

# Commandments, Concerns and Education in the Covenant

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My aim in this essay is to engage Michael Rosenak's work at two central points: his understanding of the problems which face the Jewish educator who seeks, in a secular society, to initiate students into a fellowship that is "holy"; and his suggestions for how to accomplish this task: How – in one key formulation – to teach students "a language of specific contents that address the object of ultimate concern through the various dimensions of religious commitment" (p. 104).<sup>1</sup> My framing of the Jewish educator's mission will be somewhat broader than Rosenak's, my sense of the sociological and theological problematics will be somewhat different (in part because of the differing situations in which we have considered these matters), and my ideas about Jewish education will be those of a part-time practitioner in the field rather than those of an acknowledged master. I hope that this contribution will assist readers of Rosenak nonetheless in applying his lessons in Jewish classrooms, particularly in the American Diaspora – a place where commandment is often resisted, concern for Judaism requires lengthy and careful cultivation, and membership in the covenant is both greatly suspect and deeply treasured; a place, in other words, both of educational challenge and educational opportunity. Rosenak's teachings about Jewish teaching, I hope to show, remain highly relevant, his "theory of religious Jewish education" a cogent response to an unprecedented Jewish condition.

1 All page numbers in this portion of the text refer to citations from Michael Rosenak, *Commandments and Concerns: Jewish Religious Education in Secular Society*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987. The work is cited in later portions of the text as CC.

## I. The Contemporary Situation

Limitations of space preclude the sort of extensive summary required if we are to do justice to Rosenak's ideas about the problems facing the Jewish educator today, but perhaps we can get a sense of them by focusing on the two key terms which comprise the title of Rosenak's first book, and figure in my title as well. They signify two divergent "orientations" to Jewish education as currently practiced. "Commandment" is shorthand for the "normative-ideational" approach, one which knows what the truth is, as it were, and what good is, and aims to impart such knowledge and inculcate such behaviors as will enable the student to grasp hold of and practice that goodness and truth. The educator takes account of the particular conditions in which teaching occurs only in order to translate "normative philosophies" effectively into "concrete educational objectives." Educated individuals according to this model are "those who correspond to some pre-established and imposed pattern of wisdom and virtue" (pp. 17–21). Rosenak contrasts this approach with the "deliberate-inductive orientation" – "concerns" for short – which begins with the learner and asks how he or she can be taught to interact successfully with, and to understand, other people and the world. The educator must look long and hard at the conditions in which learning will take place, for the latter does not exist in any abstract a priori form – a seed ready for the planting – but rather takes shape in the teaching itself. Educated individuals according to this model are "those who can understand reality, relate themselves meaningfully and effectively to it, change themselves when necessary, and shape the environment when feasible and desirable" (p. 21).

Educators who follow the first approach, Rosenak writes, might well be distressed at the apparent disinterest of many students and their parents in what Jewish tradition has to say to them, let alone at their lack of interest in fulfilling the obligations which the tradition sets forth. Educators who follow the second approach might be troubled far more by the failure as they see it of Jewish tradition in its current forms to address the actual lives, needs and aspirations of students and their parents. The problem in their view is not how to get the students to hear what they need to hear but how to recast the tradition to make it worth hearing. Whereas the educators of "commandment" in our day often find themselves "standing guard" over the integrity and authenticity of the tradition, lest it be blown away with the winds of the zeitgeist, educators

of “concern” are generally much more hospitable to forms of experiment and innovation, lest the tradition die a slow death of irrelevance (pp. 21–25). Rosenak’s sociological and philosophical analysis of secularism causes him to be far from sanguine about the chances of success available to either educational approach acting alone.

The relevance of the contemporary situation to Jewish education, we note, is itself at issue in this dispute. Partisans of both approaches will agree that one cannot educate in a vacuum. One necessarily teaches in a particular language, and that language already comes inflected with cultural meanings that must be addressed. Key terms such as “tradition” may carry connotations of opprobrium or mere ornament that Jewish educators must raise to awareness and contest. Classroom hours are limited by the willingness of students and their parents to allot them in the face of competing demands. Despite shared acknowledgement of these realities, however, the two approaches differ markedly on the question of what normative status should be given the contemporary situation. Do the demands of autonomous individuals, “sovereign selves,” carry normative or only tactical importance? A long line of modern Jewish thinkers since Mendelssohn have disagreed on this issue; Rosenak takes no stance on it, but merely notes what is at stake, when he writes candidly that, “In such a situation of virtual apostasy, any normative-ideational approach that posits ideal objectives of Judaism becomes virtually impossible” (p. 42). Nor does he endorse “the secular view of the situation,” which holds (whether in Israel or the Diaspora, whether from a committed viewpoint of Jewish national or cultural identity, or from the viewpoint of partial or complete assimilation into a Gentile culture and society) that education speaking the language of religious commandment will likely be seen as indoctrination, as a threat to the self’s autonomy, and – worst of all, perhaps – as irrelevant to actual life and its concerns. Rosenak’s own vision emerges only when he turns from problem to solution. Jewish religious educational theory, he holds, not only must but can respond effectively to secular criticisms. The remainder of *Commandments and Concerns*, and much of a subsequent book, *Roads to the Palace*, are devoted to showing what one such response, a theory of “norms despite modernity” (p. 129), would look like.

Before turning to that theory, and amending it with a few ideas of my own, I want to supplement Rosenak’s account of the obstacles facing Jewish educators in contemporary America (and, to lesser degrees, in the rest of the Diaspora as well) with my own analysis of the problems

besetting Jewish religious education. I draw here on a historical study of modern Jewish struggles with matters of ritual and commandment, *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, as well as a sociological study of contemporary American Jewish attitudes and behaviors relative to these issues, *The Jew Within*, co-authored with Steven M. Cohen.<sup>2</sup> Both works, I believe, indicate not only obstacles but openings to the sort of Jewish education Rosenak has in mind. Once again, I cannot hope to summarize an entire book within the limits of this essay, let alone two books, but will try to suggest several discussions in the books that bear directly on the matters at hand.

