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## THE CULTURAL CONDITION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The date of this Symposium, though fixed long before yesterday's Israeli election was announced, is most appropriate. Yesterday (election day) we reached the climax of a campaign highlighting what divides our people. By contrast, at this session today we are to discuss what unites us. Had Jewish culture had a greater hold on Israel, the election results, whereby our people evolved over some 3,500 years from Twelve Tribes into 15 parliamentary parties, would have been rather different, and we would not now be torn by such bitter divisiveness which sets Jew against Jew with little in common to draw us together.

### I

In leading this Symposium before so many of our people's most eminent personalities of thought and action, I appreciate the responsibility assigned to me: to present a global assessment of contemporary Jewish culture for the guidance of those charged to allocate what are specially sacred financial resources belonging to our people for the advancement of those Jewish values that were all but destroyed in our history's greatest catastrophe.

An assignment such as this can hardly be treated as a routine event. One of the few experiences in my life that could rival it—though at the opposite end in the spectrum of Jewish fortunes—is the historic opportunity I had some eight years ago as the first Chief Rabbi from the West to occupy the pulpit of the Moscow Synagogue. I had been invited to Soviet Russia by the official community and also by the Scientific Seminars of the Refuseniks. For weeks before the visit I

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agonized a good deal on what to say in these precious moments of a reunion for which we had waited for so many decades.

I spoke on the weekly portion of the Law which dealt with the drama of Joseph's reunion with his brothers after a separation of 22 years. Joseph's first words after revealing himself were: "Is my father still alive?" Since the entire discussion prior to Joseph's revelation concerned the grief of the aged father over the loss of his son, and the fear of what might happen if Benjamin, too, would no longer return to his home, the question seems odd in the extreme. Maybe the meaning of Joseph's question was to inquire whether the father as he knew him was still alive, whether that which had united them as brothers, that noble spirit of their common father living in the homes of his children was still intact. And so I told the crowded congregation in Moscow, the first question when Jews meet after a long separation was: Are the traditions of their father still alive, actively sustaining their brotherhood as Jews? That question we too must ask at this Symposium, as an essential part of our theme.

But it is the next point I made from the pulpit in Moscow which I want to use as an introduction to the substance of our subject today. I tried to convey to my Soviet brethren some idea of my first impressions on the contrasts of spiritual devastation and miraculous revival I had encountered there. The codes of Jewish law, I told them, provided different blessings for different occasions. For sad experiences, such as bereavement, one had to recite *Baruch Dayan Emet*, praising God as the Righteous Judge. On the other hand, for particularly happy events, the blessing is *Baruch Hatov Vehametiv*, praising God who is good and does good. Now, adds the *Shulchan Aruch*, there are some occasions when both blessings have to be recited together; for instance, a son on the death of a wealthy father has to say *Dayan Emet* for the father he lost, and *Hatov Vehametiv* for the wealth he inherited (*Orach Chayim*, 223:2). A commentary (*Magen Avraham*) on the *Shulchan Aruch* (222) adds a further example. If destitution compelled a man to marry a woman who is rich but who is not exactly very attractive, then he must likewise recite the two blessings: *Hatov Vehametiv* for the money he receives, and *Dayan Emet* for the woman who becomes his wife.

On my visit, I told the worshippers in the synagogue, I had seen much in Russia which made me say *Dayan Emet* over and over again. Who could not but weep with infinite grief at the utter desolation of what were once spiritually the most flourishing Jewish communities, communities which now had no rabbis, no teachers, no children and no young people to be seen in the synagogue, no Jewish cultural or social life of any kind? And yet, at the same time, I had plenty of reason also to recite *Hatov Vehametiv* on seeing the wondrous rebirth

of the yearning by many to live as Jews, on having over a hundred thousand Jews already resettled in Israel, on the heroism of those who were prepared to face harassment, loss of livelihood, exile and imprisonment because they were determined to live as Jews, to learn as Jews, or to go to Israel as Jews, in acts of freely choosing suffering and great hardship for being Jewish in a true martyrdom for which there was no precedent since the Middle Ages.

