

respect to checking and savings accounts. The editor has also prepared a column on "Hints About Everyday Life in the United States." This column explained the American way of writing addresses, the way to enter a bus, and the system of numbering floors in this country, among other things. More sensitive issues such as personal hygiene and social mores have been discussed. A question and answer column about particularly unusual American customs, such as the midnight snack served when visiting homes is planned for future issues. *The News Exchange* has also printed Russian recipes, articles of praise for the paper and the resettlement process, a letter written by a Georgian Jew describing his impressions of a Jewish National Fund dinner he attended, a Russian's opinion about American higher education, a warning from a Georgian who received a fraudulent offer of a free trip and told how he contacted the Better Business Bureau, a plea from a Russian to organize a Russian dance group which was later organized, the impressions of the Russian Club president who attended the General Assembly in Montreal through the sponsorship of the Federation, and a poignant letter about the discrimination that caused a family to leave Kiev and a plea for more contact with American Jews. Negative comments received about the resettlement process are given to the appropriate agency for action. It is felt that the emigres feel safer in communicating dissatisfactions to a quasi-official person and that some of their complaints would not have officially surfaced without this vehicle.

The News Exchange has also been instrumental in developing a self-help emigre group. Through the telephone calls the editor received from the emigre community,

it was very evident that there was much interest in beginning a Russian Club and only a little organizational help was necessary to start it. Using *The News Exchange* as the primary vehicle for initial organization and subsequent communication, a viable Russian Club was organized that now meets weekly at The Jewish Community Center. The goals of the group are to provide cultural, social and recreational activities for the emigre community; to help facilitate the acculturation process, and to serve as a liaison between the Federation and the emigres. Through the professional assistance of a JCC staff member, the club is evolving into a strong organization.

The News Exchange has facilitated the acculturation process by enabling a two-way communication process to be developed between Americans and emigres. Not only has much valuable information been imparted to the newcomers, but their involvement in the community has been increased. Mutual understanding is of great importance if the large Soviet emigre population is to be truly integrated into the American Jewish community. A bi-lingual newspaper with a minimum amount of effort can be a significant acculturation aid. Not only does such a publication help the emigre to understand the American Jewish culture. Perhaps just as important is the bi-lingual newspaper's contribution to the host community, which learns through this medium just how different the emigre's native culture was from that of the Russia of the early 1900's which many Americans knew and why the acculturation process can be so problematic for a new emigre. The American Jew in reading a publication such as *The News Exchange* graphically sees the challenges in bringing to actuality that "We are one."

Manifestations of Jewish Messianic Movements and the Cults*

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The lessons of Jewish history are most instructive when considering the attraction cults lamentably hold for Jewish adolescents. Creative means of coping with the cult challenge can be devised once the relationship between Jew and messianic speculation is articulated.

What must be emphasized at the outset of this brief survey is that Jewish history has borne witness to the presence of Jewish messianic sects since late biblical times. Indeed, the dynamics affecting this phenomenon, once properly understood, can aid us in discerning why Jewish teens are drawn to the cult movement today.

Four Principles

There are four operative principles upon which Jewish messianic movements have depended for survival throughout the centuries:

Above all, Jewish messianic sectarianism has always stemmed from internal and external pressures besetting the Jewish community as a whole. Concern for a means of achieving salvation—economic, social, political and spiritual—surfaces when it is felt that normative Judaism cannot sufficiently address the need for relief from oppression. In our own age, the pressures have appeared in the subtle guise of assimilation, both from within and without the framework of the Jewish community proper. Accordingly, the response to assimilation is but a contemporary version of the continuing struggle on the part of the Jewish community to survive in the face of enormous pressures.

Second, mysticism, particularly messianism, is *not alien* to Judaism, but is to be regarded as one of the twin characteristics of Jewish life, the other being rabbinic

legalism. These two opposites tend to exist coterminously. Thus, the sustained interplay between Jewish mysticism and rationalism forms the essence of Jewish history. When, on occasion, one of these two trends achieves dominance, the subsequent imbalance alters the contour of events—not necessarily with beneficial results.

Thirdly, Jewish messianic movements have been a regular feature of the landscape of Jewish history. As such, they can be regarded as seeking what anthropologists term revitalization. According to Wallace,¹ revitalization movements can have a destabilizing influence upon both their own prospects for survival and the cultural mainstream from which they stem. Judaism, however, has been able, *in the long run*, to transform the impact of its own messianic trends into a reinvigoration of Jewish life. It may be said that the major contribution of Jewish messianic sects to the Jewish historical process has been that it has made of Judaism a mature religion, capable of withstanding repeated tests and challenges. In contrast, the cults today focus upon unreasonable goals which, when unattained, result in collapse.

Finally, Jewish messianic sects reflect the same predilection for an *escape from freedom*² as do non-Jewish cults today,

¹ Anthony C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 58, April 1956. Also on the subject, this author's "The Essenes of Qumran: A Study of a Revitalization Movement" (unpublished.)

