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## *A SYMPOSIUM*

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### THE STATE OF ORTHODOXY

#### *Introduction*

In recent years the vigor as well as the image of Orthodoxy has been completely revitalized. Gone are the predictions of the inevitable demise of what was widely dismissed as an obsolete movement that could not cope with the challenges of the "Open Society." Orthodoxy has made such a remarkable recovery that its new self-confidence has regrettably generated in some quarters a deplorable sense of smugness and, occasionally, has given rise to a spirit of "triumphalism."

To be sure, parallel trends can be discerned in the non-Jewish community. Liberal churches are on the decline, while the ranks of Conservative and Evangelical churches are swelling. The upsurge of the Moral Majority is but another symptom of these developments. By the same token, the search for transcendence has led to a growing popularity of sects and cults which completely renounce the Western value system. It is a matter of speculation to what extent these trends are a reaction to the general malaise of Western society—the post-Vietnam syndrome, the urban, energy and ecological crises, and the ensuing sense of disenchantment with modern culture.

Within the Jewish community, additional factors have been responsible for the growing disdain for universal and, especially, liberal values. The impact of the Holocaust has revolutionized Jewish experience as well as thought. Moreover, resentment over the growing isolation of the State of Israel has given rise to a high degree of skepticism with regard to the benefits of modern culture. Having been turned off by the "world," the Jewish community proceeds on an inward course.

Orthodoxy, which by comparison to other religious movements

has made far fewer concessions to modernity, was bound to benefit from these developments. After all, it was the only religious denomination which had not succumbed to the pressure of reconciling Judaism with "the spirit of the time." There is a general impression that Orthodoxy's newly acquired status and influence must be attributed to the respect its "authenticity" commands. In some circles, authenticity is defined in terms of total insulation from modern culture—which reached its nemesis in Hitler and Stalin.

"Right-wing" Orthodoxy capitalizes on the disdain for modernity harbored by many who feel guilty over their own modern life style. Irrespective of their own practices, they idealize the "purist" right-wing approach which to them represents the highest form of Jewish authenticity. Modern Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is ridiculed by the right wing as an illegitimate hybrid issuing from the union between Orthodoxy and a basically incompatible modern culture.

In the face of the militancy of the right wing, considerable segments of modern Orthodoxy are in retreat. Symptomatic is the "revisionism" of Samson Raphael Hirsch's ideology that is currently in vogue. In utter disregard of his stated position, it is claimed that Hirsch did not advocate his classical formulation of the synthesis between Torah and culture (*Torah im Derekh Erets*) as an intrinsic religious ideal. He allegedly resorted to it merely as an emergency measure in order to salvage those elements of the Jewish community that otherwise would have been completely overwhelmed by the onslaught of modernity.

What accentuates the self-doubt of modern Orthodoxy is the prevailing assumption that higher levels of religious standards are maintained in right-wing circles, who strive for ever higher levels of piety, because they are under no pressure to accommodate to the demands of modernity. This religious inferiority complex is reinforced by another factor. The very legitimacy of modern Orthodoxy is categorically denied in right-wing circles. But modern Orthodoxy does not reciprocate in kind. It shies away from any monopolistic pretensions. It is satisfied with claiming that it constitutes one of many legitimate versions of Orthodoxy. From the perspective of this limited "religious pluralism," representatives of modern Orthodoxy accept as valid any approach to Jewish life which acknowledges the supremacy of the halakhah.

An additional source of the growing self-doubt plaguing modern Orthodoxy is the misconception that the very readiness to encounter modern culture is by itself a sign of spiritual inferiority. Unfortunately, a vital point made by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik many years ago is as yet not fully appreciated. In his view, the alleged "modera-

tion" of modern Orthodoxy need not point to spiritual inferiority. Instead, cogent religious reasons rather than a readiness to compromise may dictate the adoption of a "middle of the road" instead of an extremist position. When Maimonides espouses the "middle of the road" approach, he is not swayed by the practical common sense attitude associated with a man of affairs. He advocates this course for purely religious reasons; moderation reflects the attempt to resolve the dialectical tension between conflicting religious values.

Another problem facing modern Orthodoxy is the lack of adequate self-definition. It has not as yet been clarified what should be the relationship between modernity and Orthodoxy. Should modern Orthodoxy merely attempt to preserve a commitment to Judaism while simultaneously living in two distinct worlds, or should modern Orthodoxy strive for a confrontation, if not integration, between Torah and the cultural values of modernity?

It was against this background of conflicting trends within a polarized American Jewish community that *Tradition* invited a number of Orthodox rabbinic and intellectual leaders to respond to the list of questions that follows.

We were disappointed that no spokesman of right-wing Orthodoxy accepted our invitation. We were, however, favorably impressed by our respondents' remarkable openness to the positive contributions made by the right wing. It was also refreshing to note that modern Orthodoxy has managed to eschew the rigidity of a monolithic stance and has avoided the pitfalls of triumphalism in its approach to the non-Orthodox community.

Walter S. Wurzburger

## THE QUESTIONS

1. *Do you believe that recent developments warrant the triumphalism exhibited by important segments of Orthodoxy which predict the total disappearance of non-Orthodox movements?*
2. *What do you regard as the basic challenges facing the Orthodox movement?*
3. *Are there common elements shared by the diverse groups comprising Orthodoxy or is Orthodoxy merely a coalition of separate movements held together only by common opposition to non-Orthodox groups?*

4. *How do you view the resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy? Does it portend the eclipse of modern Orthodoxy?*
  5. *Do you regard modern Orthodoxy as a philosophy of compromise or as an authentic version of Judaism?*
  6. *How do you view the current teshuvah phenomenon?*
  7. *How should Orthodoxy respond to the State of Israel?*
  8. *What have been Orthodoxy's greatest achievements and greatest failures on the American scene?*
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**Marc D. Angel:** (1) Orthodox Jews should be especially reluctant to make predictions about the disappearance of any segment of Jewry. How many times have we heard predictions of the disappearance of Orthodoxy? Yet Orthodoxy has survived and even flourished. It is the height of arrogance and self-righteousness to forecast calmly the demise of non-Orthodox movements. That they may be suffering from decline may be shown to be true by empirical means. That this decline cannot be stemmed is a statement none of us should answer with confident certainty.

Even if it could be shown that non-Orthodox movements would unquestionably disappear, this would hardly warrant any sense of "triumphalism." On the contrary, we should be frightened by such a possibility. With all our theological differences, yet we are part of one Jewish people and work together in so many ways for the benefit of the Jewish community here, abroad, and especially in Israel. It is not a happy prospect that the overwhelming majority of American Jews will lose their Jewishness. It is also extremely unlikely that vast numbers of the non-Orthodox community will move into Orthodoxy in the relatively near future.

(2) Orthodoxy faces a variety of challenges which might be considered as being basic. One of the major problems is intellectual openness. Right-wing Orthodoxy tends to be certain in its beliefs and pronouncements. It leaves little room for openness to contemporary intellectual life. Because of the growing influence of the right-wing movement, many Orthodox leaders are frightened. They do not want to make statements which may be criticized by their right-wing colleagues. Modern Orthodoxy has lost its confidence and has gradually been surrendering its leadership to the more singleminded and vocal right-wing movement.

Orthodoxy has a tremendous fear of change, and has no satisfactory mechanism for dealing with change. Whether in matters pertaining to the status of women, or conversion to Judaism, or in so

many other areas, Orthodoxy prefers to avoid the issues or to hide within the confines of technical legalism. There is definitely a lack of vision and, more especially, a lack of courage. It is very easy to say something is prohibited; it requires greatness to be able to see a problem for what it really is and to find positive solutions.

(3) Some years ago I attended a *tish* in Mea Shearim. I could not help wondering what there was that united me with the other people present. To the outside world, we might be lumped together as Orthodox Jews. Yet, in so many ways, we have little in common.

What unites all Orthodox groups is a belief in the Divine authority of the Torah, both written and oral. Yet, those Jews who hold these beliefs may have great divergences in their understanding of these sources and many differences of opinion on interpretations. It is really difficult to speak of Orthodoxy as a movement at all since there is so much diversity within it.

(4) History tends to be cyclical. At certain times one group is in power and at other times another group is in power. During one period some ideas seem invincible, and at other times these same ideas become discredited in favor of other ideas. That there is a resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy is an indication that Orthodoxy is a dynamic and living entity. It is only natural to expect the pendulum to swing. It is a mistake to predict the eclipse of modern Orthodoxy on the basis of a resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy. There will always be Orthodox thinkers who will not be comfortable in a right-wing setting. Their voices may be suppressed, but they will not be silenced. In due time, their voices will be heard again and right-wing Orthodoxy will decline. And so the process continues.

(5) To answer this question, we first need a definition of modern Orthodoxy. I suppose that many who would classify themselves as being modern Orthodox have great differences with others who would place themselves in the same category.

If by modern Orthodoxy we mean intellectual openness combined with a commitment to *Torah min hashamayim*, then it is certainly no philosophy of compromise. It is a valid way of dealing with Judaism as a living entity. I think this question reflects the widespread self-doubt of modern Orthodox Jews. Those who would consider modern Orthodoxy as a philosophy of compromise can hardly speak with conviction and prophetic enthusiasm. And if they are always apologizing and feeling guilty, they can hardly be true spiritual leaders.

(6) The current *teshuvah* phenomenon, I believe, is also an aspect of the cyclical nature of spiritual life. There are times and places when having a comprehensive faith seems very important to people, and there are other times when it seems less important or

even unimportant. At least a small part of our society now seems receptive to intensified spiritual life. This manifests itself in the *teshuvah* movement, but also in movements towards other religions and sects. It is an aspect of the *zeitgeist*. I believe this phenomenon will run its course, although I hope that while it continues, it serves to strengthen the Jewish people.

(7) The emergence of the State of Israel is the most significant positive event in Jewish history since the days of the Maccabees. It represents the hopes and aspirations of the Jewish people. Needless to say, on the day to day level, there are aspects of Israeli life and Israeli society which Orthodoxy should find disheartening. Orthodox Jews must be in the forefront of rectifying those aspects of Israeli life which should be remedied. For an Orthodox Jew—or any other Jew—to oppose or be neutral to Israel on principle is to isolate oneself from the history and destiny of the people of Israel.

(8) Orthodoxy's greatest achievements would include the establishment of the day school and yeshivah movement. But we should also note the significant accomplishments of Orthodox synagogues in the areas of adult education and *kiruv rehokim*. Orthodoxy has given more courage to American Jews to stand up for their rights. By being vocal and unashamed, I think Orthodox Jews have hoped to give all Jews more pride in themselves.

On the other hand, when we consider the failures of Orthodoxy, we must note that Orthodox Jews are a tiny minority within the American Jewish community. National studies have indicated that those who identify as Orthodox may represent only eleven or twelve percent of American Jews. Obviously, Orthodoxy's message has not reached or not adequately influenced the overwhelming majority of American Jews. Internal dissension within Orthodoxy, an excessive amount of "politics" and infighting may have contributed to this failure. On the other hand, we must realize that American society is not naturally conducive to Orthodox living. We live in a highly mobile and convenience-oriented society. Religion in general has suffered a decline in the United States and it should not be surprising that Orthodoxy has suffered along with the general religious community.

With all our achievements and failures, with all our successes and errors, Orthodoxy remains a vital force in the lives of many thousands of us. We should neither despair of the future nor be excessively optimistic. We ought to be calmly confident.

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**David Berger:** Any Orthodox Jew considering the confident predictions of the disappearance of American Orthodoxy that were so common several decades ago cannot resist at least a fleeting moment of smugness and self-congratulation. Nevertheless, whatever the temptation to make similar assertions about Conservatism and Reform, reality is too complex for confident prophesying, and the errors of an earlier generation should serve as a warning against glib triumphalism by any party. Attitudes evolve, trends change, and crises force people to take action; Conservative Judaism, for example, is no longer as reliant as it once was on people with Orthodox backgrounds, and Reform has not remained entirely oblivious of the challenge of intermarriage and assimilation.

The Reform response, in fact, may well exacerbate one of the greatest dangers facing both Orthodoxy and world Jewry in general. Alexander Schindler's proposals that children of Jewish fathers be classified as Jews and that "unchurched" Gentiles be the objects of a Jewish mission will hasten the day when there will no longer be a valid presumption that Reform or nonreligious Jews are really Jews. Even if such steps are not taken, the conversion to non-Orthodox Judaism of the Gentile woman in an intermarriage will mean that non-Jewish children will be brought up as Jews and sincerely believe themselves to be Jews. In short, I am far more concerned by the transformation of certain forms of non-Orthodox Jewry into movements with a growing non-Jewish constituency than I am by the prospect of their virtual disappearance.

Moreover, I confess that I would not look forward to such a disappearance. There is something disconcerting about Orthodox Jews rooting for the elimination of their rivals through intermarriage and assimilation, and it is worth noting the sorrowful reaction ascribed to the Baal Shem Tov in the wake of the conversion to Christianity of Jews as marginal and dangerous as the Frankists. The Jewish loyalties and observances of non-Orthodox Jews are decidedly better than nothing, and even from the perspective of crass self-interest, Orthodox Jews are in a stronger position now than they would be as the dominant group in a sharply shrunken American Jewish community. (It is almost superfluous to add that such a situation would also be profoundly detrimental to the interests of the State of Israel.)

The only weakening of Conservatism and Reform for which Orthodox Jews can legitimately hope would come through conversion to Orthodoxy. No such development appears imminent in statistically significant numbers; nevertheless, it is worth noting that Jews estranged from religion and searching for meaningful faith are far more likely to be attracted by Orthodoxy than by rival movements. Though Conservatism and Reform are supposed to provide easier ac-

cess for the acculturated Jew, people profoundly moved by a genuine spiritual quest often gravitate toward the more demanding option, which they tend to perceive as the more authentic one. Such a perception can operate beyond the confines of Orthodox Judaism; it accounts in part for the attractiveness of certain cults, and I suspect that it explains the remarkable success of 16th and 17th century Calvinism, which was the most forbidding and demanding version of early Protestantism.

In the case of Judaism, people seeking authenticity justly find their home in Orthodoxy, but the syndrome which identifies “more extreme” with “more authentic” is the key challenge for modern Orthodoxy with respect to the turn to the right among American Orthodox Jews. In his landmark essay on Orthodox Judaism in the 1965 *American Jewish Yearbook*, Charles Liebman noted that Orthodoxy must be granted legitimacy by rival movements while it can deny such legitimacy to them. To be sure, some non-Orthodox spokesmen have labelled Orthodoxy nonauthentic or even a heresy, but few of them have the fortitude for too strenuous a defense of the proposition that the Judaism of the Gaon of Vilna is a thoroughly illegitimate version of the historic faith.

Within Orthodoxy itself, Liebman’s point takes on a new dimension. Orthodox Jews tend to perceive Judaism as possessing only one authentic form, and outright denial of authenticity to right-wing Orthodoxy is unpersuasive and futile. Hence, in the presence of a militant Orthodox right, modern Orthodox Jews are placed on the defensive in an asymmetrical polemic. The tendency of the modern Orthodox to make contemptuous remarks about parasitic *kollel* students isolated from economic and intellectual realities does not quite obscure a sense of uneasiness in the presence of superior religious devotion.

To a disturbing extent, modern Orthodoxy deserves this inferiority complex. As a parent of children in modern Orthodox schools, I can testify that a majority—probably a large majority—of children from observant homes ignore *netilat yadayim*, rarely recite *brakhot rishonot*, and have hardly heard of *brakhot aḥaronot*; both observation and logic indicate that these derelictions are not confined to the younger generation. In a sense, these minor transgressions are more clearly symptomatic of religious malaise than the major ones that might be cited. It hardly seems likely that the evil inclination is working overtime to tempt people not to recite a blessing; what we are confronting here is an absence of religious seriousness that is all too common in the modern Orthodox community. Although modern



Orthodox ideology affirms the desirability of intense religious emotion and the necessity of meticulous observance, reality and theory are depressingly at odds.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the ideology is wrong; it means that too many modern Orthodox Jews fail to take it seriously. The Torah should not have to retreat into a corner in order to survive; it should be possible for Jews to confront the best of human thought and emerge with profounder insights inspired by that confrontation. This means much more than going to college to study computer science and accounting or even law and medicine; the Orthodox college student who apologetically cites *parnasah* as a *hetter* for his higher education is not what modern Orthodoxy should be about. If we are to experience a religious renaissance without sliding into the "right," we must renew the fading conviction that modern Orthodoxy represents a genuine Jewish ideal. Torah combined with secular learning is not merely an economic necessity; it is one road to human perfection. From a position of confidence in the validity of this approach, we need not deny the legitimacy, even the desirability, of another approach as well. It is hardly heresy to suggest that God is pleased that both Rashi and the Rambam pursued their respective careers and that we would be immeasurably poorer if either had not lived.

Regrettably, the Orthodox right is also plagued by serious shortcomings. It would be naive to express surprise that ethical behavior is not the inevitable result of an Orthodox commitment. (Gershom Scholem once remarked that an Orthodox acquaintance told him that God had made a serious mistake when he placed *lo tignov* among the ten commandments; instead, he should have arranged a gloss to a gloss on the Ramo which would have said, "*Yesh nohagin shelo lignov*.") What is distressing, however, is that the study of Torah has become the very justification for forbidden behavior ranging from cheating on exams to presenting fraudulent transcripts to obtaining funds by questionable means. Such actions are not universal in the Orthodox right, and I am not even arguing that they are more prevalent there than among non-Jews; nevertheless, Orthodox Judaism cannot flourish indefinitely in the midst of moral contradictions, and I regard this as a practical, not merely an ethical danger.

Finally, for all my insistence on the legitimacy and value of right-wing Orthodoxy, I must confess to profound disappointment bordering on embarrassment at the intellectual constriction and naivete that it sometimes fosters. Comparing the intellectual atmosphere of the Mosad HaRav Kook series of biblical commentaries with that of Art-

Scroll (even allowing for the radically different genres that they represent) is a wonderful exercise in renewing one's faith in the value of an Orthodoxy that does not close its eyes to the outside world.

Notwithstanding these and other problems, the resurgence of American Orthodoxy is a historic phenomenon. It will, I hope, become increasingly difficult for American Jewish organizations to promulgate positions opposed by Orthodoxy as *the* views of the American Jewish community. More important, despite rampant assimilation among American Jews, this resurgence indicates for the first time that the destiny of an acculturated and emancipated Jewish community in the modern West must not lead inexorably toward a weakening of traditional commitment. Though we continue to confront both internal and external challenges of ominous proportions, American Orthodoxy has broken through to a new level of security and confidence from which those challenges can be met with guarded but justified optimism.

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**Louis Bernstein:** Serious deviations from Orthodox Judaism, in our homeland and in the diaspora, have sprouted periodically throughout Jewish history primarily because of the inability of the contemporary Jewish leadership to meet specific challenges of their times. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same inability still prevails. Whereas, the non-Orthodox movements are suffering from critical demographic problems and are not sanguine about their own future, they will continue to exist in one form or another. Their diminution and attenuation do not warrant triumphalism as few of their losses are Orthodoxy's gain. Most are lost to the Jewish people forever, losses that we can ill afford.

From my observation tower, non-Orthodox Jews have become aware and sensitive to the dangers confronting them. As a result they are seeking anchors for survival in Israel. Reform, in particular, has come full circle. From the bastion of anti-Zionism, it not only encourages support of the State of Israel but has an embryonic settlement movement. The lines of demarcation between mainstream Reform and mainstream Conservatism are becoming blurred. They cooperate closely in efforts *vis à vis* Israel. The line between them was always one of degree. The gut feeling of survival makes total disappearance of Conservative and Reform most unlikely in the

foreseeable future and they will remain a factor to be contended with. The dynamics of Jewish life keep obsolete organizations alive even if only by utilizing heroic life-saving measures.

Orthodoxy's weakness in the current historic climate is organizational rather than ideological. Louis Marshall and Julius Rosenwald wrote off Orthodoxy in America in the early part of the 20th century. If Orthodoxy could mass its power, its clout on the American Jewish scene would be decisive. Its fragmentation, in America as well as in Israel, is the basic reason for its weakness. Minute differences metastasize into insurmountable obstacles. These differences, viewed in retrospect, are almost comical but they open wide and painful wounds in their contemporary context.

Today, those who say *ve'yatsmah purkanei* in the *kaddish* worship in the same synagogue and alternate with those who don't in leading the services. Just a few short decades ago, these words were tantamount to a declaration of war, sending close families into bitter factions. Boro Park was recently converted into a battlefield between Satmar and Belz with helmeted policemen constructing barricades and a helicopter hovering overhead to prevent beard pulling and *sheitel* snatching from turning into mob violence.

Modern Orthodoxy, more sophisticated and Americanized, is equally guilty of the sin of diffusion of strength. Two competing synagogue organizations with no basic ideological differences, with the same leadership, playing musical chairs in communal honors, best demonstrate this weakness which drains inestimable treasures of sorely needed communal funds and human resources. Orthodoxy can not cope with other challenges, intellectual or communal, as a house constantly dividing itself.