## II

What I told the Moscow congregation on the two simultaneous blessings could equally be said of the cultural condition of the Jewish people the world over today. The reports which have been circulated in preparation of this meeting reflect two opposite trends, two contradictory findings. Whether expressly or by implication, they all provide ample cause for reciting *Dayan Emet* over the enormous losses we continue to sustain. Even the gratifying advances in academic Jewish studies recorded by Professor Joseph Dan and in Professor Sid Leiman's paper on "Torah Scholarship Since the Holocaust" still affect only a relatively small fraction of our people; the bulk remain estranged from any Torah learning or any Jewish cultural pursuits.

Quite some years ago (in 1959) the London *Jewish Chronicle* conducted a survey among a representative sample of Anglo-Jewry to discover the level of Jewish literacy. It found that less than 3% had bought any book of Jewish interest during the preceding year. I doubt if the figure would be very different now (except for the growing minority of the very Orthodox whose homes invariably have a sizeable collection of Jewish books—mostly Talmudic and rabbinic classics).

There is surely cause for alarm when Dr. Leonard Rosenfeld states as "the elemental truth" in his paper:

Just as the Holocaust was the mortal threat of yesteryear, assimilation is the endemic threat of today and the visible tomorrow.

Perhaps even more depressing are the suspicions which prompted the Guidelines Committee of the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture to commission a special study on the Jewish family, and the findings with which Professor Samuel Heilman's preliminary paper have already confirmed that the whole field of Jewish marriage is now a disaster area—through the erosion of a phenomenally low Jewish birthrate; the ravages of alarmingly rising divorce rates among Jews; and the continuing flow of defections through intermarriage, in some communities exceeding 50%. Any knowledgeable observer of the

Jewish scene hardly requires statistical or scientifically researched evidence to realize that the drainage on our human and intellectual resources in sheer terms of numbers is grievous and ominous.

Still dealing merely with a quantitative assessment, I am bound to add that these disconcerting factors are by no means limited to Diaspora Jewry. Thus, in Israel, the proportion of Jewish children who are culturally disadvantaged and religiously deprived is, at two-thirds of the total, no less worrying than in the average Diaspora community; the disproportion between the Jewish and non-Jewish birthrates inside Israel is appreciably graver than in the Diaspora; and if one regards *yeridah* as the Israeli equivalent of intermarriage elsewhere, then the comparative figures of desertion are scarcely reassuring.

So far the fairly obvious negative side.

### III

Happily, there is at least equal cause for reciting at the same time *Hatov Vehametiv* many times over. When Joseph Dan can report a “twenty-fold increase in the number of scholars in Jewish studies” during the past few decades, and the establishment since the Second World War of chairs in Hebrew and Judaism of one kind or another in nearly five hundred institutions of higher learning in North America alone, or when Sid Leiman assumes “that the number of different titles and editions of Torah publications printed from 1950 to 1983 exceeds the total printed from the advent of Hebrew printing until 1950,” then we are indeed here witnessing a Jewish culture explosion of the most phenomenal order for which we gladly recite *Hatov Vehametiv*.

Even more significant than the purely numerical comparison between ongoing overall shrinkage on the one hand, and the proliferation in Jewish scholarship and Torah learning on the other, is the long-term projection of both these opposite trends. It lies in the nature of two intersecting graphs—the one declining until it reaches zero, and the other rising indefinitely—that the latter in time must extend beyond the former. The losses by indifference, assimilation and the reduction in the size of Jewish families are necessarily finite. They will cease when the process of self-liquidation has run its course, when those producing too few and losing too many are extinct. That is where the negative graph ends. On the other hand, the process of regeneration through larger families and more intensive Jewish commitments is potentially infinite, and therefore in the long run far more enduring.

