# Recent Trends in American Judaism

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THE DECADE OF THE 1980S HAS witnessed a series of acrimonious confrontations between the leaders of various religious denominations within American Jewry. Some observers have voiced concern that American Jewry will soon be riven into contending camps that do not recognize each other's legitimacy as Jews. Others maintain that such a polarization has already come to pass; that a deep divide separates Orthodox from non-Orthodox Jews, with only a relatively small population of modern-Orthodox and right-wing Conservative Jews seeking to bridge the divide. And still others view the present confrontations as merely a passing stage in the continuing evolution of a distinctly American version of Judaism.[1]

This article seeks to go beyond the headline-making clashes between leaders of Jewish religious denominations in order to evaluate the state of contemporary Jewish religious life. It probes the following matters, among others: How do patterns of religious observance today compare with those of the recent past? What are the major concerns of the Jewish laity, and how have the rabbinic elites responded to these concerns? What new rituals and religious forms have captured the imagination of Jews in recent decades? What conclusions may be drawn about the condition of Judaism in the United States today?

The time period under discussion spans the two decades from the late 1960s to the late 1980s. This has been an era of perceptible change in patterns of behavior among American Jews, particularly in the religious sphere. Beginning in the mid-1960s, the agenda of American Jewish life shifted significantly in the wake of new social trends and reassessed priorities. In short, the changing character of Jewish life in America necessitated shifts within organized religious institutions, which in turn set off new chains of events. To set into bolder relief the far-reaching shifts that have occurred of late in the religious sphere, it would be well to begin with a brief consideration of Jewish religious life in the middle decades of the 20th century.

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[1]For different assessments of American Jewish religious polarization, see the statements by Steven M. Cohen and Irving Greenberg in "The One in 2000 Controversy," *Moment*, Mar. 1987, pp. 11–22.

## MIDCENTURY GROWTH

The dominant characteristic of American Jewish life between 1940 and 1965 was numerical growth. Jews, like the larger American population, participated in a baby boom. As the Great Depression eased and veterans returned from World War II, Americans married in record numbers and began families. For Jews, this boom was propelled by the children and grandchildren of immigrants from Eastern Europe who had come to America in ever-swelling numbers between 1880 and the outbreak of World War I. Never before in the history of American Jewry had such a vast age cohort begun families in so short a span of time.

Simultaneously, large numbers of young Jewish families joined in the general American exodus to suburbia, an uncharted area devoid of Jewish institutions. This relocation represented not only a move from city to suburb, but also a departure from Jewish neighborhoods to settings populated mainly by Gentiles. Jews also began to move in substantial numbers to geographic regions of the United States that previously had only small Jewish communities, most notably southern California. These two developments—a burgeoning population and a major geographic shift—spurred the growth of religious institutions to provide prayer services and educational programs.[2]

The young families moving to suburbia in the 1940s and early 1950s often had only scant exposure to synagogue life prior to their move. Overwhelmingly second- and third-generation descendants of East European Jews, they had grown up either in homes where Judaism was taken for granted and Americanization had been given highest priority, or in socialist homes which rejected most religious practices. To be a Jew was primarily a matter of association with fellow Jews, not a conscious act of affiliation with a synagogue.[3]

This changed in the 1940s due to several factors: (1) When Jewish veterans returned from the war, they were eager to participate in the same kind of Americanized religious services that they had encountered in military chapels—services lead by an American-trained rabbi, who worked with a liturgy that incorporated both traditional and English readings. Hence, returning Jewish veterans were receptive to the program of evolving suburban synagogues.[4] (2) After moving to suburbia, transplanted Jewish urban-

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[2]For a contemporaneous account of the Jewish move to suburbia, see Albert Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia* (Boston, 1959). On the geographic relocation of American Jews in the postwar era, see Marshall Sklare, *America's Jews* (New York, 1971), pp. 44–47.

[3]For an extended discussion of the Jewish associationalism that characterized second-generation Jews, see Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York, 1981).

[4]The role of World War II in the Americanization of second-generation Jews and their Judaism has been insufficiently appreciated. Two essays written shortly after the war that

ites found themselves lonely for Jewish companionship. They looked to the synagogue to provide them with a network of Jewish friends and peers—a surrogate for the Jewish neighborhood. As one promotional leaflet stated: "The community needs a place for our children and we adults need some place to carry on our social lives. What better place can there be than our synagogues?"[5] (3) In the absence of a Jewish neighborhood where youngsters were socialized in Jewish customs and behaviors through a process of osmosis, it became necessary for parents to affiliate with a synagogue that would provide a formal Jewish education.[6] (4) Involvement in building a synagogue and sending children to a synagogue school were means for these Jews to participate in the larger revival of institutional religion that characterized midcentury America. By participating in seemingly parochial activities within their synagogues, these Jews were acting as quintessential midcentury Americans.[7]

The quarter century from 1940 to 1965 was a boom period in the establishment and construction of new Jewish religious institutions. The United Synagogue of America, Conservative Judaism's organization of synagogues, increased its affiliates from approximately 350 at the conclusion of World War II to 800 by 1965, with as many as 131 new congregations joining in a two-year period of the mid-1950s.[8] Similarly, the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations boasted 664 congregations in 1966 compared to 334 in 1948. In the mid-1950s, 50 new congregations joined the UAHC within a two-year period.[9] Orthodox synagogues also experienced a period of growth as Young Israel branches and other modern Orthodox congregations sprang up in newly emerging urban and suburban areas.[10]

Not only were hundreds of new congregations established, but existing ones experienced unparalleled growth. It now became common for syna-

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emphasize this point are Abraham Duker, "On Religious Trends in American Life," *YIVO Annual*, vol. 4, 1949, p. 63; and Moses Kligsberg, "American Jewish Soldiers on Jews and Judaism," *YIVO Annual*, vol. 5, 1950, pp. 256–65. The latter emphasizes anti-Semitism in the military as a factor promoting chapel attendance by servicemen and women.

[5]Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*, p. 98.

[6]There is ample evidence from this period, in synagogue brochures as well as survey responses, that parents regarded the synagogue as primarily a vehicle for the education of youth. See, for example, Leonard Fein et al., *Reform Is a Verb* (New York, 1972), p. 90; and Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier: A Study of Group Survival in an Open Society* (Chicago, 1967), p. 190.

[7]See Sklare and Greenblum, *Jewish Identity*, chap. 5.

[8]For congregational growth in the Conservative movement, see the *Biennial Reports of the United Synagogue of America*—1952, p. 52; 1957, p. 97; 1959, p. 140; 1961, p. 3; 1963, pp. 184–85; 1965, p. 6.

[9]On the growth of the UAHC, see Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism* (San Francisco, 1984), pp. 71, 198.

[10]On the spread of Orthodox synagogues, see Charles Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," AJYB 1965, vol. 66, pp. 22–40, 59–60.

gogues to serve thousands of members. In 1937, the largest Reform temples numbered 500–800 families and only a half dozen had passed the 1,000-family mark. By 1963, 20 had passed the 1,400-family mark and a few exceeded 2,500 families.[11] Although Conservative, and especially Orthodox, synagogues rarely attracted such large membership bases, they too expanded dramatically.

The explosive growth of synagogues was matched by an equally dramatic expansion of synagogue schools. Enrollment figures demonstrate this clearly: in 1940, approximately 190,000 children attended Jewish schools; this figure rose to 231,028 in 1946; and then doubled to 488,432 by 1956; by the early 1960s, enrollments peaked at approximately 590,000. All in all, the number of young Jews attending Jewish schools tripled between the early 1940s and early 1960s. The vast majority of these children attended synagogue-based schools; only 8 percent were enrolled in intercongregational or noncongregational schools in 1962.[12]

There were important variations in the type of schooling adopted by the religious movements. Reform continued its earlier policy of emphasizing Sunday school, i.e., one-day-a-week education. In the peak years of the early 1960s, 60 percent of Sunday schools were under Reform auspices, 25 percent under Conservative auspices, and fewer than 10 percent under Orthodox auspices. By contrast, Conservative synagogues invested heavily in Hebrew-school education, i.e., schools that required attendance several times a week, usually on three separate days. In 1962, half the Hebrew schools were sponsored in Conservative synagogues, almost a quarter by Orthodox ones, and 13 percent by Reform temples. Within the Orthodox movement, the pattern was more complex. The figures cited above illustrate that Orthodox synagogues continued to sponsor Sunday schools as well as Hebrew schools. But in the postwar era, growing numbers of Orthodox Jews opted for education outside the synagogue in intensive all-day schools. The shift was especially dramatic outside of New York City where day schools grew from barely a handful in 1940 to 107 in 1959. Significantly, 85 percent of all day schools in America were under Orthodox auspices in 1962, even though close to one-third of their pupils were drawn from non-Orthodox homes.[13]

There were several important consequences of this rapid growth of synagogues and synagogue schools. First, there were insufficient numbers of personnel to staff them. It was estimated in 1962 that some 3,000 additional

[11]Jacob K. Shankman, "The Changing Role of the Rabbi," in *Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Bertram W. Korn (New York, 1965), p. 246.

[12]Enrollment figures are taken from: Uriah Z. Engelman, "Educational and Cultural Activities," AJYB 1946–1947, vol. 48, p. 137; idem, "Jewish Education," AJYB 1963, vol. 64, pp. 152–53; and Walter Ackerman, "Jewish Education," in *Movements and Issues in American Judaism*, ed. Bernard Martin (Westport, Conn., 1978), p. 196.

[13]Engelman, AJYB 1963, pp. 152–53, 161–62.

rabbis and educators were needed to meet the growing institutional needs of American Jews.[14] The dearth of trained rabbis and educators limited the effectiveness of synagogue and educational programs at a time when Jews were joining institutions in record numbers. Second, the massive growth in the population of children reshaped the priorities of synagogues, with large percentages of synagogue budgets going to schooling. In Conservative synagogues, for example, education absorbed over a quarter of synagogue budgets, an allocation second only to the cost of salaries for personnel.[15] This represented a dramatic change from earlier models of synagogue life in which children played little role, and where most activity was focused on the needs of adult men. Now the synagogue was viewed as the primary vehicle for the socialization and education of young people in the ways of Judaism. Rabbis and teachers—and by extension, the synagogue—were assigned a role *in loco parentis*, as substitute Jewish role models.[16] Third, synagogues used their schools as a means to increase membership. Often, congregations did not even charge tuition, but rather financed their schools through membership dues—a strategy that, in the short run, compelled parents to join congregations if they wished to educate their children and have them celebrate a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, but that also resulted in parents dropping their membership once their youngest child had completed his or her Jewish education.[17]

## *Conservatism*

The expansive growth of religious institutions benefited all of the major Jewish religious movements, with Conservative Judaism being the greatest beneficiary. Not only did the number of Conservative congregations double in this period but Conservatism was the preferred religious self-identification of a plurality of American Jews.[18] This was not necessarily a matter of

[14]Freda Imrey, "Religion," AJYB 1963, vol. 64, p. 146.

[15]"Survey of Synagogue Finances," issued by the Department of Synagogue Administration, United Synagogue of America, Nov. 1963, p. 21.

[16]Many observers of Jewish life have remarked about the reliance of parents on the synagogue, rather than the home, to provide Jewish identity and knowledge to children. The frustration of rabbis over this state of affairs was summed up in Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg's cynical quip that the synagogue in America is "to a large degree, a parent-teacher association of the religious school." Quoted in Carolyn L. Wiener, "A Merger of Synagogues in San Francisco," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Dec. 1972, p. 189.

[17]On the relationship between synagogue schools and congregational membership, see Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (Glencoe, Ill., 1955), p. 77ff.

[18]*Jewish Identity: Facts for Planning*, Council of Jewish Federations, Dec. 1974, pp. 2–4. Local surveys also bore out these findings for many communities. See, for example, Sidney Goldstein and Calvin Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans: Three Generations in a Jewish Community* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), pp. 176–77.

ideological commitment, as the most astute sociologist of the time noted already in the early 1950s, but rather a decision to opt for a moderate compromise between the extremes of Orthodoxy and Reform.[19] Jewish men serving in the military during World War II had been exposed to an essentially Conservative worship service, even though most Jewish chaplains were not Conservative rabbis, because such a service was deemed most appropriate to the spectrum of Jews in the military. When these veterans returned to found new synagogues in the suburbs, they generally opted for Conservative synagogues as a fair compromise.[20] As one synagogue organizer put it, "We figured that the Conservative [synagogue] was 'middle of the road,' and would not offend any group in the community. So we called it a Conservative congregation."[21]

While only a minority of synagogue members adhered to the religious commitments of the Conservative movement, significant numbers were attracted to specific programs offered by Conservative synagogues: principally, the more intensive schooling offered by Hebrew schools as compared to Sunday schools; but also the Conservative worship service that combined a high degree of fidelity to the traditional liturgy with innovations deemed appropriate to midcentury America; and a lavish panoply of social and recreational programs that Conservative synagogues sponsored more readily than their Reform or Orthodox counterparts.[22]

To meet the needs of Conservative youth, the Jewish Theological Seminary in conjunction with other arms of the Conservative movement founded the Ramah summer camps in 1948.[23] During the 1950s and 1960s, the Conservative leadership began to invest systematically in day schools, creating a network of 15 by 1961.[24] It was symptomatic of Conservative Judaism's self-confidence that it founded an international arm (the World Council of Synagogues) in November 1957, and in the 1960s developed a rabbinical seminary (the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano) to serve Latin American Jewry.[25]

Steps were also taken to clarify the movement's ideological stance. The

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[19]See Sklare, *Conservative Judaism*, passim.

[20]At the conclusion of World War II, Philip Bernstein wrote that Jewish chaplains subordinated their ideologies to the needs of Jewish soldiers. "This led to more observance of tradition by the Reform, a liberalization of the Orthodox, and an expansion of Conservatism." See "Jewish Chaplains in World War II," AJYB 1945–1946, vol. 47, p. 174.

[21]Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*, p. 97.

[22]Jack Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue," in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York, 1987), pp. 111–47.

[23]Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "Camp Ramah: The Early Years, 1947–52," *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1987, pp. 12–42.

[24]Walter Ackerman, "The Day School in the Conservative Movement," *Conservative Judaism*, Winter 1961, p. 50ff.

[25]Marc Tanenbaum, "Religion," AJYB 1959, vol. 60, p. 64.

Rabbinical Assembly, the organization of Conservative rabbis, for the first time endorsed a *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book* in 1946.[26] Two years later, relations between the Rabbinical Assembly and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America were revamped in a manner that gave wider latitude to the Conservative rabbinate's law committee. Within a short period, the law committee began to issue rulings on Halakhah (Jewish law) that departed significantly from Orthodox interpretations, most notably a ruling in the early 1950s concerning the permissibility of driving to a synagogue on the Sabbath.[27] Conservative leaders issued a series of volumes designed to disseminate information about their movement, most notably, Rabbi Mordechai Waxman's *Tradition and Change*, a compilation of ideological statements by prominent Conservative thinkers, Rabbi Moshe Davis's history of Conservative Judaism's origins, Evelyn Garfiel's guide to the prayer book, and various guides to the dietary laws and other observances, written by Rabbis Seymour Siegel and Samuel Dresner.[28] Gradually, rabbis and congregations managed to achieve a significant measure of uniformity in the practices of Conservative congregations, with mixed pews, mixed choirs, and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies for girls gaining wide, if not universal, currency.[29] All in all, the middle decades of the 20th century were a time of self-confidence for the Conservative movement.

## *Reform*

The same decades were a period of significant institutional growth for the Reform movement as well.[30] Throughout the postwar era, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations reported annual gains in new affiliates. Some of this growth resulted from deliberate efforts taken by the Reform movement to have a greater impact. Thus, in the late 1940s it launched an intensive campaign to "win the unaffiliated," a shift away from the policy of social exclusiveness that had characterized recruitment policies earlier in the 20th century.[31] The UAHC relocated from its former headquarters in

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[26]The prayer book was edited by Rabbi Morris Silverman under the direction of a joint committee of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of America, headed by Rabbi Robert Gordis.

[27]Sidney Schwarz, "Law and Legitimacy: An Intellectual History of Conservative Judaism, 1902–1973" (unpublished doctoral diss., Temple University, 1982), pp. 221–22, 255–56.

[28]Jacob Neusner, "Religion," AJYB 1960, vol. 61, p. 57.

[29]Morris S. Goodblatt, "Synagogue Ritual Survey," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly*, 1942, pp. 105–09.

[30]On the institutional growth of the Reform movement, see Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism*, pp. 71, 75, 198.

[31]Leon A. Jick, "The Reform Synagogue," in Wertheimer, ed., *The American Synagogue*, pp. 102–03.

Cincinnati to New York City, a move expressly designed to place the organization in the heartland of the American Jewish population.[32] Hebrew Union College expanded to reach new populations, merging with the Jewish Institute of Religion to create a New York school, establishing a Los Angeles branch in 1954, and opening a Jerusalem campus in 1963.

Under the leadership of Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath from 1943 to 1973, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations invested heavily in programs of social action. Eisendrath summed up his point of view in an interview when he received an award as clergyman of the year in 1959: Social action, he declared, "that's religion. The heart of religion concerns itself with man's relation to man." The Reform movement gave tangible expression to this concern in 1961, when it established a Religious Action Center, later renamed Social Action Center, in Washington, D.C. In the practical sphere, Reform rabbis assumed a leadership role in the movement to desegregate the South.[33]

Simultaneously, the Reform movement underwent important shifts in its approach to Jewish rituals. A survey conducted by the UAHC in the late 1940s found that virtually all responding congregations claimed to have moved toward "increased ritualism."[34] In a reversal of long-standing policy, congregations gradually permitted men to wear head coverings, if they so chose; and in a shift that had a broader impact, the Bar Mitzvah ceremony was reintroduced in virtually all temples. (It had earlier been rejected in favor of Confirmation services for older adolescents.) Congregations that had ushered in the New Year with trumpet blasts reverted to the traditional shofar, and cantors were hired to replace or supplement non-Jewish choirs. Studies of home observance indicated as well that members of Reform temples were more receptive to rituals such as candle lighting on Friday evenings and Hanukkah, as well as the celebration of the Passover Seder.[35]

This renewed interest in religious ritual engendered considerable soul-searching among the rabbinic elite of the Reform movement. In part, rabbis resented the pressures placed on them to reintroduce rituals that appealed to folk sentiments, e.g., the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, which now dominated Sabbath morning services. Equally important, the new turn to ritualism was regarded by many rabbis as a rejection of classical Reform ideology, an ideology that had attempted to purge Judaism of ceremonies that were seen as anachronistic. Typical of this view were remarks by Prof. Jacob Marcus

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[32]On the UAHC's relocation to New York, see Maurice Eisendrath, "The Union of American Hebrew Congregations: Centennial Reflections," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, Dec. 1973, pp. 144–45.

[33]Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism*, p. 73, and Neusner, AJYB 1960, pp. 55–56.

[34]Morris N. Kertzer, "Religion," AJYB 1952, vol. 53, p. 155.

[35]See Jick, "The Reform Synagogue," p. 104; Stephen Sharot, *Judaism: A Sociology* (New York, 1976) pp. 164–71; and Benjamin Efron and Alvan D. Rubin, "The Reality of Bar Mitzvah," *CCAR Journal*, Oct. 1960, pp. 31–33.

of the Hebrew Union College in a speech delivered in 1959: "There are today too many Reform Jews who have ceased to be liberals. Their Reform, crystallized into a new Orthodoxy, is no longer dynamic. Shocked by the Hitlerian catastrophe, many have turned their backs on the future to seek comfort in the nostalgia of a romanticized Jewish past which never existed. We cannot lead our people forward by stumbling backward."[36]

## *Orthodoxy*

The crucial factor shaping Orthodoxy at midcentury was an infusion of new energy and leadership brought about by the arrival of refugees from Nazi Europe. The newcomers arrived from diverse Jewish environments, ranging from the rationalist yeshivah world of Lithuania to the Levantine Jewish society of the Balkans, from the Westernized, acculturated Orthodox *Gemeinden* of Germany to the insulated, self-segregating communities of Hungary. They came not out of a desire for self-advancement in America but simply because their communities had been decimated by the Nazi death machine. They were filled with nostalgia for the rich Jewish lives they had known in the Old World, and they were intent on recreating much of that life on American soil. Some built self-segregated enclaves in urban settings or rural environs, such as Boro Park and Williamsburg in Brooklyn and New Skvare in Rockland County, N.Y.; some insisted on wearing distinctive garb and communicating mainly in Yiddish; and most regarded American innovations in religious life with contempt. They saw themselves as the embodiment of a now destroyed European Judaism, the only Judaism, they insisted, with a claim to authenticity.[37] Gradually, the new immigrants assumed important roles within all sectors of Orthodox society, serving as rabbinic authorities, charismatic holy men, teachers, ritual functionaries, and organizers.

The arrival of a strong traditionalist element prompted a more combative Orthodox posture in this period. The new assertiveness was signaled at a meeting of Orthodox rabbis in 1945 devoted to the banning and public burning of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan's *Sabbath Prayer Book*, a Reconstructionist *siddur*.[38] By the mid-1950s, there was a strong push for Orthodox self-segregation, much as it had existed in Europe. In a widely reported

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[36]The outlook of classical Reform was enunciated in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 and revised in the Columbus Platform of 1937. Marcus's address is quoted by Alan Tarshish, "How 'Central' is the CCAR?" *CCAR Journal*, Jan. 1960, p. 32.

[37]On the impact of Orthodox refugees from Nazism on American Orthodoxy, see Shubert Spero, "Orthodox Judaism," in Martin, ed., *Movements and Issues*, pp. 86–87; and Charles Liebman, "Religion, Class, and Culture in American Jewish Life," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Dec. 1967, pp. 239–40. A full analysis of this group's immigration history and impact on American Jews and Judaism is urgently needed.

[38]Joshua Trachtenberg, "Religious Activities," AJYB 1945–1946, vol. 47, pp. 216–17.

edict issued in 1956, 11 *roshei yeshivah*, heads of rabbinic academies of advanced study, joined by the leader of the Hassidic Lubavitch movement, issued a ban on Orthodox participation in rabbinic organizations that included non-Orthodox rabbis. This ban was designed to place pressure on American-trained rabbis, particularly alumni of Yeshiva University and the Hebrew Theological College, to withdraw from umbrella organizations such as the Synagogue Council of America and local boards of rabbis.[39] The Rabbinical Council of America, the organization of modern Orthodox rabbis, was thrown into turmoil by the decision, with its president supporting the ban, but the majority of the rank and file rejecting it. (They could do so because the revered leader of the modern Orthodox rabbinate, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, refused to sign the ban.) The issuance of the ban was symptomatic of the intention of the traditionalist leadership to pursue an exclusivist policy *vis à vis* the non-Orthodox community.[40]

The modern Orthodox community itself showed a more combative posture in these years. Rabbis affiliated with the Rabbinical Council of America engaged in a concerted effort to stem the massive tide of defection by Orthodox congregations into the Conservative camp. In legal challenges that were fought before state supreme courts, Orthodox leaders sought to prevent congregations that had previously relegated men and women to separate synagogue precincts from introducing mixed seating, a change that signified a congregation's defection from Orthodoxy to Conservatism. Yeshiva University also brought pressure on its rabbinic graduates not to serve in congregations that permitted mixed seating or the use of microphones on the Sabbath.[41] In the late 1950s, rabbis espousing the modern Orthodox position established a new journal, *Tradition*, both as a vehicle for expressing their own point of view as well as for combating non-Orthodox tendencies. Early issues of the journal were replete with hard-hitting critiques of Reconstructionist ideology, Conservative halakhic rulings on the marriage document and mixed seating, and the Reform movement's liturgical innovations.[42]

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[39]On the ban, see Tanenbaum, AJYB 1959, p. 59, and "Religious Pluralism at Home: A Hundred Years of the NY Board of Rabbis," *Jewish Observer*, May 1981, pp. 44–47.

[40]Jacob Sloan, "Religion," AJYB 1957, vol. 58, p. 153.

[41]On the defection to Conservatism, see Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue," pp. 124–25. On the issue of separate seating, see Louis Bernstein, "The Emergence of the English Speaking Orthodox Rabbinate" (doctoral diss., Yeshiva University, 1977), pp. 289–97; and Bernard Litvin, *The Sanctity of the Synagogue* (New York, 1959), pp. 49–77. See also Morris N. Kertzer, "Religion," AJYB 1955, vol. 56, p. 235, and Tanenbaum, AJYB 1959, pp. 60–62.

[42]See, for example, in *Tradition*: Eliezer Berkovits, "Reconstructionist Theology: A Critical Evaluation," Fall 1959, pp. 20–66; Norman Lamm, "Separate Pews in the Synagogue: A Social and Psychological Approach," Spring 1959, pp. 141–64; Emanuel Rackman, "Arrogance or Humility in Prayer," Fall 1958, pp. 13–26; and Walter Wurzburger, "The Oral Law and the Conservative Dilemma," Fall 1960, pp. 82–90.

Orthodox groups of all stripes invested heavily in this period in the establishment of day schools and yeshivahs. Leading the way was Torah U'Mesorah, which oversaw the growth of the day-school movement from approximately 30 before World War II to over 300 by the mid-1960s. Simultaneously, rabbinic figures recently arrived from Europe founded academies of higher study to support the continuing education of adult men, even after their ordination.[43] The latter institutions, *kollelim*, would produce the future leaders of right-wing Orthodoxy and provide teachers for the day-school movement.

Even with the emphasis on separate schooling, Orthodox Jews made important strides toward Americanization in these years. During the middle decades of the century, Orthodoxy ceased to be the province of relatively poor immigrant Jews, as its adherents participated in the upward mobility that brought affluence to large segments of American Jewry. Orthodox Jews now founded their own vacation resorts, as well as summer camps for youth. Perhaps even more important, they capitalized on changes in the marketing of American foodstuffs to convince manufacturers that it paid to carry kosher certification. Never before had so many non-Jewish food manufacturers carried kosher labeling in a direct effort to attract observant Jews concerned with dietary laws.[44]

Despite these important strides, however, Orthodoxy continued to be seen as a marginal grouping. In part this resulted from the selective blindness of contemporary observers, who were preoccupied with the widespread Jewish effort to integrate successfully into postwar America. From this perspective Orthodoxy was seen as a relic of past Jewish separatism. But there was also much objective evidence of Orthodox weakness. Hundreds of congregations that had been counted as Orthodox in the decades prior to World War II either folded or shifted their allegiance to Conservatism. Many who continued to identify as Orthodox were residual members of the movement; they did not observe Jewish religious laws with any thoroughness.[45] Even parents who sent their children to the expanding network of day schools did not practice consistently or meticulously.[46] As for their role in Jewish communal life, Orthodox Jews did not have a great impact on policy or philanthropy. Writing at midcentury, Marshall Sklare stated: "Orthodox adherents

[43]See Spero, "Orthodox Judaism," pp. 86–87.

[44]For an early article noting the revolution in the kosher food industry, see Morris Kertzer, "Religion," AJYB 1964, vol. 65, p. 81, which reports on a survey conducted in 1963 claiming that 2,000 products certified as kosher were manufactured by 400 companies, compared to half the number of both just a few years before.

[45]On the residual and nonobservant Orthodox, see Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," pp. 30–36.

[46]Duker, "On Religious Trends in American Life," pp. 54–55.

have succeeded in achieving the goal of institutional perpetuation to only a limited extent; the history of their movement in this country can be written in terms of a case study of institutional decay."[47] Though this assessment proved incorrect in the long term, it accurately identified the more visible trend in Orthodox life at the time.

### *Reconstructionism*

The middle decades of the century also witnessed the emergence of a new Jewish religious movement—Reconstructionism. Since the 1920s, Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan and a coterie of his disciples had preached the ideology of Reconstructionism but had taken few steps to create a fourth religious movement. Kaplan steadfastly refused the entreaties of his followers to institutionalize his movement and focused instead on disseminating his views through a journal of opinion, *The Reconstructionist*, and a synagogue in New York, the Society for the Advancement of Judaism. Kaplan remained firmly within the Conservative camp, presenting his viewpoint to generations of rabbinical students at the Jewish Theological Seminary and arguing for change before his colleagues in the Rabbinical Assembly.[48]

In 1963 Kaplan retired from the Jewish Theological Seminary at age 82. This move freed him to support his followers' desire to expand Reconstructionism from an ideological movement to a distinct denomination within Judaism. Plans were made to establish a Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, which commenced operations in 1968.[49] Even before that, a federation of Reconstructionist congregations was founded to unify like-minded synagogues and to attempt to bring more groups into the fold.[50] By the late 1960s the movement was poised for growth but was still only a fringe phenomenon, overshadowed by Reform, Conservatism, and Orthodoxy, and numbering only a few thousand adherents.

The mushrooming of synagogues across the American landscape was not viewed by all observers as a sign of religious vitality. Will Herberg, for one,

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[47]Sklare, *Conservative Judaism*, p. 43. A continuing high rate of defection from Orthodoxy was also predicted on the basis of surveys of younger Jews. The Riverton study, for example, found that most adolescents from Orthodox homes planned to identify as Conservative. See Marshall Sklare, Marc Vosk, and Mark Zborowski, "Forms and Expression of Jewish Identification," *Jewish Social Studies*, July 1955, p. 209.

[48]On Kaplan's allegiance to JTS and refusal to found a separate movement, see Schwarz, "Law and Legitimacy," pp. 191–96, 400–404; and Charles Liebman, "Reconstructionism in American Jewish Life," AJYB 1970, vol. 71, pp. 30–39.

[49]On the founding of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, see Liebman, "Reconstructionism," pp. 41–45.

