

The JEWISH

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Perry M. Shoemaker

ROMANCE OF THE POOR

(A Story) by Theodor Herzl

Translation by Harry Zohn

A LEADING RAILROAD EXECUTIVE

(Interview with Perry M. Shoemaker)

Solomon Lenchitz

TESTIMONIAL TO AMBASSADOR ABBA EBAN

Henry W. Brann

BEN GURION

Samuel I. Cohen



Ambassador Abba Eban



Salute to Israel 11th Anniversary

Testimonial to Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin. (l. to r.) Rabbi Charles Kahane, Charles Altman, holding Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, Rabbi Arthur Schneier, Herbert Romanoff, Rabbi Trainin, Joseph Willen, Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, Rabbi Morris M. Goldberg, Nathan A. Levine, and Rabbi Solomon J. Sharfman.

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Vital Issues and Rabbi Jung's Plea (A Symposium)

(Continued)

Myth and Counter-Myth

By NORMAN LAMM

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RABBI Jung is to be warmly applauded for focusing public attention upon the "myth of an Orthodox majority in the United States." In their enthusiasm to catch up with the twentieth century in public relations techniques, some Orthodox organizations have all but outdone themselves. The mighty pronouncements on the numerical strength of Orthodoxy sometimes come uncomfortably close to the thin borderline separating "public relations" from "propaganda." The illusion created is "pernicious," as Rabbi Jung puts it, not only because it is "unjustified by the circumstances," but also because of the effect of this illusory optimism upon those who dwell so complacently in the great metropolitan ghettos and then are suddenly and unexpectedly faced with the harsh realities of the religious complexion of American Jewry. The disappointment can have personal cataclysmic consequences.

Nevertheless, there is an equal danger in a counter-myth that has been taking root more recently. It is the myth of despair, a sense of *ye'ush* which is as morosely blind to the bright spots on the Jewish scene as the first myth is oblivious to the shadows. There is a sense of impending doom that often over-

nabaum of Hart, Schaffner and Marx, and others. "Of course," he added, "I cannot ignore my friend, Phillip D. Jonas, able Vice President and Comptroller of our Railroad."

This genial railroad giant also has a happy family. Married since 1930 to Emily Burrill Hane, four children are their contribution to American citizenship.

A Trustee of Elmira College, Mr. Shoemaker has also contributed liberally to hospital campaigns and numerous charities.

In closing, Mr. Shoemaker stated that the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad continues to enjoy an unbroken record of friendly service.

It takes a man of wide experience in a place of far-reaching responsibility to acquire a broad-minded interest in his fellow-Americans. And the greater the scope of his work, the more adequate is his preparation for the great share he is to have as a contributor to the welfare of American citizens. The eyes of the country are on him in whatever he does. This interview with Mr. Perry M. Shoemaker has convinced me that he is the type every American should seek in many ways to emulate.

takes those of the older generation whose nostalgic memories of *die alte heim* make America look pale by comparison. Worse still is the phenomenon of the unthinking "official" who in public proclaims the extravagant "myth of the Orthodox majority" and privately yields to the unintelligent myth of despair.

What should be our approach? How are we to steer an even course between these two extremes? First, we must remember that mythology is no substitute for truth, and "public relations" releases do not change cruel facts. Secondly, we must recall certain data from Jewish history which will act as correctives to the sense of hopelessness that often affects minority groups that perhaps have known better days. And these facts will prove to us that loyal, authentic, genuine Jews ("Orthodox" Jews of all ages) *were almost always in the minority*. From the times of Moses—when there were more worshippers of the golden calf than there were loyal Levites—to the Talmudic era when the Pharisees were (as their name *Perushim* indicates) a minority, only one of 24 sects; from the days of the Babylonian Geonim, when the general Jewish populace was incredibly ignorant of basic fundamentals, to the days of Maimonides, who complained to the Sages of Lunel that hope for Torah scholarship is rapidly fading, we have most often been what Rabbi Jung calls "a respectable minority." We did not need the "myth of an Orthodox majority" to help us survive, and survive we did even though our leaders occasionally gave expression to dark moods, as long as they did not completely succumb to that counter-myth called *ye'ush* or *atzvut*—despair, moroseness.

Even in the great preceding age, the one in which Polish Jewry represented one of the highest levels yet attained of Torah scholarship and religious observance, both intensively and extensively, there were those who complained of the inferiority of their generation to those preceding them. The reader is referred to the remarkable responsum #44 in Responsa *Mesiv Davar* of the "Netziv" of Volozhin, in which a great teacher of a great academy in a great Torah-loyal Jewry finds it necessary to assure his readers that their generation is not the most hopeless, most rebellious and most immoral that ever existed.