For instance, let me limit for the moment the practical application of this comparative estimate to the Anglo-Jewish scene, with which I am obviously more familiar than the corresponding trends elsewhere. Some eight years ago, I suggested to a "Conference on Jewish Life in Modern Britain" sponsored by our Board of Deputies that if the prevailing trends of decline will generally be maintained, it is likely that by the end of the century the size of Anglo-Jewry will be reduced from around 400,000 to perhaps only 300,000; yet those who will survive as identifying Jews will constitute a more knowledgeable and committed community than the one they replace. In other words, by the survival of the fittest, we will make up in quality what we lose in quantity in the foreseeable future, and thereafter even the numerical graph will start to rise again. With some local variations, similar patterns probably govern Jewish life the world over today.

#### IV

Let me now turn from this rather generalized survey to a more substantive critique of the contemporary Jewish cultural scene. Clearly, any such assessment involves value judgments, and these are bound to have a degree of subjectivity. A glaring example of how diametrically opposed such value judgments can be, thereby leading to completely contradictory conclusions, is provided by the two principal recommendations, contained in the papers prepared for this occasion, on the criteria to be applied by the Memorial Foundation for investments in the promotion of Jewish culture. Professor Dan states quite categorically:

Academic excellence is the one and only target, for if it is achieved, everything else is achieved . . . The search and support of academic excellence should be the one and only guideline for our work in the future.

Dr. Rosenfeld advocates the opposite in equally uncompromising terms:

Proposals, regardless of their intellectual, academic or professional quality . . . must pass this acid test and answer this question: Does it dam, in an effective manner and to a substantial degree, the current flood-tide of assimilation?

His sole criterion is not academic excellence, but what he calls "unconditional survival."

Here you have an illustration of the dilemma which faces us in any evaluation of worthwhile contributions to Jewish culture. I daresay

that even on what constitutes “academic excellence” or on what advances “unconditional survival” opinions can vary widely. A consensus of these definitions is no more likely to be reached by us, representing as we do widely divergent interests and commitments, than by the specialized scholars who were commissioned to present their expert conclusions to us. The search for any such consensus on priorities and criteria in determining what is worth supporting more or worth less is therefore a futile exercise, so long as we are not agreed on certain parameters within which such value judgments are to operate.

V

I would rather therefore use this privileged occasion to draw attention to certain characteristics of Jewish cultural developments over the past four decades to which I found little or no reference in the papers submitted to us, at least not by way of probing beneath the bare facts and figures. In my attempt to search out some of the dynamics which govern recent cultural advances as well as their limitations, I hope to highlight some current trends and shortcomings which may ultimately have a bearing on policy decisions, especially if the emphasis in the future is to be on innovative programs initiated by the Memorial Foundation, at least as much as on the support of existing projects.

As my point of departure for what strikes me as a characteristic of some consequence, I want to use the perceptive observation by Professor Dan when he states:

It seems to me that the major difference between the first hundred years of the study of a subject differ from the last forty years in one main respect. Previously each subject was dominated by one central figure, a great scholar whose studies were the center of developments in the field; now, in most fields, one can find several groups of scholars, often without one dominant figure, dilligently producing impressive scholarly results.

He then goes on to mention a dominant scholar like Leopold Zunz in the field of Jewish traditional poetry of the last century as a giant who has no equal today and who is now succeeded by an entire team of scholars. One could think of any number of such pioneers in various fields of Jewish scholarship—from Jost and Graetz in history, or Steinschneider in bibliography, or Hermann Cohen in philosophy, to Buber and Gershom Scholem in Jewish mysticism; men of such stature and originality simply no longer exist.

Now, this as a statement of fact is self-evident, even if it is not commonly recognized. What is less self-evident are the reasons

accounting for this phenomenon, especially when we relate it—which the papers we commissioned did not do—to a very similar phenomenon in purely religious Torah scholarship.

