

Philosophical Reflections on Jewish Family Life*

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This presentation is divided into two parts: marriage and family. Since relationship is the element that permeates both institutions, we briefly examine the Judaic value system in the marital relationship and in the parent-child relationship. This is followed respectively by comments on contemporary life styles.

I. Marriage

Marriage is a value in Judaism. A value is a preference which an individual or group holds with affective regard. This means that Judaism strongly prefers that people marry rather than remain single.

Resh Lakish stated: It is better for two persons to dwell together (i.e. to marry) than to live alone!¹

The statement clearly suggests that when there is a choice between staying single and marrying, the latter is to be preferred. Marriage is viewed as a preferred way of living for it involves a relationship of a man and woman who, as social beings, meet each other's needs for companionship and emotional fulfillment. It is this union that produces children who perpetuate the Jewish community.

The decision to marry is a decision to enter the institution of marriage. Jews

who decide to marry are also involved in a second institution: religion. Thus, marriage in Judaism is an amalgamation of two institutions whose coerciveness and moral authority reinforce each other. Behavior and roles are prescribed in specific ways; each partner can expect the other to fulfill his/her respective responsibilities so that their social union leads to intimacy and the creation of a family.

Peter Berger has this to say about the relationship between religion and social institutions:

Religion legitimates social institutions by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by locating them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference . . . Everything "here below" has its analogue "up above." By participating in the institutional order, men *ipso facto*, participate in the divine cosmos. The kinship structure, for example, extends beyond the human realm, with all being (including the being of the gods) conceived of in the structures of kinship as a given in the society.²

In Judaism, the human family, *hamalya shel matta*, has its analogue in the divine family, *hamalya shel ma'ala*. Human sexuality reflects divine creativity. The human court reflects the divine court; human justice emulates the divine judicial system. Thus human activity—mar-

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¹ *Yebamot* 118b.

² Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967, pp. 33-34.

riage, sexuality, law—is invested with sacramental validity.

Perhaps this is why couples, even intermarrying couples, along with their parents, want to be married by a rabbi. They seek not only the rabbi's blessing, but religious legitimation. Under the *hupah* (canopy), the marriage acquires ontological validity. It is confirmed by mysterious powers—God, Judaism, the tradition—of which the rabbi is the symbol. Marriage is no longer a fragile relationship between two individuals, but a communal event at which God is present. It thereby gains stability and solidity.

In traditional society, few people (we have no statistics so we cannot be more precise) remained single, fewer opted to live as unmarried couples and divorces were few. This was due to the heavily institutionalized community which reinforced traditional values of marriage and family life.

In modern times, religion lacks the coercive authority it once had. The value of individualism as opposed to community permeates the society. Consequently, without the support of the religious institution, marriage reverts to a fragile human institution subject to conflict and easy dissolution.

The organized Jewish community can bolster the longevity of marriages by providing support groups for newlyweds and young couples. Centers and Y's are the ideal forum for the social confirmation of married couples' identity. They, along with synagogues, can jointly sponsor social and cultural programs and Jewish study groups that address the political, economic and social issues of the day. Synagogues can encourage the establishment of *havurot* for prayer and study. Programming should be geared, as much as possible, to serving the entire family. When they are together, the young can learn from the old and vice versa, as each gains a new

perspective on youth and age. In a small way, this may help to diminish the increasing fragmentation of Jewish family and community life. Family agencies offer Jewish family life education workshops to strengthen marital and family bonds by helping couples to sort out their values and tune in to the values of Jewish tradition. It is the community, when organized and directed toward the maintenance of marital and family stability, that can provide through the group process, a cohesive structure for successful marriage. Thus, the community substitutes for the institution of religion.

The Marital Relationship

How does Judaism view the marital relationship? Aside from the specific duties incumbent upon the husband and wife³, Maimonides, paraphrasing the Talmud, suggests the following attitudes:

A man should honor his wife more than himself and love her as himself; he should spend much money on her and not frighten her nor make her cry, and speak softly to her.

The wife should honor her husband greatly and do what he says; she should view him as a king and share his likes and dislikes. In this manner will their marriage be pleasant and fulfilling.⁴

From this passage, it appears that marriage is not perceived to be a means of self-fulfillment, where the other person exists to meet one's needs. It is rather a relationship where each partner's primary concern is the well-being and happiness of the other. It is as if Judaism says to the husband: your wife comes first, and it says to the wife: your husband comes first; you each come first for each other. This relationship re-

³ For the husband's obligations, see *Ketubot*, 46b, and for the wife's, see *Ketubot*, 59b.

