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## 26 / A Life of Jewish Learning: In Search of a Theology of Judaism

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Bob Seltzer and I first encountered each other half a century ago at his family's St. Louis synagogue. Newly hatched from rabbinical school, I was the assistant rabbi there, and, as was typical in those days, I had been asked to start and run a youth group. Bob was a member of that high-school-age group and I remember him as bright, sensitive and somewhat shy, but one of those kids of such promise that you cannot help wondering what they will make of themselves. In Bob's case I have been able to keep some track and have watched with admiration his emergence as a historian of Eastern European Jewry and his broader work on Judaism entire as well as his significant leadership of various Jewish intellectual enterprises. So it was with very great pleasure indeed that I received his invitation to give this lecture. I cannot imagine that his extending this honor to a student of theology was without some qualms on his part or that of various of his colleagues. The relationship between the university, particularly those which are government sponsored, and the discipline which speaks of religious faith from within the circle of belief, has long been a troubled one, a difficulty exacerbated by those Jewish faculty members who want their Judaism to be resolutely non-religious. Having taught Jewish thought at various secular universities over the years, I think such worries can easily be overstated. In any case, I pay tribute to his courage in overriding those issues and welcoming me to this platform.

The particular terms of this lectureship call for a still somewhat uncommon academic mix of biography with serious intellectual work. I see in this a tribute to the cultural shift in thinking about thinking which

characterizes our time and loosely goes by the name "postmodernism." The charge laid on me has led me to an insight which I suggest is the *grundmotif* of this lecture. Somehow I have managed to traverse the second half of the twentieth century as a culturally involved, socially engaged, serious intellectual, indeed, a Jewish religious thinker, of all things, and yet have lived essentially without notable angst or crisis. As I look back over the past fifty years or so, it seems to me that my religious intellectual life has been a relatively organic development, one not untroubled or unperplexed, but, by contrast to what many other writers report, a relatively straightforward and unbroken development.

This absence of radical theological or personal spiritual crisis was not due to any of the usual causes of religious certainty. I do not recall ever having had an enveloping mystical vision or a conversion experience; I did not grow up in a household suffused with religiosity or characterized by rich observance or Jewish learning; and from what I have read of some other people's religious lives, I cannot claim a naturally saintly demeanor or a congenitally intense sense of personal piety. Unlike most of my Jewish neighbors and friends, I do appear to have a more lively and acted-upon sense of the reality and presence of God. Otherwise, I seem to me to have been always a rather normal, if bookish, Midwestern American Jew. When, as the years have gone by, I wondered why I wasn't as radically troubled by various events as were numbers of people whom I highly esteemed, I have thought this simply might be a failing of mine. But my efforts to be a religious rebel or to contend with God never lasted long. They seemed unauthentic to me. So, though I couldn't then come up with a clear understanding of why I was right to do so, I persisted in my way. Perhaps others will find in the mental story that follows an explanation for my curious life experience.

Taking heuristic license, I shall speak about five distinct and largely successive themes in my intellectual development.<sup>1</sup> Life, of course, is not that neat and my head has often seemed to me an untidy closet, overflowing with a jumble of ideas, one which regularly defied every effort to tidy it up. Still, since my long-term focus has been on systematic theology, I am accustomed to the guilt of over-simplifying in the desire to make the broad truth stand out. I shall here, as often elsewhere, paint with a very wide brush.

In my first stage I sought to give a rational construction of Jewish truth but quickly ran afoul of the insoluble problems of epistemology. These systemic difficulties made it impossible to know with any certainty

that our religious beliefs were true. That did not turn me into a secularist, as happened to so many others, but this, second led me to existentialism as a means of explicating Judaism. Thinking existentially pointed us beyond pure cognition to what it might mean to conceptualize in terms of the whole self and thus opened up valuable ways of talking about God. Unfortunately this philosophy also emphasized human generality, thus again posing a barrier to integrating Jewish particularity with the reality of a personally known God. Seeking to resolve this critical issue, I, third, began giving considerable attention to what we might assert about the role of the social in contemporary Judaism—a topic that, as I shall explain later, had to include why the founding of the State of Israel took only a subsidiary role in my theology. At the same time, fourth, I was deepening my sense of what God might still mean to us and why the question of the Holocaust meant something quite different to me than what it had in most Holocaust theology. All of which came to a climax, fifth, in my current postmodernism, a stance which has finally provided me with a cultural language with which to set before the thinking community a fresh, systematic statement of a richly ramified Jewish belief.

Let me immediately connect with this intellectual agenda two personal experiences which seem to undergird my march through these various phases. The one may be my earliest childhood memory. I remember going with my father and grandfather, both immigrants from Eastern Europe, to a small, Lower East Side traditional synagogue for an evening *Simhat Torah* service. I have a vague sense of being given a flag and marching around with it. Something about that evening seems to have made an indelible, favorable impression on me and I have long associated it with my primal sense that there is something profoundly good and true about Judaism. Did I come to feel that way because at no other time I can recall did I do anything with my father and grandfather, a man, I must add, I did not much care for? We moved to Columbus, Ohio, when I was six or seven—but whether the *Simhat Torah* experience was before or after that I cannot say, so I do not know whether it had anything to do with a special or a rather ordinary trip to Manhattan.

The other experience is connected with my growing up in the Midwest. My father, who loved being with Jews, discovered that there was only one way to associate with them in the Ohio *galut*, exile, and that was to belong to and attend a synagogue. As a result, we often went to the local Conservative synagogue, the logical gathering place for modernizing East European Jews like my parents. There, and everywhere

else in Columbus Jewish life, I found that no one ever explained Judaism very well. Despite my regular dismay that teachers, rabbis, and visiting speakers made Judaism seem rather dumb, I never wavered from my judgment that Judaism had to be better than that. I swore to myself that if I ever had the chance I would give it a properly intelligent explanation.

My impulse to be a latter-day Maimonides seemed most unlikely of realization because, though people often said that I should become a rabbi, that, in typical post-immigrant fashion, was the last thing any reasonably bright, upwardly aspiring young American Jewish boy would do. I did maintain a number of Jewish interests after Bar Mitzvah and confirmation until I got to the university, Ohio State, in 1940—I was sixteen—but once there I could not find much at Hillel that appealed to me. Jewish studies, needless to say, didn't exist in those days, and this major school of 15,000 students had just one Jewish professor, in marketing, typically enough.

#### THE BOY RATIONALIST'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISAPPOINTMENT

I came to the university as an enthusiastic devotee of the ethos of modernity: reason was the best, indeed the only guide to truth and value, and the university was the instrument by which one acquired its variegated teaching. Though I had received a glimpse of how one might give a sophisticated exposition of Judaism from Manuel Brandt, the instructor in my synagogue's high-school class, Judaism was far from the forefront of my attention. For all my inner regard for Judaism, it was the irresistibly attractive and convincing ideas of the general culture that filled my imagination. In that, I simply mirrored the goals of my generation. I became a philosophy major and, in due course, was permitted to enlarge that concentration to include the social sciences. I fervently anticipated the immense human benefits that would result from applying the scientific method to all issues of human concern and I scorned those old-fashioned types who refused to use their minds rigorously.

Yet before long my polemical rationalism was brought up short by my fundamental commitment to the reality of value in the universe. The usual shorthand for this is moral value or ethics, but, as best as I can recollect my sensibility then, I had in mind something broader than the good one should do. It centered rather on the kind of person one should be. Of course, that certainly demanded substantial ethical dedication but it aspired somewhat higher by attaching us to a broad ideal of high

human quality. Even in today's more embracing diction that sounds rather fuzzy and had I tried to articulate it in the heyday of rationalism, it surely would have been dismissed as simply laughable. Nonetheless, I was convinced then, and remain so today, that this vision of the reality of value was not ultimately a mere act of personal whim, volition, or projection, or simply a social construct, for all that self and society shaped it in their fashion. I knew that value inhered in the universe, and this insight became the criterion by which I began evaluating the adequacy of the various systems of thought for which my teachers and fellow students were proselytizing. Of course, other standards also influenced me. Nonetheless, I firmly believe that the issue of the ground of value was central for me in those undergraduate days.

I was certain enough about my commitments to reject the pragmatism which was so powerful an intellectual force in the university culture then. In my practical, naive way, I could not understand why, by strictly pragmatic standards, Hitler would not be entitled to try the hypothesis that Germany would function better as an exclusively Aryan enterprise and see, by whatever means efficiently led to that end, if this social vision worked. As a result, for a short period I became a Platonic idealist, attracted to its notion that The Good was the highest of all ideals and thus at the heart of reality. But I could not find a contemporary exponent of philosophical idealism who made much sense to me. Equally troubling was the fact that no philosopher who reasoned in this fashion had much general intellectual acceptance. I did not want to talk a philosophic language that only I and a few others thought could explain things. I wanted to be able to converse with some significant portion of our society. (I now recognize the slippery nature of seeking social acceptance, for I long suffered from it in the years that I spoke the lonely language of theology to a Jewish community that was resolutely secular and agnostic.) When I concluded that philosophical idealism was not rationalistic enough for the mid-century intellectual temper, I knew I would have to find a radically different manner of talking about the truth.

