

are surrounded by "stories" on radio, TV, film, and recordings, but what we need is a return to the *human voice*. We need to tap into the child in ourselves and recapture the wonder, mystery, hope, and love embodied in our stories. Stories contain comfort and meaning, form and beauty, identification and safety, healing and friendship, the personal and the universal. We need to learn again how to sing and tell stories—and to learn to listen.

Through stories we can truly understand each other better—a Jew from Morocco and a Jew from Eastern Europe, Jew and Jew, Jew and non-Jew. When we sit and tell stories, we become friends.

Rabbis today have a tremendous responsibility—to help people live in an ethical way and to help restore much-needed values in the community, to help people find meaning in their lives, to educate people to the Jewish way of justice and peace. This must be done with imagination and enthusiasm.

This is the role of the storyteller. The art of the *darshan* and the *maggid* in our Jewish way of life has been neglected. But happily rabbis are now showing a renewed interest in storytelling, rediscovering the power of stories and of storytelling. No rabbinical school has included storytelling to any great degree as part of the preaching courses for a rabbi. To the traditional rabbinical functions of scholar/teacher/interpreter/judge of Jewish law, it is time to add the functions of storyteller/*darshan*/*maggid*. ■

#### NOTES

1. Foreword to Benno Heineman, *The Maggid of Dubno and His Parables* (New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1978), p. x.

2. Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1928), volume 6, p. 263.

3. Peninnah Schram, *Jewish Stories One Generation Tells Another* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1987), pp. 293-295.

4. *Against Silence: The Voice and Vision of*

*Elie Wiesel*, edited by Irving Abrahamson (New York: Holocaust Library), p. 55f.

5. Heineman, p. 250f. This is my retelling of the story.

6. Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism As a Civilization*. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society and Reconstructionist Press, 1981), p. 457.

## A Prayer for Storytellers

*Or zaru'a latzaddik uleyishrei lev simkha.*

Light is sown for the righteous and joy for the upright in heart.

Eternal our God, let this holy moment lift us to Your Presence in life and light, in peace and joy.

*Ribbono shel Olam*, may we sow seeds of light as we tell our tales, and may they sprout in our day, so that we may see the fruits of our labors.

Eternal One, may the light of your Torah glow in us and bless us, as it did our ancestors:

(Responsively)

May we be like Avram, who learned the story and in learning, was transformed from Avram to Avraham.

May we be like Rivka, whose own inner wrestling with the story begot conflict and reconciliation.

May we be like Moshe, whose version of the story gave him the strength to lead a stiff-necked people and the courage to challenge God.

May we be like David, who recognized the source of his power and translated the story into songs of praise and thanksgiving.

May we be like Rabbi Akiva, who understood that the story could be told on many levels of the *Pardes*, and who empowered his listeners with the ability to tell.

May we be like the *hasidic* masters, who listened to the divine voice, to the voices of the people, and to the voices conveyed in the wisdom of the tradition, washing clean their hearts to serve the Divine and all creatures honestly.

May we be like the survivors of the Shoah, who insist on telling the story, its darkness and its light, and who have shown us the potential for joy in the victory over evil.

May we be like the builders of the State of Israel, who are creating the story with their hands and with their hearts.

May we learn from their examples, learning as we listen and teaching as we tell.

*Barkhenu Avinu kulanu ke'ehad  
kulanu ke'ehad be'or panekha.*

Bless us, our Parent, one and all, with the light of Your Presence.

*This reading was composed by the members of the 1987 RRC graduating class—Rabbis Jon Cutler, David Lev, Barbara Rosman Penzner, and Amy Zweiback-Levenson.*