

**CHANCELLOR ARNOLD EISEN'S ADDRESS
TO THE JEWISH EDUCATORS ASSEMBLY
With Questions and Answers**

January 29, 2008

Transcribed from a recording by JTS

CHANCELLOR: Reading is never unambiguous; for example, familiar to all of you I assume. It says that we are to hear. God is there so we can hear God's call, Kuf (phonetic sp.) val (phonetic sp.) lamet (phonetic sp.), God's voice. Then the text takes exquisite care to use the word call in the sense of the funders (phonetic sp.) that go with the brokeem (phonetic sp.), that go with the lightnings, and the very same verse, which comes back to the idea of listening to God's call uses call in the sense of the voice of the shofar, which is waxing louder and louder at Sinai. Hence, the problem the evil commentators had throughout the centuries in understanding whether the call that Moses heard was some kind of special voice of God, and if it was, what does that mean? Because God does not have vocal chords according to (Indiscernible) of God. Or if it wasn't God's voice, was it perhaps the shofar? Was it the funders? What exactly did Moses hear? And then how much more so was it the people down at the bottom of the mountain here?

You can't escape all sorts of ambiguities that are built into this so-called revelation where the point is that nothing can be revealed in the sense of seeing. And even what is revealed in the sense of heard is subject to this kind of ambiguity. The text requires interpretation. The text, you might say, jumping ahead of ourselves, requires an interpretive community. Now let's jump ahead one more step and find ourselves at this week's portion and perhaps my very favorite moment in the chorus came when after we had gone through some torah, daveem (phonetic sp.) and tuveem (phonetic sp.). We had looked at second temple literature. It was apocalyptic and (Indiscernible), and then you come to the revik (phonetic sp.) period. And you're trying to get the students enthrol (phonetic sp.) who are trying to understand what this particular tradition is and how it treats its particular scripture. Try to get them to a sense of what rabbinic Judaism is about, expose them to somebody's rashaventog (phonetic sp.), expose them to some gosh halaha (phonetic sp.). And then my favorite, you come to interpretation given an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and imagine the students' shock when this clear, forthright statement of what parshmit (phonetic sp.) is supposed to be. Not only clear and forthright but used as part of the contrast, age-old contrast between Christianity and Judaism, this religion of justice, even vengeance and law versus the religion of law. It turns out that the rabbis interpreted an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, not the literal way at all, of course but to mean monetary compensation.

So the midterm exam asks the students to follow rabbinic passage with the rabbis site three parts of the torah that they use to prove that eye for eye, tooth for a tooth means financial compensation and not literal damages, and the students' assignment is to prove that it does mean eye for eye, tooth for a tooth literally and also that it does not mean eye for eye, tooth for a tooth. And then if they can do this, then they have successfully entered into what I think the rabbinic enterprise is about, to reasoning from this scripture and particular from its law, which is an essential, essential piece of this scripture and our tradition and certain conservative Judaism to reason from law. It's a necessity of interpreting law and (Indiscernible) the particulars of law to change in times and circumstances.

And so you get from this coming reesh (phonetic sp.) parsha (phonetic sp.), meesh (phonetic sp.) pateem (phonetic sp.), which not by coincidence given the architecture of the torah, which always follows the principles of torah. So we have to get from Sinai to meesh pateem, you might say, rather directly, and following (Indiscernible) meesh pateem where you

get these essential principles applied immediately to concrete law stipulations. Then you have to interpret these stipulations for coming generations.

Alright. Let's say (Indiscernible) that what applies to an introduction to Judaism classes at Stanford University where the population consists of some Jews and many non Jews, applies (Indiscernible) to any course in Judaism meant for Jews of teenage years and above, and older, and calbahomer (phonetic sp.), a double calbahomer certainly applies to conservative Judaism where, if I could put it this way, the essence of what we do, the very essence of what we do is to insist on close knowledge of our tradition. It's text, and it's history. In depth, with the complexities intact, with the history of that interpretation and historical awareness about how this interpretation has changed over the centuries, and to take this in-depth knowledge of tradition and as cleaving to torah, this holy torah close, and take it into the time and culture, the culture in society in which we're determined to be full participants. And if we're going to do that with any confidence that we're going to carry this tradition forward and not one of our own invention, we better know this tradition thoroughly and in depth.

So the question is what is required to do that? How does one do that? And these are kind of elements of a conservative philosophy of education, and I want to dwell on those for some minutes and then talk at the end of my time allotted in the question/answer period about the more toughest matters of how we take this forward, and particularly what JTS's role can be.

So let's begin at what I think is the very beginning of any Jewish enterprise in this day and age, which is to build and maintain Jewish communities, strong Jewish communities, face-to-face Jewish communities, places of trust, places where the plausibility of our claims is present rather than absent or flimsy as it is in a larger society. The plausibility of Jewish claims is flimsy because we are two percent of the larger population, and the images and ideas and commitments and enticements that bombard us for morning to night every single day are largely not taken from Jewish storehouses and are either neutral as regarded to Jewish commitments or in many cases hostile to those commitments. But whether neutral or hostile, they, by definition, trivialize them because they are not ours, and we constitute a very small portion of the time and space and mental time and space in which we will live. And so our first task, if we're going to do anything as far as keeping Jews Jewish, certainly Jewish education is to build and maintain smaller communities.

Now the reason for this is given in the torah portion. I mean just -- I don't know whether the way I'm about to present this is foreign to you, and if so, please ask me and come back to it in the question period. But if you come at this with anything like the sociological or political eye, as well as what we might call the religious eye, and the torah insists, I believe, that you look at it with all these different eyes. You look at Exodus, Chapter 19, and you look at the covenant ceremony, you realize something fundamental has happened here in Exodus, Chapter 19, which determines the shape of Judaism and of Jewish history forever after and certainly mandates action on our part today. And what happens there is that God does not create a religion at Mt. Sinai. That there is a relationship among the people of Israel. There is a covenant among the people of Israel, which created simultaneously with the relationship between this people in all aspects of its being for more than religion, we might say, with God, with the transcender (phonetic sp.), with (Indiscernible). And the two covenants are simultaneous, which means that unlike other religions in the world, we are not set up as an association of believers. There's much more here than that. This people has a narrative. We, as it were, have to go through this narrative again and again every time we make our way to Sinai to identify with this people, identify with their ancestors, identify with their history, make this story ours so we're prepared to take this story on as ours.

This narrative, this common experience, this experience of slavery and liberation from slavery is the story that we bring with us as we stand at Sinai, whether we are the Israelites from long ago or us today. And then the consummation of the being of people together comes

when now we share a past, but we share this future direction, this sense of what we are here to do in the world together.