A decade plus later, this same value benchmark reasserted itself in my rejection of linguistic analysis or the philosophy of language which swept through the English speaking academic world in the 1950s. This movement prided itself on its rigorous rationality and certainly taught us how many of our intellectual problems were due to tangles in our language and the way we used it. But the linguistic analysts insisted that, to be meaningful, statements had to be empirically verifiable or, as consistency later required them to put it, that statements had to be



empirically falsifiable. By that criterion, the entire realm of ethics had to be considered rationally devoid of meaning, non-sense, as some polemicists put it, and ethical statements relegated to the realm of mere emotive utterance. Many of these philosophers were themselves people of fine character, ones you probably could have counted on in a time of persecution, but they either did not see or did not much care what their demotion of ethics to the realm of personal or social preference might engender if widely accepted. Because I cared profoundly about social consequences, I was something of a pragmatist, but surely one who evaluated our suggested duties by how well they conformed to my idealistic ontology, a stance which, I would now contend, is typical of much halakhic reasoning.

My break with philosophy and the adequacy of rationalism can easily be traced back to a specific experience at the university, one so memorable and vivid that it was as close as I have ever come to a conversion. I hasten to add that it had no religious aura about it but was more like what I imagine happens when an animal sheds its old skin. The event was accompanied by sensations of strangeness, newness, freedom, and hope, and an eagerness to set out on a new path. That was, I take it, a self-conscious experience of powerful growth.

What transpired was mundane enough. As an advanced undergraduate, I was granted admission to a graduate seminar on epistemology offered by a visiting professor from Johns Hopkins. Since little could be more basic to a philosophic quest than a rational understanding of how we know what we know, I entered the course with great interest and considerable timidity. The nub of the sessions soon turned out to be the conflict between epistemological dualism and epistemological monism. That is, we usually naively assume, in some pre-Kantian fashion, that our minds can make contact with the world outside us so that our ideas are an accurate reflection of what is "out there." That assumes two distinct entities, the mind and the world, and thus involves a dualism of knowing. However, mind/world reasoning engenders a paralyzing problem: how does a quite material world get into our consciousness as immaterial ideas? This leads other philosophers to argue that all cognition is only the mind's patterning and that, rationally speaking, we have no evidence at all that there is a world "out there." To be fully consistent, we must say there is only mind and, as it were, a monism of knowing. Of course, this abandonment of any possibility of knowing a real world is attacked by other philosophers as an intolerable solipsism.

The arguments for dualism and for monism went back and forth in the seminar. We read thinkers who propounded one or the other view, and the students then would deepen the inquiry by espousing one or another position. The mental exercise was impressive and initially quite exhilarating. But after some weeks it became apparent to me that we would reach no decision. Indeed, by the rationalistic premises of the discussion, we could not reach a decision. Walking to my car one afternoon after class, I realized that if I became a philosopher I would never know with rational certainty how I knew what I knew. In fact, for the rest of my life I would keep debating this issue or finding ways to evade it. Today this is part of the widespread attack on Cartesian rationality, which, by its privileging of doubt and individual judgment, is finally self-destructive. There is little of true human significance that can be put into "clear and distinct" ideas, so certainty, that great initial promise of rationalism, becomes unattainable. The world and human duty were far too real to me to devote my life primarily to a discipline in which one could never know the truth, particularly the truth of value on which I and our community based our lives.<sup>2</sup>

Permit me an addendum, one I believe important to understanding why my rejection of a universalizing rationality as the prime shaper of our Judaism remained a major theme in my work. As the years went by and my consciousness of the depth of my particular Jewishness rose, it reinforced my early demotion of rationalist thinking to a secondary role in my theologizing.<sup>3</sup> Classically, modern Jewish philosophers have made one's rationality and its concomitant universalism primary. As a result, their thought necessarily rendered particular Jewishness of secondary value even though the thinkers often made valiant efforts to give Judaism validity by exposing and lauding its universal message. Alas, Judaism always comes off second best in this kind of thinking. As a result, modern sophisticates over the decades have self-righteously disdained their Jewishness (and its special responsibilities and social disabilities), for the general culture's humanistic lifestyle which directly focuses on the universal goals rather than being encumbered by their ghetto-ish incarnation, Jewish practice. Radically put, the primacy of rationalism makes Judaism dispensable, at least in principle. Even Mordecai Kaplan, the great exponent of the naturalistic virtue of particularity, was forced by his Durkheimian premises to as good as concede this point in his book *The Future of the American Jew*. In his adulation of the religionization of democratic nationhood, he can only point to the present ethical shortsightedness of American national vision as providing a temporary, coun-



terbalancing role for the historic religions.<sup>4</sup> The implication is clear: should the American civilization ever develop a full-fledged religious culture, as he hoped and trusted it would, there would be no need to remain a Jew.<sup>5</sup>

If, however, one believes, as I came to understand I did, that there is something cosmically valid about Judaism and hence it is not dispensable, then any philosophy which continues the old identification of truth primarily with universals will necessarily be unacceptable.<sup>6</sup> This issue lies behind the century-long argument over whether the discipline should be "the philosophy of Judaism," or "Jewish philosophy." In a "philosophy of Judaism," one seeks to show how a rational truth which has been established by academic philosophers can be found in the particular literature and practices of the Jewish religion. "Jewish philosophy," by contrast begins with the premise that Judaism has some particular insight into reality which the philosopher now seeks to explicate to inquirers in the terms of some culturally accepted rationalism. This perennial modern conflict surfaced again at a recent meeting of the American Academy of Religion. With special apologies for this shameless simplification of their highly nuanced and impressively sophisticated presentations, Lenn Goodman argued the case for a contemporary philosophy of Judaism (one which was fully conscious of the value of Jewish particularity); David Novak made a case for Jewish philosophy based on a prior commitment to God's revelation at Sinai; and Norbert Samuelson presented a non-revelational case for Jewish philosophy based upon a prior commitment to Judaism, its texts and its tradition of reasoning. For all my admiration of these colleagues and their instructive work, I deny the ability of any contemporary philosophic rationality to provide an adequate statement of Judaism's particular content.

Something similar needs to be said about employing "ethics" as well as "tradition" as major factors in explaining how one goes about one's non-Orthodox decision-making. I learned this, in good part, from my own error in this regard. In my very early article, "Toward a Theology of Reform Jewish Practice,"<sup>7</sup> I followed a common liberal track by simply setting ethics and tradition side by side as determinants of what we should do. I did not then see that the major problem of our decision-making arose at those places where the universal insistence of ethics clashed with the particular demands of Jewish tradition. The ethical cannot, on its own terms, accept any compromise or diminution of its claims; anything less is unethical. But there are instances where the demands of Jewish tradition cannot be subordinated to the hegemony of ethics

without grave danger to the entire fabric of Judaism. Intermarriage is the classic case, and, depending on what one sees as basic to the edifice of Judaism, decisors will differ as to when they allow the tradition to say "No" to what ethics commands. To resolve this difficulty, non-Orthodox traditionalists like Jakob Petuchowski, z"l, Elliot Dorff, and Moshe Zemer, will generally try to argue that the *halakhah* itself contains an ethical concern (and that in something of a modern sense of "ethics"). That flies in the face of all in classic Jewish law which is resolutely a-ethical or even un-ethical, including its insistence that private conscience must almost always bend to the stated law.<sup>8</sup> I can only applaud the goals of such thinkers even as I often agree with their decisions. We do need to give major priority in Jewish duty to what ethics tells us about the unique importance of persons as persons, but I do not think we can ever theoretically integrate that well with our sense of the particularity of Judaism's truth as long as we do not substantially recast our thinking, something I believe postmodern Jewish categories now finally allow us to do.<sup>9</sup> And that returns me to my story.

I had moved through the university with some speed and was, at eighteen and a half, into my senior year of courses. But I had also exhausted all my allegedly sensible career options. My course in advanced algebra seemed to me terribly sterile so I couldn't press ahead with becoming an atomic physicist, and while I liked chemistry, the lab work was too devoid of human contact for me to become a chemist. I gave up on medicine after an intensive summer's study of zoology and I rejected law, despite some tempting offers from some very well-connected Jews, because I feared that I couldn't pursue justice as an adversary whose goal was winning cases. Teaching philosophy had been my last and best hope of putting all my interests together and when that collapsed, I fell back on the rabbinic option that had so often been urged upon me and which I had investigated as far back as when I graduated high school.

In 1942 I entered the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, with the specific interest of studying Jewish theology. I already used that troublesome term, "theology," because I didn't know what else to call my interest in an abstract, systematic statement of the content of Jewish belief and the reasons for believing in it. I soon learned how odd most of my schoolmates found my focus on belief and its exposition. Those students who rose above simple careerism were devoted either to social justice (as it was called before activism demanded another name) or to "Zionism," that is, a non-ideological passion for the Jewish people and

its particular future. All were praxis-oriented, sturdy exemplars of American pragmatism and champions of the ideology that the Jewish emphasis on mitzvah meant that what you did counted, not what you believed. It did not take much psychological acumen to see that this stance justified their living, as did most of American Jewry, in peace with their agnosticism.

