

## The Crisis in Jewish Life — the Aftermath of the Yom Kippur War\*

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MORE than 200 days have passed since Yom Kippur. We will be debating its meaning for more than 200 months, and it will probably take 200 years before historians can fully assess its implications. The emotions that gripped us — the sense of isolation, the feeling of impending doom, the threat of a second holocaust, even thinking the unthinkable — these have left us. But the changed situation of the Jewish world is very much with us, an intimate part of our daily personal and professional lives. And the total milieu has changed as well: government stability in the West has vanished; we face not only an ongoing energy crisis, but a chronic global shortage of raw materials, which is shifting the power of balance in unpredictable ways; and galloping inflation is epidemic in all countries.

Arnulf Pinst† sketched for us a wonderfully comprehensive canvas of the new Jewish condition. He painted a detailed and informed picture of where we find ourselves in the world Jewish community in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. It may well be, as he said, that all the basic elements in our current situation were implicitly present before October 6th, and that the dramatic events simply revealed them to us in all their starkness. Nevertheless, we are now conscious of a vastly different order, our insights are new, and in that sense, we face a radically changed situation.

Simply stated, it is my view that what is called for is a new posture, a new stance based on a changed conception of ourselves as an American Jewish community in the context of world Jewry. This new perspective rests on the total obsolescence of both the concept and the term *Diaspora*. *Diaspora* and *galut* have become almost equivalent in meaning; the traditional view has been to place Israel at the core and everybody who is outside Israel is viewed as living in dispersion from that core and, thus, in a certain sense, in "exile." There is no doubt that this perception was being called into question long before Yom Kippur 1973, but the war and its aftermath — especially the political isolation of Israel and its heavy dependence on the United States — have raised new doubts about its validity. The idea of *Diaspora* is not only dated; its impact is actually mischievous. It has served as a crutch for our own inaction. It has bred a lack of responsibility for enriching the quality of our own life here. It has led to a form of vicarious Jewish living on a global scale that borders on pathology. We need to liberate ourselves from this narrow perspective.

In looking at the world Jewish condition today, we need to recognize that we have a single Jewish community, with parts of it located in various geographic places on this planet. Some members of this Jewish community are in Israel and some members are in Europe and some members are in America. This is obvious on the face of it, but what are the implications of this perception? If we accept the fact that there is a Jewish community spread throughout the globe, then we

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must conclude that the strength and vitality of the whole Jewish community is dependent on the strength and vitality of each part, like links in a chain. And that means to me that the Jewish communities outside of Israel are critical links in the survival of the Jewish people. An integral part of the same concept is that Israel is also a vital link in the survival of the Jewish people.

What does that mean in terms of its implications for Jewish communal services here in America? For me, it reinforces the absolute essentiality of strengthening Jewish life *wherever* it is lived on this globe. And, I hasten to add, not on the facile basis that a strong Jewish community in the United States and Canada will help make Israel strong — which it will. But this cannot be the basis for a self-respecting, autonomous, and dignified Jewish life. We can no longer view the support of Israel and the insurance of its continued existence as *prime* and Jewish life elsewhere on this earth as secondary. No. What it means to me is that all parts of Jewish life partake of the *same kind of primacy*. This not only faces us here in North America with a great challenge and a tremendous responsibility, but also, with the need for new standards of measurement of our performance as a Jewish community. For, if we view the strengthening of Jewish life in that part of the world where we live as a primary responsibility of those of us who live here, then we must make sure that we have at hand the skill and the resources to carry out our mission to be a strong and integral part of the overall strength of the world Jewish community. Does this mean that our responsibilities to Israel or to Soviet and Syrian Jewry are reduced in any way? Absolutely not. Quite the contrary. It is clear that for the foreseeable future we will need to continue to give major attention and resources to these responsibilities. In typically Jewish fashion, we

are called upon to recognize that *both* of our responsibilities are primary — neither taking second place to the other. However, only *we* can carry out the responsibility to insure the strength and viability of the American and Canadian Jewish communities. No one can do it for us.

To explore some short-range and long-range implications of this view of our mission, I see a direct and immediate impact in four areas:

#### Short-Range Implications

*First*, we must look forward to a period of substantially expanded public action by American Jews in an attempt to influence public opinion and the actions of our government. There is no need for me to delineate the isolation of Israel in the world and the crucial role the American government plays in Israel's future. This is true not only in the area of military support, but in the political arena as well. Israel's fate is unequivocally bound up with United States policy. What it means to us in the field of Jewish communal service (noting the limitations imposed on us by our tax-deductibility status) is that we must undertake more elaborate programs to insure that we have the instruments and the resources necessary to carry out this task. We appear to be ready for this heightened role, and as our leadership has become more third and fourth generation we mark the emergence of a new style in our behavior as an American Jewish community, with a new willingness and even a sense of comfort in using more publicly the standard, "Is it good for the Jews?" This is still a far cry from the "never again" militancy of Jewish populism, but it represents a fresh, new self-acceptance that embraces vigorous pursuit of particularistic Jewish goals, along with more universal aspirations.