⁴ Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Marriage 15, 19–20.

quires giving before taking, obligations over rights. The husband needs to be sensitive to his wife's feelings, her need to feel and look attractive in clothes and jewelry, and to control his anger. The wife, too, must be attuned to her husband's needs and wishes and try to satisfy them. When there is mutual sensitivity to the needs of the other, the marriage is more likely to endure. Implicit in the marital relationship is the notion of sacrifice.

Today the notion of sacrifice is obsolete, residing as we do amidst a culture of narcissism. It is very difficult for spouses to place the needs of the other before one's own. Self-gratification seems to precede other-gratification; it is a value that leads to marital conflict.

Sacrifice as the ingredient of a successful marriage may be inferred from a talmudic passage:

Said R. Eliezer: He who divorces his first wife, even the altar sheds tears for him.^{5*}

Why the metaphor of the altar? The altar was the locus of the animal sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple. Perhaps R. Eliezer means to say that when a couple get divorced, the altar sheds tears for they will no longer sacrifice for one another.

Implications

In light of the Jewish values of marriage, the Jewish community cannot approve of homosexual marriage. Such couples cannot be considered married to each other, no matter how loving and giving they are. The homosexual union is viewed as unnatural.

In a comprehensive discussion of the Jewish attitude toward homosexuality,

* It does not say "for them" because the husband is doing the divorcing and the focus is on him. But the altar's tears are for the wife too, for divorce is perceived to be more detrimental to the woman owing to her greater dependency.

⁵ *Gittin*, 90b.

Norman Lamm concludes, "Judaism allows for no compromise in its abhorrence of sodomy, but encourages both compassion and efforts at rehabilitation."⁶ While "efforts at rehabilitation" appears to be a directive to Jewish social agencies to try to change homosexuals into heterosexuals, unless the client requests it, this approach is professionally unethical. Though we are entitled to maintain a personal value system, we may not impose it on the client. However, as we explore the self-image and feelings of the client, we may introduce the perceptions and attitudes of those in society who support and reject homosexuality. The attitude of Jewish tradition should be incorporated along with the others in this process. But the agency does not reject homosexuals who apply for service.

It is known that Jewish agencies employ homosexuals as professional social workers. These agencies apparently do not take a forthright oppositional stance, for they believe in the workers' ability to separate personal values from professional values. Those agencies who, in principle, will not hire a homosexual would tend to situate their policy in the Jewish value base and in their fear of possible negative influences on clients.

The Jewish values in marriage guide our attitude to intermarried couples where no conversion has taken place. The ideal Jewish marriage exists not only between two Jews but is permeated with Jewish values and traditions which are transmitted to children. Intermarriage is biblically prohibited because it is feared that the non-Jewish partner will turn the Jewish partner away from Judaism.⁷

⁶ Norman Lamm, "Judaism and the Modern Attitude to Homosexuality," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 1974 yearbook, Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1974, pp. 194-205.

⁷ Deuteronomy 7:3, 4.

Similar to its stance on homosexuality, the Jewish family agency cannot approve of intermarriage. Both homosexuality and intermarriage erode the continuity of the Jewish family. However, the agency does not reject the intermarried couple and, most certainly, the parents who seek help in dealing with the strains and stresses in their lives. Since one of the partners is Jewish, we should help them maintain their connection to the Jewish community. In this the family agency is different from Orthodox and Conservative synagogues which tend to bar intermarried couples and families from membership. They believe that accepting them may legitimate their belonging to the Jewish community.

The family agency should serve intermarried couples and their families because it is a non-ideologically and non-denominationally based social service agency. It does not have to decide whether or not a child of a non-Jewish mother is Jewish, although it must be privy to the available information on this subject. Its main focus is on the family dynamics with their conflicts and dysfunctions, and the ways in which family members can learn to deal with their problems. Professionals working with this clientele need to have some basic information regarding the organized Jewish community's diverse attitudes toward the intermarried. Professionals should know the positions of the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist groups with regard to their Judaic status, the rites of conversion, the status of children born of non-Jewish mothers and Jewish fathers and vice versa, the parents' options with regard to their children's religious identity, and the ramifications of their decisions for the family's acceptance in the Jewish community. Their coming to the Jewish agency is a statement of connection and identification, and their mo-

tives should be explored in the helping process.