Finally, in addition to using the present to avoid illusory optimism and the past to guard against devastating pessimism, it is important above all (as Rabbi Jung indicates) to emphasize again and again that the greatness of Orthodoxy does not lie primarily in big institutions and bureaucratic ma-

chinery *per se*. Certainly, in our highly industrialized and compartmentalized society, we need all the educational and synagogal organizational instruments which are requisite for the successful functioning of the modern Orthodox community. But all this is only a means to a higher end—the personal sense of commitment, the authenticity of religious conviction, the genuinely religious element which will make such ludicrous paradoxes as “the non-observant Orthodox” a matter of the past. The underlying secularism which pervades all American life, including American religious life, is a far greater danger to Torah than all the deviating “isms” combined. This blight can be countered chiefly by true *yir'at shamayim*—and this cannot be taught by press releases or even by lectures, but only by example.

To conclude, we must take to heart Rabbi Jung's amimadversions on the “myth of an Orthodox majority,” and be equally distrustful of its counter-myth of despair. And the best way to achieve our aims and goals is not only *le-bagdil Torah*—to make the Torah “great,” to provide the means for the organizational growth and programmatic development of Orthodoxy—but, far more important, also *l'ha'adirah*—to make Torah “glorious,” to deepen the Torah experience, to strike to the roots of the Jewish soul, to strive for depth and meaningfulness, for the timeless and the eternal.

Only through the kind of demythologizing represented in Rabbi Jung's article can this great—and glorious—dream come true. It behooves American Orthodoxy to pay close attention to his words.

American Orthodoxy—Growing?

By HAROLD I. LEIMAN

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A PEOPLE is as strong as its youth, and if we are to judge American orthodoxy by the startling increase in the number of its youth in day schools, in the rabbinate and in the synagogues, we have good reason to anticipate a bright future for orthodoxy here in America. For in less than 25 years the number of day schools has increased from 17 to 227. The young orthodox rabbinical organizations have more than one thousand members. Young Israel has a network of vibrant branches which extend throughout the United States and there are 43,000 children enrolled in our day schools on the elementary and secondary levels.

The expansion is still limitless. More and more parents are becoming conscious of the fact that the only kind of education which is lasting and carries forward our tradition, is day school education. Children in the day schools have superseded chil-

dren in the public schools even in the secular education. More children (boys and girls) than ever before are continuing in the day schools beyond the first eight years, through the high school and even through the college years. The orthodox rabbinate offers a number of good paying positions and the young Rabbi is held in high esteem. (Some congregations have been known to present the Rabbi with a car and a home besides an adequate salary). Orthodox synagogues are growing and new Young Israel branches are being formed in new and modern suburban communities.

And yet, there is a qualitative element that threatens to undo much of the great achievements of American orthodoxy. It is difficult to describe this element since it is a negative one. The words that come to mind are—lack of authority, lack of organization, disunity.

The young orthodox layman of today is the product of a Yeshivah, of Young Israel or just of good orthodox parents of the previous generation. He has a tendency to move out to the suburbs to live. Naturally, he chooses an area where other orthodox families live. But his outlook on life soon becomes material. His lawn must be as green as his neighbor's, his car as modern and his home as elegant. Convenience in physical living very often leads to convenience in spiritual living. Soon the least common denominator of orthodoxy becomes standard and any deviation therefrom in either direction is frowned upon. And you may ask, why? Isn't there an orthodox Rabbi who is an authority and who is constantly on the alert to raise the standards of orthodoxy?

Yes, there are young Rabbis and capable ones too. And they make serious efforts to improve religious living. But they are, also, hampered by lack of authority. They find no unified group whom they can turn to for decisions in their problems. Just as there is disunity among the laity so there is disunity among the rabbinate. One orthodox Rabbi will have a full “mehitzah” in his *shul* while another, a partial one and a third Rabbi an imaginary “mehitzah.” Yet each Rabbi will defend his “mehitzah” as being within the spirit of the *Halakhab*. One orthodox Rabbi will forbid social dancing, another will forbid it only on *shul* premises, and a third will permit it even on *shul* premises. When such confusion reigns even among the rabbinate, how is the layman to be guided and by what authority?

But then can we not turn to the day schools? The teachers are graduates of yeshivah; they are close to the Torah; by educating the young they will influence the parents. True, day schools have made gigantic strides in this respect but they, too, are