“From inside traditional Judaism, a Jew is a Jew essentially, and that is destiny; choice is not what counts.” In the modern world, “the sense that choice is open and that authenticity depends on individual choice - this is a given.”

“The contemporary rhetoric of identity, of being or becoming ‘what one really is,’ tries to make choices seem like destiny. But whatever the consolations of this rhetoric, it masks the reality testified to over and over again by the voices recorded throughout this book: Jews in America today are a people not “chosen” but choosing. This is true for the least affiliated as well as the most observant. And it is at the heart of both individual experiences and the apparently contradictory patterns of revival and assimilation that they generate. Identity, formerly objective and imposed, has become constructed and chosen - Jewish identity, like all others. There can be no return from this disposition to choose. The future of American Jews will continue to be determined by the place that individualism, modernity, and choice afford to Judaism - not the other way around.”

“The right to self-creation might be taken as a source of strength rather than fragility for Jewish commitment.” But “when choice permeates all commitments, the conditions for the maintenance and continuity of a separate historical community of faith are inevitably undermined.”