[50]The Reconstructionist Foundation launched a Reconstructionist Fellowship of Congregations consisting of four affiliates in 1955. See Jacob Sloan, "Religion," AJYB 1956, vol. 57, p. 190.

questioned the depth of religiosity of those who were so eager to affiliate with synagogues. He characterized their involvement as "religiousness without religion, . . . a way of sociability or 'belonging' rather than a way of orienting life to God."[51] Among Jews there had been a notable rise in synagogue affiliation, but it was not matched by a rise in synagogue attendance. Survey research consistently found that Jews lagged far behind Catholics and Protestants in weekly attendance at a worship service.[52] Observers concerned with the quality of religious commitment, as measured by synagogue attendance and ritual observance, had reason to be skeptical about the depth of the religious revival.[53]

Beginning in the late 1960s, new currents began to sweep through American Jewish religious life. Arising from a range of circumstances, some specific to the Jewish condition, others generic to the American and even international mood at the end of the 20th century, these currents reshaped the agenda of both religious institutions and individual Jews. The landscape of Jewish religious life as described above was radically transformed. Among the factors helping to bring about this change were the following: the halt in the rate of growth of the American Jewish population; the soaring rate of intermarriage and concomitant preoccupation with strategies for Jewish survival; the impact of the State of Israel on the American Jewish consciousness, particularly after the Six Day War of 1967; structural shifts among American Jews, including the passing of the immigrant generation, geographical redistribution, and rising levels of higher education; the intensified social and political activism of the 60s; the resurgence of religious traditionalism and decline of secularism; and, finally, the women's movement.

These new developments affected all areas of American Jewish life. Their impact on the religious sphere is our particular concern.

## THE RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOR OF AMERICAN JEWS

An examination of the religious behavior of the masses of American Jews provides a convenient point of departure for a consideration of developments in American Judaism since the mid-1960s. The key sources of data

[51]Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (New York, 1955), p. 260; and idem, "The Triple Melting Pot," *Commentary*, Aug. 1955, pp. 101–08.

[52]According to a Gallup poll in 1964, 71 percent of Catholics, 37 percent of Protestants, and 17 percent of Jews claimed to have attended a religious service during the previous week. By 1970, the comparable figures were 60 percent, 38 percent, and 19 percent, respectively. See *The Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, 1972, p. 257.

[53]For an especially sober assessment, see Victor B. Geller, "How Jewish Is Jewish Suburbia," *Tradition*, Spring 1960, pp. 318–30.

on the religious behavior of American Jews are population studies. In the decade from 1977 to 1987, over 50 such studies were conducted under the auspices of local federations of Jewish philanthropies for the purpose of compiling profiles of the Jewish populations they serve. Virtually every large Jewish community has been surveyed, as have a considerable number of middle-size and small communities.[54] Included in these surveys are a

[54]The following population studies conducted under the auspices of local federations of Jewish philanthropies were utilized in the compilation of data for this section (relevant page numbers for data on religious issues follow). All data cited in this section are taken from these reports, unless noted otherwise. (I thank Jeffrey Scheckner, Administrator, North American Jewish Data Bank, for graciously making these studies available to me.) **Atlanta**: *Metropolitan Atlanta Jewish Population Study: Summary of Major Findings*, Atlanta Jewish Federation, 1983, pp. 8–9. **Baltimore**: Gary A. Tobin, Jewish Population Study of Greater Baltimore, Associated Jewish Charities and Welfare Fund, 1985, sect. 6 and *Summary Report*, pp. 21–32. **Boston**: Sherry Israel, *Boston's Jewish Community: The 1985 CJP Demographic Study*, Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, 1985, chap. 3. **Chicago**: Peter Friedman, *A Population Study of the Jewish Community of Metropolitan Chicago*, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, 1982, pp. 42–45. Additional data that did not appear in the published report were generously provided to the author by Dr. Mark A. Zober, Senior Planning and Research Associate at the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago. **Cleveland**: Ann Schorr, *From Generation to Generation*, and *Survey of Cleveland's Jewish Population*, Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, 1981, pp. 42–49; **Dade County, Fla.**: Ira M. Sheskin, *Population Study of the Greater Miami Jewish Community*, Greater Miami Jewish Federation, 1982, pp. 157–211, 227–244. **Denver**: Bruce A. Phillips, *Denver Jewish Population Study* and *Supplement to the Denver Jewish Population Study*, Allied Jewish Federation of Denver, 1981, pp. iii-iv, 44–55; and pp. 14–25, respectively. **Hartford**: *Highlights from the Greater Hartford Jewish Population Study*, Greater Hartford Jewish Federation, 1981, p. 8. **Kansas City**: Gary A. Tobin, *A Demographic Study of the Jewish Community of Greater Kansas City: Executive Summary*, Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City, 1985, pp. 3–19, 36–41. **Los Angeles**: Steven Huberman and Bruce A. Phillips, *Jewish Los Angeles: Synagogue Affiliation. Planning Report*, Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles, 1979, pp. 3–32, 37–51. Also Bruce A. Phillips, "Los Angeles Jewry: A Demographic Portrait," AJYB 1986, vol. 86, pp. 126–95. **MetroWest, N. J.**: Michael Rappeport and Gary A. Tobin, *A Population Study of the Jewish Community of MetroWest, New Jersey*, United Jewish Federation of MetroWest, N.J., 1985, pp. 61–96. **Milwaukee**: Bruce A. Phillips and Eve Weinberg, *The Milwaukee Jewish Population: Report of a Survey*, Milwaukee Jewish Federation, 1984, pp. iv, 1–17. Also *Summary Report*, pp. 1–5. **Minneapolis**: Lois Geer, *Population Study: The Jewish Community of Greater Minneapolis*, Minneapolis Federation for Jewish Service, 1981, chap. 5, pp. 1–19. Also *Executive Summary*, pp. 8–9. **Nashville**: Nancy Hendrix, *A Demographic Study of the Jewish Community of Nashville and Middle Tennessee*, Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee, 1982, p. 20. **New York**: Steven M. Cohen and Paul Ritterband, *The Jewish Population of Greater New York, A Profile*, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of N.Y., 1981, pp. 22–34. Additional data were provided to me directly by Paul Ritterband. **Palm Beach County, Fla.**: Ira M. Sheskin, *Jewish Demographic Study*, Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County, 1987, pp. 101-40. **Philadelphia**: William Yancey and Ira Goldstein, *The Jewish Population of the Greater Philadelphia Area*, Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia, 1983, pp. 109–162, 172–208. **Phoenix**: Bruce A. Phillips and William S. Aron, *The Greater Phoenix Jewish Population Study: Jewish Identity, Affiliation, and Observance*, Greater Phoenix Jewish Federation, 1983, pp. 3–10. **Pittsburgh**: Ann Schorr, *Survey of Greater Pittsburgh's Jewish*

series of questions pertaining to religious life: denominational affiliation, synagogue membership and attendance, selected measures of ritual observance, and intermarriage patterns. While these studies provide rich materials on contemporary trends, only a few such surveys exist from midcentury that can serve as a basis for comparative analysis. Still, when possible, comparisons will be made, taking account of, among other things, earlier surveys, as well as the National Jewish Population Study of 1970–71.[55]

## *Denominational Preferences*

Recent population studies indicate that the preponderant majority of American Jews continue to identify with one of the denominations of American Judaism, albeit at varying rates and in declining numbers. (See table 1.) When asked how they identify their denominational preference, over two-thirds of Jews in all communities for which we have data indicated that they are either Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox. This kind of self-identification does not necessarily translate into synagogue membership or religious observance, but it indicates that the majority of American Jews accept some kind of religious label. However, compared to the National Jewish Population Study of 1970–71,[56] which found that only 14 percent of American Jews eschewed a denominational preference, it appears that in the 1980s a rising percentage of Jews do not identify with one of the religious movements. For the most part, it is only in smaller Jewish communities that approximately 85 percent of Jews accept a denominational label. By contrast, in the larger centers of Jewish population it is far more com-

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*Population*, United Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, 1984, sect. 4. Also *Community Report*, pp. 6–15. **Richmond**: Ann Schorr, *Demographic Study of the Jewish Community of Richmond*, Jewish Federation of Richmond, 1984, pp. 9, 30–31, 42–48. **Rochester**: Gary A. Tobin and Sylvia B. Fishman, *The Jewish Population of Rochester, N.Y. (Monroe County)*, Jewish Community Federation of Rochester, N.Y., 1980, pp. i-iii, 19–33. **St. Louis**: Gary A. Tobin, *A Demographic and Attitudinal Study of the Jewish Community of St. Louis*, Jewish Federation of St. Louis, 1982, pp. iv-viii, 23–42. **Scranton**: *Demographic Census*, typescript report by Mrs. Seymour Bachman, Scranton-Lackawanna Jewish Federation, 1984. **Seattle**: James McCann with Debra Friedman, *A Study of the Jewish Community in the Greater Seattle Area*, Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, 1979, pp. 8–11, 67–73. **Tampa**: Ray Wheeler, *A Social and Demographic Survey of the Jewish Community of Tampa, Florida*, Tampa Jewish Federation, 1980, pp. 60–66. **Washington, D.C.**: Gary A. Tobin, Janet Greenblatt, and Joseph Waksberg, *A Demographic Study of the Jewish Community of Greater Washington, 1983*, United Jewish Appeal Federation of Greater Washington, D.C., 1983, pp. 25, 39, 97–101, 139–50. **Worcester**: Gary A. Tobin and Sylvia Barack Fishman, *A Population Study of the Greater Worcester Jewish Community*, Worcester Jewish Federation, 1986, pp. 91–112.

[55]The results of the National Jewish Population Study were published in a series of pamphlets issued by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds during the 1970s.

[56]See *Jewish Identity: Facts for Planning*, pp. 2–4.

TABLE 1. DENOMINATIONAL SELF-IDENTIFICATION (PERCENT)

| Community | Year of Study | Orthodox | Conservative | Reform | No Preference/ Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Atlanta | 1983 | 5 | 42 | 37 | 16 |
| Atlantic City | 1985 | 6 | 46 | 29 | 15 |
| Baltimore | 1985 | 20 | 35 | 29 | 16 |
| Boston | 1985 | 4 | 33 | 42 | 21 |
| Chicago | 1982 | 6 | 35 | 39 | 20[a] |
| Cleveland | 1981 | 9 | 39 | 47 | 5 |
| Denver[d] | 1981 | 7 | 28 | 35 | 30 |
| Hartford | 1981 | 6 | 38 | 40 | 16 |
| Kansas City | 1985 | 7 | 38 | 38 | 16 |
| Los Angeles | 1979 | 6 | 30 | 34 | 30 |
| MetroWest, NJ | 1986 | 6 | 38 | 34 | 20 |
| Miami (Dade County, FL) | 1982 | 11 | 35 | 24 | 30 |
| Milwaukee | 1983 | 7 | 27 | 52 | 14 |
| Minneapolis | 1981 | 5 | 53 | 32 | 10 |
| New York | 1981 | 13 | 35 | 29 | 23 |
| Palm Beach County, FL | 1987 | 2 | 43 | 3 | 25 |
| Philadelphia | 1984 | 5 | 41 | 25 | 22[b] |
| Pittsburgh | 1984 | 13 | 44 | 37 | 6 |
| Richmond | 1983 | 8 | 42 | 36 | 14 |
| Rochester | 1980 | 12 | 36 | 42 | 10 |
| St. Louis | 1982 | 8 | 26 | 52 | 14 |
| St. Paul | 1981 | 7 | 55 | 27 | 11 |
| Scranton | 1984 | 31 | 48 | 20 | |
| Seattle | 1979 | 16 | 30 | 46 | 8 |
| Tampa | 1980 | 2 | 43 | 41 | 14 |
| Washington, DC | 1983 | 4 | 35 | 41 | 18[c] |
| Worcester, MA | 1987 | 6 | 29 | 49 | 16 |

*Source*: Unless otherwise noted, tables are based on the studies listed in text footnote 54. Atlantic City and St. Paul data are from the Boston study, p. 154.
[a]Includes "Traditional."
[b]Includes 1.5% Reconstructionist; 7% "Traditional."
[c]Includes 3% Reconstructionist.
[d]Does not include converts.
*Note:* Figures rounded to nearest decimal.

mon for Jews to see themselves as "just Jewish" or without a religious preference.

The rejection of a denominational label by 23 percent of New York Jews, 28 percent of Los Angeles Jews, 30 percent of Miami Jews, 20 percent of Chicago Jews, and 22 percent of Philadelphia Jews is particularly noteworthy, given that these are the five largest Jewish communities in the United States and encompass close to 60 percent of the national Jewish population. (See table 2 for a ranking by size of the larger Jewish communities and their approximate populations when last surveyed.)

Table 1 illustrates the wide fluctuation in strength of the various denominations. Each of the major movements can claim great strength in particular communities. When we take the size of communities into account, it is

TABLE 2. LARGEST U.S. JEWISH COMMUNITIES

| Community | Jewish Pop. | Community | Jewish Pop. |
|---|---|---|---|
| New York, NY | 1,742,500 | Middlesex County, NJ | 39,350 |
| Los Angeles, CA | 500,870 | Oakland, CA | 35,000 |
| Chicago, IL | 248,000 | San Diego, CA | 35,000 |
| Miami (Dade County, FL)[a] | 241,000 | Monmouth County, NJ | 33,600 |
| Philadelphia, PA | 240,000 | Central New Jersey | 32,000 |
| Boston, MA | 170,000 | Denver, CO | 30,000 |
| Washington, DC | 157,335 | Houston, TX | 28,000 |
| MetroWest, NJ | 111,000 | Southern New Jersey | 28,000 |
| Baltimore, MD | 92,000 | Hartford, CT | 26,000, |
| San Francisco, CA | 80,000 | Milwaukee, WI | 23,900 |
| Cleveland, OH | 70,000 | Delaware Valley, PA | 23,000 |
| Detroit, MI | 70,000 | Minneapolis, MN | 23,000 |
| Bergen County, NJ | 69,300 | Kansas City, MO | 22,100 |
| Ft. Lauderdale, FL | 60,000 | Cincinnati, OH | 22,000 |
| Orange County, CA | 60,000 | Dallas, TX | 22,000 |
| South Broward, FL | 60,000 | New Haven, CT | 22,000 |
| Atlanta, GA | 50,000 | Seattle, WA | 19,500 |
| Phoenix, AZ | 50,000 | Northern New Jersey | 19,000 |
| Palm Beach County, FL | 45,000 | Buffalo, NY | 18,500 |
| Pittsburgh, PA | 45,000 | San Jose, CA | 18,000 |
| Rockland County, NY | 40,000 | Tucson, AZ | 18,000 |
| South County, FL | 40,000 | Rhode Island | 17,500 |
| | | Columbus, OH | 15,000 |

*Source:* Executive Summary, Kansas City study. See text footnote 54.
[a]AJYB 1988, p. 229.

possible to evaluate the relative strength of each denomination. (In most surveys, Reconstructionists were deemed numerically neglible and therefore were not listed separately. Even in Philadelphia, where the central institutions of the Reconstructionist movement are located, only 1.5 percent of respondents identified with Reconstructionism.)

A high level of identification with Orthodoxy is confined largely to New York. Even in New York, Orthodox allegiance is concentrated mainly in the boroughs of Brooklyn and the Bronx and is relatively weak in Manhattan. (Twenty-seven percent of heads of Jewish households in Brooklyn identified as Orthodox compared to 8 percent in Manhattan.)[57] The numerical strength of Orthodoxy in the largest Jewish community of the United States gives that movement a visibility that belies its actual size. In point of fact, some demographers contend that the percentage of Jews who identify as Orthodox has declined to under 10 percent in the late 1980s.[58]

Identification with Conservative Judaism continues at a high level in every Jewish community, but the dominance of the movement is now challenged by Reform in quite a number of localities. In some areas, such as Philadelphia and Minneapolis–St. Paul, Conservatism has maintained formidable strength. It also holds the allegiance of a high percentage of Jews in Sunbelt communities, both in areas where older Jews retire, such as southern Florida, and in burgeoning communities such as Atlanta. Nationally, the Conservative movement still commands the allegiance of a plurality of Jews, albeit a shrinking plurality.

The main beneficiary of Orthodox and Conservative losses seems to be the Reform movement (as well as the group of Jews with no preference). This is evident in Boston, for example, where, between 1965 and 1985, individuals who identified themselves as Orthodox declined from 14 percent to 4 percent, and as Conservative from 44 percent to 33 percent, while the percentage of those who identified as Reform rose from 27 percent to 42 percent, and the "no preference" group increased from 5 percent to 14 percent. Reform continues to exhibit great popularity in its traditional areas of strength—the Midwest and South—but is gaining many new adherents throughout the nation. Just as the middle decades of the 20th century witnessed dramatic numerical gains by the Conservative movement, the closing decades of the century appear as a period of particular growth for Reform Judaism. Indeed, some Reform leaders contend that their movement has already outstripped Conservatism. However, most demographers of American Jewry argue otherwise. On the basis of recent population studies, Barry Kosmin, director of the North American Jewish Data Bank, estimated in 1987 that American Jews were divided as follows: 2 percent

[57]Steven M. Cohen and Paul Ritterband, "The Social Characteristics of the New York Area Jewish Community, 1981," AJYB 1984, vol. 84, p. 153 and table 3.3.

[58]Barry Kosmin, "Facing Up to Intermarriage," *Jewish Chronicle* (London), July 24, 1987.

Reconstructionist, 9 percent Orthodox, 29 percent Reform, 34 percent Conservative, and 26 percent "other" or "just Jewish."[59]

To refine such figures and project likely trends for the near-term future, it is useful to examine patterns among generational and age groups. A dozen studies of Jewish communities provide data on the identification of various age groupings within each of the religious denominations. Among Jews who identify themselves as Orthodox, a consistent pattern emerges: higher percentages of Orthodox Jews are in the 18–34-year-old group than in middle-age groupings; but the highest percentages of Orthodox Jews in any age category are over age 65. This suggests both a source of future strength and future weakness for Orthodoxy. Unlike the other denominations, Orthodoxy is retaining the allegiance of its young and even showing a modest increase in attractiveness to younger Jews. By contrast, surveys conducted shortly after World War II repeatedly found that younger Jews from Orthodox homes intended to abandon an Orthodox identification. As a denomination with more adherents in the child-bearing years than in middle age, Orthodoxy can expect an infusion of new members through the birth of children to its younger population. But even as it maintains its attractiveness to its youth, Orthodoxy will have to contend with ongoing losses through the death of its older population, a group that is considerably more numerous than its youth population. In virtually every community for which data are available, with the notable exception of New York, between two and three times as many Orthodox Jews are over age 65 as are between ages 18 and 45. Thus, despite higher birthrates, Jews who identify as Orthodox are not likely to increase in the near future.

Adherents of Conservative Judaism form a different pattern. Self-identification with Conservatism is stronger among middle-age groups than among younger or older groups. In some communities, the largest segment of Conservative Jews is aged 35–44 and in others 45–64; but the percentage of Conservative Jews aged 18–35 is smaller than in either of the other two age categories. The apparent attrition among younger members constitutes the greatest demographic challenge facing the Conservative movement. At present it is unclear whether the movement has been unable to retain the allegiance of many of its youth, or whether children who grow up in Conservative families defer identifying with the movement until they have children of their own, in which case population studies conducted in the early 1990s should reveal a rise in the percentage of Conservative Jews in the younger age categories.[60] Which of these explanations holds true will

[59]Ibid.

[60]A strong case for the defection scenario has been made by Charles Liebman and Saul Shapiro in "A Survey of the Conservative Movement: Some of Its Religious Attitudes," unpublished paper, Sept. 1979, p. 22. Steven M. Cohen has argued that identification is tied to family status. See "The American Jewish Family Today," AJYB 1982, vol. 82, pp. 145–53.

determine whether the Conservative movement will age or retain a youthful character.

Of all the denominations, Reform maintains greatest stability across the age spectrum, with the exception of the oldest age cohorts. In virtually every community there are approximately as many Reform Jews in the younger age grouping (18–35) as in middle-age groupings. This would indicate the success of the movement either in retaining its youth or in recruiting younger Jews from the other denominations. From a numerical point of view, it is immaterial how Reform recruits its younger members, but it would still be interesting to know whether young people are attracted from within, or whether Reform is recruiting from outside its ranks.

## *Synagogue Membership and Attendance*

Thus far, we have dealt with the relatively passive matter of denominational identification. Synagogue membership and attendance provide more active means of religious involvement. Once again there are significant variations between communities in the percentage of Jews who hold membership in a synagogue. (See table 3.) A recent study identified four variables that help determine rates of synagogue membership within communities.[61] (1) Marriage rates: Communities with a high proportion of married heads of household have a higher rate of synagogue membership; conversely, the larger the population of divorced or single adults, the lower the rate of affiliation. This conforms with a widely reported finding that American Jews generally join synagogues when they become parents and that divorce often leads to a lapse of synagogue membership. (2) Age structure: The higher the percentage of Jews in their 20s and 30s, the lower the rate of affiliation; since younger Jews are less likely to have children, they do not join synagogues in appreciable numbers. (3) Place of birth: Transients are less likely than Jews rooted in a community to invest in synagogue membership; where most Jews in a community are born locally, rates of synagogue membership are high. Thus it is not an accident that in cities in the North, synagogue membership is common, whereas in places like Phoenix it is relatively low. (4) Denominational identification: In communities where one of the religious movements is dominant, it becomes socially important to join a synagogue. In Minneapolis–St. Paul, for example, the high rate of affiliation is related to the great strength of local Conservative synagogues.

[61]Peter Friedman and Mark Zober, "Factors Influencing Synagogue Affiliation: A Multi-Community Analysis," North American Jewish Data Bank, Occasional Papers No. 3, May 1987, pp. 11–23.

TABLE 3. CURRENT SYNAGOGUE/TEMPLE MEMBERSHIP, BY COMMUNITY (PERCENT)

| Community | Year of Study | Members | Not Members |
|---|---|---|---|
| Atlanta | 1983 | Est. 27 | 73 |
| Atlantic City | 1985 | 51 | 49 |
| Baltimore | 1985 | 55 | 45 |
| Boston | 1985 | 41 | 59 |
| Chicago | 1982 | 44 | 50 |
| Cleveland | 1981 | 61 | 39 |
| Denver | 1981 | 39 | 61 |
| Kansas City | 1985 | 52 | 48 |
| Los Angeles | 1979 | 26 | 74 |
| MetroWest, NJ | 1986 | 53 | 47 |
| Miami | 1982 | 38 | 62 |
| Milwaukee | 1983 | 56 | 44 |
| Minneapolis | 1981 | 79 | 21 |
| Nashville | 1982 | 78 | 22 |
| New York | 1981 | 41 | 59 |
| Palm Beach County, FL | 1987 | 41 | 59 |
| Philadelphia | 1984 | 41 | 59 |
| Phoenix | 1983 | 33 | 67 |
| Pittsburgh | 1984 | 70 | 30 |
| Richmond | 1983 | 67 | 33 |
| Rochester | 1980 | 68 | 32 |
| St. Louis | 1982 | 66 | 34 |
| St. Paul | 1981 | 84 | 16 |
| Seattle | 1979 | 75 | 25 |
| Washington, DC | 1983 | 39 | 61 |
| Worcester, MA | 1987 | 60 | 40 |

Given the variation in membership figures from one community to the next, it is difficult to determine whether overall synagogue affiliation is rising or declining. One recent study found that synagogue membership varied from 66 percent in the North-Central states, to 48 percent in the Northeast, to 38 percent in the West. Nationwide, this amounted to a 53-percent rate of affiliation. Compared to the 48 percent of American Jews found to have been synagogue members in the 1971 NJPS, this would indicate a modest rise in synagogue affiliation. But judging from the low membership rates in the largest Jewish population centers, it appears doubt-

ful that rates of synagogue affiliation have risen in the 1980s.[62]

As for affiliation rates among adherents of the various denominations, a somewhat mixed pattern emerges from recent studies. (See table 4.) In some communities there is a clear spectrum in which Jews who identify as Orthodox have the highest rates of affiliation, self-identified Conservative Jews slightly lower rates, and self-declared Reform Jews dramatically lower rates. In other communities, Conservative Jews have the highest rates of synagogue membership, followed by the Orthodox and the Reform. The sharply lower affiliation rate of Jews who identify as Reform is one of many pieces of evidence that the Reform label is now utilized by many Jews who are not necessarily committed to the movement. Whereas at midcentury Jews with no strong religious allegiance often reflexively stated their affiliation as Conservative, today the reflex is to say Reform—particularly among the least committed.

TABLE 4. PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELONGING TO SYNAGOGUE, BY DENOMINATIONAL PREFERENCE AND COMMUNITY

| Community | Denominational Preference | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Orthodox | Conservative | Reform | Other |
| Baltimore | 71.0 | 58.0 | 54.0 | 27.0 |
| Boston | 67.0 | 60.0 | 35.0 | 9.0 |
| Chicago | 50.0 | 68.0 | 59.0 | 41.0 |
| Cleveland | 85.8 | 67.8 | 58.2 | 5.6 |
| Los Angeles | 42.0 | 45.0 | 24.0 | 8.0 |
| MetroWest, NJ | 71.0 | 75.0 | 51.0 | 16.0 |
| Miami (Dade County, FL) | 63.0 | 48.0 | 44.0 | 11.0 |
| Milwaukee | 63.4 | 64.8 | 82.8 | 23.5 |
| Philadelphia | 53.6 | 56.0 | 38.7 | 54.2[a] |
| Phoenix | 60.6 | 48.9 | 36.3 | 10.1 |
| Pittsburgh | 77.1 | 76.3 | 66.5 | 100.0[a] |

[a]Reconstructionist.

[62]On the results of a study conducted by Gary A. Tobin and Sylvia B. Fishman, see Ellen Bernstein, "Jewish Identity in the 80s," and Richard Bono, "Quandary: Establishment Struggles to Keep Jews in the Fold," both in the *Atlanta Jewish Times*, Mar. 25, 1988, p. 8, and Apr. 1, 1988, p. 7, respectively. It is worth noting that even with a synagogue-affiliation rate hovering near 50 percent, membership figures since World War II exceed those for earlier decades in this century. Thus, Stephen Sharot estimates synagogue affiliation in 1939 at between 25 and 33 percent. Admittedly, the Depression may have accounted for part of this low rate, but by 1939 the worst of the economic crisis had passed. See Sharot, *Judaism: A Sociology*, p. 146.

Since the early decades of the 20th century, surveys have demonstrated that Jews attend weekly religious services at far lower rates than their Christian neighbors. In the early 1980s, when approximately 44 percent of Americans claimed they attended services weekly, 24 percent of American Jews claimed to do so.[63] Surveys conducted under Jewish auspices in the 1980s suggest that this latter figure may well be inflated; in hardly any of the communities for which data are available do anywhere near 24 percent claim to attend synagogue "frequently"—a response that sometimes is interpreted to mean weekly attendance and sometimes attendance at least once a month. (See table 5.) Furthermore, in most communities, between one-third and one-half of all Jews attend religious services either never or only on the High Holy Days. While there is ample evidence that earlier in the century similar patterns obtained, it appears that in recent decades Jews are attending synagogue even less frequently. In Rochester, for example, 14

TABLE 5. FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES, BY COMMUNITY (PERCENT)

| Community | Year of Study | Never | High Holidays Only | Occasionally | Frequently[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Atlantic City | 1985 | 15 | 31 | 39 | 15 |
| Baltimore | 1985 | 10 | 22 | 30 | 31 |
| Boston | 1985 | 28 | 36 | 28 | 8 |
| Chicago | 1981 | 2 | 29 | 51 | 18 |
| Kansas City | 1985 | 10 | 15 | 64 | 11 |
| MetroWest, NJ | 1985 | 12 | 18 | 45 | 21 |
| Miami | 1982 | 24 | 30 | 29 | 17 |
| New York | 1981 | 30 | 27 | 22 | 21 |
| Palm Beach County, FL | 1987 | 25 | 57 | 14 | 42 |
| Philadelphia | 1985 | 20 | 57[b] | 14[c] | 9[d] |
| Rochester | 1980 | 29 | 45 | 9 | 17 |
| St. Louis | 1982 | 18 | 30 | 30 | 20 |
| Seattle | 1979 | 20 | 30 | 30 | 20 |
| Washington, DC | 1983 | 16 | 14 | 61 | 9 |

[a]Defined differently in different studies.
[b]Few times per year.
[c]One-two times per month.
[d]Every week.

[63] *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*, 1984, pp. 283–84.

percent claimed to have attended services weekly in 1961, compared to 2 percent in 1980; attendance only on the High Holy Days rose from 19 percent to 45 percent. In Baltimore, the proportion who attended synagogue "a few times a year" rose from 37 percent to 52 percent between 1968 and 1985 (although levels for more frequent attendance also rose modestly in that period). In short, American Jews, never ardent synagogue-goers, appear to be avoiding religious services more than ever.

### *Religious Observance*

A third measure of religious behavior that has been utilized in recent community surveys is the observance of religious rituals and holidays. Since Judaism knows of several hundred rituals, social scientists surveying religious practices have been forced to limit their inquiries to a select number of observances which they see as symptomatic of broader patterns of behavior. However, matters are complicated by the range of attitudes within the denominations about which specific observances are still binding in the modern context. Thus, the observance of the dietary laws is optional in the Reform movement but mandatory in Orthodox and Conservative Judaism; refraining from using transportation on the Sabbath is viewed as mandatory by Orthodox rabbis, whereas Conservative rabbis have sanctioned such travel if it is necessary to attend synagogue services. Moreover, quantitative data shed little light on the quality of religious experience. Attendance at a Passover Seder, for example, may entail an intensive examination of the Exodus narrative and its religious implications or may simply provide the pretext for a family dinner. Still, for all their shortcomings, surveys of religious behavior provide important insights into religious life, particularly so since Judaism is a religion heavily oriented toward the performance of ritual actions.

Table 6 provides data on the ritual observances of Jews in 13 different communities that vary widely in size, geographic location, and social composition. Significantly, several universal patterns are evident. In every community, the most widely performed ritual is attendance at a Passover Seder, followed by the lighting of Hanukkah candles, the presence of a *mezuzah* on the front doorpost, and fasting on Yom Kippur. It is indeed noteworthy that over two-thirds of all Jews claim to observe these rituals. Moreover, it appears that in recent decades the observance of these four rituals has become more widespread than it was at midcentury.[64]

How do we explain the popularity of these four rituals and the relatively low rate of observance of other rituals? Marshall Sklare identified five

[64]See Sklare and Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, p. 52, and Goldstein and Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans*, p. 201.

criteria that help explain why certain rituals are retained by American Jews, even as others are ignored. A ritual is most likely to be retained by Jews, he said, if it is capable of redefinition in modern terms; does not demand social isolation or the adoption of a unique life-style; accords with the religious culture of the larger community while providing a Jewish alternative when such is felt to be needed; is centered on the child; and is performed annually or infrequently.[65] The widespread observance of the Seder and Hanukkah accords well with all five criteria, while fasting on Yom Kippur fits in with the first and last. Affixing a *mezuzah* to a doorpost certainly conforms to the last criterion, but may also reflect the present eagerness of Jews to display their religious and ethnic identification in public.