This situation is all the more regrettable because what diverse Orthodox groups have in common is far more substantive than that which divides them. For example, the most iconoclastic Mizrachi and Agudah adherents worship together, study together, and members of their families marry each other. Members of the Rabbinical Council of America turn to Reb Moshe Feinstein for religious decisions and our *kashrut* and *bet din* decisions are accepted almost universally by the so-called right wing except among the exclusionist right-wing groups which accept only their own religious authority. The Rav's lectures attract an audience mirroring the panorama of Orthodox Jewish life while hundreds of modern Orthodox are at home at a *farbreiving* of the Lubavitcher Rebbe or at a talmudic discourse by a *rosh yeshivah* from the Lithuanian school. History should have taught us that the world of Torah is sufficiently broad to include Yeshiva University and Satmar, Maimonides and Shlomo of Montpellier, the

Rabbinical Council and Agudat Harabonim, hasidim and mitnagdim, Agudah and Mizrachi, the mussar movement of Reb Yisroel Salanter and the unique German Orthodoxy of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. It is the belief in the Divine halakhic process that unites Orthodox Jews and surely this common bond is greater and much more significant than the chasm separating all forms of Orthodoxy from the secularists.

The resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy, viewed in the total perspective of Jewish history, is transitory. This is a first generation that has come from Europe carrying in its baggage a way of life which eventually will be affected by the vast American social hinterland. Forty years ago, right-wing Orthodoxy was opposed to secular studies. Today, many send their children to college or technical schools.

The term right wing is far from monolithic. Is it limited only to Satmar, or does it include the student of a *kollel* in Mir or Torah Va-Daas who has a master's degree? There are other indications, particularly in family relationships, that clearly indicate that the right wing is not immune to the social factors that molded an earlier generation of Russian Jewish immigrants precisely a century ago into today's modern Orthodoxy. The latter Orthodoxy has not remained unaffected by the movement on the right. It was thrown off balance by the surge from the right. In very recent years, it seems to be back on stride, intellectually stronger by the challenge from the right, and on the way back to the healthy self-confidence necessary to its leadership role in the American Jewish community. Right-wing Orthodoxy requires the stance of modern Orthodoxy for its survival. A story, probably apocryphal, has it that the late Dr. Shlesinger, of Shaare Zedek Hospital, once asked Reb Velvle Brisker, how Shaare Zedek Hospital could obtain Orthodox doctors if all Orthodox Jews were banned from studying secular disciplines. Reb Velvle's answer is not recorded but today it is not unusual to see Orthodox doctors, even in East European garb, in hospitals.

I regard so-called modern Orthodoxy as the most legitimate expression of authentic Judaism. Otherwise, I would and could not live within its framework. Almost every period of Jewish history has had its mainstream and its extremes, some of which remained within the confines of Jewish traditions and others which fell away. The Pharisees had their Essenes. For a time, it seemed that Maimonides' opponents would succeed in totally undermining the authority of the "Great Eagle" by challenging his Orthodoxy. Samson Raphael Hirsch's *Torah Im Derekh Erets* would never have been accepted by Russian and Lithuanian Orthodoxy. Modern Orthodoxy, which

seeks to incorporate the finest in American intellectual and scientific accomplishment into traditional Jewish life, is the best method for the largest body of Jews in America to retain its Jewish identity and continuity.

Halakhah regards only individual *baalei teshuvah*. It requires anonymity of the true penitent. The hubris of those who publicly flaunt their status is contrary to the halakhic concept of *teshuvah*. In a very real sense, every observant Jew is a daily penitent. The halakhah requires a penitent to demonstrate shame and regret about his past. The penitent should seek to incorporate himself into the community. Once his slate is clean he should not retain the status forever. Judaism has at least the same responsibility of encouraging traditional Jews to deepen their roots and commitment as it does of welcoming back to the fold of the committed each and every Jew.

As a group, Orthodoxy's greatest and gravest mistake since the destruction of the Second Temple was its opposition to Zionism. To this day, Orthodox subgroupings continue their opposition to the State of Israel even though they reside in the state which grants them, ironically, the right to express the kind of opposition which even a liberal modern state would brand as treason. Had more Jews come to Palestine prior to the Holocaust when it was still possible to come, not only would they have survived, but Israel, today, would have a different religious image. The constant sniper warfare against Israel, as expressed by tying up traffic in the busiest part of New York, creates a *hilul hashem*, damaging all Jews. Conservatism and Reform have now fully recognized the centrality of Israel to Jewish life of the future. This is a major factor in their frenzied attempt to establish themselves in Israel. Orthodox failure to accept this clear and basic fact of Jewish history helped establish a gap which they are attempting to fill.

Even the Agudah today participates fully in Israeli government although it pretends it is not with the pretext it takes no cabinet seat. It, however, accepts many millions of pounds from its chairman of the Knesset's finance committee. Every Orthodox group seeks a presence in Israel today, from the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations' center on Strauss Street to the Satmar and Belzer epicenters just a short distance away. Orthodoxy, with the exception of the Mizrachi element in American life, is gradually responding to Israel as if being forced to by a demon. It should today at least accept what happened thirty-three years ago *de jure*, recognize with gratitude all that Israel has accomplished for the Jewish people since then, and sit down at one table and discuss united efforts to maintain the Jewish character of the state.

Unquestionably, Jewish education is American Orthodoxy's greatest achievement. Nothing in American Jewish history approaches this. Jewish philanthropy, a source of great pride to American Jews, has not prevented the children of important and generous philanthropists from abandoning the faith of their fathers. Concomitantly, Orthodoxy, because of its own very fragile infrastructure, has failed to reach out to the secular, uncommitted, and disappearing American Jew who is surely our responsibility as we are our brothers' keepers.

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**Reuven P. Bulka:** (1) Up to a point, the triumphalists can be forgiven for expressing their uninhibited glee, since only decades ago those who are ostensibly disappearing wrote Orthodoxy off. It is a natural human reaction to the perception of having turned the tables.

Two questions are crucial. Firstly, is the prediction of the demise of the non-Orthodox accurate, and secondly, should the Orthodox community be happy with this?

In answer to the first question, this prediction combines wishful thinking and convenient use of one set of statistics, while ignoring another. By the most optimistic calculations, Orthodoxy comprises 15 percent of the North American Jewish population, 5 percent to 10 percent being more accurate. Lower intermarriage and higher fertility rates are in Orthodoxy's long-range favor, but they are still a minority affirmation. The National Jewish Population Study shows that the younger the generation, the greater the inclination toward Conservative and Reform.

As to the second question, though the Orthodox community has crucial differences with Conservative and Reform Judaism, it may not be in Orthodoxy's interests for their theological antagonists to disappear. The non-Orthodoxy of 90 percent of Jews says something—maybe that Orthodoxy is unpalatable, or that many are “not yet” ready for Orthodoxy. With no other option but Orthodoxy, many would opt out of Judaism *in toto*.

Many Orthodox triumphalists may find this hard to take, but the much heralded *teshuvah* movement has plucked many of its members from the non-Orthodox. Without the Reform “holding pattern,” they would probably have been unreachable.

Triumphalism, therefore, is statistically baseless and theological-ly unsound.

(3) The common doctrinal thread which should run the full gamut of Orthodoxy is belief in God and adherence to God's Torah as elucidated in rabbinic tradition and codified in the *Shulhan Arukh*. Though all elements of Orthodoxy profess this commitment, how this translates into practice varies. Within Orthodoxy, there are as many who mock the knitted *kippah* as do admire and wear it. There are elements of the right who do not trust the bona fide *kashrut* supervision of the "not as Orthodox." The further right on the Orthodox spectrum one goes, the more likely is the application of halakhah to be stringent. Were it just a matter of differing opinions in the context of mutual respect, it would be ideal, for a community without intellectual challenge stagnates. All too often, however, tolerance of halakhic differences is nonexistent; those who do not adopt the stringencies as norms are *treif*, outside the pale. Many of the Orthodox right see the greatest danger not from Conservative or Reform, but from the modern Orthodox.

Even the matter of attitude to non-Orthodox groups is a source of division rather than unity. The confrontation over membership in the Synagogue Council of America sharply divided Orthodoxy years ago. That split was the foreboding of a widening gulf separating the yeshivah world from the world of congregational rabbis. Today, there are more bridges between these two domains, but also more missiles.

(4) Briefly, the resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy is owing to extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Fundamentalist religion in general has made a significant comeback, in no small measure as an equal and opposite reaction to the liberal climate of the 1960s and 70s. This extrinsic trend has worked to right-wing Orthodoxy's benefit.

Nearly two decades ago astute observers were predicting the resurgence of Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy was seen as the only branch of Judaism driven by a passion. If passion is a quality which assures perpetuity in prominence, then right-wing Orthodoxy of today has an *intrinsic* advantage over modern Orthodoxy.

Modern Orthodoxy, however, although not as passionate as right-wing Orthodoxy, may be in a state of partial eclipse, but the eclipse may be only a passing phase. The influence of the right wing in America will probably diminish with time. Additionally, right-wing Judaism is moving further right. This usually, though not necessarily, breeds intolerance, isolation, and a more limited sphere of influence. Modern Orthodoxy, as a more moderate form of authentic Judaism, and more attractive to the mainstream, may ultimately build for itself a broader base of followers.

If this scenario unfolds, the resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy will have been the portent of the reemergence of modern Orthodoxy.

(5) When dealing with religious values, the word “compromise” is anathema. Even the movements to the left of Orthodoxy insist they are not compromising; they are interpreting Judaism the way it should be interpreted. No modern Orthodox Jew could admit to compromising halakhah.

Philosophically, modern Orthodoxy is a unique fusion. Postemancipation reactions were of the either-or type; either join society at large or stay in the hermetically sealed religious community. The modern Orthodox dare to combine the best of both worlds, to pray fervently on *Shabbat* and enjoy the opera on Saturday night. From a right-wing perspective, this is philosophical, if not halakhic compromise. From the modern Orthodox perspective, this is accommodation.

The danger in modern Orthodoxy inheres in the likelihood that, to be part of the world, one tempers religious fervor and intensity, and tends to rationalize away halakhic concerns if they clash with the ability to experience American culture.

On balance, even though the actual expression of modern Orthodoxy may involve compromise, its theoretical thrust is not grounded in compromise. An uncompromising modern Orthodoxy is possible.

(6) Many are returning to authentic Judaism, but many are leaving Judaism. There are many movements to and from Judaism. There are the returnees, the dropouts, the joiners of cults, the intermarriers, and the like. Strategy wise, it is effective to emphasize the wave of return, to create a bandwagon effect and entice the vacillators to join the trend, but it does smack a little of triumphalism, of a claim that the “enemy” has surrendered and is coming back.

There are obvious dangers in overemphasizing the *teshuvah* syndrome, the most serious that it camouflages reality and induces an unwarranted complacency relative to the community as a whole. The *teshuvah* rate does not even approach the attrition rate. Concern about the future of Judaism cannot be divorced from concern about the future of individual Jews. So, emphasizing the positive is psychologically healthy but theologically dangerous. We concentrate on a positive trend and at the same time ignore a dangerous drift.

Then, there is something repulsively grandiose in the statement, “I am a *baal teshuvah*.” True, the sages placed the *baal teshuvah* (penitent) on a higher plateau than the *tsaddik* (righteous person), but the sages did the placing. One instinctively recoils from anyone who boasts “I am a *tsaddik*”; *baal teshuvah* chauvinism is equally out of place. *Teshuvah*—which incidentally is an endeavor of the righteous, who would never aggrandize themselves with the title *baal teshuvah*



(master of repentance)—demands humility. Where humility is nonexistent, one is left wondering whether this is authentic return or a religious joy ride.

(7) The modern Orthodox response to Israel, in emotion and in politics, is admirable. The extreme right anti-Israel stance is despicable. In between, the influence of the extreme right has created what could be called "Israel paralysis." It is not the "in thing" for very religious Jews to support Israel. They love the land of the Bible, but oh, the government! Many who would like to be more forthcoming are wary of the extreme right, afraid of being branded as *treif* because they support the state. Witness the Satmar-Belzer feud. One principal of a yeshivah boasted that he had balanced the two poles with an innovative celebration of *Yom Haatsmaut*—the school was closed! Does this place *Yom Haatsmaut* on par with *Pesah* or with *Tisha B'Av*?

Israel is physical survival, it is *dinei nefashot* (a matter of life and death). Disagreement with the government is petty stuff when compared with life. In the post-Holocaust, reincarnated anti-Semitism atmosphere, vacillation concerning Israel is an outrage. Orthodoxy must, with all its vigor, thrust off the yoke of the extreme right and carry the banner of Israel proudly and resolutely.

(8&2) Orthodoxy's greatest achievement is that we can even question Orthodox triumphalism. Once given up for dead, Orthodoxy is now the most vibrant and qualitatively secure trend in Judaism. Out of the organizational decay of decades ago, Orthodoxy has literally transcended its constraints. Hundreds of day schools, a proliferation of yeshivot, organized *kashrut*, are but a few of Orthodoxy's most noble achievements.

But Orthodoxy is splintered. Neither its adherents nor its thoughts are coordinated. The case of support for Israel is a good illustration. There is no coherent Orthodox position, no coordinated leadership. There is too much in-fighting of the gutter-sniping type when Orthodoxy's energies need be devoted to the pressing issues of the day.

Practitioners of Orthodoxy are at times strong in adherence to the letter of the law but weak in the province of noble behavior. Adopting *humrah* (stringency) in person-God commandments is combined with selecting *kullah* (leniency) in person-to-person commandments; one is left with the feeling that Orthodoxy is a host of practices somewhat divorced from profound faith.

In the past, when Orthodoxy's position in the Jewish matrix was precarious, it could be forgiven for being sensitive to criticism. Now, however, it is firmly entrenched and need not fear for itself. Or-

thodoxy, all aspects of it, must individually and collectively take stock.

A massive effort to heal the internal ruptures must be undertaken. The coherent Orthodoxy of tomorrow need focus on the common ground which binds, rather than the differences which fracture.

Orthodoxy must begin to exercise its leadership muscle. It must separate *humrah* from norm, and neutralize the borderline neurotics who would paralyze Orthodoxy by forcing the adoption of every stringency and the shutting off from community.

Orthodoxy must lead by being involved in every facet of community; federation, U.J.A., B'nai B'rith, social action, and the like.

Finally, in the strained economic conditions prevalent today, many cannot avail themselves of Orthodox inspired resources, most notably the day schools and yeshivot. Instead of being unable to afford not being Jewish, the next decade may become characterized as the period when Jews could not afford to be Jewish. To make Judaism affordable and desirable is Orthodoxy's great challenge.

Ironically, by becoming more involved in the total community, Orthodoxy is likely to attract greater support for its institutions. And this is the way it should be.

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**Emanuel Feldman:** (1) It is not necessarily "triumphalism" to predict the ultimate disappearance of the non-Orthodox. Even objective students such as Sklare and Liebman tend to question the viability of these movements which are hard pressed to retain their young, and which do not reproduce themselves. Already we see signs within the non-Orthodox movements of *sreifat neshama veguf kayam*: almost 50 percent of Reform rabbis will officiate at mixed marriages, and 15 percent admit to not believing in a personal God. It goes without saying that almost 100 percent do not observe *Shabbat*, *kashrut* or *taharat hamishpakhah*. (The line between the nonobservance of *mitsvot* and the ultimate officiating at mixed marriages is not as indirect as it seems.) The day of assimilation and accommodation masquerading as religion is long gone: can such hollow shells — devoid of solid Jewish content — be said to have a future? True enough, certain elements within Reform are painfully aware of their desperate situation and are trying to make traditional and even halakhic inroads. Even *Torah min hashamayim* has a few adherents. But it is

questionable whether the few in this case can overcome the many; it is more likely that Reform will go the way of other deviationist movements in Jewish history.

And if Reform goes, can Conservative Judaism be far behind? A movement which is unsure of its stand on the major Judaic theological issues—Divine revelation, the authority of halakhah, Messiah—and whose practitioners often cut vital corners even in such areas where they pay lip service to halakhic norms (such as marriage, divorce, and conversion), will not succeed in gaining the committed following it must have in order to secure its future. In fact, the Conservatives, who until recently rode the wave of middle-of-the-road popularity, are now greatly weakened precisely because a new generation demands clear-cut commitment and not neutrality in halakhah.

Would that it were not so. Would that the non-Orthodox were able to do what they said they were doing: keeping people from assimilating, from moving totally away. The sad historical fact has been that, as often as not, they have been a way station to assimilation; they claimed that their diluted, halakhah-less, *mitsvah*-less movements were in fact reflections of genuine Torah and authentic *yahadut*—but Jews, recognizing ersatz religion, rejected it and went looking elsewhere. A few, it is true, became fully observant and identified themselves with the Orthodox; but many others went in the opposite direction entirely, and they and their children are all but lost to Jewish life. Thus, to predict the ultimate disappearance of the non-Orthodox is not triumphalism; it is rather a prediction made in sadness that the bitter lessons of Jewish history concerning deviationist movements were not sufficiently clear to the founders of these groups.

(2) None of this is meant to deny that those who call themselves Conservative or Reform are anything less than our brother Jews. One of the great challenges facing Orthodoxy in America is to point out the severe theological weaknesses within the non-Orthodox, to fight their inroads into halakhah, to strengthen basic Jewish beliefs against erosion, and at the same time to maintain a love and human respect for these our brother Jews. The Orthodox have not yet found the right formula for this. True *hokhakhah* was a lost art in the times of the rabbis (*Arakhin* 16b), and is certainly not known today. We must learn how to criticize and even castigate—without scorning; to scorn the sin but not the sinner. The polarization of Jewish life would be a tragedy. Unfortunately, polarization is a two-way street: the tragedy will come to pass if the non-Orthodox insist on non-halakhic marriages, divorces, and conversions.

A second challenge facing the Orthodox is the ability to be

self-critical, to look inward, to avoid the temptation of self-righteousness. The need to point out differences should not blind us to our own weaknesses: our inability to be civil among ourselves; the self-righteousness and vituperation which mark the easy denigration of those who are not exactly as we are—though they may practice and believe in the basic fundamentals of Judaism. We must learn to love a fellow Jew not only when he is nonobservant, but—even more difficult—even if he appears to be more pious or more punctilious than we are. We must begin to recover the art of *mentshlikheit* among ourselves. More than once in Jewish history has *sinat hinam* destroyed communities.

(4) The resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy—the Orthodoxy of the hasidic and yeshivah world—is a manifestation of the desire for a Judaism which is uncompromising, which represents religious integrity and intensive scholarship. Whatever one may say of the “black-hat” world, one fact about it remains true: it is self-confident, not apologetic, not defensive. It is clear-eyed; it knows who it is, and where it wants to go; its leadership preaches and, more importantly, lives lives of total commitment and authenticity. And they have no patience with secularism or with modernity. Whether they are more, or less, pious in the eyes of God than the modern Orthodox is beside the point: they do possess a profound attraction for those seeking clarity and not fuzziness.

The resurgence of the yeshivah world does not portend the demise of modern Orthodoxy. It demonstrates, rather, the attractiveness of zeal in our day. It has already had a decided impact on all forms of Orthodox life because it has established a standard of conduct and an approach to life which was thought to be unattainable in America. Their vitality and dynamism have demonstrated that it is not only the college-educated Orthodox who are equipped to engage and confront modern life, but that uncompromising Torah attitudes can also speak to the contemporary Jew who is in search. The resurgence of the right wing is part of the resurgence of Orthodoxy in general, and cannot be addressed as a separate issue.

(5) What distinguishes modern Orthodoxy from the right wing is its view of the secular world, and its view of the non-Orthodox religious world. Secular knowledge, for example, is not *ipso facto* evil, but, as it increases our appreciation of God’s unfolding will in nature and in history, can be an instrument in the understanding of Divine truths. As for the non-Orthodox religious world, these are forces which should be reckoned with and which, when necessary, should be engaged in struggle. For the right wing, secularism and non-Orthodoxy are simply not important; to take them seriously is to recognize their existence, and to recognize their existence is to

compromise one's integrity. The fact is that the outside world has to be taken seriously, and the so-called modern Orthodox have performed a heroic task in confronting that world by articulating a Torah perspective on life and by developing an audience for Jewish authenticity. The ground was kept fertile for the later seedlings of right-wing Orthodoxy which might not have been able to take root had the ground not been prepared by the modern Orthodox. Obviously the modern Orthodox hold the same beliefs as the right-wing Orthodox: *Torah min hashamayim* and the integrity of the halakhic process. In fact, they often look to the so-called right-wing *Rosh yeshivah* for guidance. We should not overemphasize the labels. The so-called modern Orthodox fought the bitter and heroic battle with the non-Orthodox streams precisely because it was not a philosophy of compromise. And it has suffered the worst of both worlds: their secular education, their modern dress, their occasional tolerance and understanding of the non-Orthodox have often been the source of the obloquy of the right wing of Orthodoxy; and yet their innately principled stand has been the source of attacks from the non-Orthodox as well.