Divorce

Judaism values the marital bonds so highly that it makes it difficult to sever them. The two basic ways to dissolve a marriage is through death and divorce. In rare circumstances, a marriage can be annulled. Divorce requires a *get*, a bill of divorcement. The *get* needs to be meticulously explicit regarding the precise names of the couple, the location and the date. The wording makes it unequivocally clear that the husband severs the relationship and permits his wife to marry another man. Talmudic law, based on the Bible, requires the husband to grant the divorce because he married her. Though the husband is the prime actor in this ritual, the wife may initiate divorce proceedings under certain conditions upon which the *bet din*—Jewish court—may compel the husband to grant it.⁸ Under Jewish law, the wife cannot divorce her husband.

Divorce is seen as detrimental to the wife. Therefore, the husband who sends a *get* with an agent may change his mind before the *get* reaches her. The reason is that one may act to a person's detriment only in his or her presence.⁹ Even if they are on bad terms and the husband instructs an agent to acquire the *get* on her behalf, the agent cannot acquire it for her because "it is better for her to live together with her husband, even in strife, than to live alone."¹⁰ It is only

⁸ See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 6 pp. 122-137 for a discussion of divorce proceedings in Jewish law and history. For an erudite presentation of the Jewish laws of divorce in a modern context, see Irwin H. Haut, *Divorce in Jewish Law and Life*. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1983.

⁹ *Gittin*, 32a.

¹⁰ *Encyclopedia Talmudica*, Vol. 2. Jerusalem: Rabbi Herzog World Academy, 1974, p. 23.

when she receives it that she is officially divorced.

From this passage, it appears that a conflicted marriage is to be preferred to divorce. The degree of conflict, of course, will vary with every marital relationship. Though Judaism sanctions divorce, it is less valued than a marriage in conflict, which may be repaired if the couple is willing to seek counseling.

This stance may irritate some practitioners who would value divorce over a "bad" marriage. Those who counsel couples in conflict are impressed with their determination to work the conflict through and resolve it, though the marriage may eventually end in divorce. The social worker's attitude toward marriage and divorce invariably gets communicated to the couple. Representing a Jewish family agency, the worker should reflect the values of marriage, of investing effort at working through conflict, and of divorcing only as a last resort.

If divorce is the couple's preferred solution, the social worker needs to broach the option of the *get*. The idea of the *get* needs to be communicated to religious and non-religious clients alike, whether or not they are affiliated with any particular denomination in the Jewish community. The worker should have such information as which rabbis arrange *gittin* (plural of *get*), how much it costs, the procedure, and some of the benefits that accrue with it.

One benefit is that the couple may now marry others and the wife will not remain an *agunah*, a "chained" woman. A recent New York State law requires that there not be any impediment for remarriage in order for a civil divorce to be granted. The husband's refusal to give a *get* constitutes an impediment. Consequently, neither can remarry without the *get*. If the husband does not intend to remarry in the near

future, he can maliciously keep his wife "chained" to himself. Another way is to demand a high extortion payment in exchange for the *get*. Concerted efforts are now underway in the Jewish community to find *Halachic*—Jewish legal—ways to facilitate the *get* procedure and to coerce husbands through social and economic pressure. Blu Greenberg discusses this issue at length and points to several resolutions. She exhorts the rabbinic leaders to find a *halachic* way and not claim that their hands are tied. Perhaps the revision of the Jewish divorce law "will take the form of *takkanah* (regulation introduced by leading rabbis) that will empower a woman to transfer a *get*."¹¹ Women have been taking greater initiative in trying to remove this injustice but change is slow.

A second benefit of the *get* is to acquire legitimate divorce status from all segments of the Jewish community. The Orthodox and Conservative rabbinate will not officiate at the marriage of a divorcee who does not produce a *get* because under Jewish law she is still considered married to her first husband. Reform rabbis have accepted the civil divorce as valid for remarriage. The problem arises when a divorcee seeks to marry a Conservative or Orthodox man. The rabbi of these denominations will not marry them without the *get*. If they marry under Reform auspices and have children, the children's status is that of *mamzerim* (illegitimate) because the woman is considered to be adulterous by the other denominations.¹²

This problem is exacerbated today due to the increasing rate of serial mar-

¹¹ Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981, p. 141.