Sklare's criteria also help to explain the relatively low levels of observance of the dietary laws and Sabbath prohibitions. In both cases, the rituals involved set Jews apart from their neighbors and require ongoing, rather than infrequent, attention. While observance of the dietary laws and the Sabbath had already suffered decline earlier in the century, there is some evidence of even further attrition in recent decades. In Baltimore in 1985, 23 percent of Jews surveyed claimed to light the Sabbath candles weekly, compared to 39 percent in 1968; in 1985, 24 percent of Baltimore Jews claimed they always purchased kosher meat, compared to 36 percent in 1965. In Boston, 31 percent of Jews in 1985 claimed they lit Sabbath candles regularly, compared to 62 percent in 1965; and 17 percent claimed to have a kosher home in 1985, compared to 27 percent who bought kosher meat and 15 percent who kept two sets of dishes in 1965.[66]

When patterns of observance are correlated with the denominational self-identification, it becomes evident that there is a significant degree of truth to the folk wisdom concerning differences between the various religious movements: Jews who identify as Orthodox observe rituals most frequently, Conservative identifiers less frequently, and Reform identifiers least frequently of all. (See table 7.) Still, a significant proportion of Jews who identify as Orthodox are not fully observant—e.g., almost one-third of Jews in New York who identify as Orthodox handle money on the Sabbath. Moreover, when it comes to such rituals as Seder participation, lighting Hanukkah candles, affixing a *mezuzah*, and fasting on Yom Kippur, rates of observance among Conservative Jews approximate the levels of the Orthodox; Reform Jews, by contrast, observe these rituals at far lower rates. Finally, it is worth noting that some rituals which the Reform movement

[65]Sklare, *America's Jews*, p. 114.

[66]It is still too soon to analyze the patterns of observance among fourth-generation Jews, as compared to their parents and grandparents. For a preliminary attempt that utilizes data from the New York survey, see Steven M. Cohen, *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?* (Bloomington, Ind., 1988), pp. 54–56 and 129–30.

TABLE 6. PRACTICE OF SELECTED OBSERVANCES, BY COMMUNITY (PERCENT)

| Observances | Community | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N.Y. | Phila. | Balt.[a] | Wash. | Metrowest NJ[a] | KC[a] | St. Louis | Miami[a] | Phoenix[a] | Seattle[a] | Rochester[a] | Chicago | Palm Beach County[a] |
| Attends Seder | 89 | 89 | 86 | NA | 78 | 76 | 71 | 70 | 81 | 84 | 80 | 88 | 75 |
| Lights Hanukkah candles | 76 | 78 | NA | NA | NA | NA | 80 | 57 | 78 | 78 | 78 | 78 | 67 |
| Has mezuzah | 70 | 71 | NA | NA | NA | NA | 76 | 77 | 57 | NA | NA | 64 | 69 |
| Fasts on Yom Kippur | 67 | 67 | 75 | 73 | 66 | NA | NA | 52 | NA | 63 | 63 | 64 | 52 |
| Lights Sabbath candles | 37 | 32 | 32 | 15[b] | 25 | 27 | 28 | 29 | NA | 38 | 33 | NA | 23 |
| Buys only kosher meat | 36 | NA | 24 | NA | 18 | NA | 19 | 24 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Uses 2 sets of dishes | 30 | 16 | 23 | 10 | 16 | NA | 15 | 21 | 9 | 15[c] | 23[c] | 12.2 | 13[c] |

TABLE 6.—*(Continued)*

| Observances | Community | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N.Y. | Phila. | Balt.[a] | Wash. | Metrowest NJ[a] | KC[a] | St. Louis | Miami[a] | Phoenix[a] | Seattle[a] | Rochester[a] | Chicago | Palm Beach County[a] |
| Handles no money on Sabbath | 12 | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | 4 | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Refrains from transport on Sabbath | NA | 5 | 8 | 4 | 7 | NA | 5 | NA | 4 | NA | NA | 5 | NA |
| Has Christmas tree (sometimes or more frequently) | NA | NA | 16 | 25 | 13 | 21 | 14 | NA | NA | NA | 15 | NA | 9 |

NA Indicates data not available.
[a]Denotes always or frequently observed.
[b]Denotes always observed.
[c]"Keeps kosher home."

TABLE 7. PRACTICE OF SELECTED OBSERVANCES, BY DENOMINATIONAL PREFERENCE AND COMMUNITY (PERCENT)

| Observance | Community and Denominations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MetroWest NJ[a] | | | New York[b] | | | Boston[b] | | | Philadelphia | | | Baltimore[a] | | | Miami[a] | | | Chicago | | |
| | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R |
| Attends Seder | 82 | 96 | 83 | 98 | 98 | 97 | 95 | 97 | 87 | 93 | 96 | 92 | 90 | 93 | 87 | 88 | 83 | 74 | 93 | 94 | 83 |
| Lights Hanukkah candles | | NA | | 97 | 95 | 88 | 93 | 95 | 90 | 90 | 87 | 77 | | NA | | 84 | 68 | 54 | 85 | 85 | 75 |
| Has mezuzah | | NA | | 95 | 93 | 78 | 97 | 89 | 77 | 85 | 87 | 65 | | NA | | 96 | 88 | 73 | 86 | 76 | 53 |
| Fasts on Yom Kippur | 77 | 86 | 61 | 96 | 90 | 77 | 89 | 85 | 77 | 98 | 85 | 59 | 90 | 87 | 67 | 88 | 68 | 38 | 85 | 76 | 56 |
| Lights Sabbath candles | 63 | 36 | 15 | 88 | 63 | 34 | 84 | 57 | 39 | 65 | 45 | 23 | 65 | 34 | 21 | 77 | 35 | 14 | | NA | |
| Buys only kosher meat | 82 | 36 | 4 | 91 | 56 | 16 | 72 | 32 | 7 | | NA | | 67 | 23 | 7 | 77 | 30 | 4 | | NA | |

TABLE 7.—*(Continued)*

| Observance | Community and Denominations | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | MetroWest NJ[a] | | | New York[b] | | | Boston[b] | | | Philadelphia | | | Baltimore[a] | | | Miami[a] | | | Chicago | | |
| | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R | O | C | R |
| Uses 2 sets of dishes | 72 | 26 | 4 | 90 | 48 | 9 | 83 | 26 | 4 | 52 | 26 | 1 | 67 | 21 | 4 | 75 | 27 | 3 | 64 | 14 | 1 |
| Handles no money on Sabbath | NA | | | 68 | 8 | 2 | NA | | | NA | | | NA | | | 72 | 24 | 8[c] | NA | | |
| Has Christmas tree (sometimes or more frequently) | 13 | 3 | 16 | NA | | | 5 | 3 | 4 | NA | | | 1 | 5 | 13 | NA | | | NA | | |

O=Orthodox
C=Conservative
R=Reform
NA Indicates data not available.
[a]Denotes always or usually observed.
[b]Denotes synagogue members only.
[c]"Observes the Sabbath."

does not deem necessary, such as the purchase of kosher meat, continue to be practiced by small percentages of Jews who identify as Reform.

### *Intermarriage*

Intermarriage is generally defined as the marriage of a born Jew to a person who was not born Jewish. Some intermarriages result in conversionary marriages—i.e., one spouse converts to the religion of the other; others result in mixed marriages, where the two partners formally remain members of two separate religions. Strictly speaking, intermarriage does not provide a measure of religious behavior because one can be married to a non-Jew and continue to practice Judaism. Intermarriage is important in our context, however, for several reasons: it blurs religious boundaries between Jews and Christians; it serves as a potential source for new Jews if the non-Jewish spouse converts; it has a profound impact on the religious identity of children; and it raises serious questions of Jewish religious law and policy that bedevil the Jewish community today in an unprecedented manner. Our focus here will be on the quantitative aspects of intermarriage. In subsequent sections, attention will be given to the challenges raised by intermarriage for those who set policy within organized religious life.

Intermarriage has exploded on the American Jewish scene since the mid-1960s, rapidly rising in incidence to the point where as many as two out of five Jews who wed marry a partner who was not born Jewish. The NJPS was the first survey that drew attention to the changing dimensions of this phenomenon. When married Jews in the national sample were asked whether they were wed to someone who had not been born Jewish, roughly 2 to 3 percent who had married in the decades from 1900 to 1940 answered in the affirmative; the figure rose to 6.7 percent for those who had married in the 1940s and 1950s; jumped to 17.4 percent for those married between 1961 and 1965; and soared to 31.7 percent for those married between 1966 and 1970.[67] Recent population studies make it clear that intermarriage rates have remained high and dramatically exceed the rates of 20 years ago.

Table 8 lists the percentages of households in different localities that contain either a convert to Judaism or a non-Jewish spouse. In the localities listed, anywhere from 17 percent to 37 percent of Jewish households consist of intermarried families. If all these marriages resulted in the conversion of the non-Jewish partner, the matter of intermarriage would still raise important religious issues for American Jews, but they would revolve around the

[67] *Intermarriage: Facts for Planning*, Council of Jewish Federations, n.d., p. 10. For a critique of these figures, see Charles Silberman, *A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today* (New York, 1985), pp. 289–92. While the figure for 1966–70 may have been inflated, intermarriage rates subsequently have reached that high level.

proper manner of integrating the converts into Jewish society. But in most communities, the percentage of households where no conversion has occurred—the mixed-marriage category—is far larger than the percentage of conversionary households. Thus the issue is not only how to deal with converts but also how to cope with the far larger population of Jews who choose to marry a non-Jew and still identify themselves as Jewish and raise their children as Jews.

TABLE 8. PERCENTAGE OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONE CONVERTED OR NON-JEWISH SPOUSE, BY COMMUNITY

| Community | Convert | Non-Jew |
|---|---|---|
| Baltimore | 14.0 | 8.0 |
| Chicago | 4.0 | 13.0 |
| Denver | 6.6 | 30.1 |
| Metrowest, NJ | 23.0 | 14.0 |
| Milwaukee | 7.0 | 19.5 |
| Pittsburgh | 8.5 | 13.0 |

The dimensions of the problem are further highlighted by the age distribution of Jews involved in mixed marriages. Data are available from eight communities on the age composition of married couples who indicated that one spouse was an unconverted Gentile. (See table 9.) In comparing couples in three age categories—18–29, 30–39, 40–49—it becomes evident that marriage to a non-Jewish partner is more widespread the younger the couple. It may be that a certain percentage of these marriages will still become conversionary. Egon Mayer found that approximately one-quarter to one-third of intermarriages eventually lead to the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse, but Mayer's findings were based on research conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[68] Since then, rates of intermarriage have continued to rise and both the Reform and Reconstructionist movements have formally stated that they now accept as Jewish a child who has only one Jewish parent. In all likelihood, these developments are affecting the incidence of conversion among the intermarried.

Only limited data are available on the incidence of intermarriage among adherents of the various denominations, but they help clarify why the Reform movement has been most active in formulating new responses in this area. In a survey conducted in 1985 at the biennial convention of the

[68]Egon Mayer, *Love and Tradition: Marriage Between Jews and Christians* (New York, 1985), p. 157.

TABLE 9. PERCENTAGE OF JEWISH HOUSEHOLDS WITH AN UNCONVERTED SPOUSE, BY AGE GROUP AND COMMUNITY

| Community | Age Group | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 18–29 | 30–39 | 40–49 |
| Chicago | 27.0 | 23.0 | 9.0 |
| Cleveland[a] | 23.5 | 19.1 | 14.3 |
| Denver | 66.0 | 40.0 | 13.3 |
| Los Angeles | 48.9 | 20.8 | 13.3 |
| Milwaukee | 23.5[c] | 27.1[c] | 7.7[c] |
| | 33.3[d] | 12.8[d] | 10.2[d] |
| Phoenix | 60.3 | 25.8 | 40.0 |
| Richmond | 43.6 | 29.4 | 20.7 |
| Pittsburgh | 26.5[b] | 23.0 | 17.1 |

[a]Denotes spouse other than Jewish or no religion.
[b]Under 30.
[c]Husband Jewish, wife not.
[d]Wife Jewish, husband not.

Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the congregational body of Reform Judaism, 31 percent of lay leaders of Reform temples reported having a child married to a non-Jewish spouse.[69] Table 10 provides information on the percentages of mixed-married couples among the children of those who identify with Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism. In the three communities for which data are available—Richmond, Philadelphia, and Cleveland—rates of intermarriage are highest among the offspring of those who identify as Reform, lower among those who identify as Conservative, and lowest among the Orthodox. At present, then, it appears that those who identify as Reform have the highest levels of mixed marriage among their children.

In terms of denominational identification, 40 percent of intermarried Jews in Los Angeles identify with the Reform movement, as do two-thirds of intermarried Jews in Milwaukee—in both cases versus 14 percent who identify with Conservative Judaism. Interestingly, 4 percent of intermarried Jews in Los Angeles identify as Orthodox. All of these data suggest that marriage to a non-Jewish partner is not regarded by many intermarrying Jews as a sign of defection from Judaism.

[69]Mark L. Winer, Sanford Seltzer, and Steven Schwager, *Leaders of Reform Judaism: A Study of Jewish Identity, Religious Practices and Beliefs, and Marriage Patterns* (New York, 1987), p. 66.

TABLE 10. INTERMARRIAGE STATUS OF GROWN CHILDREN, BY PARENTS' DENOMINATION (PERCENT)

| Children's Intermarriage Status | Parents' Denomination | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Orthodox | Conservative | Reform | Other |
| | | Richmond | | |
| Spouse born Jewish | 86.6 | 71.4 | 48.9 | 35.7 |
| Convert | 6.7 | 3.1 | 2.2 | 7.2 |
| Other religion/no religion | 6.7 | 25.5 | 48.9 | 57.1 |
| | | Philadelphia[a] | | |
| Both Jewish | 94.3 | 92.2 | 82.4 | |
| Convert | 2.5 | 1.6 | 4.0 | |
| Intermarriage | 3.2 | 6.2 | 13.5 | |
| | | Cleveland[b] | | |
| Both Jewish | 90.0 | 76.3 | 67.9 | |
| Convert | 0.0 | 5.4 | 7.4 | |
| Intermarried | 10.0 | 18.3 | 24.7 | |

[a]"Family of origin" instead of "Parents."
[b]Only adults over 50 included in "Parents."

Precisely because so many Jews who intermarry today continue to identify as Jews, the question of the status of their children has become a bone of contention in the Jewish community. In the present context, attention needs to be given to the religious outlook and behavior of children whose parents are mixed married. The most extensive analysis of this question appears in research conducted by Egon Mayer for the American Jewish Committee. Among his conclusions are the following:[70] children of conversionary marriages are more than three times as likely as children of mixed marriages to identify as Jews; 69 percent of children in conversionary

[70]Egon Mayer, *Children of Intermarriage: A Study in Patterns of Identification and Family Life* (New York, 1983), pp. 7, 11, 15–18. For a more recent discussion of the consequences of outmarriage, see U.O. Schmelz and Sergio DellaPergola, *Basic Trends in American Jewish Demography*, American Jewish Committee, 1988, pp. 20–24.

families definitely or probably want to be Jewish, compared to 26 percent of children of mixed marriages. According to Mayer, 81 percent of teenagers in mixed-married families never attend a synagogue, compared to 15 percent of teenagers in conversionary families; and only 14 percent of children of mixed marriages celebrate their Bar or Bat Mitzvah, compared to 73 percent of children of conversionary marriages. Mayer provides many additional measures confirming a widespread pattern—only a small minority of children of mixed marriages are socialized into Jewish religious life and identify their religion as Judaism. It remains to be seen whether children accepted as Jewish under the patrilineal definition will conform to the patterns of conversionary or mixed-married children.

## DENOMINATIONAL LIFE: REFORM JUDAISM

The most visible evidence of significant shifts in Jewish religious life may be observed in the new policies and procedures adopted by the various Jewish denominations. All of the movements have been challenged by their own constituents to respond to new social concerns, and in turn each movement has been forced to react to the new directions taken by other groups on the religious spectrum. As a result, all four major movements in American Judaism have adopted radically new programs that could not have been envisioned at midcentury.

Since the mid-1960s the official position of the Reform movement regarding a range of religious practices and ideological issues has been shaped by two seemingly contradictory impulses. On the one hand, Reform has sanctioned a number of radical departures from traditional practice: it was the first to ordain women as rabbis and cantors; it steadfastly refused to place sanctions on rabbis who officiated at mixed marriages; and most dramatically, it unilaterally redefined Jewish identity. On the other hand, the Reform movement has reintroduced or signaled its willingness to tolerate many religious practices that had been rejected in the past; in many temples men now don skullcaps and prayer shawls, kosher meals are prepared, and Hebrew usages have been reinstated. Reform, then, is changing in both directions—toward a more radical break with traditional practices and toward an unprecedented openness to traditional teachings.

This eclecticism has been made possible by a rethinking of the basic Reform position. Whereas Reform Judaism was formerly a movement that on principle said "no" to some aspects of the Jewish tradition, it is now a movement that is open to all Jewish possibilities, whether traditional or innovative. The guiding principle of Reform today is the autonomy of every individual to choose a Jewish religious expression that is personally mean-

ingful. The result is a Judaism open to all options and therefore appealing to a broad range of Jews—including those who have long felt disenfranchised, such as Jews married to non-Jews and homosexuals. The dilemma this raises for the Reform movement is one of limits, of boundaries. If the autonomy of the individual prevails above all else, what beliefs and practices unite all Reform Jews? Is there, then, a model Reform Jew? And is there anything a Reform Jew can do that places him or her beyond the pale of acceptable behavior? Thus far, Reform Judaism has been unable to answer these questions.

## *The Abandonment of Ideology*

Not surprisingly, the issues that have prompted the most intense debate in the Reform movement have revolved around questions of definition and boundary. As noted above, the reintroduction of some rituals during the 1950s already engendered debate over the future direction of Reform, with some prominent rabbis expressing concern that the movement was losing its way and becoming less distinctive. The debate became considerably more vociferous as Reform Judaism instituted several radical new changes during the 1970s. Three issues especially sparked controversy: the introduction of a new prayer book to replace the venerated *Union Prayer Book* that had done service for 80 years; the decision of growing numbers of Reform rabbis to officiate at mixed marriages; and the desire of the movement to produce an updated platform to replace earlier ideological statements. In each case, Reform was torn between respect for the autonomous choice of the individual and the need to define a clear-cut position; and in each case, the former concern triumphed over the latter.

### TOWARD A NEW REFORM LITURGY

The movement to compile a new prayer book for Reform Judaism to replace the *Union Prayer Book* (UPB)[71] began in earnest in the 1950s and gained momentum in 1966 when a symposium on liturgy was planned for the journal of the Reform rabbinate. Initially there was much resistance to change; it was argued that the venerable UPB, the Haggadah, and the Rabbi's Manual were "properties" of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and ought not be tampered with. If rabbis felt uncomfortable with parts of these works, the argument went, they could use them with greater selectivity. Others, however, contended that the UPB was no longer

[71]On the history of the UPB, see Lou H. Silberman, "The Union Prayer Book: A Study in Liturgical Development," in *Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Bertram Korn (New York, 1965), pp. 46–80.

consonant with the mood of the movement and that an entirely new prayer book, compiled with the cooperation of rabbis, gifted writers, psychiatrists, philosophers, and educators, was needed. Proponents of a new prayer book complained that the UPB was written in archaic language and filled with obscure references, that its theology was dated, and its prayers remote from the actual concerns of Reform worshipers. As a tangible expression of dissatisfaction with the UPB, hundreds of Reform congregations began in the 1960s to compile informal "creative liturgies" that were distributed in photocopied form. Clearly, pressure was building among both rabbis and the laity for a new *siddur*.[72]

This ferment culminated in 1975 when the CCAR published the new prayer book, entitled *Gates of Prayer* (GOP), containing services for "weekdays, Sabbaths, Festivals, and prayers for synagogue and home." Among the innovations of this work were the following: a Hebrew, as well as an English, title; a partial attempt to deal with the male-oriented language of earlier liturgies; longer passages in Hebrew and from the traditional liturgy; a heavy emphasis on Israel and Zion; explicit references to the Holocaust; and—symptomatic of the new mood—the inclusion of ten distinct Friday-evening services (as well as a half-dozen Sabbath morning services), which have been described as ranging from "basically Conservative to Reconstructionist, to neo-Hassidic, UPB Reform, to polydox."[73]

Despite its near universal acceptance by Reform temples, *Gates of Prayer* continues to stir debate within the Reform movement.[74] A symposium held to mark the tenth anniverary of its appearance revealed a range of criticisms: some found it unwieldy because it was so heavy; others viewed it as essentially a rabbi's instrument; still others found it a poor pedagogic tool, since it lacked explanatory notes; and yet others resented its continued use of sexist language in reference to God. But the central issue of controversy continues to revolve around the issue of Reform definition.[75] One Reform rabbi indicated that the UPB "was torn from my hands by my trustees who

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[72]On the creative liturgies of the 1960s, see Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism*, pp. 66–67. For an extended discussion of the problems posed by the UPB, see the symposium in the *CCAR Journal*, Jan. and Oct. 1967, as well as Edward Graham, "Winds of Liturgical Reform," *Judaism*, Winter 1974, pp. 53–54.

[73]Eric Friedland, "Reform Liturgy in the Making," *Jewish Spectator*, Fall 1987, pp. 40–42. On "Polydoxy," see Alvin Reines, "Polydox Judaism: A Statement," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Fall 1980, pp. 47–55. On the confusion regarding "theism," see David Polish, "An Outline for Theological Discourse in Reform," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Winter 1982, pp. 2–3.

[74]On *Gates of Prayer*'s widespread acceptance, see CCAR *Yearbook*, 1979, p. 39, which claims that within four years of its appearance, it had been adopted by 75 percent of Reform temples.

[75]See the symposium on "*Gates of Prayer*: Ten Years Later," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Fall 1985, pp. 13–61.

insisted that our congregation adopt the new [*Gates of Prayer*]. . . . I am not in sympathy with the new wave of Reform, the *kipa-talit-kashrut-mila-tevila* school which now seems to dominate the movement. I subscribe to the mission idea and the social justice emphasis in conventional Reform."[76] *Gates of Prayer* underscores the departure of Reform from its earlier position, but does not present a coherent vision of what Reform ideology constitutes today, other than an amalgam of contradictory tendencies within American Judaism.

### THE CENTENARY PERSPECTIVE

The difficulty of defining a Reform outlook was further highlighted when the Central Conference of American Rabbis tried to draft a new ideological platform on the occasion of its centennial. This new platform was to take its place in a series of rabbinic pronouncements dating back to the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 and the Columbus Platform of 1937. Yet when the committee empaneled to draft the platform met, it could not complete its work in time (1973), and instead the Centenary Perspective was issued in 1976.

In his preface to a special issue of the *CCAR Journal* introducing the Centenary Perspective, Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, chairman of the special committee that eventually drafted the statement, outlined some of the ideological differences that impeded progress. He described how, in the wake of the CCAR decision in 1973 urging rabbis to refrain from officiating at mixed marriages, "internal dissension among the rabbis had risen to such a point of intensity that there seemed the possibility of the Reform movement splitting. . . . Ideologically what troubled members of the [CCAR] was the place of freedom in Reform Judaism versus that of discipline." Borowitz went on to describe candidly how the Centenary Perspective was drafted in a deliberate attempt to avoid dissension and focus on commonalities. Three issues were deemed paramount: "What is the nature of a Reform Jew's religious obligations?" "What are our duties to the State of Israel and to the communities in which we live?" and "How do we balance our duties to our people and to humanity at large?" To these was added the issue of living with diversity within the Reform movement, "particularly since it seemed to have come to the point of tearing us apart."[77]

The Centenary Perspective responded to the last issue by turning diversity into a virtue: "Reform does more than tolerate diversity; it engenders it." Thus, it is not a common ideology that unites Reform Jews but rather

[76]Samuel M. Silver's letter in *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Spring 1986, p. 83.

[77]The Centenary Perspective, as well as analysis provided by members of the committee that drafted the statement, appears in *CCAR Journal*, Spring 1977, pp. 3–80.

a "spirit of Reform Jewish beliefs." These include: a belief in God, albeit a deity whose role is not clearly defined; an identification with the Jewish people, the bearers of Judaism; and a belief in Torah, which "results from meetings between God and the Jewish people." The chief manner in which these beliefs are acted upon is through the fulfillment of "obligations" that include "daily religious observance." Significantly, the Centennial Perspective qualifies what is meant by obligations: "Within each area of Jewish observance, Reform Jews are called upon to confront the claims of tradition, however differently perceived, and to exercise their individual autonomy, choosing and creating on the basis of commitment and knowledge." Once again, when confronted with the tension between freedom of choice and guidelines for belief and practice, Reform opted for the the former.

### RABBINIC OFFICIATION AT MIXED MARRIAGES

The most bitter debate pitting movement discipline against the principle of individual autonomy erupted in 1973, when the Reform rabbinate debated a resolution that urged members of the CCAR to desist from officiating at mixed marriages. The proposed resolution not only reaffirmed Reform's long-standing view "that mixed marriage is contrary to the Jewish tradition and should be discouraged," but declared its "opposition to participation by its members in any ceremony which solemnizes a mixed marriage." The resolution went on to dictate a course of action to members of the CCAR who dissented from this view, urging them to: "1. refrain from officiating at a mixed marriage unless the couple" undertakes to study for conversion; 2. refrain from officiating at a mixed marriage for a member of another congregation served by a Conference member unless there has been prior consultation; 3. refrain from co-officiating or sharing with non-Jewish clergy in the solemnization of a mixed marriage; 4. refrain from officiating at a mixed marriage on Shabbat or Yom Tov." To give further weight to the resolution, the president of the CCAR published an essay in the official journal of the Reform rabbinate entitled "Enough," a plea to his members to desist from participating in "ecumenical marriages."[78]

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[78]The entire debate appears in the CCAR *Yearbook*, 1973, pp. 59–97. For the original resolution, see pp. 63–64. See also David Polish, "Enough," *CCAR Journal*, Winter 1973, pp. 35–37. It is not entirely clear why the issue arose in 1973, but certainly one precipitating factor was the circulation within the CCAR in August 1969 of a list of colleagues who officiated at mixed marriages. This list for the first time confirmed that over 100 Reform rabbis participated in such ceremonies and made their names available to colleagues who wished to refer their congregants to them. As noted by Norman Mirsky, the circulation of this list "removed the matter from the realm of private to that of social dissent," and made it easier for rabbis who had desisted from officiating at such ceremonies to change their policies. See "Mixed Marriage and the Reform Rabbinate," *Midstream*, Jan. 1970, pp. 40–46.

In the ensuing debate, a range of passionately held views on the matter was expressed. Speaking for rabbis who officiated at mixed marriages, Irwin Fishbein pleaded with his colleagues to recognize that they did not have the power to prevent intermarriage by refusing to sanction such marriages; he urged them "not to slam a door that may be only slightly ajar" by refusing to officiate; and he called upon them to utilize their persuasive, rather than coercive, powers to encourage mixed-married couples to participate in Jewish life. Speaking for the CCAR members who supported the resolution, Joel Zion portrayed "mixed marriage without prior conversion [as] a serious threat to the survival of the Jewish people." He then raised the issue of drawing the line, describing his decision to enter the rabbinate in order "to lead my people, not to be lead by them; to set standards for Jewish survival, not to be set upon by those who seek a convenient answer to a religious problem. . . . We rabbis are the last bastion in the struggle for Jewish survival, and . . . the time has come for us to announce that our liberalism would go no further when survival is at stake."[79]

When the debate ended, the entire section of the resolution aimed at rabbis who officiated at mixed marriages was dropped. The resolution as adopted declared opposition to officiation at mixed marriages but also recognized that members of the CCAR "have held and continue to hold divergent interpretations of Jewish tradition." The principle of individual autonomy prevented the conference from passing a resolution that did anything more than urge what one rabbi called "voluntaristic responsiveness to the demands of Jewish law and the needs of the entire people."[80] Yet even this mild attempt at using a "collective voice to exert moral deterrence"[81] prompted over 100 dissident rabbis to form an "Association for a Progressive Reform Judaism" in September 1974, whose primary concern was upholding the right of every Reform rabbi to decide individually whether to officiate at a mixed marriage.[82] The failure to pass the original resolution and the splintering of the CCAR in response to the revised resolution further highlight the challenge posed by the Reform movement's

[79]CCAR *Yearbook*, 1973, pp. 96, 64–70.

[80]David Polish, "The Changing and the Constant in the Reform Rabbinate," *American Jewish Archives*, Nov. 1983, p. 327.

[81]Ibid.

[82]Judah Cahn, "The Struggle Within Reform Judaism," *CCAR Journal*, Summer 1975, p. 65. For more on the association, see Sylvin L. Wolf, "Reform Judaism as Process: A Study of the CCAR, 1960–75" (unpublished Ph.D. diss., St. Louis University, 1978), pp. 269–71. It appears that Reform rabbis opposed to their colleagues' officiation at mixed marriages continue to press their case. See Moshe Zemer, "An Halachic and Historical Critique of *Responsa on Jewish Marriage*," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Spring 1988, pp. 31–47, which reports that 100 rabbis, including the heads of HUC-JIR, the UAHC, and the CCAR, issued a statement in Dec. 1985, declaring that there cannot be a Jewish marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew.

embrace of individual autonomy at the expense of movement discipline and coherence.

### *Religious Practice—Change in Both Directions*

Reform Judaism's commitment to individual autonomy has led to considerable revision in religious practice. Rituals that had long been deemed obsolete by the movement have been reinstated, while other traditional practices that Reform had never openly rejected in the past have now been abandoned. In its attitude toward tradition, the Reform movement has been open to change in both directions.

