Jewish Education and the Jewish Community Center

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CC
association

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Preface

Jewish Education and the Jewish Community Center is the product of a unique set of events, processes, and people. It reflects an exciting period in the history of the Jewish Community Center movement - the period since the early 1980s - which might be called the "Age of Jewish Education." This age is the result of a partnership between a unique group of committed lay leaders and skilled professionals.

In 1991 a grant by the Joint Program for Jewish Education of the State of Israel - Ministry of Education and Culture, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization enabled the JCC Association to expand its Jewish educational efforts in three directions: (1) investing in the growth of the profession of the JCC Jewish educator; (2) maximizing Israel's contribution to the Center movement; and (3) developing educational materials on Jewish education and JCCs. The grant enabled the creation of a forum of Israeli educators committed to contributing to the JCC field - the counterpart to the North American Forum of Jewish Educators for JCCs. It enabled us to conduct two seminars - one in Israel and one in North America - at which the Israeli and North American educators could meet, study together and exchange ideas. Finally, it enabled the creation of this volume.

The anthology itself is a barometer of the emergence of the field of Jewish Community Center Jewish education, with its contributors ranging from academics, executive directors, lay leaders, and reflective practitioners. The style and tone of the articles vary greatly and we purposely retained their original styles in order to give the reader a sense of the diverse approaches and emphases that exist.

This volume is the first full-length documentation of a remarkable process that is happening before our eyes. The volume includes much - and leaves out even more. Hopefully it is only the beginning of the recording of one of the most exciting periods in the history of the JCC movement.

Don Scher

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of several people in the planning and production of this anthology. Mr. Zvi Inbar, Director of the Joint Program for Jewish Education of the State of Israel - Ministry of Education and Culture, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization, was instrumental in all phases of the project and we are grateful to him for his ongoing commitment to the cause of Jewish education in the JCC. This volume was made possible by a grant to the JCC Association in 1991 from the Joint Program for Jewish Education. We appreciate the support of the Joint Program Directorate, as well as the support of the Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, under the leadership of Dr. David Harman.

The idea of the volume and its initial contents emerged during the first conference of the Israel and North American Forum of Jewish Educators for JCCs, which was held in Israel in October 1992. At that time, a sub-committee of JCC educators from North America, under the chair of Mark Sokoll, Mark Charendoff and Barry Chazan, met with Israeli counterparts to develop the idea and the framework of this volume. We are grateful to that group for its time and effort, and particularly to Mark Sokoll for wise counsel and support throughout this process.

Don Scher, Assistant Executive Director of the JCC Association and Director of the Israel Office, was one of the initiators of this entire venture, and has guided it throughout its development. His leadership, vision, and practical wisdom have been critical to the project. Richard Juran, Director of Educational Programs in the JCC Association Israel Office, has also been an ongoing force behind this volume; his deep understanding of Jewish education as well as his practical expertise have enabled ideas to become realities. Debbie Sapir's role is acknowledged on the title page; however, her contribution far exceeds that citation. She has played a remarkable role in all dimensions of this project, and this anthology has been significantly shaped by her skill.

B.C., M.

Dedication

The subject of this volume - Jewish education - and the setting in which the volume was planned and produced - the State of Israel - reflect two of the primary values of the JCC Association and the Jewish Community Center movement. Israel and Jewish education are central to the ideology and the daily life of the Center world. Nowhere do these two values find more authentic expression than in the life and work of the Executive Vice-President of the JCC Association, Arthur Rotman.

From his earliest days in Montreal, Art was ignited by the vision and the dream of the Zionist Movement and the State of Israel. That vision has accompanied his professional work in Centers in Montreal and Pittsburgh, and in leadership of the JWB and the JCC Association over the past 17 years.

Art Rotman was the professional partner in a remarkable development which took place in the JCC Association beginning in the 1980s - the emergence of Jewish education as a primary Center mandate. This exciting period in the history of the Center movement was the result of a unique partnership between outstanding lay leaders and an outstanding professional team that joined together in this important venture.

Art Rotman is the professional who made it happen; he truly "seized the day" and in his unique style - with calm, dignity, grace, and patience - worked with us to make this revolution happen. He has done it his way, which means a minimum of words and a maximum of action and results.

Ultimately, the achievement of Art Rotman does not belong to the past, but rather lies in his building of a foundation for the future. In the Talmud there is a wonderful story about an Art Rotman kind of leader:

> Honi the circle drawer was walking on the road and noticed a man planting a carob tree. He asked him when he thought that the tree would bear fruit.
> "After seventy years," was the reply of the man planting the tree.
> "Do you expect to live seventy years and eat the fruit of your labor?" asked Honi.
> "I did not find the world without carob trees when I entered it," said the man, "and as my fathers planted for me before I was born, so do I plant for those who will come after me."

The Jewish Community Center movement has already seen the fruits of Art Rotman's planting; at the same time, he has built a foundation whose fruits and products will be enjoyed for many years to come.

How does a movement thank a person who has made contributions of the scope of Art Rotman? We can think of no better expression of our feeling than a book about Jewish education published in the city of Jerusalem. The book discusses many dimensions of the field that Art Rotman helped to create; in that sense it is a drama in which he is a main character.

This book was created in Jerusalem, a city which has become one of the Rotman family homes. It reflects values and dreams that are at the very core of Art and his worldview.

On behalf of the National Board of the JCC Association and the lay and professional leadership of this wonderful organization, we are proud to be able to dedicate this pioneering volume on Jewish education in Jewish Community Centers in the 1980s - 1990s to the Executive Vice-President of our agency for the past 17 years, Mr. Arthur Rotman.

Morton Mandel
Lester Pollack

L Introduction

L A Late December Day in the JCC

by Barry Chazan
Jewish Educational Consultant,
Jewish Community Center Association

It is a late December day. The parking lot is full. As you enter the building you are greeted by an imposing menorah. The lobby is decorated with holiday streamers and the gift shop is doing a brisk business in Hanukkah candles and *hanukkiot.* Parents of pre-school children are picking up their youngsters, who clutch jelly-smudged pictures of Jerusalem, the rebuilt Holy Temple, and Judah Maccabee. There is a constant stream of people dressed in sweats and carrying gym bags, headed to the workout room. Smells of potato pancakes drift from the snack bar. The bulletin board announces tonight events: 1. Aerobic Class; 2. Parents Workshop on "The December Dilemma"; 3. Lecture on "Solutions to the Middle East Conflict" by a visiting professor from the Hebrew University; 4. Discussion on "How to Age Gracefully"; 5. Preparation Program for Board Seminar in Israel. As you walk down the halls, you are surrounded by pictures of holiday observances in Jewish communities around the world. The Jewish education specialist dashes by on her way to a meeting with the physical education director to discuss ways of introducing Jewish themes into the world of the gym. There are *mezuzot* and Hebrew signs on the doors of the rooms. The people wandering around are wearing a rainbow assortment of jeans, running outfits, business suits, Nikes, Reebocks and Converse All Stars.

You have entered the world of the end-of-the-century, suburban North American JCC. Some of it looks very Jewish; some of it looks like any other contemporary North American recreational center. It is a new neighborhood of Jewish life. It does not look like the Lower East Side at the turn of the century, or like Jewish Warsaw between the two world wars, or Tel Aviv in the 1990s. Parts of it resemble the typical modern North American leisure landscape, yet it retains a uniquely Jewish flavor.

