

# A MODERN JEW In Search of A Soul

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# TOWARD AN EROTIC SPIRITUALITY

By Ilene Serlin, Ph.D.

## *The Search*

The story which I have been asked to share here is about my experiences as a Jewish woman who went far from her roots, and who is engaged in a process of return. The point of view is that of a woman who is interested particularly in the body and in spiritual life, and who did not find these interests addressed in her early experiences of Judaism. Therefore I travelled elsewhere: to dance; to seven years immersion in Buddhism; and to years studying psychology, anthropology, Jungian analysis, and the goddess religions.

Several years ago I found myself becoming increasingly homesick, homesick for an ethnic and spiritual identity which I had only partially known. Since then, I have been engaged in a process of return, trying to understand what was missing for me in the Judaism I had known, and seeking the right questions or keys with which to approach a new study of my own tradition. The road has been confusing and yet also full of exciting discoveries. My knowledge of Judaism is limited, yet I believe that my experience may correspond to others, particularly to that of women of my age (35) and generation.

I begin the story with three vignettes.

### *THE JEWISH WOMAN — Vignette I*

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh  
willingly with her hands. . .

She riseth also while it is yet night, and  
giveth meat to her household, and a  
portion to her maidens.

She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with  
the fruit of her hands she planteth a  
vineyard...

She perceiveth that her merchandise is

good; her candle goeth not out by night.  
 She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her  
 hands hold the distaff...  
 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry;  
 her clothing is silk and purple...  
 She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and  
 delivereth girdles unto the merchant...  
 She looketh well to the ways of her  
 household, and eateth not the bread of  
 idleness. (Proverbs 31:13-27)

This is a portrait of the virtuous Jewish woman, who is combination cook, businesswoman, gardener, and seamstress. She is one Biblical role model for women.

I wonder: What has happened to the virtuous woman today? Has the rugged strong earth mother been transposed into the overprotective Mrs. Portnoy of the suburban nuclear family? Have her tasks of planting the garden and cooking the meals been transposed into serving chicken and Entenmann's cakes? What is the outlet today for her strength?

In contrast to this virtuous woman, I was a skinny tomboy. I found no inspiring role model in the emphasis on food and domesticity, and found the protective caring claustrophobic. My dreams were about discovering great scientific truths, not about finding a dependable man with whom to establish a home. I yearned for the time when I could be free; free to travel, free to study, free for adventures. The predominant Jewish role model for women to which I was exposed did not nourish my dreams nor address the real questions I had as a modern woman, and I felt out of place.

#### *THE FORGOTTEN BODY — Vignette II*

Before I had words to articulate it, I had an impression of Jewish bodies as overweight, of their energy spilling out diffusely and effusively, and of the food as too rich and too plentiful. There was a lack of containment, a lack of physical discipline, and lack of focused energy and power. As a tomboy and a dancer, I loved the body. I knew then that treating it well and as a temple of the soul meant that it required respect. Respect meant eating moderate amounts of healthy food, exercising regularly and in fresh air, and enjoying the sensuous vitality of living in the body.

Additionally, in my eyes, those practicing spirituality had unkempt bodies, and I wondered if this were part of the spiritual tradition. It has been said that Moses and the early prophets were naturally

physically fit, and that the contemporary version of the flaccid visionary is primarily a comparatively new development which is more reflective of the modern sedentary lifestyle than it is of an actual aspect of the Biblical tradition.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, I recognize that these impressions are only my own stereotypes and quite probably unfair; nevertheless, they were my very early impressions of people around me. While I had no words or theoretical questions about these observations at that time, I am aware, in retrospect, how much those impressions affected me and influenced my search into other traditions and into dance.

Only later did I begin to ask myself the following questions about the meaning of these observations: In Judaism, is the cultivation of altered states of consciousness or divine consciousness a more important obligation than the cultivation of the body? Is an apparent neglect of the body a sign of holiness? Is cultivation of the body considered to be narcissistic, or inferior to the cultivation of the mind? Are not grace, harmony, orderliness, and beauty important in Judaism, as they are, for example, in many forms of Buddhism? If these are not considered to be virtues, then what does this say about Judaism? Finally, is Judaism inevitably dualistic; that is, are mind and body understood and treated as separate entities? Or is there a way within Judaism to reach spiritual consciousness *through* the body?