The openness to tradition is strikingly evident in a number of major publications issued by the CCAR since the early 1970s. Most of these works are part of a series of volumes whose titles contain the words "Gates of"; they provide liturgies and guidance for the High Holy Days, festivals, home observances, and even penitential prayers. In addition, there is a new Haggadah for Passover and a major new commentary on the Pentateuch. All of these volumes are handsomely produced and contain a goodly amount of Hebrew, as well as commentaries from a range of classical and contemporary Jewish sources. The "Gates of" series is unprecedented as a guide for the Reform laity.[83]

Perhaps the most important volume is a work entitled *Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle*. *Mitzvah*, the book declares, "is the key to authentic Jewish existence and to the sanctification of life. No English equivalent can adequately translate the term. Its root meaning is 'commandment' but *mitzvah* has come to have broader meanings." The book's introduction then goes on to clarify the radical departure implicit in a Reform emphasis on *mitzvah*. Formerly the movement had viewed ritual commandments, as opposed to ethical ones, as "optional or even superfluous." But this dichotomy is now rejected, for "the very act of doing a *mitzvah* may lead one to know the heart of the matter. . . . Ritual, as the vehicle for confronting God and Jewish history, can shape and stimulate one's ethical impulses." The volume then surveys a range of observances related to birth, childhood, education, marriage and the Jewish home, and death and mourning. One of the most striking passages deals with Jewish dietary laws: "The fact that *Kashrut* was an essential feature of Jewish life for so many centuries should motivate the Jewish family to study it and to consider whether or not it may enhance the sanctity of their home." Still,

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[83] *Gates of Prayer* (1975); *Gates of Repentance* (1977); *Gates of the House* (1977); *Gates of Mitzvah* (1979); *The Five Scrolls* (with services, 1983); *Gates of the Seasons* (1983); *Gates of Song* (1987); *Songs and Hymns* (for *Gates of Prayer*, 1987); *Gates of Forgiveness-Selichot* (1987); *Gates of Understanding* (Commentary to *Gates of Prayer*, 1987).

the openness to tradition is continually qualified by a nondirective approach, summed up by the following disclaimer: "Even within the realm of *mitzvah* various levels of doing and understanding might exist." *Gates of Mitzvah* reaffirms the Reform movement's twin commitments to "Jewish continuity and to personal freedom of choice."[84]

A good deal of the pressure in the direction of greater traditionalism has emanated from rabbinical students at the various branches of Hebrew Union College. Much to the displeasure of some senior faculty members, rabbinical students in the 1970s began to don yarmulkes and introduce traditional rituals into their personal observance. Matters came to a head when some students began to lobby for the introduction of kosher food at Hebrew Union College to facilitate the observance of the dietary laws. For a brief period, the cafeteria at the Cincinnati branch dispensed food on two separate lines—one for kosher food and one for nonkosher food. (Subsequently, the alternatives became vegetarian food and nonkosher food.) Two branches of HUC signaled a desire to identify with a more traditional version of Judaism when they opted to refer to their chapels as synagogues.[85] It appears that rabbis ordained in recent years, as well as new faculty members appointed since the mid-1970s, are spearheading the turn to greater traditionalism.

The renewed interest in religious tradition also manifests itself in Reform temples, which over the past two to three decades have introduced the following: an increased number of readings in Hebrew (now spoken with an Israeli, Sephardic pronunciation); an *amidah* prayer, during which congregants are asked to stand; a cantor who serves as a *shaliah tzibur*, as the emissary of the congregation, something that non-Jewish choir members may not do; tolerance of male members who wear yarmulkes; and the near universal Bar and Bat Mitzvah.[86] Moreover, the liturgies employed reflect the emphasis on tradition found in the "Gates of" series.

Perhaps the most dramatic evidence of a move toward tradition in the Reform context was the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' decision in 1985 to support the establishment of Reform Jewish day schools. Earlier debates over this subject, beginning in 1969, had produced no such support. But despite vehement opposition and a relatively close vote, the 1985 motion carried. As of early 1986, there were ten day schools under

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[84]Simeon Maslin, ed., *Gates of Mitzvah*, pp. 3–5, 40. It is noteworthy that the term "*mitzvah*" does not appear in the Centenary Perspective; the operative term there is "obligation."

[85]Norman Mirsky, "Nathan Glazer's *American Judaism* After 30 Years: A Reform Opinion," *American Jewish History*, Dec. 1987, pp. 237–38.

[86]Ibid., p. 241; Polish, "The Changing and the Constant," p. 330. On the dissatisfaction of some Reform rabbis with the Bar and Bat Mitzvah, due to the deleterious impact upon Sabbath- morning attendance, see Herman Snyder, "Is Bar-Bat Mitzvah Destroying Attendance at Synagogue Service?" *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Winter 1980, pp. 9–12.

Reform auspices in North America.[87] The creation of day schools by a movement that had long emphasized universal concerns and steadfastly supported public education represented a significant turn toward Jewish particularism.

These steps toward greater traditionalism within Reform have been counterbalanced by several radical departures from earlier Jewish practice. The first such departure came in response to the feminist movement. In the late 1960s, HUC began to enroll women in its rabbinic program, a decision that had already been sanctioned by the CCAR in 1922 but had never been acted upon until the women's movement spurred an interest in the matter. In 1972 Sally Priesand became the first woman to be ordained as a rabbi in North America. Since then, over 100 women have been ordained by HUC and other rabbinical seminaries in America.[88] HUC was first in investing women as cantors, beginning this in 1975. By the late 1980s the preponderant majority of students enrolled in the cantorial programs of the HUC were women.[89]

The openness of the Reform movement to women's participation is reflected in synagogue life as well. A survey of "Women in the Synagogue Today" conducted in 1975 found that virtually every Reform congregation included in the survey responded affirmatively when asked whether women participated in the following synagogue activities: being counted in a *minyan*, reading *haftarot*, opening the ark, having *aliyot* to the Torah, carrying a Torah on Simhat Torah, giving a sermon, chanting the service, and chanting *kiddush* and *havdalah*. Interestingly, a major variable determining the openness of Reform temples to women's participation was its age: "The classical Reform synagogues, which are older, allowed little nonrabbinical participation of any type. The rabbi . . . controlled the service. . . . However, the newer congregations, in moving back toward tradition, have reinstituted Sabbath morning services, including reading from the Torah, thus encouraging more participation by members in general. A by-product of these old-new forms is the availability of honors in the Torah service to women."[90]

A second area of radical departure for Reform was the decision to welcome homosexual congregations into the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The issue first arose in the early 1970s, when Jewish homosexuals began to form synagogues in a number of localities across the nation. The head of the UAHC, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, turned for a

[87]Michael Zeldin, "Beyond the Day School Debate," *Reform Judaism*, Spring 1986, pp. 10–11.

[88]Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism*, p. 69.

[89]Laurie S. Senz, "The New Cantors," *Reform Judaism*, Fall 1986, p. 18.

[90]Daniel Elazar and Rela Geffen Monson, "Women in the Synagogue Today," *Midstream*, Apr. 1981, pp. 25–26.

responsum to his colleague Solomon Freehof, the most respected adjudicator of Reform Jewish law. Freehof ruled that "homosexuality is deemed in Jewish law to be a sin. [But] . . . it would be in direct contravention to Jewish law to keep sinners out of the congregation. To isolate them into a separate congregation and thus increase their mutual availability is certainly wrong." Despite this ruling against the creation of separate congregations for homosexuals, a number of Reform rabbis encouraged the formation of homosexual congregations by offering their facilities for religious services.[91] In 1977 the UAHC resolved to support and welcome homosexual congregations as affiliates; in subsequent resolutions it urged the inclusion of homosexuals in all aspects of congregational life.[92]

Perhaps the most radical departures of the Reform movement in the realm of practice have come in response to the issue of mixed marriage. Reform's preoccupation with this matter stems largely from the high rate of intermarriage among its congregants. In addition, the movement has deliberately decided to recruit new members from mixed-married couples in the Jewish community. Reform leaders openly declare that as a result of these two trends, within the next few decades over half the families in some Reform temples will consist of intermarried couples and their children.[93]

To deal with the rising tide of mixed marriage, Reform temples have instituted programs to smooth the transition of non-Jews into the Reform community. Some congregations sponsor support groups for mixed-married couples; others permit such couples to become members, but limit the participation of the non-Jewish spouse;[94] and still others permit mixed-married couples to participate in the full range of ritual activities, including being called to the Torah together.[95] Moreover, a very large percentage of Reform rabbis—one survey put the figure at 50 percent—officiate at mixed marriages.[96] Still, such openness has not prevented the Reform movement

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[91]See the symposium on "Judaism and Homosexuality" in *CCAR Journal*, Summer 1973, especially p. 33, on Freehof's decision, and pp. 33–41, on the founding of Beth Chayim Chadashim at the Leo Baeck Temple in Los Angeles.

[92]John Hirsch, "Don't Ghettoize Gays," *Reform Judaism*, Spring 1988, p. 15.

[93]See Mark L. Winer, "Jewish Demography and the Challenges to Reform Jewry," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Winter 1984, p. 9.

[94]See Melanie W. Aron and David Jeremy Zucker, "The Structure, Function, and Organization of a Mixed Marriage Support System," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Summer 1984, pp. 16–24.

[95]See Joseph A. Edelheit and Arthur Meth, "Accepting Non-Jews as Members of Synagogues," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Summer 1980, pp. 87–92.

[96]Hershel Shanks, "Rabbis Who Perform Intermarriages," *Moment*, Jan./Feb. 1988, p. 14, reports on a survey taken by Rabbi Irwin Fishbein. See also the "Forum" section of the magazine's June 1988 issue for a discussion of the survey's reliability, as well as the letter of Rabbi David Ostrich which suggests that rabbinical students at HUC now overwhelmingly opt to officiate at mixed marriages, for "not to officiate would render the rabbi left out of the life of the congregation."

from emphasizing conversion to Judaism. When the rate of intermarriage began to rise in the 1960s, Reform established conversion programs that enrolled thousands of students.[97] By the early 1980s the movement announced an active outreach program aimed at all non-Jewish spouses married to Jews.

It was in the context of mixed marriage that the CCAR voted at its annual convention in 1983 to redefine Jewish identity. Rabbinic law defines a Jew as someone born to a Jewish mother or someone who has undergone conversion. In its 1983 ruling, the CCAR created new criteria to define Jewishness: that a child has at least one Jewish parent; and that the child's acceptance of Jewish identity be "established through appropriate and timely public and formal acts of identification with the Jewish faith and people."[98] Interestingly, Jewish identity is no longer automatic even if one is born to a Jewish mother, but now involves some unspecified test of creed as well. In the debate over the resolution, key supporters, such as Rabbi Alexander Schindler, argued that the resolution merely made explicit practices that had long existed on a *de facto* basis in the Reform movement; that it ameliorated the condition of Jewish fathers who wished to raise their children as Jewish; and that it continued the process of equalizing the status of males and females, since it avoided giving preferential treatment to either Jewish mothers or fathers. Opponents of the resolution maintained that the new definition would turn the Reform movement into a sect, with offspring who would not be acceptable as marriage partners for other Jews. Moreover, they feared that passage would lead to further attacks on the status of Reform in Israel.[99]

The decision on patrilineal descent and the other issues discussed here have evoked comparatively little debate within the Reform movement. Most Reform rabbis subscribe to these positions, and even more important, the Reform laity assents to them. Thus, when asked if a rabbi should officiate at a marriage only if both partners are Jewish, fewer than half the leaders of Reform temples agreed;[100] presumably, even fewer of the rank and file would agree. The decision on patrilineality has heightened tensions between the Reform movement and the other denominations, but it appears to reflect a consensus within the Reform movement itself.[101]

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[97]*JTA Community News Reports*, July 25, 1969, reports on the School for Converts sponsored by the UAHC.

[98]For the complete text of the "Report of the Committee on Patrilineal Descent on the Status of Children of Mixed Marriages," see *American Reform Responsa: Collected Responsa of the CCAR, 1889–1983*, ed. Walter Jacob (New York, 1983), pp. 546–50.

[99]On the debate over patrilineal descent, see the CCAR *Yearbook*, 1983, pp. 144–60.

[100]Winer et al., *Leaders of Reform Judaism*, p. 55.

[101]This is not to suggest that all decisions are supported unanimously. For a particularly hard-hitting critique of recent Reform decisions, see Jakob Petuchowski, "Reform Judaism's

In the past two decades Reform has transformed itself from an insecure movement, uncertain of its agenda and viability, into a self-assured movement convinced that it "represents for most Jews the authentically American expression of Judaism."[102] Under a new generation of leaders who assumed executive office since the late 1960s, including Alexander Schindler of the UAHC, Joseph Glaser of the CCAR, and Alfred Gottschalk of HUC, Reform has charted a new course.[103] It has revamped its ideology and practice to broaden its appeal to sectors of the Jewish community that had often felt alienated from Jewish life—feminist women, mixed-married couples, homosexuals, as well as Jews in the other denominations who wish to exercise free choice in defining their Jewish commitments. Reform today is inclusive, reintroducing old practices while instituting new ones. Based on such an appealing program, the movement is confident that it will "harvest the demographic trends [within American Jewry] to its own benefit."[104] In their more expansive moods, some leaders express in public their belief that Reform will one day become *the* Judaism of all non-Orthodox Jews in America, encompassing liberal Jews ranging from classical Reformers to Reconstructionists to Conservative Jews.[105]

Demographic studies suggest that Reform's strategy has already begun to yield results. The movement is growing more rapidly than any other and at the expense of its competitors. It is too early to assess the long-term consequences of present trends within Reform, but no one can gainsay that it has reformed itself considerably in recent decades.

## DENOMINATIONAL LIFE: ORTHODOX JUDAISM

During the past quarter century, two major trends have marked the development of Orthodox Judaism in America. First, Orthodoxy has achieved an unprecedented degree of respectability in the eyes of both non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews. Where once Orthodox Judaism had been written off as a movement of immigrants and poor Jews, it is now regarded

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Diminishing Boundaries: The Grin That Remained," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Fall 1986, pp. 15–24.

[102]Winer, "Jewish Demography," p. 14.

[103]On the emergence of the new leaders and the considerable controversy surrounding their appointments, see Eugene Borowitz, "Reform Judaism's Coming Power Struggle," *Sh'ma*, Mar. 19, 1971, pp. 75–78, and Mark Winer, "The Crisis in the Reform Movement," *Response*, Fall 1971, pp. 112–120.

[104]Winer, "Jewish Demography," p. 25.

[105]For evidence of this triumphalism, see Alexander Schindler, "Remarks by the President of the UAHC," CCAR *Yearbook*, 1982, p. 63. "Orthodoxy's mass strength was easily confined to the first generation of American Jews, and Conservative Judaism gives evidence of being essentially a second generation phenomenon. The future belongs to us."

as a denomination with staying power and appeal to Jews from across the religious spectrum. As sociologist Charles Liebman has noted, "This is the first generation in over 200 years—that is, since its formulation as the effort by traditional Judaism to confront modernity—in which Orthodoxy is not in decline."[106] Even though Orthodoxy is not growing numerically, its comparative stability, particularly as measured by the ability to inculcate a strong sense of allegiance among its young, has given the movement significant credibility and dynamism. Indeed, the movement's programs, particularly with regard to youth, are being increasingly imitated by the other denominations.

The second trend that characterizes Orthodoxy is the shift to the right in the thinking and behavior of Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Jews today observe ritual commandments more punctiliously than at midcentury; they regard rabbinic authorities who adjudicate Jewish law in a conservative manner with more favor than they do more liberal rabbis; and in their attitudes toward non-Orthodox Jews they tend to be more exclusivist than before. Both the emergence of a stronger Orthodoxy and the movement's shift to the right have reshaped relations between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews.

## *Problems of Definition*

Considerable difficulties inhere in any discussion of the Orthodox world. Like their counterparts in other religious movements, Orthodox Jews do not share a single articulated theology, let alone movement ideology. Where Orthodoxy differs, however, is in the degree of intolerance displayed by different sectors of the same movement toward each other. This is evident in the expressions of dismay that modern Orthodox Jews voice about "the black hats"—more right-wing Orthodox types[107] —moving into their neighborhoods.[108] Right-wing Orthodox rabbis often seek to delegitimate their more moderate Orthodox counterparts,[109] while the right-wing Orthodox

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[106]Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy Faces Modernity," *Orim*, Spring 1987, p. 13.

[107]The term "right-wing Orthodox," despite its problematic nature, is used in the present discussion because it is common parlance. The category roughly approximates the "sectarian Orthodox" identified by Liebman, the "traditionalist Orthodox" identified by Heilman and Cohen, and the "strictly-Orthodox" and "ultra-Orthodox" identified by Helmreich. See the discussion that follows.

[108]For an interesting account of such fears in one modern Orthodox community, see Edward S. Shapiro, "Orthodoxy in Pleasantdale," *Judaism*, Spring 1985, p. 170.

[109]See, for example, the views of Rabbi Moses Feinstein, who differentiated between *shomrei mitzvot*, observers of the commandments, and the community of "God-fearers," sectarians; and Ira Robinson, "Because of Our Many Sins: The Contemporary Jewish World as Reflected in the Responsa of Moses Feinstein," *Judaism*, Winter 1986, pp. 38–39.

press reserves its greatest scorn for the policies of moderate Orthodox groups.[110] Even on the Orthodox right, different Hassidic groups have battled with each other. The student of Orthodoxy is thus faced with the question of whether Orthodoxy can truly be viewed as a coherent and united movement.

Further, Orthodoxy is institutionally fragmented in a manner not paralleled within the other movements. Whereas Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative Judaism have within them a single organization of congregations, a single rabbinic organization, and a single institution for the training of rabbis, Orthodoxy has a multiplicity of organizations for each of these purposes.[111] Such institutional diffusion has apparently not hindered Orthodoxy but has created difficulties for the students of Orthodox life—particularly in determining who speaks for Orthodoxy. There are many conflicting voices.

The whole issue of authority is more complicated in Orthodoxy than in the other denominations. In some ways, Orthodox Jews are the most likely to accept the opinion of a rabbi as authoritative on matters pertaining to Jewish living. Indeed, some Orthodox Jews go so far as having their rabbis decide for them sensitive financial and professional matters, and even personal family questions, such as whom to marry and how many children to bring into the world. At the same time, Orthodox synagogues are less dependent on a rabbinic elite to guide their fortunes than are those of other denominations. Pulpit rabbis have less status in the Orthodox world than in any other segment of the Jewish community, and most Orthodox institutions rely heavily on lay rather than rabbinic leadership.

Sociologists have attempted to identify the major groupings within Orthodoxy by using various analytic schema. In a pioneering study published in the *American Jewish Year Book* 20 years ago, Charles Liebman differentiated between the "uncommitted Orthodox," the "modern Orthodox," and the "sectarian Orthodox."[112] The first were either East European immi-

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[110]The most important English-language periodical of the Orthodox right is the *Jewish Observer*, which espouses the views of Agudath Israel. Its approach has been characterized by one modern Orthodox writer as one of "unrelieved negativism. Rather than articulating its own positive approach to issues, it is in most instances content merely to inveigh against positions adopted by others." David Singer, "Voices of Orthodoxy," *Commentary*, July 1974, p. 59.

[111]Orthodox rabbinic organizations include the Rabbinical Council of America, Agudath HaRabbonim, the Rabbinical Alliance of America, Agudath Ha'Admorim, and Hitachduth HaRabbonim HaHaredim. (See Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism*, p. 155.) Among synagogue bodies there are the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America and the National Council of Young Israel. On the various rabbinical seminaries, aside from Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, see William Helmreich, *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Jewry* (New York, 1982).

[112]Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," pp. 21–98.

grants who, out of inertia rather than religious choice, identified as Orthodox, or individuals who had no particular commitment to Jewish law but preferred to pray in an Orthodox synagogue. The modern Orthodox "seek to demonstrate the viability of the Halakhah for contemporary life . . . [and also] emphasize what they have in common with all other Jews rather than what separates them." The sectarians are disciples of either *roshei yeshivah* (heads of yeshivahs) or Hassidic rebbes, whose strategy it is to isolate their followers from non-Orthodox influences.

In contrast to Liebman's ideological scheme, sociologist William Helmreich utilizes behavioral measures to differentiate sectors of the Orthodox world.[113] Helmreich describes three separate groups—the "ultra-Orthodox," by which he means primarily Hassidic Jews; the "strictly Orthodox," referring to the products of Lithuanian-type yeshivahs transplanted in America; and the "modern Orthodox," by which he means Jews who look to Yeshiva University and its rabbinic alumni for leadership. Each group has its own norms of behavior, particularly with regard to secular education for children, the interaction between men and women, and even the garb they wear—e.g., the knitted *kippah*, the black velvet yarmulke, or the Hassidic *streimel*. Helmreich's contribution is to draw attention to the "yeshivah world" of the strictly Orthodox, a world that, as we will see, is transforming American Orthodoxy.

In a forthcoming study, sociologists Samuel Heilman and Steven M. Cohen speak of the "nominal Orthodox," the "centrist Orthodox," and the "traditionalist Orthodox."[114] The authors claim that Orthodox Jews, regardless of where they are situated on the religious spectrum, share with each other a high degree of similarity in what they regard as required ritual observances, belief in God and divine revelation, disagreement with potentially heretical ideas, feelings of bonding with other Orthodox Jews, and political conservatism on specific issues; in all of these areas, Orthodox Jews have more in common with each other than with non-Orthodox Jews. While the present essay will take note of the severe strains within the Orthodox movement, it does accept the premise that there are important religious beliefs and behaviors that unite Orthodox Jews and set them apart from non-Orthodox Jews.

## *Orthodoxy's Newfound Confidence*

All of the major groupings within the Orthodox camp have participated in an unprecedented revival during the past two decades. This revival may

[113]Helmreich, *World of the Yeshiva*, pp. 52–54.

[114]Samuel C. Heilman and Steven M. Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials: Modern Orthodox Jews in America*, forthcoming.

be measured in the following changes: Orthodox Jews have entered the public arena confident that a display of distinctive religious behavior will not hamper their economic and social mobility. Whereas at midcentury Orthodox Jews who wished to advance in non-Jewish environments believed it necessary to blend in, by the 1970s and 1980s male Orthodox students and professionals had taken to wearing yarmulkes on university campuses, in law offices, and on hospital wards, and in some cases, even in state and municipal legislatures. (Their female counterparts also may be identified by distinctive, though less obtrusive, items of dress, such as the modest garb of some Orthodox women and special hair coverings.) Orthodox Jews in recent decades have also demanded of their employers the right to leave their jobs early on Friday afternoons when the Sabbath begins early, as well as the right to absent themselves on religious holidays. In fact, a legal defense agency, the Commission on Law and Public Action (COLPA) was founded by Orthodox attorneys precisely to pressure employers to comply with the needs of Orthodox employees. It is now assumed by Orthodox Jews that observance of Jewish traditions ought not to limit one's professional opportunities.[115]

Orthodox Jews actively engage in the political process to further their own aims. In this regard, the most right-wing groups have been especially adept at taking advantage of political opportunities. It has now become routine in New York politics for local and even national politicians to pay court to Hassidic rabbis. What is less well known is the sophisticated lobbying effort that won for Hassidic groups the status of a "disadvantaged group," with entitlement to special federal funds.[116] It is symptomatic of Orthodoxy's political activism and self-assertion that in 1988 eight Orthodox groups banded together to form the Orthodox Jewish Political Coalition to lobby in Washington, D.C.[117]

Orthodox groups have taken advantage of new technologies to facilitate religious observance. The revolution in food manufacturing and the proliferation of food products have made it possible for Orthodox Jews to arrange for extensive kosher certification, a stamp of approval that many manufacturers regard as a means of increasing their market share among observant Jews, and even among non-Jews who deem such certification as evidence of a product's high quality. According to one report, there were 16,000 products with kosher certification in the late 1980s, compared with only 1,000 a decade earlier.[118] Advances in food technology have also made it

[115]See Natalie Gittelson, "American Jews Rediscover Orthodoxy," *New York Times Magazine*, Sept. 30, 1984, p. 41ff.

[116]*New York Times*, June 29, 1984, p. B5.

[117]*Jewish Journal* (New York), Mar. 11, 1988, p. 4.

[118]Joan Nathan, "Kosher Goes Mainstream," *New York Times*, Sept. 7, 1988, p. C1.

possible to produce new kinds of kosher products: frozen *hallah* dough, ersatz crab meat, *parve* ice cream and cheesecake, and high quality kosher wines. Technology has also been harnessed to create a new institution in American Jewish life—"the *eruv* community."[119] Beginning in the 1970s, dozens of Orthodox synagogues made use of the utility wiring around their geographic enclaves to create domains in which carrying items and pushing strollers are permissible on the Sabbath. There is no doubt that by making religious observance easier, the "*eruv* community" and the broad array of kosher products have rendered Orthodoxy that much more attractive.

Orthodox Jews have also employed new media technologies to disseminate Orthodoxy. One of the first Jewish groups to utilize cable television was the Lubavitch movement, which televises the speeches of its "rebbe," Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, from Lubavitch headquarters in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, throughout the world. The Lubavitch movement also publishes *Moshiach Times: The Magazine for Children,* in comic-book format.[120] More significantly, Orthodox publishing houses have produced a vast array of religious literature. Mesorah Publications, with its Artscroll series, is arguably the largest publisher of Jewish books in the world today.[121] Beginning with its first volume, *The Megillah: The Book of Esther*, and continuing with its *Complete Siddur* and High Holy Day prayer book, many of the books published by this private firm have sold over 100,000 copies. Significantly, this publishing house is identified with right-wing Orthodoxy. Its Bible commentaries and volumes on Jewish history give no credence to modern, critical scholarship.[122] Nonetheless, the Artscroll volumes, according to the firm's publisher, are purchased by readers spanning the spectrum from "Kollel families" to "Conservodox."[123]

Orthodox Jews have become so certain that their version of Judaism is the only correct one and the only avenue for Jewish survival that they have launched programs to help other Jews to "return" to Judaism, i.e., become Orthodox Jews. The pioneers in this endeavor have been Lubavitch Hassidim who, with much coverage in the general media, launched their "mitz-

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[119]On the rise of this phenomenon, see Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism*, p. 170. For a report on one such community, see the *Jewish Observer*, Sept. 1983, p. 37.

[120]See, for example, Joe Kubert's cartoon strip entitled "An Act of Resistance," *Moshiach Times*, Sept. 1985, pp. 12–13. On "Dial-A-Shiur" and Jewish cable television programs featuring study, see the advertisements in *Good Fortune: The Magazine About Jewish Personalities*, Jan-Feb. and Mar. 1988.

[121]Barbara Sofer, "Bringing Artscroll to Israel," *Good Fortune: The Magazine About Jewish Personalities*, Apr. 1987, p. 13.

[122]On the scholarly perspective of Artscroll publications, see B. Barry Levy, "Artscroll: An Overview," in *Approaches to Modern Judaism* I (Chico, Calif., 1983), pp. 111–40.

[123]On the audience for Artscroll books, see Sofer, "Bringing Artscroll to Israel," pp. 13–14.

vah mobiles" in the early 1970s.[124] Stationing themselves in public areas and on university campuses in boldly marked trucks, they approached non-Orthodox Jews with the avowed purpose of convincing them to increase their levels of religious observance. As the Lubavitch movement and other Orthodox groups succeeded in wooing Jews from non-Orthodox backgrounds to their way of life, the organized Jewish community took note, particularly the non-Orthodox movements that sustained "defections." It is hard to gauge exactly how many non-Orthodox Jews have turned to Orthodoxy as so-called *ba'alei teshuvah* (literally, "those who have returned"). According to Herbert Danziger, an authority on the phenomenon, the number is significant, with the *ba'alei teshuvah* transforming Orthodoxy into a movement of choice rather than of birth.[125] It is too early to assess the long-term impact of *ba'alei teshuvah* on the Orthodox world. In the short term, however, the very phenomenon of nonobservant Jews turning to Orthodoxy has raised the movement's self-esteem and increased its prestige within the broader American Jewish community.

To a greater extent than any other denomination, Orthodoxy has been able to project itself as a movement attractive to young people. On an average Sabbath, many Orthodox synagogues are teeming with young parents and their children. At community parades and other public displays, Orthodox groups marshal vast numbers of youth. In general, Orthodox day schools, youth groups, and summer camps exude a sense of youthful vitality. The success of these programs is set into bold relief by the perception of many in other Jewish religious movements that their own youth are not sufficiently integrated into Jewish communal actitivities.

Orthodox Jews have assumed positions of power and influence in the organized Jewish community in an unprecedented manner. Within the past decade and a half, individual Orthodox Jews have risen to leading administrative posts in the Council of Jewish Federations, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, the World Jewish Congress, and a range of local federations and other Jewish agencies. Their presence is symptomatic of a shift in priorities of these organizations to what are "survivalist" issues, rather than the traditional "integrationist" agendas. In turn, these officials have further spurred organizations to rethink their priorities. By insisting on assuming their rightful place within organized Jewish life, Orthodox Jews as individuals have also moved organizations to meet the minimal

[124]"Are You a Jew," *Time*, Sept. 2, 1974, pp. 56–57; "Jewish Tanks," *Newsweek*, July 15, 1974, p. 77.

[125]See M. Herbert Danziger, *Returning to Orthodox Judaism: The Contemporary Revival in America and Israel*, forthcoming.

religious needs of observant Jews: providing kosher food at Jewish communal events; not conducting business on the Sabbath or religious holidays; and providing the opportunity for public prayer.[126]

Orthodoxy has been the beneficiary of much media coverage and has learned to encourage and shape it in a positive direction. Unlike earlier coverage of some Hassidic groups in the general American press, which focused on their exoticism, more recent reporting has emphasized the warm communal spirit and decent values promoted by the Orthodox world. Jewish writers of a non-Orthodox outlook, often themselves searching for rootedness and meaning, have rhapsodized over the world of Orthodoxy. And the Orthodox, in turn, have cooperated in such ventures. It was a telling sign of the new perspective that a non-Orthodox Jewish woman on the staff of the *New Yorker* magazine was given entrée to the Lubavitch community of Crown Heights, to carry out research for a series of articles. Not only could her positive portrait not have been published in such a periodical earlier in the century, but it is doubtful that an Orthodox group would have been receptive to such an inquiry, let alone to a woman reporter, in a previous period.[127] Positive media coverage of this sort provides further evidence of Orthodoxy's new respectability, and in turn adds to the movement's self-confidence.

## *Why the Revival?*

How do we account for Orthodoxy's impressive rebound in recent decades? What factors prompted the emergence of programs for Orthodox revitalization? And why do they seem to succeed?

