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NOBODY in 1945 would have predicted that, 70 years hence, the State of Israel would become a significant economic and military power home to more than 6.2 million Jews; that well over 90 percent of the world's Jews would live in just five First World countries; that the Jewish population of Eastern Europe would drop significantly below 400,000; and that the fastest-growing Jewish religious movement in the world would be Chabad. Prophecies about Jews, 70 years ago and throughout history, have been notoriously prone to failure. In looking ahead, there is therefore every reason to be prudent. "Prophecy," an old adage wisely warns, "is very difficult, especially about the future."

With that in mind, what do I think will be the condition of the Jewish community 50 years from now?

First, the Jewish community will continue to consolidate at an unprecedented rate, so that instead of being a worldwide people, an *am olam*, spread "from one end of the world even unto the other," Jews will become an overwhelmingly First World people, living primarily in Israel and North America. Already, some 93 percent of world Jewry lives in First World countries—those with advanced economies, worldwide influence, high standards of living, and abundant technology. Half of world Jewry actually lives in just five metropolitan areas: Tel Aviv, New York, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, and Haifa. By 2065, I expect that almost all Jews will live in the First World, and as many as three-quarters of them will live close to one another, in a few sprawling metropolises.

The upside of consolidation is that Jews will be physically safer (there is security in numbers), and that it will be easier than ever for them to interact, learn from one another, and help one another. First World people, in addition, tend to share both common values and elements of a common culture. The downside is that Judaism will no longer be a world religion on par with Christianity and Islam. It will, at best, be a regional or First World religion. Those in the rest of the world—especially in Third World or so-called majority-world countries—will have no direct knowledge of Jews and Judaism at all. They will conjure up instead a mythical Judaism, and there will be no "Jews next-door" to set them aright.

Second, in 50 years, Judaism may well be experiencing a totally unexpected religious awakening. Ev-

ery religious downturn since the 18th century, at least in America, has been followed by a "great awakening." These cycles, historian William G. McLoughlin has explained, reflect the ebb and flow of culture: Periods of disruption ("crises of beliefs and values") are followed by periods of reorientation and renewal. In our day, disruptive forces—new technologies, incendiary ideas, changing social mores, and the like—have plunged religion into a period of recession. Fifty years from now, if not sooner, the descendants of those who have intermarried and drifted off may be seeking to rediscover the spiritual heritage that their parents cast away. They will look to a renewed Judaism to provide them with meaning, order, and direction.

Jews in 2065, whatever their condition, will not likely be sanguine concerning the future of the Jewish community. Like so many before them, they will worry that theirs will be the last generation of Jews, that the Jewish community will disappear unless it changes. Paradoxically, the fear that Judaism might not survive will help ensure that it does.

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Jacob J. Schacter



THE PROMINENT Danish physicist Niels Bohr once said (or was it Yogi Berra or Casey Stengel?), "It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future." But, having been honored to receive an invitation to share my views about the Jewish future, I will proceed to do so, albeit with due diffidence and humility.

First, we should not under-appreciate the fact that there will be a Jewish community in 50 years. In spite of the fact that, throughout history, we have repeatedly faced demographic dispersion, political disintegration, economic dislocation, social alienation, psychological oppression, subtle as well as crude discrimination, and, at worst, brute physical annihilation, we have survived, and even flourished. This almost incomprehensible fact has confounded many throughout the centuries, some of whom have sought explanations for it. In the words of the 20th-century Russian political and religious writer Nikolai Berdyaev: "Indeed,