

## Dimensions

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Security, followed by Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 during Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty.

The 30 year period from 1980 to 2010 saw Germany and Japan rising as strong economic competitors in the world market. In the United States, regulation of business was loosened and anti-unionism spread, along with a negative view of the entitlement society, epitomized in Ronald Reagan's targeting of "welfare queens." The movie, "Wall Street," introduced Gordon Gekko who championed "Greed is good" to his corporate stock holders. Income growth stagnated at the lower levels while shooting astronomically upward. By 2006, the top one percent of the population had enjoyed a startling 235 percent increase in their income during the 30 year period. For most Americans, however, income had risen at less than 20 percent during the three decades. Graphs show an almost flat line moving across the bottom – at middle and lower income levels for 30 years – as the income line for the very rich soars toward the top of the graph.

Richard Morin, an editor at Pew Research, said, "Income inequality is no longer just for economists. It has moved off the business pages onto the front

page." The current political campaign leading up to the 2012 elections has boiled down to Mitt Romney's "Politics of Envy" versus Barack Obama's "Fairness for the Middle Class." Elizabeth Warren, the Harvard economist running for the Senate in Massachusetts, has a unique way of describing the "social contract" between the rich and the rest of society. "There is nobody in this country who got rich on his own. Nobody. You built a factory out there. Good for you. But, I want to be clear: You moved your goods to market on the roads the rest of us paid for. You hired workers the rest of us paid to educate. You were safe in your factory because of police forces and fire forces the rest of us paid for. You didn't have to worry that the marauding band would come and seize everything at your factory and hire someone to protect against this because of the work the rest of us did. Now look, you built a factory and it turned into something terrific or a great idea. God bless. Keep a big hunk of it. But part of the underlying social contract is you take a hunk of that and pay forward for the next kid who comes along."

*Joyce S. Anderson is the author of "Courage in High Heels," "Flaw in the Tapestry," "If Winter Comes," "The Mermaids Singing" and her new book, "The Critical Eye." She can be reached at JSAWrite@aol.com.*

## Weinreb

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point and asked, "Do you see now what even a small mitzvah like mezuzah really signifies?"

I nodded my head in assent. He continued reading: "The purpose of all commandments is to instill in us belief in the Lord and gratitude to Him for creating us... The intent of raising our voices in prayer and the purpose of synagogues and congregational prayer is just so that there will be a place for all the sons of Adam to assemble and proclaim to the Almighty who created them, "briyotecha anachnu, we are your creatures!"

"That is why," he clarified. "I always refer to Him as "der Bashefer," "the Creator."

Grandpa must have been satisfied that I understood the message of that pre-dawn lesson. Whenever we subsequently met during the next more than 20 years he would say to me in Yiddish, "Vie azoy Sagt der Ramban? How does Ramban put it?" And I unfailingly responded "Briyotecha anachnu, we are Your creatures."

A footnote: many years later, and with some trepidation, I shared with Grandpa that I had been reading the philosophical works of a German theologian named Schleiermacher, who defined the essence of religion as "kreaturgefuhl," a feeling of "creature-ness." Grandpa was not surprised. He smiled, and urged me to read the passage we studied together that morning very carefully. "You will note," he said, "that Ramban does not say 'a place for all the sons of Israel to assemble,' but rather 'a place for all the sons of Adam to assemble.' The prophet Isaiah prophesied that 'My house will be a house of prayer for all nations. '

"(Isaiah 56:7 )

By whatever name we know Him all He wants from all of us children of Adam is that we feel and acknowledge that we are His creatures.

*Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb is the Executive Vice President Emeritus of the Orthodox Union. To read more articles and essays by Rabbi Weinreb, visit his blog at [www.ou.org/rabbi\\_weinreb](http://www.ou.org/rabbi_weinreb).*