## VI

The encyclopaedic Torah giant, Rabbi Menachem Kasher, whose passing some months ago impoverished us all, once gave me his explanation for the absence in our generation of immortal Torah greats who singularly illumined the Torah horizons until very recent times—men like the Chofetz Chaim, or the Chazon Ish, or Rabbi Aaron Kotler, whose likes are not to be found in our times. It is not that we lack the genius, that our intellectual capacity for greatness has suddenly declined so dramatically. Rather, he argued, it is the system of learning which is responsible. Today, we mass-produce disciples and scholars in yeshivot, all applying the same process of study and intellectual development. Under these institutional pressures, conformity is encouraged and originality is frowned upon or suppressed as a deviation from the accepted norms. In the past, said Rabbi Kasher, the truly great were never subject to the institutional constraints of conventional thinking. Instead, they were individually fashioned by the strength of their personalities and their inherent individuality. These giants were custom-made, as it were, and their potential was developed by encouraging the very originality which is the hallmark of real greatness. Conformity, on the other hand, stifles creative scholarship.

There may be very good reasons for the institutionalization of Torah learning and the preference of conformity over creativeness in the decades since the Holocaust. The devastation of the Torah heartland and its fortresses of learning was such that the quite phenomenal rehabilitation of a world so completely ruined only forty years ago would have been impossible without the single-mindedness and conformity of purpose generated by the institutional pressures of the yeshivot.

## VII

I suspect that the factors at work in reducing the rise of outstanding immortals in Jewish scholarship generally are not altogether different from those which Rabbi Kasher mentioned to me regarding the absence of Torah greats. Advanced Jewish studies have been largely institutionalized, first by the rapid expansion of Israeli universities since the

1950's, and then by the proliferation of Jewish studies departments at universities in America and elsewhere since the 1960's. In such settings, the pursuit of Jewish scholarship became structured, programmed and ultimately controlled by conventions which militated against the cultivation of the unconventional, the original, the adventures of thought which cannot be integrated into recognized and properly funded courses of study conforming with accepted university norms. An Ahad Ha'am or a Bialik, one surmises, would not easily fit into the academic discipline of a massive institution of learning, nor would they be produced in such an environment.

Even in regard to the development of science in Europe at large, the impediments of institutionalization to creative genius are stressed by no lesser an authority than the late Professor Charles Singer, Britain's leading historian of science and medicine, and son of the Reverend Simeon Singer of Singer's *Prayer Book* fame. Explaining the comparatively slow advances of German scientific thought, he writes in his contribution on "Science and Judaism" to Louis Finkelstein's *The Jews—Their History, Culture and Religion*:

A characteristic of German cultural history is the lateness of its scientific development. The great scientific movement of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, beginning in Italy, spread to northwestern Europe. For a long time the German area was little affected by it. There were a few eminent early German scientists but no outstanding school of scientific thought in a German environment. . . .

Both this tardy arrival and (subsequently) rapid development are rendered partially understandable by the history of the universities and of the technical industries of Germany. German scientific technique has, like German learning, always been in the hands of university professors. The brilliant amateur, so frequently a figure in French and English science, has seldom appeared on the German scene. . . .

Neither institutes nor organizations create science. Men of science are unique and beyond all valuation. Looking back upon the history of science as a whole, taking into consideration the proportion of people in Europe who use the German tongue, the high state of their material culture, and realizing that a large proportion of German scientific writings are products of non-German or part-German influences, it may fairly be said that Germans have been distinctly less successful than several other peoples in producing creative work of the first rank.

We see, then, that science, Jewish scholarship generally and religious learning all show the same trait: institutionalization stunts originality.

## VIII

Another closely related factor bears mentioning. At the President's Seminar sponsored by the Hebrew University's Institute of Contem-



porary Jewry which I attended last December, President Herzog, with whom I share some Irish antecedents, made the remarkable statement that since gaining national independence in 1922 and 1948 respectively, Ireland and Israel had not produced men of genius comparable to the pre-state eras. In each case, statehood had evidently removed that ultimate spur to greatness which existed when national aspirations were still unfulfilled, or which had a freer scope for individual development in the more unstructured conditions of minority struggle and existence. The George Bernard Shaws or the Agnons or the Urbachs of this world, just like spiritual pioneers in the mould of a Rav Kook or a Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik, clearly require a freedom for growth which the rigidities of institution or state could not provide.

