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Judaism in Transformation: Events and Movements for Reform

Until the 1950s it was assumed by everyone, including the Orthodox, that Orthodox belief and traditional Jewish observance were dying out. However, in the 1960s and 70s the Orthodox made a strong comeback, and traditional observances are spreading. When I was a student at the Reform Rabbinical school in the early 1960s less than 5% of the students ate *kosher* food. Now, over 1/3 of the students observe a *kosher* diet. Both the Conservative and Orthodox movements also report a resurgence of traditionalism. Several Orthodox synagogues, which had permitted men and women to sit together during services, now have re-established a partition to separate the sexes.¹ Orthodox women who married 20-30 years ago are sometimes embarrassed now to show people photographs of their wedding receptions, which picture men and women dancing together.² Young Conservative Rabbis rarely follow the liberal philosophy of Mordechai Kaplan, who was the chief mentor of the generation that was ordained in the 1930s and 40s.

There are a number of factors that have produced these new tendencies. The Orthodox Jews who immigrated from Europe to North and South America were not the most religious or best educated Jews. Overwhelmingly, they were practitioners of "folk religion", that is, they simply followed traditional observances without really understanding their purpose, or being part of the intellectual discipline involved in producing Jewish law. Orthodox leaders were resistant to learning foreign languages for fear of being contaminated by "modernism", and so were unable to teach the younger generation, in terms or concepts, understandable to them. Thus, in a generation or two,

1. Gershon Kranzler, "The Changing Orthodox Synagogue: A study of Baltimore's Congregations," *Jewish Life*, Vol. 5, No. 2/3, 1981.
2. Blanche Frank, *The Orthodox Jewish Housewife* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Microfilms Int. 1975), p. 111.

traditional observances declined drastically throughout Jewish settlements in the New World.

After World War II Orthodox Jews greatly expanded the number of all day Jewish schools. By the late 1970s most children of Orthodox families were enrolled in the almost 500 Orthodox Day Schools in North America.³ The success of Orthodox Day Schools led the Conservative movement and even the Reform movement to follow. The (Conservative) Solomon Schechter Day School Association had 17 schools in 1964, and 64 in 1982.⁴ The first Reform Day School did not open until 1970 and by 1982 there were a dozen such schools. A survey by the American Association for Jewish Education in 1979 reported that 90,675 students were in day schools, upto 18.4% from only 4 years earlier.⁵ It should be noted that during the last two decades the number of students in Catholic parochial schools was steadily declining.⁶ On the other hand, smaller Protestant groups were also expanding their "Christian Schools." Therefore, there is no clear general trend for movement towards or away from public education. The major upheavals in public education during the 1960s and 70s, make it hard to judge the relative strength of the push versus pull factors in the spread of all day Jewish education. Both forces are evident.

The expansion of intensive Jewish education through Day Schools was paralleled in the 70s by the expansion of Jewish studies courses on the college campus. The National Hillel Commission reported in November of 1979 that 347 American colleges offered over 4,000 courses in Judaism.⁷

Another source of Orthodox revival comes from Ba'alay Teshuvah (non-religious, non-observant Jews who turn into highly observant Jews). Most of these people had experimented with drugs, radical

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3. Alvin Schiff, "The Centrist Torah Educator Faces Critical Ideological and Communal Challenges", *Tradition*, Vol. 19, No. 4, Winter 1981, p. 279.
 4. *Jewish Post and Opinion*, April 23, 1982.
 5. *Israel Today*, December 6, 1979.
 6. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 14, 1976, A. U. S. Catholic Conference Study showed a drop of 2, 109, 653 students in the decade ending in 1975.
 7. Fishman and Saypor ed., *Jewish Studies at American and Canadian Universities* (Wash, B'nai Brith, 1979).

politics, communes, etc. during the turmoil of the late 60s and 70s. Many of them had been involved in other religious or spiritual groups. Seeking religious authenticity they encountered modern Orthodoxy, often in Israel, for the first time. The Six Day War in June of 1967, stimulated many Jews to go to Israel in the years that followed. Frequently they sought their roots. Most Orthodox schools and synagogues were unwilling or unable to admit such strange people into their midst. But a few Orthodox Rabbis in Israel, mostly of American or English origin, opened special schools for these searching young people. There are 6-8 such schools now with several hundred students, who usually study from 2-3 months to 2-3 years. Many of these students have returned to their country of origin, and slowly, schools for Ba'alay Teshuvah have been opened in North America also.