These questions arose also from my early experiences with Jewish dance. I went to Israel when I was fourteen years old and became very interested in Israeli folk dancing, continuing to study and dance in the United States. Although these dances gave me an outlet to celebrate the exuberance and physicality of the new country, Israel, and a way to commemorate the joys and sorrows of the Jewish people, they did not provide me with a direct experience of what felt like spirituality. Additionally, although singing and chanting were used regularly in the liturgy as a means of channeling spirituality, dance was not. Even more, over the years Israeli dance was becoming influenced by disco music and fashion, and was therefore increasingly secular. It was entertainment, not an expression of a religious impulse. So I sought out yoga, t'ai chi, Sufi dance, and Buddhist meditation, all the while wondering: "Where is liturgical dance in my own tradition?"

In light of these questions, I began to actively search for a tradition of Jewish liturgical dance. I had the fortune to be invited by Chassidic friends to celebrations which included dance. It was, for the most part, vigorous, spirited, and ecstatic. It was exuberant, but never contained. My main question, however, revolved around the separation of the sexes. Why could men and women not dance together or touch, and why could a woman not dance in front of a man? Although I found dancing exclusively with women to be a powerful means of

sensing solidarity, feeling ease in each other's company, experiencing a physical networking and almost a pagan or goddess celebration of feminine energy, nevertheless, I wondered: What is the problem with men and women dancing together?

The most frequent explanation was that the men would inevitably be sexually aroused by the women, and that this would distract them from their spirituality and comradeship. Sexuality was, I was told, indeed an important part of Jewish spirituality, and the physical exchange between partners on the earthly sphere reflected and strengthened the mystical exchange between man or woman and God in the divine sphere. Sexuality, however, was considered to be so powerful that it needed the container and covenantal agreement of a strong marriage; it had no place in public celebration.<sup>2</sup>

I had long been attracted to the traditions of eroticized spirituality in the goddess religions, in Hinduism, and in Tantric Buddhism. There, the entire cycle of death and rebirth was carried specifically in the woman's body, as in the example of Isis and the goddesses who took their sons as consorts, killed them and then resurrected them. The goddess' way of "knowing" about timing and intuition and how to manipulate energy fields was an expression of her physical power and embodiment. And the exchange of energy between man and woman, as developed and carefully cultivated in Tantric sex, was a sexuality in service of relationship and spirit, not a distraction from it. The containment of power or potency was trained as an internal discipline, and did not depend upon external boundaries or social sanctions. Why, in Judaism, was sexuality so connected to marriage and boundaries? Was this a reflection of its dualism, and its view of marriage as a primarily social institution? Was there a way to use sexuality to raise the "kundalini energies" (the yoga term for literally raising energy from lower body parts to higher ones as a means of raising spiritual consciousness) or to raise the cone of power (a term used by the Faerie tradition of witches to describe the escalation of focused energy in a group) in Judaism? Finally, is sexuality, or eros as a means of connection and knowledge, in opposition to spirituality? Does Judaism have a tradition of erotic spirituality?

My observations were supported by some of the research on family systems in orthodox Jewish families. It was reported by Goshen-Gottstein, for example, that the two aims of marriage among the ultra-orthodox Geula Jews were for procreation and for the preservation of sexual purity. Sexuality was contained within the marriage to keep from "spilling the seed" through fantasies, or through pre-marital or extra-marital relations. While orthodox attitudes toward marriage may vary between understanding it as a metaphor for the spiritual union with God and seeing it as a necessary evil to be limited,<sup>3</sup>

Goshen-Gottstein reports, however, that: "Within the marriage, both sexes frequently settle for highly stereotyped, impersonal relationships, lacking intimacy, each partner retaining a deep sense of loneliness and isolation."<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, she reports, there was a "conspiracy of silence" around topics linked to the body, since talk about bodily functions was considered to be sexually stimulating.<sup>5</sup> Masturbation was considered to be: ". . . a more serious transgression than all the transgression in the Torah"<sup>6</sup> and punishable with fasting. Formal sex instruction was given just before marriage, and was as short and technical as possible. The emotional side of sexuality was ignored, and ". . . the close female relatives will advise the bride not only on how she has to lie in bed for the missionary position but will also instruct her about the laws relating to sexual purity and impurity."<sup>7</sup> Finally, the texts which teach sexuality connect the woman with the evil inclination, exempting only the boy's mother. As a consequence, the boy's attachment to his mother remains more important than to his wife.