So God says in what to me is a key verse in the history of Judaism inside this historianist (phonetic sp.) new Judaism when God explains to Moses why am I doing this. Why am I coming down to Sinai to give these words to people, which I promised you at the burning bush I was going to do? Laman (phonetic sp.) yamina (phonetic sp.) bahal (phonetic sp.) deloma (phonetic sp.). God does not say so that they will believe in me forever. Imagine the purpose of the revelation is not so the people will believe in God. it doesn't say laman yamina ubee (phonetic sp.). It's to establish the authority of Moses. And, therefore, what is yamina busabee (phonetic sp.)? What does it mean to believe in Moses? Does it mean believe in the sense that we talk about belief, faith? Well, Moses is a human being standing before them. His skills as a leader have already been proven many times over. He's just established himself at the peak of a hierarchy of authority thanks to his father-in-law. The authority of Moses is what's established, and when God speaks with Moses, the Israelites will know that God is speaking with Moses. They will probably not hear God speaking with Moses in a clear and distinct way, but they will know that God is there. And they will know that Moses is authoritative, and they will know that this law that Moses sets up at the basis for our community is authoritative. So the point here is a community is created here. The Jewish people is created here as a community bound together, not only by the narrative that we tell ourselves, one another, that we carry forward but the fact that we're bound communal norms and if these communal norms are going to guide us as we go forth into the future.

Jump ahead to America, the most individualist society that's ever existed on the face of the globe, the most individualist society that exists on the face of the globe; Jews and our achievements; a place, which if it were a more communal society might not have the room for Jews, but it has. And the same individualisms, the same mobility, the fact that we're moving all the time, that we're shifting commitments all the time threatens the creation of community, the maintenance of community, and therefore, the creation of community, the maintenance of community is all the more important; educational enterprise.

You know if you are a parent or a teacher or a rabbi or any kind of leader, any kind of teacher that when you have a community of people who trust one another and have relationships with one another outside the synagogue or outside the classroom, what you do here together will be infinitely more powerful and successful. I knew as a faculty member at Stanford automatically that any class meeting I had in my living room would be many times better than any class meeting I had in the classroom at the university, especially if they share pizza before hand. Seriously. Meals are a great source of community building, that's why every tradition, including ours, engages in them.

So we have to figure out then what does it mean? And I'll come back to this. What does it mean to create community in our schools? I think day schools have an easier job. Synagogue schools have a harder job for reasons we can talk about, but synagogue schools are not schools that are the (Indiscernible), the vehicle of a community, that serve a community, that express the values of a community. I would argue those schools are doomed to failure no matter how many days a week they're going to meet.

Number two, torah. Community (Indiscernible) for the sake of community. And as shocking as it may be to say this in this day and age, Jews do not exist for the sake of having Jews. It was Charles Leebman (phonetic sp.) who said years ago, survival for the sake of survival does not need to survive. We're here because we stood for something, because we had work to do. We accomplish this work tangibly in the world. We have what I call a wonderful project on the grounds in the land of Israel. We have other projects on the ground throughout the world in a much less visible sense, a much less distinct sense, but they're there nonetheless. And we're here today because we stood for these things, because we have this story that's taking us somewhere.

The narrative doesn't just have a past. It has a future. It has a destination. And if torah, an authentic, continuous enterprise, which is kept alive by change but change in such a way that it really does carry on what we had previously and not imagine something new of your own free agent. This torah has got to be the center of what we do. That means history as well as text. That means criticism as well as commitment. That means the dirty affirmed as a good thing even though there are pieces of this modern culture that we don't like and probably cannot like if we're going to be authentic carriers of our tradition. But nonetheless, I think it's fundamental to conservative Judaism, certainly to me and I hope you, that we're not stuck, we're not caught in some time and space which are so alien as to the evil and something you have to just get through and keep yourself apart from as much as possible. No. The balancing act, which is conservative Judaism I think, demands what most American Jews authentically would affirm, which is that we're happy to be alive at this time and space, not just because of indoor plumbing and birth control and all sorts of other things that make my life a blessing and the span of life beyond the 30 or 40 years that it was for most of our ancestors, into the 70's and 80's as it is for most of our countries now, but because there are spiritual goods, which modernity has made possible. And I think if you are a woman, it's undeniable. But if you're a man, too, it's also undeniable if there are spiritual goods that came about as a result of this modern period, which we should affirm, and therefore, our job is not to keep ourselves aloof from it and safeguarded from it. Our job is to figure out how we blend to the degree possible. There always will be tension but how we integrate to the degree possible, this modern surrounding and the commitments of our tradition.

Well, that means now we have two key ingredients. We have community. We have torah. You might call torah tradition, torah in the broad sense. Not only the history of the text we've written but the history of the lives we've led, and these two together form what I call covenant for the simple reading, which I think some shots reading of Exodus 19 like the one I just offered. You don't have covenant without community. We don't have covenant without torah, without hispa (phonetic sp.), without norbs (phonetic sp.). So both of these are built into the structure of the tradition, and we dare not abandon these because if we abandon either one of these or abandon the combination of them, we are faults to the heritage that we want to carry forward tonight. Those are the two most important principles, community and torah.

Another question is how do we do this? What does it mean? Alright. So let's just postulate that before the Mayan period, education was largely carried on by experience. Education was largely carried on because you lived in a Jewish time and space. You lived in a Jewish reality. It got you, and the problem was not finding some Judaism. The problem was that there was so much of it, you might have wanted to escape from some of it or change it because it had you in its grip, and it was very tightly held. It held you. You held it. That was the way it was. And now, it's not there, as we all know, which is why education, as I said before, is more necessary and also more difficult.

If reality is the prime educator, yeah, it's important what you learn (Indiscernible), but it's less important if there is no reality around. And that Jewish classroom is a little more difficult because it's not sustained by the reality outside the classroom. hence, the need to make sure to the degree you can that reality is going to be Jewish.

So if one images Jewish education as a system, we would like to see, I think, a lifelong burning that starts with age-appropriate education in preschool and then goes all the way through, which means there are going to have to be multiple sites of learning corresponding to the multiple places literally and figuratively where Jews are. It seems to me that if we leave aside preschool for a moment, leave aside urashalvin (phonetic sp.) for a moment. We've got three major places where education is happening for our pre-college kids, and the important thing to do now is to do each of them better but also to figure out how to relate the three of them.

It happens that the Davidson School at JTS has three tracks, which correspond

to these three areas. It doesn't just happen. We had a school that was created at a certain time with Jewish reality in mind, and so these three tracks of course correspond to these three areas; congregational schools, day schools, and camps. And the community advantages of day schools or camps are apparent because they've got more reality on their side. The camps are seven days a week, 24 hours a day for a certain number of weeks, and the camps have hopefully cool role models who are engaging and Jewishly committed who can turn younger kids on, again, by the force of reality, by the force of their example combined with this total experience where you're surrounded by Jewish time and space, images, etc.

Day schools get not just more hours of the kids' time, but they have the advantage that a day school filters the rest of reality through this Jewish reality, so the chemistry and soccer and Abraham Lincoln and Shakespeare come into the American Jewish child through an experience, a reality, which is Jewish rather than as the counter example, which the congregational school must contend with. Having day schools be out there alongside public schools, and the public schools, the public schools, the gentile time and space, the non-Jewish time and space. The public, which as we all know is overwhelmingly a Christian public, even though the public schools are secular institutions, but the public schools are going to give you chemistry and Shakespeare. They're going to give you sports. And the notion is okay. That's reality. And if we're going to get the Jewish stuff, that's also the side on the optional side where religion is in a country, which has freedom of religion.