(We suffer, of course, from "labelmania." Is one modern Orthodox when his jacket is short, his hat not black, his education secular as well as yeshivah, he writes for *Tradition*, and is a member of the RCA—although he is a believing, faithful, and punctilious Jew? And is one right-wing when these manifestations are lacking—although he too, may be a fully observant believer?)

(6) The desire to return to basic Jewish sources, the search for roots and anchors, the yearning of the Jewish soul for direction and clarity and definition, the rejection of pseudoliberal dogmas which have resulted in a spiritual dead-end, have all contributed to a widespread movement of return to Judaism on the part of large numbers of our people. (Sadly, although the numbers are large, the percentage of Jewish young people returning is still quite small.) Orthodoxy has already responded to this phenomenon of returnees. The institutions which guide the returnees, the synagogues in which they worship, the yeshivot in the United States and in Israel in which they study Torah, the world to which they return, are without exception Orthodox. The *teshuvah* phenomenon is thus another manifestation of the inherent strength within Orthodoxy. To have envisioned such numbers twenty-five years ago would have been madness. The infusion of enthusiastic and questioning newcomers in search of genuineness can only serve to strengthen the Orthodox. The returnees seek not "services" but davening, not "communal leaders" but teachers, not oracular pronouncements about the state of the universe but concrete halakhic guidelines as to how to live their

lives. Such new demands can only strengthen us, sharpen our focus, make us more honest.

(7) One need not view the State of Israel as the actual beginning of the ultimate *geulah*—although perhaps our myopia obscures our vision—to be enthusiastic and uplifted by it. We must view it as a manifestation of God's compassion for His people, as inexplicable in its *midat harakhamim* as was the European destruction in its *midat hadin*. And, like the destruction, modern Israel, too, is a *nisayon* which tests us. The sudden emergence of a Jewish state in 1948 presented us with an opportunity not only to find a haven for tormented Jews, but to grow religiously as a people. The fact is that Israel today is the greatest single generator of Torah scholarship and Jewish piety in the world. We should respond to the State of Israel with gratitude to God for having vindicated before the eyes of mankind the biblical promise of return to the ancestral homeland. And we should respond to it by making Orthodox Jewish life in Israel a model of commitment and ethical living so that ultimately the pseudosecular forces presently ensconced there will begin to see with even greater clarity that which is becoming so evident: the spiritual bankruptcy of their ways.

(8) Among the greatest achievements of Orthodoxy are the establishment of a worldwide network of day schools and yeshivot which have raised up a generation of committed and self-confident Orthodox Jews—both modern and right-wing. We have also fought the good fight against insuperable odds and have time and again been vindicated. Were it not for the stubborn, unbending, inflexible Orthodox, Judaism in America might by now have disappeared. Our success has been that we remain the conscience of the community.

But our failures have been great. While we have developed a fine network of schools, we have not as yet achieved a strong network of synagogues in America, nor a cadre of laymen who can appreciate the central role which a synagogue must play in Jewish life.

Our cardinal failing, however, has been that we might have done so much better. With all that we have to offer, we have still not become living models for the non-Orthodox. Are we demonstrating by our lives that *drakheha darkhei noam* (her ways are ways of pleasantness,) and are we transmitting a spiritual quality that is so pervasive as to bring others close to us? Have we not often demonstrated that halakhic living and gross materialism are, sadly, not contradictory? Do we find ourselves living by every jot and tittle of halakhah and yet breaking the Ramban's famous definition of holiness? Does our shrill name calling and antagonism towards fellow Jews—even when they believe as we do—inspire confidence in us and a willingness to pursue a *mitsvah*-oriented life? With so much

in our favor, with so many historic forces pulling in our direction, with a Jewish world sated with materialism and searching for meaning and soul enrichment, the Torah way should have stood out as the only obvious alternative. But when the values which characterize the non-Torah world characterize our world as well, we are lessened and our teaching is diminished.

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**Hillel Goldberg:** I shall address the last question—on Orthodoxy's achievements and failures—because it encompasses most of the other questions. Space does not permit me to address two important issues: the woman's role in contemporary Orthodoxy, and the proper relationship between Orthodox and non-Orthodox movements.

### *The Achievements of Contemporary Orthodox Judaism*

1. *Diversification.* An unexpected boon and great source of strength, the *teshuvah* (returnee) phenomenon has helped Orthodox Judaism demographically and spiritually. The demographic aid is obvious; the spiritual aid is, unfortunately, not obvious to all. Given the extreme emotional and behavioral discrepancy between *prebaalei teshuvah* and Orthodox Judaism, it is unrealistic to expect most returnees to move smoothly into present Orthodox structures. It is realistic—and beneficial—for returnees to tap the whole variety of emotional and intellectual frameworks of Orthodox Jewish identity which have evolved in the past 200 years. Returnees have created or contributed to the revivification of Breislaver hasidut, Salanterian musar, Habad hasidut, Jewish philosophical synthesis, *mitnagedut*, and numerous other forms of Orthodox Judaism. Returnees have widened contemporary Orthodoxy's understanding of itself by reintroducing a rich and exciting diversity to it.

2. *Activism.* All out of proportion to its numbers, Orthodox Judaism has contributed to Israel and to the struggle for Soviet Jewry. The contribution to Israel is demographic and spiritual. Demographically, more Orthodox Jews than Jews identified with non-Orthodox movements have made *aliyah*. Spiritually, the Orthodox aid to Israel is twofold. First, there is the contribution of Western Orthodox immigrants to increased tolerance and mutual understanding between various Orthodox factions in Israel, and be-

tween the Orthodox and non-Orthodox. Second, there is the creation of strong links between the diaspora and Israel through the high enrollment of sons and daughters of American Orthodox Jews in Israeli educational institutions. Far more important to Israel than financial contributions or than the evolution of the right ideological response are *aliyah* and the creation of direct links. In all this, the Orthodox contribution stands out. Similarly, Orthodox students, rabbis, and laymen—far out of proportion to their numbers—nurtured the first private, political, and organizational efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry and thus paved the way for the rise of Soviet Jewry activism in the United States.

3. *Right wing.* The rise of the right wing in Orthodoxy has strengthened Orthodoxy considerably. That modern Orthodoxy has a distinct and indispensable contribution to make, and that this contribution is presently overshadowed by the success of the right wing on account of certain weaknesses in modern Orthodoxy with which I shall deal below, is no reason to begrudge the right wing its success. The tremendous impetus to Torah study and to punctilious observance of *mitsvot* are largely to the credit of the right wing. It is an outstanding achievement.

4. *Growth.* Orthodox Judaism has made itself a respectable alternative to assimilation and to non-Orthodox movements. When I came to Berkeley as a freshman in 1964, there were an estimated 5000 Jewish students out of a total of 27,500. Of these 5000 Jews, a total of two wore *kippot* on campus. There were no facilities for kosher food in any dormitory or at the Hillel House. There was no Habad House, no *minyan* with a *mehitsah*, no fellowship, almost no *shiurim*, etc. During the subsequent 17 years, the situation on college campuses and in communities with respect to *kashrut*, *mikvaot*, *Shabbat* observance, yeshivot, and the like has changed dramatically. Orthodox rabbis, laymen, and students toiled long and hard to bring this about. It is also a great achievement.

### *The Failures of Contemporary Orthodoxy*

1. *Crisis of content.* The first failure is the inability of Orthodoxy's spiritual and intellectual resources to keep pace with its institutional and demographic growth. We are facing a crisis of content. For many returnees—those who have been Orthodox for some years now—Orthodoxy has failed to provide sufficient educational and spiritual challenges once the initial impact of *kedushah* inherent in daily observance is fully absorbed. For many “native Orthodox,” there is an unhealthy substitution of allegiance to the professions, to academic Judaica, or to communal leadership, for Torah study and



the more intangible but equally obligatory *avodat ha-Shem*. The potential harmony and mutual interaction between professional, academic, and communal interests, on the one hand, and Torah study and *avodat ha-Shem*, on the other hand, has not been actualized. Instead, all too often there is a bare-bones halakhic observance together with a radical overvaluation of professional, academic, or communal interests and an accompanying radical minimization of the importance of Torah study and *avodat ha-Shem*.

2. *Internal intolerance.* Contemporary Orthodoxy suffers greatly from a lack of genuine pluralism within its own precincts. We are not "a collection of separate movements held together only by common opposition to non-Orthodox groups or to secularism"; we are bound by common beliefs about God and Torah; but we have not given sufficient thought and energy to accommodating the shadings of understanding of our common beliefs. The issue of genuine pluralism within Orthodox Judaism is the most crucial one facing contemporary Orthodoxy because without pluralism we shall, I fear, fritter away enormous energy and idealism on internecine warfare instead of channeling our energy and idealism to fighting assimilation and intermarriage and to building Jews.

Modern Orthodoxy's problem with a genuine pluralism is that, in practice, modern Orthodoxy has largely turned into a philosophy of compromise—a way to maintain an institutional affiliation without taking seriously the spiritual and intellectual demands which that affiliation entails. This makes it difficult for the modern Orthodox to be genuinely pluralist because the conferral of legitimacy on the right wing evokes feelings of guilt about the weakness of one's own commitment. Hence the right wing either is seen as a threat or as alien, or is accused of all kinds of imaginary transgressions. But were modern Orthodoxy to put to practice its theory, that is, to live day by day with a strong commitment to Torah study and punctilious observance together with a vigorous commitment to some kind of intellectual or professional synthesis of Torah and other spheres, then modern Orthodoxy would feel much more confident and find it much more easy to appreciate the right wing and to live with it with a great measure of common purpose. On the other side of the coin, were the right wing less triumphalist about its achievements, more tolerant of life situations in which many people find themselves and which dictate a broad horizon of interests and talents, and more perceptive about the basic continuity between S.R. Hirsch (whom the right wing finds acceptable) and the contemporary, serious modern Orthodox Jew, then right-wing Orthodoxy would be more humble and find it more easy to appreciate modern Orthodoxy and to live with it with a great measure of common purpose. The present lack of genuine

pluralism within Orthodoxy shows that Orthodoxy is afraid of itself—its rich diversity, its colorful continuity with all shades of pre-War European and oriental Orthodox Jewry, and its new American-styled Orthodoxy. It is much easier to assent to pluralism than to live it, for pluralism in Orthodoxy is:

when one knows that the right wing has no monopoly of piety and the modern Orthodox no monopoly on interpersonal decency and honesty;  
when the sanctity of one's speech is more important than the color of one's yarmulke;  
when the title "rabbi" is more important than the title "doctor";  
when those who identify with one or another wing of Orthodoxy can meet amicably—not by politely suppressing feelings of superiority or animosity;  
when the terms "sephardi" and "ashkenazi" connote worthy and distinguished traditions, not a divisive, emotional wall;  
when words like Torah and God are more important than words like Agudah and Mizrachi;  
when Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kuk is not used as a whipping boy with which to admonish others for lack of *ahavat Yisrael*;  
when Torah education for mentally retarded is no less important than Torah education for mentally gifted;  
when it is less important whether the other fellow's *tsitsit* are in or out than whether he is wearing *tsitsit* at all;  
when the term *baal teshuvah* is applied not only to people from nonreligious backgrounds but also to oneself;  
when it is more important whether one directs all of one's particular energies to *avodat ha-Shem* than whether one is secularly educated or secularly ignorant;  
when it is irrelevant that the garb of certain Orthodox Jews is linked to one century, as if garb linked to another century were no less culturally relative;  
when it is not scandalous that one's child decides to: become a professional, or learn in a kolel, or join the Israeli army, or marry an Orthodox Jew unlike oneself.

Plurality in Orthodoxy is when one can say: Nothing Orthodox is alien to me.

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**Moshe S. Gorelik:** (1) Orthodoxy is a successful religious enterprise. It has belied the prophets of doom in the past and can now look to the future for continued achievements. The statistics support this contention. Yeshivot, *mikvaot*, synagogues, *shtibels*, *kollelim* stud the American landscape. The heavy concentration of Orthodox

Jews in locales such as Monsey, Boro Park, Queens, Brookline, Baltimore, Silver Springs, Miami and others, indicate that Orthodoxy is alive and well, thriving and flourishing. In the past Orthodoxy was valiantly holding on to a steadily decreasing number of adherents. Today, it boasts of countless thousands of observant Jews. Yesterday, its voice in the halls of power was subdued. Today, it shares actively in the leadership of the American Jewish community.

To exhibit triumphalism and forecast the total disappearance of the non-Orthodox movements is another story. Just as the statistics demonstrate the astonishing resuscitation of Orthodoxy since the end of World War II, the statistics also indicate that non-Orthodox movements are alive and kicking. A mere survey of the American Jewish community outside the several intense Orthodox enclaves reveals that the bulk of American Jews are members or fellow travelers of non-Orthodox movements. This is true in New England, the Deep South, the Mid-West as well as in New York. Notwithstanding the loss of many members from temples through apathy and assimilation, their numbers are still large and influential. The Orthodox community by virtue of its passionate commitment shouts its presence louder than the other movements, but this does not signify that the disappearance of the latter is in sight. To proclaim thus is folly. During the days of Messiah we have hope this may come about, but at the present time Orthodoxy should continue to focus on its mission of building an ever more dynamic and meaningful religious community.

(2) Orthodoxy faces a crucial challenge. It must reassess honestly its moral commitment to *yiddishkeit*. The complaint that an ostensibly observant Jew is guilty of unethical crimes is to our sorrow often well grounded. This immorality takes on different forms, such as unsavory business practices, defrauding the government, malicious and unwarranted abuse by one group against another or an intolerable "holier than thou" attitude. The religious leaders of Orthodoxy, whether they be heads of rabbinic or lay organizations, *roshei yeshivah*, and synagogue rabbis are morally bound to denounce behavior patterns incompatible with Jewish ethics and morality. Yeshivah students should be inspired to emulate ethical models, such as R. Yisroel Salanter, the Chofetz Chaim and the like. Ethics of halakhah must not be relegated to the level of a course but must be integrated into the whole of Jewish living. A return to the elementary rules of respect, courtesy, honesty and tolerance is imperative if the integrity of Orthodoxy is to be maintained.

(4-5) Right-wing Orthodoxy reflects the age and the needs of the times. Its philosophy presents an image of genuineness, simplicity and certitude. It issues direct and unequivocal directives and does not entertain even momentarily the plausibility of differing perceptions.

It eschews any modern, critical approach, methodology or attitude to the study and application of the *mesorah*. Torah is the source of all answers. Turn it over and turn it over and all the answers will be found in it. This religious philosophy is comforting and soothing to the contemporary, be it scholar, workman, philosopher or businessman.

Modern Orthodoxy is caught in a dilemma. It is challenged both from within and from without. Internally, it is composed essentially of two groups. The first views itself as a compromise between East European *yiddishkeit* and the modernity of the non-Orthodox movements. "Let us not be too *frum*. We are living in a different world and if we are too strict, we will lose our children. Let us be realistic." This is the "eat your cake and have it too" philosophy. Its commitment lacks spiritual clout. But it does constrain many who would otherwise leave the Orthodox fold. The second group seeks a Judaism rooted in the Torah and *mesorah*, and yet does not hesitate to share in the intellectual achievements of the day. Its motto is the Rambam's, "Embrace the truth, no matter its origin." This group does not fear to reassess *shtetel yiddishkeit* in the light of genuine Torah perspectives and the ever increasing knowledge of the world about. It seeks to enrich the spiritual experiences of Torah life by broadening the perception of Torah values through the ever expanding knowledge of the world and all that is contained in it. This is not an Orthodoxy of compromise nor of exclusion. This is an Orthodoxy deeply rooted in the sanctity of Torah and *mesorah* open to new vistas and understanding.

These two forms of modern Orthodoxy face two different sets of challenges. The first must answer to the charge hurled by the right against the attitude, "Don't be too strict." To the right wing, mixed dancing, lower *mehitsahs*, mixed bathing, the low value often ascribed to Torah learning are not only examples of the compromise of halakhah, but more so, symbolize a compromise of faith. To the second form of modern Orthodoxy the right wing hurls the following challenge: Is not Torah the sole criterion for intellectual and spiritual speculation? How can we question the words of our *gedolim* and *admorim*? Can courses in general philosophy, biblical studies, Judaic research, and the like truly enlighten us more than the religious classics of our people?

I don't believe right-wing Orthodoxy will eclipse modern Orthodoxy, but the latter may come out second best, unless the image of compromise is erased. A genuine modern Orthodoxy adhering to the supremacy of Torah values and at the same time taking up the challenge of the contemporary not by isolation or insulation, but

entering the market place of ideas with deep conviction will lend balance to an often overzealous extremism pervading the Orthodox community. The depth of talmudic studies blended with the joyful faith of the hasid and accompanied by the best of general knowledge is a viable blueprint for the future of a dynamic modern Orthodoxy.

(6) The *teshuvah* phenomenon, notwithstanding certain accompanying problems, has added an important dimension to Jewish religious life. The "new born Jew" has contributed in most instances a spirit of freshness, sincerity and seriousness to religious commitment. Occasionally, one hears strong criticism against this phenomenon. For example, it is said that some *baalei teshuvah* are so overzealous that their observance borders on madness and that others may be using religion to resolve their emotional problems. In some instances the allegations may be correct, but as a whole the *baalei teshuvah* represent a healthy resurgence of *yiddishkeit*. They should not be vilified for their shortcomings. Patience, tolerance, understanding and helpfulness is what they need. And perhaps, those who were born with the right credentials will sit up, take note and be inspired.

(7) In the spirit of Yehudah Halevi: Pray for it, yearn for it and try to make *aliyah*.

(8) Chief amongst Orthodoxy's achievements is the development and growth of Torah education. The American yeshivah stands as a symbol of Orthodoxy's commitment to the relentless and uncompromising dedication to Torah learning for all Jews, seminarians and laymen alike. This is no mean feat for Orthodoxy had to confront those who jeered, dismissed or considered Torah studies as an antiquated, unnecessary intellectual exercise. A few meager undernourished Hebrew school years and perhaps a sprinkling of Judaic courses at college campuses were deemed adequate. At best a few esoteric scholars at a seminary would keep the flame of Torah learning burning. Orthodoxy, however, with relentless insistence raised the status of Torah learning onto its proper pedestal of dignity and importance. The innumerable *kollelim*, yeshivot and day schools are a valid testament to this remarkable success.

One of Orthodoxy's main failures lies in its relationship with the non-Orthodox community and its leaders. Aside from a few "liberals," the general Orthodox community feels uncomfortable about the subject and would prefer to ignore the problem. Witness, for example, the periodic debates whether the Union or the RCA should retain their membership in the Synagogue Council or other similar umbrella organizations. Orthodoxy must yet learn to live in an open society and recognize the realities of difference. There exists an ideological

chasm between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox, but theological differences must not prevent the respect due to fellow Jews. We must learn to tackle issues and not engage in *ad hominem* attacks. We must at the same time be firm in our theological stand and retain respect for the person. We may have to rebuke, but should do so with love. Passion for faith need not be converted into a blaze of disrespect and intolerance.

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**Joseph Grunblatt:** The term “modern Orthodoxy” is a misnomer, if we mean by modern that it is some new phenomenon that has no precedent in Jewish life. There were always two tracks in Jewish life; the “insulated from the world” and the “being in the world.” These two options may have been projected in the famous argument between Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Shimon Ben Yohai in the Babylonian Talmud *Berakhot*. In summary, Rabbi Ishmael said: We do not take the maxim “and thou shalt engage in it (the study of Torah) day and night” literally, but we must plow when it is time to plow, sow when it is time to sow, and harvest when it is time to harvest. Rabbi Shimon Ben Yohai responds indignantly, “If a Jew will do all that, what will happen to the Torah?” Rather a Jew must incessantly engage in study “and the work will be done by others.”

Looking a little more profoundly at the discussion, one could conclude that this is more than an argument whether to work for a living or not. Called into question is the Jewish role in the *V'kiv'shuho* process (you shall dominate it; the world, its forces and resources) assigned to man at creation. Are the Jews still part of total humanity with its obligations to inherit and develop this world, guided by Torah, or have the Jews as the *Am Hatorah* withdrawn from this process to concentrate on Torah exclusively? After all, *Torah ma t'he oleho* (what will happen to the Torah), which is crucial to the very existence of the world. No one else is going to study and observe the Torah. Let the work of *v'kiv'shuho* be done by others.

Taking a stand on this fundamental issue inevitably affects the position one will take on the degree of “worldliness” that is permissible; whether to grant legitimacy to the study of and proficiency in non-Torah disciplines; how to relate to the Gentile world; and in-

directly, even how to relate to the non-Orthodox State of Israel today. Modern Orthodoxy therefore means "worldly" Orthodoxy, contemporary version.

