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CONGRESS
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**Reciprocal Influences: Good and Bad
The Israeli & American Jewish Communities**

**The 15th
American-
Israel
Dialogue**

**Aharon Amir / David Avidan / Ari Avnerre / Paul Berger / Eliezer Berkovits / Andre Chouraqui
David Cohen / Rachel Elboim-Dror / Hertzal Fishman / Marcia Goldstein / Lois Gould
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Avigdor Ravitsky / Alice Shalvi / Amnon Shamosh / Henry Siegman
Uriel Simon / Howard Squadron / Saul Teplitz / Walter Wurzbarger**

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The 15th American-Israel Dialogue

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In this special issue of CONGRESS MONTHLY we publish the proceedings of the 15th American-Israel Dialogue, sponsored by American Jewish Congress and held at the Hebrew University, Mount Scopus Campus, July 10-13, 1979. The coordinator of the Dialogue was Phil Baum, associate executive director, AJCongress. Richard Cohen, AJCongress public relations director, served as press officer for the Dialogue.

OPENING SESSION

From Sentimentality to Ideology: Renascent Zionism as the Bridge

A Presentation

JACOB NEUSNER

The bonds between American Jewry and the State of Israel are firm, yet unpredictable. They fluctuate from year to year, from headline to headline, if the strength of the ties may be measured in the concrete facts of UJA contributions or revealed in the ineffable measures of concern and of caring. There is a minimum, a perpetual caring. There is a maximum, a caring which stops short only of *aliyah*. Between these parameters the community as a whole tends to fluctuate. In the immensely diverse life of families and individuals, the fluctuation is even greater.

It follows that we may generalize, but only at the price of committing banality. American Jewry cares deeply for the State of Israel. But American Jewry chooses to live in America. That means, on the one side, that our community will not tolerate in its midst positions hostile to the essential existence and security of the Jewish State. It means, more importantly, that American Jewry concedes the State of Israel is *the* Jewish state. And, on the other side, we contemplate the spectacle of a sizable group of people who persist in calling themselves Jewish and in seeking to secure their continued and important existence as a Jewish community, while not choosing to live in the Jewish State. The paradox of that conflict of established self-understandings, between wholehearted support for the State of Israel, on the one hand, and an equally profound will to be what they are, which is both Americans and Jews, captures the ideological dilemma of American Jewry. It explains, I think, why there is no ideology of American Jewry, that is, a theory which explains to American Jews who they are, what they are, and why they are where and what they are.

For any such ideology which ignores the celebration of Jewish nationhood ignores the facts of American Jewish distinctiveness. But any such ideology which leads to its logical conclusion in the celebration of Jewish nationhood—that is, which affirms for American Jewry a single nationality, the Israeli one—is equally unserviceable. Given the powerful force of American nationalism, moreover, an American Jewish ideology which might attempt to distinguish the American state, encompassing diverse peoples or nations, from the American nation, or which tried to define an American nationality encompassing diverse “religious” groups, would be somewhat beside the point. When, therefore, we confront the unresolved dilemmas of American Jewry, we understand the uncertain character of American Jews’ relationships to the State of Israel. These merely are symptomatic of the incapacity to discover an American Jewish ideology, which makes sense of both ourselves and our world. The consequence is a community based upon sentimentality, not intellect and mature self-understanding.

We shall understand ourselves best, I think, only if we take seriously the power of American nationality and American culture and realize that we Jews, as always, in all our specificity, point to more than ourselves. When American Jews come to the State of Israel, they discover not their Jewishness but their Americanness. That means that for American Jews, Jewishness is a mode and a measure of their Americanness. It is what makes them distinctive and different specifically in the context of American nationality and American culture. But it has now become clear in the public press that the same is to be said of other American

communities and subgroups. The Polish American of the third generation is proud of John Paul II, but has not got the slightest intention of moving back to Cracow. The Italian American of the third generation speaks some broken Italian and follows what happens in the homeland, but in Italy is perceived, and perceives himself or herself, as American. American blacks in Africa are American. All of us turn out to be strangers at home. These obvious facts mean that what all of us once were—which is, Jews from such and such a place in Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa, or Italians from the south of Italy or from Sicily, blacks from the tribes of Africa’s west coast, or Poles from this district or that—differentiates us from one another. But what all of us now are differentiates us from our diverse pasts, even while it does not make us what we do not wish to be: undifferentiated Americans. The new ethnicism of American culture is possible only against a background of sameness. Now that Jews have no foreign accents, they want to learn Yiddish or even experiment with Hebrew as their “secret” or ethnic language. (Our Yankee neighbors, who go back to the 17th century in Rhode Island, after whose families towns in the state are named, go looking for ethnic foods on the bottom of Narragansett Bay and come up with quahogs.) In other words, the ethnic assertion, which, for the Jews, leads some to the Jewish Defense League and others to Lubavich, expresses nothing so vividly as the profound Americanism, the completed assimilation, of the Jews of America.

It follows, therefore, that when we analyze our ties to the State of Israel, we have to make sense of these ties, in some measure, in the context of American society and politics. This is for two reasons.

First, American Jews receive the world through the same medium as others, which is, through TV, the public press and other neutral media of communication. While they are “for Israel,” they are not “for Israel” for reasons terribly different from the reasons the generality of Americans will be “for Israel.” True, they will be “for Israel” to a far higher proportion than the others. But they receive their knowledge of the State of Israel—as distinct from their attitudes to the State of Israel—from the common media of communication. That is why,

for example, American Jews in general have never fully grasped the Greater Land of Israel Movement, the aspirations of Gush Emunim, the policy of creating Jewish settlements on what the American press calls "the West Bank," and other points at which, over the past decade, Israeli policy has responded to forces and aspirations unfamiliar, and even inaccessible, to Americans in general, and American Jews in particular. If we report that in the main American Jews want what is good for the State of Israel but, so far as they know and care at all, are not enthusiastic about the present government's program in Judea and Samaria, we report a fact which is something quite distinct from what we state. We merely convey that our understanding of this part of the world reaches us through those eyes which wear neutral spectacles. The vision of the press is not shaped by a Jewish perspective. Even when reporters are Jewish, they cannot be expected to allow that fact to intervene in what they see. Nor could any of us know what we should be seeing, when, as is clear, Americans of the Jewish religion (or, one may prefer, Americans of the Jewish ethnic subdivision) grasp a world laid forth through essentially undifferentiated, therefore by definition un-Jewish, angles of vision.

Second, if American Jews receive the world as do other Americans, it also is true that American Jews have no choice. For they, their parents, their grandparents, and on backward, know no other world. What this means is that their sense of, their response to, the State of Israel is shaped by their sense of themselves as Jews—and not contrariwise. They are Jews in the concrete setting of their hometowns and cities, and, as I have already implied, the meaning of the fact that they are Jews is important principally in that local context, where they live. They have little sense of forming part of an international people of long and proud past, *except* insofar as they are the branch or remnant of that ancient past in Wichita or Duluth, a neighborhood of New York or a suburb of Cleveland, Toronto, Montreal or Chicago. For America is not only an intensely nationalistic society. It also is a remarkably diverse and deeply provincial one. Local loyalties and regional traits are preserved not only by distance and historical circumstance but also by choice, by what makes people feel comfortable. Indeed, given the cultural diversity of the

Jewish community, given its class divisions, which run very deep, given its severe tensions about matters of religion and self-understanding, politics and public policy, given the diversity of its Jewish experience and commitment, from total to minimal—given all this, we must be amazed that there is any consensus on anything at all. Yet there is, and it is on only one thing, and that is where I began, the agreement that to be an American Jew is to be "for Israel," but not to be so very much "for Israel" that one actually migrates to the State of Israel for good.

Clearly, much is wrong with the vague consensus, the shared sentimentality, which substitutes for a mature ideology of American Jewry. For one thing, sentimentality lacks the power to define and secure consistent policy. For another, since it rests on how one feels, sentimentality does not turn individuals into a community, or private persons into citizens. There is, indeed, no sense whatsoever of citizenship of, or in, an American Jewish community. No one responds to the claim, for example, that we have, everyday, annual responsibilities to carry out together, responsibilities which impose their taxes in the form of contributions. The UJA and other fund-collecting agencies succeed by appeals to motives other than responsibility, citizenship, collective tasks, the common good, and the public interest. It is not criticizing the UJA and the Federations to observe that they do not appeal to a public interest but only to shared fears or fantasies. The fact is that a community as regional, as diverse, as divided as our own has no choice but to reach out to the lowest common denominator—that is, a generalized sentiment that we are "for Israel," an appeal to "history-and-peoplehood" lacking all philosophical clarity.

If that is the case, and if we hope to reform and rebuild a community worthy of the name, we have to take that lowest common denominator and build on that. Clearly, to formulate a Zionist theory of American Jewry, one will construct on the basis of what must, at its foundations, be declared a profoundly Zionist attitude, if not of mind, at least of heart and soul. If, as at Babel, all we have is mud, then that is what we shall use for mortar. It is enough. And the bricks are abundant: the people are there.

Defining the relationship between

American Jewry and Israeli Jewry and the State of Israel lies at the beginning of the way toward a mature self-understanding in American Jewry itself. Surely this fact, that the most powerful Judaizing experience in American Jewry of our day remains the existence of the Jewish State, conforms to the historical requirements of the age. That is why I take the occasion of this Dialogue to reflect upon not what is wrong, but what is right and true in the shared and reciprocal respect of the two greatest Jewish communities of our day, yours and ours. That explains why it is necessary, specifically in Jerusalem, to speak of New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Winnipeg and Boston.

When we turn to Zionist theory prior to 1948 for guidance in how to think about ourselves, we find rich insight. The Zionist critique of the *golah* and of the situation of *galut* for Poland or Germany contains much truth for Florida and Minnesota. Indeed, so far as the great theorists speak truth about the Jewish condition and the Jewish situation, what they say retains enduring relevance. What they teach us, specifically, is simple, basic things. "We are a people, one people." That affirmation places limits on the theory we may formulate of what we are, where we are, and why we wish to be. Western Jews live as "slaves in freedom." Critics of American Jews, those who perceive its self-hatred and its profound ambiguities about itself, have done no more than to repeat that simple observation. The inspiring record of German Zionism—"wear it with pride, the gold Star"—which shows the power of Zionist theory to secure for Jews self-respect denied by society and removed by politics, suggests something beyond itself. It is how the Zionist idea, exposed, fully articulated, applied and exemplified, may yet bring life to the confused Jews of the American *golah*. Finally, the very existence of a solid and extensive corpus of ideas of Zionist ideas, stands as a testimony against the anti-intellectualism, the banal pragmatism, the out-and-out babbly, of American Jewry and its leadership. When you realize that Zionism is the creation of intellectuals—lawyers, journalists, professors, doctors, and others who make their living by selling what they know—shaping Zionist theory defies reality. For such slight self-understanding as American Jewry has attained is not the contribution of the intel-

lectuals but of people of affairs, businessfolk and bureaucrats. These people have led us into the state in which we now are. That is why instead of to ideas, we appeal to sentiments; instead of upon ideology, we rely upon unsteady emotions.

Zionist theory carries within itself insights of authentic Judaism. To take one concrete example, on rereading Ben Halpern's *The American Jew, A Zionist Analysis*, I am struck by his stress on the conception of *galut* as critical to the American Jewish ideology. Halpern offers the insight that, so long as American Jews do not perceive themselves as strangers at home, that long are they out of touch with the fundamental self-conception of the Jewish people through its history. The existential dimensions of *galut*, as a definition of the human condition, are not to be explored so long as the political and social realities of the American Jews as a *golah*, of American Judaism as in *galut*, are not acknowledged. Indeed, if American Jews lose the sense that they form a *golah*, that they are in *galut*, however they choose to interpret the meaning of these two facts, they lose all possibility of understanding the deepest historical facts of Judaism. There is no reason to despair. For good or ill, the social and political realities of American life make it certain that American Jews will not lose the opportunity to preserve their sense of *galut* and of forming a *golah*. They will not lose that opportunity if they have the benefit of the Zionist critique of their condition and of their context.

I offer Halpern's conception as only one example of how Zionist theory may help us to understand what we are and who we are—and what we may become. It is meant to instantiate my claim that what we need from thoughtful Israelis, those who care about the bond between us to begin with, is the formation of an agenda for thought and inquiry. We need an intellectual program based upon Zionist theory for the past and for the present. It would be difficult to compose a brief program of inquiry, for the issues are many, the intellectual potentialities profound.

Let me point to two parts of the work.

First, a principal task of Zionist philosophy must be to clarify, to unpack the meaning of powerful and correct slogans of the day. For example, while American Zionism may happily concede

the principle of the "centrality of Jerusalem," precisely what is conceded is puzzling. Since, we all know, this affirmation does not extend to the Israeli government's making decisions about the character and conduct of Jewish life in America, people generally assume it refers to something more "spiritual." But we are not sure what we affirm. For their part, a fair number of Israeli scholars assume that when Isaiah speaks of Torah's going forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, he is talking about the faculty of one or another of the Israeli universities. In point of fact, achievement in Jewish scholarship is widely diffused. No one outside of Jerusalem is able to concede the centrality of Jerusalem in each and every discipline of Jewish studies. In some fields excellent work is done. In others what comes forth is naive and arid, a mere academicism. The prestige attaching to things Israeli does not extend to Jewish ideas. In all the Jewish world, who reads a book of theology written in Jerusalem? And what important book of Jewish philosophy has appeared there in a decade? And where in Jerusalem shall we go for powerful ideas for shaping the intellect and soul of the Jewish people? In the perception of significant intellectual figures in the American Jewish community—professors who teach hundreds of students a year, writers who are read, rabbis who are heard, journalists who write for thousands every week—intellectual life in the State of Israel has little to say to American Jewry. If there is a center, surely the periphery must acknowledge it.

This matter of the intellectual limitations of the center leads to a much more painful issue, which is second and last in the ideological agenda.

In all that has been said, one thing has not been mentioned, and that is, *aliyah*. The reason is obvious. When we speak of American Jewry as a *fact* of Jewish history, we do not speak of its proposed dissolution. Perhaps we should. Maybe Zionism has only one thing to say to the *golah*, which is, "come home." But if we concede that that is the whole and only message of Zionism to American Jewry, we then offer nothing by which that community can explain what it sees in itself, an enduring and important group. I do not, and would not, ask Zionist theory to accommodate itself to the aspiration of Ameri-

can Jewry to persist in a form very much like what it now is. That seems to me to constitute a non-Zionist theory of American Jewry. I reject it. Zionism without *aliyah* is not Zionism. But Zionism with only *aliyah* is not relevant. I reject it because it contains no seeds of reform, no grounds for criticism. I reject it because it abandons the historical, Messianic aspirations of the Jewish people. I reject it because such an ideology, promising a merely favorable view of the State of Israel while positing an American Jewry essentially unchanged and unaffected by the existence of the State of Israel, violates the essential reality of the world which is to be explained.

Nor is it possible to speak of Zionism without affirming *aliyah* as the highest expression of the Zionist commitment. Just as Zionism is a measure of the complete devotion of the Jew to being Jewish—so Jewish that, whatever the world proposes, that Jew requires a Jewish state in this world—so Zionism can conceive of itself only through the fulfillment and completion represented by *aliyah*. But there are facts to be dealt with—facts with which we started. One fact is that American Jews in our time have not taken to heart the challenge of *aliyah*. That is a measure of their Jewishness, a measure by which they may be found wanting. A second fact is that American Jews take very seriously indeed the existence of themselves as a distinctive community and the continued existence of the State of Israel as well.

So, if we speak of Zionism which is fulfilled and completed in *aliyah*, we cannot pretend to exhaust the agenda of what there is to be said in Zionism about the Jews. Zionism has much more to say about the Jewish world. And, if truth be told, when Zionism speaks principally or only about *aliyah*, it gains no hearing, merely ritual assent. When Zionist bodies affirm the centrality of Jerusalem and the definition of true Zionism as solely or mainly *aliyah*, sympathetic and friendly American Jews of course share that affirmation. Then they go home. So *aliyah* has become, in the main, an empty slogan, affirmation of *aliyah* an empty ritual, in American Zionism. We must ask whether there are not other, lesser things for Zionism to discuss. I am inclined to think Zionism has much more to tell American Jewry.

A Zionism consisting not of *aliyah* at the apex but of only *aliyah* turns a harsh and angry face to the great majority of the

Jewish people. It is not a Zionism of hope and confidence, of trust and goodwill. It is not a Zionism which the *golah* needs. It is a Zionism to be not defied but merely ignored and disregarded. That other, re-nascent Zionism must be a Zionism which addresses itself to the realities of the Jewish world and the frailties of the Jewish people. It must be a Zionism

which calls upon the Jewish people to defy reality and overcome frailty. And that renewed Zionism, in my judgment, can lay the foundations for an American Jewish ideology, capable of explaining, and sustaining, permanent and mature ties between the largest Jewish community of the world today, on the one side, and the State of Israel, on the other.

Transmitting the Values of Judaism

A Presentation

ELIEZER BERKOVITS

The first concern of our meeting is defined as the role of voluntary associations, the influence of private groups on the formulation of public policy. Actually, we, the Jewish people, have a long and effective tradition in this field. During most of our *galut* history we were, in the political sense, a "private group." By that I mean: we had no state organization of our own, we had no political parties; yet, our communities were organized and functioning, without government power and police enforcement, mainly on the basis of a voluntarily accepted internal discipline.

We had a general educational system for all classes of society hundreds of years before any of the modern nations. Public aid, social services, care for the poor and the sick were organized already in Talmudic times and continued to exist, and were further developed, in all the Diaspora Jewries. All the institutions of the communities were maintained by communal taxes and other voluntary contributions. Based essentially on the consensus of the people, there was a judiciary system whose decisions were obeyed, mostly, without enforcement from above. One has to read the history of the *takanot hakehillot* in order to appreciate to what extent we existed and survived as a "private group" by means of voluntary associations, and through the devotion of volunteer workers, both in political and communal affairs.

American Jewry has continued this unique tradition of the Jewish people, not

because it is today a relatively opulent society, but because it is the child of that great tradition of Jewish public-spirited action that their forebears brought along from the ghetto and the *shtetl*. This tradition they have integrated with some of the best aspects of American democracy. No other group has had such a record of public-spiritedness expressed through voluntary associations as has American Jewry. It is a distinctive mark of its Jewish character, independent of the measure of its religious observance or its Torah scholarship.

I say, with deep regret and sorrow, that in Israel the role of voluntary associations in influencing public policy is hardly noticeable. In the invitation that we received to this Dialogue, mention is made of Shinui and the Peace Now movement as examples of "private groups" functioning in Israel. When Shinui first appeared on the scene, I was very much in sympathy with its goals. We needed change in every area of life in this country. What happened to the change? Shinui has become silent. Its initial moral and ethical fervor got bogged down and finally absorbed in the political game. Nor should one confuse Shalom Akhshav (Peace Now) agitation with the peace movement in the United States during the Vietnam War. The peace movement in the U.S. had a program not only for external but also for internal peace. It had an ethical philosophy for living to be implemented in personal relations no less than in ex-

ternal politics. No matter what or thought of it, it was expressed in the rather crude slogan, "Make Love, Not War." The Peace Now organization lacking exactly that: a Peace Now effort for internal use. And we need it badly in this country! It is doubtful whether peace movement has ever been as intransigent and aggressive against all those who do not agree with it as is Shalom Akhshav. It is for this reason that I am not convinced that it really means peace and not just politics. There is no one in Israel who does not want peace and, consequently, it is easy to manipulate the general desire for peace for political purposes.

This loss of public conscience by which Jewish communities maintained themselves in the *galut* is inseparable from the tragic loss of Jewish values and the decline of Judaism among the majority of the Israelis. Let me cite the experience of a young person who was born and lived in a secular kibbutz and who gave his life for Israel. His words were published in *Shdemot*, which is the recognized periodical of the kibbutzim. The young man looking back at the education he had received to form himself "as a Jew with a Jewish soul," concludes with one word—"little." He writes movingly:

"I look at the *vatikim*, the elders, the older generation, and wonder: they were born in the Jewish atmosphere of the *galut*, how come they have not bequeathed to us, be it even just a little, of what they absorbed from their parents? It is unlikely that everything [they had received] was worthless to such an extent that it had to be destroyed forever. Why are they silent? Why don't they say something to their children?"

The same publication, in another issue, quotes one of these *vatikim* as saying: "My son is not a Jew. I wish he were, at least, a socialist."

These statements come from kibbutzniks who represent the elite of Israeli society. The role of voluntary associations in the formation of public policy and that of private groups in influencing the ethical quality of life will remain insignificant as long as the present spiritual and value vacuum continues to exist in Israeli society. A well-known Israeli author, educator and lecturer at the Hebrew University, for instance, is able to make the following most revealing statement: "It is impossible to educate to values; nor

is there any need for it."

