

place for all Jews, outsiders included, and sees to it that each one has an important voice, not only a place at the margins. We need to continue seeking a living community which really feels itself part of the chain of Jewish existence stretching from our past into our future. And that community must be more than a wish or slogan. It must help all Jews discover that we want a community in which each of us can also "stand alone".

Here is the voice that lives the tension of passing before the Judge of the World *k'venei maron*--one by one--while also knowing that we are--all considered together in a single glance.

I am here because it is only in being with you that I can wrestle with my aloneness. I am myself-with-you. Because I am in this community I can also stand aside from you and find my own place. I am together with you, because we share our Jewish fate and our Jewish responsibility for the world. However different our individual understanding of our community may be, we are partners in the covenant we have inherited as a community. I am alone but not lonely because it is only when I remain truly connected to you that I can stand apart from you.

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Other thoughts

Justice Ginsburg, another "terminal jew?"

Eugene B. Borowitz

Ahad Haam, returning from his first Zionist Congress said he felt like a mourner at a wedding. Amid the general ecstasy that the Jewish people would now practice politics he was depressed that no one seemed very much concerned about Jewish culture. His experience came to mind as I pondered my reaction to our community's elation at Ruth Bader Ginsburg's joining the Supreme Court.

I, too, have been celebrating. I have rejoiced with Americans everywhere that a person of such intelligence, character and obvious judicial temperament has been appointed to our highest court. With feminists I have cheered a heroine of the ongoing struggle to attain equal rights and our nation's further progress toward genuine job equality. And like most Jews I've swelled with pride that another bookish, industrious, smart Jew has attained

public eminence. This "little" Jew typifies the glory of our modernization in courageously going where Jews (and women) weren't wanted and by dint of discipline, character and accomplishment winning the respect and admiration of colleagues.

Loss Despite Loyalty

So why the "mourning?" Because while most Anglo-Jewish newspapers have been uncommonly quiet about Justice Ginsburg's Jewish involvements, one normally reliable paper said her son was married under Christian auspices. I assume he is a loyal Jew in his own way, as the expression goes, but one not much concerned about religion; his parents, many papers have said, are not members of any synagogue. I imagine that his wife has some religious connections and so the non-Jewish ceremony--and so, too, my surmise that Justice Ginsburg's grandchildren will not be raised as Jews.

Technically speaking, Justice Ginsburg does not qualify for Leslie Fiedler's jarring self-description, "terminal Jew." The eminent literary critic wrote recently that he suddenly realized that, having long lived by the universal standards of high culture, he would be the last Jew in his family. None of his children, much less his grandchildren, was Jewish and thus they would never know the verbal, bookish, ethnic hubbub which had so shaped him. This pained him in ways he had never anticipated but he resigned himself to it as another, and not the worst of those regrets that one accumulates over a lifetime.

Of course, the Ginsburg Jewishness will survive the Justice through her son and her daughter. Perhaps their family will be one of those that recapitulates the gloomy data of the 1990 Population Survey that 50% of us intermarry (with dire Jewish consequences in the third generation).

Defining Jewish Responsibility

I am disturbed by the short-sightedness implicit in our community leaders' judgment that the Ginsburg accession is "good for the Jews." By that they specifically mean that she will likely be a steady judicial force for the

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liberal social agenda they--and I--identify with Jewish social ethics today. But their standard of Jewishness seems exhausted by personal character and liberal ethics. I believe they and most other Jews care very much more about Jewish continuity than that but they don't say so. Surely it would be impolite, even impolitic now to say something so particular, so ethnic. But the situation is not much different at other times for our culture achieves its veneration of tolerance--for which Jews adore it--by an exaggerated esteem for individuality. So most of us have settled the conflict between the American ethos of individualism and the Jewish demand for selfhood-amid-the-folk by giving the impression that we only need be Jews in our generation and, thus, that by living it now, we have fulfilled our Jewish responsibility.

Jewishness-for-now is surely better than assimilation but it won't do if one seriously cares about being a Jew. It violates the covenant of the generations which is at the heart of our Jewish experience. When we turn to tradition we acknowledge the living power of our past. So Jewish action today needs also to feel the pull of our future, one which extends to messianic reaches. Our acts also need to be measured by that criterion. No human being can ever guarantee that today's deeds will secure a given future but some things we can do are more likely to get us there. Our liberal community leadership needs to find a way to give Jewish continuity its proper place in making their public Jewish judgments. And individual Jews need to face up as early as they can as to how serious they are about being Jews. For if they are, they need to act on the ineluctable importance of the next generations' Jewishness to their own personal Jewishness. At the least, we all need to make that as plain to our family and other Jews as we can. Which, I suppose, is what I am doing here.

EUGENE BOROWITZ is founder and Senior Editor of *Sh'ma*.

Book Reviews

WALKING HUMBLY WITH GOD

Daniel C. Matt, ed. Ktav

Non-Orthodox *tzaddikim*--spiritual role models, if you insist--seem rare, perhaps because we don't easily idealize leaders. Hershel Matt, z"l, deserves better. True, his writings only hint at his gifts of soul. But read, e.g., his "*Kavvanot* and Prayers," and be brushed by his glory.

BECOMING BROTHERS

Howard and Arthur Waskow. Free Press. \$22.95

This journey of siblings learning to love each other acquires special interest since one is a leader of our community. The history is evocative; the decisive role of death poignant; and why one becomes "our" Arthur and the other assimilates, a mystery.

LANGUAGE IN TIME OF REVOLUTION

Benjamin Harshav. California, \$25.

The "revolution" is an essay on Jewish modernization as secularization, heavy on culture but impervious to what happened to religion. The "language" is the revival of modern Hebrew. Alas, I found little here not well explored elsewhere.

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It is with the seasonal feelings of awe and anticipation that we begin a new year with you. We have freshened up our look a bit, but our goal is still the same: to make you a part of the best Jewish conversation around. For, ultimately, it is you and your responsiveness that gives Sh'ma its energy and character. As always, we look forward to hearing from you.

May the new year bring sweetness and health, peace and prosperity to you, Israel, and all humankind.

Sh'ma

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