My teachers were not only mostly believers but they were also impressively learned, emulators of that pioneering modern Jewish scholar, the historian Leopold Zunz. They had a quasi-Hegelian trust in the explanatory power of historic development to resolve all modern issues of belief. This naive trust in the persuasive power of a historical treatment of ideas animates and thus makes unusable, the first great English book of Jewish theology, Kaufmann Kohler's work by that name. True, we had a Professor of Jewish Theology, Samuel Cohon, as fine a Jew and human being as there was at the Hebrew Union College. When I had advanced enough to take his major course, I self-confidently pressed him to face up to the critical difference between the history of an idea and the reasons why one should still believe it. My attack, which lasted through several sessions, opened a breach between us that only some years of maturation and a considerable growth in humility on my part managed to mend. If the oddity of an avoidance of theology at a theological school seems strange, let me also point out that it took a long time for American Jews generally to get over their antipathy toward questions of belief and the term "theology." Thus, in 1962, when I wrote an article for *Commentary* on "The Jewish Need for Theology," it evoked a response from that redoubtable philosophic analyst, Sidney Morgenbesser, asserting that theology was not Jewish and that all self-respecting moderns would reject any effort to coerce Jewish belief. I responded that Judaism certainly did not have the equivalent of Christian dogmatic theology but it certainly had an aggadic tradition of seeking to clarify Jewish faith.<sup>10</sup> I wish the language of "meta-ethics" and such terms had been common then as I should have been able to make a much better case for theology by saying it is our meta-*halakhah*, the belief which impels and guides our duties—another example of my life-long concern with the ground of our values.

In sum, at the College I again found myself in the situation where I knew Judaism was very much better than the way my teachers were explaining it to me. Fortunately I soon found a friend who shared my odd interest, Arnold Jacob Wolf, a fifth-generation American Jew and a scion of a family which had known distinguished Reform rabbis. Though

we never studied in the typical *chevrusa* (yeshivah study partner) style, we became spiritual companions and mentors to one another in a way that has continued on to the present day. We were soon joined by Steven Schwarzschild, z"l, whose rich Germanic culture and razor-sharp neo-Kantian mind, honed by the socialist Marxism of the Frankfurt School, gave our triumvirate a fizzy continental intellectuality that constituted our real rabbinic-school education.

This late-1940s-early-1950s emergence of a minority of Reform Jews interested in theology, among whom must be named our predecessor, Lou Silberman, our contemporary, Jakob Petuchowski, z"l, and the most distinguished of the émigrés from the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, Emil Fackenheim, was matched at the Jewish Theological Seminary then in such figures as Seymour Siegel, z"l, Herschel Matt, z"l, Byron Sherwin, and David Silverman. These men and others became the core of a small, path-breaking community of theological concern that had no predecessor in American Jewish life and, as a collective, has had no successors. I leave it to the historians to explain this phenomenon, one made more notable by the fact that its early documents are driven by neither of the factors that Jewish writers always invoke when speaking of recent Jewish thought: the Holocaust and/or the founding of the State of Israel.

The kind of theology that concerned us in those days was not narrowly intellectual. Its natural corollary was a new Jewish pietism, with the thinker taking God, the people of Israel, and Jewish practice very much more seriously and personally than had heretofore been the case. While the standard Jewish concerns of the day, Zionism, study, and social action, now received a new impetus and tone, in my life it led to a lifelong dedication to the practice of prayer with *kavanah*, intention. For us, and for me, God was not merely a curiously complicated conceptual challenge but a reality in whose presence one had to stand with regularity, doing so as one of the people of Israel encountering God. To this day, praying in one or another of the modernized traditional modalities of Jewish piety is a significant part of my daily regimen. With its unpredictable highs and lows, it is also an unceasing spiritual challenge and a difficult and humbling one, at that. It is not called *avodah*, labor, for nothing.

#### THE PROMISE AND PROBLEMS OF EXISTENTIALISM

I left the College after ordination in 1948 disappointed that the Faculty did not want to grant me a fellowship to stay and do graduate study. It

was, I believe, the only time a student aspiring to a doctorate has been so denied. But two special resources accompanied me then. I had married just before my senior year and I was to learn from the gifted, exceptional Estelle, my wife now of 52-plus years, what it means to live in a covenant of mutuality. I never use the words "covenant" or "partnership" that she does not stand behind them. *Vehamaskil yavin* (and the wise will know all that implies). And I took with me to my St. Louis position the inklings of a new direction in thinking, one that was yet quite indistinct but in which Buber and Rosenzweig, of whom I shall say more later, were my uncertain guides. Greater clarity did not begin to come until, after two years of congregational service, I received the fellowship I had once been denied and we returned to the College so I could study for the newly established Ph.D. degree. My tenure was too brief for that, only one year, for when the Korean War broke out it was my turn to serve as a chaplain, having been deferred from military service in World War II. Fortunately we were stationed stateside for the two-year stint and I was able to complete my first earned doctorate, in the College's *in absentia* D.H.L. program. My dissertation was in the area of rabbinic theology. Because of my anti-philosophic stand, I did not want to follow the more common path of studying the medieval Jewish philosophers and then using their thought as a basis for contemporary Jewish thought. I turned rather to the creators of our Judaism, the rabbis, to study in detail what they said theologically and how they expressed their belief in a non-Hellenic diction (the latter a topic I have studied for years and that still intrigues me).<sup>11</sup>

While a resident graduate student I had been able to read rather widely and I discovered that there was in that period a culturally significant language I might use to give a non-rationalistic exposition of Judaism: existentialism. The existentialist thinkers knew the critical truth that our most fundamental sense of reality does not sensibly arise from pure reason but from what it means to be a self, a person, a living being, or, as they technically epitomized it, that our existence precedes our essence.

Two things made me hesitate about adopting the existentialist approach to truth. The first was that its primary exemplars, Sartre and Jaspers, were committed atheists and as resolutely secular as the typical rationalist philosopher. However, the patron saint of this fresh way of thinking was Søren Kierkegaard and there could be little question about his authentic religiosity. As it turned out, there was also a more recent body of writing which could be called religious existentialism, and my



first book, a decade plus later, was devoted to describing these thinkers and arguing that Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber were entitled to a place in their number.<sup>12</sup> My second reservation about espousing this position arose from the easy identification of religious existentialism with its Christian exemplification. True to their tradition, Christian thinkers regularly utilized the existentialist analysis of the human condition to make a case for sin as a necessary concomitant of humanhood which only God's grace could then overcome. In keeping with classic Jewish teaching, however, neither Rosenzweig nor Buber was as pessimistic about human existence and reconciliation with God. Rather they pointed to the way all human beings—and not just Jews—might encounter God directly and without a mediator.

Arnold Wolf and I had discovered Buber while we were rabbinical students, no thanks to our teachers who were too rationalistic to even mention his name in class. I can still visualize the dowdy copy of *I and Thou* in its old, green binding which Arnold retrieved from our library stacks and which began our conversion to a non-rationalistic pattern of religious thinking. We then avidly read everything of his that appeared in English. A British publication, Buber's commentary on much of the Torah, entitled *Moses*, had a major effect on us.<sup>13</sup> It showed one could read the Bible without deprecating critical scholarship but nonetheless taking its religiosity seriously, that is, in Buber's fashion, not censoring out the reality of God's presence in the story. We then devoured the early Buber books of the newly established American branch of the Schocken publishing program, the two volumes of *The Hasidic Tales* and, even more thrillingly, the collection of papers entitled, *Israel and the World*.<sup>14</sup> In these varied essays we could see how the theory enunciated in *I and Thou* could be applied to problems as real as Jewish education, Zionism, and Jewish life generally.

Situating Buber and Rosenzweig in the existentialist stream of modern religious thought allowed us to signal that we were not alone in rejecting the primacy of rationalism and provided us with a culturally significant way of communicating the content of our kind of Judaism. That seems relatively easy to say today when non-rationalism seems almost to dominate our culture. But in the 1950s and early 1960s it was anathema to the resolutely rationalistic non-Orthodox establishment as, in a lesser way, it was to the American Jewish ethos. Let me emphasize here that assigning reason a role secondary to some prior reality does not mean abandoning rationality altogether. If anything, I believe that we non-rationalists have a particular obligation to be as clear and explicit as our



basic stance allows us to be. Such subsidiary rationality is one of our few safeguards against the many astonishingly irresponsible non-rational notions we regularly hear about these days. To be sure, thinking which begins from a non-rational base can never reach the kind of certainty that rationalism once promised and which still allures many people. Not a small number of the orthodoxies of our time have flourished because of their attraction to people who cannot bear having to live with a certain measure of risk. Existentialists cannot even mitigate that vulnerability by supplying their adherents with a (rational) rule for recognizing when we have reached the limits of necessary uncertainty. The secondary use of reason prevents it from containing the unknown, but that should not cause us to belittle how valuable its limited applicability remains.

This lecture exemplifies what reason can do even when relegated to a secondary role. My students over the decades have received this procedure in strikingly different ways. Thirty years ago, I was much too non-rational and pious for them. In the last decade plus, they often rebel at my insistence upon their thinking hard and doing so based on a considerable body of knowledge. After all, isn't religion ultimately about what it is that they, as they say, "simply know," or "deeply feel"? Similarly, encountering my persistence at analysis and argument, some classify me as an, ugh!, rationalist. I do not know whether I am too compulsive about the need to think clearly about what we believe but cannot rationally explicate. I only know that I have yet to find a more responsible way to refine my religiosity.

To revert, for a moment, to rationalistic categories, Buber's non-rational thinking resolved two critical problems for me. The first was the epistemological issue: how could one "know"—in the special, certainty-seeking sense of that term—that God was real. At the cost of limiting what rationality could accomplish, Buber had given up on what I-it certainty could say about persons and God. He had, however, called our attention to the reality that these days we have two ways of knowing, not only the familiar I-it mode but an even more significant one, that of the I-thou. In this non-rationalistic manner of knowing, the full sense of quality and value is made plain. We know God as persons are known, not as things are known, and to identify a thing with God is idolatry, even if the thing is an idea. However, we can find God, better, meet God, in direct and indirect encounters with God which are closely analogous to our moments of true relationships with persons. This dualistic, now I-it, now I-thou, epistemology deeply offends the rationalists, those dogmatists of

the I-it and worshipers of concepts. Regardless, as the years have gone by and the personal has, for most of us, greatly expanded beyond the cognitive, what Buber said has come to make increasing sense.