Perhaps the key to Orthodox success has been its educational institutions. As noted above, Orthodoxy began to invest heavily in all-day religious

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[126]On the appropriation of traditional rituals within the federation world, see Jonathan Woocher, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986), p. 153. The battle to introduce religious observances into Jewish public life was not monopolized by Orthodox Jews; Conservative rabbis often played a pioneering, though unheralded, role. See Wolfe Kelman, "Defeatism, Triumphalism, or Gevurah?" *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly*, 1980, p. 20.

[127]For examples of earlier reports emphasizing the exotic world of Hassidic communities, see Harvey Arden and Nathan Benn, "The Pious Ones," *National Geographic*, Aug. 1975, p. 276ff., which explores "the closed world of Brooklyn's Hassidic Jews—a bit of old Hungary transplanted to a tenement neighborhood in America's largest city." See also Ray Schultz, "The Call of the Ghetto," *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1974. For a very different kind of reportage, see Lis Harris, *Holy Days: The World of a Hassidic Family* (New York, 1985), which originally appeared in three installments in the *New Yorker*.

For other examples of media attention to the Orthodox world, see Dorit Phyllis Gary, "The Chosen," *New York Magazine*, June 28, 1982, pp. 24–31; and Jan Hoffman, "Back to Shul: The Return of Wandering Jews," *Village Voice*, Apr. 21, 1987, p. 13ff.

schools at midcentury. In 1940 there were only 35 Jewish day schools in America, scattered in seven different communities, but principally located in the metropolitan New York area. Within the next five years the number doubled, and day schools could now be found in 31 communities. The postwar era witnessed an even more impressive surge, so that by 1975 there was a total of 425 Orthodox day schools, including 138 high schools, with a total enrollment of 82,200. It is estimated that by the 1980s approximately 80 percent of all Orthodox children were enrolled in day schools.[128]

Day schools serve the Orthodox community as the key instrument for formal education and socialization. With at least half of each day devoted to Jewish studies, day schools have the luxury of teaching students language skills necessary for Hebrew prayer and the study of Jewish texts in their original Hebrew or Aramaic, as well as ample time to impart information on the proper observance of rituals. Equally important, day schools provide an environment for building a strong attachment to the Orthodox group: they prescribe proper religious behavior and impart strong ideological indoctrination; and they create an all-encompassing social environment where lifelong friendships are made. According to one study of a leading Orthodox day school, even students from non-Orthodox homes developed a strong allegiance to Orthodoxy due to their ongoing exposure to the school's programs. Moreover, the majority of students were as religiously observant or even more observant than their parents.[129] At midcentury, the proliferation of day schools was creating a quiet revolution that few contemporaries noticed. By the 1970s and 1980s, Orthodoxy began to reap the benefits of its educational investments.[130]

Complementing the day-school movement is a series of other institutions designed to socialize the younger generation of Orthodox Jews. Orthodox synagogues of various stripes have introduced separate religious services for the young people as well as a range of social, educational, and recreational programs to provide an Orthodox environment while the youth are not in school. In addition, Orthodox groups have invested heavily in summer camps, which provide an all-embracing Orthodox experience during vaca-

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[128]For data on the proliferation of day schools and the rise in enrollments, see Egon Mayer and Chaim Waxman, "Modern Jewish Orthodoxy in America: Toward the Year 2000," *Tradition*, Spring 1977, pp. 99–100. For more recent estimates, see Alvin I. Schiff, "The Centrist Torah Educator Faces Critical Ideological and Communal Challenges," *Tradition*, Winter 1981, pp. 278–79.

[129]Joseph Heimowitz, "A Study of the Graduates of the Yeshiva of Flatbush High School" (unpublished diss., Yeshiva University, 1979), pp. 102–03.

[130]Two surveys illustrating higher levels of education and observance among younger Orthodox Jews are: Egon Mayer, "Gaps Between Generations of Orthodox Jews in Boro Park, Brooklyn, N.Y.," *Jewish Social Studies*, Spring 1977, p. 99, and Heilman and Cohen, *Cosmopolitans and Parochials*, chap. 5.

tion months. Beyond that, it has become the norm for Orthodox teenagers to spend some time in Israel, again in an Orthodox ambience.

A second factor in the revitalization of Orthodoxy was the participation of Orthodox Jews in the postwar economic boom that brought unparalleled affluence to Americans in general. Like their counterparts in the other denominations, Orthodox Jews in increasing numbers acquired college and graduate degrees and entered the professions. These occupations freed Jews from the need to work on the Sabbath, thereby eliminating a conflict between economic necessity and religious observance that had bedeviled traditionally minded Jews in earlier periods. Thanks to their newfound affluence, Orthodox Jews could afford to send their offspring to day schools, from kindergarten through high school, and to pay for summer camps and trips to Israel for their children. In general, Orthodox Jews were now able to partake fully of American life even while adhering to traditional observances. The link between religious traditionalism and poverty and the backward ways of the Old World had been broken.[131]

An important consequence of this new affluence has been the ability of Orthodox Jews to insulate themselves more effectively from the rest of the Jewish community. With their host of synagogues, day schools, recreational programs, restaurants, summer camps, and the like, Orthodox Jews, in their largest centers of concentration, can live in separate communities that rarely interact with the larger Jewish populace. Even within the structures of existing communities, Orthodox Jews have obtained the right to separate programs geared to their own needs, or Jewish communal organizations tacitly set aside special resources for the sole use of Orthodox Jews.[132] Living in separate communities that insulate them from the larger Jewish community has helped to foster an élan among Orthodox Jews and a belief, particularly conveyed to the young, that the Orthodox community constitutes the saving remnant of American Judaism.

A series of developments in the broader American society has also given an important boost to Orthodoxy. Particularly during the 1960s and early 1970s, when experimentation and rebellion appeared to be the order of the day, those who were repelled by the new social mores found solace in the

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[131]Charles Liebman noted this shift in the economic status of Orthodox Jews already in the mid-1960s ("Changing Social Characteristics of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jews," *Sociological Analysis*, Winter 1966, pp. 210–22). See also Bertram Leff's study of the occupational distribution of Young Israel members, cited in Gershon Kranzler, "The Changing Orthodox Jewish Community," *Tradition*, Fall 1976, p. 72, note 8; almost two-thirds of male members were professionals.

[132]In New York City, for example, Jewish Ys reserve special times for Orthodox Jews who require sex-segregated swimming. Other federation agencies sponsor special clinics and programs for Orthodox Jews, such as a program for developmentally handicapped Orthodox youth.

stability of Orthodoxy. More recently, the comparatively lower rates of divorce and substance abuse in the Orthodox grouping have encouraged many Jews to perceive Orthodox Judaism as a bulwark against social instability. At the same time, the openness of American culture has made it possible for Jews to identify with Orthodoxy without the need to defend their distinctive ways. As Charles Liebman has noted, "The very absence of rigid ideational and cultural structures which characterizes modernity, the undermining of overarching moral visions, and the celebration of plural beliefs and styles of life, invite culturally deviant movements."[133]

Finally, Orthodoxy has achieved increased stability in recent decades because it has policed its community more rigorously and has defined its boundaries ever more sharply. Where once a great range of behaviors was tolerated and the Orthodox movement contained a large population of nominal adherents, Orthodox Jews today are far less tolerant of deviance. Far more than any other movement in American Judaism, Orthodoxy—in its various permutations—has set limits and defined acceptable and nonacceptable behavior. This has a twofold psychological impact: first, it attracts individuals who want to be given explicit guidelines for proper behavior, rather than shoulder the burden of autonomy that is the lot of modern individuals; and second, it sharpens the group's boundaries, thereby providing adherents with a strong feeling of community and belonging.[134]

### *The Shift to the Right*

More rigorous self-policing is but one manifestation of Orthodoxy's shift to the right, a shift that is expressed in changed behavioral norms, political judgments, educational preferences, choice of leaders, and attitudes toward Western culture and non-Orthodox coreligionists. The move to the right has led the once distinctly modern Young Israel movement to move quite close to the strictly Orthodox Agudath Israel.[135] It has led to the veneration of yeshivah heads who seek to insulate their followers from Western modes of thought and torpedo efforts at cooperation between Orthodox and non-

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[133]See Liebman, "Orthodoxy Faces Modernity," pp. 13–14.

[134]On the treatment of deviance within the Orthodox setting, see Egon Mayer, *From Suburb to Shtetl: The Jews of Boro Park* (New York, 1979), pp. 134–35; Helmreich, *World of the Yeshiva*, chap. 8; and Jeffrey Gurock, "The Orthodox Synagogue," in Wertheimer, ed., *The American Synagogue*, pp. 37–84.

[135]See, for example, Aaron Twerski's essay in the *Young Israel Viewpoint* denouncing the Denver conversion program (June 1985, p. 16). Note the broader observation of Gershon Kranzler that the Young Israel movement, which once supported religious Zionism, is now "solidly right-wing Agudah." ("The Changing Orthodox Synagogue," *Jewish Life*, Summer/Fall 1981, p. 50.)

Orthodox groups. And it has led to the demoralization of rabbis who formerly spoke for modern Orthodoxy.

Rabbi Walter Wurzburger has observed that "the mere fact that the term 'Modern Orthodoxy' is no longer in vogue and has been replaced by an expression ['Centrist Orthodoxy'] that deliberately avoids any reference to modernity speaks volumes."[136] Few Orthodox spokesmen any longer articulate the undergirding assumption of modern Orthodoxy, namely that a synthesis between traditional Judaism and modern Western culture is not only feasible but desirable.

The retreat from an ideology of synthesis is evident at what was formerly the fountainhead of modern Orthodoxy, Yeshiva University. The altered spirit was evident already by 1980, when the registrar of Yeshiva's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary compared the present cohort of rabbinical students with their predecessors of the mid-1960s: "Things are entirely different . . . their whole outlook, sexual, religious, anti-college except in the narrowest, most utilitarian sense, is completely different from what it used to be. We have moved way to the right."[137] The shift is also apparent at Yeshiva College. In the mid-1980s the undergraduate student newspaper saw fit to publish a symposium on "Why Do [Yeshiva Men] Attend College?" As noted by the editor, this question should never have been raised at a college that had functioned for decades with the motto *Torah U'Mada* (Torah and Science), but "Yeshiva's motto does not offer a simple solution to this complex issue." In fact, one of the symposiasts, an American-trained talmudist, argued that "secular pursuits . . . for their own sake are dangerous on many grounds," particularly because they may not aid in "developing one's self Jewishly."[138] Thus, even within the walls of Yeshiva University, the insular views of the Orthodox right have made significant inroads.

The shift to the right is also evident in the declining authority of Yeshiva University's rabbinic alumni. *Tradition*, the journal established to represent the point of view of modern—now centrist—Orthodox rabbis, gives voice to a rabbinic establishment under siege from elements on the Orthodox right.[139] Virtually all contemporary *gedolim* (recognized rabbinic authori-

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[136]Walter Wurzburger, "Centrist Orthodoxy—Ideology or Atmosphere," *Journal of Jewish Thought*, vol. 1, 1985, p. 67.

[137]The registrar is quoted by William Helmreich in a letter published in *Judaism*, Summer 1981, p. 380.

[138]Quoted in Jeffrey S. Gurock, *The Men and Women of Yeshiva: Higher Education, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism* (New York, 1988), pp. 254–55.

[139]Revealing evidence of a modern Orthodox rabbinate under siege is provided by the symposium on "The State of Orthodoxy" that appeared in *Tradition*, Spring 1982, pp. 3–83. The editor of the symposium, Walter Wurzburger, explicitly stated that "considerable segments of modern Orthodoxy are in retreat," and framed questions that underscored the

ties) identify with right-wing Orthodoxy and their views are rarely challenged.[140] Some insiders see this state of affairs as stemming from a failure to produce adjudicators of rabbinic law who have a modern Orthodox outlook.[141] Others feel that modern Orthodox leaders lack the charisma of the traditionalist *gedolim*, who are the products of the great European yeshivahs, and who appear uncompromised by any accommodation to modernity.[142] Yet others focus on ideology, noting the inability of modern Orthodox rabbis to confront the right and counter its message with a coherent program for modern Orthodox living.[143]

The weakness of the modern Orthodox rabbinate is tellingly revealed in its reliance on the Orthodox right for its official prayer book. The penultimate prayer book sponsored by the Rabbinical Council of America was translated and edited by David De Sola Pool, the spiritual leader of the Spanish Portuguese Synagogue in New York, and an exemplar of Americanized Orthodoxy. Its successor, the new authorized *siddur* of the RCA, is *The Complete Artscroll Siddur*, which in its original version explicitly traces its inspiration to rabbis associated with the rightist yeshivah world. For its edition of this *siddur* the RCA added only two modifications: a brief preface by Rabbi Saul Berman, in which he invokes "the Rov," Joseph B. Soleveitchik, the mentor of rabbis trained at Yeshiva University, and the insertion of the Prayer for the State of Israel, which the Artscroll editors had understandably omitted, given their non-Zionist ideology. There is no small irony in the fact that the RCA thus commissioned its opponents in the Orthodox world—traditionalists who do not accept the legitimacy of centrist Orthodox rabbis—to provide its official prayer book.[144]

The pulpit rabbis of centrist Orthodoxy face not only delegitimation but also a growing rate of attrition within their congregations. Younger members are increasingly attracted to small, informal synagogues (*shtieblach*) or

challenge he perceived: "How do you view the resurgence of right-wing Orthodoxy? Does it portend the eclipse of modern Orthodoxy? Do you regard modern Orthodoxy as a philosophy of compromise or an authentic version of Judaism?"

[140]David Singer, "Is Club Med Kosher? Reflections on Synthesis and Compartmentalization," *Tradition*, Fall 1985, p. 34.

[141]Bernard Rosensweig, "The Rabbinical Council of America: Retrospect and Prospect," *Tradition*, Summer 1986, pp. 8–10.

[142]On the charisma of noncompromisers, see Mayer and Waxman, "Modern Jewish Orthodoxy in America," pp. 109–10.

[143]See Joshua Berkowitz, "The Challenge to Modern Orthodoxy," *Judaism*, Winter 1984, pp. 101–06; and Shubert Spero, "A Movement in Search of Leaders," *Journal of Jewish Thought*, 1985, pp. 83–101.

[144]In the new RCA *siddur*, see especially p. xii for Berman's invocation of Soleveitchik and pp. 450–51 for the prayer for Israel. Other than these changes, the RCA *siddur* is identical to the *Complete Artscroll Siddur*; even the pagination has been retained by adding pp. 448a and 449b.

early services within established synagogues. In either event they separate themselves from the larger congregation. Writing in the mid-1970s, Rabbi Steven (Shlomo) Riskin, arguably the most charismatic figure in the modern Orthodox rabbinate, noted that inroads by Lubavitch and right-wing yeshivahs resulted in "the draw[ing] off from the modern Orthodox shul of many of the young yeshiva graduates, much to the chagrin of the local *Rav* [pulpit rabbi] who has tailored his sermons and rabbinic style to the tastes of the 'young people.' "[145]

Even within centrist Orthodox institutions, a palpable shift to the right is evident. One of the harbingers of change was the elimination of mixed social dancing at synagogue functions. Whereas in the mid-1950s it was commonplace for modern Orthodox synagogues, including Young Israel congregations, to hold square dances for their youth and social dancing at banquets, such activities are now banned by Orthodox synagogues.[146] Centrist Orthodox synagogues are also far more apt today to demand punctilious observance as a prerequisite for leadership within the congregation. There is also less tolerance today in Orthodox synagogues for members who are only nominally Orthodox. Not surprisingly, formerly modern Orthodox day schools are also moving to the right, as evidenced by curricular revisions that downgrade the study of Hebrew language and literature, as well as the erosion of coeducation. Whereas modern Orthodox day schools formerly separated the sexes around the age of puberty, they now are routinely separating boys and girls in the third and even lower grades. The new tenor is summed up in the somewhat self-mocking, somewhat bitter, joke about Orthodoxy's "Chumrah-of-the-Month Club," as growing numbers of Orthodox Jews accept the need for ever greater stringencies.[147]

## *Why Is the Right Gaining Strength?*

In light of the increased acculturation and upward mobility of Orthodox Jews, how is the move to the right to be explained? One would have expected that, as more Orthodox Jews attained a high level of secular education and entered the professions, they would move in the direction of "synthesis" rather than insularity. Why, then, has the Orthodox right made such deep inroads in the larger Orthodox community?

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[145]Shlomo Riskin, "Where Orthodoxy Is At—And Where It Is Going," *Jewish Life*, Spring 1976, p. 27. See also Gershon Kranzler, "The Changing Orthodox Synagogue," *Jewish Life*, Fall 1981, pp. 43–51.

[146]Spero, "Orthodox Judaism," p. 89, describes the prevalence of mixed dancing. For a case study of one congregation, see Shapiro, "Orthodoxy in Pleasantdale," p. 169.

[147]The term appears in Silberman, *A Certain People*, p. 260. For a serious attempt to address the phenomenon, see Moshe Weinberger, "Keeping Up with the Katzes: The Chumra Syndrome—An Halachic Inquiry," *Jewish Action*, Rosh Hashana 1988, pp. 10–19.

A key factor, most certainly, is the day-school movement, which draws its personnel overwhelmingly from right-wing Orthodox circles. By contrast, few graduates of Yeshiva University's rabbinical program enter the relatively poorly paying field of Jewish education. As teachers of Jewish subjects in day schools, the products of the yeshivah world have imposed their worldview upon the schools and their youthful charges. They have made clear their distinct lack of enthusiasm for both secular education and the modern State of Israel, while arguing for the intense study of religious texts and punctilious halakhic observance.

A number of other factors have also facilitated Orthodoxy's move to the right. Within some sectors of the more acculturated Orthodox community, a kind of "discount theory of Judaism" prevails. This theory has been described by Lawrence Kaplan as follows: since " 'more is better'—for the children, that is ('they'll lose some of it later,' or so the theory goes)—it is the traditional Orthodox yeshivot which represent the 'more.' " Many highly acculturated Orthodox parents fear that their children will join the general slide into assimilation that characterizes so much of American Jewish life. They therefore expose their children in school to a Judaism that is far to the right of their own thinking in the hope that should their children move away from religious observance, they will end up at a position near modern Orthodoxy.[148]

Beyond these calculations, certain environmental factors have also favored the Orthodox right. One is the prosperity of Orthodox Jews, discussed above, which makes it possible for them to send their children to religious schools well into their college years. When Orthodox youth graduate from yeshivah high schools, their families can afford to send them to Israeli yeshivahs for further study—as a kind of finishing-school experience that is often located in an environment shaped by the attitudes of the Orthodox right. Then again, the waning decades of the 20th century have been a time of declining confidence in the viability of modern cultural norms. This mood has strengthened the hand of fundamentalists throughout the world, including traditionalists in the yeshivah world who reject the values of secular America. Finally, none of the communal circumstances that formerly put a brake on religious extremism in the European Jewish context any longer play a role in American Jewish life.[149] Orthodox halakhic authorities do not have to accommodate the broader needs of the Jewish community; on the contrary, they wish to segregate their followers from the non-Orthodox world.

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[148]Lawrence Kaplan, letter, *Judaism*, Summer 1981, p. 382.

[149]See Charles Liebman, "Extremism as a Religious Norm," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Mar. 1983, pp. 82–85.

## *Responding to New Challenges*

The consequences of Orthodoxy's shift to the right may be seen in the responses of centrist Orthodox rabbis to new challenges. One challenge was mounted from within by Orthodox women, members of centrist Orthodox synagogues who sought to reconcile their commitment to Orthodoxy with the new feminist consciousness of the 1970s and 1980s. Because they accepted the separation of men and women in their own synagogues, Orthodox women who wished to assume an active role in religious services founded a network of women's *tefillah* (prayer) groups in the 1970s. The new prayer circles took steps to avoid conflict with the larger Orthodox community: they scheduled services only once a month, so that members could continue to attend their own synagogues on three Sabbaths out of every four; they also omitted sections of the service that may only be recited by a quorum of men; and they eschewed using the term *minyan*, so as not to suggest that they were engaged in an activity reserved solely for men.[150]

With only a few exceptions, rabbis of centrist Orthodox synagogues responded negatively to these activities by their own female congregants.[151] As a consequence, the *tefillah* groups, for the most part, met in private homes. Moreover, when prayer groups did turn to rabbis for halakhic guidelines, they were rebuffed. As one of the leaders of the movement observed, this was one of the few times in Jewish history "that Jews turned to rabbis for halachic advice and were refused."[152]

Several years after the *tefillah* groups first appeared, the president of the Rabbinical Council of America brought the issue before a group of five talmudists at Yeshiva University, asking them for a legal responsum. The resulting one-page, undocumented statement prohibited women's prayer groups, ruling them a "total and apparent deviation from tradition." The statement added that "all these customs are coming from a movement for the emancipation of women, which in this area is only for licentiousness." The RCA, centrist Orthodoxy's rabbinic body, then approved the publication of the responsum, intending it as a "guideline" for Orthodox rabbis.[153]

There is no way to judge how such an issue would have been resolved in an earlier era in the history of American Orthodoxy. Women's prayer groups, after all, were responses to two new developments: the influence of the feminist movement of the late 1960s and 1970s on Orthodox women, and the coming of age of Orthodox women who had acquired a high level of literacy in Hebraica and Judaica in day schools. What is noteworthy,

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[150]"Tsena-Rena," *Lilith*, no. 6, 1979, pp. 46–47.

[151]Ibid., and "Orthodox Women's Prayer Groups," *Lilith*, no. 14, Fall/Winter 1985, pp. 5–6.

[152]Rivkeh Haut, quoted in *Lilith*, no. 14, Fall/Winter 1985, p. 6.

[153]Ibid. See also the article by Hershel (Zvi) Schacter in *Beit Yitzhak*, vol. 17, 1985.

however, is the uncompromising stance adopted by centrist rabbis toward their own congregants. Rather than seeking a means to accommodate Orthodox feminists, or channel their energies productively, most rabbis in what was formerly the modern Orthodox rabbinate treated women's *tefillah* groups as deviant and undeserving of support, let alone a home in the Orthodox synagogue.

A similar hard-line stance has been taken toward challenges emanating from outside the Orthodox world. One symptom of this is the growing influence within the centrist Orthodox rabbinate of those who wish to follow the ruling issued in 1956 by yeshivah heads banning cooperation with non-Orthodox rabbis.[154] There is also a greater willingness on the part of Orthodox rabbis to express in public their disdain for the religious activities of Jews outside their camp. Already in the 1950s, Orthodox authorities had ruled that synagogues lacking a *mehitzah*, a barrier between men and women, were illegitimate,[155] and that marriages performed by Conservative and Reform rabbis were not religiously valid and therefore did not require a Jewish bill of divorce (*get*).[156] But in the 1980s, these decisions were openly proclaimed. Thus, the rightist Agudas Harabbonim began to place newspaper advertisments urging Jews to stay home on the High Holy Days rather than attend a non-Orthodox synagogue.[157] Moreover, in September 1988, the same organization announced a campaign to educate Jews that Reform Judaism "leads to mixed marriage" and Conservative Judaism is "even more harmful because it acts as a 'steppingstone' to Reform."[158]

This hardening of positions and shift to the right may be interpreted in two ways. It may be seen as a triumph of the elite religion of the yeshivah world over the folk religion that had previously been Americanized Orthodoxy.[159] The new elite Orthodoxy not only writes off non-Orthodox Jews who are unprepared to become *ba'alei teshuvah*,[160] but also insists that all

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[154]Walter Wurzburger, "Orthodox Cooperation with Non-Orthodoxy," *Jewish Life*, Summer/Fall 1981, pp. 25–27, and press release, "Orthodoxy Should Follow a Policy of 'Creative Engagement' with Conservative and Reform Says President of RCA," May 20, 1987.

[155]For the unequivocal condemnation of non-*mehitzah* synagogues by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, see the letters quoted in "A Call to 'Every Jew' and Some Responses," *Jewish Observer*, Jan. 1985, pp. 37–39.

[156]The ruling by Moses Feinstein, to the contrary, was intended as a leniency, so as to reduce the numbers of *mamzerim* whose parents had not properly divorced. See David Ellenson, "Representative Orthodox Responsa on Conversion and Intermarriage in the Contemporary Era," *Jewish Social Studies*, Summer/Fall 1985, pp. 215–18.

[157]Joseph Berger, "Split Widens on a Basic Issue: What Is a Jew?" *New York Times*, Feb. 28, 1986, p. 1.

[158]*Jewish Week* (New York), Sept. 20, 1988, p. 12.

[159]David Singer, "Thumbs and Eggs," *Moment*, Sept. 1978, p. 36.

[160]Note the observation of Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University: "Witness the readiness of our fellow Orthodox Jews to turn exclusivist, to the extent that psychologically,

compromises with modern culture are to be rejected as un-Jewish. The shift to the right may also be interpreted as a symptom of deep insecurity and retreat into insularity, of fear that the corrosiveness of modern American culture will eat away at the Orthodox population, just as it has sapped the non-Orthodox movements. Thus, even as it revels in the success of Orthodoxy, the *Young Israel Viewpoint* publishes an article entitled "Why Are Young Israel Children Going Astray?"[161] and the movement sponsors a symposium on "The Lifestyles of the Modern American Orthodox Jew—Halachic Hedonism?"[162]

## DENOMINATIONAL LIFE: CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Far more than the other denominations, Conservative Judaism has experienced severe turmoil, at times even demoralization, during the past quarter century. In part, this is the result of the letdown following the end of the Conservative movement's era of heady growth in the 1950s and 1960s. Equally important, Conservative Judaism has experienced turmoil because forces both within and outside the movement have confronted it with provocative new challenges. Conservatism had managed to paper over serious ideological differences within its ranks during the boom years, but by the late 1960s and early 1970s, internal dissent intensified and new alliances were being forged within the movement to press for change. With each step taken toward ideological and programmatic clarification, one faction or another of the Conservative coalition has felt betrayed.

In addition, Conservative Judaism's once enviable position at the center of the religious spectrum has turned to a liability as American Judaism has moved from an era of relative harmony to intense polarization. As the conflict between Reform on the left and Orthodoxy on the right has intensified, the Conservative movement, as the party of the center, has found itself caught in a cross fire between two increasingly antagonistic foes, and hard-pressed to justify its centrism. As Ismar Schorsch, chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, has noted, the center "must produce an arsenal of arguments for use against both the left and right which, of necessity, often include ideas that are barely compatible."[163]

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though certainly not halakhically, many of our people no longer regard non-Orthodox Jews as part of *Klal Yisrael*." See "Some Comments on Centrist Orthodoxy," *Tradition*, Fall 1986, p. 10.

[161]Reuven Fink, *Young Israel Viewpoint*, Sept. 1984, p. 24.

[162]Ibid., Sept./Oct. 1988, p. 20.

[163]Ismar Schorsch, "Zacharias Frankel and the European Origins of Conservative Judaism," *Judaism*, Summer 1981, p. 344.

## *Strains in the Conservative Coalition*

The Conservative movement has long been based on a divided coalition. Writing at midcentury, Marshall Sklare noted the gap between the masses of Conservative synagogue members and the rabbinic and lay elites of the movement.[164] Whereas the elites shared similar standards of religious practice and a common ideological commitment, the masses of synagogue members were unaware of Conservative ideology and often were only minimally observant. According to Sklare's analysis, "Conservativism represents a common pattern of acculturation—a kind of social adjustment—which has been arrived at by lay people. It is seen by them as a 'halfway house' between Reform and Orthodoxy."[165]

Even within the elite there was a considerable distance between the Seminary "schoolmen" and the rabbis in the field. As one of the rabbis bitterly put it: "Certain members of our faculty . . . have put us in shackles and in bonds . . . so that we cannot move. . . . [This] is humiliating to us. . . . [They] laugh at us as ignoramuses . . . [and imply] that we have been graduated as social workers and not as rabbis for humanity."[166] This statement draws attention to lack of empowerment and legitimacy accorded by the Seminary's faculty to its students during the first half of this century. But the gap within the Conservative elite also consisted of a tacit understanding concerning the division of labor within the movement. As Neil Gillman, a professor of theology at the Seminary observes:

> All of the groundbreaking Conservative responsa on synagogue practice [and] Sabbath observance . . . came out of the Rabbinical Assembly. . . . For its part, the Seminary Faculty remained within the walls of scholarship. It issued no responsa. If anything, it maintained a stance of almost explicit disdain toward all of this halakhic activity. . . . This relationship was actually a marriage of convenience. The Faculty could cling to its traditionalism, secure in the knowledge that the real problems were being handled elsewhere. The Rabbinical Assembly looked at its teachers as the hallmark of authenticity, holding the reins lest it go too far.[167]

The gap between the Seminary and the rabbinate was symbolized by the maintenance of separate seating in the Seminary's own synagogue until the 1980s, even as virtually every rabbi ordained by the institution served in a congregation that had instituted mixed seating of men and women.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the long-standing "discontinuities and

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[164]Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (Glencoe, Ill., 1953), p. 229.

[165]Ibid., p. 229. See also Elliot N. Dorff, *Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants* (New York, 1977), especially pp. 110–57.

[166]Sklare, *Conservative Judaism*, p. 190.

[167]Neil Gillman, "Mordecai Kaplan and the Ideology of Conservative Judaism," *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly* (hereafter "*RA*"), 1986, p. 64.

conflicts" within the Conservative movement, to use Sklare's formulation, had grown more aggravated. First, there was the gap between the rabbis and their congregants. This issue was directly confronted by Hershel Matt in the mid-1970s in a letter to his congregants explaining why, after 28 years in the rabbinate, he had decided to leave the pulpit: "The present reality is that affiliation with a congregation or even election to the Board or to committees does not require any commitment" to the primary purpose of a synagogue—"seeking to live in the holy dimension of Jewish life . . . trying to accept the obligation and joy of worshipping God, . . . trying to learn Torah from the rabbi."[168] A decade later, a younger colleague of Matt's, Shalom Lewis, published an essay describing the loneliness of the Conservative rabbi:

> The loneliness we suffer is not necessarily social but spiritual. We might bowl, swim, and *kibbitz* with the best of them, but we are still in another world entirely. We quote Heschel and no one understands. We perform *netilat yadayim* and our friends think we're rude when we are momentarily silent. . . . We walk home, alone, on Shabbos. I am blessed with a wonderful social community, but I have no spiritual community in which I have companions.[169]

Conservative rabbis have for decades bemoaned their inability to convince the masses of their congregants to live as observant Jews. In 1960, at a time of most rapid growth for the Conservative movement, Max Routtenberg noted the "mood and feeling among many of us that our achievements touch only the periphery of Jewish life and that our failures center around the issues that concern us most as rabbis and as Jews."[170] Almost two decades later, Stephen Lerner characterized the problem even more bluntly: "The major problem is that we have been or are becoming a clerical movement. We have no observant laity and even our lay leadership is becoming removed from the world of the traditional family."[171] In the intervening years, the journals and national conventions of the Conservative rabbinate repeatedly addressed this issue, and rabbis voiced their concern that the movement "had become less identifiable" and was in danger of "los[ing] its force and becom[ing] of less and less consequence on the American Jewish scene."[172] The mood in Conservatism was aptly captured by one rabbi who remarked to his colleagues that "self-flagellation appears to be the order of the day for the leadership of Conservative Jewry."[173]

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[168]"On Leaving the Congregational Rabbinate," *Beineinu*, Nov. 1975, pp. 6–7.