The nature of the Jewish population

in the United States offers us an opportunity to make substantial impact on U.S. policy, and we do it fully and freely as citizens of this country, concerned with its policies and actions. Our concentration in large numbers in the metropolitan areas in politically key States offers us leverage in getting our message across more effectively. Then too, despite our concentration in the large cities, we are also found spread throughout the country in many small communities, and the presence of organized Jewish communities in all corners of the land has made it possible for us to exploit the contacts and to make impact on legislators and government officials who can help interpret the Jewish position. The challenge to us, then, as an organized Jewish community, is to take stock of the tasks we will be called upon to do and to prepare ourselves to develop programs to meet those responsibilities. Should the job require action that goes beyond the norm of charitable agency activities, we may need to expand our role through non-tax-deductible entities.

A *second* area, and one referred to also by Arnulf Pins, is the need for us to strengthen the bonds we have with our counterpart communities throughout the world, and U.S. Jewry and Canadian Jewry will have to relate themselves more closely and on a more continuing basis with sister communities in Europe, South America and in other places throughout the world. They, too, are vital links in the chain. We need a closer sense of fellowship and con-fraternity. We are, of course, already on our way with some good beginnings. The reorganization of the Jewish Agency for Israel to provide more effective input by the Jews who live throughout the world is an important step, and plans are already afoot to develop some international approaches to fund-raising which will lead to closer cooperation in other areas. Another example of this kind of

development of closeness between national Jewish communities is the fascinating fact that the French Jewish community will not only continue to send leadership missions to Israel, but is also planning to send missions to the U.S. to see how the American Jewish community operates and to examine how we can cooperate more closely in joint enterprises. Our own International Conference of Jewish Communal Service is another step. As we move ahead in this area, we may discover that we need new bodies for inter-community cooperation.

A *third* area touches a matter of some delicacy. If indeed our perception of Jewish life changes so that we recognize the primacy of the need to strengthen Jewish communities wherever they are, Israel itself will need to have a better understanding of Jewish life outside of Israel. It is an unfortunate fact that, despite visits throughout the Jewish world by many Israelis, there is a lack of knowledge in depth on their part about what goes on in Jewish life outside Israel. Indeed, for too many in Israel there is a total lack of interest in other Jews except as a source of *aliyah*. This is a challenge to us, to help change their perception of the Jewish world. We will need to work together to devise imaginative programs, of two-way missions, of *shlichim* in reverse, of exchange, and so on. The hard part is not coming up with imaginative programs, but rather the development of common acceptance of this as an appropriate goal.

*Fourth*, we may also have to adopt a changed attitude towards immigration of Jews to the United States. Immigration — movement — is the one constant in Jewish life. There is neither the time nor the necessity to explore the value overtones of the terms *Olim* and *Yordim*. Recently, the fact that a small number of immigrants to Israel have found a need to leave and seek homes elsewhere has

produced some modest flak in various quarters. But my remarks are addressed to our own attitudes toward Jewish immigration to these shores. In recent years (except for the Russians) this has been reduced to a relative trickle, and even as we have officially welcomed these new Americans, we have never undertaken positive programs of encouraging such immigration. Now, from the perspective of the need to strengthen all facets of Jewish life in America, including our numbers, shouldn't our attitude change? We know that the Jewish birth rate has dropped to the point where we are practically at zero population growth and, if it continues, we may never reach the six million population mark in the United States. Moreover, the high inter-marriage rate results in additional losses in our numbers. There is no doubt that our strength is related to numbers and that we need reenforcement through a substantial rate of immigration of Jews to the United States. We should turn away from the conception that immigrants are a burden which we bear, and begin to realize how important they can be as an accretion of strength by the American Jewish community.

#### Long-Range Impact

When we address ourselves to the long range, we come face-to-face with the need to develop the standards by which we can evaluate our own Jewish community programs here in the United States and Canada. We will have to examine how each program in quality and quantity meets one basic criterion: *does it strengthen and enrich the American Jewish community?* An immediate caveat is essential. There is a danger of misinterpreting this standard. In some quarters there has been a growing trend of argument that there is a dichotomy in the Jewish community between the agencies that serve Jews and the agencies that serve Judaism.