It is not difficult to see, from this description, how sexuality was not held to be a joyful and natural function. For the man, it was connected to the mother. For the woman, it was connected with laws of purity and impurity, with child-bearing and rearing, and with the missionary position. Sexuality, concludes Goshen-Gottstein, swung from opposite poles of repression and obsession, leading sometimes to lack of concentration on schoolwork and uncontrollable masturbation among the boys, and violent sexual fantasies among the girls.<sup>8</sup>

The problem seems to be that sexuality has become too literally identified with the genitals and "lower" functions, and has lost its connection to eros, to the heart and brain and "higher" functions. The question remains: Can sexuality be recovered as a healthy and natural function and an emotional and physical bonding between two people? Can sexuality be restored as a powerful spiritual means of connecting the self, through the erotic connection with its soul-mate, to the energies of the universe?

### FORMS OF SPIRITUALITY — Vignette III

One day I was meditating in the Tibetan hall. The talk that day was about the importance of tradition and of one's ancestors. I looked around me at the colors and the spatial arrangements I had grown to love, at the oriental faces, and thought: What about my Jewish tradition?

My Buddhist lineage was founded by an Indian sage named Tilopa in 988 AD, approximately 1500 years after the original Buddha,

Sakyamuni, was enlightened. Called the "Kargud" lineage, it is known for emphasizing practice rather than scholarship. It is one of the four Vajrayana lineages, which are the secret, magical, or esoteric teachings which were developed in Tibet. Through the Vajrayana practices, I had learned basics about the importance of clarity, focus and concentration. I had learned how to sense my own inner core of silence and receptivity, which allowed me to attend to the quiet voices of my own unconscious and heart, to other people and situations, and to the unfolding patterns of universal events. I learned about the importance of space as the context in which all other events happen. A one-month *dathun* one summer, which entailed eight hours of daily sitting practice in silence, taught me about doing one action at a time with awareness, efficient use of energy, and to clean up after myself. I grew accustomed to rooms which were sparse and clean, in which only a few objects appeared. Discipline was not aesceticism; it was an expression of man's natural clarity and openness, and was the precondition for power to be expressed as focused and effective.

In contrast to the sense of open space in Buddhism, my impression of religious Jewish households and places of worship was of cluttered space. Sacred objects had a lot of detail, tables were jumbled with heaps of food, and conversation was punctuated with many interruptions and exclamations. When I participated in orthodox prayer services, I was moved by the swaying and rhythmic movements, but I wondered if there were a place for individual contemplation and silence. Was Jewish spirituality more communal than Buddhist spirituality? Why did I feel more spiritual when I was meditating by myself or walking in the woods than I did when I was in a group of people who practiced prayer at a particular time and place, and who practiced indoors in a room which did not move me? Was a lovely environment just distracting, as if the deeper stream of religious experience did not depend upon the aesthetics of a room? Yet even Gothic cathedrals, which move me greatly, are deliberately constructed to facilitate particular harmonies and states of consciousness; so was the use of space an expression of a Jewish religious experience? What would help me understand my experience with Jewish spirituality; would it take patience and study to understand what it was about, or should I trust my reaction about when I was moved or "felt a spiritual presence" and when I simply did not. Was there a Jewish aesthetics which, like Buddhist aesthetics, correspond to spiritual practices and needed to be revealed?

At a talk on Jewish spirituality, I asked the rabbi where the quiet and contemplation was in Jewish spirituality. He told me that Jewish spirituality was, in fact, a "noisy" spirituality<sup>9</sup>. In a class on Jewish

mysticism, I listened to long hermeneutics on Ezekiel's vision. Even the graphic depiction of layers of text and commentary in the book seemed to me to be as spatially convoluted, complex, and uncontained as the discussion itself. I wondered where the mysticism was in this class. To me, the class seemed intellectual and analytical: was Jewish mysticism about study and content rather than about experience or form? I was told that this was indeed the emphasis, but also, that the method of discussion was meant to approximate the method of text analysis in yeshiva (religious school). From this example, I could get a taste of what a religious student might experience.<sup>10</sup> Certainly it was true for me that hours of participation in this kind of discussion led to insights, headaches, and an altered, if not hypnotic, state of consciousness.

Was the cognitive element simply emphasized more in Judaism than the emotional or the intuitive element? Again, support for this observation came from Goshen-Gottstein, who discovered a significantly higher level of cognitive training in child-rearing practices among the Geula Jews than among a control group. She states that parents actively encouraged speech and thought from twenty-month old children, correcting their speech, teaching them reading and abstract thinking, and talking frequently to them. The primary role of the male was to be a Talmudic scholar, while the girls were trained to be wives and mothers.<sup>11</sup> Altogether, the cognitive level was stressed to the point where emotions were ignored, parents did not express feelings, and there was an effort to repress negative feelings, especially aggression. Although Goshen-Gottstein recognized that the cognitive emphasis appeared more among Ashkenazic than among Sephardic Jews and may therefore be culture-bound, nevertheless, the spiritual tradition in Israel and in the United States is predominantly influenced by Ashkenazic practices, and so its emphasis on cognition over emotion is significant for understanding how the spiritual tradition developed in Israel and in the United States.