I begin, as does Rosenak, with the fact that Jewish beliefs and behaviors stand before Jews in the modern West as one among a number of options competing for their interest and allegiance – the problem well-described by Peter Berger as “the heretical imperative.”<sup>3</sup> Jews, like all other inhabitants of modernity, need to *choose*, in areas of life, great or trivial, where their ancestors had little if any room for departure from fixed routines. Moreover, Jews must make these choices in a situation where, as a political and cultural minority, Jewish beliefs and activities do not enjoy the *prima facie* “plausibility” (Berger’s term as well) of, for example, Christmas celebrations, or keeping up with current movies or best-sellers, or following the latest news at a local or national level. Plausibility is denied to Jewish observances because the “structures” which normally provide it are lacking: media coverage, for example; taken-for-grantedness; association with political and economic power; the prominence of buildings expressive of or dedicated to the beliefs and behaviors under consideration; residence in a neighborhood where observance is common and visible. Berger’s analysis of these issues is generally convincing, as far as it goes.<sup>4</sup> I have therefore turned my attention to several related factors which bear on Jewish choices, factors all the more serious because they may never enter directly into one’s consciousness.

For one thing, the very bargain with Emancipation (or “modernity”) struck by Jews upon entry into Gentile societies two centuries ago, still

2 Arnold M. Eisen, *Rethinking Modern Judaism: Ritual, Commandment, Community*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998; Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family and Community in America*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000.

3 Peter Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1979.

4 My reservations are voiced in *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, pp. 61–66.

enforced in a variety of ways today, and still apparently accepted by the vast majority of Jews, presumed that Jews would not exhibit too many appreciable differences from the neighbors whom they had joined in civic privileges, in citizenship. This meant, in 19th century Europe, speaking and dressing and eating as an individual who was *gebildet* or *civilisé* would do.<sup>5</sup> Philip Roth's marvelous short story, "Eli the Fanatic," explores the consequences to himself and his neighbors when a Reform Jewish lawyer in 1950s suburban America decides one day to walk the streets of his town in Hasidic garb. Many Jews do exactly that in America today, of course. The bar of acceptable difference has been raised to tolerate many previously unacceptable ways of speaking, dressing and eating. But it remains the case, I think, that for most American Jews the first question (or set of questions) asked when considering enactment of any distinctively Jewish behavior is not *theological* (what do I believe about God, revelation and commandment), but *political*: How much will this behavior (e.g., taking matzah to work during Passover, or taking off from work on Yom Kippur, or celebrating Shabbat at home) demonstrate apartness from my neighbors? What degree of distinctiveness from the larger society and culture do I want to demonstrate? And how much such distinctiveness is the society in which I live prepared to tolerate? The issue in the first instance, then, is not so much "indoctrination" or "autonomy" or even "relevance," but distinctiveness, difference, otherness. Spinoza raised the issue in the work which set the stage for all subsequent thought about the modern challenges to Judaism, indeed he inserted the issue into the work's very title: *The Theologico-Political Treatise* (ca. 1670). The issue is not belief (a private matter, invisible to others and oneself, theological), but ritual behavior (a public matter, and so of concern to the majority and the sovereign, political) – that which, Spinoza asserted, had the power to preserve Jewish distinctiveness indefinitely. The onus today, we might say, is always on the ritual to make the case for its own observance. In the "default position," one will do nothing out of the ordinary.

A second obstacle to Jewish observance (or, in some cases, an actual attraction to it, for a *measure* of distinctiveness, if it gains approval from the minority and/or the majority, may well be considered a plus) is the status of that observance as *ritual*. Ever since Protestant critiques

5 Ibid., pp. 23–37, 107–117. For the classic statement of this position see Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*, New York: Schocken Books, 1978.

of Catholicism, incorporated by Enlightenment thinkers into the very assumptions of modern, rational selves, the word “ritual” has carried several pejorative connotations which bear directly on Jewish choices.<sup>6</sup> Ritual, first of all, adorns life rather than obligates the self. That is why it is “mere” ritual – viewed positively in its place as adornment, but seen negatively when it seeks precedence over other possibilities for action, as law. Second, ritual occurs (or should occur) infrequently, ideally as a vehicle or accompaniment to moments of peak experience set apart from everyday activity. Much traditional Jewish ritual (dietary laws, for example) is rather superimposed on everyday experience. Third, ritual should “make sense” as the symbolic expression or enactment of a particular message or truth. That is its only plausible purpose, the end to which it leads, the only justification for engaging in it (aside from adornment, the obvious “value added” of, for example, a wedding performed by a rabbi in a synagogue). These popular notions of ritual are either articulated explicitly or taken for granted in numerous influential anthropological theories (for example, those offered by Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz), and they have been contested by other theorists (most notably Mary Douglas and Jonathan Z. Smith). No less important for our concerns, they have been discussed in many leading works of Jewish thought written over the past two centuries. Think, for example, of Mendelssohn’s attempt in *Jerusalem* (1783), responding in part to Spinoza’s *Tractatus*, to understand the commandments as “ceremonial script” and yet retain their status as commandments.<sup>7</sup> Or ponder Mordecai Kaplan’s efforts, in *Judaism as a Civilization*, to throw off the claims of Orthodoxy and “supernaturalism,” to “reconstruct” the commandments as “folkways,” yet to retain or recover Judaism’s status as “law” and “involuntarism.”<sup>8</sup>

The circle cannot convincingly be squared, I believe; ritual is not commandment, though commandment may well take the form of ritual. Yet modern Jewish thinkers of a variety of perspectives have had no alternative but to try and make commandment into ritual, because the entry of Jews into modernity has made translation of Jewish into general language

6 See Eisen, *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, ch. 3.

7 Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, tr. Allan Arkush. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1983.