There is considerable tension between the establishment Orthodox and those who spend time, effort and money on the Ba'alay Teshuvah.⁸ Nevertheless, the knowledge that hundreds of young people from non-observant homes are returning to Orthodoxy, provides a spiritual uplift that helps make Orthodox leaders optimistic about regaining influence and control in the Jewish community.

In the last few years, dozens of "how to do it" books on Orthodox practice have been published in English for the first time. In the 19th century, Orthodox Rabbis opposed translating sacred texts into the vernacular for fear of encouraging assimilation.⁹ In the first half of the 20th century such books were not needed because those who were very observant knew Hebrew, and those that did not know Hebrew did not observe or study the details of Shabbat or Kashrut. Now there is a market in English for detailed studies of Orthodox law. Not all of the Ba'alay Teshuvah become or remain Orthodox. Some will calm down after their initial "conversion" and become more observant Conservative and even Reform Jews. They will, however, spread their influence in these movements.

The revival of Orthodox Judaism parallels to some extent the resurgence of evangelical Protestantism. The search for direct reli-

8. Ralph Pelcovitz, "The Teshuva Phenomenon: The Other Side of the Coin," *Jewish Life*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1980, p. 16.

9. Alexander Guttmann, *The Struggle Over Reform in Rabbinic Literature* (N.Y.W.U.P.J., 1977), p. 125-6.

gious experience and emotionalism has characterized many young people during the last 10 to 15 years. This has made Chasidism (a sect of Orthodox Jews noted for their singing, dancing and mystical enthusiasm) popular among all Jewish groups. Mystical Jewish texts are also growing in popularity. Many Jews who have encountered Hindu and Buddhist mysticism desire to learn about Jewish mysticism. However, unlike Eastern mysticism, traditional Judaism opposes teaching Kabbalah (the Jewish mystical tradition) to those who are single, or are under the age of 30, or have not yet acquired a firm grounding in the Bible, Jewish law, and Jewish philosophy. This traditional restrictiveness has prevented the generation of a separate organization or sect emphasizing simplistic mystical experience and easy recruitment policies.

The gradual loss of faith in liberal secular humanism, which seems to be a worldwide phenomenon, makes people much more open to all types of alternative philosophies. This includes not only the great religious traditions, but also astrology, magic, various types of ESP, flying saucer cults, etc. The claim frequently made by Jewish alarmists that Jews are disproportionately involved in cults is erroneous.¹⁰ It is true that some groups (particularly the Eastern ones) have a Jewish membership that ranges from 15 to 30%.¹¹ Other groups, however, (flying saucer cults, Scientology, or the People's Temple of Reverend Jim Jones) have a Jewish membership of less than 2%.¹² Jews have been disproportionately involved in all ideologies and movements in the 20th century that have sought to elevate society and humanity whether through political, social, psychological, cultural or spiritual means.¹³ While Jews are disproportionately involved in most Asian

10. Martin Dann, *L. A. Jewish Community Bulletin* March 1, 1982, p. 2. He states, "Jewish participation in cults is estimated to be far beyond their representation in the general population. In these groups (Divine Light Mission and Sida Yoga - followers of Muktananda) at least one-third of the membership is Jewish". My own information is that the Zen Centre in Los Angeles is almost 50% Jewish.
11. James Rudin, *Prison or Paradise: The New Religious Cults* (N. Y. Collins, 1980), claims 10-12% of Unification Church, 20% of Iskon and 30% of Divine Light Mission members are Jews.
12. Allen S. Maller, "Jews, Cults and Apostates," *Judaism*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Summer 1981), pp. 306-11.
13. A whole issue of *Jewish Life* (Vol. 3, No. 4, Winter 79/80) is devoted to various aspects of this development.

religions in America, they are disproportionately un-involved in the various Christian and pseudo-scientific cults.¹⁴ This is due to Jewish openness to Asian philosophy because of its lack of historical association with anti-semitism, and Jewish suspicion of Christianity and semi-magical cults because of their previous involvement in anti-semitic movements, (Hitler, and many of the Nazi leaders were both ex-Christians and occultists.)