It is generally agreed that there has been a marked shift to the "right" in American Orthodoxy. This fact is attested to by the proliferation of right-wing yeshivot, *kollelim* and institutions and by the insecurity of modern Orthodoxy itself. The modern Orthodox tend, more and more, to make their schools conform to "right" standards and their organizations are very anxious to demonstrate their "Torah-true" Orthodoxy as they curry favor with the hasidic and yeshivah communities. In the world of prayer the trend is reflected, particularly in the larger communities, by the decline of the formal synagogue and the growth of *shtibels*, small and informal places of worship. I see in this swing to the right a reaching out for the position of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yochai, varying levels of rejection of the world, and an affirmation of the singular unique and unaffiliated nature of Jewish existence. The successes of the right can be attributed to many causes and circumstances. We are living in the post-emancipation era and being part of the world is not as exciting and as "seditious" as it was to the enlightened Jews of East and West. In fact, going far beyond the confines of Orthodoxy, there is a general disappointment in Western civilization in spite of space shuttles—a disappointment resulting from society's inability to resolve basic problems of the human condition and compounded by failure to offer a meaningful and satisfying existence to modern man.

Important factors in the swing to the right are the inherent weaknesses of modern Orthodoxy or "worldly Orthodoxy." Unlike *Torah im Derekh Erets*, American modern Orthodoxy did not emerge out of an ideological rebirth, as was the case in Hirsch's Germany, but as a compromise between the old and the new world lifestyles which beset it with incongruities and inconsistencies. By and large modern Orthodox families do not encourage their children to pursue Torah scholarship as a life vocation. "It is not a job for a Jewish boy." Most of the young *talmidei hakhomim* emerging out of modern Orthodoxy are youngsters who have "defected" to the right. Without substantial Torah scholarship the modern Orthodox movement does not exude the authenticity and does not project the confidence and self-assurance young people seek. It becomes a vicious circle and a self-fulfilling prophecy, "if you want to be an authentic *ben Torah* you have to join the right." Closely related to that issue, and part of the modern Orthodox syndrome, is its lack of spirituality as a quality of life. The modern Orthodox Jew has become deeply affected by the hedonism of Western man. We do not mean to imply

that you cannot find *gartelah* at *Pesah* beach parties. But generally speaking, modern Orthodox Jewry study less Torah, *daven* more briefly and less frequently with *minyan*, are more ready to spend money for better entertainment than for a better *Esrog*, and are more lax in observing the rules of *Tsniut* (sexual modesty). The children of this segment of Orthodoxy are often to be found on campuses at universities throughout the country. Those of us who attended the most recent convention of the U.O.J.C.A. at Boston heard some very disheartening reports about the spirituality and the moral standards of these youngsters. In short, modern Orthodoxy suffers from being more modern than Orthodox.

Another weakness of modern Orthodoxy is its locus. Its former proud and confident position as the "party of the middle" has become tenuous and uncertain as it glances to its left. The triumphalism of right-wing Orthodoxy may not be morally or practically justified from an overall historical perspective but it certainly has some basis in reality. The modern Orthodox Jew looking to his left finds the steady disappearance of the "less-than orthodox" Orthodox Jew who at one time was the financial backbone of the Orthodox institutions. (Undoubtedly this fact is partially responsible for the financial crisis in Jewish education. The money lost from that sector of the population has not been replaced fully by new resources in the observant community.) Looking further to the left he sees a mass exodus of the younger generation through assimilation and intermarriage. It is quite evident as one keeps on moving from the right to the left that the rate of "reproduction" (both biologically and spiritually) decreases substantially. The modern Orthodox Jew suddenly discovers himself to be the "left" as he sees an abyss to the left of himself. In moments of somber reflection he is frightened and led to worry about the spiritual destiny of his children.

The criticism of American modern Orthodoxy coming from within and without should not obscure its many accomplishments. That it managed to survive at all under the very adverse social and cultural conditions of "melting pot" America is a miracle in itself. But it did more than "hold down the fort" until the arrival of Europe's remnants and the general religious revival. Through the U.O.J.C.A. and the "modern" rabbinic leaders of the R.C.A. it established respectable and responsible communal *kashrut*. While all the credit for the growth of the yeshivah movement, particularly at the higher level, is given to the *rabbonim*, *Roshei yeshivah*, and rank and file of the post-W.W. II immigration, the contributions in monetary and personal involvement, moral encouragement and political support of the local modern Orthodox Jewish community is often ignored when the credits are presented. With the exception of



Lubavitch it was modern Orthodoxy (admittedly after W.W.II) through N.C.S.Y. of the U.O.J.C.A. and through Yeshiva University seminars for teenagers that pioneered the flourishing *teshuvah* movement.

The current weakening of modern Orthodoxy is saddening. First, the Talmud had already decided that "Rabbi Ishmaelism" is the more viable option for most Jews. The "not in the world" option of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yochai was considered workable only for the few. This is true also because of the ancillary development of attitudes towards Israel. The right responds positively only to the religious institutions in Israel, not to Israel as a state. This undermines the overall Orthodox input and contribution to the great Jewish event of our century and it weakens our influence in the overall Jewish community in the *golah*. I view the negativism to the state, on the right, as more than dissatisfaction with its secular nature. It is existentially part of a general reluctance to come to grips with a problematic contemporary world and a longing for a greater sense of security that the "not in the world" Judaism offers.

Yet I refuse to take a pessimistic view of modern Orthodoxy. I am looking forward to a new, positive and healthy influx, a spilling over from right wing, or self-styled "Torah-true Judaism." The signs are already visible. After all, not everybody makes it to *kollel*. Many professed members of the right are entering wider areas of contemporary life, if for no other reason than economic necessity. *Kollel* itself must reach a saturation point. Ultimately there are saturation points in positions available in *hinukh* and even in computer programming. We are already seeing the beginning of a trend in pure Torah scholarship that is coming to terms with contemporary needs and even the worldliness of the modern Jew and his organizations. The relationship at this point may be more symbiotic than integral, but it is there. The "spill over" from the "right" in a positive way is becoming visible in such "worldly" organizations as the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists, Orthodox Jewish Teachers, Cheshbon Society, and the like. Rabbi Ishmael is bound to triumph once again. This new, slow but steady spill over will help solidify a rejuvenated modern Orthodoxy which will be more Orthodox than modern; an Orthodoxy which will be simultaneously more authentically Jewish and more realistically contemporary, a new version of *Torah im Derekh Erets* indigenous to present location and times.

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**Robert S. Hirt:** (1) The noteworthy resurgence of Orthodoxy cannot justify a projection of triumphalism either on demographic or strategic grounds. According to the National Jewish Population Study (Fred Massrick and Alvin Chenkin, 1973), the writings of Charles Liebman, and surveys of Sidney Goldstein and Calvin Goldscheider (Jewish-American Prentice Hall, 1968), Orthodoxy comprises no more than 10 percent of the Jewish population in the United States, at best. The more self-congratulatory we are, the easier it is to avoid the reality that records significant developments in other ideological groups. Despite the move to the left, there is a discernible move toward greater commitment to traditional Jewish learning and practice within Conservative and Reform movements as well as in federation young leadership groups. When these movements are viewed as enemy camps, doomed to extinction, "red flags" are raised and potential adherents to a full Torah way of life are turned away. It is more effective to address the issues than the labels. The use of code words and public denigration of non-Orthodox movements lead us to a heightened polarization which discourages open, searching, non-Orthodox Jews from identifying with Orthodox institutions. Orthodox leaders would do better to project educational and life style strengths rather than broadcast triumphalist broadsides.

(2) The decline of the inner city, the traditional stronghold of Orthodoxy, the flight to suburbia and exurbia, the move to the Sun Belt have dealt severe blows to the core of Orthodox synagogue life. The challenge to Orthodoxy is to develop new Orthodox congregations wherever Jews reside. If Orthodox leadership does not respond, its impact will be restricted to a few isolated and insulated oases in the major metropolitan population centers. Good social planning to identify those communities with the greatest potential for growth is essential, so that valuable and limited human and economic resources are not dissipated in a buckshot approach. The singular pioneering effort of Yeshiva University, through its Division of Communal Services, to provide guidance, rabbinic personnel, and financial assistance for new congregational development for the past twenty-five years is one example of what has to be rapidly expanded throughout North America.

The day school is now well accepted as the most effective setting for Jewish education. No longer is the day school regarded as solely within the province of the Orthodox community. Today, in most cities, schools founded by the Orthodox leadership, populated with children from diverse backgrounds and orientations, receive significant financial support from the general community, via Jewish federations. If these institutions, largely under Orthodox direction,

do not provide high quality education in Judaic and general studies, they will be taken over by a leadership with different priorities. Before the day school gained popular acceptance, the local Orthodox rabbi or principal was in overall control. There was a sense of appreciation and loyalty to the school's founding fathers. This is no longer the case. A day school that does not provide academic excellence will not be able to retain its ideological character simply because of tradition and inertia. In addition, there is a significant effort by federations to heavily fund the establishment of new schools of a nonideological nature as an alternative to the yeshivah. Providing quality education, not the building of new schools, should be the objective for the next decade.

The personnel issue is pivotal in Jewish education. Incentives relevant to status, security, and economics must be created if we are to attract talented young people willing to undertake proper training for a life-long career. Teachers must be role models who care for children and are ready to strike roots in a community.

The turnover in personnel is a very serious concern today. Increasingly, schools founded by the Orthodox community in small and medium size cities in the South, Midwest, and West Coast have non-Jewish or nonobservant general studies administrators in educational leadership positions. Lay leaders will not allow the "musical chairs" situation to continue, and feel that continuity in administration is absolutely essential to a school's survival. In these settings, the Jewish studies department may be left in the hands of an Orthodox department chairman as a concession to the traditional segment of the school population. Orthodox educational leaders must be aware of the ideological and educational factors that have led to what is more than a passing phenomenon. The future direction of hundreds of schools is at stake.

In a time of population decline, we have a proliferation of schools. Cities like Baltimore, Cleveland, and Seattle are experiencing polarization. The centrist day schools in these communities are losing their right and left wings. For decades, the traditional day school successfully provided a Torah educational environment for students regardless of home background. Wonderful things were achieved in the fertile ambience of the day school. Judaism as a life style was adopted by many marginally-committed families who had for the first time come in contact with Jewish families having rich Jewish educational backgrounds. The emergence of "*heder* schools" to avoid contact with the nonobservant, and the creation of non-Orthodox schools, to be free from capitulation to a vocal right, have presented the existing schools with a state of uncertainty and tension.

If the trend of “*heder* schools” and the withdrawal orientation persists, Orthodoxy will simply lose access to the larger noncommitted community.

Orthodoxy has spawned a generation of highly educated, economically successful, *shomrei mitsvot*. However, this laity has not been prepared for leadership roles in the general Jewish community. Policy making and social planning often take place without the input of the yeshivah educated. It is necessary for rabbis and educators to share insights and aspirations with their lay people so that a concerted effort can be launched to elevate and maintain a high standard of Jewish commitment in all community endeavors.

A recent sampling of Orthodox rabbis, Jewish educators, and laymen on major issues of concern to Orthodoxy yielded the following areas, ranked in order of frequency of response:

1. polarization of left and right;
2. erosion of large congregations;
3. shtetelization on a large scale;
4. tension between rabbis, educators and their respective lay leaders;
5. the need to articulate a centrist philosophy and assert halakhic spokespersonship.

(4) Growth of the right seen as a resurgence of commitment to Torah is undoubtedly a positive development. However, the motivation for this phenomenon is not clear. The loss of a moral consensus in American society, economic and social dissolution, personal insecurity and anxiety, tend to taint all established institutional structures with an air of the inauthentic. Society's current anticultural and anti-intellectual climate makes religious institutions with a similar orientation appear attractive. To many, the more removed the religious institution is from general society, the better. Distance means separation from societal pollution. The move to the right is not necessarily an indicator of greater spiritual striving. The emphasis on external conformity, exhibited by the right, may have greater appeal than a search for substance and religious growth. Prediction for the future is highly speculative. The departure to the right within Orthodoxy may clearly establish the center as a visible alternative for an authentic, halakhic, authoritative—but not authoritarian—posture. To retain adherents in the center and attract from the right and the left, the centrist movement will have to define and articulate its position on basic issues. These include: the attitude towards general culture and education; the status of women regarding work and Torah study; the notion of *daat Torah*, and where does authority

reside; attitude toward non-Jews and to the secular government; and many others. The centrist position should not appear to emerge merely as an identity created by defection of the right and the left.

(7) The time has come for Orthodoxy to relate to the existence of the State of Israel in halakhic and conceptual rather than political and organizational terms. The spiritual implications of *Yom Haatsmaut* and *Yom Yerushalayim* for the Jewish people have yet to be fully explored. There is a need to consider the imperatives placed upon us by the emergence of the state: Is *yishuv Erets Yisrael* to be considered seriously by all diaspora Jews? If so, do our school curricula reflect this understanding? The community has been seeking direction in these areas for a long time. Students get mixed signals on these issues from their pulpit rabbis and *mehanhim*. Responses are awaited in the centrist community.

Perhaps for the first time since the dawn of the Enlightenment, Orthodoxy is holding its own, growing in quality and in self-confidence. Despite the oracles of the '30s, which predicted the demise of Orthodoxy, genuine Torah communities have emerged. The level of today's learning and observance is creditable. America is perceived as a *makom Torah* of high quality. At the same time, the assimilation rate is more rapid than was predicted two decades ago. The objective now is to put together a well thought-out plan for the future, with clear educational goals and communal projections. Orthodox rabbis, educators, and lay leaders, in a cohesive manner, can design an effective mechanism to transmit and share a Torah life style within the context of the larger general Jewish community.

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**Immanuel Jakobovits:** (1) I believe recent developments do warrant the prediction of the eventual triumph "by important segments of Orthodoxy," but they do not justify any "triumphalism."

The pointers to dramatic demographic changes in favor of the Orthodox at the expense of the non-Orthodox are clear enough. The non-Orthodox are today self-liquidating. Their birthrate is phenomenally low, while their fall-out rate through assimilation and intermarriage is alarmingly high. These twin pincers are bound to squeeze progressively more tightly, and were the present trends to be maintained unimpeded, the forecast that American Jewry might be reduced from the present 6 million to 10 thousand within the next cen-

tury could be tragically realistic, with similarly declining numbers elsewhere.

The most intensely committed elements, by contrast, gain at both ends; they enjoy a prolific birthrate and they are now—for the first time in modern history—almost completely immune to the erosion of defections. In addition, they now make some increasingly significant inroads into the ranks of the non-Orthodox by recruiting *baalei teshuvah*, where formerly the movement was in the opposite direction.

In Israel, these factors are further accentuated by the high proportion of the Orthodox among *olim* and of the non-Orthodox among *yordim*. *Yeridah*, it has been said, is the Israeli equivalent of intermarriage in the diaspora. Added to these comparative losses among the non-Orthodox is Israel's abnormally high abortion rate which has already claimed well over a million potential Israeli lives since the establishment of the state.

These facts and figures seem indisputable. But far from justifying any complacency, let alone triumphalism, such a massive loss of Jews, amounting to a self-inflicted Holocaust, must be a cause for the most profound agony. Every Jewish life, whatever the degree of Orthodoxy, is infinitely precious, and the ravages wrought by birth control and assimilation must grieve particularly those Jews who are committed to Jewish values, which includes the corporate responsibility of all Jews for each other.

(2) To my mind, the most basic challenge facing the Orthodox today is to transform their present introvert attitudes, sometimes bordering on smug self-righteousness, into an outgoing concern for the rest of society, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

The historical reasons for the prevailing mentality are valid enough. While the Nazi Holocaust destroyed one-third of our people generally, the most Orthodox element suffered the devastation of perhaps nine-tenths of its leaders and followers, its academies and communities. This forced the decimated remnants, transplanted as they were to the culturally inhospitable soil of the West, to become isolationist and inward-looking if they were first to prevent their complete disintegration and then to rehabilitate themselves as a potent force—which they have achieved with phenomenal success in the last decade or two. Western civilization's betrayal of the Jewish people during the Holocaust period, lately paralleled by the hostility of the United Nations, was likewise bound to generate an unconcern, if not disdain, for the non-Jewish world, including—among the Orthodox—a pronounced antipathy to all secular pursuits.

These attitudes, then, can certainly be explained, perhaps even justified as a temporary reaction to an emergency situation. But they

can never be vindicated as a norm for authentic Judaism, or even as an ultimate answer to the present Jewish predicament. Neither the self-imposed insulation of the most committed Orthodox segments from the rest of our people, nor the disengagement from the universal dimension of our prophetic heritage can prevail for long without abdicating major imperatives of Jewish teachings and compromising the Divine Covenant on which Jewish rights and Israel's security are predicated.

However, in the long run, the current upsurge of Orthodoxy is likely to engender sufficient self-confidence to face the encounter with non-observant Jews and with the secular world at large without fear or compromise. Only then can the principal challenges facing the Jewish people, and the Orthodox element within it, be met.

(3) Of course, what is shared by the diverse groups comprising Orthodoxy is, above all, a common commitment to the *Shulhan Arukh*. But far from being "held together by common opposition to non-Orthodox groups or to secularism," the various Orthodox movements are in fact divided, in part at least, precisely by their attitude to, and relations with, groups outside their own ranks.

(4) I view the resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy as an obvious challenge to "modern Orthodoxy." The faster growth of the former is the reward of singlemindedness, intensified by the sense of insecurity to which I have already referred, and reflecting the preference of our generation for black-and-white absolutes rather than grey hybrids admitting doubts, questions or innovations. The ascendancy of right-wing over modern Orthodoxy is nevertheless an astounding phenomenon. It seems to defy both history and logic. Generally, in the past, Jewish religious leaders came to terms with the thought and culture of their environment in communities of countries where secular standards were high (for example, medieval Spain, Italy and modern Germany), while in the absence of an intellectual challenge from outside, Judaism remained self-contained and developed from within (for example, medieval France, Germany and modern Eastern Europe). We now do face such challenges from outside, and have yet opted predominantly for disengagement from the secular world around us—a trend for which I know of no historical precedent. Again, of the three principal Orthodox movements in the pre-war period, Hasidism and the yeshivah (Mussar) worlds belonged to Eastern Europe, while *Torah im Derekh Erets* was indigenous to the West in Germany and the Anglo-Saxon communities. The eastern Jewish world was all but destroyed, the west survived; yet the first two movements have made spectacular strides while the third is sharply declining—there is not a single school of higher Jewish learning committed to Hirsch's philosophy anywhere in the world today!

(Yeshiva University and Bar Ilan represent a combination, but not a synthesis in the Hirschean sense, between Jewish and secular values.)

Whether in the long term this process will lead to the complete “eclipse of modern Orthodoxy” is therefore still questionable. I believe historical and contemporary forces will eventually generate some new movement which will be both modern and authentic in the classic tradition of Orthodoxy when planted into a culturally-sophisticated milieu. Meanwhile, my personal commitments notwithstanding, I am quite at peace in seeing my own children and grandchildren caught up in the upswing of an East European type of Orthodoxy which has of late certainly proved more successful than its Western counterpart in completely stopping the leakage of assimilation, perhaps for the first time in modern Jewish history.

(5) I regard modern Orthodoxy as a philosophy of synthesis rather than of compromise, authentically in the tradition of the Rambam, followed by a long line of philosopher- or *Wissenschaft*-savants down to Hirsch, Hoffmann, Epstein and J. B. Soloveitchik in the modern period.

(6) It will take another generation to evaluate the current *teshuvah* phenomenon properly. It is certainly beginning to reverse the trend of defection so prevalent in the last generation. It is still far from being a mass movement and occasionally shows somewhat discomfitting parallels to the faith cults elsewhere. As neophytes, *baalei teshuvah* also often tend towards a simplistic view of Judaism, with zeal compensating for depth. But there are, of course, also many profound and creative people among them who represent an invaluable accretion to Orthodoxy. Highly worthy as are the efforts to reclaim these lost souls, one wonders whether at least similar energies should not be invested into the conquest of communities by encouraging *b'nei Torah* to assume leadership responsibilities in the conduct of communal and national affairs. The *teshuvah* movement is so far highly individualized and has scarcely made any impact on the overall direction of Jewish life.

(7) Orthodoxy is today largely responsible for the thrust towards militancy in Israel, as exemplified—though for entirely different motives—by Gush Emunim, Lubavitch and Meir Kahane. Such identification of religious Jewry with radicalism in the public mind could prove to be baneful to Orthodoxy—and to Israel. I therefore think it is imperative for Orthodox moderates, who may well be in a majority, to be heard and seen without having their voices suppressed or maligned by distortion. As for the non- and anti-Zionists, who comprise a very considerable number, especially in the yeshivah world, their dissent, too, should be respected, even if



one cannot share it, as a legitimate part of diversity on these issues reaching back to the conflicts of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai as well as Rabbi Akiva and their contemporaries. On the other hand, those committed to religious Zionism should make greater efforts to encourage *aliyah* and to emphasize the centrality of Israel in synagogues and schools. They should also advocate the separation of religion from party politics and the independence of the Israel Rabbinate from state control—partnerships which may have been useful in the past but are now obsolete and counterproductive.

(8) Though now somewhat more distant from the American scene, my impression is that Orthodoxy's greatest achievements lie in its educational intensity, turning it into the only segment among America's Jewish tribes which no longer has to worry about survival in quantity or quality. Orthodoxy's greatest failures are to be found in its fragmentation and consequent impotence as a cohesive force to match and overtake the communal effectiveness of the non-Orthodox, notably in matters of national concern, ranging from Zionist policies to welfare agencies and from Jewish studies programs at universities to the governance of Jewish hospitals. The image of American Jewry, at least from the distance, is still overwhelmingly secularist, the phenomenal advances of the Orthodox element being all but obscured by internal rivalries and short-sighted policies. Yet, in the long run, the failures are bound to be outweighed—and corrected—by the achievements.

