

A CENTURY AND MORE

Hebrew Poetry and the Swift Chariot

(continued from page 9)

This compressed history of ours—from the pre-historic ape to the techno man, to the reversal that the stopwatch is invented before chess—could probably only be believable in a poem. Just as the full strain of time's attack on each of us might itself best exist in the poetic heterocosm:

The Portrait:

The boy

Does not sit still,

And I can't quite capture his lines.

I draw one while the wrinkles in his face multiply

While I dip my pen

His lips twist and his hair becomes white

His bluing skin peels from his bones. And he disappears.

The old man is gone,

So what is to become of me.

Each of these poems exploits at least one glaring reference to ancient text: The portrait painter utters the very lines that jump from Reuven's self-concerned mind when he finds that the abused Joseph is missing from the pit. "Hayeled einenu, va'ani ana ani ba," The boy is gone, what will happen to me. (Reuven is the older brother responsible for his brother's well-being). Relying heavily on the gorgeous sound of that line in Hebrew, the poet not only appropriates a verse intended for a situation of the moment and powerful enough for a larger existential question, but he signals that the ancient lives within the present. "Likrat," even more elaborately mixes the ancient world with the present, and the port reminds us that the epoch (in Hebrew "Idan") was full of sun – an "Eden" indeed, which was perhaps not a garden, but an entire forest, not inhabited so much by people as by primates. But something happened, it began to get colder, and the apes have murmured their way towards clothing, stopwatches and chess – the tools of civilization that is modern life as we came to know it from the Middle Ages to the present. Modernity already?! Old age already!? Va-ani, ana ani ba? What of us? And what of us?

In Memoriam

John Bergreen, beloved son of Adele and Morris Bergreen.

Morris Bergreen, treasured member of the Board of Governors for more than three decades, member of the Executive Committee, Chair of the Library, Museum and Archives Committee, and President of the Skirball Foundation.

Rabbi Alan D. Bregman, esteemed alumnus of the Cincinnati School, Coordinator of Adult Jewish Living and Learning, and Director of Alumni Relations, HUC-JIR.

John Levine, beloved son of Aaron Levine, a member of the New York Board of Overseers.

Alter and Heschel on Jewish Time

(continued from page 8)

keeping the Sabbath was not only a ritual act: it was a statement of humanity's proper place in the world.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the Gerer *Rebbe* had looked with optimism at an almost unbridled human potential. Scarred by war and loss, Heschel kept faith with humanity, but held that we must acknowledge our submission to the passage of time, as we acknowledge the very presence of God who searches for us.

The style of Judaism reflected and refined at HUC-JIR over the last 125 years is far

away from Polish piety, but it has in common this same ambivalence towards human potential. We believe that humanity can make its mark on time, but we are alarmed at the idea of an all-powerful Superman, cut loose from the moorings of morality and the great anchor of time.

The story of the Jew in modernity is the story of this tension between the belief in human potential and the dread of human self-deification. Consciousness of time is not simply a mark of punctuality or an emblem of history. It is a safeguard for humanity.

TEACHING STUDENTS HOW TO TRANSFORM THEIR SYNAGOGUES:

The Synagogue 2000 Approach

(continued from page 21)

observed that they can extend to their synagogue lives. For applying what they learn in class, the students emphasized the importance of the details. Rabbi Philip Rice ('01) focused on the details for creating a friendlier environment in the synagogue by using a welcoming vocabulary, and placing signage that makes navigating within the building easier. He remarked that Synagogue 2000 is "really working. It's not just theory." Cantor Rosalie Will Boxt ('01) emphasized the process of taking people from where they are to where they want to go, stating that "each person needs to grow at his or her own level."

Synagogue 2000 speaks of a guiding acronym: "PISGAH" (literally, mountain summit), the initials which represent six areas where innovation is required – Prayer, Institutional Infrastructural Deepening, Study, Good Deeds, Ambience, and Healing. Reform, Conservative, and traditional congregations all across North America are currently implementing this unique cross-denominational approach to revitalizing the synagogue.

The class and the program are working. To become involved or for additional information, please contact Harriet Lewis at (212) 824-2228 or harriet@s2k.org.