However, some groups who taught spirituality did, in fact, seem to emphasize emotional learning. Later that same year, for example, I had the opportunity to join in an all-night discussion on Simchat Torah, where a tzaddik (an enlightened person) from an ancient holy family in Morocco read and chanted all night in Hebrew, French and Aramaic. Without listening to the words, I let the rhythms wash over me and felt strangely moved and exalted. The rhythms and emotionality of Jewish spirituality felt immediately familiar to me, more so even than the contained and dispassionate spirituality of the Buddhism I knew. However, the Jewish spirituality seemed to exist in such a specialized esoteric world, whereas the Buddhist practices were so clear, subtle, and inordinately practical in everyday life. Was this a

difference between spirituality in which the divine was transcendent and spirituality in which the divine was immanent? Moreover, there was not one place to go which combined Jewish spiritual practices with an everyday lifestyle which was like my own, as I had found in my Buddhist community. The reform congregations did not seem to place an emphasis on spirituality; in fact, the ones I attended emphasized political action and intellectual skills. Ethics, abstract moral codes and reason were taught; these may have been the "higher" or "head" virtues, but where were the virtues of intuition, passion, and emotion; where were the body and the heart? When I went to daven (pray) with the orthodox instead of the reform Jews, however, I felt spirituality, but their politics were incompatible with my own. For example, the men and women were separated and I found it difficult to take my place with the women. All of the action was taking place in the men's section; they were studying, animatedly discussing, and carrying the Torah. There were only a few of us in the woman's section, blocked by a curtain from even seeing the men practice. I wondered why women were not allowed to participate with the men.

The answer to this question, from some orthodox men, that women were essentially "already spiritual" and therefore did not need to fulfill all the spiritual practices (mitzvot) that were required for the men did not satisfy me. I wanted to be where the action was, studying and discussing and touching the Torah. I also heard from the men that women would only gossip and that their attention was taken up with the children, suggesting to me that once again women were viewed as distractions and considered to be incapable of spiritual concentration or learning. Women were trapped in a self-fulfilling prophecy. If they continued to be kept out of the action, then they would continue to be ignorant of spiritual development. They would continue to be assigned to the world of "matter" (food, children, household responsibilities) while the men would specialize and lead in matters of "mind" or "spirit." Women's earthly matter was necessary to balance and anchor their men's flights into ideas and spirit. Matter and spirit still seemed separate to me, and the separation seemed to correspond to gender. Although I wanted badly to study spirituality in a Jewish setting, the separation and isolation of the women was profoundly disturbing.

On the other hand, I did envy the stability and lack of angst among some of my orthodox women friends. Their religious life had given them clear boundaries and rules and a sense of assurance about their place in life. I discovered in myself a sense of nostalgia, a wish that I, too, could adopt these rules and regain my lost consciousness. But, first, the cultural forms of this group were from the past and simply

too far for me from the modern American lifestyle of my actual childhood pattern. And second, I knew that I really did believe in freedom, with all its attendant worries. I valued questions more than answers, struggle more than serenity, and trusted that wisdom comes through experience, through taking in more of life, not less. As a woman, I actually do not want to be protected, but want to taste as much of life as I can. My body is the vehicle through which I experience the world -- its loves and losses, friendships and betrayals, sexuality and sensuality. My body is the container through which life passes; it must be strong and seasoned, not frail and protected. It can only be unafraid of darkness, of greed and envy and lust and aggression, if it has come to terms intimately with them. Furthermore, I agreed with Freud that the repressed returns, and with Joseph Campbell that when the repressed returns, it does so in its shadow aspect. If the feminine is repressed, then it returns in its terrible aspect: the bad witch, bitch, devouring mother, etc. Therefore, it seems extremely important to allow all aspects of the feminine to live, even and especially within the boundaries of Judaism. Finally, much as I value the comfort of the large family, I nevertheless believe what Buddhism taught me: that we are all fundamentally alone. No one can really assuage another's loneliness, and it is best if we learn how to be alone with ourselves. The best protection against fear and loneliness, therefore, is to go through the experience of them and accept them as part of the condition of being human.