So Judaism is religion on the side a few hours a week competing with soccer and piano lessons and all the other optional features of life. That message is powerful. That message has to be contended with, and therefore, congregational schools have a set of challenges, which are different from day schools even though I think one of our tests is to make sure there are teachers and our leadership and our curriculum are much more tightly integrated among the three. But day schools have to work, as it were, less hard than congregational schools to make sure that the congregational schools aren't communities because they have to compensate for so much more. So how do you have a congregational school be a community? You've got to make sure your parents are on board. I say you've got to as if it's easy as pie to make the parents on board when they're dropping the kids off for a couple hours a week and not living a life in conformity with what the kids are being taught.

I know this is hard, but there are some things we can control to the degree we have access to a qualified pool of teachers or can control those teachers. And here we get to complicated things that I'm going to come back to in a moment, but I believe with Isa (phonetic sp.) Aaron and her team in the spurring of congregational education. That we are not there primarily in any Jewish school and certainly not a congregational school to impart information and skills. The information and the skills are vehicles to the two tasks, which Isa calls socialization and acculturation. That is the socialization piece. We are there to make children feel part of a community. And acculturation, we are there to make them participants in the conversation of this community. Ultimately, the conversation that began at Sinai. Learned participants in the congregate conversation that began at Sinai. You can't do that if you lack all the text and skills, but we've got to find the balance right that the point is not to teach text and skills. The point is not primarily to teach text and skills. that means that there are qualifications for teachers, which go beyond their command of the text and the skills. And unless anyone doubt what I'm talking about, I'm making a controversial point that knowledge in Hebrew should not be a sufficient qualification for teaching in what's called a Hebrew school.

One has to be committed to the values of the school in order to teach in the school. If one doesn't have enough trained teachers, then one has to make the difficult decision of maybe lay people who are trains who share the values of the community as a net gain over people who have more training but less commitment to the values of the community. That's a hard one, but that's one I urge us to wrestle with.

College education (Indiscernible) other vehicles. Teen education. If we don't

have the kids in a day school and sort (Indiscernible) every wide high schools. High-quality courses are hard. The kids are exhausted. I'm the parent of someone who is a freshman in college. Believe me, I've just been through Hebrew High. I know the difficulties in maintaining a good Hebrew High. I held starbwon (phonetic sp.) from Paulo Alto and then quickly fell from the kind of courses I wanted to have on moretic (phonetic sp.) akleem (phonetic sp.) to Jewish cooking, Jewish humor, etc., etc. because you have to entice the kids out.

My Hebrew High School education, perhaps college, did have a precious thing going for it aside from high-quality teachers. I went to an all-boys high school. Central High grats (phonetic sp.) had girls. This was a wonderful asset. and Hebrew High in the evenings has that asset also. It's a great place to meet kids, and that's the primary reason they're there. It's not a bad thing sustaining the Jewish community. But the mix between high-quality and pop education is a hard one to find.

And finally, I think we know how to adult Jewish education. I think we've proven there's a hunger for high-quality adult Jewish education. The key is to reach more adults with it in more settings, and I think JTS has the responsibility in that regard and will take action to implement our responsibility. Let's use our resources better to provide means to educate conservative Jews, adult American Jews around the country.

So alright. I just want to say about five or six more on principles, which I'll enunciate in more brevity. So this is really filling in the details of what I said already. Hebrew. We've really got a problem here, and we can't avoid it. I don't see any Jewish continuity without the Jewish language. I think every anthropologist and sociologist and historian is on my side in this regard. There is no culture that perpetuates itself without its language. We are a glument (phonetic sp.) that is strongly committed to Hebrew. Most Americans are basically provincial. I was astonished to meet the number of Jews who live a mile from the border of Mexico who do not speak Spanish. I think there's a reason why they don't speak Spanish living a mile from the border of Mexico. It's a found identity thing going on. That's of course speculation on that. I say it because I have the same speculation in regard to American Jews. I think many of our Jews do not want to be too Jewish. That's why they don't go to Israel. Only 40 percent or so of adult American Jews have been to Israel even once. That's why they keep Israel at a safe distance.

The latest polls are are you a Zionist? The answer that says yes I'm a Zionist is a low 20 percent. Do you care deeply about or are you deeply attached to the state of Israel? The percentage that says yes is about 27 percent. There's a self-distancing on the part of Jews. This is all speculation. One cannot prove this, but the same thing is perhaps operating with Hebrew, plus the fact that you don't need it. And you might take Chinese if you're very far-sighted because if you're going to operate in this world the next half century, you're going to need Chinese. Spanish, very, very useful. French a little less so now a days than it was before but great literature, great culture. Hebrew less so. You can get credit for this Hebrew. A small minority take advantage of it, and we conservative Jews are committed to Hebrew.

And our synagogue services are and have been remained distinguish by a presence of Hebrew that's going to turn off some people. We can do things to make them welcome, to have them become literate, but still, a service which is in English is going to attract some people, not just because it's more familiar but because it is in English. After all, this was the reasons that (Indiscernible) Frankle (phonetic sp.) left the former rabbinical conference of 1840's. Hebrew was the issue of which he walked out and founded conservative Judaism, and he did it not because he believed God doesn't speak English or German or French or because you couldn't pray in vernacular and he thought you could but because he wanted to maintain the Jewish people and it needed its language, which was Hebrew.

So we have an investment, I think, greater than the other movements (Indiscernible) in making sure that we can teach Hebrew in the most sophisticated ways possible, and it is a lot of technology on this. And JTS is pioneered as you may know in early

childhood programs in Hebrew and Hebrew emerging from three-year-olds, and it's very successful. And there are programs afoot to teach Hebrew to all age groups, which are proven to be much more successful than other programs, but we can't drop it.

Number two, long (Indiscernible). Here's a harder one. Honesty. Honesty. And this is harder maybe even than Hebrew. Hoover put it well. Hoover said, "What no other voice in the world can teach us with such simple power and the Bible does is that there is truth and there are lies, and a human life cannot persist (Indiscernible) safe in the decision on behalf of truth and against lies. There is right, and there is wrong. And the salvation of man depends on choosing what is right and rejecting what is wrong, and it dispels the destruction of our existence to divide our life up into areas where discrimination between truth and lies, right and wrong holds and others where it does not."

And this is no orthodox Jew speaking here, not even a conservative Jew. And I think Hoover was absolutely right, and it's a very anti, postmodern claim. There is right with a capital R. There is wrong with a capital W, and our tradition stands are polus (phonetic sp.) and the conviction that there is right and there is wrong. It's not just a matter of language, games, and opinion.

Allen Bloomshore (phonetic sp.) and his popular book, a controversial book, The Closing of the American Mind, years ago what I think is undeniably true, that our students profess to be culture relativists and moral relativists. Our universities, in a sense, inculcate moral relativism and yet I don't think our students or our faculty believe it. What do I mean? If you ask them, they will say there's no right and wrong with a capital R and a capital W. That's just a matter of opinion.

I had a student a (Indiscernible) school that I visited this year have exactly this argument with me. He was saying there is no right and wrong. it's just my opinion. And even though you and I might agree that murder is wrong, that's just our opinion. And I said, "No, it's not a matter of opinion. There is right, and there is wrong. Murder is wrong." And he said, "Yes. I think so, too. But that's your opinion." I'm sorry. I can't prove it, but I know it's true. I'll stake my life on the fact that it's true. I'm doing that. So are you.