In the words of the young kibbutznik, whom I quoted earlier, for the graduate of the Israeli secular school system, Judaism remains "a closed garden and a sealed well." Obviously, a society with such an educational system can hardly be of any help in solving the serious problems of Jewish education under which American Jewry is laboring. Jewish education in the Diaspora can have only one meaning: religious education, education that draws its sustenance from the open wells of Judaism. Jewish youth in America is in no need of a secularism made in Israel. American secularism is quite a bit superior to the Israeli brand. Israel—the reality of the State—does play a very important part in Jewish education in America. Its significance has to be integrated into the teaching of Jewish history as well as into the interpretation of the very meaning of Judaism.

This task had better be undertaken by American Jewish educators, thinkers and philosophers. The help that American Jewish education may receive from Israel has to come from the rather limited circle of educators who, on the one hand, are open to the world, fully aware of the problems and complexities of modern life and, on the other, in addition to a sound, general education, also possess a great deal of Torah learning, and whose personal lives are guided by the values of Judaism of the ages, meaningfully applied to the contemporary situation.

But what of the influence in the other direction, the influence of "Americanism," of the American striving for modernism upon the quality of Jewish life in Israel? The mere *striving* for modernism need not detain us. Modernism ought to be the result of a certain progress in man's striving for truth, in his search for meaning, in his struggles to realize the purpose of human existence. But to strive for modernism because it is modern to be modern is infantile.

Let us attempt to define the positive features of American modernism. One might say that it is an affirmation of the individual, his liberation, his ability to find himself and his freedom to be himself, exemplified by the slogans: "do your own thing," "be in touch with your own feelings," "I'm O.K., you're O.K."

If one wishes to use some of the basic psychological and educational principles of American modernism, one might refer to the terminology of one of its prophets,

Carl Rogers: "unconditional personal regard," "a person's freedom to be what he really is" (no matter what he is).

Notwithstanding the fact that we Jews are a people with a long history, Israeli society is, in its great majority secular, a Now-society; it is a Now-society because of its alienation from the past of the Jewish people, because Judaism is a "sealed well" for it, because among some leading intellectuals there is an aversion toward Judaism. America, in spite of its relative youth, is not a Now-society, but retains lasting traditions and significant commitments to recognizably American values. If there are experiments with certain forms of a Now-subculture, there is hope that the experiments may turn into genuine progress. There are, presently, signs in American society of disillusionment with many aspects of American modernism.

Israeli secularism, however, represents a Now-society, a society without a past. The influence of Western modernism reaches its people mainly by way of media. In an age in which the medium is the message, what is being uncritically absorbed by this Now-society is the culture junk of the West, with concomitant spiritual and ethical decadence. The "Americanization" of Israeli society is a tragic aspect of Israeli life.

But what of Judaism, the voice of its teachers? Where is it heard and how is it heard in Israel? It is this voice and the deeds which could conceivably benefit the spiritual, religious and educational needs of American Jewry. The opportunities for Judaism in a state of Jews are revolutionary. Judaism was originally intended for a people living in its own land, in control of the comprehensive reality of its national existence and guiding its own course. Judaism is not a religion in the sense the term has in Western parlance. It is the way of life of a people in a covenantal relationship with God. It is not a church chiefly concerned with the salvation of souls. Rather, Judaism's ideal is *letaken olam bmalchut shadai*, to establish this world of man as a kingdom of God. The ethical social issues, the quality of life, are thus in the forefront of its authentic concerns. For this reason Hillel was able to sum up the essence of Judaism—"what is hateful when done to you, do not do unto others." For this reason the Talmud says: "the entirety of the Torah is for the sake of the ways of peace."

It is for this reason that occasionally in the Talmud complicated Halakhic questions are decided by the Biblical quotation, cutting the Gordian knot: "All its ways are ways of pleasantness; and its paths are paths of peace."

In the Diaspora, Judaism is essentially limited to the circumference of congregational existence. Some of its vital aspects languish because of lack of applicability to the life of the Jewish people. With the rise of the State of Israel, once again—since the destruction of the Second Temple—opportunity has been granted for the application of the full range of Judaism to the life of the people, to such problems as: the quality of life, corruption, slaughter on the roads, standards of social behavior, business and work. But nothing! Silence!

The State of Israel is the challenge to Judaism to prove its viability and relevance for the Jewish people living in its own land in the second half of the 20th century. This challenge has thus far not been met. Wide areas of Halakhic teaching on social ethics and personal integrity have remained "a closed garden and a sealed wall" for the Israeli rabbinate as well as for the heads of the *yeshivot*.

There is a great deal of Torah learning in Israel. But occasionally this great quantity of learning reminds me of a story told in the Talmud: There was a man who studied Halakhah, all the Halakhic *midrashim*, and even the Tosephta. When he died, they came to Rabbi Nahman Bar Yitzhak and asked him to deliver the eulogy. Said Rabbi Nahman: "What shall I say about him? That he was a basketful of books, but lacking?" Lacking what? Explains Rashi: "A basketful of books that, of course, does not understand what it contains."

In this respect Israel may learn much from the American rabbi; from his concern with the spiritual and often with the psychological and, occasionally, even with the material well-being of his congregants and their families; from his social concerns, from his public and political conscience, from his involvement in the causes of voluntary organizations and private groups. Even the best among them may not have the vast learning of some of their Israeli counterparts, but often they do have a finer grasp of what Judaism is about.

What follows from all this? First of all let us understand that the State of

Israel is today the greatest asset of the Jewish people. It is here and nowhere else that the future of the entire Jewish people will be decided. Secondly, the reciprocal relationship is vital for the Diaspora as well as for the Jewish people in Israel. We are one people! Whatever happens to either branch of the Jewish people happens to all of us. This reciprocity is not limited to the political arena; it is even more important in the spiritual, moral and religious areas. We have to live with each other in mutual responsibility.

May I point to one vital demand of the present hour. This State of Israel was not built by Israelis, though it was defended against outside enemies largely by sabras. The State was founded and built by Jews from the *galut*. It is true, the majority of them rebelled against the old ways. But even their rebellion was Jewish.

They came with a vision that was the vision of the ages. In the midst of their rebellion against the old, the quality of their vision was sustained by the emotional fire inherited from the old home. In a great and moving letter, Yosef Hayyim Brenner, one of the great visionaries among the founders of Israel, affirms, in classical Talmudic language and style: "For I am of the seed of my father." It was true of him; it was true of many of the outstanding founders of Israel.

We are still only at the beginning of the road. We need now, as in those earlier days, Jews from the *galut* to come here with the vision of the ages, with the idealism sustained by the reopened wells of Judaism. Only so can the potentiality contained in the State of Israel become a blessed reality. Only then will we be able to enjoy the fruits of our reciprocal influences.

ute to this process by not only giving of their values and culture but by helping to build respect for others.

The other part of my identity is that I am a kibbutz member. Yesterday, Rabbi Berkovits made some remarks to which I take exception. I certainly deny that Judaism and the Jewish religion are synonymous. He spoke about secular ideas or ways of life which American Jewry should scorn to import from Israel. If I were an American, I would prefer such imports to the imports of the religious, with its factionalism and narrow-mindedness.

I would point out to Americans that the values of Judaism are present as much in the kibbutz as in Williamsburg or other places where the day is spent in study of the Talmud. To work the land of this country, to speak Hebrew, to live in this country and defend it, are no less Jewish than praying. Judaism has moral values that are important to the majority of the Jewish people who cannot be religious but define Judaism in the prophetic tradition. To be frank, I bridle at the assertion of the "un-Jewishness" of the kibbutz, essentially the most Jewish contribution of Zionism.

SECOND SESSION

DISCUSSION

AMNON SHAMOSH:

I was born in Aleppo, Syria, and came to Israel at the age of nine. I write fiction dealing mainly with Oriental, Middle Eastern, Sephardic characters, their way of life and culture, now in confrontation with the way of life of Ashkenazic Jews. This brings me to my first point. I note the absence here of my people and I find it significant.

When I look at the American delegation, I cannot help wondering why Sephardic representatives are not here. After all, American Sephardim do not suffer the disabilities of their Israeli counterparts. They can express themselves, they have a communal life, they have leaders, but they do not appear on the map of world Jewish activity. The present delegation attests to this fact. I'm not saying this out of rancor but in an attempt to change things. I suggest that a future Dialogue discuss Sephardic-Ashkenazic relations.

The influence of American Jewry on the cultural and political life in Israel is potent, and this arouses a certain antagonism and alienation which we cannot

afford. How to soften these feelings without inhibiting American contributions is a problem that is not easily solved. We must begin by acknowledging that some of the more beneficent influences of America do not reach us, particularly the notion of cultural pluralism.

The Ashkenazic part of the population in Israel has, for many years, patronized the Oriental Sephardic Jews in Israel. And this superiority complex has wrought so much damage that it will take generations to recover from it.

The old American concept has played havoc here. I refer to the "melting pot" concepts which Ben Gurion embraced—a sad mistake in a country with diverse backgrounds and traditions. The attempt to bury the past required a futile effort to negate everything created in the Diaspora. It damaged people by seeking to deprive them of free choice, by forcing on them a mold not of their making. It was a paternal "we-know-best" attitude that could only be resented.

The resistance of Israeli culture to the contributions of various groups is deplorable. But it is not too late to change things, and American Jews can contrib-

WALTER WURZBURGER:

What has been lacking in our discussion is the realization that the very existence of the State has led to a philosophy of statism which has unduly influenced both Israeli and American Jewry. We suffer from the idolization of the State which we regard as an absolute value.

Permit me to quote a personal example. A number of years ago I participated in a "teach-in" against the war in Vietnam. Just before I was supposed to speak, one of my students approached me and stated, "Do you know what you are doing? By speaking against the war in Vietnam you are undermining the security of the State of Israel." Many of us were placed in a very difficult position. Our moral imperatives clashed with what we were told were the vital interests of the State of Israel. There were, of course, many individuals who felt compelled to stifle their moral concerns out of this consideration. This, to my mind, illustrates the mentality which is engendered when the State emerges as our supreme value.

To cite another example: Whenever I mentioned certain problems involving the Arab population in Israel at public lectures, I was greeted with hostile reac-

tions. Nothing seems to matter to us any more but concern for the security of the State of Israel. This moral impoverishment certainly is a negative influence exerted by the State.

On the other hand, it must be stressed that the very existence of the State of Israel is a tremendous boon for the survival of Judaism in the U.S. I agree that one cannot separate "Judaism" from the Jewish people. The State of Israel, as the paramount instrumentality for the preservation of the Jewish people, constitutes for the overwhelming majority of American Jews their primary focus of religious identification.

For American Jews the State of Israel is not merely a secular political entity but functions as a religious symbol. From a Jewish perspective, tilling the soil or defending the borders of the State is a *mitzvah*—a religious imperative. Can, therefore, efforts in behalf of the State of Israel be really termed "secular"? It would be beneficial if we would forget the dichotomy between religious and secular when the problem of Jewish existence is concerned.

Rabbi Berkovits presented the contrast between the alleged great spiritual sensitivity of the American rabbinate, on the one hand, and the callousness and indifference to moral issues of the Israeli rabbinate, on the other. It is very easy to pronounce ethical absolutes. The only trouble is—and I happen to teach ethics—practical ethical decisions are fraught with so many ambiguities and contradictions that moral decision-making is an extremely delicate matter. I have often spoken out on numerous sensitive ethical issues. But this is not necessarily a sign of moral courage, since I speak from a position where I am not really responsible for the actual decisions.

The Israeli rabbinate, however, operates under completely different conditions. It is assigned authority in narrowly circumscribed areas. We in the U.S. know that Supreme Court justices are reluctant to become involved with public issues because they feel that their authority must be preserved for those areas where they represent formal, legal authority. You cannot expect rabbis, who occupy positions on the supreme *beit din* (religious court), to issue pronouncements in the areas in which they cannot invoke Halakhic authority. Nevertheless, the rabbis do, on many occasions, speak out on moral and political issues.

However, I believe that there is no justification for the contention that the Israeli system prevents the rabbis from exhibiting moral courage, and that, consequently, Israel should copy the American model of the separation of church and state.

RACHEL ELBOIM-DROR:

I side with Rabbi Wurzburger's strictures on statism. The Israeli establishment has exploited this sentiment to repress American Jews from responding candidly to Israel's problems. This restrictiveness has resulted in making Israel a political and cultural ghetto, and rescue can come only if American Jews and others speak out freely.

What we need here is not supine acquiescence to Israel's views but the diversity that prevails in the American Jewish community. There is even diversity on religious questions in the U.S., but not here.

WARREN HARVEY:

This criticism of Israel's repressiveness and American passivity is overdone. To be sure, a minority of American Jewish leaders are fearful of criticizing Israel, but there are many who do not shrink from offering their views publicly. This may not be apparent when American leaders come here and smilingly pose for photographers with the Prime Minister and other dignitaries.

I wish to advert to Rabbi Wurzburger's comments on Rabbi Berkovits' observations. Rabbi Berkovits, if I understood him, criticized the Israeli rabbinate for failure to exert a moral force on political issues. He was scornful, properly so, of their aloofness from vexatious moral problems, and from the community. In contrast, American rabbis who are not so pious are actively involved in the community, its daily problems. Part of this glaring contrast derives from the fact that the Israeli rabbinate sees itself as a functionary of the State, not of the community.

There was a certain ambiguity in Professor Neusner's lecture. On the one hand, he tells us that the one thing that unites American Jews is that they are for Israel but that they are committed to remain in America. But then, at the end of his lecture, he observes that this commitment to remain in America is the result of a frailty. How can this be? If American Jews see America in positive terms, if it is necessary for Israel that the

American Jewish community remains strong and influential, why is the desire to refrain from *aliyah* a result of frailty?

URIEL SIMON:

I was impressed by Professor Neusner's even-handed criticism of American and Israeli Jewry. I was impressed by his view that to be an American Zionist means that one must affirm America to be a *galut*, and not to make such an affirmation is a consequence of "frailty." This concept of "human frailty," I am afraid, is used to mask the absence of a positive ideology.

JACOB NEUSNER:

I did not offer an ideology of American Jewry. I was saying we don't have one, we're not able to explain to ourselves what we think we are doing, we're not able to balance the diverse commitments by which we live our Jewish lives. You're not hearing from American Jews in the mass and you're not seeing them, just as we are ignorant of what's happening in Israel. We are not even talking past each other. It's simply two separate worlds which don't know how to communicate with one another. We have no idea what's in the minds of Israelis and they have no idea what's in our minds.

There are two things to be said. First, the notion that American Jews are for Israel—which you take for granted—is by no means proven. You are missing the struggle within the community. You are missing the social and cultural divisions within the community. You're missing the attitude of young people which is very hostile to Israel.

My fear vis-à-vis the two communities has nothing to do with *aliyah*. My concern is that there be some kind of meaningful connection in the next 30 to 50 years.

I think the other Americans who are less professionally engaged in Jewish things than I am will have much more to say about the vital center of American Jewry and its attitude. When Howard Squadron announces that he agrees, for example, that American Jews shouldn't criticize Israel, he says it in Jerusalem. He may say that in New York too—but nobody takes that seriously. Those of us who issue statements or who sign statements are going to continue to do so.

URIEL SIMON:

I would like to go back to Rabbi Berkovits' presentation. Rabbi Berkovits is

very tolerant of almost everything American, and if American junk is imported into Israel, it's not the fault of the exporters but the exclusive fault of the importers.

When one changes one's land, one tends to become nostalgic, recalling the glorious aspects of the old country and denouncing the crudities of the new land. There is something askew in Rabbi Berkovits' presentation. He says that the only great achievement of Israeli society is its military record and that we have to import from the *galut* spiritual leadership. I won't labor my criticism of this utterly unfounded conclusion by noting the thirst in Israel for spiritual things, even by so-called young secular students at the universities and in the kibbutzim.

Similarly, Rabbi Berkovits' observations on the Peace Now Movement here is utterly at variance with the facts. He assigns moral dimensions to America's peace movement but none to the one in Israel. He derides the latter's outlook as purely formal since, he says, everybody in Israel is for peace. What he ignores is the political dilemma, that is, every Israeli citizen has to make a decision whether peace is more important than territories, or territories more important than peace. Is the peace slogan used for political exploitation and do the Peace Now people lack a sense of social justice? I deny this implication most fervently!

ELIEZER BERKOVITS:

I understand the feelings of Professor Simon and others. I'm sorry that so many things were misunderstood. I did not say that Israel should copy the American rabbinate. What I said was that there is a great deal one can learn from the American rabbinate.

I did not say that I was enamored of America. Professor Simon should have heard what I had to say about American Jewry when I lived in America. Nor am I tolerant about the things that are going on in America, else why am I here?

I wasn't really giving my evaluation of Shalom Akhshav. I was voicing my doubts. I'm neither for nor against Shalom Akhshav. I don't follow the Gush Emunim, nor am I against the Gush Emunim. I see certain ideas and I see problems.

What I was trying to do was to present certain problematics. I know there is some desire, even among the secularists, to establish some contact with Jewish

tradition. The fact is, however, that we are in a very difficult spiritual and moral situation. I can understand that the Israelis don't see this clearly or are not troubled by it. It hurts me. My remarks weren't in the spirit of criticism so much as in seeking to understand our common situation. I'm unhappy about it but I do not want to run away from here. We are not fully aware to what extent we have become, as a result of the Holocaust, a ruined people. The task is to rebuild from the ruins.

SIMON HERMAN:

I agree with Dr. Neusner that there is no issue in Jewish life today around which there is so broad a consensus everywhere as around support for Israel. Zionism, however, is more than pro-Israelism in the Diaspora; it is more than Israeli patriotism in Israel, and it is more than the act of *aliyah*, even though *aliyah* is at the center of Zionism. I also see Zionism as a comprehensive approach to the problems of the Jewish people.

I do not have in mind just a repetition of classical Zionist theories which were developed to meet the needs of a particular Jewish situation at a time when a major part of the Jewish people was located in Eastern Europe. History, at many points, has proved them correct and some of their fundamental theses still apply today. But the Jewish situation has changed—after the demographic changes in the Jewish world, after the Holocaust, and after the establishment of the State of Israel. Zionist ideology has to be reexamined in terms of the changing conditions and needs of the Jewish people.

In a recently published book, I tried to set out what seem to me to be the elements of such a Zionist ideology. I don't have the time to elaborate on the points I set out in my book, but I want to refer to the seven headings under which appear the propositions which I feel have to be taken into consideration in any attempt to formulate a Zionist ideology.

Under the first heading would come, of course, the basic premise of Zionism that Jews are one people with a common past and a common destiny—the interdependence of all parts of the Jewish people and the mutual responsibility which flows from that fact. Under the second heading would be subsumed the propositions dealing with Israel as the national center of the Jewish people. Under the third heading comes an exami-

nation of the implications of the concept of *galut* and the divergent views of Zionists on the subject. The fourth chapter deals with the central issue of *aliyah* and the fifth looks at Zionism as representing both a revolutionary act in Jewish life—the political decision to take our destiny into our own hands and establish our own State—and an expression of the continuity of Jewish history and tradition. Then would follow a consideration of the ultimate aim of Zionism which is concerned with the fate and future of the entire Jewish people. The seventh chapter deals with the pertinence of Zionist ideology to all the problems of a Jewish community, wherever it be. Zionism has an approach to the fight against anti-Semitism, to the struggle against assimilation, to the organization of the Jewish community, and to the content of Jewish education and culture.

Erik Erikson has drawn a distinction between two types of relationships. In one type of relationship, the parts interpenetrate and influences flow in both directions. In the other type of relationship, the parts exist as distinct totalities linked together but with no interpenetration. I believe in a Zionist conception which sees the Jewish people as a wholeness. There is a difference between the parts, between the nature of that part where Jews are a majority developing their own life in their own way, and the nature of the parts where Jews are minorities subject to the goodwill of other majorities. But while this distinction has to be kept in mind, the parts should be seen as interdependent and interlocking. Everything should be done to stimulate Jewish life in the Diaspora. Indeed, the future of *aliyah* from the free countries depends upon the strengthening of Jewish identity in these communities. But these communities should not be regarded as just reservoirs for *aliyah*.

HOWARD SQUADRON:

Professor Neusner is, of course, quite correct in saying that no matter how many times Howard Squadron says that the American Jewish Congress will not engage in public dispute but will convey its views to Israeli government leaders privately, people will sign and issue statements. The American Jewish Congress does not speak for the entire American Jewish community, nor does any other organization. Jews have always disagreed and will always do so publicly. The question is really what is

constructive, and on that Professor Neusner and I disagree.

I don't want to preempt the discussion about volunteerism that's going to come up, but I do want to say that it is possible that feelings of insecurity in the *galut* inevitably leads to a greater degree of volunteerism. We are different from other ethnic groups and do suffer a greater insecurity. Therefore, our feeling towards Israel is much more intense than, say, Italian Americans towards Italy. As a consequence, we become more involved with Israel.