The Orthodox revival and the growing traditionalism among young North American Jews is also the result of a widespread disillusionment with Western secular humanism and American materialism. Even secular education is no longer perceived as a means of enlightenment and human salvation, as it was by a previous generation, which often transformed the traditional Jewish belief in the value of the study of Torah, into the pursuit of a college degree.¹⁵ This disillusionment with Western culture is seen most clearly in the growing desire of many Jews to confront the European Holocaust.

During the 6 years of World War II 50-60 million people died, most of them civilians. Among the 20-25 million European dead almost 6 million were Jews. Most of these Jews were murdered in specially designed death camps. In addition to the 6 million Jews, almost 5 million other "inferior beings"; Gypsies, Slaves, Homosexuals, socialists, etc. were murdered by the Germans and their helpers.¹⁶

What makes the death of the 6 million Jews unique is that they were singled out for destruction not for their political, religious or social views; and not because they did anything specific economically, politically, sexually or militarily; but simply because their very existence was abhorrent to the Nazi mentality. Over 1 million Jewish children were shot, starved, burned or gassed to death along with the

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14. Benjamin Zablocki, *Alienation and Charisma* (N.Y. Free Press 1980), p. 91 Zablocki studied 22 Eastern Religious Communes and found that 28% of their membership were Jews. In the Christian and Hippie Communes he studied Jewish members were 2% and 3%, respectively.
 15. In the Orthodox community many students are "anti-college except in the narrowest, most utilitarian sense", Lawrence Kaplan "Communications" *Judaism*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Summer 1981), p. 382.
 16. A good introduction to the Holocaust is Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews 1933-1945* (N.Y. Bantam 1976).

adults. The world had never before witnessed such revolting inhumanity. Western civilization had never been so cruel and destructive.

In the years immediately following World War II the shock of the death camps was largely suppressed. Europe turned its energy to the cold war, and then to rebuilding for prosperity. The Jews turned their energy to resurrecting a Jewish State in the land of Israel, and to building their surviving communities. Only after 2 or 3 decades could most Jews start to face the Holocaust (or as it is now more appropriately referred to:—the Shoah, the destruction). One can easily see the reawakening of confrontation with the Shoah in the rapidly expanding number of books being published on this theme. The three basic books which detail what had happened were published in 1951 (*Harvest of Hate* by Leon Poliakov, Paris), 1953 (*The Final Solution* by Gerald Reitlinger, New York), and 1961 (*The Destruction of the European Jews* by Raul Hilberg, New York).

The capture and trial of Adolph Eichmann in 1961 (*Eichman in Jerusalem* by Hannah Arendt, New York, 1963) awakened more feelings and stimulated some awareness in young people. Novels by Eli Wiesel and Leon Uris in the early 60s popularized this expanded consciousness of the Shoah. In 1962 the Jewish Education Commission of New York City published an anthology *Flame and Fury* for Jewish schools, and in 1968 the Reform movement published a major anthology *Out of the Whirlwind* by Albert Friedlander. In the 1970s interest began to focus on special topics: the role of Jewish leadership,¹⁷ Western indifference to rescue possibilities,¹⁸ Jewish resistance to the Nazis,¹⁹ moral and religious issues,²⁰ non-Jews who rescued Jews,²¹ and the present psychological and spiritual conditions of the survivors and their children.²² By the late 1970s over 200 colleges

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17. Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat* (N.Y. Mac Millan 1972) pp. 259-316 and pp. 475-575.
 18. Arthur Morse, *While Six Million Died* (N.Y. Random House 1967).
 19. *Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem Yad Vashem 1971) Yuri Suhl, *They Fought Back* (N.Y. Paperback Library 1968).
 20. Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (N.Y. McGraw Hill 1964).
Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower* (N.Y. Schocken 1976).
 21. Peter Hellman, *Avenue of the Righteous* (N. Y. Bantam 1980).
Alexander Ramai, *The Assisi Underground* (N. Y. Stein & Day 1978)
 22. Reese Brenner, *The Faith and Doubt of Holocaust Survivors* (N. Y. Free Press 1980).

offered classes on the Shoah,²³ the Catholic Church in New York had produced a TV series for its parochial schools on the Shoah, and some church leaders were examining the religious roots of anti-semitism.²⁴ In 1980 a ten hour TV series on the Holocaust was viewed by almost 120 million Americans.²⁵

Having traced the growing encounter with the Shoah among Jews (and to a much lesser extent even among non-Jews) a few words need to be said about the reasons for this development. First of all, time heals. Just as someone who has lost a child eventually recovers from the shock, and is able to revisit painful places and relive traumatic experiences with decreasing anguish, so too does a people, especially the younger generation. This process was already evident in the early 1960's. It should be noted that the French have only recently started to confront the collaborationist regime of Petain. The Germans have hardly even begun to face the Shoah.

