

PROGRAM BANK UNITED SYNAGOGUE YOUTH
155 5TH AVENUE NY NY

B-32 EDUCATION

"My name? My name is not important.
Who am I? I am the last American Jew. The year is 2124,
the place is the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.
I am in this museum, in a cage on exhibit. People pass my
way, day in and day out, staring, pointing, and even
sometimes laughing. On the walls surrounding my exhibit
are the remnants of a Jewish culture; a talis, a Torah,
the books of the Talmud, and the rest. Each day, as I
sit here watching the people pass, I wonder to myself how
6½ million people who existed as Jews a little over one
century ago could have possibly vanished. My father and
grandfather used to talk with me about the Jewish commu-
nities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. About
the large populations in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago,
Pittsburgh, about world-wide organizations like United
Synagogue, B'nai B'rith, and so many others. I recall my
father telling me how successful and prosperous the Jew
in America was. And About a land called Israel. And yet,
all this has vanished - all this has disappeared. I
contemplate the reasons, I recall the events, and I search
for an answer. I now believe that I know how the Jews
in America and in the world disappeared.



Small things at first, things that happened gradually. Jewish families stopped attending Shabbat services, the father stopped sending his son to Hebrew Schools, Hebrew High Schools, Day Schools and Bar Mitzvah classes. The Shabbat candles were never lit. My grandfather told me that they were still good Jews - they attended Yom Kippur services, they held the Passover Seder each year. However, the books tell me that in time this too ended. To attend a Kol Nidre service became a chore, not an honor - to hold a Seder became a task, not a joy. The rituals and observances of Judaism began to vanish and this I believe was the first step.

I was reading of a Rabbi, a Mordecai Rosenberg, who demanded that Jews fight for emancipation between the American community and the Jewish community, to put aside all differences in order to be equal, to assimilate. And in time the Jew did become equal. He attained material success, and he achieved sustained equality. The Jew was at the same level socially as any Christian. Hatred towards the Jew soon died off, and nowhere was there heard a shout of bigotry towards the Jew. And with this fight for equality, all differences were put aside, including religious differences. Jews stopped hanging the mezzuzahs on their doors, as it merely proved them different. Jews, when asked if they were Jewish, would either give a brisk "no" or would give

no answer. A non religious Judaism was established in America. Why didn't these people see that a non-religious Judaism couldn't exist? Judaism obviously needs Jews, but also Jews need Judaism. Without one, the other is dead. Why didn't these people see it? And then the final blow to the Jew came. It occurred about 50 years ago, and so I can recall it vividly. The Arab nations around the Jewish state of Israel grew restless and strong. As they have since the beginning of recorded history, the Arab nations wanted Israel destroyed. And they acted. With two nuclear pellets, three and a half million Israelis were obliterated, and that land that had once flowed with milk and honey was now charred beyond fertility. When the news of the incident flashed across the globe, the Jew in America turned his head, denied concern, and replied; "Really, what could I have done" Yet little over 150 years ago, a man in World War II was supposed to have slaughtered 6 million Jews in Germany, and my father told me that people swore they would never forget. They promised that they would always support the Jews across the continents, they pledged their donations towards the development of Israel, and they vowed their allegiance for the progress of all Jews. But in time the donations stopped coming, and the allegiances were forgotten. Any responsibility of the American Jew to the

Israeli Jew was ignored. How forgetful a people can be!

When the people lost their pride in themselves, their religion, and their Israel, they lost everything!

As it was once said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?"

I am the last American Jew, In less than 20 years, I too will die. And never again will another Jew set foot on this planet. My G-d, my G-d, where did we forsake you?