[169]"The Rabbi Is a Lonely Person," *Conservative Judaism*, Winter 1983–84, pp. 40–41.

[170]Max Routtenberg, quoted by William Lebeau, "The RA Faces the Seventies," *Proceedings of the RA*, 1970, p. 99.

[171]"2001: Blueprint for the Rabbinate in the 21st Century," *Proceedings of the RA*, 1979, p. 122.

[172]William Greenfeld, quoted by Hillel Silverman in *Proceedings of the RA*, 1970, p. 111.

[173]See Jordan S. Ofseyer's contribution to the symposium discussion in *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1972, p. 16.

The observations of leading sociologists further added to the pessimistic mood. Early in 1972, Marshall Sklare published an essay on "Recent Developments in Conservative Judaism" designed to update his study of 1953. As read by the editor of *Conservative Judaism*, Sklare "offered a thesis that the Conservative movement at the zenith of its influence, has sustained a loss of morale," attributable to "the emergence of Orthodoxy, the problem of Conservative observance, and the widespread alienation among Conservative young people."[174]

Charles Liebman and Saul Shapiro, in a survey conducted at the end of the 1970s and released at the 1979 biennial convention of the United Synagogue, came up with strong evidence to substantiate the thesis of the Conservative movement's decline.[175] Liebman and Shapiro found that almost as many young people reared in Conservative synagogues were opting for no synagogue affiliation as were joining Conservative congregations. Further, they contended that among the most observant younger Conservative families, particularly as defined by *kashrut* observance, there was a tendency to "defect" to Orthodoxy. Here was evidence of a double failing: a movement that had invested heavily in Jewish education in the synagogue setting seemingly did not imbue its youth with a strong allegiance to the Conservative synagogue; and rabbis who themselves had rejected Orthodoxy found their "best" young people—including their own children—rejecting Conservatism for Orthodoxy.

In truth, many of the best of Conservative youth were choosing a path other than Orthodoxy, one which would have a far more profound effect on the movement than denominational "defections." Beginning in the early 1970s, products of Conservative synagogues, youth movements, Ramah camps, and the Seminary were instrumental in the creation of a counterculture movement known as "*havurah* Judaism."[176] Although Conservative Jews did not completely monopolize the *havurah* movement, they played key roles as founders, theoreticians, and members. The first person to suggest the applicability of early rabbinic fellowships as a model for the

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[174]Stephen C. Lerner, in his introduction to a symposium responding to Sklare's critique, which was entitled, significantly, "Morale and Commitment," *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1972, p. 12. Sklare's essay forms the concluding chapter in the revised edition of his book (New York, 1972), pp. 253–82.

[175]Liebman and Shapiro, "Survey of the Conservative Movement"; and Saul Shapiro, "The Conservative Movement" (unpublished, dated Nov. 13, 1979). For critiques of the survey design and its assumptions, see Harold Schulweis, "Surveys, Statistics and Sectarian Salvation," *Conservative Judaism*, Winter 1980, pp. 65–69; and Rela Geffen Monson, "The Future of Conservative Judaism in the United States: A Rejoinder," *Conservative Judaism*, Winter 1983–84, especially, pp. 10–14.

[176]Stephen C. Lerner, "The Havurot," *Conservative Judaism*, Spring 1970, pp. 3–7; William Novak, "Notes on Summer Camps: Some Reflections on the Ramah Dream," *Response*, Winter 1971–72, p. 59. See also the symposium on Ramah in *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1987, which points up the relationship between the camping movement and *havurah* Judaism.

present age was Jacob Neusner, who had been ordained at the Seminary.[177] The first and perhaps most influential of all *havurot* was founded in Somerville, Massachusetts, in 1968 by a group of Ramah and Seminary products under the leadership of Arthur Green, a rabbi ordained at the Seminary. The guiding force in the founding of the New York Havurah, as well as the journal *Response*, was Alan Mintz, who had earlier served as the national president of United Synagogue Youth. Finally, the books that served as primers of *havurah* Judaism, the *Jewish Catalogs*,[178] were compiled by products of Conservative youth programs.

Richard Siegel, one of the editors of *The Jewish Catalog,* provided the following analysis of the link between *havurah* Judaism and the Conservative movement, when he was invited to address the national convention of the Rabbinical Assembly:

> Ramah created a new Jewish lifestyle. . . .A group of discontents was created [due to experimentation at Ramah], a group of people who had a vision of something different from what went on in synagogues. . . .In essence, it was an internal development within the Conservative movement which had within it the seeds of internal contradiction, and its own destruction, in a way. The Conservative movement was unable to absorb . . . to meet the religious needs of a group of young people.[179]

For Siegel, then, it was the intense experience of participating in a Jewish religious community at Camp Ramah that prompted the emergence of the *havurah* movement as a substitute for what young people regarded as the formal and sterile atmosphere of the large Conservative synagogue. As Susannah Heschel put it to another group of Conservative rabbis: "The movement has succeeded too well in educating its children, because these children feel they have no proper place in Conservative life."[180]

In the short term, Heschel was correct in noting the alienation of some of these youth from Conservative synagogues. But there is substantial evidence to indicate that in the 1980s many of the formerly disaffected, including those who continue to worship within the *havurah* setting, increasingly participate in Conservative life: they send their children to Solomon Schechter schools and Ramah camps; they identify with the liturgy and ideology of Conservatism; and most importantly, they have moved from the

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[177]Jacob Neusner, *Contemporary Judaic Fellowship in Theory and Practice* (New York, 1972).

[178]Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld, and Sharon Strassfeld, comps. and eds., *The Jewish Catalog* (Philadelphia, 1973); Sharon Strassfeld and Michael Strassfeld, comps. and eds., *The Second Jewish Catalog* (Philadelphia, 1976); idem, *The Third Jewish Catalog* (Philadelphia, 1980).

[179]"Futuristic Jewish Communities," *Proceedings of the RA*, 1974, p. 80.

[180]Susannah Heschel, "Changing Forms of Jewish Spirituality," *Proceedings of the RA*, 1980, p. 146.

periphery to the center of Conservatism's institutional life. It is this last development which accounts in large measure for the turbulence within Conservative Judaism in recent years. Put simply, leadership in the Conservative movement, its national institutions, synagogues, rabbinate, and various organizational arms, has passed into the hands of men and women who were reared in the pews of Conservative synagogues and socialized in its Ramah camps and USY programs. That transition has brought dislocation and turmoil to the Conservative movement for over a decade.

The biographies of recent Conservative leaders tell much of the story. When Gerson D. Cohen assumed the chancellorship of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 1972, he brought with him years of experience as an early participant in the Ramah experiment. His successor, Ismar Schorsch, shared such experiences and is himself the son of a Conservative rabbi. Equally important, the Conservative rabbinate has been recruiting ever growing percentages of its members from Conservative homes. During the first half of the 20th century, the preponderant majority of rabbinical students at JTS were drawn from Orthodox families and educational institutions. Since then, the percentage of such students has dwindled, so that hardly any current rabbinical students come from the Orthodox community. Instead, close to one-third are either from Reform backgrounds or unaffiliated families, or are converts to Judaism, while the other two-thirds are products of the Conservative movement.[181] The Seminary faculty, too, has been replenished with American-born Jews, who for the most part have been educated in Conservative institutions.

The new elite of the Conservative movement differs from its predecessors of earlier generations in two significant ways. Today's leaders regard the world of Orthodoxy as alien, and are far less emotionally tied to it. Accordingly, they feel fewer constraints in setting their own course. Second, and even more important, the new elite of the Conservative movement is far more prepared to put into practice the logical consequences of Conservative ideology. It is particularly significant that many of the new elite had experience in Ramah camps, because Ramah, as one observer noted, "is the battleground par excellence for Conservative Judaism, where theory and practice must and do meet. . . . [Only Camp Ramah] constantly turn[ed] to the central educational institution, the JTS, to ask what are the permissible limits of experimentation in Jewish prayer? What are the permissible limits of Shabbat observance? What precisely is the role of women in

[181]Aryeh Davidson and Jack Wertheimer, "The Next Generation of Conservative Rabbis," in *The Seminary at 100*, ed. Nina Beth Cardin and David W. Silverman (New York, 1987), p. 36. Other essays in the volume also point up the ability of the Conservative movement to recruit from within; see, for example, Burton I. Cohen, "From Camper to National Director: A Personal View of the Seminary and Ramah," pp. 125–34.

Conservative Jewish life?"[182] Precisely because it created a total Jewish environment, Ramah provided a setting in which to explore what it means to live as a Conservative Jew on a day-to-day basis. Products of Ramah, accordingly, have been prepared to put Conservative ideology into action once they have assumed roles of leadership within the movement.

As the Conservative elite has changed in character, the structure of alliances within the Conservative coalition has shifted dramatically. The "schoolmen" described by Marshall Sklare in the mid-1950s now include some women, but even more important, include home-grown products with strong ties to the Conservative movement and no allegiances to Orthodoxy. The same is true of the rabbinate and organizational leadership. Thus, coalitions for change cut across the movement, rather than remain solely in one sector, as had long been the case. The issue of women's ordination, which has agitated Conservative Judaism for a decade, has served as the symbol of change and the catalyst for further realignment within the movement.

## *Womens' Ordination as Symbol and Catalyst*

Although Conservative Judaism had long accepted the mixed seating of men and women in synagogues and, since the 1950s, had increasingly celebrated the coming of age of girls in Bat Mitzvah ceremonies, it was only in the early 1970s that more far-reaching questions concerning the status of women in religious life were addressed by the movement. A group of Conservative feminists, members of Ezrat Nashim,[183]—a Hebrew pun referring to the separate women's gallery in traditional synagogues, but also implying a pledge to provide "help for women"—pressed its agenda at the convention of the Rabbinical Assembly in March 1972, by holding a "counter-session" to which only women—wives of rabbis—were invited. The group demanded the following of the RA: that women be granted membership in synagogues; be counted in a *minyan*; be allowed to participate fully in religious observances; be recognized as witnesses before Jewish law; be allowed to initiate divorce; be permitted to study and function as rabbis and cantors; and be encouraged to assume positions of leadership in the Jewish community. These demands drew special attention because they were put forward by self-proclaimed "products of Conservative congregations, religious schools, the Ramah Camps, LTF, USY, and the Seminary."[184]

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[182]Robert Chazan, "Tribute to Ramah on Its 25th Anniversary," *Beineinu*, May 1973, p. 31.

[183]Alan Silverstein, "The Evolution of Ezrat Nashim," *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1975, pp. 44–45.

[184]Ibid.

Until a detailed history of Jewish feminism is written, it will not be possible to determine how many Conservative women actually supported these demands. What is clear, however, is that they evoked a sympathetic response within the Conservative rabbinate. This can be seen in the ever-increasing attention paid to the women's issues in both the journal and the convention proceedings of the Conservative rabbinate, beginning shortly after the aforementioned RA convention. In terms of action, in 1973 the Rabbinical Assembly's committee on Jewish law and standards adopted a *takkanah* (legislative enactment) permitting women to be counted as part of a *minyan*. The next year, the same committee considered whether women could serve as rabbis and as cantors, and whether they could function as witnesses and sign legal documents. Supporters of women's equality concluded that the minority opinions on these matters provided a sufficient basis for change in the status of women.[185]

When news about the decision on counting women in a *minyan* became public knowledge through articles in the general press, Conservative opponents of "egalitarianism"—the term that came to be applied to the equal treatment of women—began to organize. The decision had placed such rabbis on the defensive with their own congregants. How could individual rabbis committed to traditional role differences between men and women in the synagogue continue to justify their stance when a *takkanah* permitting the counting of women in the *minyan* had been passed by the legal body of the Conservative rabbinate? The action of the law committee, it was argued, undermined the authority of the individual rabbi. Furthermore, opponents contended, the committee had assumed an unprecedented role as an advocate of change. In short order, rabbis opposed to the decisions of the law committee organized a body initially known as the "Ad Hoc Committee for Tradition and Diversity in the Conservative Movement" and subsequently renamed "The Committee for Preservation of Tradition within the Rabbinical Assembly of America." Thus, even before the issue of women's ordination was formally raised, the battle lines were drawn within the Conservative rabbinate.[186]

Despite bitter divisions among its membership over questions of women's status, the Rabbinical Assembly assumed a leadership role in advocating a decision on women as Conservative rabbis. At its annual convention in 1977, the RA petitioned the chancellor of the Seminary to "establish an interdisciplinary commission to study all aspects of the role of women as

[185]Mayer Rabinowitz, "Toward a Halakhic Guide for the Conservative Jew," *Conservative Judaism*, Fall 1986, pp. 18, 22, 26, 29; see also Aaron H. Blumenthal, "The Status of Women in Jewish Law," *Conservative Judaism*, Spring 1977, pp. 24–40.

[186]Rabbi I. Usher Kirshblum headed these two committees; his correspondence with rabbinic colleagues, spanning the period from 1975 until 1983, is in the Archives of Conservative Judaism, at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

spiritual leaders in the Conservative Movement." Chancellor Cohen acceded to this petition and selected 14 individuals, evenly divided between rabbinic and lay leaders, to serve on the commission. The commission heard testimony around the country based on a variety of perspectives, including Halakhah, ethics, economics, sociology, psychology, and education. From the outset, however, it had committed itself to a guideline that "no recommendation would be made which, in the opinion of the members of the Commission, . . . would contravene or be incompatible with the requirements of Halakhah as the latter had been theretofore observed and developed by the Conservative Movement." Within two years, the commission concluded its work; it presented the RA with a majority opinion supported by 11 members, urging the JTS to admit women to the Rabbinical School, and a minority report issued by 3 members opposing such action.[187]

The majority, in its report, contended that since the role of the contemporary rabbi "is not one which is established in classical Jewish texts . . . [there is] no specifiable halakhic category which can be identified with the modern rabbinate." The halakhic objections to the ordination of women "center around disapproval of the performance by a woman of certain functions. Those functions, however, are not essentially rabbinic, nor are they universally disapproved, by the accepted rules governing the discussion of Halakhah in the Conservative Movement."

The minority report, in contrast, argued that the key halakhic issues had not been resolved to the satisfaction of many Conservative Jews, as well as Jews outside of the movement "who may be affected by practices in connection with testimony relating to marriage and divorce." The minority expressed concern that the ordination of women would drive opponents of egalitarianism out of the Conservative movement.

Once the commission reported its findings back to the Rabbinical Assembly, attention turned to the faculty of the Seminary. During the course of the commission's hearings, Chancellor Cohen had shifted his position from a desire to maintain the status quo to enthusiastic support of women's ordination. He took it upon himself to bring the matter before the faculty of the Seminary within one year, an undertaking that itself precipitated further controversy. It was not at all clear from Seminary rules of procedure that the faculty was empowered to decide on admissions policies. Some

[187]The "Final Report of the Commission for the Study of the Ordination of Women as Rabbis" was compiled by Gordon Tucker, executive director of the commission, and is printed in *The Ordination of Women as Rabbis: Studies and Responsa*, ed. Simon Greenberg (New York, 1988), pp. 5–30. See also the position papers of Seminary faculty members in the Greenberg volume. Several of the most forceful papers presented in opposition to women's ordination are not included in Greenberg's volume but appeared in a booklet entitled "On the Ordination of Women as Rabbis" (JTS, mimeo, early 1980s). See especially the papers of David Weiss Halivni, Gershon C. Bacon, and David A. Resnick.

argued that only talmudists on the faculty should have a right to decide; others objected to any faculty participating on the ground that admissions policies were a purely administrative matter; and still others claimed that halakhic questions had not been resolved satisfactorily, and therefore, no decision could be taken by the Seminary. In December 1979, the matter was brought before the faculty, but was tabled indefinitely so as to avoid a sharp split.[188]

Pressure for action on the ordination issue continued to mount, particularly within the Rabbinical Assembly. A number of women of Conservative background who had studied for the rabbinate at the Reform and Reconstructionist seminaries pressed for admission to the Rabbinical Assembly. The official organization of Conservative rabbis now was placed in the position of possibly admitting women who were as qualified as many male candidates ordained by non-Conservative institutions, even as the movement's own seminary refused to ordain women as rabbis. The issue came to a head in 1983, when Beverly Magidson, a rabbi ordained at the Hebrew Union College, successfully demonstrated her qualifications for admission to the Rabbinical Assembly. Like all candidates for admission not ordained by the JTS, Magidson needed the support of three-quarters of the rabbis present at the convention in order to gain admission; in fact she received the support of a majority. Some supporters of Magidson's admission opted to vote against her on the grounds that a woman ordained by the Seminary should be the first female admitted to the RA. Others felt that such a momentous decision should be reserved for a convention that drew a broader cross section of the membership (the convention met in Dallas, and attendance was lower than usual). But it was clear from the vote of 206 in favor to 72 opposed that it was only a matter of time before a woman rabbi would be admitted to the RA and that the Seminary could no longer defer a decision.[189]

In the fall of 1983, Chancellor Cohen once again brought the issue of women's ordination before the faculty. In the interval, several of the staunchest opponents of women's ordination had left the faculty, and Prof. Saul Lieberman, an intimidating figure even after his retirement from the faculty, had passed away. Clearly outnumbered, most other opponents of women's ordination, principally senior members of the rabbinics department, refused to attend the meeting. By a vote of 34 to 8, with one abstention, on October 24, 1983, the faculty voted to admit women to the rabbinical school. By the following fall, 19 women were enrolled in the Rabbinical School; one of them, Amy Eilberg, was ordained in May 1985,

[188]On the background to the faculty vote of 1979, see David Szonyi, "The Conservative Condition," *Moment*, May 1980, especially pp. 38–39.

[189]For the debate over Magidson's application, see *Proceedings of the RA*, 1983, pp. 218–51.

on the basis of her academic attainments during years of graduate studies.[190]

The protracted and bitterly divisive debate over women's ordination went beyond the issue of women's status in Judaism to the broader questions of movement definition. Predictably, given the centrism of the Conservative movement, advocates of opposing positions branded their opponents as either radical Reformers or Orthodox obstructionists. This was particularly evident during the debate over Magidson's application for admission to the RA. Opponents explicitly stated that if the RA voted affirmatively, "we are going to be publicly identified with the Reform movement";[191] supporters argued that by rejecting Magidson, "we will be subjecting ourselves to ridicule. . . . Our own communities and our congregants will lump us with Orthodox intransigents."[192]

Whereas earlier controversial decisions, such as the law committee's stance on the permissibility of driving to synagogue on the Sabbath, affected only individual Jews, the ordination of women as rabbis directly affected all segments of Conservative Jewry. Congregations eventually would have to decide whether to hire a woman as a rabbi; members of the Rabbinical Assembly would have to decide whether they could accept women as equals, particularly as witnesses in legal actions; and members of the Seminary faculty would have to decide whether they could participate in the training of women as rabbis. Once ordained as rabbis, women would assume a central role in the Conservative movement, a role that could not be ignored.

## *Redefining the Movement*

The crisis of Conservative morale during the late 1960s and the 1970s and the subsequent struggle over women's ordination prompted the leaders of Conservative Judaism to clarify the movement's program. The result was an outpouring of programmatic statements, halakhic works, and liturgical compositions. Even the decades-old plea of rabbis and lay people for an explicit statement of Conservative belief and practice was heeded. The result was the publication for the first time—over a century after the founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary—of a statement of Conservative principles issued jointly by all the major agencies of the movement. The Conservative movement was now clearly determined to stake out a clear position in the Jewish community and to maintain that position combatively.

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[190]See Francine Klagsbrun, "At Last, A Conservative Woman Rabbi," *Congress Monthly*, May-June 1985, p. 11; and Abraham Karp, "A Century of Conservative Judaism," AJYB 1986, vol. 86, pp. 3–61.

[191]David Novak, in *Proceedings of the RA*, 1983, p. 223.

[192]Aaron Gold, in ibid., p. 237.

Beginning slowly in the early 1970s and then intensifying in the 1980s, a series of volumes appeared defining the Conservative position. First came a High Holy Day prayer book.[193] At the end of the decade there was Isaac Klein's *A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice*,[194] the first codification of Conservative halakhic rulings, albeit one written from the perspective of a highly traditional Conservative rabbi. In the 1980s came a Passover Haggadah,[195] a new *siddur*,[196] works on the Conservative approach to Jewish law, such as Joel Roth's *The Halakhic Process: A Systemic Analysis*,[197] and the collected responsa of the committee on Jewish law and standards.[198] Most notably, in 1988, a joint ideological committee, chaired by Robert Gordis, encompassing all organizational arms of the movement, issued *Emet Ve-Emunah*, a statement of beliefs and principles.[199]

Although the new publications do not speak with one voice or suggest anything resembling unanimity, several clear trends are evident. First and foremost, Conservative Judaism has reiterated its desire to occupy the center of the religious spectrum. Thus, the statement of principles speaks of "the indispensability of Halakhah" and the "norms taught by the Jewish tradition." By emphasizing a normative approach to Jewish religious behavior, the Conservative movement rejects the Reform and Reconstructionist positions. Simultaneously, the statement distances itself from Orthodoxy by taking note of "development in Halakhah," and affirms the right of Conservative religious authorities to act independently to interpret and adjust Jewish law.

It needs to be stressed that the Conservative position espoused in *Emet Ve-Emunah* is consciously centrist in that it seeks a path between extreme positions. As analyzed by Chancellor Ismar Schorsch, the statement of principles treats Halakhah as "a disciplinary way of life which is dynamic and evolving." It rejects Mordecai Kaplan's views on chosenness by reasserting "the meaningfulness of the concept of chosenness, and at the same time, claims that we are open to the wisdom of Gentiles." It "depicts Jewish prayer as something firm and fixed . . . and yet [the] liturgical form is open to development, to the refraction of contemporary tastes and anxieties."[200]

A second element of the reshaped Conservative Judaism of the 1980s is

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[193] *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* (New York, 1972).

[194] New York, 1979.

[195] *The Feast of Freedom Passover Haggadah* (New York, 1982).

[196] *Siddur Sim Shalom: A Prayerbook for Shabbat, Festivals, and Weekdays* (New York, 1985).

[197] New York, 1986.

[198] *Proceedings of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement 1980–1985* (New York, 1988).

[199] *Emet Ve-Emunah: Statement of Principles of Conservative Judaism* (New York, 1988).

[200] Ismar Schorsch, "Reflections on *Emet Ve-Emunah*," an address circulated in typescript, unpaged.

an open embrace of pluralism in Jewish religious life. Within the movement itself an effort is made to embrace all Jews who identify themselves as Conservative. Even the newly published statement of principles need not be accepted "as a whole or in detail . . . [as] obligatory upon every Conservative Jew, lay or rabbinic." With regard to other Jewish groups, the statement of principles urges Jewish unity and seeks a common Jewish approach to conversion and religious divorces, vexing sources of friction between the various denominations.[201]

A third feature of the new Conservative position is strong support for gender equality. The statement of principles explicitly affirms the equality of the sexes. The new *Siddur Sim Shalom* takes cognizance in the Hebrew liturgy of the possibility that women will don *tallit* and *tefillin* and includes a blessing (*mi she-berakh*) for a female called to the Torah.[202] While stopping short of making equality of the sexes an absolute norm of Conservative Judaism, movement leaders have indicated clearly where their sympathies reside.

The emphasis on gender equality has led to widespread change. Surveys conducted during the 1970s suggested that growing numbers of Conservative congregations were electing women as officers and including them as equal participants in religious services by counting women in a *minyan*, calling them to the Torah, and permitting them to chant portions of the services. According to a 1988 survey conducted by Edya Arzt, "Better than half the congregations do count women in the *minyan* and do give them *aliyot* on all occasions. An additional 61 congregations give women *aliyot* on special occasions, such as an anniversary or a *Bat Mitzvah* or jointly with their husbands." Arzt found distinct patterns based on geographic location; opposition to women's participation was greatest in Brooklyn and Long Island, began to wane west of the Hudson, and was least evident on the West Coast, where the preponderant majority of congregations were egalitarian.[203]

Those opposed to egalitarianism and other recent changes in Conservatism have organized the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism

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[201]*Emet Ve-Emunah*, pp. 124, 40–41.

[202]*Siddur Sim Shalom*, pp. 2–3, 144.

[203]Edya Arzt, "Our Right to Rites," *Women's League Outlook*, Fall 1988, pp. 17–18. For some earlier surveys, see Zelda Dick, "Light from Our Poll on Women's Role," *Women's League Outlook*, Summer 1975, pp. 14–15; Daniel Elazar and Rela Geffen Monson, "Women in the Synagogue Today," *Midstream*, Apr. 1979, pp. 25–30; and Anne Lapidus Lerner and Stephen C. Lerner, "Report," *Rabbinical Assembly News*, Feb. 1984, pp. 1, 8. For two essays on the process by which individual congregations adopted egalitarianism, see Ruth R. Seldin, "Women in the Synagogue: A Congregant's View," *Conservative Judaism*, Winter 1979, pp. 80–88; and Esther Altshul Helfgott, "Beth Shalom's Encounter with the Woman Question," *Conservative Judaism*, Spring 1986, pp. 66–76.

(UTCJ) as a lobby within the movement. The UTCJ originally emerged in the fall of 1983 from the earlier pressure groups that had fought against changes in the status of women within religious law. Although it continues to speak out against egalitarianism, it has broadened its program to represent the interests of those within the Conservative coalition who oppose what they perceive as a move away from tradition. A recent article written by a lay member of the union, titled "Relief for Beleaguered Traditionalists," appeals to the disaffected: "Your rabbi is touting *Sim Shalom* as the greatest liturgical innovation since the Sh'ma. Your synagogue's ritual committee is again considering women's participation and seems to go along with whichever side seems the loudest. You've seen some food in the synagogue kitchen that makes you wonder whether you can eat there."[204] Although the union represents only a small proportion of Conservative Jews, whenever a decision is taken by the Conservative movement that does not conform with its views, it manages to get equal time in the Jewish press.[205]

The union's boldest challenge to the Conservative leadership has come through the establishment of a separate "Panel of Halakhic Inquiry," which, among other things, has restated the objection to women as rabbis and counting women in a *minyan*. A recent responsum dealing with the new Conservative prayer book argues that "it should not be used for the purpose of fulfilling one's prayer obligations," because it introduces "gratuitous changes," eliminates gender distinctions, "extirpates or modifies almost all positive references to . . . sacrificial ritual," and through its alternative readings, undermines the obligatory nature of Jewish prayer.[206]

Ironically, the rabbinic leaders of the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism play much the same role today within the movement that the Reconstructionist wing played during the middle decades of the century. As analyzed by Gilbert Rosenthal, "The left wing believed itself the odd-man out. The Reconstructionist wing complained that our movement was too bound to tradition, too obsessed with nostalgia, too submissive to the rule of the Seminary faculty." Since the secession of Reconstructionism from the Conservative movement, "there is virtually no articulate left wing in our movement. Instead the odd-man out is the right-wing, which . . . has considered itself increasingly trampled upon and isolated. Today's critics decry our movement for being too obsessed with change, with radicalism,

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[204]Douglas Aronin, *Hagahelet*, Spring 1987, p. 4.

[205]In a letter to the *Jewish Post and Opinion* (August 17, 1988, p. 15), Ronald Price, the UTCJ's executive director, claims that the union represents "500 rabbis (including some 150 Orthodox rabbis who identify with our philosophy) and over 5,000 lay families."

[206]See the responsum by Alan J. Yuter in *Tomeikh keHalakhah* I, ed. Wayne Allen (Mount Vernon, 1986), pp. 6–12.

with departures from Halakhic norms."[207] For their part, members of the UTCJ are convinced that Conservatism no longer has an articulate left wing because Reconstructionism has triumphed within the Conservative movement itself.

The leadership of Conservative Judaism has defined the shift differently. As enunciated by Kassel Abelson in his presidential address to the Rabbinical Assembly in 1987, Conservative Judaism is a "traditional *egalitarian* movement."[208] Traditionalism has been affirmed in the maintenance of Hebrew as the essential language of the liturgy; in the continuing assertion of the need for *Keva*, an established structure "for the times, content, and order of prayer"; for the reaffirmation that Judaism is a normative and binding legal system; and for the reiteration of the role of rabbis as arbiters of Jewish law. As a symbolic gesture of support for the traditional stance of Jewish law, the Rabbinical Assembly even went to the unusual length of affirming as a "standard" the belief that Jewish descent is only conveyed through the mother, thereby subjecting any rabbi who acts upon the patrilineal redefinition of Jewish identity to expulsion from the Rabbinical Assembly.[209] By affirming the need for conversion to Judaism as the only acceptable way for a non-Jew to enter the covenant and by rejecting the redefinition of Jewish identity introduced by Reform and Reconstructionist colleagues, the Conservative rabbinate sought to reiterate its fidelity to tradition on the most controversial and divisive issue on the Jewish religious agenda.

The repositioning of Conservative Judaism through the resolution of the issue of women's ordination served to relieve the paralysis besetting the Conservative movement. Conservative leaders began displaying a new feistiness in pressing the Conservative agenda on the American Jewish scene. Thus, Robert Gordis has challenged Reform to abandon patrilineality as a misguided departure from the unified approach of the Jewish people.[210] Similar challenges have been offered by movement leaders to the position of Orthodoxy *vis à vis* other issues. Ismar Schorsch has publicly declared his determination to become more denominational, to "bring a Conservative interpretation of Judaism to Europe as well as South America" and Israel, and to challenge opponents of the movement in the United States.[211] Conservative leaders have clearly resolved to assert in the public arena the

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[207]Gilbert Rosenthal, "The Elements That Unite Us," *Proceedings of the RA*, 1984, p. 23.