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**Shnayer Z. Leiman:** What follows is an attempt to take seriously the dictum of the rabbis that the intensive study of a brief text is preferable to the superficial reading of an extensive text. Thus, this discussion focuses primarily on questions 2 and 8.

Orthodoxy's remarkable penchant for survival is due largely to the profundity, resiliency, and ultimately the sobriety of its teaching. Such diverse figures as Maimonides, Nahmanides, and R. Judah Hasid in the medieval period, and Rabbis Samson Raphael Hirsch, Zadok ha-Kohen of Lublin, Hayim Soloveitchik, Abraham Isaac Kook, and Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz in the modern period reflect the incredible richness and latitude of Orthodox Jewish teaching. And precisely because throughout Jewish history critics from within had the courage to criticize constructively and revitalize Jewish religious life without compromising its essential characteristics, Orthodoxy's

continued religio-intellectual existence—whether in rabbinic, rationalist, kabbalistic, ḥasidic, musar, or Zionist garb—was never really threatened. Despite the dire predictions of sociologists and demographers who mistakenly insist on relating rising intermarriage rates with a waning Orthodoxy, we may rest assured that Orthodoxy will survive. The issue is not the survival, but rather the quality, of Orthodox Jewish life. What will Orthodoxy look like in 2082? Or, better, what should Orthodoxy look like in 2082? To respond to the latter question is to undertake to shape the future of Orthodoxy, no mean task, yet one we cannot avoid. We must take a close look at ourselves, list our virtues and vices, and address ourselves to transforming vice into virtue. Orthodoxy's triumphs are self-evident to *Tradition's* readers and need not be rehearsed here. They are celebrated often enough in the Orthodox press. Orthodoxy's failures are less evident, perhaps because they are less pronounced, perhaps because we prefer not to acknowledge their existence.

Some of Orthodoxy's more blatant weaknesses are listed and discussed, however briefly, below. No significance should be read into the ordering of the weaknesses listed. Often interrelated, they are listed separately only so as to provide convenient handles for the reader to grasp as he attempts to confront a particular weakness. I offer no easy solutions, but surely the beginning of any solution is an awareness of the problem.

*Rabbinic Leadership.* An entire generation of rabbinic leadership was obliterated during the Holocaust. The confluence of intellect, piety, personality and practical wisdom that characterized the likes of Rabbis Ḥayim Ozer Grodzenski, Menaḥem Ziemba, and Elḥanan Wasserman is no longer to be found. The vast majority of pre-Holocaust rabbinic leaders who survived the Holocaust, such as the Ḥazon Ish and Rabbi Aharon Kotler, have long since departed. The few who remain are in their eighties (and beyond) and can no longer be expected to take up the cudgels of the wars of the Lord. While these elders live, a much younger generation of rabbinic leadership will hesitate to assert itself. If Orthodoxy is to thrive, that younger generation—two generations removed from its predecessors—will have to assume enormous responsibility *now*. Despite its youth, and despite the discontinuity between generations brought about by the Holocaust, the new rabbinic leadership will have to win the confidence and support of the various segments of Orthodoxy, especially the laity, no easy task. Without a new and vigorous leadership, Orthodoxy risks drifting aimlessly into the 21st century and ultimately becoming the fossilized religion its worst detractors already make it out to be.

*Rabbi/Rosh Yeshivah Dichotomy.* Whatever other problems plagued their rabbinates, Rabbis Jonathan Eybeschutz, Aryeh Leib Gunzberg (the “Shaagath Aryeh”), and the Hatham Sofer did not have to share their base of power with the local *rosh yeshivah*. They functioned simultaneously as rabbi and *rosh yeshivah*. Indeed, it is alleged that Rabbi Hayim of Zanz ruled that a rabbi who does not function as *rosh yeshivah* cannot pass for the officially appointed rabbi of a given town or city. The division of labor between rabbi and *rosh yeshivah* is a modern phenomenon. In theory, the dichotomy should allow for a healthy specialization that could advance the interests of Orthodoxy on many different fronts. In fact, the dichotomy has led to tensions that serve to undermine Orthodox unity and power. The tensions range from trivial matters such as who should perform the wedding ceremony—rabbi or *rosh yeshivah*—to the much more serious issue of which group shall assume primary responsibility for providing Orthodoxy with the leadership it so sorely lacks.

*Lay Leadership.* One of the great triumphs of contemporary Orthodoxy is that it has produced a committed and enlightened laity, that is the graduates of the Hebrew day school movement and of the various institutions of higher Jewish learning. Concomitant with this triumph is an egregious failure: Orthodoxy has yet to develop the communal structures that would allow it to tap the strengths of its laity and to channel the laity’s boundless energy constructively, so that Orthodoxy’s strength could be self-perpetuating.

*Sense of Community.* Despite the pious lip service paid to the notion of Jewish brotherhood, there really seems to be no sense of community among Jews living in proximity to each other. The *shtetl* is gone, so too the *kehillah*, and the social constructs that have taken their place, whether synagogue or Jewish community center, are pitifully inadequate. The proliferation of *shtibels*, the waning of the synagogue as the central social institution of Jewish life, and burgeoning institutional rivalries all serve to aggravate the problem. Not only is it possible, it is perhaps commonplace for a Jew in modern times to live in virtual isolation within a thriving community of 10,000 Jews and more. Can a community of “lonely men and women of faith” perpetuate itself as a community?

*Spirituality.* No traditional aspect of Judaism has been so eroded by the modern American ethos as its spirituality. Whereas our grandparents saw God everywhere, our children see Him nowhere. The synagogue, once a house of prayer, has been transformed into a social center. A spiritually moving experience in a modern synagogue is as likely today as was the splitting of the Red Sea in antiquity. In

many synagogues, the public reading of the Torah—originally intended to challenge and instruct the listener and to provide him with spiritual sustenance—has become a chore to be dispensed with as swiftly and painlessly as possible. Too often rabbinic sermons resemble political editorials one would expect to find on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*. Despite a captive audience, some rabbis refuse to transform the sermon into a vehicle for teaching Torah, inculcating piety, and providing the spiritual sustenance necessary for the Jew to make it through the week. In some synagogues the spirituality that once accompanied the joyous celebration of a *Simḥat Torah* has been rendered meaningless by celebrants who neither study Torah nor support its study by others. Introspection—a practice highly valued by medieval Jewish ethicists—is foreign to the contemporary Jew. Yet such is the strength of Judaism that its spirituality lives on despite the secularist onslaught. Unfortunately many have fallen, the battle continues, and spirituality will prevail only if Orthodoxy is sufficiently determined to see it do so.

*Jewish Education.* No aspect of Judaism is rendered more lip service and less support than Jewish education. Teachers' salaries are ludicrous; school administrators—the best of whom earn a living wage—are beleaguered by boards of education, boards of directors, and irate parents who are persuaded that they know more about Jewish education than any administrator who would deign to work for them. Indeed, talented teachers and competent school administrators could well be placed on the endangered species list. So too could teacher training programs. The attrition rate of teachers and administrators—if it could be calculated—would stagger the mind while serving as an indictment of the Jewish community. Such a calculation would not even take into account the many talented young Jews who are driven away from the Jewish educational field before they get there. Ultimately it is the Jewish community that must set its own priorities; and how many parents would look with pride on their son the Jewish teacher or rabbi? Only when dignity is restored to the profession of teaching will Jewish day schools and high schools attract the talent necessary to deliver the quality education Orthodoxy seeks. Space limitations do not permit a discussion of quality education itself, for example, the ideal curriculum, methods of instruction, library resources, research and publication projects, and school finance. There is need for improvement in all these areas. But the bottom line is that there can be no quality Jewish education without inspired and talented faculty and administration. One suspects that until Orthodoxy resolves the recruitment of personnel problem, there will be time enough to address the other aspects of quality Jewish education.

These, then, are some of the more salient failures and challenges confronting Orthodoxy as it approaches the turn of the century.

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**Aharon Lichtenstein:** As an expatriate who enjoys direct contact with Orthodoxy in America only in the course of brief annual visits, I respond to *Tradition's* invitation with a measure of diffidence. If proverbial wisdom can be twisted, I approach the questions it has posed endowed, I hope, with a transient's perspicuity; and yet I feel sadly bereft of the sense of immediacy so essential for measuring a pulse or perceiving nuances. Nevertheless, as the questions are by and large general—and since, moreover, most are, *mutatis mutandis*, no less relevant to the Israeli than to the American scene—I trust the response will be to the point.

Any assessment of the current state of American Orthodoxy must relate to two distinct issues: (1) its position *vis à vis* schismatic movements, and (2) the degree of its success or failure in coping with challenges which confront American Jewry as a whole. With respect to the former, it is clear that over the past two decades the relative strength of Orthodoxy has been considerably enhanced. This change is due, in part, to the decline of Conservative and Reform Judaism, many of whose traditional constituents have either become totally disaffected or have moved in the direction of consistent halakhic living. In large measure, however, it stems from the resurgence of Orthodoxy itself. Much to the dismay and disbelief of our adversaries (and, quite candidly, weren't there some premonitions among our adherents as well?), it has turned out that the projections of our anticipated demise were not only premature but quite simply erroneous. Revitalization has been perhaps most clearly manifested in the growth of advanced (and often protracted) Torah study; and the development of this area probably constitutes our greatest single recent achievement. How many truly believed, 20 years ago, that the yeshivah proper would today be the heart of Yeshiva University, its *bet midrash* filled to capacity, evening after evening? I wonder if even Rav Aharon Kotler ztl, visionary as he was, thought that close to a thousand *b'nei Torah* would now be learning in Lakewood.

Moreover, the growth has not been confined to major centers, yeshivot having sprung up in what were once regarded as spiritual steppes; nor has it been purely quantitative. The quality of Torah learning has been enhanced, as regards both depth and scope, and

commitment to it, rooted in a sense of its transcendence and unfazed by the imperious pressure of an engulfing secular culture, has been sharpened.

The enrichment of Torah study has of course been accompanied by an ideological and sociological shift to the right; and this, in turn, has led some in the modern Orthodox camp (I very much dislike this stereotyping nomenclature, but in a brief essay it is almost indispensable) both to doubt their own credentials as the bearers of an authentic Torah position and to fear that the intensification of commitment must *ipso facto* generate forces which may sweep them aside. The doubt is sheer nonsense. If by modern Orthodoxy one means the attempt to relate the truth of Torah to the social and intellectual milieu of a more general culture; if it entails realizing Torah values within the context of an integrated life, seen steadily and seen whole, it needs no apology. One may accept it or reject it, but can anyone cavalierly dismiss the tradition of Rav Saadya Gaon and the Rambam as pallid compromise?

As to the fear, it is certainly not without foundation. It should be emphasized, however, that the decline of modern Orthodoxy is by no means an inevitable result of the growth of the right-wing Torah world; and that, despite some unquestioned and unjustified belligerence from certain quarters, if modern Orthodoxy is eclipsed, the primary reason will not be the resurgence of the right but the fragility of the complex and tenuous balance it offers and, alas, some of its own shortcomings. For too long, while it was clearly the main show, modern Orthodoxy was apologetic toward the left and condescending to the right. Often more concerned with image than with substance, it evaded some of the challenges posed by its position and frittered away opportunities offered by it; and some of its spokesmen confused making the *Times* with the *summum bonum*. None of this is inevitable, however; and there is no reason why a chastened and therefore strengthened modern component, itself rooted in intensive commitment to Torah and drawing sustenance from it, cannot flourish within the overall context of revitalized Orthodoxy. Although persistent internecine struggles have somewhat obscured the fact, that which unites the diverse factions of Orthodoxy is far more basic and far more comprehensive than that which divides them; and if only we all develop greater sensitivity, tolerance, and empathy, we should be able to attain a mutually fruitifying relationship within our common halakhic community.

The improvement in the relative position of Orthodoxy—largely based, in turn, upon its absolute resurgence—is both impressive and, to us, gratifying. With respect to our second topic, however—

Orthodoxy's success in meeting the challenges confronting collective American Jewry—the picture is far less sanguine. Even as the hard core of Orthodoxy has strengthened and deepened its commitment, the community as a whole has become polarized, with most of it increasingly apathetic if not alienated with respect to its Judaism. During the last 20 years, assimilation has become ever more insidious, intermarriage rampant, Jewish identity eroded, and disaffection with *any* religious affiliation widespread; and upon all this Orthodoxy has had almost no significant impact. Consequently, I, for one, fail to understand the smug satisfaction which envelops some of my colleagues. With intermarriage running close to 50 percent, when studies indicate that over three-fourths of our brethren do not enter *any* house of Jewish worship on *any* day of the year, while the fabric of the Jewish family is impaired (just think of the purely halakhic problems this raises, not to mention broader implications), can anyone rest content because several thousand *b'nei Torah* (whose importance I do not, of course, minimize in the slightest) are now more committed? We are justifiably gratified by the growing number of *baalei teshuvah*. Yet, even as we recall *hazal's* emphasis upon the significance of every individual as a whole world, can we forget that these represent a minuscule part of their alienated peers?

Nor do I share the glee some feel over the prospective demise of the competition. Surely, we have many sharp differences with the Conservative and Reform movements, and these should not be sloughed over or blurred. However, we also share many values with them—and this, too, should not be obscured. Their disappearance might strengthen us in some respects but would unquestionably weaken us in others. And of course, if we transcend our own interests and think of the people currently served by these movements—many of them, both presently and potentially, well beyond our reach or ken—how would they, or *klal Yisrael* as a whole, be affected by such a change? Can anyone responsibly state that it is better for a marginal Jew in Dallas or in Dubuque to lose his religious identity altogether rather than drive to his temple?

Our collective difficulties are, under present circumstances, perhaps largely unavoidable. The deck is simply stacked. However, I am afraid Orthodoxy's failure to cope with them has been exacerbated by some of our own failings. There are primarily two. The first—to some extent, I am afraid, the obverse of intensified commitment—is a certain narrowness which has gripped much of the Orthodox world. At its worst, this has bred a measure of arrogance and intolerance and has even shockingly led to corruption derived from the sense that one is above mere civil law or civil behavior. Even

where these are absent, however — and I fervently trust such instances are not widespread — narrowness manifests itself in cultural insularity and limited horizons; in pettiness and smugness; above all, in misplaced priorities and skewed perspectives. This last is reflected in the prevalent attitude toward the State of Israel which is generally regarded favorably but not recognized as a momentous historical development. It is also evidenced, however, with respect to the American scene. On one of my visits I recall being almost overwhelmed by the impression that the major challenges confronting American Orthodoxy were neither demographic nor ideological, not how to deepen Jewish identity and weld the community, and not how to come to grips boldly with the social and intellectual impact of secular culture. These were, rather, determining the status of metropolitan *erubin* and finding the right tuna fish. I do not, of course, minimize in the slightest the need for dealing with the minutiae of halakhah seriously and responsibly. But this must be done, as *gedolei Yisrael* always insisted, with sensitivity, with perspective, with sweep. And of these we currently have too little.

The second failing — not unrelated to the first, concerns the quality of leadership. American Orthodoxy has produced some fine *talmidei hakhamim*, many capable and conscientious rabbis, and a group of thoughtful and articulate intellectuals; and, under the circumstances, this achievement has been remarkable. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it has produced almost no indigenous *gedolim*, neither in the narrower sphere of halakhah nor in the broad realm of public leadership, and no first-rank creative thinkers or artists. Their absence, at a plane beyond competence and commitment, is sorely felt; and it is partly responsible for the myopia which often besets us.

In closing, let me stress that in making certain criticisms I have not sought to minimize the accomplishments of American Orthodoxy. These have been, under circumstances which rendered sheer survival a major achievement, very substantial. However, I feel we would do best to leave the kudos to others and to focus more on what yet remains to be done. Looking before and after, we should regard our recent resurgence as providing both the opportunity and the responsibility to proceed “Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new.”

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**Bernard A. Poupko:** (1) Although Maimonides asserts that “The Torah assures us that eventually Jews will repent at the termination of their exile . . .” it is unrealistic to predict the total disap-



pearance of non-Orthodox movements in the foreseeable future. The reasons are rather obvious. Both by virtue of formal affiliation and personal commitment the non-Orthodox groups constitute the overwhelming majority of the American scene. Their centralized institutional structure and their material resources should not be underestimated. Furthermore, theirs is the advantage of catering to their constituency with "pragmatic realism" which is totally unthinkable within the observant sector where Law is central and determines policy, ideology and action. Likewise, the intensely ideologically committed within the non-Orthodox movements will continue zealously and tenaciously their efforts to preserve and expand their particular mode of Judaism. Thus, it is premature at this juncture of American Jewish history to expect the total disappearance of non-Orthodox movements, at the most a precipitous decline.

(2) Some of the more serious basic challenges facing the Orthodox movement are:

- a. effective and a meaningful communication with all segments of our Jewish community in America. We have not as yet mastered the skill of presenting with clarity and imagination our ideological philosophy and our fundamental objectives;
- b. fragmentation and duplication of efforts in the areas of education, Soviet Jewry, *kashrut* and Israel have in no small measure impeded our efforts and diminished our effectiveness;
- c. the negative attitude of some of our Torah scholars and their yeshivot towards the institution of the rabbinate and the synagogue which is a contributing factor to the weakening of our communities;
- d. the everincreasing level of mobility to the Sun Belt which is threatening existing communities and resulting in the rise of new non- and semi-observant communities;
- e. the imbalance caused by overemphasis of ritual aspects at the expense of socio-moral requirements demanded by the halakhah;
- f. the effect of the continuous inflationary trend of our economy upon intensive Jewish education, that is, young couples finding it more and more difficult to pay tuition for their children although even the highest scale of tuition hardly covers 50 percent of the cost to educate a Jewish child in the contemporary setup;
- g. our narcissistic culture which emphasizes sensuous gratification, material acquisition, pleasure fulfillment and untamed permissiveness;
- h. a disinherited generation of Jews who were never exposed to a

meaningful Jewish experience, that is, who never saw a father engrossed in the Bible or the Talmud, a mother praying or a grandfather putting on *talit* and *tefillin*.

(3) Only some of these common elements are shared by the various diverse groups comprising Orthodoxy. It is rather too simplistic to assert that Orthodoxy is a collection of separate movements held together by common opposition to non-Orthodox groups or to secularism. It is rather authentic and historic values and concepts, that is, unconditional commitment to Torah, *mitsvot* and the halakhic Jewish life style which hold us together. In fact not all of us share the same approach and the same attitude towards the non-Orthodox groups. Some segments within the Orthodox community have never abdicated their role towards the ultimate spiritual rehabilitation of our nonobservant brethren. This love and concern for them constitutes a major part of their Jewish orientation. On the other hand there are some among us, however limited in number, yet militant and resourceful, who resort to insulation and a self-imposed ghetto. Clearly, our positive aspirations which we share in common overshadow the "fictitious solidarity" against the encroachment of the nonobservant sector.

(4) The current resurgence of the right-wing Orthodoxy does not portend the eclipse of modern Orthodoxy which has proven through history its authenticity and its viability on the American scene. Modern Orthodoxy, in the same manner as Samson Raphael Hirsch's ideological orientation in Germany a century ago, has proven to be the most effective answer to the needs of American culture and today's mood. Right-wing Orthodoxy, if anything, has considerably strengthened and deepened the aspirations and the commitments of modern Orthodoxy. The interaction of these two views, generally speaking, has proven to be a salutary asset for both. There may be different emphasis and approaches but the goal is the same, to achieve a Jewish community of enlightenment and commitment.

(5) Even as the commitment to writing of the Oral tradition by Judah, the Prince, was not a compromise but rather the erection of a protective fence to guard the halakhah, so modern Orthodoxy too, as personified by Yeshiva University, the Rabbinical Council of America and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, is erecting "a reliable fence" to guard, preserve and expand the sovereignty of halakhah in Jewish daily life. The Torah enlightened and the *mitsvot*-conscious medical doctor, lawyer, scientist and business executive are not a compromise but rather a cherished and most valuable achievement of modern Orthodoxy. Modern Orthodoxy has produced on the American scene a young generation of

men and women, native Americans, who share an enlightened awareness of an enthusiastic commitment to Torah Judaism.

(6) The current *teshuvah* phenomenon should be viewed as a significant deterrent to the frightening trend of assimilation, intermarriage and the erosion of authentic Jewish values. The *baalei teshuvah* among us constitute a unique reality which offers authenticity to our age-old conviction that Judaism and Western culture are not incompatible and that one cannot computerize predictions about the destiny of Torah Judaism even in the midst of most insurmountable challenges. The *teshuvah* phenomenon is genuine because it originates within the deep and innermost resources of the Jewish soul. There is an honest and a passionate thirst for that which is true and lasting in Jewish life.

