

Jewish Tradition and Philanthropy in a Canadian Industrial Community

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"Whatever is hateful unto thee, do it not unto thy fellow: this is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary". Hillel, 2nd century, Common Era.

Cape Breton Jews, reputedly, are the most generous per capita in Canada. This paper attempts to elucidate this phenomenon in a preliminary way, through esoteric and exoteric understanding. Three members of the Cape Breton Jewish community were interviewed for this project; they were asked to offer their self-perceptions of their life values. I relied upon other Jews and non-Jews in the wider community, and a cursory study of the traditional and recent literature, to discount or confirm my own Gentile perspectives on the question of Jewish involvement in Cape Breton life.

My research has led me to look at three streams, or contexts, of the generosity of these particular people, and by extension to many of the Jews in the area. They are 1. religion, or the Jewish Tradition, 2. a history of socialism both in Europe and in Canada, and 3. the impact of life in Cape Breton. One or more of these factors comes into play in the life views of three people; these life views are most often depicted in family histories provided by interviews. The family histories helped to alleviate an understandable embarrassment at being asked to articulate personal generosity. Within these contexts was the idea of a strong "sense of place", the place being Cape Breton, and with that, a strong sense of commitment.

In the Jewish religious Tradition, the most important of “*Mitzvot*”, or good deeds, is *Tzedakah*. It is based upon the admonition from Leviticus xix, 18, that “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”, what has become known as the Golden Rule by both Jews and Christians. The original meaning of *Tzedakah* is “justice” or mutual responsibility; more recently, it has become known as charity. The obligation of the Jews for the well-being of others is characterized by Abraham's acceptance of the responsibility for the those in need. (Proverbs, 14) The Jewish Religious festival of Purim which celebrates the story of the Scroll of Ester, the Jewish Queen of a Persian Monarch, offers a prayer which underlines this responsibility. One line of this prayer says: “That though we dwell in safety, blessed with abundance, Our Brother's hurt is our hurt, their sorrow, ours¹.”

On a practical level, Maimonides, 12th century Spanish philosopher, defined eight degrees of giving as part of social responsibility: the least fitting is “he who gives grudgingly, reluctantly, with regret”. The highest form of giving is that which *enables*: he who helps a fellow man to support himself by a gift, or a loan, or by finding employment, thus helping him to become self-supporting (apologies for direct translation which may appear to be gender exclusive). Maimonides' seventh level of giving includes an admonition against announcing one's charity: “he who gives without knowing who to whom he gives, neither does the recipient know from who he receives”².

In Biblical teaching on Social Responsibility, the Sabbatical Tradition was honoured: slaves had to be freed after seven years; not only freed, but given clothing, food, money, and land, all the things needed to start an independent life. As well, fields had to be left fallow, and slaves or Gentiles allowed to use them. Tzvi Marx, in assessing the implications of *Tzedakah*, explains that *need* goes beyond the “objective minimum that any person would require to sustain body and soul, but also the subjective idiosyncratic, individualistic demands of ... personality, the satisfaction of which are deeply connected with ... sense of well-being and self-respect”³. This

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1. Rabbi Morris Silverman (comp.), and Jacob Neusner (notes). *The Complete Purim Service* (Media Judica, 1973), p. 4.
 2. Rabbinical Assembly of America, *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book*, p. 335.
 3. Tzvi Marx, “Priorities in Tzedakah and Their Implications”, *Judaism*, vol. 28 (1979), p. 80.

statement, as well, indicates the importance for *enabling* charity, charity that allows that person, or group, assisted to continue to help themselves.

