

# JUDAISM IN AMERICA

## Submitting to Divine Religious Authority in a World of Personal Autonomy: The Challenge of Choice

BY: Jacob J. Schacter

After having lived in the United States of America for more than three hundred and fifty years, it is fair to assert that Jews have flourished in this country. Although the religious discrimination and intolerance that faced the initial group of Sefaradim who arrived here in 1654 persisted more or less for over a century, the situation of Jews significantly improved after the founding of our country in 1776 and has only gotten better with the passage of time. Jews in the United States have achieved great heights in all areas of endeavor – socially, culturally, economically, politically, and also religiously.

But the very reality of freedom, democracy, tolerance, and pluralism that made all these achievements possible also continues to pose a significant challenge to the future of Judaism in America. Will Jews be able to maintain a meaningful fealty to their Jewish identities and commitments, or will they assimilate in large numbers into the culture around them? America has been good for Jews; will America also be good for Judaism?

I want to focus specifically on the Orthodox community in America, particularly the segment within it that, in addition to being committed to religious observance, also values engagement with the culture around it. This community, in my view, faces a unique challenge in maintaining, in real, practical terms, its identity as a group that lives in two worlds.

In 1985, Robert Bellah co-authored a book entitled *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* which highlighted the centrality and ubiquity of the principles of personal autonomy and individual choice in the United States. As an example of these widespread phenomena, he described a nurse, Sheila Larson, who “has actually named her religion (she calls it her ‘faith’) after herself.” In her words, “I believe in God. I’m not a religious fanatic. I can’t remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It’s Sheilaism. Just my own little voice.” She defined “my own Sheilaism” in the following way: “It’s just try to love yourself and be gentle with yourself. You know, I guess, take care of each other. I think He would want us to take care of each other.”<sup>ii</sup>

While Bellah was not the first to draw attention to this phenomenon, his “Sheilaism” became a popular code word among American sociologists of religion (imagine what she would have called her religion had her name been Judy...), and articles have been published since then assessing its pervasiveness in con-

temporary American society. In one particularly well-known study published in 1992, two prominent practitioners of the field, Bruce A. Greer and Wade Clark Roof, noted that “‘Sheilaism’ in its many individualistic, privatistic, and voluntaristic forms, is widely prevalent in contemporary America.”<sup>iii</sup> In 1998, another respected sociologist of religion, Robert Wuthnow, observed that:

“At the start of the twentieth century, virtually all Americans [...] were cradle-to-grave members of their particular traditions, and their spirituality prompted them to attend services and to believe in the teachings of their churches and synagogues. Organized religion dominated their experience of spirituality, especially when it was reinforced by ethnic loyalties and when it was expressed in family rituals. [...] Now, at the end of the twentieth century, growing numbers of Americans piece together their faith like a patchwork quilt. Spirituality has become a vastly complex quest in which each person seeks in his or her own way.”<sup>iii</sup>

And “Sheilaism” continues to characterize American religious life into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well.

This phenomenon of “Sheilaism” does not only reflect the feelings of individuals; religious houses of worship have also adopted “Sheilaistic” practices.<sup>iv</sup> “Ritual” has given way to “ceremony;” formal structured prayer has been replaced by individualized song and meditation.<sup>v</sup> *The New York Times* reported in August 2006 that “40 to 45 new religious groups are emerging a year,” no small number.<sup>vi</sup> Personal religious “meaning” has taken precedence over the long-time staples of organized religion and commitment to covenant and community.<sup>vii</sup>

Jews are not unaffected by this phenomenon; in fact, the opposite is the case. Research has shown that Jews are at the forefront of this trend in America, more than members of any other major religious group. Greer and Roof reported in their study that “Jews were considerably more privatized than either Protestants or Catholics.”<sup>viii</sup> In other words, a higher percentage of Jews determined what Judaism was to them than Catholics what Catholicism was to them or Protestants (Fundamentalists, Moderates, or Liberals) what Protestantism was to them. The data show that Jews are most likely among religious groups to exercise their freedom of choice in defining the substance of their religion.