All sorts of Jews pass through its halls: religious, assimilated, observant, liberal, inter-married, searching. Its doors are open to Jews of all persuasions and all inclinations. It is one of the few places where Jews of all kinds meet together. It is a center of many diverse Jewish activities. You can find there intensive courses in Jewish study; lecture series on contemporary Israel; pre-school teachers singing Hebrew songs and teaching about Jewish values; staff members studying Jewish history and philosophy; public ceremonies marking all of the Jewish holidays; Jewish artifacts prominently displayed. Jewish experiences happen in this neighborhood.

It is also a place where Jews of the '90s participate in recreational and cultural activities which characterize contemporary life. They work out in spacious health clubs, play basketball in huge gyms, swim in Olympic-size pools. Teens and adults meet over a cup of coffee or a Coke in the snack bar; parents buy Jewish gifts in the gift shop; families observe Yom HaShoa and Israel Independence Day together in the lobby or on the lawn. Jewish people fill this neighborhood. Over one million Jews of all ages enter the doors of JCCs across North America yearly. For some, this is one of many Jewish agencies which they frequent; for others it may be the only Jewish neighborhood they visit - and the only Jewish oxygen they breathe.

The story of Jewish education in the JCC is the story of pumping Jewish oxygen into that neighborhood. This is a different kind of Jewish education; it does not follow all of the usual forms and categories. Its "teachers" are not generally graduates of schools of education; it doesn't have a "curriculum" in the classical sense; its classrooms spill out of the normal four-wall structure. Indeed, the world of Jewish education in JCCs follows another script. It is a story which spells itself out in many diverse spheres of the Center building and life.

One of the most prominent areas of Jewish life in the JCC is the early childhood education program. Most Centers include impressive and expansive areas devoted to high-quality programs and facilities for young children. The presence of these programs, first and foremost, enlivens the halls of the building with young voices, squeals, and occasional whimpers. Pre-school programs offer innumerable opportunities for singing Hebrew songs, baking *hamentaschen, latkes and Malian,* telling stories of Jewish heroes and heroines, adorning the walls with artwork on Jewish themes. Pre-school programs also provide an excellent window for reaching out to parents who come to the building daily with their charges. There are special holiday workshops for parents, parent-child activities, newsletters that are sent home. Indeed, there is a growing recognition that the age of young parenting is a critical moment for recapturing and reinvolving young parents whose own Jewish identity concerns were not addressed in their adolescent or young adult lives.

A second arena of Jewish activity in the JCC is the summer camp. The camp offers a wealth of opportunities for introducing Jewish content and values in an enjoyable and accessible manner. Teams can have Hebrew or historical names. Pre-Shabbat celebrations can be conducted. Re-enactment of exciting historical events can take place in outdoor settings. Visiting Israelis can be part of the staff. Jewish foods and customs can easily be introduced. The camp allows for naturally doing things which are part of the normal Jewish life cycle.

The over-all Jewish ambience of the Center is a third critical arena for advancing the Jewish mission of the agency. Jewishly influenced signs, pictures, foods, symbols, and music turn a recreational facility into a Jewish neighborhood. Holiday preparations and exhibits affect everyone who comes into the building - including those who otherwise might never have any contact with Jewish events.

Adult Jewish learning is an additional arena of great importance in the Center world. Centers across North America have devoted much energy to innovative and diverse programs of adult learning for their members, lay leaders and professionals,

including: institutes for Jewish learning which encompass diverse courses, seminars, and workshops on Bible, Jewish history, and contemporary Jewry; the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School network - a successful project in adult Jewish learning developed by the Hebrew University's Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora; lecture series and visiting scholars; the *Derech Torah program - a* one-year course in basic Judaism which originated at New York's 92nd Street Y and has since spread to several other Centers across the country. These programs are open and available to all Jews regardless of background or lack thereof.

One of the exciting new areas in Jewish education that has evolved during the past decade is Jewish family education, which is aimed at affecting the Jewishness of the entire family. Family education not only encompasses educational activities, programs and experiences at the Center, but seeks to empower the families to increase their Jewish learning and celebrating at home. Jewish family education is trying to address the needs of the many different configurations of contemporary Jewish families.

Most Centers today provide a year-round calendar of Jewish celebrations and happenings. Holidays like Israeli Independence Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, Purim and Hanukkah are marked buy public ceremonies at the JCC. Preparations for holidays like Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, Pesach are felt throughout the building. Jewish Book Month is celebrated by displays and bazaars. Israeli film festivals are held. Several Centers have Jewish museums and theater companies. Visiting speakers and entertainers on Jewish themes appear throughout the year. Anyone who comes into the building any day of the year will be touched by a Jewish event.

Centers are increasingly being staffed by professionals who have Jewish interests or knowledge. A growing number of Center executives have made Jewish education, identity and continuity a major priority. Such executives have put Jewish education and continuity on the agenda of board meetings; they have made sure that board meetings include a *dear Torah;* they have invested in Israel staff and board seminars; they have worked to obtain a full-time Jewish educator; they have brought visiting scholars, lecture series, study programs into the community; they themselves have begun to study; they have created connections and alliances with the larger Jewish educational world locally and nationally; they have become advocates and spokespersons of the motto of Jewish education. JCC staff members have increasingly become conscious of the Jewish mission of the Center as well. You can see them going to class, reading Jewish books, or discussing Jewish topics. Boards, too, devote more time to the Jewish dimensions of the JCC. Many Centers have developed new missions statements which highlight Jewish concerns. Some boards actually study together regularly.

Many Centers now employ a full-time professional who is responsible for agency-wide Jewish education. Since the early 1980s, when JCCs in Chicago, Boston and Los Angeles first engaged senior Jewish educators for Jewish educational planning and program implementation, the full-time Jewish educator has become a mainstay of Center life. These educators assume responsibility for a broad range of activities all aimed at deepening the Jewish consciousness of the agency: staff training, board

training, Israel seminars, Jewish content in summer camp, early childhood education, teen programming, adult Jewish learning, Russian absorption. They have become catalysts and initiators of new ideas and enriched activities in the Jewish sphere. The human ambiance of Centers has become more Jewishly predisposed.

You might well feel a greater presence of Israel in the JCC. Many JCCs have *shlichim from* Israel who conduct extensive Israel-related programming. Over one-third of North American Jewish Community Centers have participated in a program of special staff training seminars in Israel organized by the JCC Association's Israel Office and over two-thirds of the executive directors have been to Israel in recent years in an educational context. These seminars, which focus on such key issues as Jewish identity, pluralism, public affairs, and Israel-Diaspora relations, have heightened the sense of the Jewish mission of the Center, deepened the personal Jewish identity and knowledge of Center staff, and provided staff with new ideas and resources for Jewish activities in their local agency.

This is a Jewish education of a different breed. It is not instead of classrooms, synagogues, or formal Jewish learning. Centers develop environments, create gateways, and open windows of opportunity. They reach out to Jews and welcome them into the fold. Centers join the other agencies in the community in the larger cause of Jewish identity and continuity. This is a Jewish educational world very much shaped by the human dimension: it is rooted in the concept *of klal Yisrael* and it reaches out to Jews wherever and whoever they are. It does not come to complete the work of Jewish education by itself, neither does it feel free not to play an important role in enabling Jews to feel good, comfortable, and influenced by the richness of their civilization and tradition. It is a Jewish educational world which has taken great strides in the past decade - and which is committed to doing its work better and more thoroughly in the decades to come.