[208]"Presidential Address," *Proceedings of the RA*, 1987, p. 45.

[209]For the debate over adopting the matrilineal principle as a "standard" within the RA, see *Proceedings of the RA*, 1986, pp. 313–22.

[210]Robert Gordis, "To Move Forward, Take One Step Back: A Plea to the Reform Movement," *Moment*, May 1986, pp. 58–61.

[211]Ismar Schorsch, "Centenary Thoughts: Conservatism Revisited," *Proceedings of the RA*, 1986, p. 79. See also the "Presidential Acceptance Speech" of Kassel Abelson, which points to Conservatism becoming a "more militant middle." Ibid., p. 76.

correctness of Conservative Judaism's recently modified, yet still centrist, position.

## DENOMINATIONAL LIFE: RECONSTRUCTIONISM

The most significant development in Reconstructionism during the past quarter century has been its reconstitution as a fourth religious movement, one which claims parity with the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform branches of Judaism.[212] Ironically, however, the institutional growth of the movement has gone hand in hand with a reassessment of the teachings of its founder, Mordecai Kaplan. In fact, Reconstructionism has been reconstructed.

### *Building a Fourth Movement*

The emergence of Reconstructionism as a distinctive movement began when Mordecai Kaplan retired from his professorship at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 1963, at the age of 82. Reconstructionist institutions had existed before, but at Kaplan's behest they had not taken an independent course. Thus, when the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Fellowship was established in 1950, its founders declared they had "no intention of creating a new and competing denomination." Similarly, when the Reconstructionist Fellowship of Congregations was formed in 1955, it required all its constituents to hold dual membership in both the fellowship and in a congregational association of one of the three denominations. In the early 1960s, however, a number of Kaplan's disciples, including his son-in-law Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, convinced him of the need to establish an independent movement. Kaplan's retirement from the Seminary after 51 years freed him and his followers to pursue such a course.[213]

In the fall of 1968, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College opened its doors in Philadelphia. The site had been chosen largely because of a special arrangement between the new college and the department of religion at Temple University in Philadelphia.[214] RRC, as it became known, was to

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[212]The first sentence of the "Platform on Reconstructionism" announces that Reconstructionism is "one of the four major Jewish religious movements." *Newsletter* of the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot (hereafter *FRCH Newsletter)*, Sept. 1986, page D.

[213]See Ira Eisenstein, *Reconstructing Judaism: An Autobiography* (New York, 1986), pp. 216–23.

[214]Temple University had recently come under public auspices and was eager to develop its seminary into a department of religion. The head of the department, Bernard Phillips, devised

train rabbis who combined a knowledge of the Jewish tradition with an understanding of other religious faiths. Accordingly, students were required to enroll simultaneously as Ph.D. students at Temple, while pursuing their rabbinical studies. The goal was "to produce a rabbi capable of confronting the secular world, acquainted with Christianity and other religions, and committed to the application of Judaism to the social problems of our day."[215]

Not surprisingly, the first years of the college were marked by considerable instability: a succession of deans and presidents oversaw operations; the requirement for students to earn a doctorate in religion was first modified and then dropped entirely; and faculty members came and went. But the basic conception of the curriculum remained intact. Guided by Kaplan's view of Judaism as "an evolving religious civilization," the curriculum each year introduces students to a different era of Jewish civilization—biblical, rabbinic, medieval, modern, and contemporary.

The 103 men and women ordained by RRC during its first two decades have provided the Reconstructionist movement with a cadre of rabbis imbued with a shared allegiance to Reconstructionist institutions and ideology. Most of these alumni do not occupy pulpits in Reconstructionist congregations. Rather, they hold positions in Reform and especially Conservative synagogues, where they serve as emissaries for Reconstructionism. These rabbis, far more than the relatively few congregations and *havurot* within the movement, provide Reconstructionism with a presence within the American Jewish community.[216]

## *The Reconstruction of Reconstructionism*

In the process of becoming a full-fledged denomination, Reconstructionism has moved boldly in several areas. One involved the thorny issue of mixed marriage. Whereas the Reform rabbinate drew widespread attention—and opprobrium—for its decision on patrilineal descent in 1983, the Reconstructionist movement had already passed a similar resolution at its annual convention 15 years earlier. In May 1968, Reconstructionism recognized as Jewish the "children of mixed marriage—when the mother is not

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a master plan to bring seminarians of the Protestant and Catholic, as well as Jewish, faiths to Temple. See Bernard Phillips, "Where Religion Meets Scholarly Dialogue," *Reconstructionist*, Oct. 11, 1968, pp. 7–9.

[215]Reconstructionist Rabbinical College brochure, undated and unpaged.

[216]For a listing of alumni of the RRC and their present positions, see the school catalogue for 1988–90, pp. 60–63.

As of early 1988 there were 62 affiliates of the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot, many of them quite small. Some 2,000 families were estimated to belong to the Reconstructionist movement in the New York area. See *FRCH Newsletter*, Mar. 1988, p. 1.

Jewish—if the parents rear the child as a Jew (providing the boy with circumcision), matriculating the child in a religious school so that the child may fulfill requirements of bar or bat mitzvah or confirmation. No other formal conversion rites for the child will be required. . . ."[217] On a related matter, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association drafted "Guidelines on Intermarriage" in 1983 that outlined the proper role of rabbis at mixed marriages. Urging rabbis to reserve the use of the "traditional wedding ceremony (*kiddushin*) for the marriage of a Jew to a Jew," the guidelines affirmed the free choice of the rabbi "to attend and/or participate in a civil marriage ceremony between a Jew and a non-Jew" if the couple expressed a "determination to pursue, in the course of an on-going Jewish identification, ties with the Jewish community and the establishment of a Jewish home."[218]

A second area of far-reaching Reconstructionist innovation concerns the role of women in Jewish life. Kaplan's pioneering efforts in regard to women's participation in synagogue life are well known. His daughter Judith was the first girl to celebrate a Bat Mitzvah ceremony, this in 1922; in 1951, the Society for the Advancement of Judaism began to call women to the Torah and count them in a *minyan*. When the RRC was established, women were quickly admitted. Still, as noted by Rabbi Arthur Green, the current president of the RRC, it is only recently that gender equality has become a "bedrock principle" of Reconstructionism. This means that "in no move toward Jewish unity and interdenominational rapprochement will we compromise the following: the full participation of women on all levels of Jewish leadership, including the rabbinic; the welcome offered to women to participate and be counted as full equals in all areas of Jewish ritual life; the acceptance of women as partners with men in legal decision making, witnessing, and participation in a *bet din* (rabbinic court); or the right of a woman, in the absence of other good alternatives, to end a marriage with a Jewish divorce obtained in a non-degrading manner."[219] In recent years, Reconstructionists have sought to act on this principle not only with regard to ritual matters and policy decisions but also in the liturgical sphere. Thus, a new prayer book is being prepared that promises to eliminate the male-dominated imagery of the traditional liturgy.[220]

A third area for innovation has been in the conduct of congregational life.

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[217]*Reconstructionist Newsletter*, Sept. 1968, p. 1.

[218]"RRA Guidelines on Intermarriage," *Reconstructionist*, Nov. 1983, pp. 18–23. A survey sponsored by the RRA found that 50 percent of the members wanted a strong statement against rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages, while 30 percent already did, or were prepared to, officiate at such marriages. See *Raayonot*, Spring/Summer 1982, p. 8.

[219]Arthur Green, "Reconstructionists and Jewish Unity," *Reconstructionist*, Sept. 1987, p. 12.

[220]See David Teutsch, "Seeking the Words of Prayer," *Reconstructionist*, Mar. 1988, pp. 10–11.

In recent years, Reconstructionists—especially rabbinic leaders—have rethought the relationship between rabbis and their congregants. The Reconstructionist rabbi "serves not as a judicial authority but rather as a learned teacher—someone who by virtue of his/her greater knowledge of Jewish civilization, can assist other Jews in studying the tradition and reaching their own decisions."[221] The ultimate arbiter, however, is the congregation, which is vested with the authority to make "all decisions, including decisions about ritual, . . . in a democratic fashion."[222] To insure democratization, Reconstructionists have developed clear-cut procedures for participatory decision making within smaller *havurot*, larger congregations, and the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot.[223]

As noted above, the institutional growth of Reconstructionism has been accompanied by a reevaluation of Kaplan's legacy. For example, in recent years, some prominent Reconstructionists have advocated a return to the belief in a supernatural God, a belief emphatically rejected by Kaplan. While the "Platform on Reconstructionism" draws a distinction between traditional Judaism's "conception of a supernatural God who possesses such attributes as goodness, justice, righteousness, and mercy," and the Reconstructionist affirmation of "a conception of God as the Power or Process that makes for salvation, or human fulfillment," it also affirms "that *belief in God* is more central to Jewish religion than a specific *conception* of God."[224] This cautious approach is necessary to accommodate the growing numbers of Reconstructionists who reject Kaplan's view of the matter. As one recent alumna and current faculty member at RRC has put it, "Claims about hope and goodness are quite implausible in anything *but* a supernatural context"; accordingly, she affirms her belief in a supernatural and personal God.[225] The emergence at the RRC of neo-Hassidism, with its emphasis on experiencing God through song and body movement in the

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[221]Editor's Introduction, "Democracy and Lay-Rabbinic Relations in Reconstructionism," *Reconstructionist*, Sept. 1985, p. 8. See also Sidney H. Schwarz, "A Synagogue with Principles," *Reconstructionist*, June 1985, pp. 21–25.

[222]Rebecca T. Alpert and Jacob J. Staub, *Exploring Judaism: Reconstructionist Approach* (New York, 1985), p. 79.

[223]See the symposium on "Democracy and Lay-Rabbinic Relations in Reconstructionism," and especially the remarks of Richard A. Hirsh, "Clarifying Our Terms," in *Reconstructionist*, Sept. 1985, pp. 13–15. Hirsh is one of the few to object to this rejection of the traditional rabbinic model, noting that "while all Jews are *entitled* to an opinion, not all opinions are equally informed or equally valuable. I remain convinced that in lay-rabbinic interchange, a rabbi's perspective . . . is generally better informed (though not necessarily more correct) than that of a lay-person" (p. 15).

[224]*FRCH Newsletter*, Sept. 1986, p. E.

[225]Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer, "Reconstructionism Between the Generations," *Raayonot*, vol. 2, no. 2–3, pp. 44–45.

course of prayer, further threatens to undermine the traditional Reconstructionist conception of God. The newly elected president of the RRC and several faculty members are prominently identified with this trend.[226]

A similar challenge has been mounted to another long-standing principle of Reconstructionism: Kaplan's rejection of the chosen people concept. In a symposium on the future of Reonconstructionism conducted in 1982, several participants "indicated that the Kaplanian position on the chosen people might be *passé*."[227] Further evidence of rethinking on the matter is to be seen in the following statement issued by the Reconstructionist prayerbook commission in 1982: "There is a historical link between chosenness and the idea of holiness and covenant. Our sense of destiny has been necessary for Jewish survival. Thus, we should affirm what we consider ourselves to be chosen *for* rather than emphasize what we are chosen *from*. This principle can be implemented by emphasizing vocation."[228] These statements suggest that the concept of the chosen people, albeit somewhat redefined, is gradually being reinstated.

At least three factors are shaping Reconstructionism's changing ideological posture. First, there is the changing constituency of the movement. Writing at midcentury, Harold Schulweis, a leading disciple of Kaplan, characterized the original followers of Reconstructionism as the "twice-born: Those who at one time experienced Orthodoxy and rejected it . . . and who later feel the need to return but to a tradition nourished by a thoroughgoing intellectual modernity."[229] In the 1980s, in contrast, as an editorial in the *Reconstructionist* put it, "there are many members of FRCH affiliates who have joined because of the atmosphere and spirit of these groups. These people are unaware of the movement's philosophy in all its details."[230] Unlike the adherents cited by Schulweis, who were renegades from Orthodox homes, today's Reconstructionists are newcomers to Judaism. When Kaplan spoke of the right of tradition to cast a vote but not a veto, he appealed to a constituency that knew how tradition voted. Today, the task of Reconstructionism is to appeal to a generation that first must be exposed to Jewish tradition before it can even decide on its limits.

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[226]The former president of the college, Ira Silverman, and a leading administrator of the movement, David Teutsch, also have advocated a reexamination of Kaplan's theology. See Sidney Schwarz, "The Reconstructionist Symposium," *Reconstructionist*, Mar. 1982, p. 21. See also Ari L. Goldman, "Reconstructionist Jews Turn to the Supernatural," *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1989, p. A26.

[227]Ibid., p. 22.

[228]"Prayerbook-Committee Progress Report," *Reconstructionist*, Spring 1983, p. 21. See also the symposium on chosenness in the Sept. 1984 issue.

[229]"The Temper of Reconstructionism," in *Jewish Life in America*, ed. Theodore Friedman and Robert Gordis (New York, 1955), p. 74.

[230]*Reconstructionist*, Oct.-Nov. 1984, p. 7.

A second factor promoting ideological ferment is the presence on the RRC faculty of figures associated with countercultural tendencies in the religious and social spheres. Reconstructionism today prides itself on "being on the cutting edge of Jewish ritual and practice," and consciously reaches out to Jews who are eager to experiment.[231] Recent issues raised for discussion within the movement included the following: creation of "an ethical kashrut"—the prohibition of food produced through the oppression of workers, or in factories owned by the Mafia, or whose kosher certification is obtained unethically;[232] provision of "sanctuary for the stranger"—permitting members of a FRCH congregation to provide refuge for victims of political persecution who immigrate to the United States illegally;[233] and experimentation with female goddess imagery—as part of an effort to "dig up women's spiritual practices from the past and see what resonates," as proposed by a woman student at the RRC.[234]

Finally, the movement of Reconstructionism away from Kaplan is in part a result of the very decision to create a separate movement. As long as Kaplan played the role of gadfly to the Jewish community, the success of Reconstructionism was measured by the extent to which his views were adopted by the existing movements. Judged in those terms, Reconstructionism was enormously influential. As a separate movement, however, Reconstructionism has been under great pressure to define a distinctive approach to Jewish life in a community that has already accepted much of Kaplan's program. This pressure has done much to propel Reconstructionism toward new, and in some cases radical, positions that are far removed from the principles of Mordecai Kaplan. Thus, Reconstructionism, which began as the most sharply defined ideological group within American Judaism, today defines itself more by its process than by its united ideological commitments.

## DENOMINATIONAL RELATIONS

The foregoing analysis of shifts in the policies and practices of the various Jewish denominations provides the necessary context to assess why relations between the religious groups have deteriorated in recent years. All of

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[231]Gary Rosenblatt, "Can a Reconstructionist Rabbi Go Too Far?" *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Mar. 27, 1987, pp. 66–68.

[232]Rebecca T. Alpert and Arthur Waskow, "Toward an Ethical Kashrut," *Reconstructionist*, Mar.-Apr. 1987, p. 13.

[233]Sissy Carpey, "Miklat Legerim: A Havurah for Sanctuary," *Reconstructionist*, May-June 1987, pp. 8–12.

[234]Rosenblatt, "Can a Reconstructionist Rabbi . . . ?" pp. 66–68.

the movements have responded to a series of new challenges faced by the American Jewish community: the rising level of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews and the resulting question of how to integrate the children of such marriages into the Jewish community; the feminist revolution and the demands of Jewish women for equality in religious life; and declining levels of synagogue affiliation and involvement of third- and fourth- generation American Jews, which have forced Jewish institutions to compete for members. Each movement has responded differently to these issues and has embraced policies unilaterally, with little or no consultation with the other groupings in American Judaism. The resulting policies reflect profoundly different conceptions of Jewish identity, religious reform, and the future of American Judaism. The Reform and Reconstructionist position on patrilineality, for example, is incompatible with Conservative and Orthodox definitions of who is a Jew. The ordination of women as rabbis is viewed by the non-Orthodox as a logical extension of Jewish values and by the Orthodox as an unacceptable deviation from Jewish tradition. As Irving Greenberg, a modern Orthodox rabbi has suggested, both extremes on the religious spectrum act as if they have written each other off; they assume that those with opposing views will become increasingly irrelevant to the Jewish future.[235] Only those on the Conservative right and the Orthodox left seem concerned about this situation, perhaps because they have ties to all segments of the Jewish community.

One episode that symbolizes both the possibilities and the lost opportunities for greater religious unity is the so-called Denver experiment.[236] Beginning in 1978, Reform, Conservative, and Traditional[237] rabbis in that city formed a joint *bet din* to oversee conversions. (Orthodox rabbis refused to participate, and there was no Reconstructionist rabbi in Denver at the time.) The purpose of this program was to prevent a situation in which rabbis in Denver could not recognize each other's converts. While rabbis still retained the right to perform their own conversions, approximately 750 individuals underwent conversion in Denver through the joint court.

In order to function as a *bet din*, all participating rabbis compromised

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[235]On Greenberg's views, see "Will There Be One Jewish People in the Year 2000?" *Perspectives*, National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, June 1985. See also Gary Rosenblatt, "Judaism's Civil War: How Deep Is the Rift?" *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Jan. 29, 1988, pp. 56–59.

[236]The most complete account of this experiment, which includes interviews with all of the participating rabbis, appears in "Conversion and Patrilineality," a special section of the *Intermountain Jewish News* (Denver), Dec. 2, 1983, pp.1–12.

[237]Traditional synagogues and rabbis are largely a Midwestern phenomenon; Traditional congregations permit men and women to sit together and utilize a microphone during religious services; their rabbis, mainly graduates of the Hebrew Theological Seminary in Skokie, Ill., identify with modern Orthodoxy.

some of their views. The Traditional rabbis "were prepared to say that even though . . . all of the students coming out of the general conversion process would not be authentic Orthodox Jews, . . . as long as they were beginning an effort to learn Judaism and aspire to be committed Jews, we were prepared to offer our signatures."[238] The Reform rabbis, in turn, agreed to teach about Jewish dietary laws, including the special Passover requirements in the home. In addition, the Reform rabbis acceded to the Traditional and Conservative rabbis' insistence that converts undergo ritual immersion in a *mikveh* and that males undergo a symbolic circumcision (*hatafat dam brit*). The lone Conservative rabbi in Denver, whose conception of conversion represented a centrist position, served as chairman of the group for most of its history, but the actual conversion ceremony was supervised by three Traditional rabbis.

After six years of relatively smooth functioning, the Denver *bet din* was dissolved in 1983. The precipitating factor was the resolution on patrilineality adopted that year by the Central Conference of American Rabbis. This decision to redefine Jewish identity, as well as the designation of Denver as a pilot community for a new Reform outreach effort—to seek out converts—convinced the Traditional and Conservative rabbis that they could no longer participate in the joint body. Although the Reform rabbis of Denver held varying views on the question of patrilineality, the decision of the Reform rabbinate on a national level placed the Traditional and Conservative rabbis in an untenable position. They could not cooperate in a conversion program with rabbis who held a very different conception of Jewish identity. Furthermore, they felt they could not supervise conversions that would occur with increasing frequency due to a Reform outreach effort that was inconsistent with their own understanding of how to relate to potential proselytes.

The possibility of future cooperation between the denominations in other Jewish communities was further undermined by the response of Orthodox groups to the Denver program. When the existence of the program became public knowledge (ironically, through the announcement of its demise), Orthodox groups raised a hue and cry over the folly of Traditional rabbis participating in a joint conversion effort. The *Jewish Observer* stated bluntly:

> While compromise for the sake of unity can often make good sense, when dealing with basic principles of faith, "compromise" is actually a sell-out. . . .It is time that all Orthodox rabbis recognize that Reform and Conservative Judaism are far, far removed from Torah, and that *Klal Yisroel* is betrayed—not served—when Orthodoxy enters in religious association with them.[239]

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[238]"Conversion and Patrilineality," p. 2.

[239]Nisson Wolpin, "Compromise on the Great Divide: Questionable Conversions in Denver," *Jewish Observer*, Jan. 1984, pp. 32–34.

In the judgment of the *Jewish Observer*, "The Traditional rabbis of Denver have been party to an outrageous fraud."

Since the collapse of the Denver program, denominational relations have continued to deteriorate. Key flash points include: the veto exercised by Orthodox rabbis of the Rabbinical Council of America to prevent the Reconstructionist movement from joining the Synagogue Council of America;[240] the reconstitution of the JWB Chaplaincy Board in response to the application of a woman rabbi seeking to serve as a Jewish military chaplain;[241] and the placement of newspaper advertisements by rabbinic groups of the Orthodox right urging Jews to stay home on the Jewish High Holy Days rather than worship in non-Orthodox synagogues.[242] When the *New York Times* saw fit to publish a front-page article with the headline "Split Widens on a Basic Issue: What Is a Jew?" the divisions among rabbis began to attract more attention in the wider Jewish community.[243] One organization in particular, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, headed by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, sought to focus communal attention on the growing rift by inviting the leaders of all four Jewish religious movements to a conference that posed the provocative question—"Will There Be One Jewish People By the Year 2000?"[244]

In late 1988, rancor between the denominations reached new heights in response to Israeli political maneuverings. Both major Israeli political factions signaled to potential coalition partners representing various Orthodox constituencies their readinesss to guarantee passage of an amendment to Israel's Law of Return, stipulating that converts to Judaism be granted citizenship under that law only if they had been converted "according to Halakhah." From the perspective of non-Orthodox groups, this amendment could have only one purpose—the delegitimation of non-Orthodox rabbis. Since it is widely known that merely a handful of converts move to Israel annually, it was clear that this Orthodox demand had more symbolic than practical importance. The true issue was not so much "Who is a Jew?" but "Who is an authentic rabbi?"[245]

For several weeks in late 1988 the American Jewish community was in turmoil over this issue. The General Assembly of the Council of Jewish

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[240]See *JTA News Bulletin*, Apr. 23, 1986, p. 4, and the editorial "The Synagogue Council of America," *Reconstructionist*, July-Aug. 1986, p. 6.

[241]When the CCAR placed a female candidate in the chaplaincy program, the commission was reconstituted as the Jewish Chaplains Council in 1986. See *JTA New Bulletin*, Aug. 29, 1985, p. 3, and AJYB 1986, vol. 86, p. 399, and AJYB 1987, vol. 87, p. 400, on the name change.

[242]*New York Times*, Feb. 28, 1986, p. A1.

[243]Ibid.

[244]Cohen and Greenberg, "The One in 2000 Controversy," pp. 11–22.

[245]Gary Rosenblatt, "Separating the Historical from the Hysterical," *Baltimore Jewish Times*, Dec. 9, 1988, p. 29ff., offers a helpful introduction to the controversy.

Federations devoted much of its agenda to the matter, particularly because community leaders feared that passage of an amendment to the Law of Return would do serious harm to fund-raising efforts and relations between American Jews and Israel.[246] The Jewish press carried an ongoing stream of reports and articles in response to this issue, including interviews with converts and debates among rabbis over the implications of the impending Israeli vote. Leaders of Jewish organizations threatened to urge their members to reconsider their funding allocations for Israeli charities and to withhold funding from Orthodox institutions in the United States. At the end of the year, Israeli political leaders forged a government that, in the short term at least, had no plans to amend the law—and so the immediate crisis passed.

The resentments unleashed by this controversy were unusually strong. Opponents of the amendment faulted Orthodox leaders in the United States, particularly the Lubavitcher Rebbe, for pressuring Israeli groups to pass the amendment. It was frequently argued that Orthodox Jews in America were taking their battle against the other Jewish denominations to Israel because they could not win such a battle in the United States. Moreover, non-Orthodox leaders claimed that their identity as Jews was under attack. As Shoshana Cardin, a former president of the CJF and chairwoman of that organization's committee on religious pluralism, put it: "What we're dealing with here is perceived disenfranchisement of millions of Jews. And in this case, perception is reality."[247]

Though some Orthodox organizations—principally, the Rabbinical Council of America—supported the campaign to remove the issue of "Who is a Jew?" from the Israeli political agenda, Orthodox groups joined together to blame Reform Judaism for creating a religious schism. In an "Open Letter to American Jews" signed by several Orthodox organizations, the halakhic definition of Jewish identity was described as "universally accepted among all Jews for thousands of years. Reform, however, has done away with Halacha; and the Conservative movement is forever tampering with it."[248] In a similar vein, Marc Angel, one of the most moderate members of the centrist Orthodox rabbinate, lashed out at those who criticized Orthodoxy for its stand:

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[246]Arthur J. Magida, " 'Who Is a Jew' Dominates Assembly," *Jewish News* (Detroit), Nov. 25, 1988, p. 1.

[247]Cardin is quoted in the Magida article, noted above. See also " 'Who Is a Jew' Issue Threatens Funding," and "Leaders Protest 'Who Is,' " *Atlanta Jewish Times*, Dec. 2, 1988, pp. 12, 13, as well as " 'Who Is a Jew' Furor Erupts," in the same periodical, Nov. 8, 1988, p. 16A.

[248]The open letter appeared in the *New York Times*, Dec. 19, 1988, p. B9. On Orthodox divisions over the issue, see Alan Richter and Walter Ruby, "Rift Develops Among Orthodox over Law of Return," *Long Island Jewish World*, Dec. 2–8, 1988, p. 3.

> Those leaders who speak so passionately for Jewish unity ought to have launched a major attack on the decision of Reform Judaism to consider "patrilineal Jews" as Jews. There has probably been nothing more divisive in modern Jewish history than this decision to unilaterally change the definition of Jewishness to include the child of a Jewish father.[249]

It is still too early to tell whether the bitterness generated by the "Who is a Jew?" debate will lead to further polarization or whether it will redouble efforts toward greater religious unity. The formation of an Israeli government intent on shelving the question will not in the long run make the divisions over Jewish identity disappear. For underlying the debate over "Who is a Jew?" are differences between Jewish religious factions over questions of religious authenticity, the nature of religious reform, and different conceptions of "What is Judaism?" Irving Greenberg has warned that by the end of the century there will be perhaps as many as half a million children, born to mothers converted by Reform rabbis or accepted as Jewish under the patrilineal definition, whose Jewishness will not be accepted by other Jews.[250] Moreover, within a generation, there will be rabbis of patrilineal descent who will not be recognized *as Jewish* by Orthodox and Conservative rabbis. Clearly, the inability of Jewish religious movements to act in concert in the recent past will have serious repercussions for American Judaism in the coming decades.

## NEW SETTINGS FOR RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

Although most Jewish religious activities in America continue to be channeled through the organized denominations, some important new programs for religious renewal have been launched independently—and sometimes in conscious rejection of—organized American Judaism. During the past 20 years, American Jews have experimented with new forms of religious communities, innovative liturgies that express contemporary concerns, and nontraditional settings for Jewish study. In time, some of these programs have been integrated into, or tacitly supported by, established religious institutions. But much of the impulse and energy for innovation has come from individual Jews seeking new ways to express their religious commitments.

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[249]Marc D. Angel, "Leaders of U.S. Jewry Have Fear of Losing Power," *Jewish Week* (New York), Dec. 16, 1988, p. 26.

[250]See the exchange between Irving Greenberg and Steven M. Cohen in "The One in 2000 Controversy."

## *The Havurah Movement*

The most striking and influential attempt to foster religious renewal through the establishment of an alternative to established synagogues has been the *havurah* movement. In a new study of this phenomenon in American Judaism, Riv-Ellen Prell situates the movement in a particular historical context.[251] The *havurot*, she argues, were created by a particular generation—the grandchildren of immigrants from Eastern Europe, a generation that had come of age primarily in suburban America in the 1960s. Being swept up in the "youth culture" of the 1960s and 1970s, these young Jews sought a religious community that would alter "the relationship between the individual and society, between making and consuming, between membership and community, and between instrumentality and authenticity." The *havurah* model appealed to them because it provided the opportunity to form small intimate fellowships for study, prayer, and friendship that seemed impossible in the large, decorous, bureaucratized synagogues they knew from their youth. It allowed for individual participation and spontaneity, whereas established synagogues were dominated by professionals who "led" formal services.

The young Jews who joined *havurot* espoused the dominant political ideology of the time. They adopted the rhetoric of the New Left and supported the general critique of American society and especially of the Vietnam War. But what distinguished this group was its involvement with Jewish concerns. For even as they criticized established Jewish institutions, *havurah* organizers were engaged in the process of remaking Jewish life, rather than rejecting it wholesale. As Prell observes:

> This generation offered their own transformation of the key themes in American Judaism: authority, decorum, and organization. They neither transformed the voluntary structure of the American Jewish community, nor abandoned organizations, chiefly the prayer community, as the source of Jewish identity. Rather, they refashioned the nature of Jewish organizations in light of the aesthetics of the American counterculture. . . . Their counter-aesthetic and alternative decorum constituted a means by which they differentiated themselves from their parents and from American society.[252]

The first *havurah*, Havurat Shalom, was founded in Somerville, a suburb of Boston, in the fall of 1968, as an alternative rabbinical seminary. Within a short time, Havurat Shalom reoriented its program "to create a new and stimulating Jewish community." One year later the New York Havurah was formed, and within a few years, young Jews formed the Farbrangen in Washington and a similar *havurah* in Philadelphia. By the early 1970s,

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[251]Riv-Ellen Prell, *Prayer and Community: The Havurah in American Judaism* (Detroit, 1989), pp. 69–72.

[252]Ibid., pp. 71–72.

*havurot* had proliferated on many college campuses. For the most part, these early *havurot* "were closed communities of young people . . . that were open to the rest of the Jewish community on Sabbaths and most holidays. . . . The groups were run democratically, and generally included some program of communal study, in addition to regular communal meals and occasional weekend retreats."[253]

The *havurah* outlook of this period came to wider attention with the publication of *The Jewish Catalog* (1973) and *The Second Jewish Catalog* (1976), which along with a third such volume (1980) eventually sold over half a million copies. The first volume was oriented to a "do-it-yourself" approach aimed at "enabling the individual Jew to build his own Jewish life."[254] The volume paid attention to "the physical aspects of Jewish life, and provided a guide for the construcion of Jewish objects."[255] By contrast, the second catalog was more concerned with "proper ways to act rather than the simple how-to of doing Jewish things—more attention to the community, less to the self."[256] Surveying the Jewish life cycle, study, synagogue, prayer, and the arts, the second catalog offered a "mix of personal advice with halachic and other traditional sources, together with ideas, suggestions, illustrations, photographs, general information, and small-print commentary."[257] Both volumes featured an encounter with traditional Jewish sources and a concern with Halakhah, coupled with experimentation and eclecticism.