In modern-day discourse, the socialism associated with Jews has become popularly known as "*Tikkum Olam*" or "repairing the world", a sometimes esoteric approach to post-modernist socialism. For Jews who came to Cape Breton in the early part of the century, socialism was a very real, very active, and often dangerous political movement in Europe. For example, several years ago I interviewed a Cape Breton Jew, who, as a teenager, was involved in the 1904 uprising and was forced to escape from Russia. Undoubtedly, a significant number of Jews were implicated directly and indirectly in the left-wing social movements that overtook Europe starting in the mid-19th century. Cape Breton descendants of these Jews have a keen historical awareness of the Jews' role in the major socio-political movements in Europe, citing literacy as a major factor in their involvement and leadership.

Socialism was of particular significance to Jews in the Industrial Cape Breton of the early 20th century when long and bitter strikes were the only recourse in the workers' fight for better working conditions in the coal mines and at the steel plant. At those times, Jewish merchants extended credit to striking workers who had been "cut off" by the company store. Many Jews also took part in "study groups" for workers who were trying to better understand socialist principles. In everyday life Jews were often translators, legal advisors, and letter-writers for many European working class immigrants in Cape Breton. During the Depression of the 1930's, when strikes were useless tools against capitalist oppression, Jewish merchants bought farm produce from workers' garden plots, or exchanged those goods for clothing and other dry goods. Cape Breton Jews were rarely on the picket lines, – since they were mainly merchants – but they have always been recognized as supporters of the workers' struggle for a better life.

Little has actually been documented of the Jews' role in the development of working class consciousness or the socialist movement in Cape Breton. This probably reflective of the small population of Jews in the area and the fact that there was no specifically Jewish working class sector in Cape Breton society⁴. What may be as important, however, was the

4. See, Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, pp. 287-324 for the experience of Jews in the textile industry on New York's East Side. Of particular interest is the account of the Jewish women's strike in which their Jewish bosses were

willingness of Cape Breton Jewish entrepreneurs to become involved in the struggles of the non-Jewish working class, the miners and steel workers.

The three primary informants in this study are all in Cape Breton as a result of the industrialization of Cape Breton – steel making and the expansion of coal mining which commenced at the turn of the twentieth century. As one informant put it:

It was just the time when the steel plant was being opened up, there were 13 mines here. This was going to be the "Industrial Heart of North America". They were recruiting people, people came to work in the steel plant from all over the world, from all the Eastern European countries, from Barbados, from you know, and... So this was going to be the Mecca. (Irving Schwartz)

All of the informants have been involved in family entrepreneur-ship in Cape Breton for most of their lives. These people are part of a small group of Cape Breton Jews who have not left the area to join their children and grandchildren in Canada's larger urban centres. They are known for their leadership and involvement in the non-Jewish society of Cape Breton. All give generously to a wide variety of causes within the wider Cape Breton community, ranging from very large loans to start up new businesses and significant donations to the local university, to a de-mining project, or a graduated licensing system for young people, or a Boys and Girls Club in financial trouble, to small everyday requests for school projects, or individuals experiencing difficulty in a sluggish economy; they serve on numerous boards, foundations and other organizations. All are community activists in some form; all relate strongly to their Jewish community although in different ways and different degrees. However, despite their active and often well-known participation in so many forms of contribution to society, this project presented a certain amount of embarrassment for each of the informants because "bragging" about giving, or announcing amounts given, is considered by many Jews to be in bad taste, going against the ideals of giving.

All of the informants are Ashkenazic Jews, for whom the Yiddish language and historical consciousness of pogroms and the holocaust are never far from their *raison d'être*. Consciousness of the importance of Zion is found in each person in varying degrees.

compelled by "social responsibility" to end the strike by arbitration.

The eldest of the informants, Jack Yazer (Yonah Jezierniski), was born in Suprasl, a small *shtetl* in Poland, in 1914. He came to Cape Breton at the age of 14, brought here by his mother's sister, to join his brother, Mendel and his sister Fanny who were already in Sydney. He travelled from Poland to Liverpool in steerage on the "Baltara".