8 Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society (1934), 1994. See especially pp. 292–293.

unavoidable if the tradition is to make its own case persuasively.<sup>9</sup> Two strategies have frequently been employed by thinkers in the modern effort to offer *ta'amei ha'mitzvot*, “reasons for the commandments.” The first, related to the problem Rosenak titles “Particular Faiths and Universal Religiosity” (CC, p. 88), involves the attempt to explain distinctive Jewish behaviors as the enactment or expression of universal truths, or as paths to universal goods.<sup>10</sup> Classical Reform thinkers provide the most obvious but by no means the only examples of this strategy. Samson Raphael Hirsch too recurs often in *Horeb* (1837) to universal goods or truths taught or inculcated by the unique legislation of *halakhah*. Passover is regularly celebrated by Jews of all denominations as the “holiday of freedom.” Hanukkah, we are told, teaches the importance of religious liberty. Kaplan devoted an entire work, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* (1937), to expositing the holidays in keeping with such a schema. Sociologist Marshall Sklare hypothesized 40 years ago that the universality of a ritual’s purported message would (along with its transpiring in private space and time: the political factor) be a key predictor of its observance by contemporary American Jews. (*The Jew Within* confirms this prediction.)<sup>11</sup> The problem, of course, is that one can arrive at the same universal “lesson” without the inconvenience, or expense, or undesirable distinctiveness, of a particularly Jewish practice. What is more, if observance of the ritual depends on acceptance of a certain explanation for it, one may well reject the former because of dissatisfaction with the latter. A ritual’s worst enemies may be the friends who plead its case before skeptical Jews. The latter, unable to affirm or deny any putative meaning, may simply decide to abstain.

A second strategy, employed widely by Jewish thinkers at least since the mid-19th century, is to invoke what I call the mitzvah of nostalgia: appeal to a felt imperative to walk in the ways of the ancestors.<sup>12</sup> Jewish liturgy has always been marked by reference to the merits of the patriarchs and matriarchs. They are invoked in prayers for rain and dew, for example. Their stories are told and retold at Passover and Hanukkah. Their martyrdom is recounted at Yom Kippur and the Ninth of Av. But

9 Cf. Rosenak, CC, pp. 99–104.

10 See Eisen, *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, ch. 5.

11 Cohen and Eisen, *The Jew Within*, pp. 96–98. See Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, New York: Basic Books, 1967.

12 See Eisen, *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, ch. 6.

whereas the ancestors were traditionally used as models of piety whose deeds we seek to emulate to the degree possible, so that we too might prove loyal servants of God, the emphasis has shifted in the past century and a half – never more so than in contemporary America – to following in the footsteps of the ancestors *so as to connect with them* – rather than to connect *through their intercession with God*. One suspects that a personal meaning of Passover celebrations has always been the memory of parents and grandparents no longer present around the table. The Seder text itself understands its purpose in part as the transmission of tradition to future generations. Contemporary accounts, however, do not raise the personal meaning of Passover and other observances to consciousness but make it primary, while other meanings (such as greater closeness to God or obedience to God’s word) become secondary. Connection with ancestors now figures as a major explanation of what the holiday means and why it should be celebrated – this at the very same time when one’s own parents, because they are nonobservant, can no longer be regarded as role models of Jewish observance – and have thus become ancestors from whose practice one must depart in order to continue the practice of more distant ancestors. These dynamics are complex, and may themselves be a source of meaning (even pleasure) in renewed Jewish practice.<sup>13</sup> American Jews, like other Americans, apparently find the greatest existential meaning to life in the relationships which cannot be severed by distance or divorce: children and grandchildren, parents and grandparents. But they are pleased when the meaning inherent in those relationships is deepened and overlaid with Judaism, a chain of ancestors stretching back three millennia. They welcome the integration of their own family story into a larger saga that promises to continue far into the future. “Tradition,” I argue in *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, is now the effective “god-term” for American Jews, a framework or authority in which they wish to place themselves, albeit on their own terms, even though some are aware that the “tradition” they “follow” is often a construction of someone’s recent invention. Data in *The Jew Within* confirm that they overwhelmingly regard tradition positively, and wish to carry it forward.<sup>14</sup>

Personal meanings are now a virtual prerequisite to ritual observance. American Jews, Cohen and I conclude, differ from their predecessors not

13 See Cohen and Eisen, *The Jew Within*, ch. 4.

14 See for example Cohen and Eisen, *The Jew Within*, pp. 91–96, 216–217.



in the fact of choice from a variety of potential observances, but in the widespread belief that it is their *right* to choose which practices to observe, that it would be *wrong* to surrender that right and observe any ritual lacking in personal meaning, just because someone in authority such as a rabbi (or some other Jew, such as one's in-laws!) says that one should do X or Y in order to be counted a "good Jew." Indeed, many "elite" thinkers examined in *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, like the "laypeople" studied and interviewed for *The Jew Within*, seem to be engaged in a lifelong *search* for authority that they never actually discover and do not want to discover – for finding it would mean obedience to that authority, an end to the journey.<sup>15</sup> Neither obedience nor arrival – both demanding permanent commitment – is appealing. Jews, like Gentiles, regard themselves as "sovereign" (at least in the private domain in which religion now figures) and are reluctant to foreclose options or forego choices by "committing" once and for all to any practices or beliefs. Nor do they feel obligated by the "public Judaism" of Federation campaigns, support for Israel, or even – increasingly – remembrance of the Holocaust.<sup>16</sup> The right to choose may deter decisions on behalf of a minority culture or religion, of course – or it may render the minority tradition more attractive precisely because it is chosen rather than imposed, acceptably distinctive rather than merely commonplace. Commitment, arrived at freely, may be more attractive and more lasting – witness the widespread attachment to religion in America, where religious commitment is voluntary and there is no established church. Mendelsohn's *Jerusalem* seeks to portray the emergent fact of choice as an advantage for Judaism – an opportunity for Jews to freely take on the "yoke of the commandments," as the Torah and the rabbis had intended all along. There is perhaps some naiveté in this view, but also no small degree of truth – *if* the choice for Torah can be made a live choice, clear and present to the chooser, not only credible – which is hard enough – but actually persuasive.

We should note, finally, that these further dimensions to Berger's "heretical imperative" define Jews as modern or post-modern far more than the fact of heresy taken in a literal sense of rejection of accepted truth. Indeed, the vast majority of those interviewed for *The Jew Within*, and 83% of those who participated in a representative survey of adult

15 See Eisen, *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, ch. 7.

16 See Cohen and Eisen, *The Jew Within*, chs. 2, 5.

American Jews, professed some sort of belief in God.<sup>17</sup> “Secularization,” then, is no longer an adequate description of the developments most defining of the Jewish educational situation. The problem lies elsewhere, and so must the response.