The Six Day War, here as in other areas, served as a catalyst to accelerate developments. In the days preceding June 6th 1967 the Jewish people were terribly frightened by visions of a renewed devastation. But instead of becoming the victims, they found themselves in the unexpected role of victors. The Israeli victory set off a period of pride and self-confidence in Jewish communities throughout the world, even reaching into the Soviet Union. This liberating experience and the resulting restoration of confidence, enabled many people to stop avoiding the Shoah.

At the same time, the image of the Jew as victor was unpopular among the members of the left and the new left. Thousands of Jewish young people who were heavily involved in civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, and other leftist causes felt rejected by the increasing leftist anti-Israel philosophy.²⁶ They frequently identified themselves with

23. The most informative source for recent developments is *Martyrdom and Resistance*; a bi-monthly news letter published at 823 United Nations Plaza, N. Y. 10017.

24. Fr. Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (N. Y. Macmillan 1965).

25. Miami Herald, April 27, 1978.

26. Nathan Glazer, "*The New Life and the Jews*," *The Jewish Community in America* ed. Marshal Sklare (N.Y. Behrman House 1974) p. 301 and Seymour Martin Lipset, "The Left, the Jews and Israel," *Jewish Spectator* Vol. 35, No. 4, 1970.

the victims of the Holocaust in order to preserve their self-identification with the underdog.

Finally, endangered by voluntary assimilation in the Western world, forcible assimilation in the Soviet bloc, and violence in the Middle East, the Shoah seemed to an increasingly activist core of the Jewish people, to be the spring-board for a Jewish rebound. Nothing could unite the various religious, political and social views of the Jewish people as well as the Shoah. Emil Fackenheim has written that all Jews have a new commandment which was revealed in the Auschwitz death camp. "We are, first, commanded to survive as Jews, lest the Jewish people perish. We are commanded, second, to remember in our very guts and bones the martyrs of the Holocaust, lest their memory perish. We are forbidden, thirdly, to deny or despair of God, however much we may have to contend with Him or with belief in Him, lest Judaism perish. We are forbidden, finally, to despair of the world as the place which is to become the Kingdom of God, lest we help make it a meaningless place in which God is dead or irrelevant and everything is permitted. To abandon any of these imperatives, in response to Hitler's victory at Auschwitz, would be to hand him yet other, posthumous victories."²⁷

In the last decade the commemoration of the Holocaust (Yom Hashoah) has become increasingly widespread. It is still observed in only a minority of synagogues, but this minority is steadily growing. The way in which Yom Hashoah became a holiday is instructive. After World War II non-religious leaders representing a group of survivors and ghetto fighters requested that the Israeli government declare the first day of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising (the single best known event of the Shoah) as the memorial day for the Holocaust. However, since the uprising began on the first day of Passover, which is a holiday of redemption and joy, the Orthodox Rabbinate opposed this date. The Israeli Rabbinate wanted the Shoah to be incorporated into the traditional days of mourning which precede Tisha Ba'Av, which commemorates the destruction of the ancient temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

However, the Jewish people did not accept this proposal. They simply ignored it. A later alternative, supported by the Chief Rabbi

27. Emil Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return into History* (N.Y. Schocken 1978), p. 23.

and top Orthodox leaders, was to incorporate the Shoah commemoration into Tisha Ba' Av itself. This also did not find acceptance. Most people felt that the magnitude of the Shoah was such that it could not simply be added as an additional tragedy to an already existing day. The Israeli Parliament finally established Yom Hashoah as the 27th of Nisan - 12 days after the Warsaw uprising began. This date occurs during the uprising but is the anniversary of no particular event.