In Canada, Jack followed in Mendel's footsteps by peddling on foot with a pack on his back in the rural areas of Cape Breton; he also worked in some of the local dry goods stores owned by Jews. Eventually he used a horse and wagon. He still remembers some of the Gaelic that he learned from Scottish Cape Breton farmers and fishers. When Mendel opened a clothing store in Sydney Mines in 1930, Jack moved there as well, working part-time in the store, but still peddling in the countryside. In 1934, his brother took him in as a partner. In 1946, the Yazer Bros. opened a store in Sydney with Jack as manager. He moved to Sydney in 1952.

He remembers little of his childhood in Europe, except that it was unhappy. He saw his mother die when he was five, and his life with his father and stepmother seemed without affection. But he does remember working with horses, an interest that he carried throughout his life and passed on to his family. His memories of the kindness of a wealthy Polish Countess indicate the dangers of being a Jew and also his struggle for mere existence as a young person:

As a kid, I remember the... because this castle was owned by this rich countess. And as I said Jews were [often searched out by the local police or armies]... And she used to let the Jews to go out in the basement, like a hidden doorway, like, but she had a big field... She had a big park, like a garden, ... with big trees.

Well, she somehow took a liking to me. I was blond and [had] long blond hair. We used to go there. She had stables for the horses. The men slept in the stables, you know with the horses. That's [normal practice]. And they had, I remember the copper barrel, and they used to have like, bran, and oats in the other copper barrel, with covers on them, When I used to go there, and steal potatoes. If an adult stole a potato, you shot him, I mean, no question about it. But if a kid... So we used to get your hands down underneath the fence and steal a potato, I remember that, and you put it under your shirt and like, blouse up your shirt. And if it was a big potato you put it back, a small one. So you take it home, you'd peel the potato, two or three, whatever you had. And then you save the peelings. Next day I'd go down to those, to the people [at the castle], and without them watching I'd steal some bran [from the barrels], you know,

put it in my pocket for ... take it home and you cook the bran and, with the potato peelings, you know. So it was something to eat.

Food could also be had as payment for feeding the horses at a local butcher's:

See we had to go to Hebrew school and Polish school, you know. So then, you'd go there and the morning you'd feed the horses. And then you'd come in at noontime, you'd water them. And go back to school. After you watered them, you went in the house for dinner. They had a table, bigger than this I guess, it was, it was a big family there. And most of the time I was alone, but a lot of the time [He went with his brother, Hershel, who subsequently died in Europe]... We'd sit against a wall, and when they were finished eating, they'd take a plate, and if they had anything left on their plate, they'd put it on your plate. Whatever was left...

Jack was also impressed by the kindnesses of people in Canada when he first arrived.

So, coming to Canada, maybe I'm doing a lot of things because I'm grateful. It's just because I see the type of people we are. The first thing I noticed when we got here... We landed in Quebec. And we came over in steerage from England with the Empress of France. A luxury liner, but we just sit, sitting, you know. So when we came in to Quebec, we were all getting ready and lining up to go down, and there was a high gang plank and a long... you know, the Empress of France was pretty big. And then I was standing in line and I looked over, and I saw this lady coming. I didn't see anything, but I saw two stevedores at the end of each, each side of the board [gang plank]. And they were pointing there. So I tried to see what they were pointing at. There was a lady had two kids, like this. She held on her case of, you know, here. Another kid on the side, and everybody pushing her. Nobody... you know, say, I'll take the kid, I'll take the luggage, or nothing. And this stevedore, blocked the traffic. He got up, and he helped the lady. That was the first thing that I saw. How... people had feelings for human beings.

Happy memories of Jack's youth are found in his anecdotes of peddling in rural Cape Breton -- happy debates with farmers, learning Gaelic, simple hospitality, honest religion:

[in the] northernmost sparsely settled areas where people were glad enough to see a new face, glad for the opportunity to buy a few clothes. Jack remembers the hospitality of the poor country folk who welcomed

the stranger in their midst, who shared with them their humble bread. No one touched a bite of food, he recalls, until the grace was said⁵.