And I think Hoover is right. You can't divide a plate into areas where right and wrong pulls and areas where it doesn't. That means that teachers in Jewish settings have to stand for more than the conveying of facts, information. Students get this from the media all the time. Not only do they know that the so-called facts are never really facts, but they're subject to a variety of a multitude of facts and information. They want people to tell them what's true, and more importantly, they believe that some things are true. When they fight against genocide and darfor (phonetic sp.) or come to vigils against a rape on campus, they're not just expressing personal or collective opinion. They believe that genocide and murder and rape are wrong with a capital W, and they need a teacher in a Jewish setting to stand up and say this and stand for what he or she says. That person, in other words, has to be a total person and not just a voice that's reading the text book aloud from the front of the class, as it were.

That makes the criteria for teaching harder. I know we have a shortage of Jewish educators in the United States, and here's a Chancellor of JTS saying alright. It's not enough to know the facts and information. the person has to be a mech (phonetic sp.). Yes. I'm afraid so. The person has to be a Jewish mech. The person has to believe there's ultimate value in the survival and transmission of this tradition and the living of this torah. The person must believe that there is right and there is wrong and must embody this in the teaching. We know that nobody is perfect. There are no saints, certainly not me. I think students are wise enough. They have a lot of siblings. They have families. They know that there's not a lot of sainthood around. They're not demanding sainthood, but they have a right to demand personal commitment, integrity, honesty from everyone that stands up in front of them in a Jewish classroom. Because if not, what else distinguishes the Jewish educational studies from all the other educational studies that they've been exposed to? This is very difficult. I don't think we

can get around it.

Third, again. I'm on the H's now. Hyphenated identity. Hebrew, honesty, hyphenated identity. I think that (Indiscernible) Kaplan (phonetic sp.) was onto something profound when in The Future of the American Jew, which came out 60 years ago he said we have to educate American Jews for democracy. What did he mean by this? He meant that ordinarily as a minority tradition with very few hours in the week at our disposal, we figure the kids are going to get enough of America elsewhere. We're going to focus on the Jew. But what we don't give them by and large except by example is that knowledge of how to live a hyphenated identity, and that's the most important thing we can give them of all. They're not Jews in a Jewish environment. They're Jews in a non-Jewish environment, and we struggle as adults to put together the pieces but don't find any coherent way of passing on what it needs to put together the pieces. They're supposed to pick it up by osmosis. And let's be honest and say this is an experiment. Heshel (phonetic sp.), in his address to the Vengurian's (phonetic sp.) Archeological Conference in 1957 said, "Modern Judaism is an experiment. This experiment may fail." For many American Jews, it fails because they do not succeed in any kind of synthesis. They give up on one side or the other, and we are determined to hold onto both. And therefore, we have to educate not just the Jew in the child or the adult or the adolescent but all of the person, and that means hyphenated identity.

As conservative Judaism, I think we are called more than any other movement to emphasize this because of who we are, and it's difficult. And again, we have no choice. But I think we have a history of doing it, and that just means applying that history, making it systematic, articulate, and putting that forward.

And finally, I want to say one more word. This is not an H but an I, and that's of course Israel. We don't know what to do with Israel in the American Jewish community. I say this declaratively, simply. I stipulate it. We do not know what to do with Israel. If we did, it would just be a matter of persuading people to do it. When the second (Indiscernible) broke out, as you probably know, the sulknute (phonetic sp.) sponsored what they called environmental scam of Jewish educational diaspora to determine the place of Israel in American Jewish curricula at all ages. They found the place of Israel in American Jewish curricula was marginal wherever it was not absent entirely.

Sometimes, but not always, you'll noxmute (phonetic sp.). Falafel, you know, hummus. Sometimes a little bit of knowledge of the public relations problems that Israel faces. History of Zionism, almost not a goal. History of the state, almost not a goal. Wrestling with the reality of what are we supposed to do with the diaspora, too difficult. So yeah, (Indiscernible) yes, but dealing with a real state, a real place with real problems, a parallel track but different from us in taking this tradition and carrying it forward into another generation, very, very difficult.

Well, along with my other challenges for conservative Judaism, I have to add this one that we are the movement that has always cared about Jewish people, as I said. We are over-represented, heavily so in all sorts of Jewish communal organizations. And I (Indiscernible) that sometimes it's held up to us as a liability because our most people to people have migrated from the conservative fold to serve the larger Jewish people. It is true that we've lost a bit of talent in the moving because of this. The gains of the Jewish people has been immense. Just look at the contribution to Israel made by Oleen (phonetic sp.) or conservative (Indiscernible) teachers. Just look at the federation movement and see how heavily overrepresented Jews are. Go down the list of Hebrew colleges in the United States and look at the leadership and faculty and curricula and look at how overrepresented conservative Jews are in these schools. I could go on. The Jewish studies profession as a whole.

We are a group that is privileged and burdened with the gift of having klagagus (phonetic sp.) voril (phonetic sp.) as a major piece of who we are. And that means this movement has to cultivate relationships with Israel, that orthodoxy is doing better than anybody else right now, but doing it in a particular way, which even some orthodox Jews are bothered by

because religious closeness tends to go along with political affiliations right now, but the akeeva (phonetic sp.) is not just a youth group. It's a political movement, and I would be happier if a movement, including mine, did not identify closeness to Israel with a particular political stance, even if that political stance was mine. I think that closeness to Israel should not be political. It should expose you to the conversation; make you an insider to that community and its conversation, as well as to America.

So among the challenges, which we have to figure out in the next few years, is the challenge of what to do with Israel in our curricula. What are we going to sacrifice in order to Israel? How can we do Israel at the same time as we teach other things we need to teach and not just Hebrew language?

Well, I want to say one more word about the movement, and then I will stop and turn it over to your questions. This movement needs all of us right now. Some of you have already heard on more than one occasion my stump speech about conservative Judaism. Forgive me if you've heard it before. You can go to synagogues in the United States, like I was in Houston at (Indiscernible). They were astonished that the conservative movement is losing numbers, because they in Houston are absolutely booming. Their synagogue is adding several hundred young families. And then I was Park Avenue Synagogue in New York last weekend, and they are booming. And I was at temple. This was in (Indiscernible) three weeks ago, and they are booming. And there are conservative congregations all over the country, including Chicago, which are booming. And there are conservative day schools and afternoon schools even, which are booming, and there are conservative camps, which have long waiting lists. Rama (phonetic sp.) camps with long waiting lists and have to turn away potential campers.

This is not a movement in failure. The only sench (phonetic sp.) in which this movement has declined is that yes, our numbers have declined. It's hard to figure out how much. It may be a couple hundred thousand people even. We can't be sure. And our population is aging. These are the reforming orthodox. True. But you have to think about why this is happening, and is it defections from this movement to others? It is in some cases, and you want to figure out why. But it's largely not defectious (phonetic sp.). It is in fact demographic shifts from towns and cities where conservative institutions were strong but where the economy has dried up and people are leaving, and it means a shift from certain areas of the country, such as the midwest, where conservative Judaism is relatively strong, to parts of the country, like the south and southwest, where we are relatively weak.