This anthology is about enriching the Jewish potential of the JCC. Come stroll through this world, be effected by it, and help it become a force for Jewish continuity.

2. Credo for a Movement: Jewish Education on a National Level

by Arthur Rotman
Executive mice-President,
Jewish Community Center Association

The Commission on Maximizing Jewish Educational Effectiveness in Jest ish Community Centers, known also as the Mandel Commission in recognition of Morton Mandel's leadership, represented a turning point in the North American Jewish Community Center movement. By highlighting the role of the JCC as an agent of enhancing and protecting Jewish continuity in North America, the Commission's findings virtually redefined the JCC's mission, calling on it to make Jewish education its primary objective. Today, 10 years after the Commission concluded its work, the JCC's role in the Jewish educational enterprise seems so obvious that it is hard to remember it differently.

The notion that effective Jewish education is critical to the survival of the Jewish people is not a new one; it is rooted in one of our basic religious tenets. We are reminded of it every time we pronounce *the Shema.* The familiar words "Hear 0 Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One," are followed by this admonition:

> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words that I command you this day shall be in your heart. Teach them faithfully to your children. And speak of them in your home and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up.

This is one of the few but important texts in which the issue of Jewish education is addressed. It does not limit "teaching these words" to a school, or a synagogue, to specific hours, or specific months. Rather, it clearly instructs that Jewish learning should - and must - take place throughout our lives, at all times and in all places. Effective Jewish education certainly necessitates formal teaching, but it also requires making optimal use of informal settings. Overnight camps, day camps, early childhood education programs and adult education courses are as important as a Hebrew school classroom. Even leisure time can be exploited for Jewish educational purposes.

The "children" referred to in this admonition are not necessarily people under a certain age; they can be teenagers, adults, seniors, or whole family units. And "walking by the way" alludes to the public domain, which includes a communal gathering place. The JWB (now the JCC Association of North America) Board of Directors must have had the *Shema* in mind - perhaps unconsciously - when it took the historic step to create the Maximizing Commission, because there is no place in

today's Jewish world that encompasses all of these elements better than the Jewish Community Center.

On a recent trip to Israel I met with some colleagues with whom I have worked closely for many years. We recalled the sentiment that prevailed in Israel in 1958, when I first visited Israel. Israelis then overwhelmingly believed that Israel was the only place in which Judaism could thrive, that there was no hope for a Jewish future in the Diaspora, especially not in North America. My Israeli colleagues cited the recent findings of the CH 1990 Jewish Population Study which indicated the lack of a feeling of Jewish identity among many Jews throughout North America as evidence that they were right. I disagreed. They were wrong in 1958 and they are wrong today.

The then JWB Board of Directors did not need the disheartening results of a comprehensive population study to incite it to action, The board members created the Commission on Maximizing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of JCCs in 1983 because they recognized then that Jewish education is the key to our survival. The Maximizing Commission unleashed a torrent of change. Its recommendations prompted modifications programming, activities, objectives and the basic way in which JCCs perceived their mission. The JCC movement today bears little resemblance to the movement of a decade ago.

During the course of its work, the Commission visited 32 JCCs throughout the United States and Canada. It became apparent that changes were already beginning, but the Commission brought an air of urgency to the task. The final report, prepared in 1984, summarized both the innovations taking place and outlined the initiatives to be undertaken. In its conclusion, the report stated:

> The starting point for the JCC is no longer Jewish programming just because the users or members are Jewish, but rather providing appropriate Jewish educational experiences as a vital means of insuring Jewish continuity.

A decade has passed since that visionary report was published and the progress made in the effort to maximize the Jewishness of JCCs during the past 10 years has been impressive. To measure the specific changes, the JCC Association commissioned Professor Bernard Reisman, Director of the Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service at Brandeis University, to conduct an evaluation study. among Reisman's findings in Social Chan e and Response - Assessing Efforts to aximize Jewish Educational Effectiveness in Jewish Community Centers in North America were the following important data:

- 76% of the JCCs reported that the overall flavor of their facilities had become "more Jewish";
- 69% reported an increase in the importance of Jewishness among staff;
- 77% reported greater collaboration with other Jewish organizations;
- 79% reported a greater extent of Jewish programming.

Reisman also found significant advancement in the area of inter-agency cooperation between JCCs and other Jewish communal organizations, which resulted from the Mandel Commission's recommendations. The Commission had clearly stated that despite the great progress being made by Centers, it was never the intention of the JCC movement to try to achieve its goals for Jewish continuity alone. Rather, the Commission encouraged JCCs to reach out to partners in the community with whom they could combine efforts. Reisman found copious examples of JCC cooperation with Bureaus of Jewish Education, Hebrew schools, synagogues and Federations, illustrating the improvement in agency relationships and enhancement of the overall communal awareness of JCCs. The important accomplishments of the past 10 years were not made by JCCs alone.

Changes have also taken place in the key area of funding. Recently, a number of Jewish family foundations, each with assets in the hundreds of millions of dollars and each concerned with the issues of Jewish continuity, have emerged in the Jewish world. They are an addition to the traditional sources of funding which could give JCCs the fiscal strength to address the needs of the 1990s and beyond. The JCC Association staff recognizes that one of its evolving tasks is to provide Centers with the skills and approaches necessary for them to access appropriate new funding sources. We must prepare Centers to reach out to sources that will enable them to not only continue the good work that they already do, but to accomplish all of the goals that must be reached in the name of Jewish continuity.

The JCC Association can also help Centers in their efforts to enhance their Jewishness by facilitating connections between them and other like-minded parties and organizations that have similar interests in ensuring Jewish continuity. The Association must bring the Centers closer to the rest of the Jewish community, and must assume a leadership role in that larger community.

Our mandate - to ensure Jewish continuity by fostering Jewish education "with all our soul and with all our might . . . in our homes and when we walk by the way, when we lie down and when we rise up" - is clear. With the continued energy of the JCCs across the continent, we will accomplish that work.

II. Ideology and JCC Jewish Education

This section deals with some of the basic ideological questions which underlie the essence of the Jewish educational enterprise in JCCs. David Dubin asks whether and how JCCs can be pluralistic. Yehiel Poupko challenges the JCC to be the modern heir to the holy task of the transmission of Jewish tradition. Zvi Bekerman, Barry Chazan, and David Resnick attempt to explain what informal education means and how it is implemented in JCCs today. Gerry Bubis asks whether those who go to JCCs constitute a unique breed of contemporary Jew. While the essays in this section do not answer all of the major questions, they do help us understand them and their importance to the challenge of Jewish education.

3. Israel and Pluralism
Framing an Ideology for the Jewish Community Center[1]

by David Dubin
Executive Director,
JCC on the Palisades, Tenafly, New Jersey

The concept of pluralism is the foundation upon which the North erican Jewish Community Center movement is based. Israel, which is a pluralistic society in structure but not in mentality, illustrates several implications of pluralism that can be usefully applied to the Center movement: an emphasis on the ties that bind all Jews together, the encouragement of disagreement and a respect for disagreement, the development of strategies that promote a toleration of differences, and a recognition of the importance of religious expression. In this article I will examine the issue of pluralism in Israel to see how it mi[g]ht be instructive for our work in North American JCCs.

