, is a relationship of the greatest power and meaning. When children issue from that relationship, there is often the sense that one is playing an essential role in the eternal, ongoing flow of existence. One has participated in a miraculous act of creation and one has the amazing opportunity and responsibility to guide that soul in love and in wisdom and in tenderness. Thus, the family setting has a transforming affect on adults as they learn from day to day to celebrate the wonder of love, the mystery of creation.

Families are part of the fabric of life. No people has had more intuitive understanding of that fact than the Jewish people. No people has more wisely understood that it is in the family setting that the presence of God can be most keenly felt. By living Judaism, the Jewish family has untold opportunities to rejoice in the bounties which have been bestowed upon it. We must spare no effort to show Jews of all ages the inestimable value of Jewish family living.

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