

Sh'ma

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Steven S. Schwarzschild, z"l

With heavy heart I again apprise our readers of the death of a Contributing Editor, in this case one of the founders of *Sh'ma*. Steven was the premier rationalist philosopher of Judaism of his generation, the unwavering banner-bearer of the Marburg neo-Kantian idealism which first disclosed the academic power of the Jewish idea. An uncompromising intellectual, he loved footnoting almost more than cogent argument; a devoted teacher, he demanded much of his students while intellectually and humanly giving them very much more in return. A passionate social critic in the spirit of the Frankfurt School, he derided all pretension to social righteousness and thought it a desecration of Judaism when Israeli or American Jews sought to rationalize immorality as Jewishly expedient. My dear friend for nearly half a century, he lent his weighty prestige to *Sh'ma* and wrote articles for us challenging our readers to reach for a proper Jewish intellectual and ethical horizon. May God grant his grieving family—and us all—speedy consolation. *E. B. B.*

Facing four natural catastrophes

In recent weeks an astounding range of natural catastrophes assaulted our continent. Awestruck by the fury—so different from Elijah's experience at Mt. Horeb, 1K 19:1-21—I invited all the rabbis I could locate in the affected areas to reflect with our community on their experience. We are deeply grateful to those who managed to respond despite the intensified pressure of these days. With many statements arriving, I abridged them all so they could fit in one issue and, in order of receipt, to limit duplication of theme. They follow, by area, alphabetically. E.B.B.

(1) Hurricane Hugo

Edward M. Friedman

On the evening before Hurricane Hugo was due to strike, all citizens on the barrier islands and in "low-lying areas" were urged to evacuate. My wife and I, having arrived in the city less than a month before, thought it wise to consider ourselves in the latter category and get out of town before the storm.

We quickly roused my parents who had arrived that same afternoon from Connecticut, got our 14 year old son Aaron, and, grabbing a couple of days' clothing, headed out with thousands of others to safety. Only after we were safely settled in Greenville did we stop to think that we had left everything we owned in Charleston at the mercy of the elements. Yet, looking back on it, when my wife was asked if she took her valuables with her, she responded, "Yes, Aaron."

Fortunately the phone lines were still functioning in the morning and we were able to find out that our house had suffered only relatively minor damage. I also spoke with the Cantor, who had remained, and was told that damage to the synagogue was limited. It was Sunday afternoon before we could return and see firsthand the devastation that Hugo had brought. Our lovely wooded neighborhood looked like a war zone with trees down all along the streets, roofs damaged, fences and tool sheds destroyed. We soon learned to call this "minor damage" compared to that in other, less fortunate, neighborhoods.

On Monday I drove to the synagogue and found torrents of rain coming into the hallway, kitchen and social hall. Entering my own office, I discovered a waterfall that destroyed five shelves of books, nothing compared to the thousands of volumes and personal papers lost by my Orthodox colleague whose home was hit while his synagogue, our sanctuary and the historic Reform Temple were virtually unscathed.

Could we conduct services for *Rosh Hashanah* in four days' time? We optimistically decided that we could and should. A logging company cleared the roadway and a contractor covered the holes in the roof temporarily, hooked up an electric generator, cleaned up the building and got things ready for an emotional *Rosh Hashanah*.

The response of people around the country was unbelievable. The phones rang constantly as rabbis

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