## II. The Educational Response

I have provided this summary of my own view of the situation in which much Jewish education transpires in contemporary America (“much” rather than “all” because while Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox classrooms are not entirely immune to these factors, they are shielded from their direct impact to a greater or lesser degree, as are Conservative or Reform classrooms which meet criteria set forth below) because I think it refines (without contradicting) Rosenak’s presentation, and because I believe it relevant to the formulation of educational theory. Like Rosenak, I do not believe that Jewish educators can in good conscience merely surrender the normative character of their tradition to a culture resistant to religious norms. But neither should they regard that culture as totally lacking in normative value – a mere obstacle demanding tactical response. The problem with some “normative-ideational” approaches, in other words, is not that they will prove ineffective but that they are wrong. A Jewish educator must speak the truth to his or her students at all times. The relevant question, then, is what that truth is and how it should be taught.

At this point in his own discussion, Rosenak introduces a new pair of terms, analogous but not identical to those discussed thus far: “explicit” versus “implicit” religion and education.

Explicit religion concerns itself with what we believe and practice as loyal adherents of a specific faith, as members of a believing community; it sets down norms that prevail in our fellowship, norms that are incumbent upon those whom “we” will recognize as

17 Ibid., ch. 7; p. 219. Asked if they believe “there is a God,” 56% said “definitely yes” and another 27% “probably yes.” Asked if they believe God watches over them in times of danger, the replies were 36% and 32% respectively for “definitely” and “probably.” Only 52% affirmed any belief, definite or probable, in God’s “special relationship with the Jewish people.”

“religious.” Implicit religion deals with existential encounters, occasioned by looking within and up in an attitude of faith; it connotes reverence, openness, and search for meaning. (pp. 112–113)

Sympathetic discussion of both options yields the judgement once again that neither, standing alone, can stand.

Explicit religious education has a normative philosophy of education, but it is not convincing to most Jews in the modern age. Implicit religious education can be shown to be philosophically plausible, relevant to the modern person, and linked to scientific inquiry or reflection upon religion. But it has no normative philosophy of education beyond a commitment to existential virtues [...] Jewishly speaking, [it] lacks specificity or religious depth; it is either culturally “universal” or simply national. (p. 168)

Rosenak has of course shown his hand here: the problem with the former approach is only that it is not convincing, and the educator’s task is therefore to make it so. The latter approach carries with it *prima facie* plausibility, but it lacks a normative philosophy, specificity (of belief and practice) and “religious depth” – serious lacunae indeed.<sup>18</sup> Clearly one will need to add to it substantially, i.e., to meld the two in such a way as to retain the advantages of both. Rosenak’s strategy for doing so borrows from Jewish thinkers such as Heschel, Soloveitchik and Rosenzweig but amends all of them in search of the combination he seeks. His further exposition of the synthesis in *Roads to the Palace* draws liberally on Alasdair MacIntyre’s notion that any viable concept of virtue (or, by extension, any religious tradition) will necessarily contain three elements: (1) a *practice* – “a coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity” in which goods are modeled and realized; (2) a *narrative* which orders and makes sense of an individual human life in terms of the larger story of the community; and (3) a *moral tradition* which is a source of both identity and obligation (p. 207 and footnote to MacIntyre refs). “It should be clear from the above,” Rosenak writes, that “the ultimate aim of practices is to attain to the good that the community of practitioners declare to be inherent in them, which can be attained in no other way.”<sup>19</sup> It should also be clear that “practices involve

18 See especially the summations in Rosenak, CC; pp. 178, 207, 228, 264.

19 Michael Rosenak, *Roads to the Palace: Jewish Texts and Teaching*. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995, p. 208. The book is cited hereafter in the text as RP.

communities comprising all those who engage in a practice,” including those learning how to do so (RP, p. 209).

One of the ways a person learns what to do in life, according to MacIntyre as adopted by Rosenak, is by coming to see his or her personal story as interwoven with “threads of practices and virtues that have communities and histories.” We discover who we are through the stories we tell. “I can answer the question ‘What am I do to?’ only if I can answer the prior question ‘of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’” (RP, p. 209).<sup>20</sup> We come to see ourselves, in part, as heirs to choices we have not made and which we might not have wished to recognize. Indeed, tradition is best understood not as a given set of beliefs or practices but as a process of negotiation, of “continuous conflict.” Rosenak concludes this section of his presentation with this definition from MacIntyre: “A living tradition is an argument precisely about the goods which constitute that tradition” (RP, p. 210). In order to be part of this argument, one must master the “language” and “literature” in which it has been carried on until now. Rosenak devotes the remainder of his book to a “lexicon” of Judaism’s language and literature, including both *halakhah* and *aggadah*, and comprising not only past arguments but the imprint left by those arguments. All provide the material, in stories and in practices, through which (and only through which) the argument, the tradition, can be carried forward.

This is a very appealing notion of religious tradition, one analogous to Rosenzweig’s notion of Torah and its teaching (set forth in his famous open letter to Buber, “The Builders”) as a *path* on which one walks through life. What “is this way to the Law,” to Torah, Rosenzweig asks? If Torah is not to mean simply the 613 commandments as laid out in the Shulkhan Arukh (a version of explicit religion) or whatever speaks to me as an individual with “inner power” (a Buberian formulation of implicit religion), what can it mean? And how does one teach and learn Torah in new situations? How does one leap from “path” – which in my reading of Rosenzweig means: all that Judaism has been and meant until now – to “pathlessness,” that which Judaism must become in the very different circumstances that hold now and will hold in the future?<sup>21</sup> Rosenzweig

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He is drawing on Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd Ed. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.

20 Cf. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 216.

21 I refer in this section to Franz Rosenzweig, “Teaching and Law” [an excerpt from

has (a few pages earlier) ruled out the two answers which he attributes (in part erroneously) to classical Reform Judaism on the one hand and Hirsch's modern Orthodox Judaism on the other, just as Rosenak found the "deliberative-inductive" and "normative-ideational" approaches, on their own, insufficient. One cannot simply carry on as before, or simply make Judaism whatever a person or group of persons wishes it to be.