(7) The response of Orthodoxy to the State of Israel should be twofold. On the one hand, we must offer material help and respond to the needs of the state with unconditional and wholehearted commitment. *Aliyah* must be embraced as a cardinal religious principle. At least one member of every observant Jewish family in America should settle in Israel. Still we cannot remain indifferent when vital issues of Judaism are at stake in the newly forged society of Israel. Our voice must be heard whenever halakhah is threatened. Of course, our intervention must be exercised with caution, judiciousness and above all with an abundance of love and devotion to the State of Israel. Furthermore, the very birth of the State of Israel and its existence must be viewed as a religious phenomenon and as the fulfillment of the Divine promise to our ancestors. The State of Israel should be regarded as the dawn of our looked forward to Messianic Era.

(8) Orthodoxy's greatest achievements on the American scene are: Yeshiva University, Torah Umesorah, the day school movement, the rise of yeshivat and *kollels*, Young Israel and the remarkable rise of a young generation steeped in Torah, excited by *mitsvot* and totally committed to the preservation of authentic Judaism and the security of the State of Israel. Orthodox Judaism brought about the dawn of a golden age in Torah scholarship on the American scene. Orthodox Judaism has achieved legitimacy, credibility and acceptance which are in no small measure responsible for the resurgence of the *teshuvah* movement. Orthodox Judaism in America spearheaded the rescue of Soviet Jewry. Orthodoxy's greatest failure is its inability to achieve a centralized cohesiveness and a more effective level of communication with the general Jewish community.

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**Nachum L. Rabinovitch.** (1) Much though I welcome the rapid and visible growth of Orthodox groups of all kinds, I cannot see in pessimistic prospects for the non-Orthodox movements any warrant for triumphalism. Sadly, only a minority of American and world Jewry outside Israel identifies appreciably with anything Jewish. Thank God, the State of Israel preserves Jewish peoplehood, but in the *golah* we face, God forbid, the possible disappearance of millions of Jews. The urgent historical challenge is to deepen our sense of responsibility to *klal Yisrael* and to extend ourselves to the limit of our capacities to spread Torah as widely as possible. At the same time, we must beware of smugness and self-satisfaction, which besides being quite unjustified by the facts, are entirely inimical to a Torah outlook.

(2) The growth of the Orthodox community has greatly increased our resources, but even within the fold, the challenges are mind-boggling. Genuine *talmidei hakhamim* are difficult for any society to produce, and it is not surprising that their numbers are as yet so small. Yet, when one compares the thinness of Torah learning with the all-pervasive values of consumerism which infest some of our most strident groups, it is obvious that a Torah-true society is still very far from realization. Even the sobering sense of *galut*, always a bulwark in the diaspora, is in America evaporating in a strange psychological reaction to the God-given opportunities of *geulah*.

(3) The increasing tendency to see *yiddishkeit* as a matter of organizations and movements, a tendency apparently shared by the framer(s) of this questionnaire poses great dangers. Instead of loyalty to God, devotion to the study of His Torah, and commitment to the fulfillment of His *mitsvot*, the marks of "authenticity" become this or that sectarian label. There has never been a formal organizational structure to comprise all Jews, and none is needed now: we are not a pressure group, certainly not a sect. Torah and *mitsvot* are the common elements that bind us together.

(4) The resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy, insofar as it involves enhanced observance and increasing Torah learning is an inspiring phenomenon. Nonetheless, it appears to me there are some less welcome features as well. To some extent there is here a temporary combination of sociological and psychological factors. A virile response to the shattering experience of the Holocaust affirming our will to survive, together with a nostalgic romanticization of a vaguely remembered Eastern European Jewish way of life, given a period of uninterrupted affluence of longer duration than has previously been known—these are a heady mixture. The unresolved issues in the confrontation of Judaism with the radical social,

economic, scientific and political transformations of the modern age were consumed in the flames which destroyed most of European Jewry. The unprecedented prosperity of American Jewry since the war permitted the development of enclaves within which there allegedly obtains a life style patterned after a real or imaginary Eastern European model whose painful inner contradictions do not yet need to be faced.

(5) Modern Orthodoxy—what is it? The questioner apparently presupposes a pejorative meaning for “compromise,” as if authentic Judaism is or has ever been monolithic, unaware of the conflicting demands of body and soul or of love and justice; of the abiding tension between learning and doing, of the clash between pressing needs of the present and the inevitable necessities of the future. Seeing the world through one eye alone, anything which is not apparent on the surface can easily be discounted. Yet is it not for a shallow two-dimensional existence that God has created us. Without depth-vision, without awareness of the past and sensitivity to the present there can be no wisdom and without wisdom there is no fear of heaven. Nonetheless it is undeniably true that some of what passes as modern Orthodoxy is nothing more than a slowed-down process of assimilation—a thin veneer of ethnic-type Judaism over a basically non-Jewish culture. It should be noted, however, that in some contexts the “thin veneer” scarcely appears to be that, for it may consist of many *shtetel* folkways and may even be accompanied by some meticulous practical observances, and the phenomenon is not restricted to those who call themselves modern Orthodox. Both a *shtreimel* and a *kippah srugah* may be nothing more than ostentatious self-righteousness hardly indicative of fear of heaven.

Judaism can only thrive if Torah learning prospers. Where Torah learning is not valued, or where it is inhibited, and certainly where it is made to serve partisan ends, there Judaism is warped. To use the study of Torah as an excuse to refrain from taking cognizance of the real world is not only an abdication of responsibility; it is an implicit disavowal of the power and relevance of Torah. A Torah which is not concerned with the complex problems of our age, is merely a shadow of God's Torah: His Torah is for every age. His Torah requires that we serve Him and build a just society, a holy community, with all the gifts of God as well as all the inventions of man. His Torah seeks to stretch our intellectual and spiritual horizons to the utmost.

The evolution of a Torah way of life which takes account of the immense possibilities as well as the awesome challenges of the modern condition cannot be accomplished in one generation. The rise of the State of Israel has in some ways facilitated this develop-

ment, but it has also made it more critical. A Jew can never be at ease.

(6) It would be surprising indeed if the unparalleled events of our times—the unspeakable terror of the destruction of a third of our people and the awe-inspiring rebirth of Jewish sovereignty—did not shake a few complacent hearts and summon some seekers after God. Yet the so-called *teshuvah* movement is not a purely Jewish affair. For the upheavals in the Jewish world were a manifestation of global paroxysms. The Holocaust was the nadir of a civilization in its depravity, a civilization which had lost its soul. The specter of a nuclear holocaust is only barely suppressed into the unconscious, and the profound sense of unease which it generates has turned many sensitive people to a spiritual search. The perplexities of modern man breed a host of religious and pseudoreligious phenomena. Unfortunately some Jews too have been caught up in cults of various kinds, and I am not sure that even the majority of Jewish seekers have found the *teshuvah* movement. And even of those who have, their naive yearnings are sometimes too easily satisfied with simplistic half-truths which are a poor substitute for the bread of Torah and cannot nourish the soul in the long run. For *baalei teshuvah*, as for all of us, there are no easy roads to enlightenment. Understanding Torah is an arduous undertaking demanding persistence and sustained effort. Without deprecating the one day student of the college (*Hagigah* 5b), nor denying his honestly earned merit—can he be made a model to emulate or a guide to those who have lost their way?

(7) It seems to me that the answer has been formulated for us already as we learn in the *beraita*, “Till thy people pass over O Lord”—this is the first entrance. “Till the people pass over that Thou hast acquired”—this is the second entrance. Say from now that the people of Israel were entitled that a miracle be performed for them in the second entrance as in the first entrance but that the sin intervened.

It is sad that the sin is so thick that some of us still cannot see what has happened before our eyes. The very fact that this question is asked is a pointed reminder of the words of the prophet: “who is so blind as my servant?” (Isaiah 42:19).

No doubt this is one of Orthodoxy's greatest failures. On the other hand there have been achievements. Though clearly only a very small beginning has been made, Torah is no longer foreign in some communities. We still do not have reliable statistical data on the extent of the impact of day-school and yeshivah education. Yet that impact is undeniable. Progress has been steady and the potential for further growth seems to have been established. Some young *talmidei*

*hakhamim* are growing in stature and in some few places a community environment conducive not only to observance but also to learning has been created.

Yet, a sociologist studying our Orthodox communities finds many features characteristic of non-Jewish social structures of similar economic strata. The centrifugal forces battering the family—the basic social unit—have not spared us. Even the most right-wing groups, in spite of, or perhaps because of their regimented stratification, are not immune to some of the debilitating ills of American society such as drug addiction and family breakdown. Even violence has almost become an “accepted” pattern in some hasidic intersectorian squabbles.

It is surely not without significance that an unhealthy occupational distribution continues to characterize Jews in American society and increasingly threatens even Israel. While interpretation of the facts may be in dispute, it certainly says something about the intellectual movements in our midst as well as our values, that a school of science under Torah auspices has folded, but law schools flourish. We need to redouble our efforts to increase and to deepen Torah learning, to cultivate Torah values and ideals and to translate them into a way of life that not only permits the literal observance of *mitsvot*, but which becomes a highway to love of God.

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**Emanuel Rackman:** The leaders of Reform Judaism a century ago predicted the demise of Orthodox Judaism. They certainly were false prophets. No less naive are they who predict the disappearance of non-Orthodox movements before the coming of the Messiah. They are focusing their attention on the return of many Jews to the tradition and halakhah but they ignore the lamentable alienation of many more from Judaism as a religion with dogmas and commandments. Even when these alienated do not totally assimilate, their Jewish identity is ethnic or nationalist in character but certainly not Orthodox and they will undoubtedly affiliate with movements that allow them to maintain ties with their people without committing themselves to beliefs and behavior that they do not relish. Moreover, it is to be expected that in cultures that stress the value of freedom, nonconformism will abound. This is a phenomenon as natural as any and cannot be eliminated.

In several respects the recent developments that have encouraged

some Orthodox Jews to feel that Orthodoxy will triumph over all other approaches to the faith are a curse as well as a blessing. They are themselves causing at least as many Jews to abandon the tradition as are being attracted to it. These developments include a growing extremism and intolerance which is found in segments of the so-called yeshivah and hasidic worlds and drive many Jews who would otherwise be Orthodox to non-Orthodox camps. It even happens that when one member of an already Orthodox family identifies with a group that presumes to be more Orthodox, he causes more than one brother or sister to reject what all might have cherished in common had mutual respect and tolerance prevailed instead of their opposites.

Indeed, this is one of the major challenges to Orthodoxy today. How does one put an end to the identification of Orthodoxy with intolerance, the total rejection of modernity, and the readiness to isolate from nonobservant Jews? However, this is not the only challenge.

For me one of the major challenges has been well described by Professor Charles Liebman. It is the failure of Orthodox Jews who are coping with modernity to do so unapologetically but rather with conviction that theirs is the authentic halakhic Judaism. Too many of them simply refuse to deal with the problems intellectually. Many even have guilt feelings and deem themselves second-class Orthodox Jews. They regard the ultra-Orthodox as the true representatives of the faith when in fact the attitudes and positions of the extremists have the fewest precedents in ancient and medieval Jewish history. Needless to say, for me the ways of the so-called "ultra-Orthodox" are inauthentic, although they serve a good purpose—they help me to discover the golden mean.

The neglect of Bible study is another problem with which Orthodox Jews must cope. Unfortunately, they prefer ignoring this problem even in their universities. Most Orthodox Jews who have attained at least one university degree are aware of the existence of the "higher" criticism of the Bible. They choose either to ignore it or to accept it without permitting it to affect their religious behavior patterns. Only a few face the challenge and resolve it—at least for themselves—with a measure of intellectual honesty. But of openness with regard to it there is virtually none.

Despite the fact that I readily acknowledge the existence of different Orthodox approaches, and find Orthodoxy no more monolithic than the non-Orthodox movements, nonetheless, I believe that there are common elements shared by the diverse groups that call themselves Orthodox. These include more than the fact of Revelation and the integrity of the Pentateuchal text. The Orthodox approach to halakhah differs radically from that accepted by the



overwhelming majority of non-Orthodox Jews. There is a real gap between even left-wing modern Orthodox halakhists and right-wing Conservative ones. The difference may not be articulated easily but is to be found particularly in the mood of the *posek* (the arbiter of a halakhic issue) when asked to qualify or reject the view of a respected authority. The Orthodox do so with "fear and trembling." The non-Orthodox do so more blithely. In any event, the Orthodox are united in their preoccupation with halakhic literature and its prescriptive character. Yeshivot, where Talmud is the principal subject of study, is their first love. In addition, they are the watchdogs for the observance of the halakhah in national Jewish organizations. In Israel too they try to make the state conform to halakhic norms. Thus, in dogma, practice, and program, all the Orthodox groups have much in common and ought at least to try to achieve a measure of cooperation among themselves and some coordination in their operations.

By the same token, the more liberal Orthodox groups must prevent the more rigid ones from dominating the scene so that all of Orthodoxy is equated with the latter's points of view. For this reason Ben Gurion faulted the Mizrachi in Israel, often ignored them, and instead sought counsel from the Agudat Israel.

Yet, the modern Orthodox ought not organize as a separate group. I resisted pressures to do this many years ago and I believe that my judgment then is still correct. Had the modern Orthodox organized as a separate body instead of upholding the legitimacy of their position within existing Orthodox organizations, their less liberal brethren would have related to their group as if they were "conservative." It is always easy for the self-righteous to cast aspersions on those whom they deem less righteous. They may not do this with malice. They may do so only to protect themselves and their progeny against contact with those who may be wrestling with religious doubts or pressing for more creativity in halakhic decisions. The so-called "enlightened" in every society are always suspect by the less daring. And the modern Orthodox must insist on their rightful place in the councils of the Orthodox "establishment" lest their own credentials as Orthodox spokesmen be forfeited.

That right-wing Orthodoxy is experiencing a resurgence is no surprise. First, in the world's present cultural milieu conservatism and reaction are the order of the day. Disillusion with science and the spirit of free inquiry is legion. Both are hallmarks of modernism and therefore the ancient is sought out by more and more people. As many are flocking to mysticism and oriental religions, so are many flocking to the quaint and esoteric in Judaism. Second, the modern Orthodox produced many Jewish intellectuals but not primary and

secondary school teachers for the day schools to which they send their children. Other Orthodox groups trained the teachers. The result is that the modern Orthodox permitted their progeny to be educated in a spirit upon which they frown. They rationalized what they did by saying, "Let the child get the rightist point of view in his youth; maturity and experience will straighten him out later." Their prediction did not always come to pass. What is worse, many of the children were alienated altogether because of the contrast between the teachers' closed minds and the parents' openness. Third, in an insecure world, many crave security and, without a doubt, blind faith provides more security than does the travail of the intellectual who seeks God as Maimonides did—in doubt and anguish, in awe and trepidation. Fourth, many of those presumably practicing *teshuvah* have come to it via routes that can account for the most unpredictable irrational behavior and commitment.

I am hopeful that a study will yet be made of the resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy and we will then know more about its causes and effects. Such a study is already projected at Bar-Ilan University. However, for me it does not portend the eclipse of modern Orthodoxy at all. Indeed, the number of modern Orthodox is increasing. Their visibility is not great because they look like most others among whom they live. They include the overwhelming majority of Orthodox Jews who have been exposed to a higher secular education—academics, professional people, artists, writers. They are observant of the *mitsvot* but modern in the sense that they do not reject modernity as Hirsch and Kook and Soloveitchik did not. They attend synagogues often presided over by rabbis whose talmudic learning they respect but whose philosophy of Judaism they cannot share. Since they do not organize as a group and make public pronouncements on their views they are as inaudible as they are invisible. However, they are there in the hundreds of thousands—in Israel and in the diaspora.

If men like Dr. Soloveitchik would publish all their views, as they share them with a trusted few, then perhaps more of the modern Orthodox would not only express themselves in print but perhaps also considerably enrich our literature in Jewish thought. One of the causes for the reluctance to articulate and publish has been the tragic "McCarthyism" in Orthodox Jewish life which silenced many modern Orthodox in the past and will continue to silence them until terrorism dies not only in the political arena but also in the religious sphere.

For me there is no doubt that the destiny of the Jewish people in the diaspora is very much linked with the future of the State of Israel. The modern Orthodox have almost unanimously identified with the State of Israel. They will be shattered if, God forbid, any calamity

befalls it. Many of their more extreme brethren may even rejoice if Israel collapses and say that they always held that we erred in our appraisal of the religious significance of the state's emergence. However, for the modern Orthodox the blow will be as serious as that which occurred in the years 70-71 C.E. I make no plans for it. I hope to live and die with but one directive—to strengthen that state and enhance its physical security and deepen its spiritual foundation and thus fulfill my messianic faith. I refuse “to play it safe” by allowing for the possibility that I am in error. This would be for me as sinful as “*shituf*”—worshipping God and several of His competitors at the same time.

The current *teshuvah* movement excites me no more than did the phenomenon of “foxhole religion” in its day. Jews and Judaism will not be saved by these periodic happenings. What excites me more is the activism of the Orthodox—especially the modern Orthodox—in the intellectual, political, economic, and social, life of both Israel and the United States. There are plenty of separatists in both countries but those who did undertake to cope with the challenge of modernism and integrated not only with all their fellow Jews but also with non-Jewish society achieved status for the tradition in academic circles, in the medical, legal, and engineering professions, in scientific research and in social service. The United States was made safe for diversity. The general Jewish community learned not only to respect the religious commitment of the Orthodox but also to give it financial support. Even the statutes of the country and many court decisions reckoned with the legitimacy of our desire to be different. And last but not least, Orthodoxy gained respectability in the most enlightened circles—literary and artistic.

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**Shlomo Riskin:** (1) The battle being waged in America is not primarily between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox; it is rather between the Jew who has a commitment to his tradition and the Jew who does not. If the failure of the non-Orthodox movements would reflect a concomitant broad-based return to the Sabbath, the festivals, *Kashrut* and Torah study, there would indeed be reason for a spirit of triumphalism within our ranks. Unfortunately, the statistics of intermarriage are constantly escalating (51 percent of those on college campuses according to the University of Maryland, 1979), the total proportion of Jews consuming *kosher* meats is constantly de-

clining (from 73 percent to 16 percent within four decades according to the UOJCA), and due to the high assimilation rate and low birth-rate, the Jewish community of America is dwindling at an alarming pace (from a purported six million to between 10,000 and 900,000 for the year 2076, according to Harvard Population Studies as reported in *Midstream* magazine). The state of American Jewry is cause for mourning rather than triumphalism; it calls for agonizing soul searching and vigorous action rather than fatuous self-congratulation and ostrich-like complacency.

(2) Our most basic challenge is Jewish survival within an open society. Diaspora communities have maintained themselves throughout history either because the indigenous population refused to accept the Jew or the host government allowed us to establish an independent religio-political structure which presented a Jewish state within a Gentile state (as in Babylon with its Jewish exilarchate and Europe with its *Vaad Arba Aratsot*).

Orthodoxy, as the standard-bearer of traditional Judaism, must feel responsibility for every Jew. We must utilize the media to expose the mass population to the beauty of the Sabbath and the festivals, the glories of Jewish history, the centrality of the State of Israel, the challenge of Jewish destiny, the joy of Torah study. We must not rest until the Jewish federations understand the need to provide every Jew of every age with a maximum Jewish education, including summer camps and week-end "retreats" (a more apt title would be "advances") which will touch the heart as well as teach the mind, provide Jewish experience as well as Jewish knowledge.

But we must do far more than outreach. Since of necessity we devote so much time and energy to the external form, to the ritual of Jewish practice, we run the danger of overlooking the underlying ethical motifs which are after all the purpose for our unique life style, the means by which we can become a "Kingdom of priests—teachers and a holy nation." We must insure that we not become "inverted marranos," who display an external commitment to the faith of our ancestors, but internally accept the secular values of selfish individualism, and materialistic hedonism. An observant Jew whose major concern is whether to spend Passover in Acapulco or Honolulu and who expends far more time and money on lavish rites-of-passage celebrations than on Torah study and "sanctity of tongue" can hardly be a worthy descendant of Abraham and Sarah, no less a representative who will value and influence others.

Finally, we must utilize our greatest scholars and our most sensitive religious leaders to help us encompass the beauty of Japheth within the tent of Shem. The slogan of synthesis is no longer sufficient; the best of secular knowledge must be utilized as the hand-

maiden of Torah, so that a well integrated personality emerges who can intelligently and creatively deal with the challenge of modernity to enhance his faith commitment. We have all too few such models, and one of our greatest challenges is to discover whether indeed such people can be produced on a broad-based level.

(3) I would like to believe that the various groups within the Orthodox movement are held together by a common commitment to halakhah, a corpus of law whose roots stretch back to Sinai. This law is interpreted in each generation by its leading religio-legal scholars, as provided for by the Book of Deuteronomy (17:8-11).