But this does not mean decline. This does not mean failure, and you don't respond to the fall in numbers by circling the wagons or by sitting around with your arms folded. You respond by standing up with a kind of creativity and excellence, which will draw people to your institutions. And this involves not just techniques of all sorts of which you are much more skilled and expert in than I am. How do you improve a curricula for a particular age group in a particular school? How do you attract better teachers, etc., etc.? But this involves a package of visible excellence and a message. And I want us to talk about message because I think this is where I can play a useful role. What is it that we stand for? How do we get across the message that we're not here because we don't want to be as religious as the people who are orthodox? Wrong. And we're not here because we believe if we were really Jewish enough, if we didn't want to compromise with America, we'd be orthodox. Wrong again.

We're here because we believe this is the most authentic and effective way to carry forward this tradition. At our best, we are doing exactly what we think the torah and the rabbis wanted us to do, which is to carry forward this tradition into every time and space, integrate the best of that time and space with Judaism and, therefore, make this tradition thrive and grow.

Now we all need to stand up proudly and get others to stand up proudly as conservative Jews in this sense and identify conservative Jews, not only with this or that institution but with a path or a set of paths that I'm now calling conservative Judaism. This is

what we stand for. And when I had the chance to do one initiative in the conservative movement this year, I decided to focus on mitzvah because I am shaped by this torah. And I do believe that the center of this torah is the portion that we read in shul dispashamat (phonetic sp.) and its translation into light that we are covenant people. We are here to build communities. We are here to do (Indiscernible) in the world, and certainly conservative Judaism has to stand for mitzvah. But you'd also have to recognize diversity, and that's why I wanted Jews talking to one another about mitzvah and trying to figure out in small groups, communities, what mitzvah means to them.

So as you may know, in seven or eight pilot congregations around the country this year, we're having intense discussions facilitated by JTS with curricula supplied by JTS for the members of those synagogues who want to to engage in discussion with one another about mitzvah. If this works, and I think it's going well so far, we are going to have a movement wide discussion available to every synagogue starting next year sometime and to every arm of the movement. And this is why I'm here to talk to you about this. I'm hoping that rama camps with whom JTS has a connection will engage our young people in discussion of mitzvah in this way. Talk to each other about what do you feel commanded by and obligated by and responsible for and engaged by and in love with in Judaism? Talk about the so-called ritual mitzvah. Talk about mitzvah's house of the world like darfor (phonetic sp.) or Israel or whatever. Talk about you and mitzvah.

I'm hoping that our U.S.-wide groups will do this. I'm in touch with our metz (phonetic sp.) clubs. I'm in touch with our women's leagues. I'm in touch with the United Synagogue, and I want to be in touch with you. And I would love to have some day schools and some congregational schools and a group of you over the next year, in liaison with JTS, planning a way of doing this that is right for you and your schools so that the entire conservative movement, taking in as many age groups as possible, can be united by a discussion, a discussion; not a set of lectures but a discussion about a key issue, which concerns us all, the issue of mitzvah, what it is we're obligated, responsible for, commanded to do together in this world.

My ambition is that conservative Judaism will thereby be strengthened as a movement, that many conservative communities will be strengthened as communities, and that we will be able to see for ourselves how precious it is for us to be a part of these communities and to be part of this movement we call conservative Judaism. Thank you very much.
[applause]

FEMALE: Thank you very much chancellor. I know that many of you have questions. You gave us a lot to think about. Much of it wasn't new to us, but hearing it from you in the way you articulated it, I think really motivates us to reach an even higher madrega (phonetic sp.). We want to work together, and we want to have time for some questions. If you have a question, please stand up and then we'll try to answer as many questions as possible. Rashel (phonetic sp.).

RASHEL: Chancellor, first I would like to thank you very much for your leadership and coming to address us here. I think that's wonderful. [applause] I also like the fact that you tell it like it is, and it's not a lot of hype. My question is a very specific one. You talked about distinguishing the conservative movement in an affirmative way. Could you please distinguish when you talk about future orientation between the Christian faith community as it stands, which is very powerful, especially politically in this country, and the conservative movement and its narrative and its future direction.

CHANCELLOR: First lesson in intro to Judaism, which was religious studies 23 at Stanford, which I taught for many years, is that this thing called Judaism is very complicated. And the minute you get into it a little bit and you have to break it down into adjectives in front of this Judaism and the same thing with Christianity, of course. So I'm (Indiscernible) down Catholicism and Protestantism and I break down the process, etc., etc. So it's very, very

difficult. And it's much easier to destroy dichotomies than to resurrect them.

The very first task we've got where connected to Christianity is to do a complex balancing act of on the one hand judeo (phonetic sp.) Christian tradition. We share a lot different. That's the key I think to our success, our integration in this country. We manage to sell, to write and sell a narrative called the judeo Christian ethic, the judeo Christian tradition, which is now under siege as other religious groups come into America, and we're going to have to get a new narrative. But also they're not us, and it's very important to reject their notion of how they are not us. It's not law versus love. I've said this before. I cannot stress this strongly enough, because I believe on the basis of long education of Jewish and Christian students at places like Stanford that the Christian narrative of law versus love is a live and well in the United States of America and many Jews internalize it and it gets in the way of appreciation of mitzvah.

Now one of the ways that we are going to be distinguished as Jews, as my kind of Jew, from many Christians is that our political narrative is not going to be simple. I actually think that there are certain absolutes that are given us. I think, as does Isaiah in chapter 58, the servant by the rabbis (Indiscernible) before service, I think feeding the poor is absolutely (Indiscernible). The whole thrust of the book of Exodus, it seems to me, is a set of vectors, which lead you in the direction of certain involvement with history and the world.

So not involving with the world is another absolute. We don't go in big for asenesism (phonetic sp.) in this tradition. We don't like withdrawal from the world. We love this world. This world can be good. Quite the mantle for our whole being. But then the torah refrains, it seems to me, from specifics about how you redistribute the wealth and take care of poverty. It doesn't tell you who to vote for in the primaries. It doesn't even tell you who to vote for in the general election. It gives you some indication in terms of commitment, and then you see which party, which candidates are most in keeping with these general commitments, but it doesn't tell you how to translate these programs into such specifics that you know this particular one is yes and this particular one is no. In some cases, it does do that, but in other cases, it doesn't do that.

So as a preliminary answer to your question, we stand for a commitment to certain rights and wrongs. These are absolutes. These are nonnegotiables. There are certain tasks, which have to be done in the world. Genocide must be stopped. Murder, rape, these are death. They are wrong. These are evil and should be stopped, etc., etc. But we are also commanded, I believe, to tolerate those who are different from us in some specifics.

This combination of commitment and tolerance is a self-distinctive. When the rabbis taught that the righteous of the nations of the world had a share in the world to come, I believe what to say, not wearing my kipov (phonetic sp.) or wearing my Stanford professor religious hat, the rabbis did something revolutionary in the history of religion in the world. They had a commitment to modefeism (phonetic sp.), which was combined with a commitment to respect for people who differ from us in their worship of God. Remarkable, and we have to cleave to that. And that is a major difference I think between Jews, almost all Jews, and almost all Christians (Indiscernible).