"The Builders" makes two suggestions, both refinements of its guiding metaphor of Torah as path. First, one must recognize that there is no end to the way, and no shortcut to it or upon it. One cannot view the path from the heights, but only walk it, and however far one has walked one is always only on "the first lap." Jewish learning is not a matter of a curriculum to be mastered but a life to be lived. Second, only a "laborious and aimless detour through knowable Judaism gives us the certainty that the ultimate leap, from that which we know to that which we need to know at any price, the leap to the teachings, leads to Jewish teachings." The teachings do not become Jewish simply because a Jew or group of Jews declares them to be such – nor even, Rosenzweig would say, because Jews study and enact them in a Jewish language, or in a Jewish state. (Judaism is not like French culture in this regard, he maintains.) If we seek to specify what is required in order to follow Rosenzweig's directive (and Rosenak's, in many ways indebted to Rosenzweig's), I think we must stipulate at least five elements.

First, there must be *learning*. We must inform ourselves as thoroughly as we can about how Jews in the past made Torah matter in their lives (Torah in the MacIntyre-Rosenak sense of contested conversation, and in my terms the sum total of the ways Jews over the centuries have taught and lived in relation, direct or ultimate, to the Five Books of Moses). The library of texts is vast. The record of history is complex. Jews did not live or read Torah in only one way. Hence the need for "laborious" presentation of our "language and literature." Nor can we act authentically if we decide in advance what we need to find when we turn to the Jewish past – a particular position on abortion or social policy, for example, or a particular theory of creation or gender difference – and then rummage through the tradition until we find it, at which point we

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"The Builders"] in Nahum N. Glatzer, ed., *Franz Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, New York: Schocken Books, 1976, pp. 234–42; and to Arnold Eisen, *Taking Hold of Torah*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, pp. 28–34.

triumphantly proclaim this position “Judaism.” That is why our search must be “aimless.”

Second, we require *community*. Recall the MacIntyre-Rosenak elements of practices and narratives, both of which are *collective*; no less important, recall Berger’s insistence that “plausibility” requires “plausibility structures.” No belief or practice can successfully claim *prima facie* plausibility if it is not shared by at least some of the people around me. One normally comes to trust in revelation, Rosenzweig seems to argue in *The Star of Redemption*, not from some neutral point of objective consideration but from inside the narratives and practices of a community.<sup>22</sup> One is unable to hope for the eventual triumph of Judaism’s vision of the good, or even proximate victories on the road to that ultimate outcome, unless individual agency is joined to the willing activity of others committed to the same end and the same means to it. Finally, in order for the conversation begun (according to the Torah) at Mount Sinai to proceed honestly and effectively in any present day, and certainly in ours, Jews must engage in it with people whom we trust enough to listen when they tell us we are wrong.

Because Jews do not believe or practice Torah in only one way, it follows that there must be both one overarching Jewish community and a plurality of Jewish communities within it, distinct from the others yet recognizing commonality with them. The particular versions of the story must all fit themselves into a larger story that includes them all. This is a necessary if formidable task for Jewish educators to undertake, all the more difficult because the vast majority of Jews will no longer live inside Jewish communities exclusively. But they must live inside them to an important degree if Jewish education is to prove persuasive to any degree.

Third – a further requirement of “plausibility” – there is the basic need for *times and spaces* designed for, and hospitable to, Jewish practices and stories rather than others. No tradition can survive or thrive without a calendar. If there is only September-October but not Tishre and High Holy Days, if there is only Easter but not Passover, Christmas but not Hanukkah, if the New Year means parties and fairly banal resolutions for self-improvement but not a “thick” accounting of a moral self and

22 See the persuasive case made for this position by Leora Batnitzky in “The Philosophical Import of Carnal Israel: Hermeneutics and the Structure of Rosenzweig’s *Star*,” *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 9; 1999: 127–153.

its need for *teshuvah* – then one cannot walk the path of Torah or learn to walk it. Israelis too move largely to non-Jewish rhythms. Diaspora Jews, unless they belong to segregated ultra-Orthodox communities, must expend great efforts to construct and maintain vibrant Jewish spaces and potent Jewish times.

Fourth – equivalent to much of what Rosenak includes under “language and literature” – there is what I term for similar reasons the “*language and grammar*” of Jewish commitment. “Grammar” is an appealing metaphor to me because grammar puts the words into action by connecting them one with another. It points to the many ways in which Judaism is a collective rather than an individualist tradition, and is one of praxis – actions and their meanings – rather than of ideas alone. One should not under-emphasize the importance of ideas, of course, a potent source of Jewish survival (and of anti-Semitic) opposition over the centuries, and still such a source today. Language too, the words themselves, matter enormously. Not only do the words we speak reflect and shape the concepts in our minds. (Think of the obvious disparity between “*tzedakah*” and “charity.”) Certain things will never occur to us if we do not have the language to describe them. Words can sometimes call experience into being. Every Jewish community before those of the modern Diaspora had a Jewish language in addition to the language of its surroundings. The lack of such a language has limited the ability of many American Jews – and their teachers – to think and act authentically as Jews, and the lack of such thinking and action has reduced our ability to imagine those syntheses between Judaism and other cultures which in the past have proven so important both to Judaism and to the cultures with which Jews have interacted.

Finally, and most controversially, there is *God*. Rosenak’s objective, we recall, is a theory of Jewish *religious* education, but even he does not seem to place God at the very center of Jewish educational conversation, just as God has for centuries not been the primary subject of either *halakhah* or *aggadah*. The encounter with Jewish tradition, one should stress in any educational situation resembling the one described in the first part of this paper, need not start or end with God, because that tradition, no matter what the educational situation in which Jews found themselves, has always encompassed far more than God, and likely always will. It may in fact be advisable for Jews, children or adults, to suspend their problems with God for a time as they draw near to the Torah and to the tradition more generally. One of my objectives

in writing *Rethinking Modern Judaism* was to persuade its readers that some of the obstacles to traditional practice or belief which they believe are theological or religious in nature are in fact functions of their political situation as a minority, or their intuitive conceptions of modernity or ritual, or their self-image as perennial “seekers,” or their disinclination, not always conscious, to obey authority or surrender options. These obstacles can block the way to hearing the stories and engaging in the practices from within which God and the eternal questions surrounding God can be addressed. It helps to bear in mind, I think, that the aim of Jewish education is not to produce Jews (i.e., believers in X or observers of Y), but to produce Jewish human beings; in Rosenzweig’s term, the point is not thought about God or Judaism, from a distance, but the living of Jewish life.