This observation was sharply highlighted at the very beginning of an important book

published in 2000 by Steven M. Cohen and Arnold Eisen analyzing current religious trends in the American Jewish community:

“The principal authority for contemporary American Jews, in the absence of compelling religious norms and communal loyalties, has become the sovereign self. Each person now performs the labor of fashioning his or her own self, pulling together elements from the various Jewish and non-Jewish repertoires available, rather than stepping into an ‘inescapable framework’ of identity (familial, communal, traditional) given at birth. Decisions about ritual observance and involvement

“You [the reader of those books], having agency, had the right and responsibility to take control, choose from a broad range of options, and find personal meanings that satisfied you.” Turning to contemporary times, the author writes that, “less willing to be recruited by God’s conventional armies, we sign on as spiritual consumers on the alert for anything and everything that can make life more worth living. Choosing spirituality over religiosity, we demand to be touched by diverse experiences that offer us meaning, wisdom, and paths for inner growth and healing.”<sup>x</sup>

The following cartoon sums up my point quite succinctly:<sup>x</sup>



*“We’re thinking maybe it’s time you started getting some religious instruction. There’s Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish—any of those sound good to you?”*

in Jewish institutions are made and made again, considered and reconsidered, year by year and even week by week. American Jews speak of their lives, and of their Jewish beliefs and commitments, as a journey of ongoing questioning and development. They avoid the language of arrival. There are no final answers, no irrevocable commitments.”<sup>ix</sup>

There are no longer any norms that are “compelling,” no “loyalties,” no fundamental givens. “The sovereign self” reigns supreme, religious involvement is a “journey,” and each Jew decides for him or herself what “Judaism” means.

Examples of this phenomenon abound, but I will cite only one here. A recent book entitled *Inventing Jewish Ritual* describes the phenomenon of the various “Jewish Catalogues” published in the 1970s and 1980s:

Orthodox Jews are not untouched by this phenomenon. By virtue of their proactive involvement in American culture and their firsthand exposure to its values, many have been deeply affected by this value of choice and on occasion – or, I strongly suspect, more often than that – “pick and choose” those aspects of Judaism with which they want to seriously engage, albeit within a range of less acceptable legitimate options than other American Jews. We are all familiar with individuals who clearly and publicly identify as Orthodox but who compromise on a wide range of religious activities that they themselves acknowledge are obligatory upon them to perform. Although they would take issue with Sheila Larsen’s assertion that religion could potentially – and legitimately – be reduced to loving oneself and caring for others, they too reflect the ultimate reality of choice that is the core

characteristic of “Sheilaism.” At the end of the day, all their theoretical protestations notwithstanding, they too choose which mitsvot they will or will not perform.

But is this an appropriate mode of behavior? Is not classic traditional Judaism predicated on a notion that stands in diametric opposition to the idea of choice, namely, that, as a divine document, the Bible – and Oral Law as well<sup>xii</sup> – represent the will of God which Jews are bidden or obligated to obey? The word “mitsvah” does not mean a “good deed” that can be performed or avoided at will but “commandment;” it is a non-negotiable, uncompromising requirement or duty. There are no equally valid choices when it comes to whether or not to observe or accept Jewish practice and belief. Religious observance cannot be what I want it to be. “Commandment” means that there is a “Commander,” i.e., God, and there is a “commandee,” i.e., every Jew. One must accept the total system; “picking and choosing” or “mixing and matching,” accepting some aspects of the tradition and rejecting others, is not a viable option for an individual Orthodox Jew or for a community concerned with insuring a strong Jewish life in the future.