Pluralism and Zionism

Pluralism is defined as a social condition in which disparate religious, ethnic, racial, and political groups are part of a common community and live together harmoniously, enriched by their differences. It is the ultimate condition of democracy and freedom. Unlike the melting pot theory that sought to deny differences, pluralism defines democracy as t the right to be different. How does Israel measure up to this lofty ideal? How did its social and political evolution influence its current circumstance of pluralism?

In an Israel shaped and rules in its formative years by Socialist-Secularists who were politically animated by the Labor [P]arty, the concept of the collective predominated over individual rights. Unlike the United States, a multiethnic society with a positive ethos of tolerance and individual rights as reflected in its Bill of Rights, Israel has no such document. The ethos of Israel was to foster the will of the collective and to concern itself with the destiny of the Jewish people. The mission of Zionism was to serve a "people" not "individuals" and the state was founded on this principle. In the United states, tolerance is a governing ideal; in Israel, sufferance is the governing ideal. As it has been said, "It is easy to pray for the ingathering of exiles, but it is different to live with them."

To its credit, Israel recognizes this problem The Army and the schools teach tolerance as part of their curriculum. The Adenauer Foundation is developing a

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[1]Reprinted with permission from *The Journal* of *Jewish Communal Service, Vol. 67,* No. *1,* Fall, 1990, pp. 35 - 42.

curriculum on tolerance at Hebrew University, and *Savlanut* (the Hebrew word for tolerance) is an organization that plans symposia on tolerance for Israeli citizens. As an Israeli put it, "We need to discover brothers we don't even know." Indeed, Israel understands the cumulative impact of its obsession with the collective and is equally conscious of the dizzying multitude of religious, ethnic, and political populations and factions within its midst and of the conflicts that they breed. Given its social history and prevailing heterogeneity, Israel not only survives and overcomes, it moves forward dynamically and tenaciously, and it continues to absorb and integrate without respite.

In the United States, when Jews do not like one another, they form a new synagogue, or move to a new community. In Israel, there are no cities of refuge, no gilded ghettos, no new Israels. The country pulsates with the turbulence of diversity and a clashing of cultures unrivaled elsewhere. Israel is a pluralistic society in structure not yet in mentality. Its problems are so complex and bewildering that they leap out at you and force you to think about how they affect you personally and professionally. Viewed from this backdrop, there are a number of implications for the Jewish Community Center movement in North America.

A **Judaism** That Unites

In Jerusalem on Yom HaShoa, a siren echoed throughout the country, and I found myself standing still in utter silence for one minute with almost every other Jew in Israel. The country was paralyzed as Jews throughout the land stood in awesome, frozen silence in memory of the martyrs of the Holocaust. *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim,* ultra-Orthodox and ultra non-Orthodox, Ashkenazim and Sephardim, right wingers and left wingers, natives and tourists, old and young, rich and poor stood next to each other. During this one minute period, all differences evaporated. All Jews stood as one in memory of a painful episode in their common heritage. The imagery of a united, mournful, and motionless Jewry in Israel was almost surrealistic, but there is a lesson to be learned from it.

When Jews confront the issue of survival, particularly in relation to their past, they coalesce. Daniel Elazar observes that when the *intifada* began, there was a closing of ranks. The quarrels of the ultra-Orthodox and extreme secularists disappeared from the streets. Nobody fought over opening movie theaters on Shabbat Although hawks and doves continued to express their views openly, the decibel level of Israeli politics was lowered noticeably.

Jews in Israel can debate endlessly their political future. Yet, when they commemorate Yom HaShoa, Yom HaZikaron, Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim, they weep as brothers, pray in solemn oneness, and rejoice in frenzied unity. The past, the shared memories, history, and heroes bind one to another even as they know that their opinions about the future divide them. The past can be reconciling and harmonizing, not in terms of one's interpretation of the meaning of history, but in the collective memory of a shared heritage that recalls our people's struggle for survival.

In North America, the Jewish Community Center movement, committed to peoplehood and pluralism, may gain some insights from the Israel experience. Israel, with all its notorious conflict, even hatred, is able to find and plan moments of peace and coherence through its commitment to memories of the past and its obsession with survival. Surely an agency that is a powerful agent for Jewish continuity can maximize its commitment to pluralism by underscoring the same common threads that unite us. Remember that the conditions of pluralism can be achieved by means that may appear to be dramatically opposite; namely, by accentuating and accepting difference (to be discussed later) and by fostering harmony and commonalities through an understanding of the ties that bind us. These ties are not difficult to identify for they are guideposts for the Center's ideology. They include a strong emphasis on shared Jewish values, such as community responsibility. *faith, tzedekah,* religious expression, social justice, family stability, Jewish learning, and *shalom bayit.* The teaching and programming of these values should permeate our services. Creative programmatic expressions of our collective memory that are designed to illuminate our common heritage, with particular emphasis on the sobering and healing impact of our struggle for survival, would contribute immeasurably to fostering a sense of unity and commonality for a people that has in fact survived because of its rich and magnificent mosaic of diversity.

Dissent and Disagreement

Pluralism encourages disagreement. but discourages dissent, which involves a rejection of the system. One can express disagreement at any time, and sometimes crises are the most appropriate times to do so. Disagreement over policies is an essential part of the democratic process. Unfortunately, in Israel, dissent is widespread, and its corollaries are adversity and hatred. Thus, Israel is pluralistic in composition and structure, but not in mentality and spirit. The fundamentalist reaction to expressions of modernity within religious life animates this problem, and the consequences are both foreboding and frightening. Our tradition teaches us that the Second Temple was destroyed not because of idol worship or heresy but because Jews treated one another with *Sinat Chinam* - hatred. God apparently viewed this deficiency as worthy of capital punishment. In Israel, there is too much *Sinat Chinam* growing out of an inability to differentiate disagreement from dissent and anger for the opinion from the opinion giver. The *Haredim* react violently to women seeking a sense of participation at the Western Wall, and the secularists and others react hatefully to their violent reactions. The vicious cycle spirals, and the spirit of pluralism is thwarted.

Our consciousness of this phenomenon should sensitize us to the nuances of pluralism in Centers. In our agencies, we should encourage disputation and provoke controversy, not for the sake of controversy, but from our conviction about the importance of a free exchange of ideas and respect for difference. We must remember that *Halachah grew out* of disputation within the spirit of love for Torah. During the time of the oral Torah, there was much disagreement,. but there was no corollary of hatred because there was respect for difference and for the framework in

which that difference was expressed. It was somewhat akin to the Hegelian construct of synthesis and antithesis. One posits a theory, out of which grows an antithesis, which in turn generates a conflict, out of which grows a deeper level of knowledge, which in turn creates a thesis and antithesis, and the process builds on itself. Similarly in social work education, we learn that the highest level of decision making comes not from domination or even compromise but from integration, a process of conflict that is resolved not from one alternative or the other, but from a new and creative synthesis, a resolution that is better than both alternatives.