The questions which were raised for me at this point were: What is the difference between religiosity and spirituality? How much is Jewish spirituality dependent upon following rules? Which rules are essential, and who decides? How does one know, or is it important, whether one is inside or outside the Jewish tradition? To what extent can one improvise upon spiritual practices or ritual without threatening the integrity of the religion or one's own personal integrity?

Emotionally, I felt terribly in conflict about where to turn and devote myself, even though absolutely no one was asking me to choose. At this point, I did not feel that I could study Judaism and continue to practice Buddhist meditation. Each one called for commitment to a teacher, teachings, and a community, and I agreed that commitment was necessary for depth learning to take place. Certainly there were some similarities and complementarities between Buddhism and Judaism, but mostly I was aware of their enormous differences. The effort to understand brought such questions as: If aesthetics are an indication of a state of mind, then is Jewish spirituality about complexity, as compared to the Buddhist emphasis on simplicity? Does the clutter and convolutions of study and practice mirror the complex Jewish mind? If so, then would Jewish spirituality

have its own form, *rhythms* as well as content? Finally, why did something about the particular rhythmic and emotional quality of Jewish spiritual practice strike a resonant chord in me?

### COMING HOME

As my conflict between Buddhism and Judaism intensified, and when it seemed clear at least that I knew very little about Judaism, the next natural step seemed to be to turn the problems into constructive questions which could frame further study. However, to my great dismay, I couldn't even find the place to begin.

The form of Buddhism which I studied is carefully schematized and its spiritual practices are progressive over time. A beginner is first introduced to basic meditative practices, then certain texts, then more advanced practices, etc. The group, an individual meditation instructor, and the teacher keep the student grounded and making steady progress. Although Buddhism is paradoxically about "getting nowhere," there is nonetheless a clear beginning and progression to the practice. In dance, too, there is a clear beginning of warm-up, fundamental exercises, and dancing practice. But how does one begin to learn about Judaism? Some advised me to begin by studying text, by reading Torah. Others said that keeping Shabbat was the core Jewish experience, and so I should devote Friday nights and Saturdays to learning. I thought maybe I should learn how to cook chicken soup and noodle pudding. No one suggested that I learn to pray! Perhaps the multiplicity of answers reflected the fact that Judaism is partly cultural, partly tradition, and partly religious. Yet the disturbing question remained, "Where is the point of entry? What is most basic about being Jewish?"

I began to yearn for stability and roots; the image of "home" became both increasingly important and elusive. The word "orphan" came up over and over; I was cut off from the transmission of inherited wisdom between the generations.

Through study and psychoanalysis I learned that the search for a home is real, yet it is also psychological and archetypal. By psychological and archetypal I mean that the search for home and the condition of homelessness has been quintessentially Jewish for millenia. By understanding my longing psychologically, a paradoxical shift happened. I could suddenly see myself as not alone, but rather as part of a tribe, all of whom shared experiences of homelessness. In fact, the Hebrew word, *Na-v'nad*, meaning a fugitive and a wanderer, was defined psychologically as "...persons in motion -- passing through territories not their own -- seeking something we might call completion, or perhaps the word clarity will do as well, a goal to which only the

spirit's compass points the way."<sup>12</sup> In other words, homelessness is not a literal search for a concrete territory, but it is a spiritual, lifelong, search for fulfillment.

Second, at the conference which I helped organize on Jewish spirituality and women, our discussion group considered the question of how each one of us felt cut off from our roots and impoverished for not having received the teachings of our ancestors, relatives and traditions. Suddenly, the word "orphan" echoed all our feelings; again, it became something we, as contemporary urban Jews, could share rather than bear alone. This observation was borne out in Paul Cowan's marvelous book *An Orphan in History*, which confirmed for me that our individual feelings of being orphans also reflected a cultural feeling shared by many Jews at this critical point of the modern era.

Other clues began to appear. I knew that Judaism was not concerned with faith or serenity, yet it was only when I read Arthur Waskow's description of "wrestling" with God as a central metaphor in Judaism did I feel at home. According to Waskow,<sup>13</sup> the prophets and Old Testament leaders questioned and resisted God; skepticism and argumentativeness were Jewish forms of dialogue and *relationship*; covenant was the main model. Therefore, the solitary meditation of Buddhism or the individuation of a Jungian or heroic spiritual quest were not necessarily Jewish. It must be said, of course, that Buddhism is not about simple serenity and that it values skepticism, just as there are examples of individual spiritual practices in Judaism. Judaism as a religion is more concerned with relationship and community than with abstractions like space and clarity and simplicity. Perhaps, then, the women who sit apart in the Orthodox services talking with each other and with their children are being spiritual in their way, rather than being "non-spiritual."