Yale Law School Professor Robert Cover understood this well when he wrote:

“Every legal culture has its fundamental words. [...] The word ‘rights’ is a highly evocative one for those of us who have grown up in the post-enlightenment secular society of the West. [...] Judaism is, itself, a legal culture of great antiquity. [...] When I am asked to reflect upon Judaism and human rights, therefore, the first thought that comes to mind is that the categories are wrong. I do not mean, of course, that basic ideas of human dignity and worth are not powerfully expressed in the Jewish legal and literary traditions. Rather, I mean that because it is a legal tradition, Judaism has its own categories for expressing through law the worth and dignity of each human being. [...] The principal word in Jewish law, which oc-

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cupies a place equivalent in evocative force to the American legal system’s ‘rights,’ is the word ‘mitsvah’ which literally means commandment but has a general meaning closer to ‘incumbent obligation.’ [...] All law was given at Sinai, and therefore all law is related back to the ultimate heteronomous event.”<sup>xiii</sup>

The story is told about a Hasid who came to his *rebbe* for help. His wife was ill, his roof was leaking, his horse was *shlepping* its foot,

and his thirteen-year-old daughter was, sadly, as yet unmarried. The *rebbe* said to him, “We will observe Rosh Hodesh in two weeks and then a few weeks thereafter will be Yom Tov, then Rosh Hodesh again. Each time you recite *Hallel*, say ‘*Anna Hashem*’ with a lot of *kavvanah* (concentration) and the *Ribbono shel Olam* will help you.” The Hasid left, very happy with the advice and blessing of his *rebbe*. He prepared himself before Rosh Hodesh and did what the *rebbe* said. Then came Yom Tov and Rosh Hodesh and another Rosh Hodesh and he continued to follow the same practice. After six months passed, nothing had changed, so he returned to the *rebbe* with the complaint that he had done exactly what he had told him to do with no results. He wife was still ill, his roof still leaking, his horse still *shlepping* its foot, and his daughter was now thirteen-and-a-half and still not married. The *rebbe* asked him, “Which ‘*Anna Hashem*’ did you recite with *kavvanah*?,” and he responded, “*Anna Hashem, hoshi’ah nna, Anna Hashem, hatslihah na; Lord, please save me; Lord, please grant me success.*” The *rebbe*

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slammed his hand on the table and said, “No. That’s the wrong ‘*Anna Hashem*.’ There is another ‘*Anna Hashem*’ in *Hallel*, namely ‘*Anna Hashem, ki ani avdekha; Truly, Lord, I am your servant.*’ That is the one you need to recite with *kavvanah* in order for the *Ribbono shel Olam* to respond favorably to your prayers.”

The message of this story is that one needs to see oneself as an *eved* or a servant

who, by definition, has no choices. A servant is totally bound by the will and desire of his master. Do we not recite a few times a week in the *Berikh Shemeih* prayer, “*Ana avda de-Kudsha Berikh Hu; I am a servant of the Holy One, Blessed be He*”? To my mind, identifying as an observant Jew requires placing a premium on submission, on obligation, on commandedness; in other words, on the rejection of notions of personal autonomy, and a multiplicity of valid choices that are so much at the

heart of contemporary religious life in general and contemporary expressions of Judaism in particular, even for segments of the Orthodox community.

The centrality of the doctrine of commandedness – including which shoe to put on and tie first and which fingernail to cut first<sup>xiv</sup> – is reflected in a variety of Talmudic statements. “*Gadol ha-metsuvveh ve-oseh mi-mi she-eino metsuvveh ve-oseh; One who performs a mitsvah having been commanded to do so is greater than one who performs a mitsvah without having been commanded to do so,*”<sup>xv</sup> for example, conveys this idea especially well, because it is not only considered aggadic or homiletical, but also has normative halakhic implications (e.g. it is the basis for regarding the meal at a bar mitsvah – and, for some, at a bat mitsvah as well – as a *se’udat mitsvah*<sup>xvi</sup>). Similarly, the midrashic assertion that “*lo nittenu ha-mitsvot ella letsaref bahen et ha-beriyot; the mitsvot were given only to refine human beings,*” is central to this discussion as well,<sup>xvii</sup> as is “*she-oseh middotav shel ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu rahamim ve-einan ella*

*gezeirot; for he renders the mitsvot of the Holy One, Blessed be He, into acts of mercy while, in truth, they are nothing other than decrees.*”<sup>xviii</sup>

This idea, the indispensability of obedience in halakhic commitment, is stressed in a number of articles written by R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik. For example, after presenting a dramatic summary of the midrashic statement describing the separation between husband and wife central to *Hilkhot Niddah*, he writes:

“This kind of divine dialectical discipline is not limited to man’s sexual life, but extends to all areas of natural drive and temptation. The hungry person must forgo the pleasure of taking food, no matter how strong the temptation; men of property must forgo the pleasure of acquisition, if the latter is halachically and morally wrong. In a word, Halacha requires of man that he possess the capability of withdrawal.”<sup>xix</sup>

R. Soloveitchik used the language of “must” and “requires,” terms that are totally foreign in the contemporary cultural discourse.<sup>xx</sup>

And so the question is clear and obvious: Given the absolute premium placed upon personal autonomy and individual choice in contemporary American culture, and given the fact that many Jews in this country, including those who identify as observant, are deeply rooted in and influenced by that culture, how is it possible to construct a compelling argument for

Jews today to choose to submit to the obedience and discipline of Halakhah that is so central to the very essence of the Jewish religious consciousness and commitment and so important to insure the future of Judaism and Jewish life in the United States? How can one convince or, better, inspire Jews that they “must choose to be commanded again,”<sup>xxi</sup> with all the practical implications of such commandedness for their daily behavior as Jews? Is there a way to help even many who identify as Orthodox to move from inward sentiment to outward behavior, from feelings of “spirituality” to the practice of “religion,”<sup>xxii</sup> from stirrings of “piety” to expressions of “ritual,”<sup>xxiii</sup> from belief – even sincere and genuine – in the centrality of Halakhah to total submission to it as a system that is commanded, compulsory, and binding?

R. Aharon Lichtenstein once wrote, “On the one hand, he [the modern Orthodox Jew] recognizes – both as a matter of a priori inherent necessity and in light of relevant sources – that authority, and submission to it, is critical. [...] On the other hand, the typical modern Or-

thodox Jew bristles at the thought of constricting his autonomy. [...]”<sup>xxiv</sup> What can be done toward helping this individual resolve her or his dilemma? Nothing less than the future of a strong, viable Jewish community in America is at stake.

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<sup>i</sup> Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 221.

<sup>ii</sup> Bruce A. Greer and Wade Clark Roof, “‘Desperately Seeking Sheila’: Locating Religious Privatism in American Society,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 31,3 (1992): 346-352, at p. 347.

<sup>iii</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 2. See also idem, *Growing Up Religious: Christians and Jews and their Journeys of Faith* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), esp. pp. 162-193.

<sup>iv</sup> See, for example, Nancy Ann Jeffrey, “Religion Takes a Holiday,” *The Wall Street Journal* (March 15, 2002): W1, W12.

<sup>v</sup> See the observation by Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (New York: Routledge, 1973), p.

41, cited by Charles S. Liebman, "Ritual, Ceremony and the Reconstruction of Judaism in the United States," in Roberta Rosenberg Farber and Chaim I. Waxman (eds.), *Jews in America: A Contemporary Reader* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1999), p. 308.

<sup>vi</sup> Michael Luo, "Seeking Entry-Level Prophet: Burning Bush, Tablets Not Required," *The New York Times* (August 28, 2006): B1. For different examples, see Christopher Partridge (ed.), *New Religions: A Guide: New Religious Movements, Sects, and Alternative Spiritualities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); idem, *Encyclopedia of New Religions* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>vii</sup> See Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1993).

It is also interesting to note that the overabundance of choice in America has generated a backlash. See Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2004). The subtitle of the book is: "How the Culture of Abundance Robs Us of Satisfaction." My thanks to Dan Cohn for bringing this book to my attention.

<sup>viii</sup> Greer and Roof, "Desperately Seeking Sheila," p. 350.

<sup>ix</sup> Steven M. Cohen and Arnold Eisen, *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 2.

<sup>x</sup> Vanessa L. Ochs, *Inventing Jewish Ritual: New American Traditions* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2007), pp. 40-41.

<sup>xi</sup> This cartoon was published in *The New Yorker* (March 20, 2000). My thanks to Ms. Shari Shanin for bringing it to my attention a number of years ago.

<sup>xii</sup> *Shabbat* 31a.

