

November 19, 1984

Mrs. Maud Wilcox
Harvard University Press
79 Garden Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Maud,

Since you were generous enough to offer, I wonder if you could read the following remarks in my name at the Phi Beta Kappa award dinner.

"Behold, I am as a person of seventy." These words of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, recited each year at the Passover seder, come to mind this evening, for loosely interpreted they are said to mean: "Though I am but a young man, on this fateful evening I feel as though I had the wisdom of a seventy-year-old." If I, who had just reached the midpoint to seventy when I said what I had to say about the cultural condition of man, am being honored this evening, it is only because I was raised since early on to carry the burden and to speak the language of someone twice or three times my age. And so, I share the honor with my parents, refugees from Eastern Europe who never compromised on matters cultural; with my extraordinarily devoted teachers, and with the whole generation of Jews who insisted that their story be told before all vestiges of the past were erased forever. I hope that through my book their story will be passed on to many others who will then experience the joy of proclaiming: "Behold, I am as a person of seventy -- rich in wisdom and understanding."

Yours truly,

David G. Roskies