It is claimed that priority should be given to those agencies which deal with Judaism, and that meeting the needs of Jews is to take a secondary role. We reject such a dichotomy. The two elements are integrally related. These activities are two aspects of the very same imperative, they are mutually reenforcing, and it is impossible to separate the welfare of Judaism from the welfare of Jews. The very elements in our tradition which motivate us to care for the poor, the elderly, the isolated, are the very values that we seek to perpetuate when we teach our Judaism. And so it would be artificial to separate them and dangerous from the point of view of making value judgments on Jewish communal activities. By the same token, it is too glib simply to make a blanket endorsement of all agency programs which are in any way related to taking care of Jews. Our Jewish communal structure cannot be merely a "service-station" geared to meet a series of personal needs. It is also the expression of a value system and interpretation of the covenant. All of us, in whatever agency, have the responsibility to the client we serve, but our client is not only the group or the family or the individual who presents his problem to us; it is also the Jewish community, the Jewish people — past, present, and future. This means that we must look to each agency to re-assess its own programs and find how it can strengthen those elements that enhance Judaism as well as meet the needs of individual Jews.

What we are calling for is nothing less than a re-evaluation of the missions of our agencies in relation to the basic criterion. I do not offer a new agenda for American Jews. The pitfalls of Jewish agenda-making are too well known to this forum. Each of our communities and each of our agencies must do this for itself. But make no mistake. Putting together an agenda of concerns is no routine task. In the final analysis it is the

measure of what we value as a Jewish community. What I do offer is an exploration of what standards we might use to make the judgments on our communal programs. What elements must we look for to offer guidance in evaluating the choices we must make? I offer for consideration not *four questions*, but *five* that must be asked in each case.

*First, will it strengthen unity in the Jewish community?* By this we mean those activities which strengthen our capacity to respond as an organized community in the context of K'lal Yisrael. I am not calling for an end to ideology. Here on the North American continent we long ago became committed to a pluralistic approach to our Judaism. Our Father's house has many mansions, and the varieties of Jewish identification add strength and color to the organized Jewish community. What I am calling for is the recognition that since we must make optimum use of our resources of manpower and money and leadership, we cannot fritter away our strength on meaningless or frivolous institutional rivalries. The differences which we cherish must be genuine and must relate to differing perceptions of the issues and varying approaches to goals. We cannot afford to be imprisoned by an institutional past that may no longer be relevant. We will need a readiness to restructure and to accept new forms more consistent with the growing consensus in the Jewish population.

*Second, will it help commit our younger generation to identify as Jews?* Will it develop in them a willingness to participate in shaping the Jewish future? We speak here of more than Jewish education. Indeed, the tragedy is that some of what goes by the term Jewish education does not lead to commitment. What is visualized is a broad spectrum of activities in and out of the classroom whose impact is to create this kind of commitment. All of us have recognized that the educa-

tional process takes place in many places outside of the school, and it is to this broader concept and the programs which are not restricted solely to the walls of the classroom that we must give our attention. We need a better school, too, and the efforts to improve it must be unremitting. But we need to develop a truly comprehensive program from early childhood through adulthood, exploiting the many resources available to us.

*Third, can we accomplish the program objective through a non-sectarian or inter-sectarian effort? Do we need the program as a Jewish service?* We must sharpen our understanding of what should be and should not be included as Jewish communal programs. This has long been a difficult problem for us, but the future demands that we must deepen our evaluation of programs so that we can put our resources into programs that clearly call for a sectarian effort. Where a program can be done effectively on a non-sectarian or inter-sectarian basis we should insist that it be financed and carried out in that way. This is more than a matter of economy or efficiency. If we are to concentrate on those elements in the communal program which are absolutely essential to our continuing strength, we must make the most effective use of top flight professional and lay leadership. Even as I suggest this as a vital issue, I must note that we cannot be completely doctrinaire about what belongs inside the Jewish communal effort and what should be excluded. It is not an uncommon experience for many of us to have faced a communal situation where, despite objective demonstrations of facts and figures, a large portion of the Jewish community opts to have certain programs carried on in a sectarian fashion as a Jewish communal effort. At that point, the effort to de-sectarianize the program may in fact tend to weaken and divide the Jewish community. In such a situation we will have to be more gradual in

the process of winning consent. This will take a sensitive perception and a willingness to realize that some changes require long-term effort and cannot be carried out overnight.

*Fourth, does it strengthen and enrich Jewish family life?* There is no need to delineate the core role played by the family in the Jewish experience — the matrix of so many of our values and the agent of transmission of the heritage — Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children. Nor is there a need to document the buffeting that the Jewish family has been subject to — along with all other families. The litany is long — a rising divorce rate, the drug culture, the generation gap, the disappearance of the three generation household, growing alcoholism, the emergence of new family styles (which might, more accurately, be described as non-family styles). A growing end-product is the increasing number of female-headed households with small children. But all this is well known to us. The challenge that confronts us is whether we can devise programs to re-integrate what have tended to become discrete programs and services into a new comprehensive pattern, with the integrity of the family as the core concern. And whether we can add a dimension of Jewish enrichment that will transcend the bounds of pathology and strengthen the Jewish family's capacity to recover some, if not all, of its historic functions. This is a massive question — but it is one that we must ask when we make decisions on our programs.