By the mid-1970s, this kind of approach came under attack from within. Some longtime members of the *havurah* movement grew impatient with what they saw as a casual approach to Jewish tradition, summed up by the semijocular remark of one insider: "We are a *havurah* so we examine Halakhah, then decide what we want to do."[258] Describing his early years in the *havurah* movement, Alan Mintz noted sardonically, "In those days my Judaism was a delicate flower of the Diaspora, a kind of aesthetic religion based on values and symbols which sacralized personal relations."[259] From a different perspective, William Novak challenged the *havurah* movement to stake out an alternative approach to Jewish tradition: "Is

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[253]William Novak, "From Somerville to Savannah . . . and Los Angeles . . . and Dayton," *Moment*, Jan./Feb. 1981, p. 19.

[254]David Glanz review in *Congress Bi-Weekly*, June 21, 1974, p. 21.

[255]William Novak, "The Future of Havurah Judaism," *Moment*, Jan. 1977, p. 56.

[256]From *The Second Jewish Catalog*, quoted in Novak, "The Future . . . ," p. 56.

[257]Ibid.

[258]Quoted in Shira Weinberg Hecht, "Religious Practice and Organization in an Egalitarian Minyan Setting," a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Oct. 1988, p. 28, note 14. I thank the author for graciously sharing this paper and information on her research.

[259]Alan Mintz, in the symposium "Have You Sold Out?" *Response*, Spring 1976, p. 43.

it not time," he asked, "that those who find the Halakhah an inadequate surface begin to pave a more systematic alternative?"[260]

In the 1980s, these issues began to pale as the *havurah* movement underwent important transformations. All the non- Orthodox versions of American Judaism expressed a new openness to the *havurah* form. Reconstructionism enrolled *havurot* as constituents in its Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot; and Conservative and Reform congregations organized synagogue-based *havurot*. The latter were designed to offer synagogue members intimate fellowship, while simultaneously participating in the life of a larger congregation. In an influential essay, "Restructuring the Synagogue," Rabbi Harold Schulweis urged his colleagues "to offer the searching Jew a community which does not ignore his autonomy":

> We are challenged to decentralize the synagogue and deprofessionalize Jewish living so that the individual Jew is brought back into a circle of Jewish experience. . . . I see one of the major functions of the synagogue as that of the *shadchan*—bringing together separate, lonely parties into *Havurot*. In our congregation, a *havurah* is comprised of a *minyan* of families who have agreed to meet together at least once a month to learn together, to celebrate together and hopefully to form some surrogate for the eroded extended family.[261]

Although definitive statistics are not available on the number of synagogue-based *havurot*, it is clear that the model proposed by Schulweis has been adopted by a significant number of congregations.[262] A survey conducted by a Reform commission headed by Rabbi Saul Rubin in the early 1980s found that at least 129 Reform temples sponsored *havurot*, with the largest numbers in the Northeast and on the West Coast. Most contained between 10 and 19 people, and revolved around educational activities, social programming, holiday observances, and Jewish family life.[263] Similar data are unavailable for Conservative synagogues, but the attention devoted to synagogue *havurot* at conventions of the Rabbinical Assembly suggests the proliferation of such fellowships.[264]

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[260]Novak, "The Future . . . ," p. 59. For a hard-hitting critique of *havurah* Judaism by an outsider, see Marshall Sklare, "The Greening of Judaism," *Commentary*, Dec. 1974, pp. 51–57. Sklare was particularly incensed over the rejection of Jewish norms in favor of the "youth culture," and the "superiority toward the conventional forms of American Jewish life" (p. 57).

[261]Harold Schulweis, "Restructuring the Synagogue," *Conservative Judaism*, Summer 1973, p. 19.

[262]Daniel Elazar and Rela Geffen Monson, "The Synagogue Havurah—An Experiment in Restoring Adult Fellowship to the Jewish Community," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, June 1979, pp.70–72.

[263]I am indebted to Rabbi Rubin for sharing some of his survey findings with me. As far as I know, they have not been published. On *havurot* on the West Coast, see Gerald B. Bubis and Harry Wasserman, *Synagogue Havurot: A Comparative Study* (Washington, D.C., 1983).

[264]See "Havurah Failures and Successes," *Proceedings of the RA*, 1979, pp. 55–75.

The introduction of fellowships into larger congregations has provided some adherents of *havurah* Judaism with the opportunity to reestablish their ties to the American synagogue. Whereas *havurot* once represented a break with establishment Judaism, they now serve as a bridge linking former members of the student movement with the larger Jewish community. This linkage was made especially evident by the formation of a national organization of *havurot* in 1979, which brings together both the independent and synagogue types.[265] The established community no longer views *havurot* as a threat, but has incorporated the fellowship ideal into some of its programs; in addition, it has recruited members of the *havurah* world to serve as rabbis, administrators, and educators within the larger Jewish community. In turn, members of *havurot* turn to the larger community in order to provide their children with Hebrew or day-school education, Jewish camping experiences, and social and recreational programs offered by Jewish community centers.[266]

A second dramatic change in *havurah* Judaism has been the shift from a community focused on study and social interaction to one primarily concerned with prayer services. Indeed, many a *havurah* has signaled the shift by renaming itself a "*minyan.*" To some extent, this is a function of changes in the life situations of members. The undergraduate and graduate students who founded the *havurah* movement have taken on career, marriage, and family responsibilities that leave little time for intensive communal experiences. At the same time, the *minyan* may also represent a reaction to the loose, informal structure of earlier *havurot;* the goal of the *minyanim* is to enable members to fulfill a technical requirement of religious life—public prayer. The *havurah* and *minyan* are also distinguished by membership patterns. *Minyanim* are open to anyone who will participate regularly; as a result, "the typical *minyan* is larger than a *havurah*, and may reach a membership of eighty to a hundred."[267] But the growing population of attendees at *minyanim* has also led to dissatisfaction among those who feel that a large group works against spontaneity and brings in newcomers who lack the synagogue skills and *havurah* experience of veterans.[268]

A third important change in *havurah* Judaism has been the introduction of gender equality as a fundamental principle. As the women's movement

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[265]Jeffrey Oboler, "The First National Havurah Conference," *Congress Monthly*, Dec. 1979, pp. 12–13.

[266]In Boston, however, Shira Weinberg Hecht found that many *havurah* members send their children to day schools, thereby obviating the need to join a synagogue.

[267]Lenore Eve Weissler, "Making Judaism Meaningful: Ambivalence and Tradition in a Havurah Community" (unpublished doctoral diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1982), cited in Hecht, "Religious Practice," p. 8.

[268]For some debate over this issue, see Steven M. Cohen, "Conflict in the Havurot: Veterans vs. Newcomers," *Response*, Summer 1979, pp. 3–4; and Michael Strassfeld, "Too Many for a Minyan," *Response*, Spring 1980, pp. 21–28.

developed in the 1970s, *havurot* incorporated egalitarianism as a basic ideal, albeit not without some strains. Since much of the liturgy of *havurot* was highly traditional, it took time for women to be integrated into nontraditional synagogue roles—as prayer leaders, Torah readers, etc. The movement as a whole also debated whether males of an Orthodox outlook, who insisted on praying in a *minyan* that separated the sexes, could be included in *havurah* Judaism.[269] The gradual evolution of egalitarian religious services within *havurah* Judaism not only transformed the prayer services of the movement but also served as a model for women in conventional synagogues. Moreover, with the intensification of their involvement in religious services, women in *havurot* began to experiment with new religious rituals and liturgies to express their separate concerns.

*Havurah* Judaism's relationship with the larger Jewish community is not without its ongoing challenges. Since its inception, the movement has been uncertain of its position *vis à vis* the established denominations. Does *havurah* Judaism represent a fifth religious movement? Is it postdenominational and, therefore, separate from all movements? A second challenge pertains to the relationship of *havurah* members to other generations of American Jews. Ironically, the young Jews who founded *havurot* to express the needs of their own generation have persuaded their elders of the value of their program, but have been far less successful with their juniors. Lamenting the absence of younger members, a *havurah* founder has observed: "No one beyond the generation that began the *havurah* joined or created new ones. Where are the college aged students today? They are becoming Orthodox Jews. We could only speak for ourselves."[270] As the former members of America's youth culture enter their 40s, they may find themselves without a successor generation within the *havurah* movement.

## *New Women's Rituals and Liturgies*

Jewish feminism has served as a second source of innovation outside of the mainstream of American Judaism.[271] Jewish feminists have created new ceremonies and liturgies, or reappropriated older forms to mark the particular life-cycle events of Jewish women. Though they communicate with each other in the pages of established journals, as well as new publications, such

[269]For a discussion of the principle of egalitarianism in *havurah* Judaism, see Novak, "From Somerville . . . ," pp. 58–59. For a case study of the struggle for egalitarianism within one *havurah*, see Prell, *Prayer and Community*, chap. 7, "Community, Visibility, and Gender in Prayer."

[270]Quoted in Prell, *Prayer and Community*, p. 317.

[271]Our discussion of denominational life noted the struggles for increased women's participation within established institutions, such as synagogues and seminaries. The present section is concerned with less formal and institutionalized expressions of Jewish feminism, many of which transcend ideology and denomination.

as *Lilith*, Jewish feminists appear to lack institutions to coordinate their activities. There are pockets of activists and small groups in many areas of the country, but little centralized activity. Moreover, Jewish feminists vary widely, from Orthodox women who will work only within the parameters set by Halakhah, to women who create nontraditional liturgies, to radical feminists who insist on breaking with the existing vocabulary of Judaism, claiming it is inherently distorted by patriarchal values and masculine religious categories. Due to the diffuse nature of Jewish feminism, it is difficult to assess just how many women are involved in its activities. But the proliferation of new liturgies and ceremonies attests to the creative engagement of those women who do participate in the movement.[272]

The initial focus of the Jewish women's movement within the religious sphere was to accord women a greater role in traditional ceremonial life. Hence, double-ring ceremonies were introduced at Jewish weddings so that brides could play a more active role; and the ceremony of *Brit Milah* was revised in order to accord mothers an opportunity to recite part of the liturgy at their sons' circumcisions. Once these hurdles were overcome, Jewish feminists shifted the focus of their attention to the celebration of women's life-cycle events.

Undoubtedly the most widely practiced of these were birth ceremonies for baby girls. These have ranged from the *Simhat Bat*, or *Shalom Bat*, which includes no new liturgy or formal ceremony, aside from remarks prepared by the newborn's parents, to the *Brit Banot*, which not only models itself after the liturgy of the *Brit Milah*, but in some instances seeks a substitute for the act of circumcision in analagous physical acts, such as immersing the baby girl in a ritual bath or washing her feet in water.[273] As noted by anthropologist Chava Weissler, such ceremonies strive to achieve several ends: (1) to create an elaborate celebration that rivals the *Brit Milah*; (2) to develop a liturgy initiating the child into the covenant that binds Israel to its God; (3) to define an approach to sex-role differentiation.[274]

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[272]Much of the source material utilized in this section was gathered by Rabbi Debra Cantor, who, as a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, compiled "A Compendium of New Jewish Women's Rituals" for a course I taught on contemporary American Judaism. The most important repository of materials on Jewish women's activities in the religious and other spheres is the Jewish Women's Resource Center (JWRC), housed at the headquarters of the National Council of Jewish Women in New York.

[273]Over 50 different birth ceremonies for girls are on file at the Jewish Women's Resource Center. See also: Susan Weidman Schneider, *Jewish and Female* (New York, 1984), pp. 121–30; and an issue of *Sh'ma* devoted to these rituals and liturgies (Dec. 23, 1983); Daniel I. and Myra Leifer, "On the Birth of a Daughter," in *The Jewish Woman: New Perspectives*, ed. Elizabeth Koltun (New York, 1976), pp. 91–100; Gary and Sheila Rubin, "Preserving Tradition by Expanding It," *Response*, Fall/Winter 1982, pp. 61–68; and "The Covenant of Washing," *Menorah: Sparks of Jewish Renewal*, Apr./May 1983, p. 22ff.

[274]Chava Weissler, "New Jewish Birth Rituals for Baby Girls," unpublished paper at the Jewish Women's Resource Center, p. 6.

A wide range of ceremonies was developed to celebrate other milestones in the lives of women. These include the redemption of the first-born daughter, *Pidyon Ha-bat*; weaning ceremonies; and special prayers that enable women to commemorate both pregnancy and miscarriage.[275] Further, an array of liturgies was created to mark the fertility cycle of women. The onset of menstruation is celebrated rather than perceived as a curse; it is designated as a "coming of age" to be proclaimed by daughter and mother in a public setting.[276] Jewish feminists have created other ceremonies to reappropriate the monthly ceremony of ritual immersion in the waters of the *mikveh*, as well as to mark the onset of menopause.[277] The value of such rituals for feminists is that they grant recognition to the unique experiences of women. For some feminists, however, the emphasis on women's biological functions represents a step backward. "Is the celebration of the recurrence of the menses feminism, or is it a ceremony honoring instrumentality?" asks Cynthia Ozick in a widely remarked essay. Feminism, she argues, must enable women to transcend biology; accordingly, Jewish feminism should seek to end the segregation of women.[278]

Feminist Judaism has found particular meaning for women in two Jewish holidays—Passover and Rosh Hodesh (Festival of the New Moon). Passover has become central to feminist celebrations for a number of reasons: it is the most widely celebrated of all Jewish holidays; it is thematically focused on liberation; it has traditionally been a time when women shoulder the burden of preparation; and the Exodus narrative itself draws attention to the roles of women—Yocheved and Miriam, Shifrah and Puah. Structurally, the twin Seder evenings provide an opportunity to experiment with new liturgies on the second evening, even for those who prefer the traditional ceremony on the first. Not surprisingly, there has been an outpouring of feminist Passover liturgies, generally focusing on women's liberation and their role in history.[279]

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[275]Copies of such ceremonies are on file at the Jewish Women's Resource Center. For a survey, see Schneider, *Jewish and Female*, which contains a section on "Rituals for the Landmarks of Our Lives," pp. 117–48.

[276]For a ceremony marking the onset of menarche, see Penina V. Adelman, *Miriam's Well: Rituals for Jewish Women Around the Year* (New York, 1986), the section on "Sivan." See also *Siddur Nashim*, comp. Maggie Wenig and Naomi Janowitz (Providence, 1976), for a "Prayer on Menstruation."

[277]On the reappropriation of *mikveh*, see Evelyn Hutt v'Dodd's contribution in "The Ways We Are," *Lilith*, Winter 1976/77, pp. 7–9.

[278]Cynthia Ozick, "Bima: Torah as a Matrix for Feminism," *Lilith*, Winter/Spring 1985, pp. 48–49.

[279]For a survey of 13 feminist Haggadahs, see *JWRC Newsletter*, Winter/Spring 1981, pp. 1–2. See also Reena Friedman, "How Was This Passover Different from All Other Passovers?" *Lilith*, Spring/Summer 1977, pp. 33–36. For a new prayer to mark the pre-Passover cleaning, see Lynn Gottlieb, "Spring Cleaning Ritual on the Eve of Full Moon Nissan," in *On Being a Jewish Feminist: A Reader*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York, 1983), pp. 278–80.

Some Jewish feminists have reappropriated the Festival of the New Moon, building upon its traditional association with women. Rabbinic texts had long enjoined women, as opposed to men, from engaging in their usual work routines on the New Moon Rosh Hodesh; some of those texts had in fact identified Rosh Hodesh as a reward to women, as a time when, in the world to come, "women will be renewed like the New Moons."[280] Rosh Hodesh is seen, thus, as a suitable occasion for exploring women's special spiritual needs. Since the early 1970s, when these celebrations gained popularity, Rosh Hodesh groups have met throughout the country, usually during the evenings when the new moon has appeared, to mark the occasion with the reading of mainly English liturgies (including their own versions of "*techinot*," traditional women's supplications), movement in a circle, lighting candles, and eating a ritual feast.[281]

In all these activities, Jewish feminists have grappled with the tension between wishing to develop opportunities for women to express their own religious needs and a desire to integrate women into all facets of Jewish religious life. In discussions of liturgical revision, this issue is central: Is the goal of new liturgies to refer to God using pronouns that are feminine or using pronouns not associated with either gender? And if either approach is utilized, will Jews find a liturgy meaningful that differs radically from the hallowed prayers? The decades of the seventies and eighties have opened the way to experimentation with liturgy and ritual and to serious consideration of these issues.[282]

### *Reaching Jews on the Periphery*

The era of the 1970s and 1980s has also witnessed the emergence of a wide range of programs that appeal to Jews previously considered to be on the periphery of American Judaism. Some of these activities are "outreach" programs that reflect the internal agenda of the organized Jewish community—efforts to stem the tide of defections. Others are the spontaneous coming together of individuals seeking novel forms of religious community. Typical of the latter are humanistic synagogues, gay synagogues, rural

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[280]For a good introduction to the historical, as well as the contemporary, observance of Rosh Hodesh by women, see Arlene Agus, "This Month Is for You: Observing Rosh Hodesh as a Woman's Holiday," in Koltun, ed., *The Jewish Woman*, pp. 84–93.

[281]Carol Glass, "A Festival of Joy," *JWRC Newsletter*, Winter/Spring 1981, reports on Rosh Hodesh groups. Numerous texts on the celebration of this ritual in different localities are on file at the Jewish Women's Resource Center.

[282]For a sampling of views in this debate, see the essays by Judith Plaskow, Rita M. Gross, and Arthur Green in Heschel, ed., *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, pp. 217–60; Naomi Janowitz and Maggie Wenig, "Selections from a Prayerbook Where God's Image Is Female," *Lilith*, vol. 1, no. 4, Fall/Winter 1977–78, pp. 27–29; Judith Plaskow, "Language, God and Liturgy: A Feminist Perspective," *Response*, Spring 1983, pp. 3–14.

communities, and informal networks for "Jewish renewal."

Jewish organizations spanning the spectrum from Jewish community centers and Ys to synagogues to special retreat centers have developed programs to attract unaffiliated Jews and teach them how to observe Jewish rituals. Many of the sponsoring organizations are nondenominational, such as Hadassah, but are eager to expose unaffiliated Jews to some type of religious observance—a traditional Sabbath, model Seder, or *sukkah* visit. Among the most innovative programs have been the retreats offered by the Brandeis-Bardin Institute on the West Coast and Project Connect, sponsored by the 92nd Street YM/YWHA in New York, both directed at unaffiliated families, including mixed-married couples. Synagogues of all denominations have been especially active in promoting outreach programs and separate religious services for single Jews, who tend to be unaffiliated. In New York and Washington, close to a thousand Jewish singles gather annually for their own High Holy Day services.[283]

In 1963, a Reform rabbi, Sherwin Wine, formed a "secular humanistic" Jewish congregation in Farmington Hills, Michigan, to provide a congregational setting for Jews who rejected belief in God but sought a communal structure to meet with fellow Jews. Wine's congregation now numbers 500 families and has been augmented by 25 additional congregations affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism. These congregations hold Sabbath and holiday celebrations utilizing "non-theistic symbols (a *sukkah*, *lulav* and *etrog*, for instance), folk songs and celebrations, such as a Purim carnival—independent of services." Rites of passage are commemorated in ceremonies that do not include blessings or Torah readings, but do connect the life-cycle event to the larger tapestry of Jewish history. In general, congregational meetings consist of two parts: a period of time devoted to reading philosophical reflections, poetry, meditations, and songs; and a part devoted to a lecture or cultural program. Humanistic Judaism claims an international membership of 30,000 Jews.[284]

In 1972 homosexual men and women organized Beth Chayim Chadashim in Los Angeles, the first gay synagogue. Since then approximately 20 additional congregations have been established, with the largest, Congregation Beth Simchat Torah in New York, claiming 400 members and 1,000 worshippers at High Holy Day services. When interviewed, members of these congregations describe their early education in yeshivahs and Hebrew schools and their subsequent rejection of Judaism because of the conflict

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[283]See, for example, Richard Bono, "Traditional Jewish Values Back in Vogue," *Atlanta Jewish Times*, Apr. 15, 1988, p. 1; and John L. Rosove, "A Synagogue Model for the Single Jew," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Winter 1986, pp. 29–36.

[284]See Naomi Godfrey, "Taking the Theism Out of Judaism," *Jewish Week* (New York), Apr. 8, 1988, p. 28.

between their sexual orientation and traditional Jewish norms.[285]

Gay synagogues provide these individuals with an opportunity to participate in Jewish worship with men and women who share their way of life. While much of the traditional liturgy is utilized at the services of gay synagogues, new prayers are added to "remove gender references to God, recognize the contributions of women as well as men . . . and to reflect the experiences of lesbian and gay Jews." A prayer included in the liturgy of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav in San Francisco expresses the hope: "Let the day come which is all Shabbat, when all people, all religions, all sexualities wil rejoice as one family, all children of Your creation."[286]

Throughout American Jewish history, some Jews have resided in small rural communities, separated by vast distances from the larger centers of Jewish life. Rural Judaism declined in the middle decades of the 20th century, as younger Jews sought higher education and settled in urban centers. In the late 1960s, this process was briefly reversed, as small numbers of Jews involved in the counterculture sought to escape from their suburban homes to rural America as part of a "back-to-the land" movement. In time, some confronted the isolation of their lives, in particular their loss of Jewish contacts. By the mid-1980s, the annual Conference on Judaism in Rural New England was convened to connect Jews in Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine, who live far from a synagogue. A Klezmer band and a bimonthly journal—*KFARI: The Jewish Newsmagazine of Rural New England and Quebec*—help to provide a sense of community for these rural Jews. In Montpelier, Vermont, 80 families practice "New Age Judaism" in a nondenominational synagogue that functions without a rabbi.[287]

The "New Age Judaism" of rural Jews is part of a larger movement that has sought, since the 1960s, to merge Eastern religion, the self-actualization movement, and the counterculture outlook with Jewish religious traditions, particularly with Jewish mysticism. Led by a charismatic rabbi named Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, this loosely organized movement has gradually evolved an institutional network known as the P'nai Or Religious Fellowship, which currently numbers 11 American affiliates.[288] "Reb Zalman," as he is called by his disciples, has publicly spoken of his evolving Judaism,

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[285]See Barry Alan Mehler, "Gay Jews," *Moment*, Mar. 1977, p. 22; Henry Rabinowitz, "Talmud Class in a Gay Synagogue," *Judaism*, Fall 1983, pp. 433–43; Janet R. Marder, "Getting to Know the Gay and Lesbian Shul," *Reconstructionist*, Oct.-Nov. 1985, pp. 20–25.

[286]Michael Rankin and Gary Koenigsberg, "Let the Day Come Which Is All Shabbat: The Liturgy of the 'Gay-Outreach' Synagogue," *Journal of Reform Judaism*, Spring 1986, p. 70.

[287]See Sam Allis, "In Vermont: When Woody Allen Meets L.L. Bean," *Time*, Sept. 26, 1988, pp. 10–11.

[288]See *P'nai Or*, undated brochure issued in 1989. Most affiliates call themselves P'nai or B'nai Or; one in Berkeley, Calif., is called the Aquarian Minyan. There are two affiliates in Europe.

one which began with intense study of Lubavitch Hassidism, later encompassed formal study of psychology, experimentation with LSD, and study with various masters of Asian religions.[289] He founded the P'nai Or Religious Fellowship to revitalize Judaism. As stated in its promotional brochure, "P'nai Or searches the inner meaning of Torah, Kabbalistic philosophy, Chasidic prayer, meditation, humanistic and transpersonal psychology, and *halakha* to gain a practical orientation to Jewish spiritual life. By understanding their intentions, the individual derives a new appreciation of Judaism as a path to inner balance and inter-connectedness with others, and with the world we live in."[290]

In light of its emphasis on self-expression, the Jewish renewal movement is particularly concerned with prayer. Schachter-Shalomi has developed what he refers to as a "Davvenology," an examination of Jewish prayer which "monitors each phase of the inner process and observes it in differing personality types." P'nai Or groups take great interest in dance, song, and movement, to invigorate their bodies and stimulate spiritual intensity.[291]

Designed as a self-consciously experimental movement, which "welcomes all Jews, including those who have been disenfranchised by the Jewish establishment,"[292] the Jewish renewal movement has begun to grapple with questions of definition and boundaries. A recent issue of *New Menorah: The P'nai Or Journal of Jewish Renewal* featured a debate over the "content" of Jewish renewal. As articulated by Arthur Waskow, one of the more politically active leaders of the movement, there is a vast difference between "Jewish restoration" and "Jewish renewal." The former continues to do what Jews have always done: "Keeping women in their separate place; keeping gay and lesbian Jews invisible; imagining God always and only as Lord and King; saying 'all my bones will praise You' while sitting locked into pews where no bone can move a quarter-inch; reciting the second paragraph of the Sh'ma while taking no responsibility to end the acid rain that is destroying earth." Jewish renewal, according to Waskow, requires the rejection of all these positions.[293] As the movement coalesces into what some regard as an emerging "fifth" Jewish religious movement, it will be forced to decide whether it is a movement of "content" as well as form.

There is considerable overlap in the populations of Jews who identify with several of the new and experimental movements. The *havurah* move-

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[289]See "An Interview with Zalman Schachter-Shalomi," *New Traditions*, Fall 1985, pp. 9–25. His own account of some of his earlier experimentation is in "The Conscious Ascent of the Soul," in *The Ecstatic Adventurer*, ed. Ralph Metzner (New York, 1968), pp. 96–123.

[290]*Adventures in Jewish Renewal*, a publication of the P'nai Or Outreach Bureau (n.d., circa 1988), p. 2.

[291]See the pamphlets cited above.

[292]*Adventures in Jewish Renewal*, p. 2.

[293]*New Menorah*, Pessach 5749, pp. 6, 10. For more on Waskow's views, see his *These Holy Sparks: The Rebirth of the Jewish People* (San Francisco, 1983).

ment, feminist Judaism, Jewish renewal, and to some extent, gay Judaism, share an openness to innovation. They also share a common belief that they are disenfranchised from "establishment" institutions and synagogues. In fact, members of these movements are frequently invited to address rabbinic and synagogue conventions and publish articles in the journals of the religious movements. In limited but perceptible ways, their experimentation with new liturgies and ceremonies may even be having an effect on denominational Judaism. At the same time, their absence from the institutions of mainstream American Judaism deprives the "establishment" of important sources of enthusiasm and creativity. Conservative synagogues would take on a far more youthful and dynamic quality were they to regain the youth lost to *havurot*; and Reconstructionism would have greater momentum were the sympathies of its adherents not divided between it and the Jewish renewal movement.

## CONCLUSION

In concluding this report on trends in American Judaism during the past two decades, it is appropriate to ask what they portend for the future of American Jewry. For the most part, the debate between sociologists of the American Jewish community revolves around the health of Jews as an ethnic group, and relatively little is said about the religious dimension of Jewish life. This is understandable, given the propensity of sociologists to focus on quantitative measures and on the survival of Jews as a viable and forceful group on the American scene. In light, however, of the uncertain future of ethnicity as an enduring bond within American society and the reemergence of religion as a powerful factor, the condition of American Judaism needs to be reevaluated. This question takes on particular importance for Jews, since Judaism has traditionally provided its adherents with patterns of behavior and reasons for identification that go beyond ethnicity, with a Jewish content that has motivated them to remain distinctive.[294]

The current debate between sociologists pits "transformationists" against "assimilationists," with the former arguing that American Jewry is undergoing dramatic changes that are transforming but not weakening Jewish life, whereas the latter perceive the changes within Jewish life as portents of decline and eventual assimilation into the fabric of American society.[295]

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[294]For a contrary view stressing only the "structural" factors that account for Jewish identification, see Calvin Goldscheider and Alan Zuckerman, *The Transformation of the Jews* (Chicago, 1984).

[295]Two penetrating analyses of the debate between "assimilationists" and "transformationists" are presented in Cohen, *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival?* pp. 1–18, and Charles S. Liebman, *Deceptive Images: Toward a Redefinition of American Judaism* (New Brunswick, 1988), pp. 61–73.

Recent trends in American Judaism provide evidence to bolster both positions. Certainly American Judaism has been transformed within the past two decades: all of the religious movements have repositioned themselves on questions of ideology and, to a large extent, also practice. New movements of religious renewal have emerged which have particularly attracted young Jews. Indeed, there are more options for religious expression and more tolerance for religious pluralism than in any previous era in American Judaism. Moreover, there is a great curiosity today about religious expression, as distinct from the associational character of much of Jewish life in earlier decades of the century.

Simultaneously, demographic data suggest diminishing involvement in Judaism among the masses of American Jews. Surveys conducted during the eighties show a decline in the percentages of Jews who identify with any religious denomination. And compared to surveys conducted two decades ago, lower percentages of Jews attend synagogues with any regularity, keep kosher, or light Sabbath candles weekly. Most ominously, the rate of mixed marriage has skyrocketed in the past two decades, and is highest among the youngest Jews. Efforts to cope with this unprecedented challenge—which relates to the very transmission of Jewish identity—color all aspects of Jewish religious life.

All of these patterns suggest that in the religious sphere, a bipolar model is emerging, with a large population of Jews moving toward religious minimalism and a minority gravitating toward greater participation and deepened concern with religion. The latter include: newly committed Jews and converts to Judaism, whose conscious choice of religious involvement has infused all branches of American Judaism with new energy and passion; rabbinic and lay leaders of the official denominations, who continue to struggle with issues of continuity and change within their respective movements; and groups of Jews who are experimenting with traditional forms in order to reappropriate aspects of the Jewish past. These articulate and vocal Jews have virtually transformed American Judaism during the past two decades. At the same time, an even larger population of American Jews has drifted away from religious participation. Such Jews have not articulated the sources of their discontent but have "voted with their feet," by absenting themselves from synagogues and declining to observe religious rituals that require frequent and ongoing attention. To a great extent, their worrisome patterns of attrition have been obscured by the dynamism of the religiously involved. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether the transformation of American Judaism wrought by the committed minority during the past two decades will sustain its present energy and inspire greater numbers of Jews to commit themselves to a living Judaism.