¹² For a fuller exposition of this problem, see Norman Linzer, "Halachic Implications of Illegitimacy and Adoption for Social Work Practice," *Jewish Social Work Forum* 4:1 (Spring 1967).

riages, and the stubborn refusal of the denominational rabbis to agree on common family law policy. It behooves the social worker to become aware of the internecine conflicts among the major Jewish religious denominations. This knowledge can assist in the presentation of options and their practical consequences to clients.

Grounds for Divorce

There is a three-way dispute in the Talmud regarding grounds for divorce. According to the School of Shammai, the wife's adultery is the only ground. The School of Hillel adds "even if she burned his food." Rabbi Akiva posits even if he found a woman more pleasing than her.¹³ In its discussion of this *mishnah*, the Talmud bases the divergent opinions on different interpretations of the verse "he had found an 'unseemly thing' (*ervat davar*) in her."¹⁴

The Code of Jewish Law follows the School of Hillel's opinion. This is so not because food is so important to a marital relationship and burning it is inexcusable, but according to the commentaries, it symbolizes a ruptured relationship, i.e. the couple's incompatibility. Though the views of the School of Shammai and Rabbi Akiva also imply a strain in the relationship, the School of Hillel seems to focus on their interaction and the wife's insensitivity to the husband's needs.¹⁵

Here, too, implicit in the Judaic discussion of grounds for divorce is that the marital relationship needs to be built on trust, mutual fulfillment of needs, self-sacrifice and intimacy.¹⁶ These

qualities of a relationship appear to coincide with contemporary views of successful marriage.

In sum, we have posited several essential Judaic values and consequences regarding the marital relationship:

1. It is better to marry than to live alone.
2. Marriage, to be viable, requires mutual respect and self-sacrifice.
3. Once marriage is entered into, its dissolution is difficult, though possible.
4. Divorce is condoned but not encouraged.
5. A *get* permits the couple to remarry.

Despite the challenge to some of these values by alternate life styles, the values need to be contended with, exposed, taught and discussed. They can guide professionals who work with couples and young people in reaching for the value dimensions of the client's behavior.

II. Family Relationships

In its discussion of the relationship between parents and children, the Bible emphasizes duties rather than values. The latter may be inferred from the former. The Talmud prescribes the duties of the father, based on biblical verses, to circumsize the son, redeem him, teach him Torah, marry him off, teach him a trade, and some say to teach him how to swim.¹⁷ The mother's role is to nurture the child. Through their role convergence, parents socialize their children into the Jewish community and help them to grow up to become independent persons who marry and raise families.¹⁸

¹³ *Gittin*, 90a.

¹⁴ Deuteronomy, 24:1.

¹⁵ *Meiri* cited in Kehati's commentary on *Gittin*, Mishnah 10.

¹⁶ See Saul Berman, "Jewish Value Perspectives: Poverty, Sexuality, Family Life," *Judaism and Mental Health*. New York: Board of Jewish Education, 1978, pp. 71-85.

¹⁷ Kiddushin, 29a.

¹⁸ For a fuller exposition of parental duties and their application to contemporary family life, see Norman Linzer, *The Jewish Family: Authority and Tradition in Modern Perspective*. New York: Human Sciences Press, 1984, pp. 86-91.

Honor and Reverence

The duties of the child are prescribed in the commandments of honor¹⁹ and reverence.²⁰ Honor, as defined in the Talmud, consists of feeding, giving drink, dressing, taking parents in and out. Reverence requires the child not to sit in the father's seat (read mother's too), contradict them, nor take the opponent's side in an argument.²¹

Acts which express honor require emotional closeness. To feed and dress one's parents who are apparently elderly and cannot care for themselves requires touching, caressing and holding and evokes feelings of love and tenderness. Acts which express reverence require emotional distance and self-restraint. Reverence for parents reflects the child's acceptance of their authority in a hierarchical relationship.