Our Center programs of education should be designed to help people understand and struggle with all dimensions of a given issue, to raise their level of consciousness and knowledge, to help them form convictions on critical issues, and to be comfortable in expressing these convictions so that they are able to enter the arena of disagreement with confidence. Every Jewish issue that is important to the Jewish people should be part of our curriculum of Jewish education. Too many of our members suffer not from the quality of their opinions, but from the fact that they have no opinions. Jewish education means that we help people with two dimensions of Jewish education as we satisfy our mission of pluralism. First we help them enter the arena of disagreement, and second, we design the environment of education in a way that teaches respect for disagreement. All too often, our strategy and objectives in education are not planfully formulated to convey our own conviction of the importance of separating opinion from opinion giver, of civility, and perhaps most important, of the possibility of adjusting one's point of view. Our tradition teaches us about the classic conflicts between the schools of Hillel and Shammai. at we do not always learn, however, is as particularly relevant quality of the school of Mel. Its students were required to learn the arguments of the Shammai school for two reasons: to understand fully the other point of view and to leave themselves open to modifying their point of view. In our planning for Jewish education programs, we would do well to follow in the spirit of Bet "Rel.

Pluralism Breeds Conflict

Zionism strove to integrate two conflicting premises: the collective particularism of Jewish aspirations to an independent national state and the universalism of modern Western civilization (Cohen, 1983). The Jewish state was to be an enlightened state, one in which the secular values of freedom, justice and equality for all citizens without difference of race, nationality, or religion would be realized fully. was to be a fully democratic state in which universalistic principles would govern the relations between all citizens without difference of race, nationality, or religion would be realized fully. It was to be a fully democratic state in which universalistic principles would govern the relations between all citizens. According to the high expectations of Zionist idealists, it was to be a "light unto the nations." The Zionist dream called for an ingathering of all the exiles, but it did not envision the nature nor the extent of the problems resulting from the conflicting principles of particularism and universalism.

The absorption of immigrants, particularly Sephardic Jews during the 1950s-1970s, is a salient illustration of the consequence of these conflicting components (Cohen, 1983). During that time, the government conceived of absorption in broad ideological terms as a complete re-education or resocialization of the newcomer who would become a new person, switch worlds, and internalize a new scale of secular and nationalistic values. The Orientals were required to relinquish most of their traditional values. Too, they did not enjoy the protection and assistance of powerful patrons. Orientals became second-class citizens and for a long time were considered incompletely absorbed and judged incompetent to perform central roles in the emergent society.

The first significant protest movement of Oriental Jewish youth began in the early 1970s in the form of the Black Panthers who were the precursors of the distinctly ethnic Tami Party. In time, the realization of the consequences of deculturation of the Oriental community led to an emerging consciousness of ethnic ideology or civil religion, with efforts to establish Oriental Jewry as an equal but distinct partner with the Ashkenazim within the common framework of the Jewish nation. Israel seemed to have learned its lesson from the early 1970s so that the resettlement of Soviet emigres during the late 1970s was far more humane and sensitive than its earlier absorption of the Sephardim. In fact, this superior treatment was recognized by the Sephardim and contributed to the Black Panther uprising.

The Oriental absorption experience suggests two important insights that have relevance to our agencies. Pluralism is a double-edged sword. When societies adopt the principle of cultural pluralism, either in the formation of a state based on a messianic dream, or as an expression of democracy that welcomes all who wish to experience the sweet taste of freedom, they must recognize the challenges of diversity and expressions of ethnic distinctiveness, When people are encouraged to express their individuality under the liberating banner of democracy and freedom, there is inevitably a reactive backlash to these expressions, which results in conflict, intolerance, and a mentality of anti-pluralism. In other words, a policy of pluralism that does not take into account the sensitive management of pluralism leads to antis pluralism. When Theodore Herzl accommodated the religious elements within the Zionist movement after the Basel conference of 1987, encouraging Orthodox elements to organize themselves into a political party within the World Zionist Organization, and Mizrachi did in fact join, he could not anticipate the *Haredis* Secularist conflict of 80 years later. In fact, he was heralded as a statesman for his pluralistic and inclusionary policy. Similarly, when Ben Gurion and the Mapai Party granted concessions to the Orthodox community to achieve unity in an agreement known as the "status quo," he assumed that Orthodoxy would eventually dissolve while he was buying time for a front of unity and pluralism. But a policy of pluralism does not ensure a state of pluralism, just as the policy of Glasnost has also "liberated" the virulent antis-Semitic group, the Pamyat, to demonstrate openly and wantonly their hatred for Jews. Without planning, for thought, and education, a policy of pluralism can lead to anti-pluralism.

In our agencies, therefore, it is not sufficient to embrace the concept of pluralism. We must also anticipate its impact and potential consequences. It is not sufficient to welcome minority groups into the Center, such as *Hasidim,* Israelis, and Soviet emigres, without preparing educationally and politically for their integration and for the acceptance of their unique differences,

The Soviet emigres are a case in point. Our agencies are an important instrument in the resettlement of Soviet emigres. As humanists and pluralists, we welcome them and seek ways to integrate them into our agencies and to connect them to Jewish communal life. Yet, we must also anticipate problems that could result from this pluralistic ethos.

One Center has been so responsive to Soviet Jews that the rest of its membership no longer uses the Center pool on Sundays because it is so heavily populated by Soviet Jews during that time. Other agencies report that there is hostility in the community because Soviet Jews are using scholarship funds for camp and nursery school that would normally be granted to local indigent families. Still others report that there is arrant discrimination among Center members toward Soviet Jews whom they feel to be socially and culturally Philistine. Other agencies report similar if not identical problems with regard to ultra-Orthodox or Israeli subgroups in their communities. To embrace these groups as members or, even more problematic, for leadership positions, because we are accepting of all Jews under a policy of pluralism, does not automatically ensure them a pluralistic environment. We need to understand the limitations of tolerance and the sociological and political dynamics in the integration of diverse populations within our agencies; from this understanding can be derived environmental and educational strategies that will help facilitate successful absorption. We may never be able to eliminate intolerance, but surely we can blunt its force with a proactive response: an anticipation of what happens to people sociologically and psychologically when they are faced with the reality of cultural pluralism and the development of appropriate policy responses.

The second insight evident in the Oriental absorption experience in Israel relates to the power of particularity and a caution against the distortion of pluralism. In time the Sephardic community has made great strides, although true equality has yet to be achieved. The contribution of Oriental Jews to the Zionist enterprise is now recognized as the history of Oriental Jewry and it suffering at the hands of the Arabs are taught in schools. More attention is paid to the literary, artistic, and musical heritage of Oriental Jewry. They have achieved greater political strength and in fact were a major factor in dislodging the Labor Party from power in the 1977 Likud victory. There is now a ZS% intermarriage rate between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. The power of their particularity could not be suppressed, and the policy to deculturize them was doomed to fail.

The authentic definition of pluralism allows for the expression of difference within the common. To suggest that pluralism means that one must blend into a universal community is as distortion of pluralism, and, in fact, is the antithesis of pluralism because it is exclusionary. As an illustration, a group of Orthodox parents request a separate unit in the Center day camp. They want their children to have an

experience that would reflect their commitment to traditional mitzvot and at the same time be part of a common community and be integrated into many of the camp activities. We should view this request as totally legitimate within the framework of authentic pluralism. To argue that the Center is a unifying instrument that stresses integrative, communal activity and where people who are different can share their differences is to miss the point of pluralism. Separation does not mean parochialism or rejection. It is the means by which people say, "We want to foster the perpetuation of our unique traditions, our particularity, even as we remain part of the common community." To answer this group by saying that you can only express your difference as you blend in with the majority is to pervert pluralism because it in fact limits and excludes the expression of difference within the common.