A comment about Rabbi Berkovits' paper. He stated that Israel is a "now" society and I am curious how a society can avoid that imputation. What sort of a value system must it have to be more or less than a "now" society? How religiously observant must such a society be? Who decrees whether tradition has been properly observed or properly refurbished to accord with modern realities?

Rabbi Berkovits believes, it would seem, that we must be accessible to religious thinking if we are to forge an acceptable sense of community, while Neusner affirms the values of Zionism as instrumental. These are generalized views and I would hope that we will be given more specific notions.

MARCIA GOLDSTEIN:

Professor Neusner and Professor Herman have assuaged a feeling of guilt I've carried around with me for two years. Let me elaborate. Our family lived and taught here two years ago for six months and we found ourselves in contact with Israelis all the time, on a day-to-day basis, with our children in the public school system. After a month or so, I rather facetiously stated that I would no longer go to a dinner party or picnic or social gathering with Israelis because the minute they looked at us—with our two sons—they would ask, "Why are you not here on *aliyah*?" and I would be made to feel guilty about our kind of Zionism.

I feel better after last night and this morning. I'm not quite at the top of that apex you talked about reaching, Professor Neusner, but I at least have a little more firm footing on the ladder. I think, in terms of what we are talking about in this Dialogue, I can now focus on what can be the positive elements of being a Zionist in the Diaspora. Perhaps we can come up with a positive role for Ameri-

can or Canadian or Australian "Zionists" to play that would not be seen in a negative light by Israelis.

YORAM KANIUK:

This discussion reminds me of Groucho Marx's quip that he would never join a club that would have him as a member. I feel that this discussion is about a club soliciting me as a member.

We talk about the relationships between Israelis and American Jews as if there has not been a drift away from each other. In ten, twenty years there might well be two separate and distinct communities. I once thought that utter separation would be good, as do many Israelis. But I've changed my mind. I don't think we understand each other very well.

The truth is, Israel is run by religious groups whose conceptions are not those of American religious bodies. In Israel, the religious groups have fostered mystic-pragmatic notions about the holy land, blood, etc., and have avoided moral and political questions. Thus the territory issue is not simply a problem of defense or policy but is steeped in feeling about "the holy land."

Zionism has always been a movement that stressed saving the Jewish people in *eretz yisrael*. When my grandfather came to this country in 1905, he came as a part of a rebellion against Jewish religion. And we, my generation, "the 1948 generation" who fought in the underground in the War of Independence, didn't grow up as Jews but as Hebrews. We fought in Jerusalem—here in this city—as Hebrews, not as Jews. We became Jews later on, or at least some of us. We called our labor movement, *histadrut haklalit shel haovdim haivrim baeret zisrael*, the general organization of Hebrew workers in the land of Israel. The word "Jew" was not mentioned in our schools. We called ourselves Hebrews, we called ourselves *eret zisraelim*.

To be sure, we went through some of the motions of Jewishness. We learned how to hate the Persians on Purim, the Greeks on Hanukkah and the Egyptians on Passover, but the rest of the time we would make plays in which we ridiculed the *golah*. The teachers, who all came from Eastern Europe, encouraged us to be *tzabarim*, sabras. You can see it in the Hebrew literature of the 1930s—the ideal of the blue-eyed, blond hero, the quiet one who is free of the *golah*. *Galut* was a denigrating word. It became different later on.

When I worked on a ship bringing Jews to *eret zisrael* and met the survivors, I became more and more a Jew. The Holocaust changed our perspectives. First, we had to realize that, horrible as it may seem, we received our nationhood because of it. This has burdened us with responsibility for the Jewish people which we must shoulder. We must not only seek social justice, a creative moral life, but also remain vigilant in pursuing our security and in remaining strong.

What are the obligations of other Jews? I don't know. We talk about *aliyah*. Why should anyone come here now? This is not an attractive place for American Jews. We haven't as yet created the society which would be all that morally attractive.

For me, there's still a long way to go. I don't want to rule over one million Arabs, to send our children to Ramallah to seal up a house or to chase a family from a house. We defend our actions by the need for security. But do we have to do all these ugly things in order to defend ourselves? There is a sobering question. Must we abandon the moral yardstick with which the Jews have been judging other people for 2,000 years?

What we really need from the American Jews is not only money, *aliyah*, and political support, but their participation in resolving our moral dilemmas. We need even more intense dialogues in order to prevent this State from becoming a theocracy, a place in which people like me and others will find it very hard to live.

SHALOM ROSENBERG:

I want to take issue with Yoram Kaniuk who taxed many of us with pagan worship of the land and making a fetish of symbols. He charges many of us with blinding ourselves to the fact that a people lives in the occupied territories. For people who speak in this vein, the countercharge of parasitism can be hurled. These people don't have to make decisions and can adopt moral stances without paying a price.

For myself, I do not shrink from saying that for me the land of Israel is holy. For me, the streets, even the *avanim*, the stones of Israel have some kind of spiritual meaning.

AVIGDOR RAVITSKY:

I learned two important things from Professor Neusner's lecture: one, that when American Jewish youth want to study

more and more about their Jewish roots they are not necessarily becoming more Israeli, but sometimes more American, because it's now popular to try to find one's ethnic and religious definition.

The second thing I learned was a paradox. Professor Neusner spoke about the desire of Jews in America to learn from Zionist criticism about the negation of the *golah* while remaining uncommitted to *aliyah*. This is bizarre. To negate the *golah*, as Zionism teaches us, means to negate everything in one's situation and to educate oneself to its impermanence.

This feeling of American Jews is understandable because we find something of the same sort in Israel. We sometimes hear the following: "I don't want to be Jewish, I want to be only an Israeli because I want to be normal, in a normal national situation, like a Frenchman. You don't ask a Frenchman about his religion." And, of course, there are Zionists who, for 60 years, have been going in the streets and shouting "I am normal, I am normal!"

We thus have analogous situations in the U.S. and Israel: a craving for normality that flies in the face of realities. However, while we teachers would like to stress the negation of the *golah*, we should be wary of discounting the values we have received from the *golah*. We should instill respect for the historic role played within Judaism of the *golah*.

PAUL BERGER:

I don't agree with Mr. Ravitsky. Zionism, I submit, embodies the concept of a Jewish State, but it doesn't necessarily follow that all Jews must live in that Jewish State. For a state to be Jewish, it has to define and understand what Judaism is. You can't have a Zionist state, because there's so such thing. There's a Jewish State. What we're looking for is the development of a quality of life in a Jewish State that teaches us about living in a modern world as Jews.

Judaism should not depend upon existing in a particular place. Of course, we believe that Judaism is more amply fulfilled in a Jewish State, but that does not mean that Judaism is irrelevant or insignificant outside of that State. To discuss reciprocal influences, we have to focus on what it is to be a Jewish State, and what it is that Judaism means.

DAVID COHEN:

We're in a depressed period in the

American Jewish community, and I welcome Professor Herman's remarks because the whole notion of renaissance Zionism may take us through the process of renewal. We have to find ways of focusing on the various processes in which we should engage.

There have been some very wise things said here today. Both Elboim-Dror's comments and Neusner's paper got us to the point not of debating what the ultimates were but of showing us how to avoid ultimates, how to get something started. The notion of experimentation, of coming here for some period of time without necessarily answering the ultimate question of *aliyah*, is a very appealing one.

I want to emphasize a point that Rabbi Wurzelberger made. The idolization of the State can lead to great harm. We lose sight of that in the heat of battle, in the passion of the moment. In dealing with the latest tactical problem, or the latest political question, we lose sight of what a society is and what it ought to be.

We talk here about reciprocal influences, but we're not two separate communities. That means that what happens internally in Israel is very important to what happens in America and what happens to the renaissance of the Zionist idea. And so, I would hope that we can begin a process of hammering out mutual responsibilities. I differ with Howard Squadron about arguments in public. We should be willing to air our differences.

SAUL TEPLITZ:

Israel has exported to America some interesting contributions. Among the things that Israel has exported is the need to stifle criticism.

The American Jew who is dedicated to Israel, to its welfare and security, reserves the privilege of criticism when he deems it necessary. He does not want to contribute only money. He also wants to contribute his mind and views.

What is happening is that when anyone differs with the Israeli government's policy, he is quickly labeled a traitor and enemy. This concerns me greatly because it goes against the whole sense of pluralism that is indigenous to the American Jewish community. The American Jewish community has learned to live with differences. In Israel, differences are not always welcome, and one is made to feel like a *chutz lageder*, outside the fence, if one voices differences.

What bothers me is that we leave no

room for diversity. One of the unique features of the Jewish people is that we've always had healthy differences. It's never been a monolithic community throughout all of our history, and now there's this passion to develop a mold into which all Jews will be fitted whether it's the religious mold or the political mold.

There are people—and some sit in this room—who have, with great love and great affection, criticized Israel and they've been made to feel like they're *sonei yisrael*, Israel haters.

I think the time has come for us to really have a very healthy dialogue. I think there are many elements of society in Israel that are not represented here at all, that are not only geographically divergent but also ideologically divergent. And there's room for a great deal of diversity.

HENRY SIEGMAN:

I would like to ask Jacob Neusner a simple question: What is the basis of his assumption that Diaspora Jewry is in need of a Zionist critique, as distinguished, for example, from a Jewish critique? Are certain *a priori* assumptions made and, if so, what are those assumptions?

JACOB NEUSNER:

There is an *a priori* assumption. The only normative statement in my paper was what I didn't say, which is that I think a Zionist critique can be shaped to be distinctive and important. Zionist ideologists are saying things, other than you will find in theological writings, on the meaning of Jewish peoplehood. They have a quite distinctive viewpoint, with which I identify. I am a Zionist. I myself cannot tolerate the formation of an American Jewish ideology on other than Zionist grounds. If you ask why I take that position, my answer is, because I live in this year and not 100 years ago. We cannot think about ourselves as American Jews without thinking of ourselves in the context of world Jewry in an age in which the State of Israel exists.

HERTZEL FISHMAN:

I agree with some of the points raised by Jacob Neusner, and because of this I want to grapple with two themes he stressed. The first theme is the need to cultivate a responsibility within Jewish people for "the public interest," as he called it, with respect to Israel. I don't

think we are relating to the public interest by coming up with public statements by people living in the U.S. which deal with Israel's security issues. The key to public interest is responsibility, and the only responsibility with respect to Israel's security lies with the people living in Israel. When we fail to differentiate between general ideological statements and security statements, we are not cultivating responsibility for the public interest.

On the other hand, I believe very strongly that it is important for committed Jewish organizations to establish educational lobbies in Israel on a permanent basis. They will seek to "educate" not only the political leadership of the country on issues affecting the immediate interests of Diaspora Jewry but also public opinion at large, through press conferences, radio and TV interviews, letters to the editor, newspaper articles, conferences, etc. It behooves major Jewish Diaspora organizations to be represented in Israel through their representatives who know Israel well, who speak Hebrew well, who served in the country's armed services, and who identify with the country not only because they reside here, but because they may have grown up here themselves, and because their kids go to school here. They know the nuances of this society.

Whether it be members of the Knesset or members of the government who don't understand the Jewish world, it is important that leading Israelis be exposed to such representatives. Whether it be questions about civics, human rights, pluralism, tolerance, or the quality of life—on-the-spot representatives of American Jewish organizations have much to contribute to Israel.

However, Jewish groups in the Diaspora must realize that only we here can make decisions, because it's our responsibility. But deal with us, and be concerned about us, not with respect to political questions—war and peace, the nature of the autonomy on the West Bank, Gush Emunim versus Shalom Akhshav—but on matters affecting our daily life here.

The second point I want to make relates to the use of the term "Zionism." One must not forget that Jewish nationalism does not necessarily mean Zionism. There have been many brands of Jewish nationalism in Jewish history, and here I take issue with those equating what they call "Zionism" with *authentic* Zionism. This does not make them in-

ferior people or uncommitted Jews, it just does not give them the right to appropriate the name "Zionism." This term is not the same as "pro-Israel" or "Israel-conscious." Since the State was established, I doubt whether there can be a *galut* Zionism of any intellectual caliber or moral integrity. Other kinds of Jewish nationalism are perfectly legitimate, but they are not Zionism. Why must "Zionism" mean everything and anything to everybody and anybody? Unless the term connotes a personal commitment with respect to the daily life of the Jewish society in Israel, it's not Zionism. Zionism means that which relates to Zion, directly, in a committed way—in Zion.

Zionism cannot embrace everything—not even in Israel. In this country it is embarrassing to listen to so many supermarket notions about Zionism—the Druse Zionists, the Black Panther Zionists, the Gush Emunim Zionists, the Shalom Akhshav Zionists, etc. If you buy an apartment in Israel, it's called Zionism, though you live abroad and make money through your investment. If, as a result of threats, the government grants a lot of money—more than they really deserve—to resettle the people of Yamit who had received huge public credits to settle there, that too is called Zionism. If you belong to the Zionist "establishment" and benefit from free trips, expense accounts, and the power to manipulate people, but you yourself do not serve as a model for others—that is called Zionism.

With this inflationary meaning of a sacred term, it is bound to mean nothing. To continue to relate Zionism to a truly decadent establishment adds to the moral corruption of our society and of the Jewish people; to continue to relate "Zionism" to empty slogans adds to the intellectual corruption of our people.

We must grapple with terms like "Zionism," "*aliyah*," "Judaism." They must mean personal commitment to a particular kind of life in this country,

participation in a particular kind of society with high values. What I'm suggesting is that the first purpose of relevant Zionism is to create, in this country, a society with a very high quality of life, based not on government edicts, on the state apparatus or the civil service, but upon families—a network of families who are committed to an all-embracing ethic, a system of "Zionist" social norms and standards which they themselves are prepared to live by. They will support one another as members of an extended family because we all need mutual support, living as we do in an alienated society which has little sense of sovereignty resting with the people. The antidote to alienation is mutual concern and trust, small group identity, shared activities, and cooperative ventures.

To a more limited extent, the same pattern may apply in the Diaspora. There, too, one can create an extended Jewish family relationship based upon this kind of ideology, but I submit that it must be related to this country. Zion remains the center of Jewish peoplehood regardless of the many rationalizations we heard last night and today. In the Diaspora one can be a Jew only partially; the rest of the time one is a human being, an American, or some other nationality.

Unless one relates to the *merkaz*, to the center of a natural Jewish environment and comes back to it frequently to charge batteries and relate to Israeli Jewish families who are involved in similar ideological *havurot*—that in itself would mark the beginning of an organic relatedness between the Diaspora and Israel—the partial *havurah* experience in a predominantly non-Jewish environment is bound to be artificial and fleeting.

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THIRD SESSION

Creative Exchanges: The Potential, the Real

A Presentation

ARTHUR J. LELYVELD

The contributions made by Amnon Shamosh and Yoram Kaniuk this morning impinged directly on some of the things I wanted to say about the dilemmas confronted in this religio-ethical dimension. So, what I will say here is a kind of restatement of some of the things that have already been said.

Another limitation is the fact that we discussed somewhat the same subject eight years ago. This last is not really a limitation, however. So much has changed since 1971 that a new look is definitely in order. The war of 1973 produced a sea-change of mood in both Israel and the U.S. It brought to a dramatic end the overconfidence in Israel and, at the same time, it confirmed for the American Jewish community the vital importance of its role as supporter of Israel both politically and economically.

Israel came to recognize that while it needed the infusion of Western *aliyah*, it needed, at the same time, a fulcrum *chutz laaretz*, outside of Israel, to move it forward. Thankfully, the American *golah* proved capable in 1973 of providing that fulcrum and that support.

We should be grateful for the strength of that community which, whatever the exactitude of the statistical estimates given us, has no intention of disappearing.

These last eight years have also witnessed the flowering of religious and ethical thought in both Israel and the U.S. Israel has seen the birth of a new generation of religious thinkers and of modern academies of religious learning. I would mention, without intending to exclude others, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz and the publications of his Shefa Foundation, the quarterly publication *Daat* of Bar Ilan University, thoughtful and searching articles in *Shdemot*, and the

continuing contributions made by members of the faculty of the Hebrew University.

There exists, too, a new receptivity to religious activity outside the religious establishment in the State of Israel. The heartening experimentation in a new type of religious commune at Kibbutz Yahel and the ordination of progressive rabbis here in Jerusalem have been received with a measure of approval by the general Israeli community.

There is another limitation, self-imposed, in the expectation that we shall be discussing the ethical dimension in accord with the principle, *al tadin et chaverkha ad shetaghiah bimkomo*—don't judge your fellow man until you've stood in his place. Not only is it unproductive, it seems to me, to make judgments about the other, it is out of keeping with the spirit of this enterprise, and it is also impossible to make adequate judgments. This is certainly true with respect to the collective communities. A nation is not a personality. No government can be free of ambiguities and uncertainties, and no society is free of evil persons and evil actions, or of those of whom we would disapprove. Most of us are *baynonim*, ordinary human beings, as capable of error and wickedness at times as we are of momentary flashes of beauty and occasional achievement.

What we really should be talking about under the heading of reciprocal influences is the contributions we make to one another in the field of values. What do we learn from one another that influences our choices?

It must be admitted at once that what Israel has learned from America is frequently less than good. Years ago many importations were decried as

"*amerikaii*." The all-rightnik tourist with his garish sport shirt was seen as a symbol of materialistic self-indulgence in the era of stern kibbutz morality that mandated simplicity of lifestyle, the conquest of labor and avoidance of exploitation.

It is evident that there has been a decline in the disdain felt in the general community for that which is *amerikaii* in its pejorative sense, and an increasing willingness to buy comfort at the expense of principle. Writers who still derogate the Diaspora recognize its negative influence—the cinemas, the discos, the disturbing ability to ape the worst manners of Western dropouts. And one can discern, too, an increased willingness to rely on Arab labor for work that is less appealing, more strenuous, or regarded as undignified—the jobs that American society always imposed on the outsiders or the newcomers.

We have reason to regret, too, our exportation to Israel of certain aspects of American religious superficiality. In that category, I would place the bar mitzvah ritual at the Wall that makes of the ceremony an end in itself rather than a celebration of a transition to Jewish responsibility solidly founded on learning that should be a prerequisite to the ceremony.

But not all of Jewish religion in the U.S. is superficial. There are evidences of profound sincerity and earnest striving. Among them is the experimentation of our young people which has created the institution of the *bayit*, house, for communal Jewish living on university campuses. There is the growing number of *havurot*, both independent of synagogue structure or affiliation with congregations, offering young families and single individuals the opportunity to study together, celebrate together, and to grow Jewishly in their development of spiritual values and in their possession of the Jewish ethical and intellectual heritage.

The burst of theological creativity in the American *golah* is another facet of our lives that is potentially an enriching influence on Israel. Here we can name as specific examples the fertile and developing field of post-Holocaust theology of Emil Fackenheim. I was interested to see that the last issue of the Orthodox quarterly *Daat* published as its lead article an article by Professor Fackenheim, a Reform Jewish theologian. That seems to me to be a happy portent of what is to come.

The covenant thought of Eugene Borowitz, the Biblical studies of Robert Gordis, the stimulating defense of contemporary Orthodoxy and the magnificent thought of Eliezer Berkovits who, having made *aliyah*, participates in this Dialogue as an Israeli but to whose contributions American Jewry still lays claim, and the scholarly productivity of Jacob Neusner—these are but a few of the host of thinkers, major and minor, whose knowledge of the Jewish sources provides a foundation for *chidushim*, for new ideas and new approaches.

These contributions do not remain isolated on the highest intellectual level of thought. They filter through the institutions of higher learning into the schools, especially the growing number of Jewish all-day schools in the U.S. and into the community, and they provide a base for the building of Jewishly vital and spiritually motivated life in the Diaspora.

The American Jewish emphasis on the ethical dimension of Jewish religion should neither be slighted nor taken for granted in this context. Historically, the ethical thrust of our tradition is evident beyond the necessity for demonstration, affirming that truth, justice and peace are the world's fundamental values—*al shloshe dvarim haolam kayam*, on three things was the world founded—and that active concern for the welfare of our fellow man and the making of peace are eternally valid pursuits. We are obligated to act upon these supreme *mitzvot* in our daily lives and in our social and communal relationships.

The American Jewish community, in many of its aspects, has been serious about this obligation. Not only liberal Judaism with its emphasis on the teachings of the Prophets, but Conservative and Orthodox bodies, as well, have been active on behalf of social justice, peace and human rights. It is not, as some have said in deprecation of such actions, a matter of taking a stand and then finding a warrant in Biblical or rabbinic literature. It is, rather, the result of an earnest effort to have our Jewish heritage function in the lives of Jews and in the affairs of the world.

If you study the programs of the synagogue bodies and their commissions, the joint plans of the National Jewish Community Relations Council and the work of the Synagogue Council of America, you will find that their major concentration has been on the pursuit of truth, justice and peace.

This has not been the case of the religious establishment in Israel, whose major emphasis has been on the ritual and personal status *mitzvot*—on *kashrut*, *shabbat*, *taharat hamishpachah*, *tfilin*, *tsitsiot*—none of which I deprecate—rather than on the ethical *mitzvot*, to the neglect of the overarching *mitzvot* of love and compassion and social righteousness.