The question may be asked as to whether the child can negotiate these two contradictory emotional states. Can the child realistically be expected to show love and feel close to the parents and, at the same time, maintain distance from them out of respect for their authority? Judaism's answer is unequivocally affirmative. It is not only possible, though difficult, to oscillate from one state to another, but it is required for the socialization process. These paradoxical emotions characterize all human relationships, whether employer-employee, husband-wife, teacher-student, parent-child, or friends. As human beings, we are capable of achieving intimacy with others and, simultaneously, maintaining distance. In the Judaic view, "the child learns the fundamentals of human relationships in the context of the family."²² A good

marriage, in this context, constitutes a blend of intimacy and private space. Good family relationships exist when the child gives service to the parents which reflects the intimacy of their relationship, and the parents show respect for the privacy and independence of their children.²³

Implications

The child's difficulty in achieving a balance between honor and reference, between emotional closeness to, and emotional distance from the natural parents, is exacerbated in reconstituted families and single-parent families. In reconstituted families, parenting patterns have been disrupted. The child harbors feelings of estrangement from the natural parents and the stepparents. New alliances, shifting domiciles, erratic visitation arrangements, two sets of parents and sometimes four sets of grandparents, conflict over honors at bar and bat mitzvahs,²⁴ risking and trusting in new relationships²⁵—all create confusion and stress for children. In addition when there are new siblings, the child who may have been the oldest in the natural family may now be the youngest. Perlmutter *et. al.* cite the existence of loosened sexual boundaries in

²³ This conclusion was discovered by the author in the course of researching and writing *The Jewish Family*. Subsequently, it was corroborated in the results of a study of factors that contribute to healthy families. Dr. John G. Looney concluded: "They have created a family system that helps the parents feel nurtured and supported, while at the same time that system enables children to go out in society and become independent human beings," *New York Times*, January 16, 1984.

²⁴ Leila Herman Perlmutter, "Coming of Age in Remarried Families; The Bar Mitzvah," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 59:1 (Fall 1982), pp. 58-65.

²⁵ Melvin Frankel, "Remarriage," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 59:3 (Spring 1983), pp. 241-247.

¹⁹ Exodus, 20:12.

²⁰ Leviticus, 19:3.

²¹ Kiddushin, 31b

²² Norman Linzer, *The Jewish Family*, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

remarried families. They urge the clinician to be alert to this phenomenon and to explore the issue so "all family members can feel safe."²⁶

To whom does the child owe honor and reverence? Is there a priority for the child's love and loyalty? It would appear that, Judaically, the child's loyalty to natural parents never ceases and always takes precedence. However, allegiance is also due to stepparents, for those who nurture the child deserve to be honored and revered as well.

In a single-parent family, the emotional life of the child is intertwined with one parent, usually the mother. Symbiotic ties are intensified, as they need each other to ward off feelings of loneliness and rejection. The single parent-child relationship could give rise to increased intimacy and interdependence, with less emotional distance and privacy for the child. It could develop into a healthy mutual aid relationship. But if the intimacy is too intense, i.e. when the parent refuses to let the child go and the child refuses to leave the parent, it could have pathological consequences.

Emotional distance from the parent could be exacerbated due to the child's anger, resentment and guilt for causing the marital breakup.²⁷ This will result in less intimacy and more acting out behavior. Thus, the child's successful achievement of a balance between intimacy and privacy, honor and reverence, that characterizes the ideal-typical

Jewish family may be more threatened in the reconstituted and single-parent families than in the intact family.

Boundaries Between Parents and Children

The notion that there need to be boundaries between parents and children is not new. Its origin is in the Bible. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh."²⁸ Marriage requires separation from the family of origin in order to build a family of procreation. The leavetaking is physical and psychological. Physically, the couple leave their respective parents' homes and establish their own home together. Psychologically, they become independent of their parents, i.e. they are no longer "children" but adults, and their primary allegiance is to each other. The separation from parents does not entail severing ties, for children are obligated to show honor and reverence throughout their parents' lives and beyond. It refers to a psychological distance from parents to enable them to create new identities as husband and wife through communication.²⁹ The Bible contends that in marriage the spouse replaces the parents as the "significant other."

Implications

The notion of boundaries between parents and children has serious implications for our understanding of the psychology of singles. This group in-

²⁶ Leila Herman Perlmutter, Tamara Engel and Clifford J. Sager, "The Incest Taboo: Loosened Sexual Boundaries in Remarried Families," *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, 8:2 (1982), pp. 83-96.

²⁷ Dennis K. Orthner, Terry Brown and Dennis Ferguson, "Single-Parent Fatherhood: An Emerging Family Life Style," *The Family Coordinator*, (October 1976), pp. 429-437; Anne-Marie Ambert, "Differences in Children's Behavior Toward Custodial Mothers and Custodial Fathers," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, (February 1982), pp. 73-86.