In the absence of a Sanhedrin, a legally constituted group of religio-legal scholars accepted by all of Israel, charismatic leadership develops whose authority is based upon legal expertise (through the writing of reasoned responsa or commentaries which discuss the precedents and ramifications of various issues in Jewish law) and the following of a committed community composed of Jews who are dedicated in their practice to the observance of Jewish law which accepts their decisions. Since halakhic literature proves that it is possible for great scholars dealing with the same Divine texts to draw divergent conclusions—both with regard to philosophic outlook and practical action—it is no wonder that we have a heterogeneous Orthodoxy comprising diverse groups. However, all agree to the binding character of Jewish law where interpretation for our generation must be based upon the opinions of a leading Torah scholar accepted by a committed community.

(5) Whether modern Orthodoxy is a philosophy of compromise or an authentic version of Judaism depends upon how it is defined. If modern Orthodoxy means accommodation by Jewish law to the transient values of modernity, if it implies the right of each individual to decide different halakhic questions for himself whether or not he is qualified to do so, if it approves of social dancing in the Pink Elephant Lounge as long as one wears a *kippah* on one's head, and if it advertises a swinging singles *Shavuot* in Aruba replete with *minyanim* and blintzes, then modern Orthodoxy is a compromise which is not even worthy of the appellation philosophy and certainly has no ultimate significance for traditional Jewish history. But if modern Orthodoxy is rooted in its commitment to a halakhah which is Divine in origin and which is greater than any one individual, if it understands that our values must emanate from our sacred Torah text and our every action—including the manner in which our women dress and the places in which we are permitted to swim—must be sanctioned by halakhic authority, but it rejects the notion that "*hadash* (anything new) is (automatically) forbidden by the Torah" and confirms the ideal that each generation deserves and requires its own halakhic

authorities to apply the eternal ideals of Torah to the specific challenges and exigencies of the times in which we live (after all, our sages teach us that Jephthah in his generation was as Samuel in his, and the *Kedushat Ha Levi* suggests that in the messianic age it is Elijah the Prophet, and not Moses, who will decide the unanswered talmudic questions for the former lives in each generation and therefore is best equipped to act as decisor), then modern Orthodoxy becomes the most authentic version of Judaism in our times.

(7) An excellent case in point is the Orthodox reference (or lack of it) to the State of Israel. For the first time in two thousand years, the Jewish people have regained sovereignty over the land of Israel: the wandering Jew has a haven from persecution, there is an ingathering of the exiles from the four corners of the earth, the city of Jerusalem has been rebuilt, the desert has begun once again to bloom, the Jews themselves can help direct their own national destiny, and all of this on the heels of the greatest tragedy in Jewish history, the destruction of six million in the Holocaust.

If ever there was a confirmation of the Divine Covenant—the eternal relationship between a people, a Torah, a God and a land—if ever there was a fulfillment of the final prophecy of Moses that despite the agonizing terror of the persecution there would be an ultimate return to the land and its God, if ever there was a period of messianic possibility and challenge, it is our generation which is witnessing it. And yet almost the whole of Orthodoxy in America behaves as if nothing has been altered, refuses to recognize the muscle of our generation and to rise to their challenge, virtually disregard the opportunity to celebrate new festivals in thanks to the God of history, and barely mentioning the commandment of *aliyah* which can indeed make us a “light unto the nations” and cause “Torah to come out of Zion and the word of God from Jerusalem.”

(4) If by right-wing Orthodoxy one means married women who cover their hair, men who attend services every morning and learn *daf yomi* (daily page of Talmud), and do not merely pray at home alone without a quorum, and even hasidim who wear special Sabbath garb, I view with joy and gladness every group which strengthens Jewish law and custom. But if by right-wing Orthodoxy one means a wholesale rejection of secular learning and a blanket condemnation of the Jewish state, I am concerned with such resurgence. Whether or not this portends the eclipse of modern Orthodoxy depends upon modern Orthodoxy. The future of Judaism lies in the hands of the teachers of our children and the rabbis of our synagogues. To be a religious educator and spiritual leader requires great commitment and sacrifice, especially since we tend to treat our religious leadership

as our employees, and we provide greater financial remuneration to the dentist to whom we entrust our teeth than to the *rebbe* to whom we entrust our souls. As long as the modern Orthodox ideal will be to produce a Sabbath observing doctor, and the right-wing Orthodox ideal will be to produce a talmudic scholar, modern Orthodoxy deserves to be eclipsed. Moreover, as long as modern Orthodoxy insists upon small families for all sorts of financial and professional considerations, and right-wing Orthodoxy gives birth to large families, modern Orthodoxy will perforce be eclipsed.

(6) One of the signs of the uniqueness of our generation is the thirst for Torah living and Torah learning by Jews of all ages and backgrounds. Our Bible teaches that "not by bread alone does a human being live, but by that which comes from God's mouth does a human being live," and the hundreds and even thousands of "born again Jews" testify to the truth of these words. The success of Habad, from New York to Johannesburg, proves what real dedication can achieve in this area, and the deepest satisfaction of my rabbinate comes from the hundreds of individuals and families we have been privileged to "bring home" through Sabbath hospitality, weekend retreats, adult classes, and a special beginner's *minyan*.

(8) Orthodoxy's greatest achievement has been the yeshivah movement. Orthodoxy's greatest failure has been its lack of response of the commandment of the hour to touch every Jew and to rise to the challenge of the Jewish state.

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**Sol Roth:** The general question of the symposium, namely, what is the state of Orthodoxy, is ambiguous. It may mean to what extent does the community which labels itself Orthodox conform to the norms of Orthodox conduct. More likely, however, and I will so interpret it, it means do the conditions in which Orthodoxy finds itself today render it probable that it will grow in strength and in numbers in the years ahead. Put this way, the question is clearly contextual.

We need not assume that conditions of Orthodoxy are identical in all locations around the globe. It would be useful to limit the scope of the question in order to be more precise in the definition of the problem and in the assessment that will be made. I will therefore concern myself with the state of Orthodoxy in the United States.

The most potent force obstructing the growth of Orthodoxy in this country is the essentially antinomian character of American

society. Politically, this is manifested in its open character which, as Karl Popper defined it, grants to every citizen the right of personal decision. It is also expressed in the thesis that that country governs best which governs least, that is to say, it imposes on its citizens a minimum number of behavioral restrictions through legislation. Ethically, the rejection of law is made explicit for example, in the theory called situations ethics which substantially rejects moral rules as irrelevant to moral issues and requires that moral decisions be made on the basis of the unique character of moral situations. Scientifically, the antinomian attitude is exemplified in the tendency to regard scientific laws as theoretical constructions and as failing to reveal structure inherent in the world of nature. Add to these tendencies the repudiation of law as a religious principle by the American non-Jewish religious community and it becomes evident that the effective communication of the halakhic approach to those who are open to the intellectual currents of the day is incredibly difficult.

The inclination to reject law is enhanced by the tendency to secularism in our society. Our age is not so much atheistic as it is secularistic—even theologians speak of God in secular terms. The predilection of the secularist is to modify, transform, or eliminate that which is sacred. The rabbinic view is that the response to the sacred must be *prisha*, separation. To respect the sacred is to exhibit the kind of reverence that prompts one to keep his distance from the sacred. Failure to do so, in a Jewish context, implies the radical modification and even the rejection of the halakhah, which to the traditional Jewish consciousness represents one of the highest manifestations of sanctity in the Jewish religious experience.

While it is true that factors such as secularism and antinomianism have, to some extent, eroded commitment even in the Orthodox community, it is those outside of Orthodoxy, those who are prepared to manipulate the halakhah to make it conform to the requirements of relevance or who have simply rejected it, who have been most vulnerable. Attrition through intermarriage and assimilation has cut more deeply into the non-Orthodox segments of the American Jewish community than into its Orthodox component. Indeed, Jewish sociologists have pointed out recently that while the numbers of the non-Orthodox continue to decline in terms of the percentage of their populations in America, the Orthodox segment has turned the corner and is already in a pattern of growth. They also contend that this trend is likely to continue.

While this circumstance does not justify triumphalism—the Orthodox community, that is, those who truly strive to observe the halakhah rather than those who merely belong to an Orthodox syna-



gogue, represent after all, a small percentage of the total American Jewish population — it does provide a basis for the perception that, in the years ahead, it will be the strength inherent in Orthodoxy that will assure the preservation of Jewish life on American shores. Those groups who have performed surgery on the halakhah for the sake of relevance and who have moderated or minimized the demands of religious obligations on the theory that the easier is the more appealing have not succeeded in stemming the tides of assimilation even when they have focused on the cultivation of Jewish character among their adherents.

The essential problem to which Orthodoxy must address itself is that of formulating parameters of *havdalah* that will assure the transmission of commitment from generation to generation. I do not believe that Jewish identity can be preserved successfully in the general Jewish community and that rampant assimilation can be reduced significantly in the face of a policy that recognizes no limits to the extent of Jewish immersion in the life of American society. Let me make my position clear. Theoretically there is no conflict between democracy and Judaism. One can claim the right of freedom in individual conduct in a democratic context even while he insists on the legitimacy of obligations in the form of *mitsvot* in the framework of Judaism. There is no contradiction in having the right to do x or to refrain from doing x, and simultaneously to have the obligation to do x, if right and obligation derive from different frames of reference. But the distinction is exceedingly fine and, in any case, a logical difference does not always make a psychological difference. Individual freedom and halakhic obligations are *perceived* as incompatible and when forced to choose, even some in the Orthodox community find the allure of freedom irresistible. To encourage the selection of the Jewish option, it is necessary to maximize Jewish life and experience in the context of a Jewish community in which Judaism is lived intensively, that is to say, it is necessary to stress *havdalah*.

The task of drawing the line, however, is a difficult one. I do not believe that it is necessary to limit the general studies of Jewish students to prevent them from falling prey to the enticement of secularism, but I have serious reservations about sending even a yeshivah *bohur*, upon graduation from high school, to an out-of-town campus where he would be isolated from Jewish life and exposed to an intellectual climate which is both profoundly secular and thoroughly libertarian. He may not be able to resist the onslaught.

Identifying such parameters is then the objective of modern Orthodoxy. The difference between modern Orthodoxy and its more traditional forms, as I understand it, is not a halakhic one or at least

not essentially so. The fact that modern Orthodoxy may adopt halakhic patterns of conduct which do not coincide entirely with those practiced by groups that reject the label "modern" is not critical. There are halakhic differences even among those who refuse to identify their brands of Orthodoxy as modern. It is, I believe, generally recognized that modern Orthodoxy is a halakhically genuine and hence a legitimate variety of Orthodoxy. The principle that "these are the words of the living God," that is, that all the various forms of Orthodoxy are valid has widespread, if not universal acceptance. What I believe is critical to the distinction is that the more traditional forms of Orthodoxy tend to adopt an interpretation of the principle of *havdalah* which requires as radical as possible a separation from society, while the adherents of modern Orthodoxy, sensitive as they are to various currents in the Jewish community and larger society, are prepared to become involved with them subject to the possibility of adhering to the halakhah without fear of erosion.

A brief illustration will perhaps be instructive. The Rabbinical Council of America which is often characterized as "modern" has made several attempts to unite with Orthodox groups not so labelled but with little success. In a conversation with one of the leaders of a nonmodern group, I was informed that a permanent association would be feasible only if the Rabbinical Council of America would dissociate itself formally from all organizations admitting non-Orthodox rabbis. I responded by noting that the issue that divides us is not one of halakhic substance but of method. We entertain different perceptions as to how best to achieve halakhic objectives to which we are mutually committed.

Hence, the modern Orthodox are seeking parameters for relations and involvement in life outside the Orthodox community. Those with a more traditional Orthodox bias are not concerned with parameters; they want *havdalah*. Here lies the problem of modern Orthodoxy. Such parameters have not yet been successfully formulated. Policies that have been applied in the past have not assured the preservation of Torah commitment uniformly among our adherents. The assumptions under which we have labored have not enjoyed spectacular success. This is generally perceived in the Orthodox community; hence, the swing to the right.

I find myself sympathetic to this tendency though I continue to seek a solution that would render it unnecessary. Modern Orthodoxy, in the sense in which it is defined above, has not yet vindicated its methodology, and until it does, it is perhaps inevitable that those genuinely concerned with Torah commitment should tend more towards *havdalah*. Finding the parameters of involvement,

however, remains the goal. The task may be difficult; we will not give up the search.

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**David Singer:** If Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik is correct in arguing that loneliness is the defining characteristic of the religious Jew, then it is fair to say that I am super *frum*. I am (may God have mercy on me) a modern Orthodox Jew, and thus a man without a community. Having crossed a bridge into the modern world, I now find myself stranded there together with a handful of Orthodox intellectuals while the Orthodox community as a whole goes marching off in a traditionalist direction (the widely noted “move to the right”).

When I was an undergraduate at Yeshiva College in the early 1960s, I had no idea that things would turn out this way. Then it seemed clear to everyone I knew (the perils of in-group parochialism!) that modern Orthodoxy was here to stay; that, indeed, it was only a matter of time before all the Orthodox joined the modernist camp. Who could resist something as appealing as modern Orthodoxy? Who in his right mind would spurn a form of Orthodoxy which held out the promise of a successful integration of Judaism and Western culture, tradition and modernity, Jewish and American living? Who could be so hopelessly narrow-minded as to choose to live in one world—the world of Jewish tradition—when modern Orthodoxy offered the best of two worlds—the truths of Torah combined with the insights of secular knowledge? This was “synthesis,” or as the Yeshiva University motto had it, “Torah and science.” It was an inspiring vision, and one that my friends and I fully expected to become a universal reality in Orthodox life.

What went wrong? Why did the dream of a modern Orthodox utopia turn to ashes? For a time I was convinced that modern Orthodoxy had failed the acid test: it had been tried and had been found wanting. Now I know better: modern Orthodoxy did not fail, it never happened. With few exceptions (perhaps the most notable being Emanuel Rackman), the spokesmen for the movement had been engaged in an elaborate charade. While they talked bravely about modern Orthodoxy representing the true ideal of Torah (à la Maimonides and the like), they really regarded it as a survival strategy—this was America; in America one had to compromise; and

that compromise was secular studies. In their heart of hearts, most modern Orthodox leaders felt guilty about what they were saying and doing. Their model of authentic Jewishness remained that of the East European yeshivah world—a total absorption in Judaism's sacred texts. Hence, when Orthodox traditionalism reared its head, the spokesmen for modern Orthodoxy immediately retreated. Who were they to argue with "Torah-true" Jews? How could they (with their Ph.D.s no less!), stand up to the *gedolim*? The battle to determine the future shape of Orthodoxy in America came to an end even before it began.

If what I am saying seems wildly exaggerated, consider for a moment that Frankenstein of modern Orthodoxy: compartmentalization. Yeshiva College claimed to be offering its students "synthesis"—the mutually enriching interaction of Judaism and Western culture. In fact, however, the two spheres were almost never permitted to come into contact with each other. The yeshivah was the yeshivah and the college was the college; Bible and Talmud were taught with no reference to modern scholarship; the social sciences and the humanities were presented without the slightest regard for Judaic teaching. Had the leadership of modern Orthodoxy been serious about what it was preaching, it would never have permitted this state of affairs—this compartmentalization of reality into sacred and secular realms—to exist. Rather, it would have striven to produce the type of Orthodox Jew depicted by Lawrence Kaplan:

He attempts to justify his commitment to modernity in terms of his Orthodoxy and, at the same time, seeks to demonstrate the significance and meaningfulness of tradition and belief for modern man. On the one hand, his modernity informs his Orthodoxy. Thus, he utilizes modern categories of thought to illuminate and deepen his understanding of the tradition and, in his study of sacred texts, makes use of the findings and methods of modern historical scholarship to the extent that they do not violate the religious integrity of these texts as he perceives it. But the movement of influence is not only one way. For his perception of the modern world and modern social and intellectual currents is shaped by his traditional perspective, so that his commitment to modernity is always critical and qualified.

While insisting that it was building bridges between cultures and world views, Yeshiva College was in reality busy erecting intellectual *mehitsot*.

The disastrous consequences of a compartmentalized education are everywhere apparent in what passes for modern Orthodox circles. These Jews are almost invariably religiously observant secularists. They may be meticulous in their observance of the Law, but their values and attitudes are shaped by the surrounding secular culture

(on most social issues, they could be card-carrying members of the ACLU). The current crop of modern Orthodox Jews have made a sociological reality out of Louis Ginzberg's famous *bon mot*: act kosher and think *treif*. The only time they do not think *treif* is when they are studying a Jewish text (Bible, Talmud, and so forth). Then, sad to say, they do not think at all! Nothing they have learned in any secular discipline—history, psychology, literature, anthropology, and the like—is ever brought to bear on their understanding of the affirmations of Judaism. All in all, today's modern Orthodox types lead consistently inconsistent lives.

Where do we go from here? (I am not willing even to contemplate the possibility of accepting compartmentalization. From a Judaic standpoint—any Judaic standpoint—it is nothing less than an abomination.) One option, of course, is to throw in the towel and to “defect” to the traditionalist camp. For someone like myself, however, this is simply not possible. In the first place, I know too much; know, that is, that contemporary traditionalists are off base when, as Lawrence Kaplan puts it, they

paint a monolithic picture of Judaism, . . . present only one model of piety to the exclusion of all others, . . . suppress the role of critical reason in interacting with authority, [and] create a false image of the religious community in history as sealed off, in hermetic isolation, from outside influences. . . .

Secondly, I cannot turn a blind eye to the fact that the current version of traditionalism fails to pass muster in terms of the criterion proposed by Michael Wyschogrod:

In the final analysis it comes down to what kind of human beings are produced. If Orthodox [Jews] . . . are bellicose and narrow, assuming airs of superiority because of a profound insecurity, unable truly to listen to those with other views because deep down they know that were they to listen they would yield, then we have forgotten what the Torah Jew was meant to be. When it worked, the tradition produced men who were individuals, who were not frightened, who listened and loved their fellow Jews and their fellow men.

In short, the problem with the contemporary Orthodox right is that it is wrong.

It would be nice to think that those Jews who remain committed to the creation of an authentic modern Orthodoxy might yet win over the larger Orthodox community to their cause. I am afraid, however, that this is just not in the cards. History, almost certainly, has passed us by. We are pathetically few in number, lack a sound institutional base, and are largely without leadership. Of course, we will persevere in our cause; first, because we believe in it; secondly, because there is

no viable alternative on the current Orthodox scene. But we should not fool ourselves: our children—my children— will grow up in an Orthodox world in which talk about “synthesis” will seem totally alien. No wonder, then, that I feel lonely—and profoundly sad.

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**Shubert Spero:** Not too long ago, the “big news” about Orthodox Judaism in America was that it was not going to die. Contrary to all the confident predictions that of all the forms of Judaism in America, Orthodoxy was the least likely to succeed, the “terminal” patient stirred, asked for the time and requested some nourishment. Early in the '50s, Nathan Glazer noted that, “Orthodoxy, despite the fact that it feeds the growth of the Reform and Conservative groups, has shown a remarkable vigor.” Today in the '80s, Orthodoxy is not only “holding its own” but seems to be attracting *baalei teshuvah* in respectable numbers and is reported to be seen in the general Jewish community as “the voice of Jewish authenticity.”

This implies two important facts: (1) Although residing in the free, option-rich environment of the United States with minimal hostile pressures, significant numbers of Jews freely choose to commit themselves to Orthodox Judaism. (2) Orthodox Jews have created their own communal infrastructure consisting of day schools, elementary and secondary, yeshivot, *kollelim*, colleges, professional schools, *Kashrut* systems, literature, a press, *mikvaot*, summer camps, and youth movements which generally permit the growth of a healthy Jewish identity that can stand up to the environment. The Orthodox Jew in America walks with his head held high and on top it is either a *streimel*, a black felt hat, or a *kippa seruga*.

Today, the “big news” about Orthodoxy is that it is not monolithic. As the group expands and the number of its adherents increase, the sociologist begins to discover the emergence of certain interesting patterns and groupings. While Orthodox leaders themselves are slow to recognize this and even slower to admit it, the serious students of American Jewish life, one after another, report the existence of a *modern* Orthodox group as opposed to the *traditional* Orthodox. Institutionally, the former are identified with Yeshiva University, Hebrew Theological College of Chicago, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, the Young Israel movement, the Rabbinical Council of America and the Religious Zionists of Amer-

ica while the latter are associated with the traditional yeshivot, Agudath Israel, the Agudath Harabonim and the hasidic communities. More recently it was reported that "Orthodoxy is moving to the right religiously" and that, therefore, "the Orthodox right (the traditional Orthodox) has emerged the stronger and more self-confident." However, the important question which the sociologists seem unable to answer in any clear way, is the essential distinction between the modern Orthodox and the traditional Orthodox.

This nascent phenomenon which can lead to the emergence of a self-conscious, articulate modern Orthodoxy must be considered the most important challenge facing Orthodox Judaism today. For there are many of us who believe that modern Orthodoxy was not "conceived in compromise and born in confusion" but represents the ideal and supreme form of Judaism. It is vital, therefore, that it be identified correctly, described fully and evaluated fairly. There is a reason why the sociologists are not successful in distinguishing between the modern and the traditional Orthodox. The sad truth is that not too long ago, the name "modern Orthodox" was given to the religious practices of certain modern Jews which was characterized by a laxity in halakhah and a fuzziness in theology. Indeed, a "modern Orthodox" synagogue usually meant one in which there was mixed seating and other instances of catering to the "modern" temper.