Jack is remembered in Cape Breton for his very significant role in bringing about the new Regional Hospital and Cancer Unit. He started in 1981, and after long years of fund-raising, speaking engagements, gathering petitions, political wrangling, and a bleeding ulcer, his dream came to fruition in 1993. He was strongly influenced in this venture by his daughter's struggle with Letterer Siwes Disease, from which she survived, and his subsequent realization of how many people suffered with various types of cancer in Cape Breton. In several instances, he assisted the parents of children who suffered from the same disease, sending them to Children's Hospital in Boston. On one occasion, he provided a suit from his store to sell tickets on, to raise money when the parents of a sick child returned from Boston without funds to carry on.

In 1978, Jack Yazer received an honorary Doctor of Laws from St. Francis Xavier University, a Catholic university in Nova Scotia for his community work. He found this a wondrous response from the community, for he had come to Canada with the equivalent of about grade eight education.

From his own perspective, of his many community activities, Jack's most important work has been with young people: his efforts to influence young people to stay in school, to stay away from drugs and alcohol, to drive carefully. He tells several stories of trying to influence individual young people to stay in school or to turn their lives around. But his most recent project, which he carries out with the help of his son, Brendon, involves as many as 100 grade sixes in a "Youth Speaks Out" programme which works indirectly with principals and teachers, the RCMP, drug / smoking awareness and safe driving programmes. The motto of this programme is, "I can say no to drugs, alcohol, racism, violence, and peer pressure". This part of Jack's contribution can be directly related to his own experience as a young person:

I don't remember a thing about my youth whatsoever. My... mother died I was young, I was five. My father got married and divorced. I mean it was just... I can't recall [him] putting his arm around me, that... you know, "I love you" or ... You know some little thing. And I seen things

5. Jo Ann Gardener, "Notes from a Hamish Farm", *Boston Jewish Times*, 1987 (date?)

here like, like I see the kids. You just acknowledge them, what they are, you can do so much with them.

He speaks of the project at the age of 83: "... the kids, God bless them. This is the best thing I've enjoyed in my life."

Jack Yazer seems, to me, to represent a pietist (albeit an un-self conscious pietism) approach to religion. He is widely known for his humility, for almost saintliness. He claims that he is "not religious", possibly meaning that he did not read Hebrew with great proficiency, or that he did not study the Torah or Talmud to any great extent. Yet, as his son pointed out, he prays twice a day, he attends Synagogue regularly, and observes the Holy Days. He did not articulate any connection between his giving and his religion, but, as he put it, "Jews like to help. It's built in." He tries to explain:

So you don't do it because ... I think you just have to like people. In my case I think a lot of it is because I never had anything. And we never had anything in Poland -- for a Jew [it] is very hard [to be a Jew in Poland]. We used to... It was very, very rough. You see I had no...

So, why I'm doing this, I can't tell you. But I know when people need help, if I can...

Irving Schwartz, a successful and nationally recognized entrepreneur, grew up in New Waterford, a mining town. Irving now lives in Sydney, but is recognized as a New Waterford boy. He owns a plethora of businesses across the region; he sits on numerous boards, locally, provincially, nationally; and he still seems to find time to chat about local issues with a vast array of friends and acquaintances. His opinion is sought and respected. He is reputed to have a "midas" touch, and some say that he makes money just to play with it. He has had a hand, in some way, in almost everything that has gone on in Cape Breton in the past 20 years.

Irving Schwartz' family came originally from Russia with the intention of setting up a commercial establishment, coming as they did from a background of entrepreneurship. His father died at the age of 35 as a result of heart attack. Irving's mother, Rose, took over the family business, making it into the most important dry goods store in New Waterford, and more recently, a high-fashion women's clothing centre. Irving's childhood memories are of a mother who was incredibly busy building a successful business and single-handedly raising six children.