This may, however, change in the years ahead, and the example of American Judaism may exert some influence here. I have already hailed the new thinking in ethical and religious philosophy that is making itself felt in *medinat yisrael*, and it is by what is being achieved at its top levels that a community should be judged. If I may use a geometric analogy that I used to apply to the campus community when I was in college work years ago, a Jewish community is like a pyramid. Its base is the broad mass of those who identify themselves as Jews. Its apex is those who achieve self-knowledge and commitment and become the creative portion of the life of the community. Its middle levels are composed of those who receive and transmit to the base that which is being created at the top. Obviously, the apex is tiny, the base is large.

It is a common fallacy to ascribe to the past a perfection which the past never had and to judge contemporary communities by standards of perfection that never applied to life in its reality, as it is lived, anywhere in the world. In the *shtetl* in Eastern Europe, which we sometimes glamorize and exalt, not everyone was a *lamdan*, learned, nor could everyone make it into the *chevrah shas*, the Talmud study group. Some barely squeaked into the *chevrah tehilim*, the Book of Psalms study group. There is ignorance, sentimentality and superficiality in American Jewry, to be sure. But they can be found in Israel, too. And where was it ever different?

In both communities the achievements at the apex, however, can be menaced by the ignorance and vulgarity at the base. The recognition of this menace is one of the factors that has produced a very real metaphysical anxiety that besets American Jewish intellectuals and, paradoxically, helps stimulate American Jewish creativity. Anxiety in Israel is equally pervasive, but it has another form. It is not metaphysical. It is the justifiable and fully necessary concern for physical security and literal physical survival. Prac-

tical concerns that leave little time for thinking about values are as much the enemy of creativity as is complacency. The very same "Diaspora dilemmas" that are cited as basic arguments for negation of the Diaspora, *shlilat hagolah*, become the goad and the spur for innovative thought. Living as a self-affirming minority in the midst of a not always unattractive majority creates a cultural tension that can be productive of spiritual, intellectual benefit.

Some of my Israeli friends are likely to scoff at this thought, but rejection of everything that smacks of *galut* involves the loss of much that is precious even when it is touched with pathos and with squalor. We see it in our best American Jewish fiction. The Washington Heights or Coney Island of Delmore Schwartz, the Napoleon Street of Saul Bellow, speak to us of marginality and alienation to be sure, but they also speak of *yiddishkeit*, of tenderness, of yearning and of aspiration.

How shall we then estimate the comparative worth of what Irving Howe calls "a reaching out toward nobility, shy, aspiring spirituality, a moment or two of achieved purity of feeling"? We may say we want neither the honey nor the sting, that we refuse to accept the suffering and the degradation out of which moments of brilliance shine. But no society is free of the vicissitudes that afflict all life, and there is a question as to which vicissitudes are, in the long run, most productive of human enrichment and ultimate fulfillment.

American Jewish thought, because of this metaphysical anxiety, has delved deeply into such questions as the meaning of Jewish survival, the role of the Jew in the modern world, the future of the American Jewish community and the implications of its changing structure. Those who see Israel as a venture in normality see this as a Diaspora debit.

But there are those in Israel who share a concern for the survival of Jewish values and who may come to see Diaspora philosophizing as a credit rather than as a debit. To be sure, we all yearn for lives free of worry, free of struggle and unhappiness, but we may also look with some apprehension at that paradise in which we will sit, each of us, under his vine and under his fig tree. What in the world will we do in that paradise? Compose psalms of praise when prayers of petition are no longer needed?

Our tradition tells us that we need not worry, that even in the world to come we will have no rest, we shall have to climb from *chayil el chayil*, from one degree of perfection to the next.

Another paradox. Diaspora thinkers have an advantage which is not quite as accessible to Israeli intellectuals and that is the presence of continuous contact with the thought of outstanding non-Jewish theologians and scholars and, indeed, frequent confrontation with the individuals themselves. Judaism through history has been enriched by the influence of alien cultures.

Today, in the U.S., with Jewish prominence in the arts, music and literature, with the rapidly multiplying centers of Judaic studies and full-fledged chairs of Jewish thought at major American universities, the most fruitful kind of intellectual interchange, often interdisciplinary in nature, is now taking place. We have not yet produced a contemporary Rambam or a modern Philo but the seeds have been planted, cultivated and the first growth can be detected.

We are a young community. The American Jewish life, although we hark back to the coming of the first Jews in 1654, really began with the East European immigration in the 1880s. But, although a very young community, we are already productive in the manner of the most glorious Diaspora communities of the past—which existed for centuries before they reached their apogee of creativity.

There is yet one more aspect of Diaspora life that can be subsumed under the heading of its ethical dimension, and this is the fact of voluntarism and pluralism in religion, ideological structures and social welfare. Jewish life has been influenced by the pattern of American democracy. Voluntary community has similarly become the hallmark of American Jewry. A host of organizations enlists the participation of tens of thousands of men and women who spend as volunteers the hours that would otherwise be given to leisure and play. I cannot agree with those who would say that American Jewish life is overorganized or chaotic. A multiplication of forms of expression preserves democracy and independence and stimulates inventiveness and responsiveness. Competition in good works has its virtues.

This kind of organizational activity, synagogue or secular, is almost totally absent in Israeli life, for here, welfare

and education and supervision are largely left to professionals and to civil servants. And they, in turn, are frequently too hurried to supply the touch of human warmth that committed lay people are able to offer.

Jewish pluralism, too, is an inheritance from the specific structure of American democracy. A Synagogue Council, such as has been created and functions today in the U.S., in which Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews plan together and act together in shared concern, has not yet become possible

in Israel, despite the advances made by nonestablishment Judaism in recent years. Establishment religion is securely entrenched and enjoys government protection and prerogatives such as never could be afforded to any one group in the U.S. But in this respect, again, insecurity has had a positive effect on American Jewish religious life. Jewish unity is recognized to be essential in the U.S., with the guarding of the synagogue against the encroachments of secularism and the blandishments of non-Jewish religious sects and exotic cults.

The Specific Form of the Religious Values of Judaism

A Presentation

YESHAIAHU LEIBOWITZ

I confess I don't see the intrinsic connections of such items as religion, the ethical dimension, and the problems of state and religion and religion and society. Nevertheless, I will tackle the subject of state and religion in theoretic terms and then turn to the actual problems of Judaism in the State of Israel.

"Religion" to me involves "Judaism," that is, we relate to religion solely through Judaism. But the term Judaism has lost, in the last generations, any clear and unequivocal meaning and become a matter of divergent opinions. Therefore, I will refrain from speaking about "Judaism" from an ideological standpoint, from discussions about *ideas of Judaism*, or about *ideas about Judaism*. I shall speak about Judaism as an empirical, historically given fact, very clearly defined for at least 2,000 years and which ceased to be defined in the 19th century. Therefore, I shall have to go back to Jewish history before the 19th century in order to speak objectively about a content of Judaism.

Speaking objectively means: without passing judgment, without evaluation, without idealization, without denigration. I'm speaking about the actual embodiment of Jewish existence during many generations. In this connection, it is not necessary to speak about general

human values which were included in Judaism because, if Judaism is defined by general human values, it is redundant. I'm interested in the *specific* contents of Judaism, the program of life according to the Halakhah, a life of *torah umitzvot*. Before we ask what *should* a Jew derive today from Judaism, we have to ask what *can* be drawn from the wellspring of the Jewish heritage.

I repeat that the answer to this question does not determine an obligation. From no statement of fact can a normative conclusion be derived. I am not discussing what a Jew *ought* to do. I am only stating the fact that what a Jew *can* draw from the wellspring of the history of Judaism is the program of a life of *torah umitzvot*.

Religious values of Judaism had a specific form. They were the way of life of *torah umitzvot* whose codified expression is Halakhah, exactly the things which my distinguished predecessor denigrated—the order of the kitchen and the table, the norms of sexual life, the order of work defined by *shabbat*. But the kitchen and the table, sex and work—these are the realities of human life.

Since this program of life has ceased to be the acknowledged form of Judaism, the meaning of the term Judaism has become uncertain. If the term "Judaism"

today is not misused as a name for a new religion but is understood to mean the continuation of the religion of the historical Jewish people—it is not possible to base it on anything other than on the way of life determined by *torah umitzvot*. No other specific Jewish content can be drawn from the sources of Judaism. Judaism cannot be based on Biblical literature. Never in all 3,000 years of Jewish history was the Jewish religion embodied in the Bible; never was it a “Biblical religion.” Christianity may be a “Biblical religion”; Judaism never was and isn’t. The Jews never based their religion on the Biblical text; on the contrary—they based their acknowledgement of this text as Holy Scripture on their religion and understood this text solely according to their religion. The Jewish people never were “the People of the Book”; they were the people of a life based on a specific understanding of this book—which is radically different from both the Christian and the historical-philological understanding of the same.

The reality of Judaism was Oral Law. The written law was just one of the institutions of the Halakhah. The Halakhah has many institutions. For instance, *shabbat*; for instance, Talmud Torah; for instance, the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures are an institution of the Halakhah. If not for the Halakhah, which fixed them as Holy Scripture, why should these 24 books be Holy Scripture? They are just ancient literature. They are for Jews of many generations sacred writings because the Halakhah established them as holy writings. Logically, and maybe even historically, *torah shebeal peh*, oral Torah, has precedence to *torah shebekhtav*, written Torah.

Nor is it possible to base Judaism on ethics. That’s the principal point of our discussion. Surely, there are some who offer us, as a substitute for Judaism, bibliolatry. This approach is, from the Jewish religious standpoint, a falsification, and from a humanistic standpoint, absurd.

There have been many different philosophies within the framework of Judaism, in part derived from external sources, and even philosophies opposed to each other which were developed in the framework of Judaism, and Judaism adapted them to its needs, or rejected them.

There has never been a Jewish morality and that’s the decisive point.

Judaism, as embodied in religion, is not an ethical category. The categories of religious faith and thought are quite different from, and incompatible with, ethical categories. Ethics is an atheist notion. I will explain this point.

There are two approaches to religion among religious people. There are some for whom faith, the consciousness of man’s standing before God, means the expectation to profit from this stance. Not necessarily to profit in a vulgar sense. But there’s no difference whether man expects from God health and well-being, or whether by religion he aspires to the exaltation of the soul, or to the correction of evil—either in himself or in the world—or to the salvation of the Jewish people or of humanity. Both the satisfaction of bodily needs and the satisfaction of mental and spiritual needs are human interests and the man who expects any of these from religion doesn’t intend to serve God but expects God to serve him. That’s what is called, in Jewish tradition, Torah or *emunah* or *avodah sheloh lishma*—Torah not for the sake of the Torah, faith not for the sake of faith, the service of God not for the service of God, but all those things as means for satisfying human needs and for human interests.

There’s another approach to religion which is exactly the contrary to the first mentioned. This is Torah *lishma*, *emunah lishma*, *avodah lishma*—Torah for the sake of having Torah, *emunah*, faith, because faith is an end and not a means, and *avodah*, the service of God, because the service of God gives a meaning to the futile human existence. Man is not a value. Man is just part and parcel of the creation, part and parcel of the world which is contingent.

Now as to ethics. Why cannot ethics be integrated within the framework of Judaism or Torah and *mitzvot*? Ethics is not a problem of behavior. All human acts, all of them, are indifferent from the moral point of view. Of two cases of killing, one may be judged as a dastardly crime and the other as an heroic deed of a man defending his family or his country, but it’s exactly the same act—killing a man. Ethics doesn’t pertain to acts but to the intention of the act.

Now the problem of the right intention, the right *kavanah*, has been discussed in human thought at least for 2,500 years, and we know of two diametrically opposed approaches to the problem of what is the right intention of man,

i.e., to what goal should a man direct his will. The first answer to this question was that the moral decision of man consists in directing his will according to his knowledge of the truth of reality. That was the great idea of Socrates: ethics is a matter of knowledge of the truth. This idea was elaborated by the stoics and renewed by Spinoza.

Kant’s answer about the right intention was that man should direct his will according to his understanding of his duty and obligation, without any connection to reality. According to Socrates, ethics referred to understanding the eternal truth of reality and the place of man in the framework of this reality. According to Kant, the meaning of ethics is understanding one’s self.

But in *kriyat shma* we read, “You shall not follow either your heart or your eyes” (“eyes” refers to the eyes of the mind). This is a rejection of Socratic and Kantian ethics. Why? “*Ani hashem elohaykhem*,” I am your God.

A man who has the consciousness of his standing before God cannot follow his conscience. It is a very important fact that none of the 48 Prophets and seven Prophetesses (these are the traditional statistics) appeals to human conscience. The Prophets appeal to heaven and earth and to the human persons, but never to the human conscience. Biblical Hebrew lacks a term for conscience.

The supreme idea of the Prophets is not the standing of man before man but his standing before God. The Jewish people in history never struggled for ethical values. We have no right to interpret our fathers differently from the way in which they interpreted themselves.

Furthermore, I doubt whether the term “Jewish ethics” has any meaning. Ethics is not subject to any qualification whatsoever by any adjective derived from human groups. No Jewish thinker ever denied the possibility of a non-Jew being an ethical person. There’s nothing specifically Jewish in ethics.

Now to state and religion in Israel. I shall tell about something which happened four months ago on *khol hamoed pesach*. I was invited to participate in a seminar of Zahal, a seminar for senior officers. The initiators of this seminar (it was the general staff) honored me by formulating the subject for discussion according to the title of a work I published three years ago: *Yahadut, Am Yehudi Umedina Yehudit* (Judaism, the

Jewish People and the Jewish State). It was a very interesting seminar. There was a heated clash of ideas since it was absolutely clear that we were dealing with a question that represented for all of the participants a question of life and death, spiritually.

During intermission, while we were sitting around the table having tea, my neighbor said to me: "It's very strange that while for three hours we have been debating the problem of our Judaism, our people and our state, nobody mentioned the fact that we are conducting this discussion on Pesach. Now Pesach, that's our common historical heritage or our common cultural asset. How is it that nobody has mentioned this fact?"

I answered thus: "Suppose I were not invited here today but would use the Pesach vacation of the university to make a tour of the country. Suppose we were touring Emek Yisrael, my wife and myself. [I chose Emek Yisrael because this officer is a member of a settlement there.] We are touring the Emek and we are oppressed by heat and thirst and we come into your home. Do you know that we wouldn't be able to drink a glass of water in your home today? And you have the temerity, or the naivete, to speak about Pesach as our common heritage when I, a Jew, couldn't drink a glass of water in your home.

"Moreover, Pesach has quite a different meaning for you than for me. For you, the meaning of Pesach is sentimental. Sentimental is not a pejorative term, not at all. It's the remembrance of the starting point of Jewish history and has a very deep emotional meaning for you. I don't doubt it. But for us, for my wife and for myself, Pesach has an existential meaning. We are not so much interested in a semihistorical happening 3,500 years ago. The meaning of Pesach for us is that we are actually living this week in a different way from other weeks of the year. Your Pesach is a subject of sentimentality. For us, it's an existential subject. I am interested in Judaism from an existential point of view. I'm not interested in mere ideas. Ideas are *hefker*, no-man's land."

The stormy discussion that followed brought up some facts: an "observant" Jew (a Jew upholding Torah *umitzvot*) and a nonobservant one cannot eat together at the same table; families of observant Jews and nonobservant Jews cannot intermarry. (In order to avoid any misunderstanding: there's no connection

whatever between this fact and the kind of laws of marriage and divorce agreed to by the Knesset for civil and administrative purposes. These are absolutely irrelevant from the Halakhic point of view. It's a pure formality, whether marriages are registered by an official who has the title of rabbi or by an official without this title.)

Further, an observant Jew and a nonobservant Jew cannot work together, neither in the fields nor in an industrial plant, nor in an office, because of *shabbat*. *Shabbat* is not a matter of one of the seven days but of all seven days of the week because *shabbat kehalakhah* means that the whole economic and technological life of the six working days should be planned and arranged in a specific way in order to make it possible to stop all these activities on *shabbat*.

Now, the so-called problem of state and religion is the problem whether there is a possibility of Jews living together—Jews who accept Torah *umitzvot*, which for them means Judaism as a program of life, and Jews who don't accept it. That both parties are patriots, that both feel themselves to be Jews, that both have the same intention of remaining Jews is neither here nor there in view of the fact that they cannot really live together; they can't eat at the same table, they can't intermarry, they can't work together. When, in that seminar, the question was posed, by what are we united?, my brutal answer was, by *Zahal*, my sons and your sons serve together in *Zahal*. And if we have in a tank a soldier who uses *tfilin* every day and a soldier who never in his life saw *tfilin*, and the tank is hit by an antitank missile, they are both killed together.

But I am not interested whether we can die together but whether we can live together. And life is exactly what I mentioned: the kitchen and the table, sex and work. Not ideas. Therefore, I am not so sure whether the unity of the Jewish people can be maintained in the future.

DISCUSSION

PAUL BERGER (*Chairman*):

Professor Leibowitz, for myself, I'd like to say that I found what you had to say of interest, but very depressing. If what you say is true about Judaism, your view of Judaism has very little to say to the Jews

of the U.S.

Rabbi Berkovits last night talked about the opportunity that Judaism has in a Jewish State. Frankly, your view of Judaism forecloses such opportunity since it establishes restrictive limits.

WALTER WURZBURGER:

I was probably less shocked than many other participants by Professor Leibowitz's startling presentation because I have studied his writings. Rabbi Leibowitz's views represent a corrective to some of our views. I must, however, add that I cannot subscribe to Professor Leibowitz's one-sided presentation of Halakhic Judaism.

Professor Leibowitz is absolutely correct when he stresses that Judaism is theocentric rather than anthropocentric or ethnocentric. But his emphasis on man's total surrender to God's rule does not warrant the statement that Judaism has no room for ethics. Actually, Halakhah contains an ethical dimension which cannot be exhausted by the formal features of its legal system. Halakhah stipulates that we utilize our ethical consciousness to determine what is good and right in the eyes of God—and, according to Tannaitic opinion, this includes concern even for the appearance of good in the eyes of man.

The truly religious person looks upon his ethical obligations and ideals as an integral part of a God-centered life. Maimonides, in his presentation of the Jewish religious code, includes the cultivation of moral virtues as a religious duty.

It must be noted that, beyond providing for a specific code of law, Halakhah stipulates that all human actions should be performed for the sake of God. Judaism represents not merely a purely formal system regulating a defined area of behavior, it embraces the totality of life. Nachmonides has already called attention to the "scoundrel within the bounds of the Torah" who, for all his meticulous adherence to the specific prescriptions of the Torah, does not fulfill the religious imperative of striving for holiness.

To be sure, the ethical response of individuals cannot possess the same degree of "objective validity" that is claimed by the purely Halakhic prescription, but this does not at all warrant the inference that ethics is totally irrelevant to a Jew who is guided by Halakhic legislation. On the contrary, leading represen-

tatives of Halakhic Judaism, from Maimonides to Rabbi Soloveitchik, stress the paramount importance of efforts to imitate God's ways through the cultivation of an ethical personality.

ARTHUR LELYVELD:

I understood Professor Leibowitz to say that I had deprecated concern for table and bedroom, for kitchen and sex, for the ritual *mitzvot*. I specifically said in my paper that I do not deprecate them. What I deprecated was the *total* concentration on matters of ritual and personal status without a concern for the larger and overarching *mitzvot*.

I would make another comment to Professor Leibowitz, whom I deeply respect. What I found missing in his presentation, and what I think pierces the wholeness of his thought, is his failure to deal with the crucial matter of decision-making. It is not automatic. It is casuistic. It takes each problem and then makes a decision. But how does it make the decision? It makes the decision in accord with overarching values. Without a concern for basic values, values that we ascribe to the Divine, there could be no process of making the decisions that have to be made in actual cases.

I cannot accept the idea that there is no such thing as Jewish morality. The entire tradition is involved in making moral judgments, ad hoc judgments of course, in accordance with each situation, but also in accordance with overarching values.

AMNON SHAMOSH:

Nobody can doubt the importance and the centrality of Jewish religion in Jewish history. Everyone who respects Jewish history and considers it part of his culture must respect and understand and try to learn Jewish religion. The great question is: Can an atheist—and I define myself as an atheist—still claim to be a Jew? And my answer is, yes!

I cannot agree with Professor Leibowitz that moral values are not part and parcel of Judaism. The values of Judaism have shaped my life and, when I am most fully aware of them, my sense of Jewish identity and belonging is heightened. To be sure, our religion has been transformed by the *golah* experience and lost, for many of us, a compelling inner force. I am not concerned with that. We should be taking from the past whatever we believe is necessary for the future. Not everything in our past is

necessary for our future as a nation and a society. We should have the right and the wisdom to choose, to be selective.