“The extraordinary result is that Yom Hashoah has been somewhat loosened from its association with armed uprising. This restores the proper perspective that Jews mourn and are proud of all the martyrs of the Holocaust, not just the fighters. Furthermore, the day is now located one week before Yom Haatzmaut (Israel Independence Day)- subtle, profound testimony to a deep connection between the two events - Holocaust and rebirth.”²⁸

Thus, within a four-week period in the spring-time of the year, modern Jews now commemorate three major events in Jewish history. Passover, which celebrates the Exodus from Egypt 33 centuries ago, is the oldest Jewish holiday. The newest Jewish holidays then follow: Yom Hashoah and eight days later Yom Haatzmaut, which celebrates the rebirth of the Jewish State in the Land of Israel. This spring cycle of three holidays now balances the fall cycle of three biblical holidays: Rosh Hashanah (the religious new year), Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), and Sukkot (the harvest festival). The Fall holidays are all universal, spiritual and non-historical. The Spring holidays all commemorate the redemptive events in Jewish history.

Many non-Jews are surprised to learn that the Day of Independence of a secular state is the occasion of a religious celebration. Yet the Jewish religion has always been closely tied to the historical events that the Jewish people have experienced. The Exodus from Egypt was also an historical/political event. Indeed, to a large extent, Judaism is the interpretation of the meaning of significance of Jewish history and destiny from the perspective of the covenant entered into by God and Israel at Mt. Sinai. For Judaism, God is manifested primarily in the history of His chosen people.

28. Irving Greenberg, “Yom Hashoah: A New Holy Day” *The Philadelphia Jewish Exponent*, April 16, 1982.

Since the last 50 years has witnessed the most cataclysmic events in the last 2500 years of Jewish history, it is not surprising that the forces currently acting to transform Jewish life and thought are those flowing from the Shoah, and the recreation of the State of Israel (the outcome of the Zionist movement started by Theodore Herzl in 1897). While general social and intellectual forces also are influencing the Jewish people, along with the other peoples in our increasingly global village, these two most significant events are the major factors transforming contemporary Judaism.

We have already discussed the revival of traditional observance and Orthodox Judaism among some elements in the Jewish community. This revival, and the increasing importance of the Shoah in Jewish thinking, can both be tied to the failure of faith in Western humanism. The third important development in contemporary Jewish life would seem to run counter to the previous two. In 1981, the Reform movement officially came out in favour of an outreach programme to encourage non-Jews to become Jewish. This represents a radical change in the Jewish position *vis-à-vis* proselytizing. While it is true that Jews proselytized during the period of the Roman Empire, the opposition of the Church and the Mosque during the Middle Ages made such activity subject to legal repression and persecution.²⁹ Having been the victims of over-zealous missionaries, Jews have a strong tendency to argue that "we leave you alone - why don't you leave us alone?" Orthodox Judaism therefore opposes proselytizing and indeed discourages people who come upon their own and want to become Jewish. Also, a community which is concerned with anti-semitism and Jewish survival, and is increasingly stressing ethnic/national concerns, hardly seems likely to encourage outsiders to come in.

It might seem that the outreach programme is simply the logical response to the increasing phenomenon of exogamy. As a small minority (with the sole exception of the State of Israel) the Jewish people are in danger of assimilation and disappearance if they do not welcome the future spouses of exogamous Jews into the Jewish community. Yet this rational explanation is not sufficient to explain the movement towards proselytizing. In Argentina, France and Great

29. Joseph Rosenbloom, *Conversion To Judaism* (Cincinnati; H.U.C. Press), p. 72. This book and 3 others which are all Reform Rabbis, were the only four books published in this century on this subject.

Britain the exogamy rate is as high as it is in the United States and Canada and yet those communities have made it even harder for a non-Jew to convert to Judaism. Indeed, there has been a ban on conversion of non-Jewish spouses in Argentina for over 50 years.³⁰

The decision to proceed with an outreach programme is based on several factors. First comes the reality that during the 1960s and 70s, thousands of non-Jews entered the Jewish community each year. This positive experience encouraged many Reform Rabbis to advocate a less passive position. Added to this is the more activist feelings of pride engendered by the Six Day War (to be discussed in more detail later) and the general ideology of Americans, who favour social mobility and religious-ethnic voluntarism. One indication of the changing attitude towards conversion may be found in the increasing popularity of public conversion ceremonies. Until the late 60s almost all conversion ceremonies took place in the Rabbi's office, or in the sanctuary before or after a service. Now, at least one-third of conversion ceremonies take place during the Sabbath Service with the whole congregation serving as witnesses.³¹