And I can remember my mother going to work 7 a.m. and coming back at 10 o'clock at night. ... I can see her now, coming home and just lying down, and flaking out. Father died in 1932. My mother had five

children and one on the way. And a mortgage on the building. Can you imagine? But she knew that she had no other source of income. There was no welfare and that, there was nothing. And she knew that she had to survive and had to feed us. And that instinct that she had for survival was unbelievable. That was 32. In 1936, she built us a new house. We had a small leaky apartment in New Waterford. You can imagine there were no fancy apartments then. She built, three, four years after he died, she built us a new house.

Rose Schwartz, who retired from active engagement at her store when she was well into her 80's, was frequently acknowledged for her contribution to the business life of Cape Breton's industrial area.

Like Jack Yazer, Irving stressed that his family was fortunate to live in Canada, he saw that good fortune as a motivation in "giving back" to the Cape Breton community.

My mother came here when she was 13 years old. And to the day she died, she thanked her father every day for the fact that he brought her to Cape Breton, her father.

I've always thought that, they arrived here as total strangers. And they were allowed to settle, and eke out a living without any interference from anybody. They were given an equal opportunity to use their skills to make a living, and they didn't run into prejudice or any of this stuff. It was New Waterford. But I think, the Island (of Cape Breton). I think that Glace Bay was the same way. You saw a whole Jewish community arrive, survive, prosper. You know, in tough times, in the 20s, in the 30s, 40s, all tough times. And they did that and they quickly became part of the community. They were part of the community. My mother tells me about leaving Russia and, and they were practically booted out. And to arrive here and no longer have to worry about pogroms, and people saying you have to move here or you have to move there. It was a marvellous thing, it was just like, unbelievable.

Given the economic and professional successes of the Jewish community in Cape Breton, the early "tough times" are not generally appreciated by the wider community. Irving tells of Jewish merchants, in the 1930's, borrowing from each other just to pay their weekly bills. His grandfather started off his business by peddling in the countryside:

My grandfather started out by taking a pack on his back, walking up Bras d'Or and Ingonish and all that whole area. Walking, big pack on his back. He may have taken the train to North Sydney, or Sydney Mines, then get off and start to walk from New Waterford, OK? I mean it was tough.

Almost every Jewish family had a version of how the Gaelic language was acquired. Irving's story had added an interesting note on Biblical literacy, a strong tradition shared by Jews and Scottish Presbyterians:

One winter he [his grandfather] was storm-bound, in some farmer's up in Boisdale. This was when he was first here, and he spent two and a half months at this farmer's farm. And, when he came back, he though he had learned the English language. But he discovered it was Gaelic, that he had learned.

But it was an interesting thing, what they (the rural people), what they found fascinating about him is, because, over in Russia, in a more Orthodox community, the Jewish men studied the Bible all the time. And they were very knowledgable, so these farmers got a hold of my grandfather and they really talked about the Bible. They could discuss it every day.

The Jews in New Waterford responded to needs of the working people of the Industrial Area in a different way:

During a strike, or during times when the pits were down, lay-off, yeah. They went out of their way, they took risks. And I remember the '47 strike, you know, I was an adult then. And they all backed those miners like crazy, you know almost to the last penny that they had, they gave them credit, in order to keep them going. So that was always there.

Irving Schwartz would not be called religious. He states that he knew almost as much about Christian religions than about the Jewish faith. This is probably exaggerated, but he recalls attending mid-night Mass and other Protestant services with boyhood friends in the small town where he grew up. His mother, who was almost constantly working in her store, did not have the time to ensure that her children were brought up as strict Jews. That is not to say that he is anti-religious; he attends *Shul* on occasion, and he is very comfortable with all levels of Jewishness. For him, there was no conscious connection between religion and his philanthropy. However, it is difficult to dismiss his connection with community and the directives of social responsibility that are so deeply embedded in its religious beliefs. These traditions were supported by family values that might also be an indication of the family's wish not to hold itself above the mining families of the town.