²⁸ Genesis 2:24.

²⁹ Peter L. Berger and Hansfried Kellner, "Marriage and the Construction of Reality," *Recent Sociology No. 2* ed. by Hans Peter Dreitzel. New York: Macmillan, 1970, pp. 49-72. For a case presentation and discussion of a married couple's separation from their parents, see Norman Linzer and Efrem Nulman, "The Jewish Family Revisited," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, 60:2 (Winter 1983), pp. 120-128.

cludes people who opt to remain single by conviction, who would like to marry but have not been able to enter into a serious relationship that could lead to marriage, adult children who devote their lives to caring for their elderly parents, and couples who live together and are unwilling, unprepared, or afraid to commit themselves to marriage.

While a variety of factors could explain why these groups remain single, a key factor may be the relationship with parents. The inability to separate psychologically from parents during adolescence and young adulthood may inhibit forming a long-term intimate relationship with another person. This factor needs to be explored in counseling singles and unmarried couples.

The lack of boundaries may also help to explain the existence of marital conflict. Hertz and Rosen state: "After marriage, the connections and obligations to the extended family continue to be of great importance. Therefore, young Jewish couples typically spend a great deal of time defining the boundaries, connections and obligations between themselves and their families."³⁰ When these ties are strong and respective ideologies and traditions are carried over to the marriage, conflict may ensue. Change is difficult because the ideologies and traditions have been deeply ingrained, and giving them up is felt to be a betrayal of one's parents and family of origin. For example, the wife may have been brought up in a home where her father catered to her mother; she expects her husband to do the same. The husband may have been raised in a home where his mother catered to his father's wishes; he expects his wife to do

the same. The scene is thus set for potential conflict. The thrust of counseling is toward respect for each other's traditions and ties and at the same time, compromise and the gradual creation of their own traditions.

Summary and Conclusions

The variety of family lifestyles that exist today presents serious value challenges to the organized Jewish community and particularly the Jewish family agency. These lifestyles reflect values that are in conflict with traditional Jewish values. Judaism's strongly held preferences are for marriage over singlehood, whose longevity is based on mutual love, self-sacrifice, companionship and intimacy. Divorce is tolerated but to be avoided whenever possible. Family life is characterized by parents and children mutually respecting and meeting each other's needs, and creating boundaries between them. The social and historical context of these values is the community and the tradition.

These values are distorted in the modern cultural climate of relativism and individualism. Family structures tend to be less stable, more prone to pathology and dissolution, and in need of help to maintain continuity. Alternative family structures require of the agency and its professional staff a serious evaluation of their philosophy and the professional skills required to serve these clients. We do not want to foster their alienation from the Jewish community, but neither are we value-free in our engagement with them. Instead, in the give-and-take of the counseling process, the different value systems need to interact with each other as we explore their motivations to seek help from a Jewish agency, their Jewish affiliations, educational background, and family history. The family agency needs to join with other agencies in the community to

³⁰ Fredda M. Hertz and Elliot J. Rosen, "Jewish Families" in McGoldrick, Pearce and Giordano, eds. *Ethnicity and Family Therapy*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1982, p. 366.

develop strategies that would maintain the connection of these individuals and families to the Jewish community.

Currently, there are many line workers and administrators who have not developed their own consensus on a particular version of Jewish identity. Often they opt for community and culture over ideology. They use tradition selectively; they believe that there are many ways to be a Jew. This "pluralism" is at once a strength and a weakness. Its strength is that it reflects individual autonomy. Its weakness is that the lack of a common ideology splinters the community and the fields of service.

Family service agencies have developed different ways of dealing with this problem. Some ignore it; by deemphasizing the Jewish value system, pro-

fessional practice can proceed unimpeded by ideological conflict. Others establish a two-tiered system whereby one office serves the Orthodox and is staffed by members of that group, and the other offices largely ignore the Jewish dimension. Still others attempt an integration by developing the Jewish identity of staff through an educational self-help group. By doing Jewish family life education on a voluntary basis, these staff integrate Jewish concerns and values with service to the community.

This presentation has explored the vector points where the practice issues hit the Judaic value system head on. It is intended to serve as a vehicle for staff discussion and debate in the effort to clarify the relationship between their Jewish and professional identities.