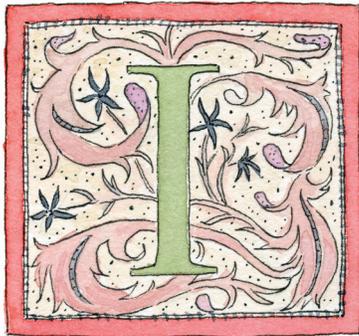


MARK CHARENDOFF

Publisher's Note

Chosenness: A status or a calling?



IN JANUARY 1983, the *New York Times* reported on a debate between John Murray Cuddihy, an associate professor of sociology at Hunter College, and Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, then the director of the Jewish National Resource Center. The topic? Chosenness.

The debate was part of a series called “Turning Inward: The Retribalization of the Jews.” Cuddihy warned that chosenness leads to a “covert form of superiority” while Rabbi Greenberg argued that, for Jews, chosenness is less of a status and more of a calling. In fact, other peoples can be chosen as well, just for other callings.

But what is *our* calling? Abraham Joshua Heschel said, “Man is a messenger who forgot the message.” So what is the “message” that we Jews are supposed to be delivering? And is that message static, or does it change as the currents of history carry it and us from place to place and from time to time? Did it shift after the

Holocaust, as Jews pondered a world that seemed indifferent to their destruction? Did it shift in 1948 when we once again had a sovereign state for the first time in nearly two millennia? Did the message change on October 7, 2023, or on June 13, 2025?

For many Jews, the notion of bearing a special message seemed embarrassing, an outdated mode of thinking—“tribalizing,” as the debate series put it. But many of those same Jews began finding their voice around 650 days ago. It seems that humanity did in fact need to be reminded of a divine message. They needed to be reminded that not every culture treasures life and protects its children at all costs. They needed to be reminded that evil does in fact exist. They needed to be reminded that freedom is fragile and must be protected. They needed to be reminded that all of humanity is created in the image of God and all are deserving of dignity. They needed to be reminded that study is important, not only to increase knowledge but to spot the rhyming patterns of history.

And they needed to be reminded that we can never give up on hope and redemption, that better days lie ahead and our mission is to work *together*, getting us to those better days a little sooner, a little faster.

Today’s Jews have reclaimed their message with newfound urgency and clarity as the Jewish state fights to deliver it. This volume is for all of them. *

MARK CHARENDOFF is the publisher of SAPIR.