We were a little better of than the average person (miner) in New Waterford, always, because we had a store and we were better off, OK? But I can remember going into the store and asking my mother and for five cents, for enough to buy an ice cream. And I'd have a couple of friends with me. OK? My mother would never give me 5 cents, without

giving the other kids equal amounts. I never saw that. She treated all of us identically. And I guess that was the very first lesson I had. You wouldn't show favouritism to one and not the other... You know, that's... [justice].

Irving spoke of his brother, Joey, as the person most influential in his own sense of responsibility to the Cape Breton community. As a youth his brother read Charles Dickens, and then would explain the readings to his younger brother, Irving – the plight of the working class in the industrial revolution. Irving, speaking of his late sibling, referred to him affectionately as a “smoked salmon socialist” who scorned money, but seemed to like the things that money could buy. But, still, Irving always remembered his brother's strong opinions on social justice.

Irving Schwartz seemed to have a deep appreciation of the totality of New Waterford society with its diverse cultures, its two main religions with Judaism on the periphery. He felt that he grew up in a more assimilative, less Orthodox atmosphere, than some other Jewish communities in Cape Breton. This did not present a problem for him, but instead opened doors of cross-cultural understanding. When I reminded him of Canada's history of discrimination against Jews, he said:

You got to forget that. You have to forget it. Because you don't know exactly who was _____, because you can't say everybody is a racist. You just can't believe it. And you got to believe there is some good in everybody. And you have to do what you have to do. You want to be part of the community. And I guess if that community really gives to you, you got to find ways to give back. You just can't be a taker.

Evelyn Moraff Davis lives in Whitney Pier, the settling point for the largest concentration of immigrants during the early years of industrial growth. Evelyn has had a yarn and crafts supply business run for the past 25 years in the same building which housed her family's business since 1938. A more recent branch of her store is located in Sydney River. Evelyn, except for a sojourn in Ottawa, has lived in Whitney Pier in the family home for her entire life, the only one of the three interviewees not to express upward mobility through home location. Evelyn is highly respected and recognized as a woman of “wisdom”, both locally and in the wider community.

Evelyn's father came to Whitney Pier about 1910 at the age of 16; he came as an escort for an unmarried cousin. Educated to be an agriculturalist (the family had a grain milling operation in Europe), he fully intended to return to Poland, but was convinced by relatives in Cape Breton to stay and

find work at the steel plant. This he did for a short time, but soon he realized the lack of future for foreigners in the steel industry. He started to learn to be a tailor, while working in a store during the day, and he went to school every evening to learn English. Eventually he opened his own small store that grew to be one of the most popular and well-stocked stores in Whitney Pier.

Despite that fact that almost every Jewish immigrant became an entrepreneur in Cape Breton, some did come with the intention of working in industry. But, as with most European immigrants, their skills were not recognized, and advancement or even full-time employment was almost impossible, with the result that most left industry for commerce. Evelyn and her husband, Harold, recalled some members of the Jewish community who worked in industry:

The first Gaum that came to the steel mill was a blacksmith. That was my mother's father. And he came to work ... because he was a blacksmith [in Europe] and he knew how to work with steel. And then he brought his family...

A few worked in the mines. The last one that I was aware of, Harry Astrof from New Waterford. He worked in the mines all the years of his life. He used to come to our synagogue. Astrof, yeah. ... that was the reason he came. [Because the New Waterford Synagogue closed and he felt comfortable in Whitney Pier].

A branch of Evelyn's family, the Gaums, were significant in the Cape Breton area, producing prominent doctors, and a "red Tory" politician named "Pinky" Gaum. Possibly because her family sought education and jobs that gave them professional status from an early period, Evelyn seemed more willing than Irving Schwartz and Jack Yazer to discuss institutionalized and local anti-semitism. Evelyn's family met with quotas in medical schools, and exclusion from pharmacy programmes in university; they found that Jews were barred from the local golf club. Evelyn remembered that her sister was unable to get a job.