In truth, the basic philosophical issue that separates the modern Orthodox from the traditional is the question of the relationship between Torah and general culture both Jewish and non-Jewish. At stake is not merely whether a young man or woman should go to college but one's entire attitude towards the arts and sciences both as consumer and as producer. The modern Orthodox fortified by inspiration from Maimonides, S.R. Hirsch and Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik see it as a Torah obligation to penetrate all of experience, intellectually and emotionally; to learn all that there is to know about man, about nature; to exercise one's mind in the development of science and to express one's talents in the area of the arts. All of this is, at once, a supplement to the Torah and is the extended area in which Torah is to be applied. The traditional Orthodox would see all of this, at best, as a waste of time since they take the study and practice of Torah to be totally self-sufficient for man's intellectual and emotional needs.

There are other issues which distinguish the modern from the traditional Orthodox. These include the proper relationship between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox Jewish groups, the religious significance of the State of Israel and our attitude towards the halakhah in terms of the following question: Is following the more

stringent view in ritual law always expressive or generative of greater piety?

The first item on the Orthodox agenda must be the full explanation and justification of these issues and positions.

The second and much more difficult task must be to persuade our traditional brothers of the legitimacy of our position. Can the Orthodox right ever admit to a nontrivial pluralism within Orthodoxy? But why not? In the realm of the *aggadah* there were always mutually exclusive interpretations offered and accepted for the same biblical passage. In the realm of theology, the talmudic sages and the medieval rabbis, again and again, agreed to disagree on some of the fundamental aspects of God, Providence and Revelation. And even in the realm of halakhah itself did we not hear the paradoxical pronouncement said in reference to conflicting views: "Both these and those are the words of the Living God."

The difficulty we face here stems from the fact that we modern Orthodox today are arguing along the same lines used by the Conservatives not too long ago. They also claimed legitimacy for their views by comparing them to the differences between hasidim and misnagdim, rationalists and mystics and the like. The fact, of course, is that Orthodoxy does admit of pluralism even on halakhic matters within certain definable limits. It is for us to demonstrate that the modern Orthodox fall *within* the tolerable limits while Conservative Judaism falls *without*. It can be shown that what unites all of the Orthodox groups together is a common approach to halakhic *authority* and agreement on the theological *fundamentals*. Remembrances of the Maimonist-anti-Maimonist controversy and the hasidim-misnagdim rift give us little reason to believe that in the near future we shall be able to convince the right wing. From the two cases mentioned above, it would seem that time itself is the final legitimator of movements in Judaism.

The swing of large segments of Orthodoxy to the more narrow conception of Judaism was perhaps to be expected. For with the success of the Orthodox educational network which funnels primarily into the traditional yeshivot you get larger numbers of students exposed to the Torah-only approach with its concomitant disdain and suspicion of general culture. Modern Orthodoxy for the foreseeable future will remain the thinking man's religion putting a premium on an extended use of intelligence and a broad approach to the Jewish vision.

It is of the utmost importance, however, that modern Orthodoxy be perceived not merely as a philosophy of Judaism which makes room for general culture. If it rejects a notion of piety which is



drawn exclusively in terms of ritual *humras* and a narrow conception of Torah study, then it must be prepared to express its own spirituality in other forms and become identified with serious emphasis in such areas as earnest devotion in prayer, conscientious concern with the moral dimension of Judaism, deep personal involvement in the upbuilding of the State of Israel. These must become the identifying hallmarks of the modern Orthodox Jew.

The modern Orthodox Jew starts out by claiming a parity of legitimacy with the right wing. But if our traditionalist brother denies our legitimacy then perhaps we should deny his. But this should not be done in a spirit of retaliation or measure for measure. For if the traditionalist withholds legitimacy from the modern Orthodox then he is in effect denying pluralism in Orthodoxy which is, in itself, a serious distortion of the Torah. And "he who makes the Torah bear a meaning other than the right, such a one even though knowledge of the Torah and good deeds be his" and even though his intentions are for the sake of Heaven, raises certain doubts about his own legitimacy.

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**Joel B. Wolowelsky:** I find it difficult to speak of the future of the Orthodox or non-Orthodox "movements," as I usually associate the terms Reform, Conservative and Orthodox with institutions and organizations rather than philosophies; institutions have a dynamics of their own and no one can predict if they will remain static, evolve new identities, or fall by the side. Nor could I say what will become of those Jews who are not full partners in the halakhic community and who do not assimilate into the Gentile community. Will they continue to identify with halakhic Judaism despite lacunae in personal observance, or will they develop their own norms and forms and eventually emerge as a distinct religious group? It's not for us to predict the future. The best we can do is to continue to act out our commitments and extend a welcome hand to all those who cast their lot with *klal Yisrael*.

I'm sure that there are many sophisticated explanations for the shift to the right and the *baal teshuvah* movements. I think, though, that the simplest explanation is that people in general try to lead a life of integrity, and ignorance is the antithesis of integrity. Now that the yeshivah-day school movement has produced a large visible "critical

mass" of well-educated laymen and scholars (with its center of gravity admittedly to the right of the spectrum), it's harder for the average person to feel comfortable with his or her own shallowness. Hence the move toward more serious scholarship and greater attention to details which can be appreciated only through learning in depth. (Although we should realize that many an *am ha-arets* adopts a *humra* simply because he thinks it will make him *look* learned—much as a pseudo-intellectual will drop phrases from a philosopher whose works he hasn't read.)

To the extent that modern Orthodoxy maintains a position that obedience to God's work requires not only observance of *mitsvot* and the study of Torah but also an attempt to dominate one's environment and exercise control over it, and to the extent that the right wing refuses to recognize the need for the Torah Jew to learn and master *hokhma bagoyim* in the humanities as well as the sciences, then it is the latter group which represents a philosophy of compromise. It presents itself as the guardian of uncompromised allegiance to the world of Torah, when in fact it often rejects involvement in the broader intellectual and social community only out of fear that it will not be able to produce a *ben Torah* who can withstand the temptations of the modern secular world. Its *poskim*, of course, by and large recognize the social and human considerations that go into any halakhic decision. But the leaders of the right, perhaps fearful—if we are generous—that a spirit of openness would undermine their efforts to build and maintain a unified strong community, do not speak out against those who withhold *ahavat Yisrael* from those who lack halakhic commitment or simply differ in halakhic interpretation or emphasis. (The venomous personal insults directed against *gedolim* associated with modern Orthodoxy or the current *eruv* controversies are but two examples.) On an individual basis, of course, *hesed* and *ahavat Yisrael* are to be found throughout the "right" and "left." But institutionally, it is modern Orthodoxy which, whatever the risks, refuses to compromise its obligation to struggle with the challenges of this world and not forsake any segment of *klal Yisrael*.

However, if modern Orthodoxy represents a philosophy of commitment rather than one of compromise, we must admit that it rather than the right wing contains the larger share of compromisers. This should not be surprising. People whose primary allegiance is to *olam hazeh* and whose loyalty to Torah values would not withstand the test of sacrifice would naturally find it easier to "pass" in a community which legitimizes active involvement in the modern world as part of its overall commitment to halakhah. *Shomer Shabbat befarhesya*, they might even reach leadership positions in that community; yet

they no sooner represent its *hashkafa* than a crook with *peyot* and black velvet *kippah* represents right-wing Torah philosophy. Also, *amkha* by and large are not philosophers. A person with simple faith would naturally gravitate toward a group which has simple answers and clearly-defined "club rules" rather than toward those who must struggle with difficult situations and challenges and whose philosophy can be compromised by the unscrupulous. We might question the intellectual sophistication of the person who blindly accepts the latest *humra*, and we might even note that he has compromised his obligation to act out of knowledge and understanding. But we usually cannot belittle his personal integrity and commitment to do God's will.

There is, however, an important change taking place within modern Orthodoxy. Until now, it lacked a large pool of articulate spokesmen. It is only fairly recent that outside constraints have been removed and halakhically committed Jews have once again had the opportunity to actualize a philosophy of synthesis; it takes a few decades to produce *talmidei hakhamim* who can articulate a philosophy in a halakhically sound and intellectually sophisticated way. But as more of these Torah scholars are trained and begin to teach and publish, we should expect wider acceptance of their philosophy among the intelligentsia of the "right" and "left."

The issue of the State of Israel does not divide the "Orthodox community" on practical grounds. Putting aside a lunatic fringe, all Jews who have a sense of *areivut* realize that the protection of the state is crucial for the well being of Jews, if not Judaism. Differing strategic analyses and varied vested interests in Israeli society may yield different stances among committed American Jews. But we should not confuse an anti-autopsy rally or the refusal to schedule any type of *Yom Haatsmaut* celebration with a pro-PLO stance. Politics are politics, even when passed off as *da-at Torah*. We may differ in emphasis or political priorities, but all halakhically committed Jews should share an obligation and desire to build *medinat Yisrael* in a Torah image.

The issue, then, is not whether we should support Israel but whether it is *reishit tsemihat geulateinu*, the beginning of the flowering of our redemption, a gift and challenge from God which calls for a personal and halakhic response. If we believe the answer is yes, the consequence will not simply be to say *Hallel* on *Yom Haatsmaut*, to require knowledge of modern Hebrew of every *ben* or *bat Torah*, or to make subtle adjustments in matters of *minhag* and *nusakh*. We will be forced to take risks and make sacrifices, rethink our relationship to *klal Yisrael*, and take seriously what it means to live in *galut*

when El-Al has daily flights to Israel. We would expect this philosophy of religious Zionism—not to be confused with an Israeli political party—to be popular among the modern Orthodox, as philosophically they are committed to understanding modern phenomena from a halakhic perspective. And for reasons outlined above, we would expect the right wing to be not yet ready to accept religious Zionism. In time, this too will change.

While I have fundamental disagreements with those on the “right” and “left” who cannot see the State of Israel in religious terms, somehow I am most put off by those who compromise their commitment to the position that we have entered the period of the *at-halta degeula*. They may tone down their public stance by such subterfuges as adding the word *shetehei* to the description of the state as *reishit tsemihat geulateinu*, cleverly changing a declaration of *emunah* into a hope that in retrospect the practical commitment will have been worth it all. Hizkiyahu was denied the role of Messiah because he refused to respond to God’s miracles with appropriate *shira* (*Sanhedrin* 94a). One wonders if the *middat hadin* would have been happy with his declaration that “I’m certainly glad all this happened to me and I’ll make the most of it—and I hope that looking back I’ll see that it was all really *hasdei Hashem*.” I don’t begrudge religious leaders their right to interpret Jewish history, nor do I question their loyalty to and vital concrete support of the state. (Indeed, many have already contributed more than I could hope to.) I only wish they’d let *mashiah* come.

One of the crucial failures of modern Orthodoxy has been its inability to come to terms with educational and associated issues regarding women. The right wing refuses to legitimize the changing patterns of women’s self-image, and its educational institutions consistently reflect this. Its girls deserve a full education, but since one doesn’t think of them as pre-med, it bothers few among them that a girls’ yeshivah high school has no advanced placement chemistry course. Its girls should know Torah, but since it is the men who will “sit and learn,” no one expects a *beit medrash*, *mishmar*, or *siyyum* for girls or to see them rejoicing on *Simhat Torah*. To the extent that it succeeds from isolating itself from the general world, the right wing has no need to change its educational policy toward women.

But the modern Orthodox woman already accepts the perspective that while sex-role differentiation is a fact of life, many experiences are to be evaluated in human rather than sex-role terms. Girls from her community attend yeshivot whose principals may have no halakhic objection to girls studying Talmud and who would not think of saying that girls shouldn’t learn science or math because they won’t

be doctors or engineers. Yet while these principals tell the boys to learn Talmud because that's the only way to really understand Judaism, somehow they are not embarrassed to remark that girls should learn Mishnah instead of Talmud because, after all, girls won't be going to *shiurim* at night after they've graduated. The issue, of course, is not simply the question of learning Talmud. Girls, like the boys, are expected to go on to college and if they wish prepare for careers. Yet the curricula of the schools—including some of the right—don't seem to be geared to encourage alumnae to spend their adult free time learning with a *hevruta* instead of playing canasta. The fact that girls can make serious contributions in various areas of Torah study is not taken seriously.

Rabbis of modern Orthodox shuls who complain that a *bar mitsvah* celebration may distort the Torah significance of the day are content to rent out their social halls for "Sweet Sixteen" celebrations but do not search for ways of celebrating a girl's reaching the age of *mitsvot*. They pride themselves on a "*modern mehitsa*" which allows women to feel part of the *kahal*; they explain *tefilah* as establishing a relationship with God and *tefilah betsibur* as establishing this relationship as part of a community—and somehow are not bothered that there's no need for a *mehitsa* for daily *shaharit* services and that the *ezrat nashim* is empty for Shabbat *minha*.

I certainly don't think that we should adopt the excesses of the '70s "women's lib" movement or those "equal rights" interpretations of halakhah which lack intellectual integrity. But suggesting that we understand how women now are coming to see themselves and that we plan for those who will have careers or an increased amount of leisure time is not the same as arguing for abortion on demand or the break-up of the Jewish nuclear family or even a "unisex" Jewish community. It's sad to say, but I feel that this failure in our educational policies is not due to any philosophy, but just an outgrowth of not caring. There will be a price to pay in the modern Orthodox community when its girls, trained to think of themselves as full participants in the process of becoming human, eventually realize that they have not been taken seriously by their religious and educational leaders.

Orthodoxy's greatest achievement on the American scene has been the creation of a sound and rigorous educational system able to produce proud, knowledgeable, halakhically committed Jews. This, however, is in danger of collapse. Unable to rely anymore on a pool of well-educated teachers who are unable to get other employment, unwilling to pay its most talented students to go into *hinukh*, and incapable of putting aside small differences in order to create large

economically viable schools, the Orthodox community—indeed, the entire Jewish community—will soon be left with a second-rate yeshivah system. There's a real danger here, and it calls for serious sacrifices if we are not to lose what was built with great labors.

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**Michael Wyschogrod:** The questions posed call for an evaluation of American Orthodoxy. Needless to say, such an evaluation is a difficult task mainly because, to a large extent, any such evaluation presupposes a normative framework by reference to which things as they are evaluated. Such evaluations therefore tend to tell us more about the evaluators than the evaluated. On the other hand, from time to time it is helpful to step back and take stock of where we are and where we are going. And that is, I suppose, what the symposium is hoping to accomplish.

First, the positive aspects of the picture must be delineated. Orthodox Judaism in the United States is that Judaism which is most clearly continuous with classical Jewish self-understanding. It is the Judaism that Rabbi Akiva and Maimonides would feel most comfortable with were they, miraculously, to return to life in our time. While it is true that Orthodoxy is itself a gamut ranging from the extreme right to modern Orthodoxy, all segments of Orthodoxy adhere fundamentally to rabbinic Judaism, with the diversity within Orthodoxy no greater than the diversity that was always a feature of rabbinic Judaism. Classical Reform Judaism is clearly outside of this continuum that stretches back to biblical times. In the case of Conservative Judaism that is somewhat less clear on the rabbinic level but becomes quite clear on the lay level. The actual practice of the overwhelming majority of Conservative Jews is also clearly discontinuous with the Judaism of the talmudic rabbis and their successors. Orthodoxy is thus the only movement whose rabbinic and lay components have remained faithful to the interpretation of the covenant that has been classically identified as Judaism.

This is the fundamental fact from which anything critical we are going to say about Orthodoxy must proceed. The renewal that will come to Judaism will come to the community of Torah-true Jews. It is to this community that those Jews who have drifted away from their roots will return. It is within this community that those holy persons will arise through whom the spiritual reawakening will come

that always comes to Israel when the spiritual drought has lasted long enough. It is, after all, only the Orthodox community that has a clear understanding why the continuation of Judaism and the Jewish people is warranted in spite of the price that Jews have paid for their continued existence. All other forms of Jewish identification, such as secular Zionism and yiddishism, to name but two examples, cling to the necessity for Jewish survival for inadequate and ultimately unpersuasive reasons. If such unpersuasive reasons have nevertheless persuaded some secular Jews to remain Jews, we can only marvel at the power of Jewish identification which remains in God's service even when the intellectual foundations for such commitment have been undermined.

Orthodox Judaism is thus the self-conscious heart of the people of Israel. And yet there is much that is wrong with it. There are different things wrong with different segments of Orthodoxy. In the final analysis, they all come down to the kind of person Orthodoxy produces. It is one thing to generate codes which spell out conduct commanded by God. It is another thing to produce holy people.

Holiness is a kind of spiritual transparency. The holy person does not serve his ego. His self is subordinated to God so that in his presence we feel the presence of God. The *tsaddik* arouses love in those with whom he comes in contact because he loves those he meets. Because he does not permit his ego to get in the way, the holy person can respond to the individuality of the person who addresses him. The love that he feels toward his fellow Jews extends to all human beings and, indeed, to all of creation. In his presence we become the persons we want to be, the persons we were intended to be. *Tsaddikim* are the final proof of any religious system as the experiment decides between confirmed and disconfirmed theories in science.

Judaism cannot survive without a certain minimum quota of *tsaddikim*. And when that minimum quota is not met, a certain hardness of heart settles on the Jewish people. This hardness of heart expresses itself in various ways. As I write, there comes to my mind a certain type of Orthodox "apparatchnik" whom I cannot easily describe but only point to. He is rigid and self-righteous, closed to human suffering and the perplexities of the human condition. He has a heavy dose of cynicism and yet he feels religiously superior to others. He is proud of his learning and uses it whenever possible as a weapon against others. His Orthodoxy is vituperative and his own inner, spiritual, personal relationship with God just does not exist. Finally, he is not an individual but the follower of a party line, whatever the party is whose line he follows.

Some examples in which this hardness of heart has expressed itself: the Orthodox flight into science. American Orthodoxy has produced scientists but very few poets, painters, musicians and philosophers. Are the realities Judaism deals with closer to science or to poetry? Is there not a certain coarseness in a community that does not even notice the absence of a Jewish humanistic culture and that is satisfied by Torah interpreted only as law and Western culture interpreted as science?

Another example: I look at the hasidic types in the photographs of Roman Vishniac and those I see today and they are not the same. Hasidism in New Square, Williamsburgh, Crown Heights and Boro Park has undertaken to replicate in America the life it knew in Europe before the war. But imitation is a dangerous religious technique. There is a well-known story about one of the hasidic masters who was criticized for making some changes and not following his father. He replied that in making changes he is following his father because his father also made changes when he came into office. The consciousness of American hasidism is influenced by the American environment which perhaps looms even larger when the strategy adopted for coping with it is the pretense that one has never left the villages of Poland or Hungary. And this strategy has exacted a price. European hasidism had a spirituality, gentleness and inwardness. American hasidism is more sullen, defensive and hard.

What about the state of Torah learning in American Orthodoxy? In terms of numbers of people and hours spent studying Torah, things are probably in very good shape. This is the greatest achievement of American Orthodoxy and an essential achievement it is because without Torah study Judaism obviously cannot survive. And yet it is a flawed study of Torah. With all the thousands of persons involved and the immense time invested, we are not producing *gedolim*. Somehow, the great teachers of recent decades did not encourage the maturation of their students. Men of great learning, they tended to overwhelm their disciples who remained fixed as pupils. While previous generations studied Torah, we speak of halakhah and think of it as an *a priori* deductive system, something like theoretical physics as interpreted by Kantian rationalism. This attitude is the Orthodox version of scientism. Whereas the first intrusion of science into Judaism took the form of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and aimed for the historicization of Judaism, the current reduction of Torah to halakhah is a curious attempt to create a kind of Judaism whose model is mathematical physics instead of the everyday lived world of the religious person.

The Torah that speaks to me is the Torah of the story. In the



story personalities emerge and events are told that cannot be and must not be universalized. The law, in Judaism, is given in the context of these stories and must never be separated from them. When hasidism was the immensely powerful religious explosion that it was it generated stories which Jews told and which capture the essence of what hasidism was all about. In these stories genuinely religious events occur not because experts in the law reason well but because the divine spirit is active in the events recounted. The essential need of contemporary Orthodoxy, it seems to me, is to recapture the category of the religious. Of course, this involves the study of Torah. Of course, this involves practice of the *mitsvot*. But it also involves more: a readiness for the unexpected. When the religious genius appears, he throws us off balance because the safe and well-established is never the living presence of God. Orthodoxy must therefore shake itself out of its security.

One final point, the people of God are not Orthodox Judaism but the Jewish people, all segments of it. Orthodox Jews must never lose the sense of the holiness of the whole Jewish people. There is therefore no option of withdrawing into Orthodox cities of refuge. We must always be more concerned with the non-Orthodox than the Orthodox because all Jews remain a part of the body of Israel. I have never been able to understand how Orthodox synagogues can exist in the midst of large concentrations of non-Orthodox Jews without the slightest concern for those outside the fold. If there are signs of genuine Jewish renewal, they are in those Orthodox circles that reach out to all Jews with affection and sincerity.

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