The question of God must be faced sooner or later, however, because we seek continuity with a tradition whose every strand until the late 19th century took God very seriously, yet we stand within a modern, secular culture which frames the many questions faith in terms of challenges posed by science, history and rationality. All Jewish educators, religious or not, bear the brunt of the widespread identification of “Jewish” with “Judaism, a religion parallel to Christianity and Islam.” Jewish religious educators of course must face the matter directly all the time. It may help to remind students of all ages that Jewish ancestors, being human, were not all believers, certainly not all the time, and their descendants won’t be either, whether because of the Holocaust, modernity or feminism; Darwin, Einstein or Freud; or the troubling givens of the human condition. It is important, I think, that young people (or not-so-young people) who see the need to proclaim before any teacher of Torah that they “do not believe in God” first be asked which God it is, exactly, in which they do not believe. It is still more urgent that they hear – really hear – that previous generations had held onto faith (itself meaning many different things) in many different conceptions of God, and may have at times doubted all of them. They should understand, in any explicit-and-implicit educational setting, that the teacher respectfully understands why faith is perhaps especially difficult today – why when all is said and done it remains “faith,” trust, a leap beyond certainty.

However, I think we also owe students the conviction, once space has been opened by these “moves” for hearing it, that if they are to maintain a living relation to the conversation of Jewish tradition – whether that relation is “religious” or not – they must at the very least



not dismiss the “ultimate concern” of every generation before ours as wish-fulfillment, or adolescent longing, or an anachronism easily and thankfully overcome by modern science. They must rather wrestle with the God of Israel, the God – according to one possible etymology of our name – of the “God-wrestler.” Moreover, if our aim is a theory of *religious* Jewish education, we dare not deprive students of the serious attention, the sophisticated thought, the passionate soul-searching, given in our tradition to the ultimate questions which have been asked and answered in some form by every culture before ours (and still resound, in America at least, in the beliefs and practices of close to 90% of the population). We need to talk with them about God, and if possible to humbly model wrestling with God.

The American Jews interviewed and surveyed for *The Jew Within*, as I noted earlier, expressed widespread belief in God either as personal being or impersonal force in the world or both (they are under no pressure to decide the matter, not being theologians).<sup>23</sup> Nearly universally they stated profound interest in the question of God, albeit without the learning, Jewish or general, to address it satisfactorily. With rare exceptions, however, they did not express belief in the God of Israel who features in every Jewish prayerbook, whether Reform, Conservative, Orthodox or Reconstructionist. They do not seem to believe in a God who split the Red Sea and revealed the Torah at Sinai; nor do they seem to believe in a God who displays special concern for the people Israel or will send that people a messiah at the start of the end of days. Their God is rather universalist and personal. In part, of course, the obstacle to the beliefs they do not hold is modern scientific and historical consciousness. Science seems to preclude miracles. Archeology and history fail to corroborate the biblical account. Children and adults alike are rarely familiar with the many attempts by modern Jewish (and Christian) thinkers to resolve or get around these issues, which is unfortunate, though evidence from both “elite” thinkers and Jewish “laypeople” indicates that the inability to provide convincing answers does not by any means foreclose participation in the conversation of Torah once one has become engaged in the stories and practices of a vibrant Jewish community. Indeed, modern problems with “traditional

23 See Cohen and Eisen, *The Jew Within*, ch. 7.

belief and practice” and the effort to overcome those problems has come to furnish much of the conversation’s very substance, and not only among learned elites. How *are* we to understand Jewish messianism? What *should* we do with the account of the Exodus? How *can* we retain continuity with a patriarchal tradition yet demand full participation in it for women? Debates on matters such as these not only fracture the Jewish community and pose serious challenges to the various religious denominations, but – arguably – enliven Jews’ encounter with their tradition and demonstrate that tradition’s vitality.

I shall focus in the remainder of this essay on the issue most directly related to any notion of the Jewish conversation which seeks to describe the tradition – as Rosenak and I do, joining a long list of modern Jewish thinkers of all denominational persuasions – as divine as well as human *covenant*. How shall Jewish educators bring students to see themselves as commanded? How can one persuasively and credibly teach that God is a Commander? How does one educate in, for, and to the responsibilities of covenant?

### III. Mitzvah: Commander, Commandment and Commandedness

Rosenak takes up this issue in *Roads to the Palace* in the course of a long and extremely rich discussion of the idea of *yir’at shamayim*, “the fear of Heaven,” and how to teach that idea. I have discussed it briefly in my book, *Taking Hold of Torah*.

Rather than attempt a summary of Rosenak’s presentation, I shall proceed directly to my own. The question before us is how – given the educational situation described in part one of this paper, and the educational objectives outlined in part two – one gets around the fact that many Jewish students, of all ages and all backgrounds, have apparently insuperable difficulties with the notion that God *commands* them. How are we to engage Jews in the observance of specific practices regarded not merely as “rituals” or as “folkways” but as *commandments*?

My answer draws on Rosenzweig and other Jewish thinkers as well as upon Charles Taylor’s suggestion, in *Sources of the Self*, that in the absence of conclusive, foundational arguments on behalf of a theory or practice, we try to show that it inheres in beliefs which people already hold and in practices that they already perform. Taylor tries to uncover

assumptions about identity taken for granted by modern selves.<sup>24</sup> I shall try to uncover evidence of accepted obligation – commandedness – which I believe is widespread among American Jews. Let us describe, then, two ways of “arriving at Sinai,” one which I call a path proceeding entirely “from our side,” the other proceeding, in part, from God’s.<sup>25</sup>

We begin with the sort of ethical responsibilities outlined on the “second” of the two tablets received by Moses in the Torah’s account, those which involve reciprocal obligations (in the rabbis’ words) between one human being and another. These five of the ten commandments enforce a social contract that is very nearly universal precisely because it is basic to every societal arrangement. God need not be invoked in order to justify contemporary acceptance of such obligations, however inconceivable it might be to the Torah to imagine justice in the absence of the “Judge of all the world.” People can and do undertake these obligations on other than religious grounds. They recognize commandments, obligations, that exist independently of this recognition, and believe it the right and duty of society to punish transgressors even if the latter reject the legitimacy of the command or its commander (society, government).