## IX

For a more comprehensive critical analysis of the current state of Jewish culture, I must add a further thought, again based on a penetrating insight I heard from an illustrious man of letters, before I draw some conclusions relevant to our more practical agenda. I remember my teacher, the late Dr. Isidore Epstein, the principal of Jews' College famed for editing the Soncino Talmud and for numerous other scholarly classics, once remarking on the difference in religious schisms between the past and the present. Major movements of dissent were hardly new in the Jewish experience. The divisions between the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the Talmudic era or the Rabbinites and the Karaites throughout medieval times were probably far more extreme and bitter than between Orthodox and Reform Jews today. Nevertheless, observed Dr. Epstein, the schisms of former times invariably enriched Jewish thought and led to wholly positive results. The very tensions of argument generated the dynamics of creative growth. The whole world of the Talmud, stretching the study and transmission of the Oral Law over nearly eight centuries of unparalleled intellectual creativity, was largely a response to the challenge of the Sadducees. Similarly, it was out of the Karaite heresy and its challenge to Rabbinite teachings that there spawned forth entire new disciplines of Jewish thought and letters, such as Jewish philosophy, Hebrew grammar, biblical exegesis and lexicography. The classical writings of Saadia Gaon, Ibn Ezra and Maimonides were in the first instance stimulated by the intellectual challenge of the dissidents. Jewish thought, literature and scholarship became immeasurably the richer for the stimulus of this challenge.

Today, added Dr. Epstein, nothing of the sort has happened. Apart perhaps from the so-called Neo-Orthodoxy of Samson Raphael

Hirsch and David Hoffmann of bygone generations, the newer conflicts with Reform produce only mutual mud-slinging and denunciations; nothing creative of any kind has emerged as a new dimension of Jewish thinking in response to the internal challenge of Reform, or—for that matter—the external challenge of modern advances in science and contemporary thought.

X

There are, then, several quite distinct levels in the appraisal of our cultural condition at this time. There is, first, the continued and quite alarming decline in numbers and in Jewish identification amongst the masses on the one side, to be set against the quite remarkable resurgence of Jewish traditional and scholarly learning amongst a fast-growing minority on the other side.

On the whole, in this movement towards opposite directions, that towards rampant secularization is now increasingly offset by the ascendancy of those who are most intensely committed religiously, and as in Pharaoh's dream, the frail minority seems set in time to consume and leave no trace of the fat majority.

In this connection, there is one illustration of changing fortunes which I feel is as instructive as it is ironical, namely that of the Yiddishist movement. It grew up and flourished primarily as a protest movement against the religious community and its culture. Yiddish literature had become secularism's vehicle *par excellence*, deliberately designed to breed a hybrid alternative to a people bound and united by a common Jewish faith. Today the Yiddishists have become a virtually extinct breed. Yiddishist culture survives only in history books and in a few university chairs—and in the *Sovietisch Heimland* and the *Birobidjan Schtern* as Russian propaganda tools, plus an anachronistic sprinkling of a few Yiddishist schools still left over as a remnant in parts of North and South America.

And yet, Yiddish is spoken today far more widely than a generation ago. It has become the *lingua franca* of tens of thousands in New York, in Jerusalem, in London and in many other parts of the world, especially among the young. Only, those who use it—in their homes, their schools, their studies and even their newspapers—are ironically the very yeshiva and chassidic elements against whom the Yiddishists had rebelled.

If I may be personal, I would not be surprised if more of my children and grandchildren than those of the Yiddishists still in our midst speak Yiddish fluently today.

Another startling indication of similar turn of fortunes is the fact

that in Israel there are now significantly more full-time students at Yeshivot and religious girls' seminaries than at the universities.

Spectacular reversals and dramatic shifts such as these must obviously weigh heavily in any realistic reappraisal of cultural stimulants likely to work and those likely to fail.

## XI

In the judgement on priorities, as we have seen, constructive suggestions vary between "academic excellence" and "unconditional survival" as the key to salvation, or at least to relief. Apart from the relativity of these criteria I already mentioned, I believe neither of them can by itself provide the ultimate answer. Academic projects, excellent or otherwise, are of little value if they will not reach out to those many who at present are still altogether beyond the pale of any Jewish culture. When I addressed the annual meeting of the Memorial Foundation in Geneva five years ago, I put the choice this way:

It is more important to encourage Jews to *read* Jewish books than to *write* them.