ARI AVNERRE:

Professor Leibowitz, in his approach to the existential historical entity of *yahadut* (and I refrain from using the term "Judaism" because I think it a very poor translation of *yahadut*, or *yiddishkeit*—"Jewishness" would be more apt), has inadvertently laid the foundation from which people like Mr. Shamosh and I—philosophical atheists—derive our Jewishness.

Since the 19th century, Professor Leibowitz stated, "Judaism" has ceased to have a clearly defined meaning. The observable, existential fact of this day is that there is a large number of Jews, both here in Israel and in the Diaspora, that accepts continuity of the existential historical entity that is its Jewishness, without necessarily adhering to either a theology or a philosophy that may have been characteristic of all or of most Jews in the past.

It is a question I would like answered by our friends from America. How much this feeling is shared there, this feeling of Jewish belonging, of affirmative acceptance of the Jewish heritage as a cultural, existential, historical continuity, without necessarily turning it into a theology?

HENRY SIEGMAN:

I've had occasion to be shocked by Professor Leibowitz's writing in the past, and I'm glad to have the occasion now to be shocked in person.

His thesis has been challenged on two grounds: that he hasn't taken into account what happened after the 19th century, and that it's not "serviceable" for Jews today, certainly not for American Jews and probably not for much of Israeli society. That may or may not be the case. I suggest that even on its own terms his description of the historical content of Judaism is not accurate. I'd like to cite one specific piece of evidence for that by turning to the Prophets themselves. It's interesting that the Prophets, when they were critical of Jewish life, specifically criticized the ritual aspect of Judaism. They said, in the name of God, that God asks what's the value of the sacrifices, what's the value of the *moadim*, the observance of the ritual holidays, the assemblies, when *yadeikhem damim maleiu*, your hands are dripping with

blood; or when you don't feed the hungry nor clothe the naked.

Professor Leibowitz, I suppose, would respond by saying these, too, are specific *mitzvot* which, in fact, is the case. But it's interesting that the prophets decided that God would rather do without the sacrifices, and without the assemblies, and without some of the ritual observances, and would rather have Jews attend to the clothing of the naked and the feeding of the hungry.

You do not find in the Prophets, at any point, a suggestion that God says "I don't need you to feed the hungry, I don't need you to clothe the naked, since you are not offering sacrifices." That kind of a critique you don't find in any of the books of the Prophets. It is obvious that the Prophets, as an act of conscience, of ethical choice, if you will, made a decision which is a personal decision and not a Halakhic decision. I would suggest that this is clear evidence that there is such a thing as conscience, as moral choice in Judaism.

YESHAIAHU LEIBOWITZ:

I shall answer the questions concerning the 19th and 20th centuries. Since the 19th century, the term Judaism has ceased to have an essential meaning. For most Jews it depends today on sentiments. These sentiments, emotions, reminiscences may be sincere and even deep but they don't constitute life. I am a hard-boiled materialist. The term "life" means, for me, phenomena in physical reality, not in consciousness. The Jewish people had for 50, or maybe 80 generations, a quite clear material expression of their Jewishness. This form of Jewishness ceased to be the acknowledged and generally accepted way of life of the Jews and, therefore, the Jewish people, for the last 120-150 years, is in a state of decomposition and disintegration. And I am not sure concerning the continuity of the existence of the historical Jewish people in the future. It doesn't depend on the State of Israel, it depends on the personality—more exactly on the personal decision—of the Jews.

The state is not necessary for the fulfillment of Judaism. Judaism can be fulfilled everywhere or—to put it in a more exact form—it cannot be fulfilled anywhere. This is an *eternal* task which can never be realized. Jews can *strive to fulfill* Judaism, but for a human being it remains impossible *to fulfill* it. But the endeavor to fulfill it, that is what consti-

tutes Jewish life.

As to the ritual *mitzvot*, all *mitzvot* are ritual. "You shall not murder." Why? Because it's a *mitzvah*. *Mitzvot* are not derived from the consciousness of man pertaining to his existence in the world as a human being among beings like himself, but rather from his consciousness pertaining to his standing before God. The yoke of the Torah is accepted neither

for the love of man, nor for the love of truth, nor for the love of duty, but for the love of God, and that is what voids it of a "moral" content.

HENRY SIEGMAN:

Let me accept your answer that all *mitzvot* are ritual, but who gave the Prophets the right to decide that one ritual is more important than another ritual? The priorities they established obviously implied ethical and moral judgment.

as we know it, is not perfect. But what distinguished the idea of the Halakhah of the *chakhamim* and *poskim* (sages and Rabbinic authorities) from some idea of the Halakhah in modern times is that their intention was to fulfill the Torah. Their intention was not to criticize the Torah from criteria which are extra-Torah—for instance, from the standpoint of ethics, society or nation.

HENRY SIEGMAN:

But at what moment in time did the well-intentioned interpretations of Halakhah become the poorly-intentioned interpretations of Halakhah that we are afflicted with in modern times? Was there a particular moment in time?

YORAM KANIUK:

This Dialogue has to do with moral issues. I hope that we can go ahead and deal with essential problems that Israelis and American Jews are now facing. Can we turn to issues that have a realistic bearing on our lives—our survival—and cease our endless definitions of Zionism, Judaism, etc.? I turn to the Americans for some understanding of how they are prepared to aid us and how they propose to bridge the gulf that divides us.

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YESHAIAHU LEIBOWITZ:

There is no priority of what you call "moral *mitzvot*" over ritual *mitzvot*. To be sure, the Halakhah is not something given but something produced by man. If there is a decision it is a conclusion of a discussion between humans who do not claim that the Holy Spirit is speaking through their mouths. Every Jew knows that there may be mistakes in Halakhic decisions. Not all Halakhic decisions were decided *bashamayim*, by heavenly God. The Halakhah is a work of men and therefore not perfect.

The divine Torah was given to human beings for their manipulation, and the Torah has been manipulated by men for 3,000 years and therefore the Halakhah,

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FOURTH SESSION

YITZCHAK LIVNI (*Chairman*):

It has been remarked here that one of our problems is that we are in many ways estranged from each other, that the American and Israeli Jewish communities are really disparate societies. I'm afraid that is right to some extent. In general, you know something about our political and economic problems, but I'm not sure that you really understand our frame of mind, the things that bother us on a day-to-day basis. You possibly don't know the names of some of our best writers, and I'm not sure that we know much more about you. However, many of us can read English, while fewer of you can read Hebrew. More of us can read your works in the original, as well as your newspapers. Few of you read ours. We watch some of your television pro-

grams, you don't watch ours. We know something about the American Jewish novels and poetry because it is excellent literature.

It's rather a pity you know so little about our literature which is also of exceptional quality. This is hardly a surprise. If in America Jews can produce good literature in English, it is reasonable to assume that their cousins in Israel can do equally well in Hebrew.

Whatever may be said of our separateness, both American and Israeli Jewish writers are in the mainstream of universal culture. It is a mistake to regard Israeli literature as provincial. It occurs to me that it might be a very good thing if a publisher were to undertake to produce a magazine which would incorporate both Israeli and American Jewish writing.

The Debasement of Popular Culture

A Presentation

LOIS GOULD

I suppose we'll get into the question of reciprocal appreciation of each other's higher literature a little later, but I think we ought to start with the cultural artifacts that are most popular. I want to talk about pop culture in the broadest possible sense, that is, the products which appeal to the larger mass audience.

As a writer of contemporary fiction and social commentary, and as the parent of two teenage Jewish boys, I find myself staring uncomfortably at popular culture. Indeed, from where I sit, pop culture now is the real and dominant parent of all our children. It's as if they had been suddenly kidnapped by a mysterious pied piper or seduced in our midst by an exotic cult, even when we thought that we had insulated them from the reach of such culture. We thought they were safe at home and in school where we were in charge of their

education, denying them television and fast foods, selecting their books, their toys and their ethical values.

We were, of course, wrong. It was a hopeless battle from the beginning. Discovering that pop culture now exerts a far more powerful influence on our children than we do, is a sobering experience. To discover that it is an evil and irreversible influence is terrifying. Of course, pop culture was never designed to be a guardian of moral ethics or tradition. In fact, the very basis for its appeal is that it rebels against the teachings of the parent culture. It shows how to rebel and reject the old order.

It's been a very good teacher at this task. Many of us never listen to the lyrics of the pop songs that our children listen to. They are appalling. They exhort children to do appalling things and to laugh at them while doing them. There is in

America, at the moment, a phenomenon called the *Rocky Horror Show*, which most parents assume is either about rock or about horror, neither of which is particularly interesting. This film has been playing at midnight in theaters across the country for two years. It is an enormous success. It is about transvestites and bisexual behavior of all kinds. It includes homicide, cannibalism, and heaven knows what else, all done in comedic form. The so-called hero is a heterosexual American male and he is the object of ridicule in the movie. Children love it, mouthing with pleasure the words of the dialogue. The movie is cleverly merchandised. It is funny and the music is catchy. The fact that it has been kept secret from the parents is, of course, a very large part of its appeal.

Pop culture is being used to spoil a child rotten, as we used to say. It gives the child presents of forbidden fruit and feeds him a steady diet of sweet release from the heavy burdens that we lay on him—commands to do well in school, to care about the future, to treat others honorably, to tell the truth. If we still think of governing a mass population in terms of bread and circuses, we must recognize pop culture as the circus. And we are exporting these circuses to more people in the world than ever before.

Mass media is, of course, our major pop cultural phenomenon. Television news has often been dismissed as an unimportant source of information. Unfortunately, it is not unimportant. This information is processed as entertainment deliberately. It is presented with smiling anchor people who banter with each other and who end up with a commercial for a cola drink. Business news is reported in terms of winners and losers, like a football game. This is extremely easy to digest and becomes preferable to newspaper reading to most people who don't wish to think or who are being taught not to think. Is it surprising that our illiteracy rate is growing?

Another pop culture phenomenon is something called a "photo novel," which is becoming popular in the U.S. A "photo novel" is done with pictures and captions in the manner of a comic book, except they are real pictures either from movie or TV scenes. The text is very condensed and people talk in comic strip balloons. I think of pop culture as a funhouse mirror or a kaleidoscope. The mirror reflects and distorts our society at a very painful moment in history: post-

Vietnam War, post-Watergate, post-political assassinations, mid-inflation, mid-energy crisis and on the brink, perhaps, of economic depression. The funhouse mirror, like a roller coaster ride, distracts us from our pain and terror in the tradition of all escapist entertainment. The kaleidoscope arranges small pieces of social truth into bright, constantly shifting patterns. It is important to keep shaking the tube so that the pieces keep falling into different patterns. This way, no one can get bored and no one is likely to study it closely. Television news, as I have said, performs the function faster and is more fun than the newspaper. Most young people that I meet in my travels, at my lectures, do not believe in static, eternal truth. They imagine eternity as a television set with the sound and picture off. No voice, no noise, no movement. Eternity to them is a "drag."

Our eyes are glazed over, our tummies are full of coke and with our children we whirl around in our cultural kaleidoscope. Pop culture keeps moving faster than James Bond on a laser beam, and we are hooked on this kind of speed, far more hooked than by any other drug. Our fashions change as rapidly as the messages on our T-shirts.

I count the incessant use of rock music as a drug. I go into a supermarket and the young clerk has a radio in his drawer and moves to the music as he makes change. He has no idea what he is doing on the job, he couldn't care less about whether he gets promoted to manager. He cares about one thing—that he has enough money at the end of the day to buy the rock music. That is how pop culture keeps him occupied, keeps him busy as a consumer.

I count also as drugs many other of our activities, but I particularly count the vain, restless, self-perpetuating search for new ways of feeling good, especially the new therapies for getting in touch with our real feelings. To get rid of bad feelings, it is now understood, means to rid ourselves of guilt about things that we do wrong—cheating, stealing, lying. The new therapeutic dispensation urges us not to deny ourselves the slightest frisson of pleasure for the sake of any moral principle whatever.

I haven't the time to explore other facets of culture. I would have liked to talk about the contribution that is being made by American Jewish writers, particularly American Jewish women writers who tend to be downgraded as a spe-

cial interest group and regarded as rather unimportant in contrast to American Jewish male writers. The same is true in films, especially in comedy.

I would also have liked to talk about the decline of the feminist movement which stems from the influence I spoke of earlier—the need to be on the move, to change. The loss of interest in such serious movements as civil rights derives from the fact that they require lasting commitments.

DISCUSSION

ARI AVNERRE:

Like the poor, pop culture has been with us for a long time. What do we mean by "pop culture"? We use the term too loosely. I am concerned with this as I am with all semantic laxity. Such laxity has produced the Zionism/Nazism equation. This equation would have been impossible had it not been for the term Nazism losing all meaning, becoming co-extensive with "anything-I-don't-like-and-choose-to-call-by-that-name."

I remember a very frightening conversation I had, a few years ago, with an IRA man in Belfast. When I asked him, why resort to violence, he answered by telling me that it was a response to violence; the things he described as "violence," as the violence he was rebelling against, were things that a correct use of language would have termed "inadequate social services," "discrimination in housing," etc. The term "violence" having lost its meaning, a justification was found for the real thing.

When words meant to separate, to delineate, become co-extensive, meaning is lost. It is because of this that I object to the term "pop culture." Perhaps this debasement of language is a feature of "pop culture" itself.

I am not shocked by the lyrics of pop songs since they do not mean anything. You have only to look at the two latest Israeli songs that won the "Eurovision" song contest. One is sheer baby talk. The other is "Hallelujah." People can sing "Hallelujah" without meaning anything, much in the same way people who have nothing to do with the Krishna cult can intone "Hare Krishna, hare Krishna, hare, hare," without meaning anything. They can also say the most terrible things—without meaning anything.

To refuse to accept the premise that mindless drivel may be termed culture, one thereby differentiates between what pop is and what culture is: they are measured by quite different yardsticks. The criterion for pop is wholly synchronic. It is judged solely by its mass distribution at one given point in time and since—as rightly said—it is a merchandise, it has to have a good market, and this is the only yardstick for its success. The touchstone for Culture, writ large, is diachronic; in its accumulation it is on the way to becoming Heritage. This dichotomy must be borne in mind. The similarity of means used to produce both things should not confuse us. An office memo does not become literature simply by the use of language.

What disturbs me is the tendency to read into pop what was never there. It is this that blurs the issue. Academics who take trash seriously influence the judgment of culture itself.

There is, of course, influence by pop on culture and on life in general, simply because it generates, too often, the idioms of our times. This influence cannot be ignored. But in terms of value, it is indifferent—neither good nor bad. It is merely there.

There is, furthermore, nothing wrong with selling people a pleasure-giving product, provided you know precisely what is being sold. What is being sold are noises that make people feel comfortable for one reason or another. But this has nothing to do with culture. With this dividing line kept in mind, I do not think that the dangers associated with the contents of pop need be feared too much.

A word about the ethnic or national dimension of pop. It is, indeed, a measure of its being a non- (or anti-) culture that it is devoid of national characteristics. In spite of pop being something held in common, it is not a medium of reciprocal influence. It is cosmopolitan rather than international.

WARREN HARVEY:

I think it is a mistake to say that pop culture is merely *part* of the idiom of our time. One thing that was clear from Lois Gould's presentation is that it uses the powerful media such as television and cinema. This was something that was not possible in previous generations.

I wanted to ask one question of Lois Gould because I very much enjoyed her presentation. Do you find that the influence of Israeli culture on young Jews in

America is less than was the case in the 1950s or 1960s? Young people then used to sing Israeli songs and be inspired by the kibbutz ethos.

LOIS GOULD:

I believe that the influence of Israel is waning. Americans have a predilection for taking the side of the underdog. Israel was perceived as an underdog which was seeking to carve a civilization out of the wilderness. Israel now appears as self-satisfied and comfortable, a stable, rather conventional kind of society. The romance seems to be over. However, there is again a perception of Israel as underdog, as threatened, which may arouse sympathy. I do hear young people talking both ways. But I must say, the young feel discomfort at identifying with a state that seems to be based on religion.

YITZCHAK LIVNI:

Let me suggest that we return to a discussion on pop influence. We've all heard that pop culture has made the world one big village. Is Israel part of it? I'd say not, since in Israel very few people are in a position to be part of an international exchange of pop arts.

AHARON AMIR:

I take some exception to the hope voiced by a previous speaker that a magazine combining Israeli and American writers would be fruitful in bridging the gap that separates us. I have the feeling that we are deceiving each other about the unity of the two communities. It has been detrimental to sound thinking, this fiction about an underlying unity. The fact is that our interests frequently diverge, and American Jewish intervention, however well-intentioned, has weakened Israel's fiber. There are, of course, cultural links between our respective communities—some for good, some for ill—but if we are to enjoy reasonable relations, we must rid ourselves of sentimentality and stop pretending we are two sides of one coin.

I believe that if we relieve each other of the claims based on the fiction of "one people" our relations could become much more normal, much more dignified, and much more productive.

MARCIA GOLDSTEIN:

I'd like to comment on Lois Gould's and Ari Avnerre's observations on the export-import of each other's "schlock." In one sense, I'm not sure

it's all negative. It would be ideal if we could continue to import into the U.S. only the "Havah Na Gilah" or the "Zum Gali Gali" culture which is what I grew up with in the 1940s and 1950s. Or if the only thing Israelis knew about American culture came from reading Mark Twain or Steinbeck. But we've moved beyond that into the real world, and the alternative to the free flow of each other's culture is censorship.

I'd like to hear comment on what the antidote to the lowest common denominator culture could be while avoiding censorship or state direction.

HOWARD SQUADRON:

Mr. Avnerre, I thought, suggested the solution to that problem. He said that one must distinguish between pop and culture, that we go through a lot of "schlock periods," but what remains one defines as culture and everything else you simply have to survive. He didn't propose censorship. He proposes that one be discriminating.

To turn to Mr. Amir's adjuration that we release our claims on each other. At the end of the Dialogue last year, A.B. Yehoshua said Israel should withdraw its hand from Americans because American Jews are living by proxy, receiving the benefits of the State and the results of Israel's struggle by merely making financial contributions and occasional visits and expressing interest. I hear the same echo now. I can only repeat the answer I gave last year.

We may not be in the front line, as rigorously involved. From the point of view of Israelis we may be on constant R&R, rest and recreation in army terms, but we are the best of friends, at the very least, if not the closest relatives, that Israel has. I think the suggestion of withdrawing hands—outside of this being totally impractical in terms of the support that Israel desperately needs—is totally unattainable psychologically. You can withdraw as much as you want. We persist in insisting that we are Jewish, that Israel is central to our existence, and, indeed, that the survival of Israel is of great importance to our survival. There can be no withdrawing or releasing claims on each other.

With respect to this morning's discussion, I share with Lois Gould the horror of the *Rocky Horror Show*. It is not a secret from most American parents, Jewish or non-Jewish. But my children don't go to midnight shows that I don't

know about. That is the essential point that I want to make. They may see something on their way home from school that I don't know about. It is possible, I suppose, for children to smoke pot in the lavatories of schools and I would not know about it, but my children will not get to a midnight show that I don't know about or approve.

It seems to me that this question of pop culture really has to do with the nature of our age. It is foolish to talk about pop culture as being something constant, as if the world doesn't change. There has been a qualitative change in the nature of our lives. Lois Gould referred to it in terms of speed and maybe that is the very best expression. Jet travel means you can make *aliyah* in a day. TV news, totally uninformative as it is, is the way most people get their information, and what they get is misleading shorthand and entertainment, because every TV segment of news is scheduled for a time slot: two minutes is too long, people lose their interest, 30 seconds is best, and with a backdrop, a visual—you've got to have a visual, somebody has got to be doing something.

American pop culture is being exported on a very speedy basis all over the world. The question that we have to face, as Jews, is how much does that distract our youth from whatever it is that we want them to be educated about.

In a sense, this pop culture is double-edged in effect. That is to say, because it has so little depth, it is possible to interest serious young people in something that has more depth, and it is our job to make sure that that isn't Jews for Jesus or Hare Krishna. At the same time, because it is there, it is always a danger. It seems to me, then, that our question ought to be how to resist pop culture rather than whether it is corrupting, because it is corrupting only to the extent that we don't intelligently resist it.

HENRY SIEGMAN:

I was struck by the difference between the two views we heard this morning. The first one, Lois' presentation, dealt with the corrupting influences of popular culture on values, while Ari's concern centered upon the corrupting influences of popular culture on high culture. That is to say, Lois, the American Jew, was concerned with the effect of pop culture on ethics, and Ari, the Israeli Jew, was concerned with the effect of pop culture on aesthetics.

I'd like to ask Lois: Do you consider, by definition, popular culture to be the adversary of high culture, the adversary of values, or is this simply incidental—it happens to be that way at the present?

LOIS GOULD:

Popular culture need not be evil and frequently is not so. The best of popular culture may indeed survive as high culture. It has been often said that you cannot tell the worth of a piece of art until it's been marinating a while, fifty years or so, and at that point you can take another look at it and judge its true value. A book may or may not be of lasting value. It may seize the popular imagination but that doesn't necessarily mean that it is a bad book. The same with a television show or a comic performance or anything else. So, my answer is that I think pop culture today is a symptom, or rather an effect of the explosion of mass media and the speed with which it is disseminated. This creates a hunger for decreasingly valuable merchandise. The pressure to produce faster, to satisfy the voracious pop appetite, results in the shoddy stuff we see today. Pop art is in a downward aesthetic spiral.