Next, we can draw upon widespread agreement that none of us lives simply as a human being in general, or only as a member of a particular society such as America, bound to its laws by implicit social contract. “Our side” to Sinai includes also those dense frameworks for life that we moderns normally separate out as culture or community and which in Jewish tradition are wrapped up in God’s design for the people Israel. All of us start life in a family and a local community of some sort as well as in a nation-state and a world. The former frameworks inevitably carry and generate obligations as they endow us and sustain us with meaning. The Torah insists upon these super-ethical obligations in its fifth commandment: respect for parents, which bridges the two tablets. It presumes, in agreement with the communitarian philosopher Michael Sandel, that the term “community” connotes

allegiances [that] go beyond the obligations I voluntarily incur and the “natural duties” I owe to human beings as such [...]. To some I owe more than justice requires or even permits [...] in virtue of

24 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989, ch. 1.

25 See Eisen, *Taking Hold of Torah*, pp. 46–67.

those more or less enduring attachments and commitments which taken together partly define the person I am.<sup>26</sup>

The choices we make as we go through life build upon those presented to us before we choose, and our choices come with further obligations in tow. We have special responsibilities to family, friends and community, and find meaning in and through those relations as well as through the exercise of the responsibilities which flow from them. If all works as it should, grudging performance of mere duty is transformed into enthusiastic acts of love. Most people recognize the legitimacy of such obligations, and regularly respond with willing performance of the requisite duties. They feel commanded to perform these more-than-ethical commandments. Most would also agree, in adult maturity, that such duties bind them even when enthusiasm is lacking. Once again, obligations to parents and children are the most obvious examples. One might even speculate, in a midrash closely attuned to the *peshat* of the Torah, that the fifth commandment commands respect for parents, and not care for children, precisely because the latter is as a rule (though not always) more enthusiastically, and less ambivalently, undertaken.

Jews are a community bound by this sort of mutual obligation; indeed they have been conceived by Jewish tradition as a widely-extended family, the “children of Israel.” They are members of one people, emerge from the same history, are subject to the same fate, and derive meaning from (versions of) the same story and (selections from among) the same set of practices. They maintain their collective story and their shared practice by huge common effort. However one understands Jewish peoplehood, and whether one regards its common history, fate, story and practices as objectively given or (in the post-modern manner) as an imaginative construction voluntarily appropriated by those who choose to do so, Jewish commonalty stands before individual Jews as an accepted source of obligation. To some degree or other (albeit to a shrinking degree) most affirm the Talmudic dictum that “all Jews are responsible to one another.” To a still larger degree, they act as if they do accept this dictum, accepting responsibility for at least some Jews, whether in supporting Israel, making contributions to a host of Jewish organizations, or devoting volunteer hours to any number of Jewish causes.

26 Ibid., p. 50; see Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 179.

The final step in the approach to covenant “from our side” is the recognition that communities survive and thrive, not merely physically but spiritually, only if their members make the sacrifices required to *maintain the institutions* which are necessary to transmit story and practice, history and language. This is all the more true of a minority tradition such as Judaism. If one accepts and is grateful for that tradition, does one not incur an obligation to make sure that it reaches others in a form compelling to them? If one is committed to Jewish survival – even if only as an option which can be freely accepted or rejected by individual, “sovereign” selves – must one not pledge fealty as well to the means required to secure the instruments of its enduring distinctiveness? Many Jews light candles on Friday night or conduct Passover seders or attend synagogue, in whole or in part out of this sort of felt obligation to transmit what they have received. They pledge allegiance not to a commanding God but to a community and its tradition, expressing faith in the ultimate meaning to be secured by living in the framework defined at Sinai and passing on that framework to future generations. They may understand the fourth commandment, Shabbat, in precisely this sense, and regard the meaning of the remaining three commandments, the first three, as a subject for lifelong conversation of great meaning – one which sometimes leads to faith in the God who commands that conversation in the first of the ten “words.” Others, however, take pride in Jewish achievement – for example, in the Jewish ethical tradition that has prompted so much work on behalf of social justice, or the Jewish intellectual tradition which has stimulated so many scientists and artists – but as yet see no obligation to help maintain the practices, or transmit the teachings, which have enabled that tradition to survive and reach them in its present form. I believe that they can be brought to accept that obligation, and to take seriously the encounter with God that is a part of it. They do accept such reciprocity in other areas of their lives. One receives and accepts the obligation to give back. This sense of obligation out of gratitude can be taught. It comprises much of the content of education to covenant.

One is on firm “explicit” ground, I think, and not merely teaching “implicitly,” in maintaining that Jews have never predicated commandment on any one formulation of belief in the Commander; Heschel’s great work, *Torah Min-Hashyamim*,<sup>27</sup> gathers hundreds of sources from rabbinic and

27 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Torah Min-Hashamayim Be-Aspekariya Shel Ha-Dorot*

later sources in order to argue (1) that authentic Jewish commitment stands or falls on the belief in “Torah from Heaven”; and (2) that Jews have never agreed on what belief in Torah from Heaven actually means or entails.<sup>28</sup> It is true that all the sources gathered by Heschel assume some sort of divine communication to the Jewish people via its prophets and sages. But Jews today can and do participate fully in the covenant, and understand covenant as commandment, without departing from or even arriving at belief in a divine origin for Torah – a Commander in the traditional (or perhaps one should say: the popular) sense. My own inquiries into these matters confirm Rosenzweig’s intuition that Jews throughout the ages, if pressed, would have given revelation as the ultimate reason for their adherence to the Torah, but required no such rationale for what was quite simply the way Jews lived. Torah conferred a life so rich and meaningful that one could not have wished for any other.<sup>29</sup>

Other Jews, however, do approach covenant initially or in large part “from God’s side.” This can mean: out of a firm conviction that God wants this from them as Jewish human beings. Or it can mean: out of experiences of gratitude or blessing, of challenge or of terror, that confirm God’s presence in the world and call upon them to live accordingly. Or it can mean: conviction that the Torah conveys true knowledge of God’s will, communicated via Moses’ prophecy or the sages’ inspiration. For many contemporary Jews, God’s presence in the world and in their lives is simply axiomatic. God is simply there, sometimes more than they would have wished. For others, however, engagement with God has remained episodic, and the pursuit of God has at times proved frustrating. God is in the world, as Jacob says, but they do not know it. And then, all of a sudden, they do. The recognition comes in boundary moments of birth and death, or in perceptions of nature as a wondrous whole, or in intimations of transcendence in history, or in flashes of discernment that

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[Theology of Ancient Judaism], Vols. 1-2, London: Soncino, 1962, 1965; Vol. 3, Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1970. An English selection and translation has just appeared: Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Heavenly Torah as Refracted Through the Generations*, ed. and trans. Gordon Tucker, New York: Continuum Press, 2005.