Buber also served us mightily, as did Rosenzweig quite independently, by clarifying what it might mean to take revelation, God's input into our lives and history, quite seriously, but not in an orthodox fashion. Rationalists reinterpreted revelation as some form of human discovery or growth, and the more confidence one had in human beings and their capacities the more value one could attach to this notion of Torah as largely human insight.

Buber and Rosenzweig had a real God, so they did not need to rest all the burden of religious truth on the power of human discovery. But they also had such modern respect for people that they could not honestly diminish the human role in revelation as much as did the traditional orthodoxies. They taught, rather, that the best metaphor for God's input is not verbal communication—stories and laws and counsel—but only interpersonal presence. In friendship or love it is the other's presence that, even without words, commands us. Such relationships send us into the world to tasks we must define for ourselves, whether as individuals or as communities—for groups, too, can relate to an Other. Often what we wordlessly know we must do is to be loyal to our past together, but our relationship may also prompt us to a creative response to this moment. Rosenzweig pointed to love as the human counterpart to such non-verbal commanding. As any faithful friend or serious lover knows, the beloved's unspoken demand of us has great authority indeed. Love, too, is the concrete reality behind the Buberian notion of relationship, a word which he, more than anyone in this century, has given such valence that it is now bandied about even in advertising slogans.

Permit me here a comment about why my recent writing has made so little direct reference to feminist thinkers. Partially, as I have written,<sup>15</sup> it is from a hesitancy to engage in inter-gendered discourse until women suggest the standards which they think are appropriate for discussions across the gender divide. Having long waited for such guidance but not found it, I am more recently of the opinion that these standards will have to emerge out of our discussions. In larger part my reticence has come from my acceptance of the ethical truth of the feminist denunciation of male sexism, a chastisement I have sought to act upon in my writing and behavior. My response to the few feminist thinkers who have gone beyond the indictment of our sinful treatment of women to state what the feminist experience now positively directs us all to do has a

more theoretical character. Having for nearly half a century been a committed Buberian, in my life as in my thought, much feminist teaching about the importance of persons and real relationships, of community and its newly personalized structures, sounds quite reminiscent to me. I hear in this thinking a restatement of what Buber was saying decades ago (though his language follows the sexist conventions of his day). The content of what he says, and not just the German or English usages, makes plain that the "thou" is always necessarily beyond gender. Thus far, I have heard little that goes beyond Buber, but I look forward to the instruction I shall yet receive from feminist thinkers on this and many other matters.

There are problems with Buber's position. Nonetheless, I regularly find that the Buber attacked for his individualism is a caricature of the man's life and thought, one often based on reading little more than the heady opening pages of *I and Thou*. Buber has an extensive, compelling social vision. He passionately believed in community and, by his thinking, helped liberate that term from its institutional understanding to make it a more personal, relational ideal. He was a Zionist at the turn of the twentieth century and the first editor of the World Zionist Congress cultural magazine. After World War I he was one of the intellectual leaders of the interfaith religious socialist movement in Europe. At the Hebrew University, the Orthodox would only stop objecting to his appointment to the faculty if his title had nothing to do with religion, so he was, with good reason, appointed Professor of Social Philosophy. Buber has a strong theory of the relationship between religion and society as well as law. Any open-minded person can see that if they will take the pains to read the last dozen or so pages of *I and Thou*, the discussion of the illegitimacy of Korah's rebellion in the book on *Moses*, and his 1936 polemic against Kierkegaard in the essay "The Question to the Single One," collected in the volume *Between Man and Man*.<sup>16</sup> It is this Buber, the social thinker, who alone ought properly to be criticized.

Buber's social vision must be resisted, I believe, because of his insistence that even as one of a genuine community, one should determine one's duty as a pure "I" in relation to the group's common (thou) center. Thus, the deciding self needs to shake off the very social bonds that he has otherwise commended. Theoretically, one detects here a vestige of Kantian autonomy, now taken a step beyond its old rational/secular isolation but nonetheless loyal to the hegemony of the newly relational individual. Practically, this is Buber's response to the various forms of collectivism which he saw threatening the individual, fears which were

only to become more evident as the twentieth century moved into its middle third. And he augmented these by his judgments that, in the Jewish community, the ethos of Orthodoxy and the compulsive propriety of Liberal Judaism oppressively interposed barriers between Jews' "I's" and the Eternal Thou.

Let me quickly summarize the gains and problems of the existentialist Judaism that as the 1960s wore on, forced me to begin a further search for a better, that is, a less inadequate language of Jewish theology. Buber, to give the prime example, restores a real God to us, but one who now has sufficient regard for human freedom such that people become partners in revelation. Though this takes us a quantum leap beyond rationalistic, humano-centric religion, it leaves the Jewishly concerned with a problem. As it were, Buber has brought a living sense of God's reality back into our post-ghetto Judaism. But leaving it at that makes us only *B'nai Noah*, children of Noah, sharers in God's covenant with all humankind. But because Buber's thought does not somehow raise *Yisrael*, Israel, the Jewish people, to a role of near equivalent authority, it does not yet help us understand what is involved in being *B'nai Yisrael*, children of Israel, sharers in God's Covenant with the Jewish People.

In due course I would identify my struggle to transcend Buber and Rosenzweig as the problem of a theology of "*halakhah*," of what non-Orthodox Jews believed that should impel them to observe more than, as we still called it then, the Moral Law. Rosenzweig simply dogmatized that law was necessary and could not explain how that jibed with his insistence that revelation was a partnered activity, one in which we were not to be coerced. Buber more consistently held on to the existential self, but this position reduced communal duty to how the individual group member presently responded to the group's norms. In practice, Buber's individualism justified modernizing Jews in shucking off the social eccentricity of identifiably Jewish acts and, at best, having a personal, perhaps humanitarian, relationship with God. But I knew with gradually increasing clarity that the truth of Judaism inhered in its particularity and not merely in its universalism. Therefore, what our community now required was a theology of non-Orthodox Jewish duty, particular as well as universal.

All of the foregoing reflects how the central concern of Jewish religious thinking began a sea-change in this period. Ever since we came out of the ghetto the driving issue of Jewish life had been "How can we, who still somehow want to stay Jewish, be authentically modern?" With

the rise of Jewish social integration in the 1950s, some people began asking, "Since we are so fully modern, what might it mean for us now also to be authentically Jewish?" In the sixties, the rise of our Holocaust consciousness and the possibility of another major Jewish destruction in Israel's Six-Day War, made most of our community realize how much we still cared about our Jewishness. Both these influences were magnified by our increasing disenchantment with the United States as a moral society. Despite a federal civil rights law, our race relations were deplorable, and, despite widespread objection to our war in Vietnam, our country persisted in fighting it. We began losing the bedrock foundation of our modern Jewish faith: that Western civilization was utterly superior to Judaism. It became increasingly evident that modernity, too, had deeply serious problems, and Judaism now commended itself to us as a valuable corrective to our society's ills.

This must not be exaggerated. What was a crack in the cultural facade and has since become a vast breach has not persuaded the vast majority of ordinary Jews to give up their utterly primary allegiance to the modern world. Contemporary Jews disagree strongly on what constitutes the proper balance between modernity and Jewishness. Very many of us remain unrepentantly dedicated to the agenda of modernity, content to have our children and grandchildren be fine human beings, worthy *B'nai Noah*. As a result, such Jews are often, as Leslie Fiedler so memorably termed them, their family's "terminal Jews." But there is also among us a not insignificant minority who think differently, people who divine that something cosmic would be lost if the people of Israel dwindled into insipidity or became a living museum piece. Something like that latter view, an intuition I can trace back as far as my struggles with a student sermon I had to give in 1948, made me years later move beyond religious existentialism in search of a compelling theology of ethical-and-more-than-ethical Jewish duty.

Was I sensing, animal-like, the tremors gathering along the tectonic plates that made Western civilization seem so solidly established? For in these post-World War II decades our culture lurched from heady self-confidence to increasing self-doubt and initiated a radical realignment of what had been its glory in secularity and its disdain for serious religious belief. So a fuller appreciation of who God was and what God may still be said to do developed alongside my strengthening Jewish consciousness. During the seventies and early eighties, these concerns were surely intertwined—the forerunner of what I would later call a needed



Jewish "holism"<sup>17</sup>—yet in what follows I will, for clarity's sake, treat the issues of community and God separately.

#### AM (PEOPLE) AND SELF

Humanly, I came to my mature decades benefiting from some wonderful accomplishments, those memorable events and relationships whose direct influence on my thought I must leave to others to elucidate. Estelle and I had produced and raised three wonderful daughters, and nothing had been more fundamental to my daily life, not even, I believe, my intense dedication to my demanding, multifaceted activities. I would like to believe that they all appreciated the priority I tried to give to the family and hope that this made it somewhat easier for Estelle and the children to have respect for my love of my work. A single practice perhaps best epitomizes this. For many years my home office was on our first floor so that the children, coming home from school, felt it natural to come by and say "Hello" or chat with me. I almost always immediately stopped what I was doing and spent some time talking to them before they were off to something else and I could resume my work; to this day, when Estelle returns from an outing, I regularly stop what I am doing and spend a little time with her to see how things went, only then heading back to my office. Obviously my growing sense of community was given greater reality by these years of being-there, schlepping, attending, appreciating, trusting, worrying, and all the rest that goes by the name of "familial love." And, if I may jump some years, when our children had grown, Estelle became a psychoanalyst in private practice, a faculty member at two psychoanalytic institutes and Dean of Curriculum at one of them. That immensely enriched our relationship and led me on to new depths of understanding myself and human variability.