My own family search tended to confirm my sense that Jewish spirituality could be carried in the *body* as a tribal or inherited trait, even as Jung's racial archetypes are transmitted somehow through the generations. For example, I had no explicit education in any form of Jewish mysticism, nor knew of any in my family. Yet I always felt a mystical inclination. My family included folk dancers, and we sometimes danced at family gatherings. Often I would be expected to lead the dancing, and I felt that somehow I had inherited a special responsibility which I knew was bigger than I was. Only much later did I know my great-aunt, who was the last survivor from the original group of Russian immigrants. When we looked at each other, she would say that she recognized the expression in my eyes. This expression was shared by her and only a few others in the family. One day she revealed that her father had been the "chazzan" (cantor)

of a Chassidic group in a small Russian town. Singing and dancing were his primary means to express devotion. When he was moved, for example, he would not sit still, but would jump up on the table, cover his face, and sing and dance with great emotion. My great-aunt used to join him at these times. When I asked what her father believed or had taught her, she just said that she and her father had a special communion which "...the others did not have." It was not anything that he said, but that "...he talked from the heart; he had a soul." When I asked her how she meditated, she danced around the living room for me, looking, at age seventy-five and barely five feet tall, for all the world like a frisky goat or satyr. And without any formal training at all, she looked remarkably like the pictures of Isadora Duncan dancing.

Without having known any of this, I had nevertheless found my way into the relatively obscure profession of dance/movement therapy, in which my job was to move with patients. I experienced the enormous expressive, communicative, and healing power of movement, and also felt that it originated in forms of healing which were far older than the discipline of modern scientific psychology. I also felt that I did not choose dance/movement therapy, rather that it chose me. Were we all carriers of some ancient tradition? Although my great-aunt could not recount specific methods of meditation or dance steps, nevertheless, what mattered was the spirit being expressed.

How dance/movement compares with Jewish spirituality and Jungian psychology is a topic itself. This is the next step in the unfolding story, the personal part which has been expressed here.

### Notes

1. Edward Hoffman, *The Way of Splendor: Jewish Mysticism and Modern Psychology* (Boulder: Shambala, 1981), p. 96.
2. Personal meeting with Rabbi Shlomo and Rebbetzin Olivia Schwartz, Chabad House, Los Angeles, Fall, 1983.
3. From J. Katz, *Marriage and Conjugal Life at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Zion, 1945), 10:21-54.
4. Ester R. Goshen-Gottstein, "Growing up in 'Geula': Socialization and family living in an ultra-orthodox Jewish subculture," *Israeli J. of Psychiatry and Related Sciences*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1984, p. 41.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
6. Shulan Aruh, *Even Ezer*, par. 23
7. Goshen-Gottstein, p. 47.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
9. From talk by Rabbi Lawrence Kushner, UCLA, Hillel, Fall, 1982.
10. From class given by Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, Hillel, Spring, 1981.

11. Goshen-Gottstein, p. 53.
12. Quote from Richard Niebhur, *Parabola*, Fall, 1984.
13. Arthur Waskow, *Seasons of Our Joy*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), p. xx.

### Editorial Comment

Dr. Serlin, like a dancer, gracefully traces for us her own search for an embodied spirituality, which is sensible, direct, feminist in a deeply soulful sense (not strident) and includes scholarship and tradition. She speaks not only for women, body and movement, but for men too, in that the feminine and eros are affirmed. Her link with her aunt is particularly moving. Only one thing was not quite accurate, in our opinion. She describes the Jewish experience rightly as one of "wrestling with God," as did Jacob, and says this experience, along with dialogue, is not a part of Jung's "individuation." Not so. Active Imagination, the main meditative technique in Jungian psychology, is just that. It involves a continuing, open "wrestle" with the unconscious, and the God-images that emerge there, which ultimately leads to union. Where she is right, though, is that the Jungians emphasize aloneness, and internal dialogue, and are either indifferent, or even hostile to the "group work." Community, central to Jewish life, is merely nodded to by Jungians. Serlin's presentation is a welcome and significant contribution to our search. For Spiegelman, it is most powerful emotionally that a person who seriously and totally confronts, examines herself/himself and tradition will ultimately, by the grace of God, find the link which embraces both individuality and collectivity. Serlin's discovery of her link with her aunt is just such a moving proof of this internal and eternal process.