The Orthodox have attacked the Reform movement's decision to seek converts. The refusal of Orthodox Rabbis to accept the converts of Reform and Conservative Rabbis is a continuing battle which will become more strident before it is finally resolved. Many Jews, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox have ambivalent feelings about proselytes and proselytizing. Ironically, Protestant missionary groups that try to convert Jews by stressing that one can believe in Christianity and yet remain a good Jew, (Jews for Jesus, Hebrew Christians, Messianic Jews, etc.) may be helping to break the automatic nexus between birth and Jewish identity. A survey in Houston, Texas found that 60% of Jews felt that a person of Jewish birth who believed in another religion ceases to be a Jew. (Orthodox law holds that such people are apostate Jews). Negative feelings toward converts to Judaism are still evident in the 10% who said, "A person who converts to Judaism can never be as truly Jewish as one who is born and reared

30. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

31. Steven Huberman, *New Jews: The Dynamics of Religious Conversion* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University microfilms int. 1979), p. 52.

Jewish” (the less Jewish the respondents, the more likely they were to hold this opinion).³²

The impact on the Jewish community of large numbers of converts is hard to predict. It might serve to lessen the ethnic component of Jewish culture within the broader framework of Jewish identity. On the other hand, most identify strongly with the cultural elements and with Jewish peoplehood. Jewish theology regards people who join the Jewish community as though they had been adopted into the family of Israel. Jewish identity is manifested primarily in terms of belonging rather than believing. The converts commit themselves to the Jewish people as well as the Jewish God, following the biblical text of Ruth, “Where you go, I will go. Where you live, there I will live. Your people shall be my people and your God shall be my God.” The converts, like all new converts, tend to be more enthusiastic and active than the born members.³³

It is still too early to predict how successful the outreach programme will be, or even how much effort will be put into it. This may not be the first time that an organization has passed a resolution which has not been implemented because of lack of zeal at the grass-roots level. However, exogamous marriage alone will have a significant effect on conversion. Indeed, a recent study of converts to Roman Catholicism in the United States indicates that 85% of them converted due to marriage to a Catholic.³⁴

Sociological studies have indicated that the percentage of exogamous marriages which result in the non-Jewish spouse becoming Jewish has been steadily rising.³⁵ In the 1950s only one out of five out-marriages resulted in a conversion to Judaism. By the early 1970s the figure was one in four, and it may now be approaching one in three. If it were to reach one in two then there would be no net loss to the Jewish people due to exogamy. Not only does the rising rate of conversion

32. Schulman, Gottlieb, Sheinberg, *A Social and Demographic Survey of the Jewish Community of Houston Texas* (Houston, Jewish Community Council 1976), p. 57.

33. David Eichhorn, ed. *Conversion to Judaism* (N.Y. KTAV 1965), p. 7

34. Dean Hoge, *Converts Dropouts Returnees* (N.Y. Pilgrim Press 1981), p. 44.

35. Goldstein & Goldscheider, *Jewish Americans* (Eaglewood Cliffs Prentice Hall 1968), p. 155.

reduce losses due to exogamy, but the Jewish community is enriched because the converts who enter are usually better than average Jews.

In a survey I directed in 1979, we found that recent converts to Judaism in the Los Angeles area belonged to congregations and attended services much more frequently than those who were born Jewish. Other studies have shown that Jews who marry gentiles who convert to Judaism are better than average Jews in terms of their Jewish education, involvement and commitment. Those who marry gentiles who do not convert are below average in all these areas.³⁶ Thus over the next generation we can expect that the weaker, more marginal Jews will drop out in large numbers while the stronger, more committed Jews bring non-Jews into the Jewish community. The Jewish community will probably be smaller and stronger at the beginning of the 21st century.

I have referred to the Six Day War on several occasions as being a catalyst stimulating and transforming Jewishness. The Six Day War stimulated the Jewish dissident movement in Russia, which eventually led to the exodus of one quarter million Jews, something no one in the early 1960s would have believed possible. It also served as a beacon attracting many marginal Jews to Israel (30-40,000 North American Jews even immigrated to Israel in the 6 years following the Six Day War.)