In terms of morality, I do believe that there is an essential connection between morality and the integrity of art. When art is created from the artist's need for expressiveness rather than for marketability, it satisfies our moral needs, our heightened sense of life. When we surrender art to a mean marketplace we diminish life—and morality.

ARTHUR LELYVELD:

I cannot wholly accept the idea that pop culture is asynchronic, because time has its effect on pop culture, transmutes it, sometimes sublimates it, but it does not disappear with the day. Yesterday's "schlock," yesterday's kitsch, is today's nostalgia. I think of a return of the 1920s. "Yes, we have no bananas!" The Charleston. The Black Bottom. They come back with much greater innocence and tenderness than they had in their first presentation. And I would also like to pay my respects to what was said about the debasement of language. It is inevitable. What is outrageous today is accepted tomorrow. Language has a life of its own, and it changes.

It seems to me that there is a distinction other than linguistic that has to be made with respect to pop culture. The judg-

ment that we make is not a judgment against popularity. That which is popular may very well be acceptable. It is against the deterioration of respect for life and for human beings which is indicated in some of the currently popular expressions.

There is such a thing as Jewish morality and it is in terms of Jewish morality that many of us respond with horror and with concern to some aspects of pop culture.

ESTHER POLEN:

The discussion today is touching since it concerns all of us and centers on our young people. Lois, I believe that your portrait of our young is a bit askew. There is another dimension to the young people, and their cultishness does not exhaust their potential. I too am involved, so to speak, in public work. I have children and grandchildren but I remember my youth. I think that it is much too easy to decry the present and magnify the past. Nevertheless, I wouldn't assert that what Lois has pointed to as evil and vulgar may not mushroom and become all-pervading. But that is our challenge—to prevent such development, particularly in the area of drugs. My granddaughter, who is 16, tells me of the drug-taking that has been going on in school, but she says there are many who have not succumbed to peer pressure. In short, we must be careful of generalization lest we encourage the very process we wish to inhibit.

As far as language is concerned, certain new usages do concern me. How much of this new pop language has life and vividness and should be respected? To be sure, there are the ugly, trashy usages which must be opposed. In all, we are right to be alarmed by facets of pop culture but not to be utterly devastated, and we should maintain our balance.

JACOB NEUSNER:

First of all, I'd like to identify with Aharon Amir's position that it is false to suppose that the Jews constitute one people. Since the facts of the day contradict it, we'll have to treat it as a statement that may some day become descriptive.

I think that we're probably wrong to discuss cultural links between two communities that really are not in communication with one another at all, that do not have shared standards of intellect, that cannot communicate with one another.

Ms. Gould's paper was admirable. It should be noted that some of us in this room live our lives in institutions. We who work in universities, in education, are a countervailing force. You, Ms. Gould, can say correctly that our impact on popular culture is outweighed by television and, of course, we have to agree. But we are there, we are fighting the good fight, and we do, every June, see the faces of the hundreds or the thousands of students whom we have taught and into whose lives we have entered and about whom we care very deeply. And that also is a factor in the shaping of our culture, our society. There is the possibility of change through institutions, through countervailing government and voluntary agencies.

DAVID AVIDAN:

I would like to point out that "pop" is a term which covers a very wide range of topics and definitions and is too often used in derogation. When one says "pop" now, one doesn't necessarily mean pop as distinguished from serious art, but one refers to iniquitous conduct. There is a tendency, as a consequence, to patronize popular artists. What I dislike about such a tone is not merely that it is censorious but can lead to censorship.

I am particularly sensitive to the problem of the Jewish community and censorship. I tend to believe that the Jewish community is basically nondemocratic in tradition, in the sense that it is a community based on a unidirectional authoritative mechanism. The messages to it come either from the center of authority or from Above, and we restrict our conduct or speech in consequence. Our censorship tends then to be self-imposed. We harbor a sense of guilt whenever we use our freedom of speech. When we wish to say something provocative or controversial there are always typical Jewish questions: Is it the right time? Is it the right place? Should we delay it for a while?

We are victims of authority and we internalize its admonitions, particularly those deriving from the family. Creativity comes from resisting these voices, from escaping the family. New York City is so powerful and so energetic because it is a city of loners, of individuals. Wherever the family is the decisive institution, creativity is deadened. The trouble with Jewry is, it is so family-oriented. The creative contribution of Jews to the arts and sciences, not only in recent years but in the last century and a

half, have come from secular individuals who flouted the communal code. The religious establishment has not contributed much to Jewish mysticism or to Jewish theology.

LOIS GOULD:

I want to reply to several observations. I want to scotch the notion that I was indulging in helpless hand-wringing. I was trying to assess realistically the state of pop culture now. I did not suggest that nothing could be done about it. I do believe, however, that the impact of countervailing forces such as government, the educational system and certainly the synagogue, depends on two very important factors: the first is obtaining the attention of the people one wishes to influence. The young increasingly "tune out" and I hear complaints about that by teachers. If the kids sit in the back of the class with their earphones on, you cannot really use countervailing pressure successfully.

The second point has to do with censorship. Freedom of the press belongs to those who own the press. What gets put on the airwaves, what gets published, what gets praised by political establishments, what gets buried because it is unpopular, depend in large measure on where the economic power resides in the dissemination of popular culture. For those who wish to use countervailing power, a hard road has to be faced.

ALEXANDER LEVITZKI:

There are always levels of culture. I have no direct connection to the Bible, and my connection to Judaism is mediated through Jewish history, through Jewish development. Without this mediation I might prefer Socrates to the Bible.

As to our discussion now, I confess I know very little about what was defined here as pop culture. Can it really be that bad? Is it only a matter of an older generation denying a younger generation its due? I become a bit suspicious when I hear only scorn for the conduct of a younger generation.

ALICE SHALVI:

I found Lois's presentation extremely interesting. What seems the most characteristic trait of pop culture is that it glorifies instant sensual gratification. If you think of the Beatle slogans—"I want it now," "I, me, mine"—you realize that extreme individualism has been pushed to extreme sensualism and finally

to an acceptance of violence.

This cultural development is a new phenomenon in Israel, and here I come to the question of reciprocal influences. I have been in this country for almost 30 years and I have witnessed an increasing Westernization of Israeli values and Israeli culture, about which I am ambivalent.

The influence of the West has been destructive in many aspects of our life. I find it repellent to walk on the streets and see the way in which English is used to give an aura of fashion to our shops and eating places. We're getting a bastard, sensualist culture. I suppose Avidan would see my reaction as an expression of puritanism. What we have replaced is a kind of puritanism that had its charm.

What you have developed in the West is a kind of instant society, something disposable. One of the drugs is called Speed, isn't it? Fast results? You have disposable handkerchiefs, disposable clothes, disposable dishes, right? The next stage is disposable people.

Now, there is another aspect of your culture. I heard mention of the Jews for Jesus movement. I am not familiar with the tenets of the movement, but it seems to me that, in a curious way, there is a simultaneous pursuit of sensual indulgence and a yearning for transcendence.

Now, I risk sounding reactionary because I believe we have something to offer to American youth—Judaism, that is, our own Jewish values, our own Jewish moral code. I know it is repugnant to some of the people here to accept the *mitzvot* relating to man and God. I don't think it should be repugnant since the relationships of man and man and man and God are, after all, the foundation of the Judeo-Christian, Western culture.

I, as an observant Jew, will admit that such advocacy flies in the face of Western individualism and liberalism. We have been profoundly influenced by the culture which Matthew Arnold summed up as "Hellenism." I too have been so influenced and am troubled as a feminist. I have agonized over the conflict between feminism and my Jewish Orthodox conception of the family (and here I differ strongly from Avidan; I see the ideal family as being a nurturing and not a destructive environment).

LOIS GOULD:

I will reply briefly to some of the points made here. No, popular culture is not

inherently all bad; obviously nothing is all bad. The danger of today's pop culture, in contrast to previous periods when popular culture was equally opposed to established culture, is that it defuses anger and rejection. We have a phrase in the U.S. now—"laid back." The young are now not interested in moving on. They want to blunt drive, to blunt the desire to achieve, the desire to explore, the desire to pioneer and move in new directions. A symptom of this change is the lure of celebrity as contrasted with the lure of power. What kids want now is to be famous.

Young men are being lured away from the desire to achieve, to go to outer space, to become scientific pioneers. Instead, they are being asked to seek self-fulfillment. They are encouraged to become narcissistic. Thus our dangers lie in the "mellowing out" aspects of the culture rather than in any decision to rebel against the parent culture.

ARI AVNERRE:

I want to deal briefly with a few points raised here. When I spoke about the debasement of language, I was not discussing "vogue words," or slang. I was discussing a state of affairs where words stop meaning anything and can be used in any context. Here I come to the remark about the equation of Zionism with Nazism. Of course, it was designed for mischievous purposes by propagandists, but the point is they were not laughed out of court because words have ceased to mean definite things. Nazism has ceased to mean what you and I know it means. Fortunately for us, even the power of the propaganda is diminished because people no longer know what they are talking about, but that is cold comfort.

I was questioned thus by several people: Why did I not dwell on the corrupting influences of pop culture? Frankly—because I do not think there are any, for the same reason that I do not believe in outlawing pornography. I do not think exposure to the written word, to songs, to a picture, corrupts anybody. Nor can the arts educate, I hasten to add. One is educated by exposure to a whole system of values and experiences.

A word about the alleged superficiality of the electronic news media. They are superficial, in effect, because people don't want to delve deeply and not because information cannot be derived from them. As a matter of fact (is there a lawyer in the house?), I think informa-

tion on the laws of evidence could be derived from Erle Stanley Gardner's detective stories. By the same token, one can extract information out of the most superficial presentation. If you do not, it is because the uses you put the media to, and the gratifications you derive from them, lie somewhere else.

One final word. As for joining the forces of pop in order to "insidiously" convert people to high culture—I think that if we adopt such a course we will more likely end up debasing culture.

YITZCHAK LIVNI:

Let me say one last word about the so-called destructive powers of pop culture. It has been said that television estranges people from pursuing more worthwhile books or theater, etc. The fact is that before television most Israelis read less and attended the theater less than today. If one wants to say that television is pap, that is one's privilege, but it shouldn't be argued that it has destroyed the public's thirst for knowledge and the finer things of the society.

I am sorry that we were not able to enter as deeply as we would have liked into our subject. Perhaps this was due to the fact that our two societies respond to pop culture with different degrees of respect and intensity. In any event, it would seem, if our cultures are to interact and exert mutual beneficial influences, it will be through serious or high culture.

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BIENVENIDO HERNANDEZ
HOWARD MARSHALL

FIFTH SESSION

ESTHER POLEN (*Chairman*):

At the opening session, Dr. Berkovits touched on the subject of voluntary associations in Israel and the U.S. He spoke of the long tradition of the Jewish people embodied in the voluntary associations and of the public aid, social services, care for the sick and the poor that

obtained in Talmudic times.

American Jewry has continued this great tradition, manifested in civic or religious groups, social institutions or special interest groups such as the American Jewish Congress. Many of us belong to more than one group and so compound our efforts for social justice for all.

Israel: The Role of Voluntary Associations

A Presentation

ESTHER HERLITZ

I am now the secretary-general of Na'amat in Tel Aviv. For those of you not familiar with that word, it means Working Women and Volunteers. It is the largest women's organization in Israel. My friends in politics seem to think that I always have 100,000 women walking behind me. This is the conception of a voluntary women's organization among Israeli politicians.

Let me say at the outset that there is an enormous difference among the conceptions of volunteerism in the U.S., Israel, Britain and continental Europe. The U.S. mode derives from Britain. My father, who was born in Germany, once came back from England stunned. He couldn't understand why private citizens should want to—or have to—run hospitals. The Central European idea, which is evident in Israel, was that the citizens pay taxes and the government gives services.

To be sure, there was a great deal of mutual aid in the Jewish communities of Europe but very little of policy-making by those involved. Mutual aid was, to a very large extent, a fundraising effort, and much of this is still evident in Israel. We can get people to collect money for a one-time operation. We have more difficulty getting people to do a continuous voluntary job.

From what we see in Israel, it seems that the Jewish Oriental communities in

the East never even had mutual aid. Mutual aid and voluntary efforts were based on the enlarged family, and one didn't really need any institutionalized voluntary effort because there was that very large degree of self-disciplined aid within the enlarged family. We find in Israel today that we have difficulty enlisting members of the Oriental community in any kind of voluntary effort, whether on their own behalf or on behalf of their community. Sometimes, when community organizations do not exist in the poorer neighborhoods of Jerusalem, their notion of exerting pressure on the government is through violent protest. They have not learned the more sophisticated techniques of protest. This contrasts, in the political sense, with the techniques of Jews who came from Europe.

The Russian Jews learned the socialist approach to organizations, that is, a centralized approach that puts emphasis on a small party executive which hands down instructions or orders to those in the field or to other elected bodies down the line. You can find this approach reflected in the Histadrut, where decision-making has remained among a small number of persons on the executive body.

In the early days this worked very well. When you develop a country, central authority is very useful because it can divide resources and power according to

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a central plan. It can decide that more money must go to the Negev, or to the Galilee, or to the army, even if the public might clamor for something else. A quarter of Israel's population lives in Greater Tel Aviv. If we were just to go by majority decision, it would be very difficult to develop other parts of the country. In Ben Gurion's writings, we discover his great emphasis on centralized government. Ben Gurion had reached the conclusion that if one wanted to build this country quickly and effectively, this was the only feasible approach.

You are all aware of that enormous voluntary organization that the British called "the state within the state," namely, the Histadrut, the Federation of Labor. It is Israel's largest voluntary association. It is much more than a trade union. It is, among other things, an economic enterprise, a mutual aid enterprise, an adult education enterprise. But at this point we must ask a question: How voluntary is membership in the Histadrut, especially in the eyes of the people who receive services from it? Is Kupat Cholim, the Sick Fund, really regarded by the patient as a vast mutual aid body, or is it reckoned a part of the Establishment so that the citizens can no longer distinguish between the government and the Histadrut?

The kibbutz and the moshav, of course, are most notable examples of voluntary collective existence. In both, people willingly give up some of their own individuality in order to live collectively, but there is no constraint. You can join it and you can leave at will.

We have had the great drama of the youth movements. I'm sorry that I'm talking in the past tense because the youth movements have declined. There was an enormous voluntary effort of education and, as they called it, "self-realization," which produced much of the creative things that have happened in this country. I am concerned that some of the organizations have declined due to the severity of their problems and the powerful pressures of the government machinery in Israel. For example, we organized the Israel Voluntary Service to benefit underprivileged youth. The service developed a kind of inferiority complex and decided that this was a job for professionals. This attitude, this fear of responsibility, is a contributing factor to the withdrawals from voluntary organizations. We are still trying to reestablish the "service volunteer," and to induce

citizens to engage more actively in decision-making, in policy-making.

In brief, while some aspects of volunteerism are declining, there is now an

upsurge of groups seeking to make their voices heard, a most encouraging sign for a society that prides itself on its democratic values.

A New Challenge for American Jews

A Presentation

DAVID COHEN

Even as confidence in, and respect for our public institutions continue to drag bottom, American voluntary associations thrive. First, I want to talk about the place of the nonprofit private sector, both voluntary and service, in defining, formulating and implementing our national goals. Second, I want to discuss the paralysis that exists in our political institutions. Third, I want to talk about the importance institutional renewal has for our Jewish institutions in America.

The experience gained in our voluntary service and citizen action activities directly stimulates action agendas in the public arena. Engaged people are insisting on having a part in framing solutions to important public issues, and are willing to work overtime to win public acceptance for them. Generally speaking, these volunteers are not working on matters that will directly benefit them.

What accounts for the impact of the nonprofit private sector on American life? The late John Rockefeller called it a "third force" to suggest that it played a role different from government and different from the profit private sector. The champions of the nonprofit private sector believe that its independence and distinctiveness make it a positive force in American life. Of course, it has its weaknesses, but its ability to be independent of government policies creates what climate exists for innovation, develops workable public and private institutional arrangements, and sets a standard for moving beyond a politics that focuses on "what's in it for me."

John Gardner, the former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare and founding chairman of Common Cause,

has identified nine significant attributes of the nonprofit private sector: freedom from constraints; pluralism; an environment for innovation; a home for non-majoritarian ideas; individual initiative; opportunities for participation; an instrument of community; grass roots vitality; the monitoring of government.

Sidney Verba and Norma Nie, two students of political participation, have identified the phenomenon of the complete activist. Do not misconstrue. The complete activist is not a zealot who has no time for family, play or job. Rather, the complete activist is a man or woman who wants to know what's going on in the community and to influence what happens. The activist works at practicing democracy by voting, engaging in electoral campaigning and then not stopping. The activist participates in community-oriented groups and contacts government officials.

Influencing decisions after election requires organization on a sustained basis. America always has had organized interest group activities. They have been organized along economic, occupational, regional or ethnic lines. We have had single-issue lobbies and they mostly come and go depending on the concerns of the time.

But the activity of the American voluntary sector is no substitute for the absence of "a state of mind, an outlook on politics and government, a public philosophy," as Sam Beer puts it. The New Deal ended in the mid-1960s and with it an accepted philosophy of what government is about.

The ending of the New Deal contributed to the birth of new constituencies and movements. In particular, the public

interest constituency—consumers, environmentalists and government reformers—stimulated a wave of reform. Its effectiveness means that it is now part of the American political landscape. There are no guarantees that it will be there 5 or 10 years from now. In addition, various 1960 movements carried over into the 1970s. Some completed their work—the peace movement; others had fundamental accomplishments—the civil rights movement. Others are active today working on many issues—the women's movement. Others focus on a single issue—the right to life movement, pro-choice movement or anti-gun control movement. These movements have influenced and are influencing American politics in major ways. They are part of the debate and pressure, push and pull, which characterize American politics.

In stressing the positive role the non-profit private sector plays in American life, we should neither romanticize it nor be seduced by it. It is not a substitute for elected leaders who will articulate goals and implement policies that deal with our toughest problems.

We need our politicians; we need them to be able to act. To be able to act, they have to shed the hammerlock which narrow interests have on them. At the same time, we need to strengthen the voluntary sector since it enables our political leaders to know what is on people's minds, to draw on new ideas and to learn about what is working in government and what is not.

American politics, particularly at the congressional level, is increasingly influenced by economic representation in the form of "political action committees." PACs get their strength from growing amounts of campaign dollars contributed to office holders and hidden lobbying influences. In Congress, money talks loudly and as more new faces appear in Congress, PACs quickly get their hooks into the next generation of office holders. The obvious link between campaign contributions and special interest favors must be broken by creating an alternative system of matching small individual contributions with public monies. Such a system would liberate our politicians from the distorting influence special interest dollars now have.

The voluntary sector cannot by itself make the American political system well. Our national paralysis on the issues of inflation and energy painfully expose American weakness. Inflation makes us

more selfish than we are. Energy tests our ability to deal with scarcity or perceived scarcity. As an American I am deeply troubled. The politics of selfishness and the politics of the special interest state fit. John Gardner reminds us that we are in a constant war between the parts and the whole.

The Jewish contribution to American life is glorious. In more communities than we can count American Jews are in the midst of communal and charitable activities that are not Jewish per se. Our support of Jewish activities is the height of responsibility. Support by Jews of Jewish and non-Jewish institutions is marvelled at by non-Jews.

In the worlds of politics, ideas, literature, the arts, our contribution and presence is respected. In politics we have historically pursued community-wide goals that go beyond our immediate agenda. Innovation and conscience is the hallmark of our social service work. Since World War II we have on the whole managed to strengthen our Jewish educational system and the synagogue as a convenor-gatherer and Jewish community resource.

There is cause to worry for reasons other than that it is naturally Jewish to worry. As America is preoccupied with the politics of the narrow and as the U.S. stays paralyzed on the essential—inflation and energy—this affects the present outlook of Jews.

As Jews, we have overwhelmingly shared the New Deal public philosophy of what government is about. That view is no longer relevant. The traditional liberal and conservative categories are no longer valid in understanding or explaining American politics. Liberals remain largely tied to New Deal institutions and ideologies. Conservatives defend the status quo by arguing in the words of Joseph Heller's Bruce Gold, "every change is for the worse." Neither liberals nor conservatives are today providing an intellectual framework for an accepted public philosophy. Our weakened institutions and absence of sustaining ideas weaken government as government cannot escape the assault of the lobbies. A debate is now underway in the United States that will establish the place and the role of government in the 1980s and 1990s. Those of us who believe in social equity, in the informed consent of the governed, in a thriving voluntary sector, better have answers for the anger that

pollsters tell us most Americans feel.