In 1953, after my two years of chaplaincy service, we had settled in Port Washington, New York, and though we moved twice in that community, making seven moves in nine years of marriage, we finally bought a large old house where, to our surprise, we lived for forty-two fulfilling years. I was the first full-time rabbi of the newly founded Reform congregation in our reasonably posh Long Island suburb, and when I left the congregation after four memorable years of service, we remained dues-paying members of that synagogue and quiet participants in its life. When I have thought or written about what I consider typical of the American Jewish community, it is my neighbors and friends of Port



Washington whom I first have had in mind, though the realities of the many other communities I have been in over the years have enlarged my sense of what really has been going on.

During the four exciting, even tumultuous years I was a pulpit rabbi, I became involved in the joint doctoral program of Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, majoring in philosophy of religion. I found that work enormously stimulating and broadening. It began a life-long interest in Christian theology and, to a lesser extent, the religious thinking of other faiths and the academic philosophy of religion. My long involvement in interfaith discussions among theologians traces back to that wonderful experience.<sup>18</sup> I managed to complete the program as an A.B.D. ("All But Dissertation") before an invitation in 1957 to become the Associate and then the national Director of Education for the Reform movement at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (the UAHC). That experience, in turn, led to much of my writing on Jewish education and gave me a very special view of the realities of American Jewish community life.<sup>19</sup> One of the conditions of my appointment was that I get a doctorate in education. Fortunately, many of my Columbia-Union credits were transferable to the Teachers College program in philosophy of education, which I completed in 1958. For my doctoral project there I tried writing up the theology of Judaism which I felt should undergird the work of teachers in Reform Jewish schools. It was my first effort at writing up a full-scale, systematic statement of Jewish belief, and while it qualified me for my degree, I knew the effort was premature and so I abandoned it without qualm and moved on to find a ripper understanding. (My second aborted effort came in 1970, I believe, when I had my first sabbatical from the HUC-JIR. I spent each morning writing an opus that would give intellectual credence to my beliefs, but, as those months came to an end, I knew that, despite its bulk, it went nowhere. Again, I never bothered to re-read or try to revise that manuscript; mainly, I suppose, because it had taught me what I still didn't know and couldn't do. These two good-sized manuscripts now repose with my other papers at the American Jewish Archives.)

My next five years planning for our educational work in the United States and Canada allowed me to work with a broad range of people across the continent. I was also involved with the UAHC staff on joint projects for our movement and with the representatives of other Jewish and non-Jewish movements or community institutions. I happily became the publisher and editor of the UAHC's broad-ranging educational publications, an activity that had already attracted me as a rabbinic student.

A good deal of my early writing was related to education, and its frequent theological interest—which defined the goals of our work—gave it a unique emphasis in this field. Education being so intimately connected with socialization, I could not help but continually be confronting the question of the relation of our ideal community to our real community.

In 1962 an early dream of mine was fulfilled when I became a full-time member of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion faculty. Initially, my primary function was to teach education, with Jewish religious thought as a minor area of specialization. But I came to the College with the understanding that eventually I would mainly be devoting my time to theology, as in fact happened. Aside from the warm human contacts it provided, teaching gave me two precious new opportunities. The first was time—time in which to read and think and write, a luxury which only those of us who have tried to do those things while carrying on other full-time jobs may be able fully to appreciate. The other was the chance to work out my thought with my students. I have long believed that the most important rule of education is “Don’t waste the students’ time,” so preparing for my sessions on Jewish thought became an important laboratory for me, one fully complemented by the response of my students to what we read and I presented. Even after thirty-seven years of full-time teaching, both these gifts of faculty status remain immeasurably precious to me.

The upheaval of the 1960s drove me into another project whose length of endurance and breadth of consequence I could not envision when I began it: the founding of *Sh'ma, A Journal of Jewish Responsibility*. It bothered me deeply that while people regularly prated of the relevance of Judaism to contemporary affairs, few ever tried to demonstrate what that might mean in our roiling social situation. By then political conservatives had stated their ethical (often their Jewish) case with such cogency that it would have been ludicrous for someone with my sense of community to act as if one could say “Jewish ethics” and assume that would simply mean what *The Nation* or *The New Republic* stood for. As in the Talmud, “the Jewish view” would now have to emerge more from the dialectic of thoughtful, informed Jewish opinions, expressed side by side, than from merely stating one point of view. My vision was confirmed when only one person on the political right refused my invitation to join our ethically polyglot group of Contributing Editors (seeing in my proposal another liberal plot to co-opt conservatism to its pink-ish purposes) and another soon left us when I raised some questions about the quality of a submission. Over the years, several people

on the right similarly withdrew, not wishing to give any credence to utterances from the left, despite the efforts I continually made to enlist writers and contributing editors from the conservative political position. In only one respect, I feel, did my own chastened liberalism affect the magazine: it remained resolutely committed to pluralism, a standard most neo-con journals, Jewish and otherwise, still regularly consider a sign of moral weakness. (After he had published, by invitation, in *Sh'ma* I asked Meir Kahane in a not-for-publication letter, whether I would be allowed to publish my journal in a state he led, and he responded that as I lived up to my ideals so he would live up to his. *Lehavdil*, in distinction, thanks to Buber's teaching about relationship, I had little difficulty accepting learned, conscientious difference of opinion amongst us.) Over the years, particularly as the journal established itself as a forum of thoughtful debate, the rate of acceptances of my invitation to write articles always remained very high. I was always pleasantly surprised at this, because my invitations often included asking writers of lead articles to tell me which of their position's critics they respected so that I could then invite them to respond to the articles. And we allowed no rejoinders except, if memory serves me, in one instance.

This private, "underground" little magazine—published without institutional support or "angel," except for the help in its first three years of a generous printer-friend—soon created a kind of idealized community of Jewish interest among its customary 5,500 subscribers. For twenty-three years, I served as its Editor and Publisher, with the indispensable administrative help of my gracious, able neighbor, Alicia Seeger, of blessed memory indeed. The contact this gave me on many levels with the real people who make up "the Jewish community" undoubtedly gave a broadening reality to my thinking about what it means that our folk stands in living Covenant with God. Though I have not been directly involved in *Sh'ma* since 1993, I continue to run into people who want me to know that they still remember fondly the community of readers/discussers that another time created. Their kindly reminiscences help me reinforce my dream of and dedication to Judaism's social calling.

*Sh'ma* was another channel for my continuing interest in Jewish ethics, which had by now become the main area of Jewish practice in which I sought to apply my maturing theological ideas. This had a twofold effect on my more abstract reflection. Considering the practical consequences of my thoughts helped me to understand more deeply what it was that I was espousing. And having to face the reaction of our community to a

concrete proposal for its action gave me a more solid sense of what it meant to be thinking as one of a people (see below) and not merely as an isolated mind.<sup>20</sup> My first substantial statement in this area, the book *Choosing a Sex Ethic*, appeared in 1969 and my most recent book, with Frances W. Schwartz, is on *The Jewish Moral Virtues*.<sup>21</sup>

The intellectual side of all this biographical approach to community focuses on my response to the two major social ideologies of the post-mid-century period, Zionism (which classically spoke in resolutely secular terms) and Reconstructionism (which sought to move beyond political Zionism to a theory of humanistic-religious Jewishness).

The leaders of Zionism built their social constructs on the modern European theory of nationalism. By making group identity critical to Jewish modernization, their views gave our community its strongest theory of the nature of the Jewish people, one whose appeal was amplified by its utterly urgent practical significance due to the rise of Nazism and the bitter reality of the Holocaust.

The notion of Jewishness as another secular national enterprise has never had much appeal to Diaspora Jews. Such "Zionism" as world Jewry has manifested is humanitarian (to save Jews who need to emigrate)—or philanthropic (to help the State of Israel support its needy immigrants and meet its social problems)—or political-familial (to support the Israelis against their international enemies). By contrast, world Jewry has steadfastly refused to perform the two central Zionist *mitzvot*: *aliyah*, to immigrate to the Homeland, and learning and using modern Hebrew. That explains, I believe, why, regardless of what some observers would like to have been the case, the founding of the State of Israel was not a major event in the Midwestern Jewish communities in which I lived in the late 1940s. Furthermore, the living significance of the State of Israel in the New York suburbs where I resided in the fifties and sixties was modest indeed. Only when the Six-Day War evoked the possibility of the destruction of the State of Israel did anything approaching passionate identification with the Israelis come into being. Even then, while fund-raising and political action burgeoned, *aliyah* and Hebraism did not.

The limits of our new enthusiasm for the State of Israel were tested in the seventies over the issue of how American Jews should give voice to their growing sentiment that the Israelis ought to be more vigorous in their pursuit of peace and more humane in their treatment of the Palestinian Arabs whose land they had acquired. I was a moderate peace-nik in the seventies and it was no fun being ostracized by the American

Jewish establishment and its hangers-on for our ethically based criticism of the State of Israel. It was small consolation later when what had once been decried as heresy became, after the incursion into Lebanon in the eighties, what our establishment leaders began calling a sign of the maturity of our relation to the State of Israel.