The Six Day War stimulated Jewish activism especially among the young. Since the youth culture in the United States was protest oriented in the late 60s and early 70s, Jewish youth had Jewish causes (Soviet Jewry, Jewish studies on campus, defence of Israel, etc.) to be involved in. The increased activism in American Jewry manifested itself in many ways. Contributions to the Jewish Welfare Funds rose considerably during the emergency and remained high in the years that followed.³⁷ Jewish tourism to Israel increased substantially.³⁸ Jews increasingly took to wearing Jewish jewellery, thus identifying them-

36. Bernard Lazerwitz, "Intermarriage and Conversion," *Journal of Jewish Sociology*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1971, p. 58.

37. Sales of Israel Bonds in the U.S. rose from \$76,000,000 in 1966 to \$322,000,000 in 1977 - *Jewish Post & Opinion*, Jan. 13, 1978.

38. In 1981 300,000 tourists from the U.S. visited Israel-B'nai Brith Messenger June 11, 1982. If 2/3 were Jewish that would equal 200,000 or almost 1/3 of the Jewish population of the U.S. in a ten year period.

selves publicly as Jews, something that had been kept a "private" matter in earlier decades when Jews were less secure. Indeed, as many forms of private personal ritual observance declined, other forms of identification which were public, increased.³⁹

In 1968 the Jewish Defence League was founded. Its slogan "Never Again" was a combination of Holocaust awareness and Israeli pride. Its militant style fitted right in with the protest style of radical groups in the late 60s. Although its membership was small it enjoyed widespread sympathy among more observant and poorer Jews.⁴⁰

The 1973 Yom Kippur War sobered the Jewish people. Support for Israel continued to mount, but by the late 70s some Jews were showing weariness in the seemingly never ending conflict. The Jews were back in their old familiar place again; singled out for vilification, victims of a double standard. Yet the Yom Kippur War led directly to Sadat's peace mission to Jerusalem in 1977 and from there to the peace treaty with Egypt which was finally completed in 1982.

Religiously speaking the most significant development from all these wars, and rumours of war, was the slow growth of messianic thinking, primarily among the Orthodox, but also by some Reform and Conservative Jews. The juxtaposition of the Shoah to the rebirth of the State of Israel was too obvious to be ignored. Only 3 years after the end of the passion of the Jewish people, the Jewish State was resurrected. In the early years people often said that, if this was the price that the Jews had to pay for Israel, it wasn't worth it. But as identification with Israel's struggle, and pride in its accomplishments grew, the balance began to shift. Rather than see the Shoah as the price that was paid, people began to see Israel as the miraculous redemption; the dry bones came to life; the exiles gathered from the four corners of the earth.

The reunification of Jerusalem in 1967 was symbolized by the sudden emotional identification of Jews, secular as well as religious, with the Western Wall, the last remnant of the wall that had surrounded

39. Allen S. Maller, "The Jewish Family Today", *Reconstructionist*, Vol. 46, No. 9 (January 1981) p. 9.

40. Janet Dolgin, *Jewish Identity and the JDL* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. 1977) pp. 16-20.

the temple mount in the days of Herod. Since 1967,⁴¹ many Orthodox Jews have begun to talk of recent events as "the beginning of the messianic redemption." The Shoah then logically falls into the configuration of the Hevlay Hamosheach, the birthpangs of the Messianic Age. While no major work has yet appeared⁴² interpreting the events of the 20th century in messianic terms, rabbis frequently allude to this view without going into detail. Thus, in an article about the Shoah that recently appeared in a Jewish paper, one Orthodox Rabbi simply states in passing, "Israel is undergoing the birthpangs of the coming of the Messiah-Chevlei Mashiach. The people of Israel lived to see the beginnings of the redemption - aschaltah digultah - because of their optimism. . ." ⁴³

Protestant Fundamentalists have not shared the Jewish reticence about interpreting current events as a proclamation of the coming of the Messiah. Indeed, the Six Day War had a major effect on them too. Dozens of books have been published by Protestants interpreting events in the Middle East and throughout the world in the light of biblical prophecies. The most important of these books *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Kindsey has sold over 2 million copies.

Jewish tradition, while urging people to have faith in the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic Age, nevertheless curses those who try to calculate the exact dates of the event.⁴⁴ If they are wrong, and all of them have been wrong so far, the people will lose faith in the Messiah, instead of simply realizing that the prognosticators were in error. Nevertheless, one cannot help but notice that all significant events in the messianic unfolding have occurred in years ending with 7.