In moving towards an involvement that reaches beyond self, in no way do we reduce our commitment and resolve to the permanency of a secure Israel. In fact, we strengthen our effectiveness. Our involvement as Jews on the major domestic issues—helping to shape an American agenda in the 1980s—will enhance our credibility on Middle East matters provided that in our pursuit of domestic matters we are idealists rather than self-serving, problem solving rather than ideological.

Martin Buber in his *Tales of Hassidim* writes: "The motto of life is 'give and take.' Everyone must be both a giver and a receiver. He who is not both is a barren tree." There is a richness, flair and drive in American Jewish life that often works better than we think. Our worrying and criticizing sometimes downplays our vitality. In suggesting steps to be taken, modifications to be made, innovations to be tried, I am looking towards discussing ways of strengthening Jewish life in America. Jewish institutions in America need a process of renewal and once begun it should continue.

As Jews we are at our best when we practice our ideals. The connection between the Vietnamese boat people and the Holocaust is an obvious one. I am aware that the skills of the Jewish Family Service and HIAS are being used to assist in the resettlement. We are unnecessarily shy about our Jewish role. Our work for the Vietnamese refugees should be treated as a genuine Jewish response of the heart. We should sound the shofar to summon and awaken others to its importance.

Our attachment to pluralism is evident. We have Shomrim and Lubavitcher, at least two groups with the initials AJC, and who knows what else. Israel also has a diversity of viewpoints and outlooks. Steps should be taken to encourage more giving by Americans directly to Israeli institutions or activities that reflect our values. The object is to enlist those Americans who are not now givers or who are dissatisfied with not knowing how their money is used. One way to start is for some institution to serve as a clearing house of information on what exists in Israel, what the level of support is from Israelis, and what these organizations are. Giving will increase contact between American Jews and Israelis. Increased contact will strengthen

commitment.

What happens in Israeli domestic matters will, apart from security, influence American attitudes, including American Jewish attitudes, towards Israel. Americans will be looking to questions of how Israel treats the Oriental Sephardic Jews and the Arabs and whether the ability of the Orthodox to impose their religious values on the larger society will continue.

One result of these actions would be to nurture—nurturing contrasts with subsidizing—the Israeli voluntary sector. In contrast to subsidizing, nurturing enables the formation of indigenous Israeli groups and institutions. Subsidies would smother them.

Pluralism inevitably includes institutions you and I are enthusiastic about and others we wish would go away. It will also lead to sharp debate on policy questions. Just as the wisdom of Israel's West Bank settlement policy creates strong debate in Israel, so has it already led to strong debate in America, largely among Jews.

American Jewish supporters of the wisdom of the settlement policy—I am not a supporter but a critic—may well feel beleaguered at their isolation and therefore may lash out at their Jewish opponents. For the health of Jewish life in America, it is essential that Jewish leaders speak out in advance against any verbal stoning and to condemn it if it occurs. Allowing room for differences on political questions in a civil way is more basic than following any set line.

Inflation and energy are two societal problems that need emphasis in America by Jewish organizations just as civil rights and civil liberties had in earlier days. As Jews we played a key role in framing the civil rights and civil liberties agendas. Now, at best, we are reactive to the domestic issues of our day.

In part, inflation goes unchecked in America because of our subsidies, economic protection regulations, and tax preferences. Efforts should include making clear there is an organized Jewish concern about inflation and how it undermines the achieving of a fair society.

The absence of an American energy policy, our dependence on foreign imports, our stalemate on alternative technologies, the anger of consumers, all have an adverse effect on Israel and the Middle East. The resources and technology exist to make our energy problem soluble. Our lack of confidence in our

leadership and institutions has increased the cynicism towards government and industry alike, making it next to impossible to deal effectively with our energy problem.

In closing, I would urge that the story of Jewish participation in American society that is happening today be told and shared with our non-Jewish neighbors. The spirit and habit of participation in Jewish life needs to be trumpeted so that its impact in building a fair and just society in America is appreciated by other Americans. It represents a hope that is now too rare in America. It means we know and feel we are Jews. It means we know and feel we are Americans.

DISCUSSION

WALTER WURZBURGER:

I would like to address the question of volunteerism which I believe has a great deal to do with the problems of unbridled individualism. It is also important for us to realize that in spite of the fact that American Jews cannot share a common culture with the Israelis, there is still very much that we have in common.

There can be no doubt that much of modern Jewish life is threatened by the overpowering sense of individualism that is so characteristic of our time. In a narcissistic culture such as ours there is little room for communal values. What we suffer from is the destruction of the sense of community. Even the loss of authority on the part of governmental authorities is not merely the erosion of the authority of the State but rather points to the loss of the sense of community which at one time supported moral values. Nowadays, moral values are perceived as purely subjective.

Many of us come from backgrounds where being born Jewish was regarded as mandating certain responsibilities. We didn't choose to become Jewish or opt for Jewish values because we found them appealing. To be sure there are many so-called Jewish values which are essentially universal values which many Jews select because they find them appealing, and they are adopted by Jews on the basis of some kind of autonomous reasoning. But the Jewish component of our personality is based upon a felt claim of the Jewish community upon us. To be sure, this claim has to reckon with countervail-

ing forces. Our bond with Jews is basically the sense of community that we have developed with other Jews and that is what makes the State of Israel so important. But the State of Israel is important to us not only because of the large concentration of Jews there. You have to realize that throughout history Jews have been oriented towards the centrality of Israel.

I am convinced that one of the most severe forms of damage we could inflict upon Israel is the de-Judaization of Israel. To be sure, attempts to develop Israel as a Jewish country involves many problems. But the separation of church and state, which would divest Israel of all particularly Jewish components, would deal a devastating blow to the future of Israel. David Avidan, in his inimitable way, makes a plea for a purely subjective Jewish experience entailing a total rejection of any kind of communal or familial authority. This is totally inappropriate for Jewish life in Israel. It may be feasible in the U.S. because that is the *golah*. We have to be satisfied with what amounts to a crippled Jewish existence. In the *golah* all we can hope for, Jewishly, is to lead the life of Jewish individuals. But in *eretz yisrael* there is the opportunity to establish what I would call a "collective religious response." I, as a Halakhic Jew, would say that this constitutes the mandate of forming a holy people. A holy people does not merely mean a conglomeration of individuals. Instead, our collective existence should reflect the ideals of Judaism. The introduction of the American model, which is essentially based upon the notion that spiritual affairs are purely the private concern of individuals and have no place in the public sector, would be fraught with disastrous consequences for the future of a Jewish State.

HERTZEL FISHMAN:

It has been suggested that the State of Israel, at least until 1948, was the world's greatest example of a voluntary effort, and yet this is only partly correct. The Jewish people throughout the world built *eretz yisrael*. When we talk about Zionist volunteers we don't mean all the people who came to Israel before 1948 or thereafter. The truth is that only a very small group of volunteers came to the land of Israel out of a sense of dedication and concern for the general good, rather than for individual security and personal interests. Beginning with the Biluim,

whom all of our history books praise but who numbered altogether 50 to 60 people, going through the Second Aliyah which had approximately 25,000 immigrants but of whom only 1,200 to 1,500 were involved in activities for the general good, and continuing with the *gdud avodah* in the 1920s and the Haganah in the 1930s—all these were very small groups within the Land of Israel.

The notion that this country was built by "Zionist" masses is somewhat distorted. The country was, in effect, established by a relatively small group of people who set the tone for the entire society, but even this very small group could not have done what it did without the practical help of those Jews who lived abroad, who helped financially, morally and politically.

It is very important to realize that Haganah would not have received its illegal weapons without the assistance of Jewish volunteers living abroad, and the first kibbutzim and moshavim would not have been settled had not lands been purchased by the Jewish National Fund with money given by Diaspora Jews. Unfortunately, this relationship between the Jewish people the world over and the building of this land has been all but forgotten by most Israelis.

And yet, how many Jews supported Israel, or the Land of Israel, or the Zionist Movement until 1948? Until 1939? Very few. One must further realize that most of the Jews who have come to this country right from the beginning, from 1882 on, did not come out of a sense of idealism, out of a sense of volunteerism. They came because they were refugees.

It is very important to realize that the people who set the tone for this country, the ideological leadership and those of us who identified with it, felt that this country was ours because we participated in its development—whether through Haganah, settlements, illegal immigration. Even the group of individuals that came from a Russian background knew what they were doing "Zionistically," and the people of this country trusted them and identified with them. We all felt that we were the true owners of this land, even during the times of the Turks and the British, because of personal involvement and democratic processes, and especially because the Jews of the world were involved through meaningful Zionist Congresses. We had tremendous self-confidence because the power of his-

tory was on our side. Since the State's creation, we have lost the effective voice of world Jewry, and there has been little trust in the political process of the Israeli party system and much frustration in the meaningfulness of participatory democracy.

Every Israeli is entitled once in four years to put his ballot in the ballot-box with absolute freedom; but the day thereafter he has little to say about how this country is governed and, in effect, very little influence on the government. Even Knesset members have little influence because the government functions largely as a feudal system, with each minister making almost absolute decisions for his own ministry. There is hardly any kind of coordinated effort on the part of the government, especially with respect to the quality of life of the society.

Our electoral process is based on nationwide proportional representation party lists, not on individual districts. Thus, no individual really represents one in the Knesset. This leads to a sense of frustration on the part of the great masses of people in this country because they don't feel that they "own" this country. It is "owned" by somebody, but not themselves, and that is why we lack a genuine motivation for improving our quality of life. If you see that our streets are dirty, it is not because we are born that way but because we don't own the streets. Let the owner take care of "his" streets. This situation exists with practically every civic issue in this country. Most of the people who came to Israel came from backgrounds of no civic education. They were not involved in the political process nor in making decisions in the countries from which they came—whether East Europe, from where some 40 percent of our people came, or Arab lands, from where over 50 percent of Israeli Jews came. And if you're not involved, you don't care; you're not responsible. Only when a person is involved does he assume responsibility, and that is one of the great flaws of our society in terms of voluntary involvement.

Most of the people who live here were brought to Israel. They didn't come out of any voluntary motivation. They were given much of what they possess, whether through subsidies, cheap credit, or outright gifts. Most of the comprehensive schools in Israel, most of the institutions of learning, the museums, the con-

cert halls, the community centers, were not built by Israelis through local voluntary means. You will find plaque after plaque bearing the names of Jews from abroad.

If sovereignty means anything at all in a democracy, it means that sovereignty rests with the people whose own volunteer efforts make for a stable society. However, the only groups that succeed in this country are pressure groups. Every day the newspapers, radio and television refer to such groups. The more selfish and aggressive they are, the more likely they will succeed. Even when the national consensus says that the pressure group does not deserve it, as is the case of Yamit today, it still wins. After all, the people in Yamit received their cheap credit from the Jewish people through the UJA, the government, etc. But they won't leave and they invoke the notion of "Zionist idealism" (that's what they call it)—unless, of course, they get so much more. This kind of "volunteerism," this kind of "idealism" in our society, is far from the "common good" norms of modesty and perspective which characterized Zionism's classical *chalutzim*, pioneers.

If we are engaged in reciprocal dialogue, I submit that concerned Jews in America have something to teach us, not only theoretically but in terms of how to do things that will improve the quality of life. I don't want them to intervene with our security, but I would like them to intervene with our quality of life. However, Diaspora Jews fear that someone here is going to attack them should they pursue this suggestion systematically. Do not fear. Have the courage to be familial members with us, not paternalistic donors. There are enough Israelis who have learned the lesson that alone they cannot pick themselves up by their bootstraps in this generation, but need help. In this context, we approach you as brothers and sisters. If you are not, why do you come here every year to "dialogue" with us? Strangers don't come to another country to conduct dialogues. I am not asking for the unanimous support of six million American Jews. If we had only 100,000 Jews in America who understood this country well and were prepared to relate to its quality of life issues, we would be a different society altogether.

I mentioned yesterday that we should have lobbies on behalf of responsible, caring Jewish organizations. I tried at

one time to create a kind of "Common Cause." And, Esther, you should know that at one point over 20 national "volunteer" organizations came together to talk about such a "Common Cause" movement to deal with issues on which we all agree—not partisan-political issues but those affecting the quality of life in this country, whether it be road accidents, pushing on bus queues, consumer protections, etc. But the country was not ready for this kind of volunteerism.

There are certain issues which are very important to us, but we don't have the know-how or manpower to deal with them. One issue is education. It is unconscionable that parents in this country have little to say about the education of their children. Americans can come to us and show us what Parent Teacher Associations do systematically and how they exercise the power even to remove school superintendents. This is genuine democratic power resting with the people. There is no more precious commodity in anyone's life than a child, and to leave a child in the hands of a "professional" teacher or principal, knowing full well that there is little qualitative education in that framework, is shameful.

I want to make a last point, most respectfully. Either you and other Jewish American groups really care about us concretely, or you will continue to relate to us abstractly and ineffectively. You are almost like people who concern themselves with celestial Jerusalem but not with terrestrial Jerusalem. Most Diaspora Jews care about Israeli issues over which they have no influence whatsoever, like security and foreign affairs. They have little knowledge and even less concern for issues which make up the bulk of our national life: education and the quality of our Judaism, work ethics and integrity, pluralism and human rights, participatory democracy and the use of leisure time, health and problems of aging, etc. Begin to view us as you would members of your own family, about whom you care enough to intervene judiciously when necessary.

JACOB NEUSNER:

What makes Common Cause work is something which I can capture in the phrase "moral authority." The reason that organizations work is that people believe in them and believe in the selflessness of those who are involved. By the way, it's also how those effective

Jewish community organizations also work. They work because people are willing to give of themselves, because they believe in what they are doing, because there is a moral authority involved.

Yesterday, Ms. Gould said that large numbers of young American Jewish people do not respect or want to identify with Israel. And the reason for that, in my view, is that Israel does not approach the world, and the Jewish world, with those kinds of explanations which establish a foundation of moral authority. The approach is limited to security.

MARCIA GOLDSTEIN:

Mr. Cohen noted that one of the aims of Common Cause is a concern with community development and community improvement. Before that, Ms. Herlitz spoke about some efforts on that score in Israel that led to violent reactions. These seem to be two contradictory results of the same sort of activity—and I suppose it all depends on a particular approach to a particular problem.

I've been hearing a lot about a new program in Israel called Project Renewal, a new kind of direct partnership

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between the Diaspora and specific Israeli communities. As an urban planner, I went to interview some people at the Sochnut (Jewish Agency) about what Project Renewal actually means, and to see whether it is just another aspect of bureaucracy or whether it really means partnership. I'm still unsure of the answer. Perhaps, Ms. Herlitz, you can shed some light on this program since we're calling for an input of volunteerism. I'm wondering, for instance, what would happen in a situation where a poor Israeli neighborhood is matched in partnership through the Sochnut with a community in the U.S. and program accountability is demanded by the Diaspora community. What is going to be the reaction of the neighborhood people to volunteers like me, coming from Massachusetts, and

telling people in Neve Yisrael or Hatikva or Katamon what they should do?

ESTHER HERLITZ:

I'll use Project Renewal to make a point. I think the idea is not: "Come and teach us." For goodness sake, don't come and teach us. It doesn't work. People don't like to listen to it and they resent it. People in some of the communities will not let the UJA bus come in any longer. They say: "We are not a zoo."

I don't believe that Mr. Fishman's suggestion about Americans encouraging our schools to build a better system will work. I'm not so sure that the American community is all that good. I mean, your problems in American cities are no fewer than ours. I think he overstated his point.

HERTZEL FISHMAN:

I was not speaking about the negative aspects of American cities but of the positive ethos of American civic culture. The point I was trying to suggest is that America still relies upon its gut feeling that sovereignty rests with the people. From this principle, everything else flows. I am aware of the fact that this doesn't happen everywhere in America, but participatory democracy is something unique in its national civilization.

ESTHER HERLITZ:

In Israel, sovereignty rests with the people too. It's a different system, but it's not one where the Establishment can impose decisions that are totally unacceptable to the people of Israel. Politicians are not stupid people and they have a sense of what the public wants and what is expected of them if they want to be reelected.

In saying all this, I am not denying the possibility, the need for joint voluntary effort. I would like to note that Israel and the American Jewish community are linked, to a very large extent, through the government of Israel and American volunteer organizations. It is an illogical link since the UJA is a voluntary organization. This, I think, is true of most Jewish organizations abroad, and there are reasons for it. It is very exciting to be in touch with a sovereign Jewish government and to be received by its Jewish ministers. But perhaps the time has come now to try to work out an organization-to-organization relationship, a community-to-community relationship.

Hertzel Fishman is right in remarking

that our parent organizations are not involved enough in the running of schools. Perhaps we can work out a kind of link between the Israel Parents Organization and some American Jewish parent-teacher set-up.

About Project Renewal, I would say that if Miami adopts Neve Yisrael, or Boston adopts Neve Yisrael, for goodness sake, don't send advisors because they will be thrown out of Neve Yisrael. But if you send a team of, say, five social workers and ten English teachers who will live in a community for a year or two and gain the confidence not only of the people who live in that community but of the civil servants, you would have a chance of building a real link.

DAVID AVIDAN:

Rabbi Wurzberger has commented on my views on individualism which he deplores in the light of a supposed Jewish communal ethic. It's a nice question, whether Judaism contains an ethic. Professor Leibowitz denied it in favor of the uni-directional flow of authoritative dicta. An individual Jew is denied choice or free conscience. Conscience for Judaism functions only to reinforce authority.

I differ about what sort of conscience Jews should possess. Unless conscience is programmed to act in its own interests, it is destructive. I think Jews, as individuals, are anything but suicidal. It is a fact that there are fewer suicides among Jews than among other groups. Individually, we are not suicidal. Collectively, we may occasionally be so.

HOWARD SQUADRON:

I want to make some comments about David Cohen's paper and try to put into some framework this question of volunteerism as it relates to the two communities. First, David points out that the nonprofit organizations help shape the viewpoints of many of our political officials. I think these nonprofit groups also continue to shape their viewpoint after their public life.

I agree that with respect to such issues as the Boat People we should be playing the leadership role we used to play. The American Jewish Congress is, indeed, now playing such a leadership role in the Boat People issue.

And I want to comment on David's plea that Jewish leaders work for tolerance of dissenting opinion in the communities. There is no question on the right of Jews to dissent. The question is

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whether, during the Middle East negotiations, it is constructive to exhibit the kind of public dispute in the U.S. that we have had.

I want to suggest that involvement in voluntary activities, such as the Boat People situation, is a test for many American Jews of their Jewishness. Rabbi Wurzberger and others seem to think otherwise, that there is no such Jewish compulsion. David Avidan has defended, indeed made a fetish of, individual conscience, as if one could function without outer-directed authority. We all carry authority within us. Authority comes from upbringing, from a stubborn desire to persist in our ways and traditions. We are all, to an extent, prisoners of history, our own personal history, and all of us are insecure. But it is also true that the human animal is marvelously flexible and that our responses can be varied.

One answer to a very deep insecurity is rigidity, an authoritarian self-contained system. That provides a kind of rock of assurance. Another way is to disappear, to hide among the majority, to assimilate. But there are other forms of response for Jews. Making *aliyah* is one response, engaging in volunteer work on behalf of Israel, or otherwise joining in the work of the Jewish community, are all reasonable responses.

One question seems to arise in this context. Have our noninvolved Jews in the U.S. completely lost their insecurity as Jews? If so, why are they so disproportionately involved in politics, in the cultural activities of the country, in voluntary activity of all kinds? Our children, presumably, have been taught not to feel insecure. If so, why the disproportionate response among Jewish young people in the civil rights movement, in the Vietnamese movement, the antiwar movement, the environmental movement, the nuclear energy movement—you name it? Such activity takes place among young Jews who deny that their Jewish upbringing has anything to do with these idealistic efforts.

Israelis, I may say, do not go into voluntary activities because they are not motivated the same way. For one thing, they may be directing all their energies in concentrating on physical survival. Moreover, Israel is not a place where Jewishness has to be expressed through voluntary means. You can express it through political activity and by political means.

I must say, finally, that we, in the American Jewish Congress, have tried to make some contact with groups here that have the same position we do on separation of church and state, on various civil liberty and civil rights issues. We have had the idea of doing the kind of hands-across-the-ocean voluntary activity which has relevance for us and we have

been eager to exchange approaches. Invariably, and I say this with deep regret, our Israeli counterparts have faded away. Now, again, there are, understandably, practical reasons for this, economic and social, but I believe in overcoming such difficulties. Israelis, like Americans, can profit from partnership in volunteer organizations and movements.

SIXTH SESSION

DISCUSSION

HOWARD SQUADRON

(Chairman):

In the past, I have, at the final session, attempted a summary of the proceedings, but I haven't the temerity to do so this year. The difficulty is that we have dealt separately with a variety of sub-topics and have not arrived at a uniform or binding theme. What we have done is deal with the ethical dimension of religion, or the religious dimension itself and its impact separately from the question of volunteerism, separately from the effect of pop culture. The summary would, therefore, have to consist of three summaries, an unwieldy procedure. I suggest then that in this session we permit comment on points raised at previous sessions and, if possible, obtain suggestions for improving future Dialogues.