To promote one book club to popularize the spread of Jewish literature can be worth far more than to help produce yet another work of Jewish scholarship of the finest excellence if it will not attract any readers to enlighten and inspire them.

As for "unconditional survival," I am not really sure what is meant by this. The aim I would like to prevail on Jews to pursue is "purposeful survival"—this is a *conditional* survival for a purpose, survival for the sake of ideals which make survival meaningful and give content to the survivors. Survival without any conditions, merely for the sake of existing, to my mind, is precisely the prescription for the kind of Jewishly-empty lives which are the antithesis to Jewish culture and which place a huge question-mark over the vindication of the Jewish claim to survival altogether.

## XII

Our findings at the next level of cultural orientation are bound to be more intangible. But what we established earlier on the progressive displacement of originality and the unresponsiveness to sectarian challenges should be sufficient to justify the conclusion that the post-Holocaust era has been singularly uncreative. We may have cultivated

existing areas of Jewish scholarship by immense concentrations of specialized research, notably in the fields of Bible studies and archaeology. Both these advances are no doubt due to the impact of the Jewish return to Zion and, in Professor Dan's words, to

. . . the almost universal acceptance, among Jews in the Diaspora and in Israel, that there is a connection between the study of the Jewish past and successful struggle for the development of contemporary Jewish culture, or even for Jewish national survival in the modern world.

In respect of these two fields of Jewish studies, it is also true to claim that the former dominance of non-Jewish scholars has now made way for an increasing Jewish role.

Significant as these developments may be in themselves, they still have little bearing on creativity in the sense of opening up new vistas of Jewish culture and scholarship. No new schools of Jewish thought, of philosophy, no new movements galvanizing the Jewish people have emerged in the past forty years.

This lack of innovation may be natural in the wake of the need to concentrate all energies and resources on resurrecting and consolidating Jewish cultural life following its near-annihilation in the Great Catastrophe. Yet in former times of turmoil and travail it was not always so. I need only mention the immortal creations of Maimonides produced by him as a fugitive from the Almohadan persecutions in 12th-century Spain and North Africa; the Chassidic movement which emerged in the wake of the agonies suffered by Jews in 17th- and 18th-century Poland; and of course Political Zionism which gathered momentum out of the pogroms of the 1880's in the East and the anti-Semitism highlighted by the Dreyfus trial in the West—to give just three examples from three entirely different epochs of great suffering leading to enormous effusions of the Jewish spirit.

### XIII

So far I can detect only two relatively confined areas in which Jewish minds have opened up during the past four decades entirely new disciplines of Jewish studies which are likely to have a permanent place in the inventory of Jewish cultural wealth. These are the quite revolutionary advances in *Mishpat Ivri*, the application of classic Jewish law to contemporary conditions, particularly in terms of Israeli legislation; and my own specialized field of Jewish medical ethics, which has burgeoned from a completely unknown subject thirty years ago into a respectable collection of practical, academic and literary projects, most recently accorded formal recognition for the first time

at university level by the decision to establish the Center of Jewish Medical Ethics at Ben-Gurion University.

In Jewish aspects of the social sciences, too, there have of course been some impressive strides of late. But none of these often very exciting enterprises—in fields like Jewish demography, sociology or ethnology—can really be regarded as having added some entirely new dimensions or directions to Jewish intellectual endeavor; these are all subjects which were essentially well advanced already before the period under review. A similar reservation applies to notable recent researches in Jewish theology and mysticism.

#### XIV

This comparative sterility is not limited to secular Jewish scholarship. It also marks the output of Torah culture. A look through the ten “Areas of Torah Scholarship” listed in Professor Leiman’s paper, together with outstanding works in each rubric, will reveal several masterly new works of commentaries, responsa, practical manuals, and encyclopaedic works of reference. But one will search in vain for truly pioneering works which hold the seeds of new schools of thought, new approaches to bridging the gulf between Jewish and general culture, or even new attempts at interpreting the latest literary, historical or archaeological researches in the light of Jewish traditional teachings, on the lines so successfully pursued by a whole school of mainly German Orthodox scholars of an era abruptly ended with the Holocaust.