The acceptance of difference within the common, as compared to blending or even worse to deculturation through integration, would apply equally to other Jewish ideological groups. A group of Conservative Jewish children who attend Ramah Camp; whose sense of *"roach"* is different from that of the majority, or a group of Reform Jewish children who want to be together to express their unique perspective should also be encouraged to "separate" if they desire to do so. Every form of positive Jewish behavior that conveys a passion for unique expression should be welcome into the common. We humanists must learn that separate is not a dirty word and that our community orientation is not subverted by experiences of separatism that are in fact consistent with authentic pluralism. Unfortunately, the Orthodox community is frequently in the center of such controversy, and the reaction is often to that specific population and not the issue. When a colleague recently reported how his Center had scheduled the athletic and swim facilities in order to accommodate the large Hasidic population in his community with separate usage periods, it was evident that he understood how pluralism can truly be translated within our agencies.

Pluralism and Religion

Perhaps the most critical problem of pluralism in Israel is the religious conflict that is primarily seen in the opposition of Orthodox to secular and Orthodox to Orthodox. It is often expressed in vitriol and violence, particularly as it relates to concepts of Zionism, Messianism, and fundamental Jewish beliefs. For example, the *Haredi* believe that Israel remains in Gaut (exile) because it is governed by secular Jews, whereas the Mercaz Harav (followers of Rav Cook including the *Gush Emunim)* believe that the Land of Israel is sacrosanct, even if it is controlled by secularists, and represents a beginning step toward *Geula* (redemption). Clearly, there is no monolithic definition of religious life in Israel or even within the separate religious subgroups. The divisions are deep and wide and, in recent years, have become more pronounced and politicized. Pluralism, in its ideal form, recognizes the authenticity of each group as part of the rich texture of society and encourages diverse religious expression. When one group imposes and impinges on the rights of others, pluralism breaks down and a schism develops.

The issue of pluralism and religion as it relates to Jewish Community Centers lies in the traditional response of Centers to religion, which is one of avoidance and neutrality. at Israel teaches us is that religion, however divisive, is a force that must be reckoned with, particularly in an environment that strives to be pluralistic. The religious community cannot be underestimated for it has a powerful influence on the country and contributes profoundly to its biblical and historical character. As one enlightened secularist stated, "There can be no Israel without the Orthodox religious community because it serves as a reminder that there is a relationship between Israel and Torah." In our own communities, we must also acknowledge the significant role played by religious institutions in the formation and expression of Jewish identity. In Centers, we have never really come to terms with our feelings toward religion and religious institutions other than to proclaim our universality and neutrality and to deny any theological orientation. Our credo is that religion belongs in the synagogue, whereas Jewish culture, education and identity belong in the Center. We no longer need to tread carefully in our expressions about religion. Now especially, as Centers have committed themselves to becoming significant agents of Jewish continuity and Jewish education, we should be sufficiently secure to embrace religious expression as an important component of our pluralistic ideology.

The nineteenth century philosopher, William James, was so struck by the diversity of the world around him that he found it difficult to retain a belief in God's oneness. In the end, he maintained God's unity to his satisfaction by conceiving of the universe as a great federal republic; one infinitely pluralistic and diverse but constitutionally ordered under God. How else do we find order in this world of diversity, except through God's oneness, which prevents us from lapsing into the vulgar relativism of "anything that exists goes" and requires us to find a universal constitutional order that recognizes both the reality and legitimacy of diversity, yet keeps it within bounds (Elazar, 1988). Diverse religious expression is one way by which we exercise free will, make moral choices, and express ourselves Jewishly. Religious expression seen in this light must be embraced uninhibitedly by Centers as a primary value in discharging our commitment to pluralism. If we can at least bring ourselves to feel that the belief in the oneness of God does not undermine our universalism or offend the secularists or atheists among us, we need not be guarded in expressing ourselves about religion because. the support of religious expression is germane to our own purposes. In fact, the principle of "oneness of God" simply offers us boundaries so that we can express our free will and beliefs pluralistically.

We need to be more proactive in encouraging our membership to affiliate with synagogues and attend day schools, to explore avenues of religious expression, to increase observance of mitzvot, to adopt a Jewish philosophy of life, and to be able to articulate it. We must recognize our own limitations and not gloat over the fact that many members now exclusively define their "Jewish affiliation" by referring to their membership in the Center. For some, it may very well be a convenient alternative that serves to protect them from a more serious commitment to Judaism. The Center can, in fact, be used as the last bastion of the secularist when we make no Jewish religious or philosophical demands on our members. This is not to deny the

heroic work done by Centers in inspiring Jewish identity through activity and education. Neither is the point being made to suggest that we ought to adopt a single religious orientation. Certainly, this would be anti-ethical to our communal and pluralistic approach. Yet, pluralism does not mean the denial of religious expression. Rather, it means we do not practice one form of religion or the other because we are accepting of all forms of Jewish religious expression. It would be a measure of our maturity to recognize all that we do that is so positive, but also to recognize that we can take our members only so far and that we should encourage them to move further and deeper into Judaism in order to find meaning and purpose in the exercise of their free will and in the belief in the oneness of God.

Pluralism as an Ideology

Many years ago, Centers were subject to harsh criticism by skeptics who questioned the depth of their Jewish commitment and program. They argued that, although Centers did sponsor some benign Jewish activities, in truth, they were superficial and too universal, and in reality, the only way to reach people meaningfully was through a more Jewish religious orientation. How ironic it is that today, precisely because there is such religious strife and bitterness, almost a schism, that pluralism in counterpoint emerges as a kind of profound ideology itself. In cont rastto the destructiveness and divisiveness of religious conflict, pluralism represents a calming and nurturing credo that accepts, embraces, and unites all Jews. Religious fervency, which was purported to give us depth, now bring us heartache and intolerance, whereas pluralism, which was purported to be superficial, now brings us depth and understanding. We take pride in our commitment to pluralism because our Centers embody this principle in both faith and action, creed and deed. We believe in the integrity of every Jew whom we recognize is created in the image of God. We proclaim unequivocally that all Jews, regardless of their beliefs or orientation, will find acceptance and validation in our family of Centers. Even more so, we are committed to help them find opportunities for personal and spiritual growth within a Jewish environment that unites and binds through memory and tradition, that differentiates between disagreement and dissent, that invites inclusiveness even as it accepts difference and separation, that supports freely religious expression as part of pluralism, and that recognizes Israel as a fount of knowledge, inspiration, introspection, and, perhaps one day, the transcendental world of truth.

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4.. Towards an Ideology of Jewish Education in Jewish Community Centers

by Yehiel Poupko
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"It is the purpose of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago to enhance and perpetuate the Jewish people and the Jewish tradition." With these words, Jerry Witkovsky assumed the position of general director of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago in 1979. This simply stated vision marked a break with the past and set a new course for the future. However, as with all general statements, it demanded specificity for purposes of application in the real life work of the JCC. Furthermore, it raised a set of critical questions. Whose Judaism would the JCC perpetuate? Which of a variety of competing Jewish ideologies would inform the JCC's Jewish work? What would be the sources of authority for such Jewish educational work; what texts, which rabbis, which theologians, and which historical and contemporary experiences?