<sup>xiii</sup> Robert Cover, "Obligation: A Jewish Jurisprudence of the Social Order," in Martha Minow, Michael Ryan, and Austin Sarat (eds.), *Narrative, Violence, and the Law: The Essays of Robert Cover* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 239-240.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 2:4; Rema to *Orah Hayyim* 260:1.

<sup>xv</sup> *Bava Kamma* 38a; *Kiddushin* 31a, 87a.

<sup>xvi</sup> R. Shelomoh Luria (Maharshah), *Yam shel Shelomoh, Bava Kamma* #37; R. Ovadiah Yosef, *Responsa Yabbia Omer*, vol. 6, *Orah Hayyim, siman* 29; idem, *Responsa Yehavveh Da'at* 2:29.

<sup>xvii</sup> See *Be-Reshit Rabbah* 44:1; *Va-Yikra Rabbah* 13:3; and elsewhere in the *Tanhuma* and *Yalkut Shim'oni*. See also Rambam, *Guide* 3:26; Ramban to Deut. 22:6, s.v. "Ve-Katav harav;" *Sefer ha-Hinnukh* #545, s.v. "Ve-ha-Ramban z'l;" Abravanel to *Va-Yikra* 19.

<sup>xviii</sup> *Berakhot* 33b.

<sup>xix</sup> R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Catharsis," *Tradition* 17,2 (1978): 38-54, at p. 46.

<sup>xx</sup> See also "Catharsis," p. 49; idem, *Halakhic Man*, trans. by Lawrence Kaplan (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), pp. 139-143; idem, "The Absence of God and the Community of Prayer," in Shalom Carmy

(ed.), *Worship of the Heart: Essays on Jewish Prayer by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 2003), pp. 73-74.

<sup>xxi</sup> The phrase comes from Reform Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf, "Reclaiming Shabbat," *Reform Judaism* 12,1 (Fall 1983): 14, cited in Marc Lee Raphael, "The Emergence and Development of Tradition in Reform Jewish Worship, 1970-1999," *Jewish History* 15 (2001): 119-130, at p. 121. This article presents the Reform Movement's struggle with the very issue being presented here, the notion of mitsvah as commandment.

<sup>xxii</sup> One finds this distinction made very often in discussions of this issue. See, for example, Clifford Mayes, "Cultivating Spiritual Reflectivity in Teachers," *Teacher Education Quarterly* 28,2 (Spring 2001): 5-22, at p. 6; Patrick G. Love, "Spirituality and Student Development: Theoretical Connections," *New Directions for Student Services* 95 (Fall 2001): 7-16, at p. 8; Paul D. Houston, "Why Spirituality, and Why Now?," *School Administrator* 59,8 (2002): 6-8; Harro van Brummelen, Robert Koole and Kimberly Franklin, "Transcending the Commonplace: Spirituality in the Curriculum," *The Journal of Educational Thought* 38,3 (2004): 237-254, at p. 238. This distinction is most clearly articulated in the following title of an article by Elizabeth Debold, "Spiritual but not Religious," *What is Enlightenment Magazine* 31 (December 2005-February 2006): 105-110. Available at: [www.wie.org](http://www.wie.org). My thanks to David Landes for bringing these references to my attention. Most recently, see Amy Hollywood, "Spiritual but not Religious: The Vital Interplay between Submission and Freedom," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 38,1-2 (Winter/Spring 2010): 18-26. Available at: [http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin\\_mag/articles/38-12/hollywood.html](http://www.hds.harvard.edu/news/bulletin_mag/articles/38-12/hollywood.html).

<sup>xxiii</sup> For this distinction, see Gregory Starrett, "The Hexis of Interpretation: Islam and the Body in the Egyptian Popular School," *American Ethnologist* 22,4 (1995): 953-969, at p. 958.

<sup>xxiv</sup> R. Aharon Lichtenstein, "Legitimization of Modernity: Classical and Contemporary," in Moshe Z. Sokol (ed.), *Engaging Modernity: Rabbinic Leaders and the Challenge of the Twentieth Century* (Northvale and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Publishing, Inc., 1997), pp. 3-33, at p. 4.