41. Shubert Spero, "Israel in Eschatological Perspective," *The Religious Dimension of Israel: The Challenge of the Six Day War* ed. Harry Siegman (N. Y. Synagogue Council of America, 1968), p. 36. and in greater detail after the Yom Kippur War. Benjamin Blech, "Is Israel A Miracle of Messianic Fulfilment?," *Young Israel Viewpoint*, October 1974.

42. My book, currently in print, *God, Sex and Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Ridgefield Press 1982) devotes one chapter to interpretation of Daniel's predictions, current events, and messianic conceptions.

43. Southwest Jewish Heritage Newspaper, April 16, 1982.

44. Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel* (Boston: Beacon 1959).

In 1897, the first World Zionist Congress was held under the leadership of Theodore Herzl. At the close of that Congress he wrote, "If I were to sum up the Congress in a word - which I shall take care not to publish - it would be this: At Basel I founded the *Jewish State*. If I said this out loud today I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, everyone will perceive it. The essence of a State lies in the will of the people for a State, yes, even in the will of one powerful enough individual. A territory is merely the concrete basis; the State itself, when it possesses a territory, still remains something abstract.

At Basel, accordingly, I have created the abstraction which, as such, is imperceptible to the great majority".⁴⁵

In 1917, the British Prime Minister Lord Balfour, offered the Jewish people a home land in the land of Israel. The League of Nations reaffirmed that homeland a few years later.

In 1937, the Peel Commission, recommended to the British Government that the land be divided between the Jews and the Arabs, and that an Arab and a Jewish State be created. If the Arabs had accepted this, the Jewish State created then would have been able to receive the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were feeling the Nazi regime, and millions of Jews might have been saved from being murdered in the death camps.

In 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine also voted to establish an Arab and a Jewish State in the Land of Israel. This occurred exactly 50 years after the first Zionist Congress, and thus Herzl's prophecy came to pass. Upon the withdrawal of the British in May of 1948, the State of Israel was proclaimed.

In 1967, during the Six Day War, Jerusalem was reunified. The shock waves from this surprising victory, as we have seen, extended far beyond the Middle East.

In 1977 Sadat journeyed to Jerusalem to begin the peace process. This was the first time that a major Arab leader was willing

45. Marvin Lowenthal, ed., *The Diaries of Theodore Herzl* (N. Y. Grosset & Dunlap 1962), p. 224.

to talk peace since the Arabs rejected the recommendation of the Peel Commission in 1937.

It would seem therefore that 1987 or 1997 should be the date when the next significant event in the unfolding will occur.

A Messianic perspective will bring together all of the recent developments not only within the Jewish Community but within the world religious community. There are many factors currently causing ferment in religious groups throughout the world. Major social and economic changes are transforming traditional societies both those that are pre-industrial as well as those undergoing post-industrial transformation. Most people see these developments as negative. But according to the rabbinic concept of the Messianic unfolding the Messianic Age itself is preceded by a period called "The birthpangs of the Messiah". Just as a woman undergoes labour pains before the new born child enters the world, so too must society undergo the wars, revolutions, heresies and general tumult which serve to transform the old structures into those which will be suitable for the Messianic Age. Thus all the conflict that is evident everywhere in the world today is not evidence that human beings are racing inevitably toward a nuclear holocaust, but rather serves as forces bringing about the transformation of human society. The signs of spiritual uplift which are overshadowed by the more dramatic, and therefore better publicized crises are in reality the seeds of the Messianic transformation. But the transition will not be an easy one. Even though the Messianic prophecies assure us that with God on our side mankind will prevail, one can empathize with the statement repeated several times in the Talmud, "May the Messiah come, but not in my lifetime".

Nevertheless, belief in the Messianic promise is essential to give us the strength to overcome the normal despair and negativism generated by the events surrounding the birthpangs of the Messianic Age. There will be false Messiahs aplenty, especially as we approach the year 2,000. But as the Messianic prophecies relating to the re-establishment of the Jewish State, and the ingathering of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel have been fulfilled in the twentieth century, so too will the prophecies relating to world-wide spiritual enlightenment, and the establishment of international justice and peace, be fulfilled in the twenty-first century.