The theoretical issue, for the few of us who cared about such matters, was now unmistakable. By nationalistic standards, as some right-wing Diaspora Zionists argued, why shouldn't we conquer territory and rule over it for our national benefit as other nations have often done? Overwhelmingly, Diaspora Jews have rejected such arguments because they have insisted that being Jewish had to do with a certain quality of human behavior. Turning its back on *Ahad Ha-Am*, Israeli and Zionist leadership has preferred the pragmatism of politics to facing up to the intimate connection between Jewishness and value that many Israelis and most Diaspora Jews take for granted. That failure, among others, has recently led Israeli as well as Diaspora thinkers to discuss what has come to be called "post-Zionism." Some Israelis have even dared to suggest that their country ought to be a multinational, democratic state rather than a specifically Jewish one.<sup>22</sup> Often, it seems that little remains of Zionist theory today other than a desire to keep asking what Zionism might still mean to us.

Mordecai Kaplan's genius created a theory of Jewish peoplehood that, while utterly rejecting the belief in our chosenness, integrated Zionist peoplehood with a religious sense of the high human quality demanded by Judaism. He did this by infusing his naturalistic, anti-revelational vision of Jewish civilization with a thoroughgoing commitment to humanistic ethics and religiosity. Sociological observation and theory had demonstrated that all peoples naturally tended to create cultures in which religion is the binding element of their value systems. The Jewish folk, as it needed to turn its attention to the various aspects of its civilization that modernization had caused us to repress, now also had to revive the religious aspect of its social life in harmony with the humanistic ethos of general culture. He argued, without chauvinism, that the Jews were particularly empowered by their rich moral heritage to restate their religio-ethical ideal today in terms of the universal ethical human task.

At mid-century, *The Reconstructionist*, the Kaplanians' journal, was one of the few places where one could encounter people who thought hard about what Jewishness might mean to moderns. Though I had enjoyed reading it ever since my rabbinic school days, I never became a



Reconstructionist. Kaplan's thought seemed to me philosophically naive about the source of our values, claiming that they were as inherent in the universe as the physical laws that scientists discovered. Just like my HUC historian professors, his theory of Jewish duty sought, without further argument, to turn a description (that by sociologists of so-called "primitive cultures") into a prescriptive way of life, authoritative for secular moderns.

In his recent book, *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, Arnold Eisen has given us a far more sophisticated version of this effort to use sociology as the basis of a new theory of Jewish ethical-and-more-than-ethical-duty. Eisen makes a subtle case for a performative approach to Jewish practice, that is, that *doing* more likely creates its own sense of the authority of the deed than does a theory of authority that *enjoins* the doing. Though he acknowledges that God or God's surrogate must be mentioned in the Jewish practice, the effectiveness of doing the act, he contends, makes moot the reality that American Jews attach to such symbols, which he believes is modest to non-existent. Thus, by attending to actual motives to Jewish practice—social integration/distinction; symbolic explanation; nostalgia; ultimacy; and "tradition"—we have our best hope of reinvigorating communal Jewish practice.<sup>33</sup>

I would agree that there is a large sector of American Jews who still profess the agnosticism typical of modernism, or at least are most comfortable when speaking its familiar language. Many more Jews still find it difficult to speak directly about God or their personal relationship with God. Nonetheless, several things persuade me that this anthropological approach to Jewish social responsibility crucially needs to be amplified by a directly theological understanding. Consider the practical issue. If ritual and nostalgia-writ-large are so performatively effective, why is it that they have not, in themselves, created a major body of observant American Jews? Moreover, I find it difficult to believe that people who seem to question so many things and exercise so strong a sense of judgment about what they will and won't do can long go on using words like God as the major referent of what they are doing without asking what they mean or stand for. Kaplan and Eisen want to avoid the theological issues by being functionalists, hoping that by attending to how things work and have effects they can evade the thorny issues of why we should bother doing them. I, in contrast, remain convinced that the critical issue of our time is the ground of our values and, thus, of our duties. While the two approaches could complement one another nicely, the theological approach is more congenial to this blending than is the functionalist.



Eisen's own personal position is not as rigorously humanist as that of Kaplan, though operationally he seeks to make room in the Jewish community for those of little or no belief. Why, I wonder, does he make no mention of the opposite contemporary social development, of the continuing strength and the growing practice of Jews who are in search of greater spirituality? Thus, to give a ritual example, prayers for healing and healing services now seem to be utterly widespread among American Jews simply because people were religiously ready for them. They would have seemed ludicrous in the days when we dogmatically insisted that whatever Divine Power we could acknowledge has no direct effect on our lives. One can, of course, perform such ritual acts without a graduate degree in theology but if some shift had not taken place in our old modernist distance from God, we could not now find virtue in them as some congregations and rabbis still refuse to do.

Where Eisen has suggested that our overwhelmingly non-Orthodox community can be healthy as long as it lives by benign nostalgia, others have argued that it requires a significant dose of *halakhah*, religious law. My recent exchange of views on this topic with Elliot Dorff indicates my sense of the limits of this approach.<sup>24</sup> What was at stake between us and is, in my view, a critical question for all non-Orthodox theologies of duty, is what sort of authority we attach to the notion of "law." Elliot felt that by "authority" I meant enforcement and pointed to the case of Prohibition which was law without being fully enforceable. Hence, he argued, we can have effective Jewish law even without any social sanctions behind it. The issue, as I see it, is not whether a dictum is enforceable but whether people consider it "law" or something possessing a different kind of authority. What I had called attention to, I thought, was the difference between the kind of compelling power Judaism vests in the *aggadah* as against that of the *halakhah*. The *aggadah* clearly is Oral Torah and therefore one should take its dicta quite seriously. However, it does not have such authority that Jews are obligated to carry out aggadic prescriptions. That is, they do not have the sense that they really "must" or "ought" to do what a given aggadist advocates, though they know they might be well advised to follow it. Not so the *halakhah* which, once it is fixed, whether by tradition or one's *rav*, must be carried out whether one likes the ruling or not. True, unfortunately, all Jews are to some extent sinners. So what makes this law is not that people always actually carry it out, but that they believe that, regardless of personal predilection, this deed should be done. They therefore regard not doing so as some kind of malefac-

tion, in short, a sin. Thus, a special sense of power or compulsion attaches to law, and this is what makes it "law." The term "*halakhah*" classically carries this kind of authority, though it does so in its own special systemic fashion.

Heteronomous prescription, as the observant Orthodox readily demonstrate, can build and vivify a community. However, its sense of what one must do, regardless of moral twinges or the press of Judaism's other values, can also make for the continuing Jewish/human reality of the *agunah* problem and the continuing lack of a solution for it. I do not see that we can gain a liberally acceptable sense of compelling duty by evading the issue of the source of its authority and merely asserting, as Dorff and other Conservative thinkers have, that one simply cannot have Judaism without *halakhah*, rules for proper Jewish behavior. Dorff goes beyond such assertive positivism and happily recounts the many reasons why the law commends itself to our volition. That is, he tries to help us understand why we should choose to have "law," particularly the flexible Conservative version of it—a strategy which I read as effectively turning *halakhah*, required duty, into *aggadah*, valuable counsel. It is his tribute to the religious significance of the strong sense of self with which modernity imbued us. As I observe the community, I find that Jews take making up their own minds as so basic to their existence that, regardless of denominational label, they will, once off the rabbi's turf, think about their rabbi's or their movement's halakhic rulings only to submit them to a higher authority, their conscientious best judgment. Tikvah Frymer-Kensky's sophisticated ethico-communitarian approach to this question even more openly abandons the power of law as law, yet seeks to co-opt the dignity of the term while effectively turning it into aggadic wisdom.<sup>25</sup>

I agree that we shall have no robust Jewish practice unless we can find a way to endow our communal observances with a certain measure of independent authority. I do not see how that can be done without bringing God and our community's relation to God into our reckoning. That will lead me, shortly, into my discussion of God. Before doing that I should like to point to two significant ways in which my growing sense of community in this period affected my thinking.

The first of these was methodological. Ever since the writings of Kant and Schleiermacher, in their different ways, modern theorizing about religious truth has begun from human experience rather than from Divine revelation. Moreover, the starting point was always the individual, and that inevitably made groups of secondary value. But Judaism is

essentially a group experience and activity, though one with a strong appreciation and tradition of individual personalities. Hence, rather than begin my theologizing with some variety of individual experience, as most previous non-Orthodox thinkers had done, I realized that I ought rather to found it on the collective religious experience of the Jewish people in our time. Not having either prophetic inspiration or an academic discipline by which to read the soul of a group, I have imaginatively waded into the sea of our recent history, up to my nostrils as it were, and then tried to set forth how, at our deepest level, we have been affected by recent decades. The resulting insight has been the spiritual-social foundation of my theological work. I shall return to this topic below when I speak about God.

The second way community affected my thinking derived from my participation in American Jewish life on many different levels. What I found there served as a reality check on my theorizing, indicating whether or not what I was trying to say made communal sense and where, in the face of communal satisfaction, I knew I needed to dissent. Once again, the dialectic between my pragmatism and my idealism asserted itself. Temple membership, attendance at services, and Torah study classes, sending our children through our synagogue school, listening carefully to what people said, and watching what they actually did about their Jewishness, all served as a balance to my voracious reading and unceasing reflection. In sum, living as another Jew among Jews (and non-Jews) has been a major resource for my theologizing.