From the very start, these questions assumed ultimate importance. The charge to enhance and perpetuate the Jewish people and the Jewish tradition meant that the JCC had to do something far more comprehensive and difficult than to merely intensify the depth and variety of its existing Jewish programs and services. The process of offering more programs of Jewish content and deepening the Jewish content of existing services had been under way for some time within the JCC as a response to the realities in the community. In this sense, the JCC's participation in the renaissance of American Jewish life, stimulated by the Six Day War, was in the best tradition of American Jewish and American democratic institutions. Change came from the streets, from the grassroots; from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. American Jews wanted programs and services with more Jewish content so that they could give wider expression to their Jewishness. In response to this demand, the JCC offered more Jewish cultural events: films, speakers, book fairs, artistic offerings, community-wide celebrations and support of certain features of Jewish religious life. For example, JCCs became more actively involved in the celebration of Hanukkah and Purim through carnivals and festivals, and in the teaching of Passover through pre-Passover model seders. All of this was good, important, sacred in fact - and it still is. It fulfills the fundamental definition of Jewish education as a lifelong process by which Jews receive the Jewish past and interpret it in the present. The authority for what has just been described is, of course, the Jewish people, their needs and their desires. The market demands, the provider responds; the consumer wants, the business delivers. But it is, and emphatically so, not enough.

It is not enough because these cultural activities are expressions of Jewish collective, ethnic consciousness. Those of us who shaped this era of Jewish communal work and mass public Jewish education, were exhilarated by it. Having been raised in the quiescent American Jewish communities of the forties, fifties and early sixties, we were convinced that these expressions of ethnic consciousness in the Jewish and American public arenas would soon evolve into personal religious commitment. We felt and we hoped and we came to believe that attachment to the external public features of Jewish cultural and communal activity would soon be integrated into private, personal life as it should be lived in a Jewish home. But in the seventies and eighties we saw a radical increase in mixed marriage rates, even as programs of this nature continued to flourish. We now know that behaviors emerging from a sense of ethnicity do not contribute to the successful transmission of Jewish civilization and Judaism from one generation to the next. Successful transmission of Jewishness from one generation to another requires more than institutional programs and services; it requires integration in the daily life of individuals and families. There is, and there must be, far more to Jewish education.

However, if the charge of the JCC is to enhance and perpetuate the Jewish people and the Jewish tradition, the questions must be **asked,** "For which elements of the Jewish past shall JCC take responsibility? Which elements of the received Jewish past does it want to see practiced and taught in the present so that they are perpetuated in the future?" The answers ought to be relatively easy to find. The Orthodox have an answer. It is described in prayer books, in the Torah, and in the Code of Jewish Law, the *Shulchan Aruch. The* Reform have an answer. It is found in the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Torah, and in such writings as *Gates of Mitzvah* and *Gates of the House. The* Conservative have an answer. It is found in the prayer book *Sim Shalom and in such writings as Emet V'Emunah. Yet as* Steven Cohen has taught us, at best, 12 - 15% of American Jews ask the questions that these books answer. Only a small percentage of American Jews ask, "What does God, as His will is expressed in the Torah, expect of me and of my life?"

The Jewish Community Center's Jewish ideology emerges from a different question. This question, which will serve as the basis and source of authority for the JCC's Jewish educational work, must meet several criteria. First, it must be accountable to the received Jewish past as expressed in the Torah and its classic commentaries. Without accountability to the text, without grounding in the Torah, there is no Judaism, no effective Jewish civilization, and there is no transmission of Jewishness from generation to generation. Second, the foundation question must move JCC work from describing "what a Jew is" to presenting "what a Jew ought to be." "What a Jew is" gives birth to programs and services; "what a Jew ought to be" gives birth to experiences. Programs describe what a person wants; experiences describe who a person is. A program is a discreet product or service that is purchased; an experience is an expression of self.

The commonplaces of JCC life that we have all come to know create both the opportunity and responsibility to ask this foundation question. They include: the autonomy of the individual, the tolerance and acceptance of diversity and pluralism,

the need and obligation for participatory decision making, and the balancing of the individual and the group. These commonplaces are found in most successful American institutions, but they were unthinkable in Jewish institutions at any other time in Jewish history. The fact that these fundamentals of American society have informed and shaped the character of the Jewish Community Center makes the JCC a unique Jewish establishment. But while theses features are critical to the culture of the JCC, they do not constitute Jewish education. The challenge before the JCC is to use these assets to make Jewish education more possible and even more effective.

The criteria and commonplaces described above set the stage for the presentation of the foundation question. The question on which the ideology of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago is: "What do Jewish people do?" If the questions for the content Jew are always "What does God ask of me on Shabbat? What does the Torah demand of me on Yom Kippur? What does the Talmud expect my seder to look like? What does the code of Jewish law expect of me at life cycle moments?" then the questions that JCC work is based on are "What do Jews do on Passover? What do Jews do on Shabbat? What do Jews do at birth and at death?

at do Jews do with the reality of the return to Jewish power in the Land of Israel?" In this sense, Jewishness become very much like a poem. We may not be able to define it in the abstract, but we know it when we see it. What do Jewish people do at critical life cycle moments, at specific daily, weekly, monthly and yearly calendrical moments? at do Jewish people do in interpersonal relations, in their family life, in American society? What do Jewish people do in relation to the State of Israel, in participation with the whole Jewish people?

To ask, "What do Jews do?" is to relive an authentic and classic Jewish question. Systematic Jewish theology was import into the Jewish tradition in order to explain Judaism to outsiders, or to those Jews who are thinking of becoming outsiders. Classically, Jewish ideas emerge out of Jewish stories and Jewish behaviors.

The combination of the Jewish identity and American personality of the JCC sets the stage for creative tension. There is an interplay between what the Jewish consumer wants and how the American consumer can be transformed as a Jew.

at does the consumer wish to purchase and what can the Jew come to practice and believe? The Jew can only come to practice and believe if he or she first purchases. If all he or she does is purchase, then transformation has not taken place. The purchased program must evolve into the lived experience. Only then does the consumer become a Jewish practitioner and only then can there be transmission to the next generation. As discussed earlier, one does not transmit programs and services to the next generation, rather one transmits the experiences that shape the self.

Addressing the question of "What do Jews do?" leads to another question: "What is the profile of a successfully educated Jewish person or Jewish family after they have purchased and become part of a series of JCC programs, services and experiences over a period of time?" The development of that profile begins with what do Jews do:

on Shabbat?
on Passover?
on Rosh Hashana?
on Yom Kippur
on Succot?
on Shavuot?
on Purim?
on Hanukkah?
on Holocaust Memorial Day?
on Israel Independence Day?
at birth?
at puberty?
at marriage?
at divorce?
at death?
in childhood?
in the teenage years?
in young adulthood?
in early marriage?
in a young family?
in a family?
in old age?

This is but the beginning. These are questions to which we can all subscribe because we know what a successfully educated Jew looks like. In between these two questions, "What do Jews do?" and "What is the successful Jewish profile?" lies the great opportunity and asset of JCC. Simply stated, it is the *mantra of the work of* Jewish Community Centers of Chicago. We weave Jewish life into general life. The greatest asset of all JCCs is that we sell general products that people need - such as camping, early childhood services, day care, fitness, and the list goes on - and into these general life activities we weave Jewish life. When we answer the question of what Jews do and how we weave Jewish life into general life, we respond to the question of the profile of a successfully educated Jewish person.