Characteristically, by far the most popular Jewish literature today is the Artscroll series of commentaries on classical, biblical, mishnaic and liturgical texts, published in New York and distributed throughout the world. I am told that the original volume of the *Book of Esther* sold some 45,000 copies—far in excess of any general best-seller, whether in the fiction or non-fiction class. I say ‘characteristically’ because, being an anthology culled almost entirely from earlier authors, though most attractively produced, this literature typifies the resistance to innovation and originality, or indeed to critical inquiry of any kind. These volumes, now comprising several dozen titles, are so unoriginal that Leiman does not even mention them; and yet they are probably more widely read than all the recently-published works he lists put together.

Quite clearly, the biggest cultural demand today is for authenticity rather than originality, exploration or inquiry. What appeals most to those with any taste for Jewish culture are certainties, answers without questions and not questions without answers. These are facts of Jewish life which we ignore at our peril, whether we welcome them or not.

XV

Finally, let me move to the third level of our inquiry, briefly examining whether we really use our limited human resources to the best advantage for the cultural rehabilitation of our people. I believe that we grossly underuse the trained personnel which is readily available to us, that vast wastelands could be reclaimed if we tapped these resources properly. Let me give you a simple example. In our Jewish day schools and many other educational establishments the world over, there is a serious shortage of fully qualified teachers and education directors, especially in the most urgently needed category combining Jewish with secular competence. There is no shortage of expertise. There are plenty of well trained, highly experienced and deeply committed Jewish teachers and educational experts. But unfortunately for a variety of reasons they prefer to serve in non-Jewish establishments, and so their capabilities are lost to the Jewish community. How much we could save in teacher-training, how immensely we could improve educational standards at our schools, if all who are properly qualified would be motivated to teach under Jewish auspices.

I feel that some relatively minor program of incentives or subsidies might open up significant new reservoirs of human resources in the promotion of Jewish education.

Developing this approach a little further, I cannot even spare one of our sacred cows. I am not at all sure whether by our encouragement, certainly by the indiscriminate encouragement, of Jewish studies under non-Jewish university auspices we do not often siphon off those very talents which might otherwise have become available to Jewish institutions. In transmitting Jewish knowledge we will, after all, have to be increasingly concerned not only with *what* we teach but the *manner* in which we teach it, not only with data about Jews and Judaism but with generating loyalties to Jews and Judaism.

The problem is evidently not new. Professor Salo W. Baron, in his essay on Steinschneider included in the *History and Jewish Historians*, writes of this great 19th-century bibliographer that he

like Geiger, Zunz, Ludwig Philippson and others advocated the establishment of Jewish chairs or faculties at general universities, rather than of separate Jewish theological seminaries. Time and again he reverted to that idea, often deploring the fact that Germany had done even less than other countries in securing independent seats for Jewish learning.

Spurred on by this philosophy, German Jewry may have been the cradle and the paragon of the *Juedische Wissenschaft*. But we shall have to decide whether what meets our post-Holocaust needs, under

conditions of acute shrinkage, is the German pattern of *Kultur* of scientific excellence pursued at the universities—with results which spelt havoc by assimilation long before the Holocaust, or whether we must not rather strive for a form of Jewish culture which serves as a means to enhance Jewish communal, national and spiritual identification among all sections of our people, and not just the exceedingly limited circle of the academic elite.

By all means, if private patrons can be found to subsidize pure research for extending our Ph.D. collections, let them be encouraged. But sparse Jewish national resources should in the first instance be invested into channeling our available talent and expertise towards community service, into training and directing our finest brains to improve the standards and scope of our educational, rabbinic and lay leadership in an effort to restore Jews as the People of the Book. In this effort, by definition, the people must come before the book. There can be no Jewish culture without Jews. The rebuilding of truly Jewish homes where we determine the number and quality of Jews to be raised must therefore take precedence over any academic or literary exercise unrelated to the people it is to serve, if the revitalization of Jewish culture is to become a dynamic movement for the reclamation of Jews.