#### WHEN HUMAN TZIMTZUM MAKES ROOM FOR GOD

I had not anticipated that trying to think out of communal experience would lead me to an enhanced understanding of our way to God. Clarifying Buber's personalistic approach to reality had long seemed to me an effective means of helping a thoughtful minority of Jews develop or deepen a relationship with God. However, as the seventies became the eighties it became increasingly clear to me that the death-of-God thinkers had radically misread our social drift. Instead of God fading from the scene and humanism triumphing, a substantial turn to religion was evident throughout Western civilization and, as part of that development, in the Jewish community as well. The Havurah movement flourished by making small-group liturgy more meaningful to people than services in large, formal institutions could, and Jewish mysticism became a flourishing interest and practice among us. In more recent years this

development has burgeoned in the widespread concern about spirituality and the concomitant efforts to vitalize the private religious lives of Jews. Some people still talk about the Holocaust as a challenge to believing in God, but no one, with the possible exception of David Blumenthal, has had anything fresh to say on that topic for many years now. Such Holocaust theologizing as does surface seems more a ritual repetition than a fresh spiritual concern. This communal experience cried out for interpretation.

My diagnosis of the situation stemmed from a curious fact about the argument for the death of God. It forthrightly asserted that the utter injustice of the Holocaust made it impossible to believe any longer in the God of Jewish tradition who rewarded good and punished evil. The logic was impeccable but it had little to do with the spiritual situation of modern Jewry. As Elie Wiesel has pointed out, traditionalists were more likely to retain their faith in the death camps than were the liberals of every stripe. And as for modernized Jews, no Jewish thinker, beginning with Moses Mendelssohn, had tried to defend the old Deuteronomic sense of tight Divine justice. Rather, with science increasingly describing how the world operated, modern Jewish views of God for the past two hundred years or so have denied that God has a hands-on relation to human history as our pre-Enlightenment thinkers still believed. When, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Kishinev pogroms shocked the civilized world and world Jewry, there were no modern Jewish voices which judged that depravity to be God's punishment of a wicked Jewry. Rather, many Jews called for Jewish training for self-defense and many more went about organizing themselves internationally to put political pressure on the Russian government. They took it for granted that human action, not God's retribution, immediately determined history. This secularized view of history was endemic among us, as world Jewry modernized and politicized itself. Thus, the God who was declared dead after the Holocaust was not the God of our largely agnostic community.

What then lay behind this curious anomaly of a community of unbelievers disturbed about the proclamation of God's demise? Another development provided a clue. A number of death-of-God thinkers had argued that we should not be fearful because God was gone. If anything, it liberated us from dependency on the Divine and let us more maturely assume full responsibility for what transpired among us. Clearly, as Kant had long since taught us, the loss of God would make no difference to our ethics, for these quite independently stemmed from our rationality, not from God's revelation. Interestingly enough, Richard Rubenstein,

the leading Jewish death-of-God theologian, was too perceptive to rely on this modernist dogma. In the post-Kantian era which had swept European philosophy after World War I, rationality came to be restricted to what could be tightly demonstrated. With rationality more a matter of tight reasoning than of any given content, one could no longer assert, as the Kantians confidently had, that every rational person would know why they must be ethical. (I have previously alluded to a similar line of reasoning in the philosophic linguistic analysts after World War II.)

However, if reason no longer demanded we be ethical, what did? Rousseau and other Enlighteners believed in the essential goodness of human nature and sought to release it from its social trammels so that it could finally express itself in high human decency. But how could one have such an optimistic faith in human nature after the Holocaust? Rubenstein bluntly acknowledged with the atheist existentialists (and the scientific materialists) that the world was devoid of value and it was only we humans who willfully imposed our varying senses of right and wrong upon it. But this intellectual collapse of an independent foundation for our ethics contradicted the general condemnation of the Nazis as utterly evil in their mass murder of Jews and others. They should have known better, we insist. But why? What now justified our soul-searing protests against the Holocaust? The meta-ethical questions refuse to give us peace: where do our values come from? What still commands human decency and is the criterion of our human worth?

All this intellectual ferment was paralleled by a growing social recognition that modernity, which had heralded personal freedom as the new route to salvation, had betrayed us. Drugs, violence, sexual license, and family abuses may have been some of the more dramatic symptoms of our social malaise, but the growing gap between the rich and the not-rich, the self-centeredness that made marriage hazardous and family and social life precarious, the meaninglessness and depression that strangely accompanied our extraordinary economic well-being all put the lie to the messianic promise of modernity. This crisis in values was the spiritual root of the resurgence of religious fundamentalism all over Western civilization. Suddenly it seemed that only the religious right of the Abrahamic faiths offered the commanding standards and reinforcing community that modernity now more and more seemed unable to mandate and socially exemplify. Among Jews, this impulse gave new and unanticipated vitality to Orthodoxy, most strikingly in the particular appeal of those of its sub-groups who gloried in refusing to accommodate to modernity.



However, anomaly piled atop anomaly because the various fundamentalisms, despite their great appeal, were able to achieve only a limited acceptance, more in politically tinged Moslem cultures, less in Christian societies, and even less in the Jewish community. Most Westerners seem to agree that, for all modernity's faults, it has given us one lasting insight into reality, namely, that personal human dignity largely means being entitled to substantially make up one's own mind about what one will believe and do. To put it theologically, we see our "autonomy" as a most precious gift of God's, even though we have learned from the chastisements of modernity that we must radically rework the ego-centric understanding which Kant and other Enlightenmenters gave that term.

Pondering our persistent ethical commitment despite its loss of intellectual and social grounds, I finally realized that we had been looking at the alleged death of God in upside-down fashion. Its solution required that we turn Feuerbach on his head. His famous nineteenth-century dictum about God had grandly opined that all our statements about God are really statements about humankind and how we view ourselves. In an era when Western humanity was exhilarated by the prospect of its apparently limitless capacities, he as good as put humankind in God's place. But, now, in the sobering reappraisal of human nature required by the Holocaust, to assert that God was dead really meant that what had really died for us in the Holocaust was not Judaism's God but our exalted modern view of ourselves and our capabilities. We have been forced to acknowledge that we are not as smart or as good as we thought we were or, at least, could become. Worst of all, our confident proclamation that we alone would bring the Messianic Age is ludicrous for people who still cannot get their lives, their families, and certainly any of their great institutions to any near-ideal level. The late twentieth century has indeed been a time of the loss of the faith we moderns passionately espoused, of ourselves as the only god worth following. That was disturbing indeed and such a blow to our egos that we hid our psychic turmoil behind the soothing modern notion of the death of God. Now that our overblown human self-idolization has died, it has made possible a healing human *tzimtzum*, a self-contraction that has made some room for God in our lives. I believe we come to God these days primarily as the ground of our values and, in a non-Orthodox but nonetheless compelling fashion, as the "commander" of our way of life.

Something similar could now also be said of the value of Jewish tradition and practice to us. Once we realized we were not always smarter



than our forebears, once we admitted that our individuality had its limits and our community might yet have much to teach us, particularly how to judge that which should be rejected or fought in our society, Jewishness took on a new value to many Jews. And with a real God involved not only with us as persons but with our people—as well as, from a Jewish point of view, with all other peoples—the concept of Covenant, of having a personal and folk relationship with God, as against merely a concept of God, became deeply appealing.

By the end of the seventies this growing torrent of ideas and assertions now cried out for systematic statement and, providentially, it seemed to me, I found a new cultural language, postmodernism, which permitted me to give this new theology a properly nuanced yet fully systematic statement.

#### SPEAKING OF JUDAISM IN THE ACCENTS OF POSTMODERNISM

If my biographical comments have become fewer as this paper has approached the present, it is because, as I see it, the impelling events which pushed me in certain directions now mostly lie behind me. Yes, children have grown and left our home and area (but not our circle of living love). Grandchildren have appeared to let us see the cycle of Jewish continuity play itself out. We are clearly older, less vigorous, more threatened by those depredations of age that have taken many friends from us. We now live in a senior life-care community where we find the limited responsibilities of managing and operating a household quite liberating. Estelle has retired from her practice while I remain full-time at my teaching and writing, both of which continue to give me great joy. And while my energies at seventy-five are not what they once were, I am still poised to do new projects while fending off other appealing ideas. Yet none of this has, in any way that I can detect, significantly influenced or deflected the line of thought that I enunciated early in the 1990s and have further developed over this decade. I must leave it to whatever historian may one day glance in my direction to say more than that.

As my Jewish religious sensibilities began to come together in the late seventies and early eighties, I could not help hearing about a complex of ideas and attitudes associated with the name of Jacques Derrida. Philosophical deconstruction quickly made a certain sense to me as its anti-foundationalism seemed a deeper level of my own judgment that reason had to be a secondary instrument of the search for wisdom and

not its prime generator and developer. I also appreciated the postmodern emphasis on thinkers being self-conscious about their particularity, a view which jibed well with my own sense of the non-universal truth of Judaism. When I added to these factors the postmodern tolerance of various styles of self-expression, I became persuaded that this cultural style could provide a cogent manner of discourse with which to speak of Jewish belief today.

As with existentialism years before, I soon realized that I could not accept this new intellectuality in its common guise but only in one of its peripheral forms. The advocates of postmodernism are post-foundationalist, that is, they deny that thinking properly begins from certain rational premises which then structure the inferences that follow. Deconstructionism further points out that classical cognition is a contradiction in terms, for words refuse to mean just one thing in an argument, and thought regularly doubles back on itself in self-denial. But Derrida and his followers do not exempt ethics and the realm of values from this deconstruction; thus, they deny the possibility of a thinking stability to moral judgments. In practice, these postmoderns, with Derrida himself the chief example, do not hesitate to make ethical pronouncements, often doing so with considerable passion. But it is certainly not clear, despite some intriguing attempts, how one could arrive at a postmodern, Derridean ethics which is more than purely personal preference. Surely our revulsion at Nazi bestiality and the countless other ethically revolting acts which have made up so much of recent history arises from a more fundamental basis than whim. For this and other such reasons, I, like a number of other writers, think of myself as a non-Derridean postmodern.