AHARON AMIR:

I have some brief remarks about volunteerism. There are two items that I would like to bring to your attention. The first is the fact that during the pre-State times in Palestine we used a very significant phrase, "*hayishuv hamurgan*," which means "an organized *yishuv*, incorporating all facets of our communal life. And this community—of course, we had dissidents—was highly organized and disciplined. This has deprived us of the habit of spontaneous reaction, of meaningful social action. Things have changed, especially since 1973, but old habits persist.

The second item I refer to happened a couple of weeks ago. A manifesto was issued by the United Movement of Youth which called upon world Jewish youth to

volunteer in the building of new military installations in the Negev that are going to be needed after we pull out of Sinai completely. How encouraging, how inspiring this is, if it comes to fruition!

Now I want to be frank about my visions for Israel. After 1967, we debated here whether to retain the occupied territories, and Abba Eban, quite logically, noted that the retention of the territories would be a threat to Israel as a Jewish State. I don't care about having a Jewish State. I want a Greater Israel, and if that requires our becoming less Jewish, I am not disturbed. I want an Israel open to people of all denominations, of all backgrounds. I really don't know what a Jewish State means in the Israeli context. As you know, we still haven't defined "Who is a Jew." But, even if we manage that definition, I still opt for a strong Israel, Jewish or not.

HENRY SIEGMAN:

I would like to say that I, for one, am not terribly distressed by the invitation issued by Israeli youth groups to their peers in the *galut* to come and help build military installations.

If there is a problem in Jewish life of excessive Biblicism, as represented by Gush Emunim, it is balanced by the Christian tendency to spiritualize everything out of existence.

Yes, of course, Jews have a mission and they have an important mission. But we have a flesh-and-blood existence and we need to be alive before we can implement that noble mission.

There is a Protestant minister in the U.S., Roy Eckhart, who is known to Israelis. He is a remarkable human being who addressed himself to this problem of the tendency toward excessive

spiritualism in Christianity. He made an interesting point in answering a critic in the Protestant establishment. He said that if Israel found itself under attack, the place for a religious Christian was in a munitions factory in Israel. When Israel is under siege, and when its physical existence is threatened, I, for one, despite my involvement in the peace movement and my tendency to be somewhat critical of some of Israel's policies, believe that the role of a religious person is precisely in helping build military installations. That is a religious impulse, and if it is not seen as a religious impulse, one distorts the nature of spirituality.

JACOB NEUSNER:

Israel is a going concern, with its own culture, its own character, its own society, its own triumphs and achievements, and its own weaknesses. We in America have been loath to let go. Israelis, for different reasons which we don't understand, have also been loath to recognize

that they exist as a State. And Aharon is telling us it is time for the Jews of the world to understand the social realities and the cultural realities which have come into being. It is very difficult. There is always a cultural lag.

On our side, we work within the suppositions of theology as if they are social facts and therefore we speak of one people. In America, we have tended to ask the State of Israel to serve as proxy Jews for us. It is an astonishing thing. What de-Judaized the Jews in the early part of the 19th century was that they wanted to be citizens. What has had a more powerful effect on de-Judaization, it seems to me, is the fact that the State of Israel has made it possible for us to be at our most Jewish entirely un-Jewish. You can be an important Jew in America and have no connection to Jewish religion or Jewish culture or anything distinctively Jewish. In our community the important Jews who are listened to, and who unfortunately think that they have to be lis-

tened to, are people who don't even read a Jewish book of any character, who never show in the synagogue, who never feel that Jewish ideas are relevant to them, who never realize that Jewish thinkers are asking questions which concern their existence.

It is not that they are *am haartzim*, illiterates. I don't condemn people in that sense. It's that they are people who don't know that they don't know and who say things as if they do know. It's not that they feel that they fulfill their Jewishness through the UJA. I say wonderful. Any Jewish thing a person does is grand. It's that they see themselves as Jews who set norms through their philanthropic pro-Israel activity, and, which they believe, validates their leadership. Now this is very sad. This is making the American Jewish community increasingly estranged from any resources of the Jewish spirit.

To be truthful, we are not one people. American Jews do not know anything about the State of Israel. They are not interested beyond Israel's politics and Israel's international relations.

Aharon said something that is shocking to us, not what he said about his aspirations for Israel but what he said about how Israel must make it in its own setting and on its own terms.

HOWARD SQUADRON:

Many of us would like to understand what Dr. Neusner finds attractive in the idea that Israel, in Mr. Amir's sense, must declare its independence. If I were to use an analogy, I would use the imperfect analogy of the black community in the U.S. declaring its independence from all of the white groups on which they were dependent for support during the most important days of the civil rights movement. They now state: "We are grown up, we are big enough, we can handle ourselves and, indeed, we would prefer to."

Jacob Neusner seems to believe that American Jews concentrate all their Jewishness into their relationship with the State of Israel and have nothing else. As a result, he says: "Let's concentrate on our Jewishness without relation to the State of Israel." I don't mean to imply that Neusner is advocating that we shouldn't relate to the State of Israel at all, or that there won't continue to be a relationship, but that we contain our efforts and apply our resources to our own Jewish advancement.

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WALTER WURZBURGER:

I cannot share Professor Neusner's perspective. I believe that the State of Israel fulfills a vital function in providing much needed oxygen for American Jewry which finds itself in an extremely feeble condition. When a person is stricken with a heart attack, we sometimes give him oxygen hoping that this, ultimately, will enable him to breathe again on his own. To withdraw the oxygen at the time when the patient is critically ill would be extremely hazardous.

We must also be realistic. Many features of Jewish life in America are grotesque. But we cannot blame Israel for the sad state of affairs where the philanthropists have become the self-appointed leaders of American Jewry. A similar kind of situation prevailed before the establishment of the State. There was a time when Federations of Jewish Philanthropies, Jewish hospitals, etc., provided the only avenue for Jewish self-identification for many individuals. I am convinced that a feeling of solidarity with the State of Israel, incomplete though this kind of Jewishness may be, is superior to a kind of Jewish identification that is expressed only in purely philanthropic activity.

I cannot understand why Jacob would like to build a Judaism without any relationship to *eretz yisrael*. Can there really be a healthy Jewish life without a meaningful relationship to *medinat yisrael*? After all, Judaism began with the *brit Avraham*, the covenant which already included a relationship to *eretz yisrael*.

Now a word to Aharon Amir. I want to remind him that Arafat seems to express strikingly similar views. He also wants the population inhabiting *eretz yisrael* to be completely unrelated to the Jewish people anywhere. Once you insist upon a total separation of Israel from the Jewish people, what difference does it make whether you call this a Palestinian or an Israeli State? We seem to witness the resurrection of Arthur Koestler's views. Koestler predicted that within a generation or two Israel will cease to be a Jewish country, and Jews throughout the world will either become Israelis or assimilate to their environment.

Obviously, for an individual who insists on being a "normal" Israeli without any Jewish components, there is no need to think in terms of a relationship between Israel and world Jewry. But for many Zionists, Zionism was conceived as the instrumentality for the preserva-

tion of the Jewish people. Now, you advocate that the State should be totally un-Jewish because its Jewish character creates only a host of problems such as "Who is a Jew." To be sure, the easiest way to cure a headache is to cut off one's head. By the same token, we can solve all the problems inherent in the notion of the Jewish State when the State is built exclusively on Western values. But I, for one, am opposed to the idolization of Western values. As far as I am concerned, one of the most impressive features of the Jewish State is the Law of

Return, which affirms that every Jew has a unique relationship with the State of Israel.

There is another message that Aharon Amir has for us. He pleads with us that we should not feel responsible for Israel because our involvement harms Israel. I believe the only adequate metaphor for the description of the relationship between Israel and world Jewry is that of brotherhood. Of course, a relationship between brothers can deteriorate and one brother may be too dependent upon the other. Nevertheless, we must act upon

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the basic assumption that we are truly brothers.

URIEL SIMON:

That's not where the problem lies—the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish State. The problem is expressed in the Jewish dissent in America from official Israeli political positions. Such dissent is voiced not only in the *New York Times* but in testimony before the U.S. Congress. Even if such activity flows from a concern for Israel, those who engage in the process are doing harm to Israel and are ignoring the will of the people of Israel.

WALTER WURZBERGER:

The influence of Jewish organizations diminishes if they automatically endorse the Israeli Administration. One must support wholeheartedly the Israeli people, but one must make a distinction between the Administration and the people.

PAUL BERGER:

Professor Neusner speaks subjectively and disregards plain facts. For example, the UJA, the Federations around the country, are now deeply engaged in Jewish life. They are not just talking about, but actively engaged in, the development and support of traditional Jewish education. The Federation in Washington, to cite one example, allocated this year \$800,000 to Jewish education. In 1971, they gave no money to Jewish education. The Federations around the country, moreover, are involved in supporting not only traditional Jewish education but in giving support to alternative forms of education designed

to strengthen Jewish life in the U.S.

I think it absurd to exclude Israel from the whole process of American Jewish education, which should embrace the widest variety of experiences and Jewish culture. To deprive American Jewish education of this enriching element is patently foolish. If American Jewish life is deficient, it is because of a certain selfishness, where many Jews won't take the time from their careers to contribute their talents to the community. The Federation leader who takes the time and trouble to raise funds for Jewish education may well be more valuable than the professor in his ivory tower pronouncing superior dicta about Jewish life. The professor's perceptions can have value, but you cannot affect life unless you act upon it.

With respect to the discussion about whether Israel shall remain a Jewish State or become "normalized," it seems to me that if the latter course is pursued, then it would have no right to solicit our aid or caring. In that connection, I would have to ask Aharon about the building of a greater state: To what end? Merely size? If that is Israel's sole purpose, it can hardly, paradoxically, attract the flood of people he solicits.

As to the propriety of speaking out publicly in America against Israel's policies, may I point out the relative unsophistication of the American public about Middle East issues. Voices raised in criticism, even with goodwill and reservations, tend to be taken literally and do grave injury to Israel's security. This is not to say we should inhibit our feelings but that we should voice our concerns in the proper quarters, among ourselves.

ALEXANDER LEVITZKI:

Professor Neusner's opening lecture was perceptive but his latter remarks almost annul his previous positions, particularly when he defends Amir's position of Israel going it alone. I cannot accept the proposition that our communities are best served by a separation from each other. I certainly do not accept the view that we don't need the support of American Jews or that Israel has nothing to contribute to the enrichment of American Jewish life. There is another fact which we ignore at our peril. What would happen to Jews in other countries who rely on a united Jewry?

As to the question of public criticism of Israel's policies, I can't evaluate its effects in America, but I can tell you, we welcome them in Israel because we want the truth—the truth about the feelings of American Jews. I might suggest, however, that the letters be sent to *Maariv* rather than the *New York Times*.

DAVID COHEN:

I am struck by our ability to get to concrete matters. That is one of the strengths of the Jewish contribution to ideas, to patterns of living. In our quest for improving things, we are not obsessed by abstraction.

There is something to what Aharon Amir complained about—that we have smothered Israel with our views, our talk, our overweening presence. We must be more disciplined, perhaps more sensitive in what we do, and certainly be more circumspect in proffering unsolicited advice.

I don't share Paul Berger's view about public discussion of differences on Israel's policy. First, it is impossible to cap discussions, feelings and ideas. I think, like it or not, the national media help define what the large questions are about.

MARCIA GOLDSTEIN:

Dependency relationships are never easy, whether they are neighbor-to-neighbor, country-to-country, or Jewish community-to-Jewish community. Dependency relationships have built-in tensions, built-in resentments, built-in disillusionments.

There have been several arguments made here about the nature of the dependency relationship. Mr. Amir spoke about Israel no longer needing a dependency relationship. Professor Neusner, in turn, intimated it is time to pull back from Israel and draw on our own Jewish

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resources. I want to observe that, as an American Jew, I cannot do without that mutual dependency relationship.

Israel has made many people who would not have any other connection to Judaism become Jewish. Whether or not this connection would be more valued in traditional religious terms is debatable. At any rate, there is a raised Jewish consciousness and an awakening, and I think that it is important.

I live in a college community of intellectuals, many of whom are Jews. A number of these people never acknowledged being Jewish, many are intermarried. Yet almost all of them, strangely enough, came "out of the closet" as Jews in 1975 after the "Zionism-is-racism" issue at the UN. They came out. They suddenly wore buttons saying "We are all Zionists." They came to a public meeting at the synagogue. They stood up as Jews and, more important, they didn't all go back into the closet again. A few of them even joined the *shul* and have generally added a vibrancy to our Jewish community which would not have been

sparked were it not for Israel.

ESTHER POLEN:

I believe that a greater interaction between our communities is desirable. We have so little knowledge of Israel's creative artifacts that it stunts our appreciation of Israel in intellectual and spiritual areas. It is most unfortunate that so few Israeli books are translated for our edification. I confess that Amir's strictures were interesting but most depressing. He simply fails to recognize the depth of feeling that binds Jews. That is not, in any way, to imply that our respective cultures do not have unique features but that, nonetheless, such differences can be transcended for the common good. In this regard, I agree with Esther Herlitz that our respective voluntary organizations are necessarily shaped by the history and realities of our communities. I sympathize with Esther's suggestion that if we are to partake in Israeli projects, it is necessary to stay in Israel for a time and work hand-in-hand with our Israeli counterparts.

HOWARD SQUADRON:

I said that I was not going to attempt a summary because I thought that we had dealt with subjects independently. I do want to point out, though, that this morning we have really been dealing with the general subject of the Dialogue, the reciprocal influences of the U.S. and Israel, in a quite precise way. Indeed, we have dealt with it in terms of the most extreme positions that I have ever heard expressed.

Aharon Amir's position and Jacob Neusner's position at the beginning of the discussion today set the tone and led to a very useful discussion.

I want to say, for myself, that I agree that we are brothers. I would suggest to Aharon that maybe the call for American youth to participate in Israeli projects was given from an underlying desire for *aliyah*. Whether it is conscious or unconscious, regardless of *aliyah*, there is an underlying expectation that, as one people, we are obliged to help each other. Therefore, what Alexander Levitzki said before about our concern,

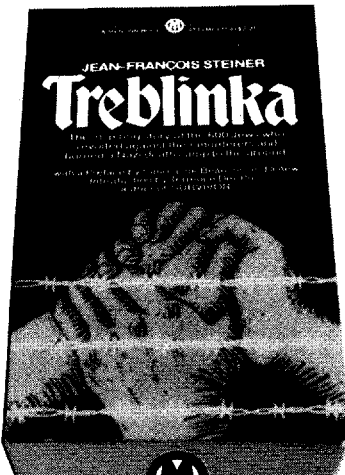
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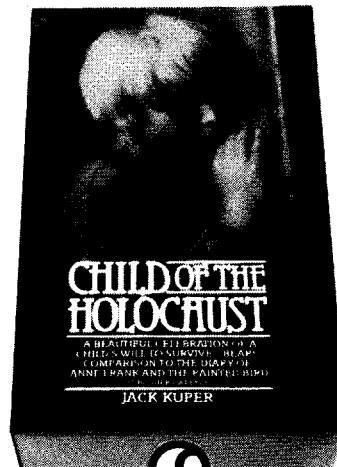
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not only for each other but for the other Diaspora communities, is particularly significant.

Oxygen, to use Rabbi Wurzbarger's metaphor, is needed in both communities. I agree with him that the existence of Israel has provided oxygen to the American Jewish community. It is inconceivable that we will not continue to rely on infusions from Israel but, obviously, it is true that other aspects of American Jewish life have to be emphasized.

That is equally true on the other side. The U.S. Jewish community has provided oxygen to Israel in more ways than

just money. The notion of withdrawing our hand has never really seemed to me persuasive. Israel doesn't only feed us. We feed Israel. Witness our Dialogues where we have talked about a whole range of important subjects. I think it is important that those discussions go on because a lot of the things that we have to say are important to Jews in Israel.

On the subject of expressing opinions, we are naturally concerned about doing Israel harm. We have to gauge for ourselves the effect of our actions on American public opinion and American policy. At the same time, we must gauge how our actions will influence Israeli

policy-making. It is a very difficult and delicate balance.

DAVID AVIDAN:

This Dialogue has made clear to me that a certain sense of guilt operates on both sides. The American Jew asks himself why am I here and not there? In a way, the same goes for the Israeli: Why am I here and not there? What am I doing in this part of the world, wasting my talents? I can utilize them better in the States, or in Europe. And there is a need for rationalization, stronger on the American side, because it has a psychological dependence on Israel.

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Whether this is true or not, interdependence and interrelatedness is a matter of compulsion for all of us.

We here, you there. These are the words we should remember regardless of *aliyah*. We are doing one job together. It doesn't mean that we don't need you here and that you don't need us there. Some may believe that supreme happiness comes from being one solid community. I don't share that sentiment. I believe that we have more to offer by being spread throughout the world. I don't believe in restricting Zionism to one part of the globe. When we come to realize that we have a global role and that our mission differs from those of other groups, our guilt complex will dissipate, and we shall not be traumatized by *aliyah*.

WARREN HARVEY:

The question of dependency interests me. The question can only be answered by examining different aspects of society and culture. In terms of culture, Israeli artists and writers fare rather well in America. Indeed, in some cases too well, as they trade on the fact that American Jews are eager to pay for their products. This tends, too often, to make certain Israeli artists pander to the market. It is not a healthy dependence.

I am not saying that American Jewry is at fault for arresting the development of an indigenous Israeli culture. The problem lies in the conception of one people which tends to blur necessary distinctions. We must distinguish between peoplehood and nationhood. The Israeli Jew belongs to the Jewish people *and* to the nation. To obliterate this distinction leads to confusion of identity.

Every good Jew has the land of Israel in the center of his Jewish consciousness, but if he wants to live a full Jewish life he has to come and live here. There is no other way. I concede that the American Jew enjoys a very rich culture in America—the American culture.

What I wish to emphasize again is the need to create something new in Israel. My impression is that Israeli culture suffers from a certain atavism, from dogmatically holding on to a past ideal of "Jewish culture."

LOIS GOULD:

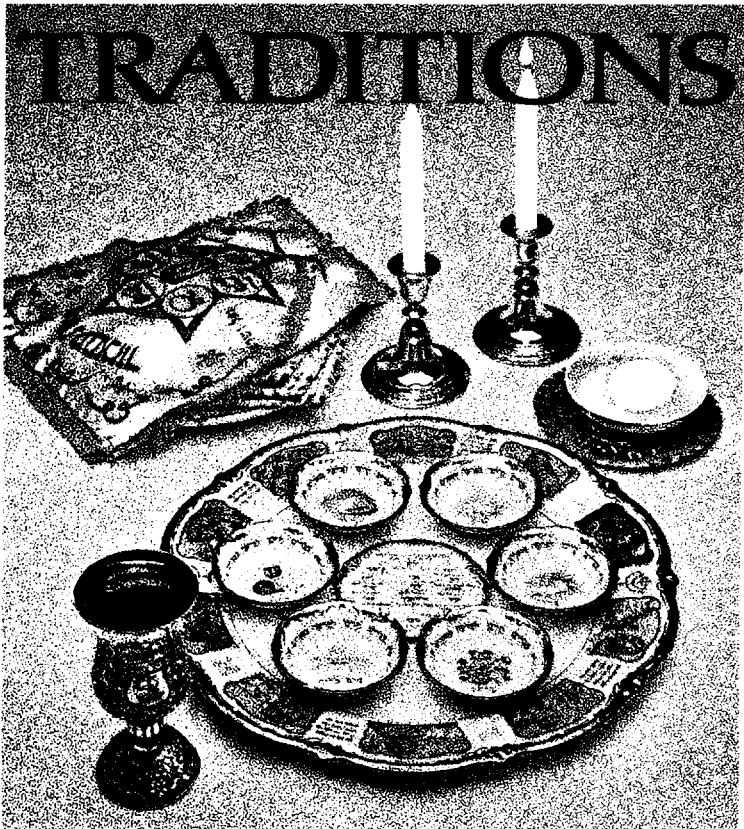
Crisis situations always have an impact on culture, a fervent demand to produce one's own artifacts and to reject products from different cultures. I dare say, if conditions become stable here, this acute

consciousness, this sense of withdrawal, will abate.

WARREN HARVEY:

I agree. It is fitting at this point, as we close the session, to hope that if ever

conditions become normal we shall be able to exchange our cultural products freely and with mutual gratitude. The reciprocal influences of Israeli and American Jewry can then operate in an atmosphere of free choice.



We sit 'round the Seder table each year, and celebrate The Exodus through traditions passed down to us over thousands of years. These traditions have become so much a part of our heritage they are inscribed in The Hagadah for all the world to see: the matzoh, the "MaNishtanah", the Aphikoman, the recitation of the plagues, the chant of "Dayenu", and on and on through the night, closing with "Chad Gadya."

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