FEMALE: Danny. When you stand up, please identify yourself.

DANNY: Sure. Danny Kohavy (phonetic sp.) from Westport, Connecticut. Is it any (Indiscernible) within the conservative movement looking at who we are (Indiscernible) within the movement as identified as conservative Jews? And my question would be to you, although you said we've lost a couple of hundred thousand people in the movement. As a young educator, that worries me. My problem is how are we going to redefine ourselves or strengthen ourselves so that we will be able to reacquire those people for the younger people that are coming into the movement and have an identity with the conservative Jew?

CHANCELLOR: Exactly right. You see young families; also mature adults are not choosing ideologically. They're choosing on the basis of experiences. They're choosing on the basis of what they find when they go into a particular synagogue or a particular school or a

particular camp. It's expensive to provide this kind of excellence. There's a shortage of high-quality teachers and educational leaders. It's a shortage of high-quality camps. We don't have enough of them. And sometimes they're not as (Indiscernible). It's just the competing camps. It's a matter of resources. But I'm convinced, not with (Indiscernible) optimisms but I believe on the basis of evidence that if we provide quality, people will come back.

I do not believe that having Hebrew in a service needs to be a turn-off to people who don't have as much Hebrew from childhood as I do. There are ways, proven ways, of making such people feel welcome in a service and giving them a comfort level in a largely Hebrew service. There are ways to make intermarried families feel welcome in a conservative congregation. There are schools which do such a job of excellence that I know from experience that kids don't want to be sick at home because they don't want to miss these schools. Imagine, they really love school so much they don't want to miss a day. They don't want to be home. They beg their parents to let them go anyway. This is not a fairy tale. This is a fact. This happens. This is a function of teaching, and curricula, and leadership, environment, community, etc., etc., all of which in principle we know how to do.

So that's why I said there's a piece of this which is quality, excellence, technique, but there's also a piece of it that's message. And where I think we have really fallen down, where we really have not been clear is what is it that we're trying to do. What do we stand for? And this notion of what is it to be a Jew and why do we have to have this kind of Jew? Why do we have to label? Isn't it enough to just be a Jew? Okay.

The important thing is to be a Jew, not the (Indiscernible) in front of Jew. Yeah. Jewish, Jew, and jee, that's what counts. But when you have certain commitments like the ones I've enumerated, like who care about textual knowledge in depth, you care about Hebrew, you care about Israel, you care about Jewish people, etc., etc., you bought institutions which reflect these commitments and inculcate these commitments, which means you're inevitably going to have these nominations. Because the minute we have one such school in Chicago and it's working really well and I'm living in New York and I'm trying to have such a school in New York, it makes sense for my school in Chicago and my school in New York to get together and partner a little bit, and we're going to have a movement, which is why if the conservative movement were to disappear tomorrow, I, and I hope you, would be spending a lot of evenings trying to develop schools and camps and synagogues, etc., which ends up looking quite similar to the conservative Jewish institutions we have now.

If we don't believe that, then we're lost because the institutions have to be serving us and what we care about and the people who we think we can get to come to them. If the populations exist were in trouble, I think the population does exist.

FEMALE: Paul.

PAUL SNYDER: Paul Snyder, Baltimore. There are certain things that I think we could do very (Indiscernible) as a movement. For example, embracing women's rights. I think we've done a remarkable job with that, but there's an area where I think we're known of which I'm not particularly proud of and that's in the area of shortening things. Over the last 20 years, I think some people see us. We're the movement with the shorter torah reading, the shorter service, the abbreviated mirkata (phonetic sp.) mazone (phonetic sp.), fewer days of school, and I wonder whether you see this as an issue, and in terms of authenticity, whether there's a direction there for us to go.

CHANCELLOR: You know, I was at Park Avenue Synagogue, and my friend, Michael Gailee (phonetic sp.) was giving a talk after lunch. Many of you know Michael Gailee. He's one of the most remarkable teachers we have in the American Jewish community. He works as a scholar in residence for the New York Federation, and Michael, when he raised the fact that the services might be even too long got a standing ovation from out the (Indiscernible). I don't find Jews complaining too often that things are abbreviated. I find them complaining that they're too long. And you may be right that we've got to find a balance.

You see if you're going to shorten something, you inevitably raise the question of why do you have to do it the long way if you can do it the short way. If you can do a hayhof (phonetic sp.) hadusha (phonetic sp.), why should we do a repetition? If we can shorten your katamazone (phonetic sp.) and do it five minutes, why would you ever want to do it in ten minutes? Etc., etc., etc. And the service, as I would say, it's not just a matter of short or long. I'm going to be talking to rabbis and kurogants (phonetic sp.) over the next two years over the entire rhythm of the service in many synagogues (Indiscernible). And what conservative Jews identify most as conservative Judaism is synagogue. That is by the way not true in reform.

When you ask people what is reformed Judaism, they will say it is social action (Indiscernible). It will not be synagogue. It will be social action. When you ask conservative Jews, they will talk about synagogue. Now that means we have some work to do in making much more visible the social action, which we're in fact engaged in, but it's not as visible. But it also means that we've got a job to do, which is greater than the other movements I believe in making sure that the product we offer, if you can call it that, the synagogue service is a much more coherent enterprise. If the rhythm is right, then it makes sense that we're not just wasting time. There's a sense in many synagogues that I've got you for three hours. It's going to be three hours. Okay. So we have endless going up and coming down, endless (Indiscernible), and we're not like focused. And so that would be my counter proposal that we look at what's shortened. And some things that are shortened are too short. And some things that are lengthened are too long.

One more thing about this and I'll stop, just to make the point of community. If you have a community that is bound together by its narrative and a community that knows that its in-depth learning of torah and its conversation about torah is what really counts, then you probably need a 45-minute full krea (phonetic sp.) in that congregation to give people a real in-depth sense of that parsha. And hopefully, you're also going to have some conversation about that. Alright. So then I say to your rabbi and your synagogue ritual committee, okay, so what are you going to cut? If you're going to have a 45-minute torah service, what are you going to cut? And in most places, the answer is nothing, and they're going to have a three-and-a-half-hour service, which is not -- given where the public is, this is non satisfactory. Most orthodox services are not that long. Our problem is serious.

FEMALE: (Indiscernible).

FEMALE: (Indiscernible). If the day school families are (Indiscernible) participation (Indiscernible) English schools (Indiscernible). But in many synagogues, those are the families with children that you see on Shabbat. And we have tried many times (Indiscernible) Shabbat (Indiscernible). And we are starting new ways (Indiscernible).

CHANCELLOR: I think the Chancellor of JTS and JTS, we have two responsibilities in this regard right now. Number one, if we have this wonderful school of Jewish education and it has these tracks in formal education and day school and congregation school. It's our responsibility to integrate them as much as possible. I also think it's our responsibility to get the leadership of the movement. It needs three areas together for serious conversation about how the silos, as we call them, can be brought together. I think that's our responsibility. We can't see an end result of the problem. If we're working together with you, getting this out, talking about this, we can solve the problem.