*Fifth, does the program accomplish what it is designed to do?* Is it effective in achieving its goals? What are the outcomes? We can no longer be content with measures based on interview counts, attendance figures and enrollment statistics. Input is vital, but not enough. We must also look at output, at impact, at results.

Regardless of our growing capacity to raise funds, we must face the inexorable

fact that needs are infinite and resources are limited. This confronts us constantly with the need to make choices and set priorities. These judgments are not restricted solely to *new* programs. We must also take a broad look at what we have been doing in the past. There cannot be an automatic acceptance that everything we did last year and the year before is one hundred percent valid for this year and the next year. As professionals, we need to provide to our volunteer leadership the tools for the evaluation of our programs and for the orderly determination of new priorities. The hallmark of our professional skill is to serve as agents of change. It is our responsibility to give the professional leadership to this process — to evaluate the programs, to recast them in terms of changing needs, and to drop those that are no longer needed. We will need to begin now to devise ways to measure the effectiveness of our programs, to assess them, to provide the tools by which we can answer the question whether we are in fact accomplishing what we have set out to do, and then to recast the programs to be more effective in terms of our new goals. I cannot help but point out that implicit on every page of the report of the National Conference of Jewish Communal Service Commission on Structure and Scope and Priorities is the evidence of our own dissatisfaction with many of the programs for which we bear professional responsibility. This represents healthy self-criticism. What we must do now is to lead the way. We will have to have the courage to question what we have been doing for years. Does it work? Who is helped? How? We will have to enrich our skills and our knowledge in order to give professional leadership, as we move into the new kinds of programs which are called for by the changed Jewish condition.

Those are the five questions. There are many others, and we will have to ask

them together. But what of the critical matter of resources? Do we have the funds needed to do the job of strengthening and enriching American Jewish life? Let us take a look. It is estimated that before the 1974 campaign is over the North American Jewish community will have raised about 700 million dollars in its federated campaigns. There are very few in this room who would have predicted that this would be possible, even as recently as ten months ago. Who knows what are the outer limits of the Jewish capacity to raise funds on the North American continent? Just to cite one single figure: if we were to apply the per capita giving of our better fund-raising communities to the total North American Jewish population, we would be raising something in excess of one billion dollars at this very moment. Thus, when we talk about resources we refer to a dynamic, we talk about a capacity which can be expanded, reflecting a willingness to respond to needs that have urgency and meaning to millions of Jews across this continent.

But, the argument runs, no one questions the amounts raised; it is the pattern of the distribution of funds that must be revised, if we are to meet the challenge to bring about a strong and enriched Jewish community in North America. As a veteran fund-raiser, I respond almost reflexively with the answer that *more funds* are the ultimate answer to increased needs. Certainly, in the face of the overseas requirements for the foreseeable future it is the only answer. If we are to do both jobs, there is no alternative... we must raise more.

But, it is also essential to add what the record of the past decade demonstrates about fund distribution. Whenever more funds are raised in the totality — even if substantially in response to an overseas crisis — more funds are made

available for our domestic agencies. Let me just recite three figures that reflect these changes in the decade 1960 to 1970. Federation *regular* campaign funds increased 38 percent, allocations for local purposes increased 57 percent, Federation grants for Jewish education increased 100 percent! This trend is continuing and must be accelerated in this decade.

In closing, let me emphasize that my assertions regarding the obsolescence of the idea of Diaspora cannot be the basis for diminished support to Israel. Our commitment to Israel is solid and of critical importance, especially as Israel is faced with a need to re-arrange its whole mode of existence in the face of new political and military realities. We must recognize that our overseas responsibilities have actually been increased by the changed conditions. And beyond fund-raising we have additional responsibilities to react and to help, as part of the world Jewish community. The worst we can do is to sit by uncritically as Israel undergoes the painful process of self-examination and change.

The words of the Psalmist are as vital today as ever, and we have converted them into the oath we affirm again and again: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning." Now we are called upon to articulate an additional oath reflective of the changed Jewish condition. We must solemnly affirm our commitment to strengthen and enrich Jewish life in North America. It is an oath that deals not with remembering and forgetting, but an oath of action — in Syracuse, in Chicago, in Winnipeg — wherever Jews live on this continent. All of these are essential parts of the Jewish people, each one precious, each one to be cherished and nourished as a vital ingredient of the Jewish community. This is the challenge. Dare we fail?