## XVI

Having now roamed fairly widely over the contemporary cultural condition of the Jewish people, pointing at some of its strengths and its weaknesses, I do not deem it my task in this presentation to set forth a practical program of future allocation policies, or even the priorities to be applied. I can help to do this elsewhere as a member of the Guidelines Committee. But my survey would be left incomplete without some *practical conclusions* emerging from my analysis, at least in the broadest terms.

I for one do not think that even their intrinsic importance should determine which schemes are worth supporting.

There are ample organizations, agencies and foundations to discover and help worthy causes. What I think is unique to the Memorial Foundation is that it can take a global look at the totality of the Jewish scene. It can pinpoint particular areas of need by filling voids otherwise left empty. It can trace significant success stories obscured from public view and support them to become internationally known as pilot projects to be adopted in other communities. It can also influence public attitudes by rewarding the search for originality and breaking the sterile cycle of conventional thinking and planning.

With these enormous and quite unrivaled opportunities in mind, and recalling that already five years ago I proposed in Geneva a specific program of priorities and innovative programs, which were circulated at the time and which seem to me as topical now as they were then, I would just list a sample of illustrations designed to meet the objectives I have proposed:

1. Aware that our people in contrast to others were born at home—in the homes of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; that we entered history in family units as “the *Children* of Israel”; and aware also that the best known Jewish imperative as enshrined in the *Shema*, particularly in the context of transmitting our culture from parents to children, seeks its being nurtured and acted out not in the synagogue, not even in the school or academy of learning, but *beshivtecha bevetecha*—“when you sit in your home”; and recognizing that the Jewish home has virtually lost its once-available position as the principal fortress of Jewish life, through widespread alienation combined with a catastrophic rise of divorces and fall of births; acknowledging all this, programs to salvage and fortify Jewish homes must become a prior condition to any consolidation and advancement of Jewish culture.

Happily, the Memorial Foundation has already endorsed this high priority in principle, and one confidently hopes that through Memorial Foundation-sponsored initiatives, intensive schemes for pre-marital training in preparation for building enduring and creative Jewish homes will become at least as popular as preparation for Bar Mitzvah, usually a ten or twenty-minute performance, and that counseling services to repair marriages at risk will attract no less communal support than health or welfare services to meet the challenges of sickness and infirmity to which Jewish agencies readily contribute on such an impressive scale.

2. Among other vital “orphan” areas looking for adoption is some effective incentive scheme to attract high calibre personnel for community service and leadership, making it worthwhile for any potential talent to be recruited for the perpetuation of Jewish life.

3. Alongside those who strive for excellence and survival, a rewarding niche must also be found for the lonely pace-setter, by assuring encouragement, support and acclaim for sheer originality, for novel enterprises in thought or action. Such inducements could take the form of competitively-earned grants for highly creative literary or organizational projects, and of global prizes and exhibitions to publicize them. There are many enterprises of great originality and with immense potential which remain relatively unknown for lack of sponsorship, precisely because they do not fit neatly into the conventional grooves of institutional interests.

4. For the popularization of Jewish culture, the emphasis should



be shifted from book-production to book-distribution, promoting all determined efforts to raise literacy among the Jewish people by ensuring that Jewish books grace every Jewish home, such as by subsidies to book-clubs or book-stalls at synagogues to help Jewish books being seen, being bought and being read.

And so back to where we started, Joseph's question: "Is my father still alive?" I hope that through some of its new visions the Memorial Foundation will help more and more Jews to give a firm and affirmative answer, by promoting the strength of our family bonds, by providing living fathers for areas otherwise left orphaned, by incentives for originality to insure that the Jewish genius will never cease to be creative, and by inspiring our homes with the living spirit of what made our fathers immortal.

Thus will we honor the memory our Foundation is charged to keep alive, and thus will we restore the unity and the purpose of the Jewish people.