This claim to be part of the family of postmoderns but not of Derridean derivation has drawn the academic criticism that a refusal to stand in the line of Derridean thought denies one the right to call oneself a postmodern. That is an odd charge indeed for a community that claims to be non-foundational.

There is much in the postmodern stance, however, which makes it a congenial language for speaking about religious faith. It easily countenances a pattern of thought which mixes certainty and uncertainty. It knows that certain kinds of assertions must always remain fuzzy while others can be made relatively clear. It tolerates a balance between that which is relatively fixed in the thought and that which remains open to fresh imagination or insight. It can live with a mix of risk and security in a given pattern of thought. However, what mostly makes it appeal to



me is its radical insistence that particularity precedes universality. No one can think in complete transcendence of time, place, class, race, folk, culture, body, and, most tellingly, as the feminist thinkers have taught us, gender. Yet we once considered it a major breach of academic etiquette for writers to use the word "I" in a formal academic paper as if no biography lurked behind what they advocated. Today, postmodernism bestows a new dignity on particularity, allowing us, on the social level, to assert that our folk, Israel, is nearly as significant in our Judaism as is the one God.

Ten plus years have passed since I began to give these thoughts systematic statement in *Renewing the Covenant: A Theology for the Postmodern Jew*. As I labored over that book, I was continually surprised that my articulating one aspect of my thought required me to think about and set down aspects of it that I had not consciously worked on before. Whole chapters forced themselves upon me as I sought to fill out the case I was making for viewing Judaism in just this way. When I had finished the book I was grateful for what the laboring had made possible, a newly mature stage to my thinking. Since then, it has occasionally struck me, as I have read this work with my students, that it often has a richer, truer theological diction than I have ever reached before.

After the book appeared, I had some fleeting anxiety that, having so fully explicated my postmodern vision of Judaism, my theological stream had run dry. The near decade since that time has happily proved me wrong. My systematic statement has, in fact, turned into a platform rather than a ceiling. Again and again it has empowered me to go deeper into what I did discuss there or delve into areas to which I had not previously turned my attention. Much of this recent development is on display in my book of earlier this year, *Judaism after Modernity: Papers from a Decade of Fruition*.<sup>26</sup> In particular, that volume indicates how much I have learned from responding to my critics. A good example of this process, now based on a more formal, academic critique of *Renewing the Covenant* by a broad range of colleagues, will appear in a volume, neatly entitled *Reviewing the Covenant*. My interest in Jewish ethics has also not abated, and, working with a lay student of mine, Frances Weinman Schwartz, I was also able to publish this year our effort at creating a contemporary style of *musar* literature in a work on *The Jewish Moral Virtues*. It makes a new/old case for twenty-four ethical *midot* which our sages and folk wisdom have classically commended to us.<sup>27</sup>

I remain, then, a work in progress and I have been honored indeed to give you this account of my thought and life thus far.

## NOTES

1. I shall not generally cite those of my writings which illustrate the developments I shall be tracing. Fortunately, in celebration of my seventy-fifth birthday, Amy Helfman, Associate Librarian of the Klau HUC-JIR Library in New York, was kind enough to do a bibliography of my writing over the years. Her paper is entitled "A Life in Covenant: The Complete Works of Eugene B. Borowitz, 1944–1999." It is a fine commentary to this lecture and is available on line at [www.huc.edu](http://www.huc.edu) under my name in the faculty section. Some hard copies of her work are available by sending a self-addressed envelope to The Samek Institute, HUC-JIR, 1 W. 4th Street, Room 518, New York, NY 10012–1196.

2. While this most probably took place in spring 1942, it was not until 1957 that one of my publications gives evidence of this transition. My paper to the Central Conference of American Rabbis entitled, as per their invitation, "The Idea of God," is framed in the classic terms of the rationalistic Judaism which had always been the intellectual backbone of Reform Judaism. In my paper, however, I, without realizing how revolutionary the act was, turned what was a general, philosophic inquiry—a proper concept of Divinity—into a particularistic, existential question—how will we recognize a Jewish idea of God when we encounter one?—giving Kaplan and Buber as my two, partially overlapping, partially disagreeing, examples. "The Idea of God," *CCAR Yearbook* 67 (1957): 174–186. Note how much of this topic is taken up in what follows in the Schneider Lecture [reprinted here as paper 3].

3. For an early statement of my emerging holistic view, one more notable for what it accepts and what it rejects rather than for how one gets from the negative to the positive stage, see "On Celebrating Sinai," *CCAR Journal* 13, no. 6 (June 1966), pp. 12–23 [reprinted here as paper 9].

4. He summarizes this ongoing repetition of this theme, democracy as the new national religiosity, at the end of the book. *The Future of the American Jew* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), pp. 518–522.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 437, the last two words, and 438. The preceding two pages set the context.

6. This becomes a significant theme in my argument in *Renewing the Covenant*. Norbert Samuelson seeks to save a place for philosophizing about modern Judaism by arguing that there are rationalisms today which are hospitable to God. But he cannot then make a case that they, based as they are on universalism, can validate a rich Jewish particularism. His critique of my thought and my response to him (and my other critics) appears in *Renewing the Covenant* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000). [My response to his suggestion is found in my paper in that volume, reprinted here as paper 25.]

7. *CCAR Journal*, 8, no. 1 (April, 1960), pp. 27–33.

8. Aharon Lichtenstein, a major figure in contemporary Orthodoxy, wrote a widely read article on "Does Jewish Tradition Recognize an Ethic Independent of Halakha?" and argued that, while it does not recognize such an outside source of duty, it has an internal thrust in a somewhat similar legal direction. His careful reasoning, however, culminates in assigning most of the ethical teaching to the *aggadah*, which, of course, does not have the compelling authority of the *halakha*. See my article, "The Authority of the Ethical Impulse in *Halakha*," in *Through the Sound of Many Voices*, ed. Jonathan Plant (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dentys, 1962). It is reprinted in my *Exploring Jewish Ethics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990) as "On the Ethical Moment in *Halakha*," paper no. 15 [and here also as paper 15].

9. On one level, this is the nub of the entire argument of *Renewing the Covenant* and its climactic chapter 20.

10. *Commentary*, 33 (August 1962), pp. 138–44. The correspondence appeared about two months later.

11. Ever since I encountered Wittgenstein's notion of "language games" some forty years ago, I have wondered how one might describe the language game in which the rabbis allowed themselves to speak directly of Jewish belief, the *aggadah*. On and off since then, I have read and done research on that ever-expanding topic. I now have some hope of bringing that long-enduring investigation to a written conclusion. I have been wrong about this several times before, though, I believe,

I have good reason now for my optimism. For a previous reference to this aspect of my work and its relation to my theological statement there, see *Renewing the Covenant*, pp. x–xi.

12. *A Layman's Introduction to Religious Existentialism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965).

13. *Moses* (Oxford, UK: East and West Library, 1946).

14. *Tales of the Hasidim: The Early Masters* (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), *Tales of the Hasidim: The Later Masters* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), *Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948).

15. *Renewing the Covenant* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), p. xii.

16. *Between Man and Man* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), pp. 40–82.

17. *Renewing the Covenant*, chapter 4.

18. In the summer of 1946, I recall having to interrupt my budding relationship with Estelle to spend two weeks teaching Judaism at a Methodist summer encampment (an experience which had quite an influence on my work two years later establishing the Leadership Training Institutes of the National Federation of Temple Youth). So too much of my first book, *A Layman's Introduction to Religious Existentialism*, was devoted to Christian thinkers. For some of my recent work in this area, see papers nos. 33–40 in *Exploring Jewish Ethics* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1990). Note there the expansion of my involvement to include an exchange with one of the foremost Western teachers of Zen Buddhism, Masao Abe [reprinted here as paper 23], and my reflections in paper no. 40 on the problems and value of such interfaith discussions.

19. As the Helfman bibliography bears out, hardly a year went by in the decade from 1956 on that I did not have a publication dealing with education. In the same period, I was, from 1957–62 the Editor of the Union's quarterly education journal, *The Jewish Teacher*.

20. I discuss my consciousness of this connection of theology and practice in the preface to *Renewing the Covenant*, p. xi and its context.

21. *Choosing a Sex Ethic* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969); *The Jewish Moral Virtues* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999). Most of my ethical papers in the intervening years are gathered in *Exploring Jewish Ethics* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990).

22. See the detailed, comprehensive volume by Lawrence Silberstein, *The Post-Zionism Debates* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

23. Eisen, Arnold, *Rethinking Modern Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), particularly the summary pages, 246–263.

24. Dorff's original article, "Autonomy vs. Community: The Ongoing Reform/Conservative Difference," appeared in *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 2 (Winter 1995). My rejoinder, "The Reform Judaism of Renewing the Covenant," and his response, "Matters of Degree and Kind," appeared in *Conservative Judaism*, Vol. L, No. 1, (Fall 1997). Both issues were quite late and the dates on them substantially precede the actual publication.

25. "Toward a Liberal Theory of Halakha," *Tikkun*, Vol. 10, No. 4, and see particularly pp. 44ff.

26. *Judaism after Modernity: Papers from a Decade of Fruition* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999).

27. *The Jewish Moral Virtues* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999).