Now in part, when (Indiscernible) reflex is the widespread sentiment on the part of our kids and our parents a kind of Jewish burnout. Jewish burnout. I'm going to be so Jewish during the week. Let me take the weekend off. And this is a function in turn of going back to this problem; living in a time and space, which are not Jewish. We have this gift called Shabbat and this gift called the (Indiscernible) torah and this gift called mila, nor which are understood by, take a wild guess, 90 percent of our (Indiscernible), 80 percent of our population of American Jews. Let's say 80 percent of our population.

So you're swimming upstream. You're doing counter-culture all the time. And

you're right. It's a problem. But part of that problem is people, that is its lack of beauty, its lack of personal reaching out, its turf issues. It's all the kinds of things you can do something about, and certainly if you're doing the maximum possible job in education, both in the synagogue and in the school when that school is a congregational school or a day school and the camp, you are cultivating a desire for Shabbat, a desire for torah, a desire for mila, a desire for community. It's a tall ambition. I understand. I can't give you any shortcuts, but this is where we are as a movement. This is exactly where we are, and I am convinced and would love you all to be convinced with me that there is no more wonderful time to be a Jew on this earth than right now in the presence of the state of Israel enjoying the blessing we have in the United States of America. And there's no more time of opportunity, no greater time of opportunity to be a conservative Jew right now because of all sorts of cultural developments. I would love to detail for you were there the time, but this is a time when this movement intellectually and spiritually and organizationally is poised to do incredible things. And it's us. This is the joy of the next umpteen years of work. yes, there's work to do. Who doesn't want work to do? Great thing. That's why --

FEMALE: Oh, I'm sorry.

CHANCELLOR: Go ahead. Go ahead. I'm finished.

FEMALE: (Indiscernible) Los Angeles (Indiscernible). (Indiscernible) proudest moment as a conservative Jew (Indiscernible) Shabbat table, Shabbat luncheon, friends, neighbors, family, and it's been very, very wonderful to see. We now learned that our dear friend (Indiscernible) will be moving on into a professional career. And what I would like to know from you a little bit about (Indiscernible). (Indiscernible). It's helpful to get some (Indiscernible) person in the tradition and (Indiscernible) in Jewish education.

CHANCELLOR: The process is that there is a search committee co-chaired by the provost and the senior professor of Jewish education in paralegal, and the search committee includes lay people (Indiscernible) had input from Jewish educators and I hope from JEA. And they are, in the next month or two, going to be narrowed down to a short list of bringing those people to campus. But trust me that your concerns have very much been taken into account in the very definition of the job. We're not to having an ivy tower academic. I'm committed, as you may know, to making JTS a place that is in service. I keep saying to the Jewish community, to the conservative movement, as to the United States and Canada, and we are going to take this notion of service very seriously. In the case of the Davidson School, it means collaborations on the ground with various arms of the conservative movement and various agencies as we have now, and that will continue.

So yes. We want a person who is an academically trained person who can operate in an academic (Indiscernible). The person has to have a PhD because JTS is a research institution, but we are not interested in hiring a researcher in the field of Jewish education who is divorced from the life of Jewish education as they work in the field. So this is a prerequisite of any person we're going to hire, and I think that with the commitments I've announced to the service of the movement of the Jewish people in the United States and Canada, you can be that Davidson School is only going to do more in the coming years of the sorts of things Steve Brown was doing, as Steve, if he had stayed with us, would be doing more.

The possibilities here are endless because the demands are endless. And when you have resources, as we all try to teach our kids. When you have resources, when you have blessings, you have a higher obligation to use them. You don't walk around feeling guilty about your blessings. You know you just have more responsibility to use those blessings, so it's a great school of Jewish education. JTS has some responsibilities. We will exercise them.

FEMALE: Mary (Indiscernible).

MARY: Mary Shafewasser (phonetic sp.) (Indiscernible), New Jersey. I find that some of our students aren't leaving to reform. They're leaving for (Indiscernible). And my question is right now we have (Indiscernible) doing some fabulous, fabulous workshops. When

is the conservative movement going to be coming out with workshops that are effective, are enthusiastic, and that we can prevent or not have to use the (Indiscernible) living legacy?

CHANCELLOR: The general move from conservatism to orthodox as I understand it has three major driving forces. One is Shabbat. There are even shefter (phonetic sp.) schools which can't seem to maintain Shabbat communities. Parents feel obliged to leave them in order to have a Shabbat community. This is a problem. Number two, study. I have just come back, let's say, from a year in Israel or I've been to ramiven (phonetic sp.). I've experienced what it is to study (Indiscernible), and I'm living in city X. And the only place I could find an experience of studying the (Indiscernible) that's this intense and this authentic is in an orthodox setting, and I feel compelled to go there because I can't find it in conservative Judaism, which is, let's say, a shando (phonetic sp.), an (Indiscernible).

And the third thing is fila. But I've had the experience of the temps authentic participatory governing, and my conservative synagogue is large and imposing and the study is rather formal, and I don't find that kind of dobbing (phonetic sp.) there and I have to go to orthodoxy to find it and I do. Again, we don't deserve to keep those kids, those adults, if we can't get them this kind of dobbing in conservatism.

Now your question -- I'm not going to be facetious. In answering your question, you said when is the conservative movement going to do this? The conservative movement, strictly speaking, does not exist in that sense. The conservative movement means cooperation among a number of agencies and individuals. I promise you I'll be doing my best to secure this kind of partnership in years to come so that what you are calling for in fact takes place. When you know there is no one agency or arm of our movement that can do it and there's no one individual like Aragofi (phonetic sp.) who sits atop a pyramid and has everyone else in that movement reporting to him, this does not exist in our movement. It's a strength and a weakness of our movement. There it is so.

So we just have to partner. I said it before and I'll say it again. We could get away with not the partnership at a time when the movement was demographically booming. When you were going to gain members no matter what you did because the demography was in your favor. This is not such a time. So unless we work better together in the next ten years, I don't know, 15 years, then we'll really be in the sort of trouble some people say we're in today.

FEMALE: Barry.

BARRY: Hi. I'm Barry Hoover, (Indiscernible). My question (Indiscernible) questions really have to do with sort of a business model and finances and that everyone at the end of the day (Indiscernible) that whatever we do in our schools, in our conservative schools, can potentially leave us member neutral, lose those members, or gain those members, which always has some financial undertaking (Indiscernible) to survive. And very frequently as someone who (Indiscernible), there's this perception that conservative Judaism, whether it's a perception by us or by the outside (Indiscernible), that it's sort of like we're for sale. We don't get absolute senders that (Indiscernible) all the time and on (Indiscernible) all the time. And it's not about is this (Indiscernible) okay. It's more about how many members is this going to gain us or how many members is this going to cost us in the long run?

And I guess the last of my comment, which the question is really how do we address that? How do we make our own congregations and our own members perceive that our serlude (phonetic sp.) standards that are not up for sale, really is independent. You said it before. We don't deserve to have those kind of converts. We were talking about just (Indiscernible) question. We can't beat those meetings. When are we going to be able to say (Indiscernible)? You know. This is what we are, and it's going to cost us some members. It's going to cost us some members.