I remember when my sister graduated ... as a secretary ... My father went down to the bank... the Royal Bank. And they were hiring different people to work in the bank. And they would come to my father and ask him for recommendations. Most of the ones who went there had gone to school with one of us. So we would say, Dad, "_____ is looking for a job, would you give her a recommendation?" And my father would write out a recommendation, and send them off to the bank. So when Betty graduated, he went down to the bank manager and said, you know, how about uh... He [the manager] said, "You know perfectly well, we can't

hire any Jews in this bank". I mean, I'm just telling you what we experienced.

The Moraff family also faced the horrors of being Jewish in Europe at the hands of the Nazis during WWII; and they struggled through bureaucratic mazes and blatant discrimination in their efforts to bring family members to Canada during that period. Yet, like Irving Schwartz and Jack Yazer, Evelyn and her husband expressed gratitude at being accepted into Canada, and the reciprocation that such acceptance elicited:

We thank God every day that Canada let us in. That we were spared going through the Holocaust. And they let my parents in. Because my parents were allowed to come in, we were saved and we are thankful. If we can help in some way to...

The seeds of the realization of Tzedakah were sown early in Evelyn Moraff's life, in a very consciously religious home. As a child, she and her sisters were encouraged in the tradition.

Now when we grew up in our house, there were "pushkas" on the wall. "Pushkas" are little charity boxes. One was marked orphans, the second one was marked students, the third one was for the Jewish national fund. You know, to plant some trees, which was still going on. OK, so we had these boxes. On Friday night, before the Sabbath, my grandmother would lift us up and each one of us had one penny to put in each box. Why? because we were going to bless our candles, and in order to bless the candles, we had to contribute to someone who was poor and may not have candles. So we were lifted up and she -- they were up too high for us to reach at that time -- and we'd drop one penny in each box, Shirley and I. That was to give to the poor. And we were told, now maybe I was four, or maybe I was five. And all of our lives we were told that you ...

The practice of making such donations has continued in Evelyn's life:

Now, when I come home from a trip, I put money in our box: 18 cents. Eighteen, in Hebrew, means life. It's "Hi". When I come back from my trip, I put money in my box, 18 cents for each of us. Why? because I thank God that we returned from a journey safely.

[Harold:] We often make donations, 18 dollars, 36 dollars. I take into account the children, \$72. But when we give a donation for something, [it is] an important thing for us.

In Evelyn's early years, her family carried on the Sabbatical Tradition through consideration of the needs of the servants who worked for the family. These were usually one or two young women, from the rural areas of Cape Breton, who kept the Moraff house while the entire family was involved in running the business. As each young woman became engaged

to get married and leave the Moraff household, Evelyn's mother made her trousseau, supplied linens, cutlery and dishes for her new household. In telling me of her mother's practice, Evelyn was able to affirm and communicate her own values.

Evelyn also remembers that she and her sisters were not allowed to look different, i.e., more affluent than their class mates. If the young women in Whitney Pier wore a certain kind of coat, that is what the Moraff girls wore. Evelyn said, in reference to the inevitable effects of the Diaspora: "One of our things is, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. This has been part of our... We, for instance, may not take on the religion of the places, but, if every body dresses a certain way in a certain place, we dress accordingly, the way the natives do." In this case, such visible integration would be an expression of empathy with the community.

Evelyn and Harold tell a story about a fund raiser for a school for Torah study who came to their door asking for assistance. Ostensibly humorous, the story demonstrated the importance of Maimonides' seventh level of giving – to give anonymously. The story also shows that Whitney Pier was commonly recognized as the most Orthodox Jewish community in Cape Breton, a fact that was recognized by Irving in his interview.