² See Gershon Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York, 1962.

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possessing a *new* and *exclusive* pattern of belief and behavior for adherents.

Case Histories

An example of each of these four principles may serve to illustrate the educative value of Jewish messianic sects in developing a comprehensive response to the cults.

a. That disaffection with mainstream Judaism stems from external and internal pressures. *Example:* The 17th century Sabbatean movement, avowing the messiahhood of Shabbatai Zvi. External pressures of the times included the eclipse of Ottoman hegemony and unrest in Eastern Europe as the social order was disrupted. Indeed, the Cossack revolt of Chmielnitzki at mid-century resulted in pogroms that all but obliterated the vital fabric of Jewish life. In addition, the economic and political systems of Western Europe, exhausted by centuries of warfare, were undergoing restructuring and realignment. Internally, Jewish life in these areas was becoming dangerously ossified and unresponsive to the felt needs of its adherents, largely as a result of the unsettled nature of events in general, which understandably affected everyone.

b. That mysticism must be viewed as one of the twin mainstreams of Judaism, the other being Halakhic Judaism. *Example:* Both trends were embodied in the single person of Rabbi Joseph Caro, who, during the 16th century, compiled a Code of Jewish Law in the daytime and kabbalistic works at night. Professor Gershon Scholem,³ the great student of Jewish mysticism, has established, through a lifetime of careful research, that messianic trends in Judaism are not to be regarded as historical aberrations but as a normative phenomenon of Jewish life.

c. That messianic movements constitute an integral part of the Jewish experience. Six *illustrations* drawn from the annals of

Jewish history make this point abundantly clear:

1. The Essenes (2nd century BCE—68 CE) evolved a parochial and exclusive vision of the future. "The Essenes believed," writes Professor David Flusser, "in three stages of salvation: the first is the preordained election, the second when grace begins to function at the moment when the elect entered the community, and the third is the eschatological redemption in the future with its reward for the elect. It is more than probable that early Christian trends . . . were deeply influenced by Essene ideas."⁴

2. Second century Bar Kochba, pursuing Jewish independence in spite of overwhelming Roman odds, was certain that divine guidance would assure the success of his revolution and hasten the advent of the messianic age.

3. Seventeenth century Sabbatean movement proclaiming the messiahhood of Shabbatai Zvi.

4. Eighteenth century Israel Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Hassidic movement, avowing the hastening of the millenium through contemplation and ecstasy. The teachings of the master supplanted the Halakhic instruction of the rabbis.

5. Nineteenth century German Reform, seeking salvation through emancipation and civil equality, with creedal reform serving as catalyst.

6. Twentieth century secular Zionists professing redemption through Statehood. It must be emphasized that each of these movements arose from *within* Jewish life, sharing a common bond of messianic aspiration.

d. That messianic movements offer an escape from freedom *Example:* Each of the groups cited above possessed highly specific creeds and attitudinal postures. They were frequently at odds with rabbinic Judaism, from which they developed. Appropriate

⁴ David Flusser, "Salvation Present and Future," in A. Zivion, ed., *Hanazrut Ha-Kidumah*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1972, p. 56.

biographical works give additional information regarding the present condition of mysticism as an operative force in the Jewish community.

Channeling Jewish Spiritual Energies

In sum, the task before us is to learn *how* to *harness* the powerful forces inherent in Jewish messianic trends, and, thereby, reinvigorate our people with the vitality. At the same time, the proper structure within the Jewish community must be sought so that the spiritual yearnings of our adolescents can be developed and applied *creatively* for the benefit of all. As proven by history, left unchecked, Jewish mysticism, always a potent force, becomes potentially harmful, particularly when squandered on anti-Jewish enterprises, the cults, as is the case today.

A vigorous initiative should be undertaken without delay to meet this challenge. Jewish symbolic language and symbolism must be revitalized through Center retreat programs, entitling every Jewish teen, at community expense, to share a Shabbat on

a regular basis with rabbis and youth workers trained in the art of stirring Jewish souls. Preventative interagency planning should be designed to stimulate a new appreciation of an adolescent's Jewish self-worth. The notation that one must look elsewhere, beyond the Jewish community, for spiritual fulfillment must be dispelled.

Risks

By acknowledging the reality of Jewish messianism and by acting to channel it for Jewish-creative purposes, we stand to benefit immeasurably as Jewish individuals and as people. The risk involved in bridging what one deprogrammed Moonie has termed the "spiritual abyss" is significant. Nevertheless, it is a risk we must confront with zeal and with a renewed sense of concern for the spiritual aspirations of our young people. The time has come to re-evaluate our priorities in the treatment of cult-related issues by addressing this all-important concern in a comprehensive, interdisciplinary fashion.

³ Erich Fromm's work by the same title should be consulted.