

The Great Decision

BY RABBI WILLIAM BERKOWITZ,
NATIONAL PRESIDENT, NJF

In this major election year, three individuals run for the highest office in the land, each presenting a different viewpoint, an alternative vision for the future. That vision and its practical implementation will determine for some time a host of everyday realities. However, never far from one's mind is the fact that in such a year as this, what counts is the choice, the decision that is made in November, when every

person is offered the opportunity to choose which path and which vision he would like to see triumph.

In a similar fashion, Jews the world over pause from their daily concerns to reflect once a year upon the higher choices and decisions offered to them. This period of introspection, which takes place during the High Holidays, is a time when Jews face questions whose answers form the intricate and complex web called Jewish identity. Yet, unlike a political election, the threads of decision which form the fabric of one's Jewish life are quite varied and different. The threat of God and family, of land and people, of learning and lifestyle, all must be

spun on the personal loom. What emerges will be unique: no one's fabric is ever the same. But the question always remains whether an individual will begin the process. After all, the road ahead is fraught with peril and doubt.

At this hour, the Jewish people stand before twin threats from the outside and the inside. The litany which has been recited for so long soon begins to take on the form of a lament: assimilation and anti-Semitism, alienation and mediocrity, indifference and inter-marriage. One almost is driven to the point of asking whether the crises facing the Jewish people will ever fade, before we will fade from them. Moreover, why must we continue to face so many challenges? Have we not suffered enough? Living in this universe, with our unique history, we know the tragic truth: there may be no answers, but there are responses. For us, in this era especially, one in particular is most essential: Jewish renewal. Indeed, without the "why" of our survival, all the "whats" will be in vain.

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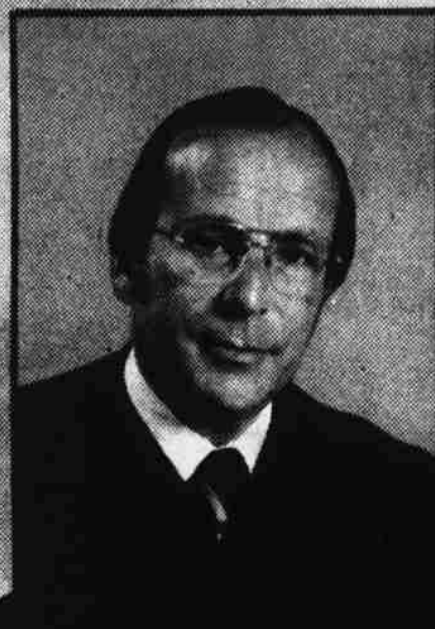
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