Listen, Elizabeth will find this funny. You see, there is a "meshulach". The translation of it is "messenger". A solicitor. And he goes around collecting money. The meshulach, which is the fellow who was collecting for the Yeshiva, which is a school in Montreal where they're sent to train, to study Torah. And some become Rabbis..... They just take a few years to study and to learn Jewish ethics ... the culture. I get a knock on the door one day. And this man is standing outside and he's saying, I'm collecting for such and such.... Can I stay for the night? I said Yes He's very Orthodox, you know. But I immediately got a cup of tea. And I served him in a glass, which.... and I had some matzo and I opened a box of matzo. And I said, here's a fresh box of matzo. I know all this.

[Harold:] *You had to show him all the labels.*

[Evelyn:] *You open, so he knew it wasn't contaminated by anything and I took some Passover, Kosher margarine. I took it out and I showed him. He opened it and he ... Would you like anything else and he said no. And he stayed the night, OK? And the next day he wanted to visit some families to go collecting but he had no drive, so Harold took him around to everybody. [laughter about a mitzvah, a good deed] Anyway Harold drove him around and he left. And the next year he came back. He came and he stayed overnight. He was there every night. He told us about our family in Northern Ontario, he everything, about Vancouver. And he*

would expect you to give him all the latest news, who's married, who's had children and any gossip things you had to tell him, well, he was waiting. So one day, I was sitting at the table and asked Harold, what's the man's name that stays here when he comes here.

[Harold:] *We never asked his name.*

[Evelyn:] *So he said to me, Gosh, we forgot to ask him his name. So when he comes next time. Anyway, the next time he came, we asked him his name.*

The Moraff family seemed to present a historical contradiction in that her father, an observant Jew, was also a socialist. Furthermore, he operated a commercial establishment, suggesting that he was a capitalist. However, Evelyn found no contradiction in this whatsoever. The Jews became merchants because that was what was open to them at the time: and they were barely surviving at this. There was no question of her father's political views:

My father told me that they brought over people from Russia. Great big husky men. And they had to carry those steel bars on their backs. And he said that six months later you wouldn't know them, they were bent over. They worked like slaves on that steel plant. And my father said, that was when the first union started. And my father was so socialistically inclined, because he was definitely..., oh boy! He said to these fellows, "You've got to get a union, you've got to!"

Conclusion

The generosity of Cape Breton Jews is by no means unique: Jews world-wide have contributed in numerous ways to almost every society. This preliminary study of the experience of three Jews in Industrial Cape Breton suggests, however, that perhaps their home communities and particular struggles of industrial society was a factor in how they defined themselves and their involvement in the wider society. Certainly, religious Tradition played a role in their efforts to "repair the world" in the Cape Breton context, either consciously or unconsciously. I was particularly struck by each person's articulation of gratitude for living in Canada, for kindness shown by Cape Bretoners during the early difficult years. It seemed that, as first and second generation Canadians, the people interviewed continue to feel somewhat like "guests" in Canada. It is, I feel, a sense of ambiguous "belonging" in the Cape Breton / Canadian context. For this reason, the idea of Zion must have a tremendous significance – a place to *truly* belong.

While the commonly understood meaning of Zion relates to the nationalistic return to Israel, Zion might also imply a place where Jews could feel welcome and able to develop their society without (or with little) hindrance. It is no accident that North America, with its immense opportunity, was considered by some Jews to be the Zion of the mid to late 19th century in Europe. That Evelyn (and Harold), Irving and Jack have remained in Cape Breton when so many Jews left for Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal may be a signal of a strengthening of that sense of belonging to Cape Breton. The depth of the understanding of each person's family history, in concert with feeling part of Cape Breton history underlies the sense of place, which has enabled these Jews to maintain their Jewish identity while playing a significant role in the total Cape Breton society.

Interviews

Dr. Jack Yazer
Evelyn Moraff
Irving Schwartz

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