## Enemies of the Synagogue?: Seeing Beyond the Symptom

BY: Ori Kanefsky

In this article, I would like to address two phenomena that take place in our synagogues: "Kiddush Clubs" and "talking during davening." I present these two phenomena not to evaluate them in and of themselves, but rather to examine some of the critical responses to each of them. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the conclusions of these reactions, I believe, they should be viewed as representative of a larger mode of critical response and of a wider trend, a trend that I find saddening and unfortunate.

The first phenomenon is that of "Kiddush Clubs." As summarized on Wikipedia, "Kiddush Club" is "a slang term applied wherever an informal group of people leave a synagogue's sanctuary during Jewish services on Shabbat (Saturday) morning to congregate, make kiddush (frequently over liquor) and socialize."<sup>1</sup> One can imagine that the rise of these groups has troubled many synagogue attendees and, especially, the leaders of those synagogues. After all, this practice seems to deliver a message of disinterest in the services and disregard for the sanctity of the synagogue.

**"If one were to exit a business meeting mid-way through to grab a beer, it would undoubtedly be taken as a gesture of utter disinterest and disrespect. If in the synagogue congregants are meant to be conversing with God, how could they walk out in the middle for something like this?"**

In fact, this is the message that Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb and the Orthodox Union perceived to be broadcasted by Kiddush Club participants. In December of 2004, R. Weinreb, then the Executive Vice President of the OU, published a letter entitled "Why Kiddush Clubs Must Go."<sup>2</sup> In this letter, he writes that "[t]he recent decision by the Board of Directors of the Orthodox Union to issue a statement calling for the elimination of so-called Kiddush Clubs for the Orthodox Jewish life in North America." For R. Weinreb, the existence of Kiddush Clubs poses two problems. The second of these areas is the problem of substance abuse in the Orthodox Jewish community, the argument being that Kiddush Clubs promote such abuse, especially among children who witness their parents engage in this kind of activity on a regular basis. This issue is a serious one and one with which I have no intention of contending in this article; if a straight line can be drawn from Kiddush Clubs to substance abuse, then by all means they must go. Instead, I am interested in studying the first of these "two problematic areas"

that Kiddush Clubs allegedly aggravate, namely, the nature of "the synagogue environment and the oft-bemoaned dearth of spirituality there."

R. Weinreb argues that "this phenomenon destroys kevod hatefillah (the dignity of the service)" and calls it a sign of "a callous disregard of the sanctity of the Shabbat service." Two issues are outlined: the lack of respect that leaving services demonstrates, as well as the fact that the departure of a group of people from the sanctuary disturbs the overall dignity of the service for everyone present. Presumably, the phenomenon of participants "often return[ing] to synagogue more than mildly intoxicated" also detracts from the dignity of the service.

R. Weinreb's argument is compelling. If one were to exit a business meeting mid-way through to grab a beer, it would undoubtedly be taken as a gesture of utter disinterest and disrespect. If in the synagogue congregants are meant to be conversing with God, how could they walk out in the middle for something like this? And so, R. Weinreb and many others conclude, Kiddush Clubs must go.

As I made clear at the outset, though, my

purpose here is not to evaluate the conclusion, but rather to study the nature of the reaction. In short, I am troubled by R. Weinreb's approach. To begin with, if one takes a closer look at the rhetoric of the letter, one notes that it seems to paint the Kiddush Club and its members as the enemy, lending it a tone of moderate anger. For example, the letter refers to the "exodus" of those who leave the synagogue and, as quoted above, laments the "callous disregard of the sanctity of the Shabbat service" (emphasis added). More pointedly, R. Weinreb employs strong language in characterizing his efforts. He writes, "We are fighting for kevod beit haknesset (the honor of our shuls). This is the first strike; there will be many more to come" (emphasis added). It is as though he imagines that those who attend Kiddush Clubs are the enemies of the synagogue.

To fight parts of your own constituency on a battlefield is to have failed as a leader. The shallowness of this kind of approach severely limits the value of the letter and the success of the campaign. There are some necessary steps missing from R. Weinreb's message. To begin with, there is no attempt at all to uncover the motivating factors behind the Kiddush Club in