28 Arnold Eisen, “Re-reading Heschel on the Commandments”, *Modern Judaism* 9:1 (February 1989), pp. 1–33.

29 Rosenzweig, “Teaching and Law,” pp. 239–40.

light up texts they read or actions they perform. Afterwards such moments refuse to be snuffed out by counter-experiences of meaninglessness or by rational analysis that explains them away. Rather, as Buber nicely puts it, they “abide in astonishment.” Or, as Heschel put it, they have been opened to the wonder of the “ineffable” – and have then managed to “tell it to their minds.”<sup>30</sup> They then want to hear, need to hear, what God requires of them (I leave aside here the vexing questions of what that is, and how we know what it is).

The passage to “taking on the yoke of the commandments” from either “side” may well begin, then, with recognition of the degree to which one *already* is commanded; the fact of this commandedness, and commitment to persist in it while investigating its meaning, may well lead to acknowledgement of a communal or even a divine commander. If we inquire, again following Rosenzweig’s lead, into what actual authorities command Jews all the while they are in search of the ultimate authority whom they never seem to find (and perhaps do not entirely wish to find), we can identify at least five such sources of authority among elite thinkers and “laypeople” alike.<sup>31</sup> (1) Socially-constructed authority; the confirmations provided by political, societal, familial, linguistic and even architectural “plausibility structures”; the social realities strong enough to withstand the countervailing pressures toward assimilation. The mysterious survival of the Jewish people over the millennia, and the remarkable creation of the State of Israel, likely function as plausibility structures of this sort. They offer powerful confirmations that the path of Torah is not ephemeral or trivial, but an enduring matter of great importance, worthy of adherence, *commanding* adherence. Nearly every Jewish classroom, if it connects past to present in a life fashion, creates or strengthens this sense of Jewish commandedness. (2) Religious experiences, or “signals of transcendence” (Berger’s term) not given a strictly religious interpretation, but which carry with them the felt commandment to order one’s life in a way commensurate with the profundity of the experience or with the presence of God it has made visible. At its best, education can itself on occasion be the site of such experiences. But it can also summon them to consciousness, reveal

30 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Man is Not Alone*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995, p. 71; Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958, pp. 75–77.

31 See Eisen, *Rethinking Modern Judaism*, pp. 212–215.

them to be shared rather than personal, endow them with language that shapes memory and future experience. (3) The awareness of meaning as such, of significance in life that is much larger than oneself. Such meaning in the modern world possesses its own charisma, because it is so scarce. One clings to any ground one can, once the void has opened up in the near distance. More human beings than we know live in close proximity to this void and have experienced its terrors. The meaning which protects them from the void carries with it a commandment they cannot but obey: "Choose life. Choose blessing. Choose the good." Both the void and the imperative are carried by students into many Jewish classrooms. (4) Community possesses authority over and above its function as plausibility structure. One owes obligations to the group which provides one with so much meaning, which as a worldwide people is achieving such remarkable things, and which as an "eternal people" existing for three millennia constitutes a chain one dare not break. Jewish educators need to teach students of all ages about the history and sociology of Jewish communities, and to help students identify with them by making the classroom itself a small Jewish community in which more than knowledge is exchanged and more than homework assignments are shared. (5) The search for immortality, which may well be the source of the ancestors' ability to command us to follow in their footsteps. Joining with them, we seek (and, in one sense at least, explored in greatest depth by Rosenzweig in part three of *The Star of Redemption*) we attain it.

Only Yeshayahu Leibowitz among the set of leading modern Jewish thinkers would have maintained (rather perversely, in my view) that the meaning conferred on the self by performance of a commandment, or the hope for the reward accruing to the self as a result of that performance, somehow invalidates the behavior's ability to count as obedience to the covenant. Whatever one's views on the status of actions done out of complex combinations of motives rather than purely because "it is my duty" or "God has commanded me to do this," it seems a mistaken educational policy to restrict the notion of commandment urged upon students to "distinctive Jewish behaviors, numbered among the 613 listed in the medieval Codes, undertaken by Jews in the belief that they derive from God's word to Moses at Sinai." I say this not as a partisan of "deliberative-inductive" or "implicit" education but merely in recognition of the fact that Jewish practice, like everything else in life, is over-determined. Commandments are observed because of multiple and complex motivations, many of which will be unknown to the actors



let alone to third parties. Commandments offer meanings, “scripted” or spontaneous, collective or personal, which cannot be separated from the official set of “meanings of the commandments” or from the manner in which they are “heard” and “obeyed” *as* commandment, and perhaps heard and obeyed as the “word” of the Commander. Jewish religious educators, alert to these complexities, should be able to do a better job of conveying to students of varying ages, learning and sophistication *both* of the two paths which lead to Sinai. They could also give a fuller account than is normally provided of the multiplicity of paths for Jewish life under the covenant which lead *away from* Sinai, as it were; the “patterns for living” (Heschel’s term) which are commonly adopted once the responsibilities of covenant to fellow Jews and to God have been accepted as commanding.

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Successful Jewish religious education, Rosenak concludes, results in students who “have been given a language with which to speak, and now they may make some literature on their own. They have been educated. They are on a road to the palace” (RP, p. 276). Teachers inspired and directed by Rosenak’s teaching can help students to know as well that the palace needs the particular road which they must maintain, can only maintain, by actually walking it, that the Torah can only reach others as a live option available for the hearing if they find and transmit the words which they, possessed of a unique capabilities in a unique situation, will be uniquely equipped by Jewish learning to utter. Like Rosenak, I think it fatal for Jewish educators of any persuasion to minimize the obstacles posed by individualism, ignorance of the tradition’s complexity and the absence of strong Jewish communities to education for the covenant, and that it would be equally dangerous to ignore the contribution which the present culture can make, in the best of classrooms, to that very same education. Jewish educators have seen much worse in the course of Jewish history, and can certainly do much better than we are doing at present.