CHANCELLOR: Again, not to be facetious. (Indiscernible) the answer to that question is when we don't have mortgages to pay off, and you're right. It comes down to budgets. But I take your point, and this is why I said it's not just a matter of techniques or what I

call structure or even of quality control. It's not just a matter of working better together or providing excellence rather than mediocrity in certain places. It's a matter of what do we stand for and clarifying what do we stand for.

Now some of you may have heard me say, and forgive me, I started with *expan* (phonetic sp.) *nahalaha* (phonetic sp.) because I learned from Heshel (phonetic sp.) there's not a chance in the world of getting people to understand *halaha* (phonetic sp.) unless they understand *mitzvah*. And I believe the way to understand *mitzvah* is not only to start with prescription but to start with the self, and the gift to the self of responsibility and obligation. I think there are many conservative Jews that experience *mitzvah* as an obligation, even if they don't -- as a gift and an obligation, even if they don't live up to it all the time. And I believe they put themselves in a conservative framework and put their kids there because they want them to have this tradition. They want them to have these norms, even if they don't always live up to them. But the fact that they choose to be exposed to these norms time after time means that they want to be reminded of why they should be living up to the source, and they're giving us an opening. They're giving us an educational opening.

So there's no way to convince a board of any institution not to worry about bottom lines. I've been on boards. You've been on boards. We all know this. The thing has to float. The mortgage has to be paid off. Teachers have to be paid. The heat has to be turned on. Okay. But by the same token, you're right. You need to have people on the board, not just the authority figures like the rabbi within the school who say *halaha*. But you need to have Jews on the board who internalize this sense of obligation to *mitzvah* and tradition who are going to speak up on behalf of that on the board, and that lay person is in short supply in many of our conservative institutions. That's right.

But my experience is the glass is not just half empty. The glass is very much half full because there are people like that, and I keep meeting them all the time. It's not just a losing battle. It's a matter of firing people up and drawing from them the most that they are capable of and not letting them get tired and ground down by the *manusha* (phonetic sp.) of the bottom line and the furnace and the roof, etc., etc.

I'm with you. I think this tradition stands for something. I think, as I said to the United Synagogue -- You all -- I have a speech on the web site, the one I gave to the United Synagogue about conservative Judaism, and I invite you all to look at it for the long version of what I think should drive the conservative movement. *Halaha* and *agada* (phonetic sp.) are indispensable pillars, to my mind, non-negotiable pillars of the movement *halaha* and *agada* together. *Halaha* is an educational problem of the first order right now.

Most American Jews are not in a place to understand what *halaha* is. That's why I'm starting with *mitzvah*, and I urge us all to start from the bottom, as it were, with the notion of communally binding obligations and responsibilities. What do we stand for as a group? What norms do we as an individual school want to stand for? How can we make *Shabbat* a norm of this school? How can we make *leelu* (phonetic sp.) *hasadeem* (phonetic sp.) a norm of the school? How are we going to actualize it so that the parent body signs onto it, the student body signs onto it? Then we get into a discussion of how that communally binding norm hooks up with the norms that have been binding the Jews for many centuries. That'll be my educational prescription.

FEMALE: We have time for one further question. Phil.

PHIL: Phil (Indiscernible), Los Angeles (Indiscernible). So we don't have cooking, but we do have (Indiscernible). So in a follow-up from Paul and Barry, Paul mentioned the lessening of things and Barry mentioned making choices having to do with (Indiscernible) and the lessening of things. And you mentioned something about going from three days to two days to one day of Jewish (Indiscernible), which I think is a great concern to many of us. It certainly is to me in a supplemental environment. And at the same time, you mentioned not having just speaking Hebrew as a prerequisite to being a Jewish teacher but something

different. And you told us sort of what you didn't want to see as best practice (Indiscernible) Jewish education. I'd like to hear a little bit about your vision of best practice pedagogy for Jewish education moving into the 21st century.

FEMALE: Now Bill, you realize we have five minutes.

CHANCELLOR: I'm, at this point, very thankful that you only have five minutes left. I actually try to be like Moses, very humble, even though I now have an office that some consider exalted, and I'm not. I'm not an experienced Jewish educator except that I've thought about these things a great deal. I think I have said something of what it takes to raise up a new generation of Jews and Jewish leaders. So in this big picture of stuff, I think I am a Jewish educator, but I have enough respect for the profession to leave the best practices on the level that we generally talk about best practices to those who are. So I'm not going to be issuing that kind of declaration.

But I meant something very simple when I talked about Hebrew, and perhaps this is a good place to wind up, on a positive note. I think that aside from my family and friends, the torah is the greatest gift I have in my life. I realized this when I was turning 40 and doing a lot of (Indiscernible) and trying to figure out what mattered to me. The result was a book called Taking Hold of the Torah, but I realized the Jewish community and the Jewish tradition, especially the five books of Moses, were in this great gift to me.

I'm in this field because I want to share this gift. I feel an obligation to perpetuate it. I think we're necessary to the world. I think it's necessary to keep the voice of God in the world. I think Jews must do this. I think integrity is the key here, as I said before, because there's so much hype and there's so much bad faith and so much (Indiscernible) out there that if I had not have the experience of a series of human beings who stood before me as authentic Jewish individuals and educated me from that, I would not be here today. I think my life would have been much poorer because of it.

I cannot abide people who think they can teach teela (phonetic sp.) who have no teela left. People teach prayer who never pray. The most difficult thing you ask an American Jew today that do, and we're going to have people teaching it who never do it. What does that say about the relationship to God? What does that say about education? That was my criterion of honesty, but that's my example here. Now they have to know about teela to know that it's hard. They have to know that they can read Heshel's wonderful essay on teela. He says a line there. I pray because I have my (Indiscernible). That's part of the experience of prayer. Any teacher who prays has had the experience of being unable to pray. Any teacher thinks that he or she can teach prayer without teaching what to do when you are unable to pray can't teach prayer. Let that be the microcosm which gets at the macrocosm. I read, say from torah. I read parshot (phonetic sp.) meeshpateem (phonetic sp.). I see the nitty gritty at the beginning of the parsha about action and slaves going free. And meeshpateem ends. Is it coincidence? Multiple authorship. They just happened to put it together this way? The experience of moshet (phonetic sp.) are wrote (Indiscernible) 70 elders up there with God experiencing, even seeing the presence of God on the top of the mountain in the portion that bridges between these laws, this nitty gritty and other peak experience and then truma (phonetic sp.) where you're trying to bring their experience down to earth and recreate it. How can I have a Jewish educator who does not have this commitment to living in a Jewish community that is full on the one hand of the norms, applied in concrete situations, the meeshpateem, and on the other hand of trying to build the reality of God into what Jews do in the world and to our communal experience?

To me, this is best practices. This is shooting for these ideals. This is never forgetting for a moment that we have the gift of a beautiful, profound, intellectually first-rate tradition. And that if we convey this tradition with love, we are doing what we've done for 3,000 or more years. The time-honored principle of Jewish education, do all this with love, and this tradition will continue another day, another generation. This to me is our obligation. It's our gift. That's why I'm a Jewish educator. I think that's why most of us are Jewish educators. And if we

can do this even halfway right, we're going to have a wonderful future. Thank you very much.
(END OF AUDIO)