It must be said that JCC cannot support the response to these questions by itself. The American Jewish consumer, as well as collective Jewish wisdom, have developed a division of labor over the past several decades. The response to these questions lies in deep and intimate partnership with the synagogue, the rabbinate, and many other institutions. This is reflected in the rather interesting document attached as an appendix to this article. This document is the product of a history, too long and complicated to detail here. It represents Chicago JCC's definition of what Jewish life ought to be and what the JCC ought to support.

A kind of passive blasphemy has been committed in this paper: Jewish life, Jewish education and Judaism have been discussed without reference to a text. There can be no Jewish thought without reference to a text. A classic text is needed to

support an ideology of Jewish education that emerges neither out of abstract principles nor out of classic religious authority systems, but rather from the details and behaviors of daily life. A text from the *Midrash is* helpful.

> Rabbi Huna and Rabbi Jeremiah, quoting Rabbi Hiyya Bar Abba commented on the verse in which it is written, "Your fathers . . . have forsaken Me (God) and have not kept My Torah" (Jer. 16:11). God declares, "If only they (Israel) had kept My Torah! Would that they had abandoned Me and kept My Torah! For if they had abandoned Me and kept My Torah its light and force would have returned them to Me.
>
> *Pesikta de'Rab Kahana 155*

This Midrash is grounded in an important and famous incident in the Torah. At Sinai, in response to God, Israel declared, *"Na'aseh v'nishma, we* will do and obey." Thus, at the very first moment when the Covenant is contracted, what God seeks and what Israel provides is *na'aseh,* doing. It is through the doing that one fulfills the Covenant and is known as a Jew.

This is one of several possible classical sources that supports the foundation question of JCC's Jewish educational work. We know the answer to the question, "What do Jews do?" It is the JCC's task to actively answer that question by asking the question, "What is the profile of a successfully educated Jewish individual/family?" These questions must be answered in the lives of the JCC's consumers so that they emerge from their experience with the JCC manifesting something more than the memories of ethnic associations and episodic programs, demonstrating in their lives and in their homes the behaviors by which Jews are known. If only Jews are helped to understand that if they abandon Me and keep My Torah they will indeed return.

Appendix A

1992 JCC BOARD SUMMER INSTITUTE
GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
EXERCISES IN JEWISH RESPONSIBILITY - THEN AND NOW

Proposed Jewish Educational Mission Statement for the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago

It is the purpose of JCC's Jewish educational and life experiential activities to bring about, for all ages, the integration of the building blocks of Jewish living into the lives, homes and life styles of American Jews and of the American Jewish family.

It is the purpose of JCC's Jewish educational efforts to have these building blocs expressed in American Jewish behaviors, attitudes and associations in the home, in other Jewish communal organizations, in the synagogue and in the community at large. The Jewish Community Centers of Chicago accepts responsibility, together with others, for the transmission of these building blocks and seeks partnership with others to the end of effective transmission.

The Building Blocks of Jewish Living

I. Individual and the Family

Life Cycle:	birth; adoption; bar/bat mitzvah; conversion; marriage; divorce; death
Shabbat	
Calendar:	Basic: High holidays; Passover; Chanukah And More: Sukkot, Purim, Shavuot, Tisha B'Av
The Home:	environment, (e.g., books, art, ritual objects); food; family roots; personal history

Jewish Education: learning; schooling; Jewish life experiences

II. Community and Interpersonal Relations:
Jewish ethics; social responsibility; synagogue; Jewish organizations; tzedakah

III. Jewish People
Israel; oppressed Jewish communities; Yom HaShoah; Yom HaAtzmaut; culture (art, theater, music, literature); language; information and news; chosenness; history

IV. The Inner Life
Faith; God; prayer; spirituality; Torah; Jewish consciousness

5. Towards Conceptualization of Informal Jewish Education

by Zvi Bekerman, *Director, Melitz - Centers for Jewish Zionist Education*
and Barry Chazan, *Jewish Educational Consultant, JCC Association*

In Jewish education, as in general education, "informal" has become a code word for something that seems to hold answers to serious educational challenges. Everyone looks upon it with great hope, even when they are not sure what they are looking at. What is informal education, and what could it mean in our Jewish educational enterprise? Zvi Bekerman and Barry Chazan, two educators who have spent much of their time thinking about this, sat down one day to talk, to share their ideas and to try to conceptualize informal Jewish education. This article is a summary of that conversation, in which they arrived at a few conclusions which may be helpful as the deliberation continues.

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Informal education is usually defined by what it is not. Traditionally, schools have become synonymous with formal education, and everything that schools are not is defined as informal. An accompanying axiom to this basic distinction equates "formal" with "serious" and "informal" with "not serious." Youth groups, camps, whatever takes place outside of the school has been labeled as informal, and therefore cannot be taken seriously in educational terms. And because most of what is done in schools is verbal, only non-verbal activities are considered informal. This is not a helpful definition because the difference between formal and informal is not actually structural, but conceptual. In fact, informal education is best seen as a certain *approach* to the process of education, distinguishable by *how* education should be done rather than the kind of building in **which** it takes place.

Semantics are only part of the problem. A more fundamental issue is the common perception that schools are the primary tool for achieving Jewish continuity. The organized Jewish community has come to exaggerate the role of schools in guaranteeing its future existence by socializing its people into being Jewish. In the Western, industrialized world schools were not developed for the purpose of recreating culture. It is therefore ironic that, to the extent that the Jewish community has made any serious effort in the area of Jewish education, it has perhaps over-invested in the school.

en the statistics about intermarriage and assimilation among North American Jewry began to scare community leaders into increasing their education budgets, for the most part they thought of education as meaning schools. But in the past decade Jewish leaders have become disillusioned with schools and have turned to other

addresses. This explains the growing interest in the Israel experience, the summer camp, and the Jewish Community Center. The enthusiasm for and success in these alternative educational settings indicates that the time has come for us to try to define more precisely what goes on in these places and in others.

Informal education is learning that takes place at all levels of consciousness. It flows; it is ongoing; it is experienced. Informal education is more similar to life than it is to school, except that informal education has a more conscious orientation than life. It is an attempt to consciously utilize life to shape a certain character, transmit certain values, develop a certain kind of being. The informal educator wants to utilize real life as a context to help people grow. Life happens with educators or without; our challenge is to find ways in which we can introduce our educational aims into this regular development of life.

The aim of informal Jewish education is to make sure that the next generation of our people identifies itself as Jewish; this may, of course, include the transmission of specific knowledge, but that is not the focus. Information in general is not a problem today. The problem we are confronting is how to organize the knowledge so that it effects identity and continuity. Cultural continuity means creating more of oneself, or in a collective sense, more of one's people. This can happen only when people of a particular culture develop common navigational tools that allow them to travel similar maps that are recognizable to other members of that group. Informal education is better equipped to address these issues because it works within the cultural milieu; formal education is less equipped to serve cultural needs.

Developing a common language requires an ongoing dialogue - that's the only thing that really works. Informal education is rooted in a belief in, love for and commitment to the dialectic. It posits that humans are wonderful creatures and that by interacting with each other - talking, reflecting, sharing, use of self - people's identity can grow.

Informal education also recognizes that while words are important, they are not enough, Informal education is rooted in people sharing or participating in some kind of experience. This does not mean that it is "touchy-feely," which is the usual translation of "experiential" in educational discourse. That is another of those erroneous generalities where there are only two options: serious education which includes homework and exams, or experiential education which is "touchy-feely."

There is content to informal education; it is not just a haphazard collection of experiences. What we usually call content in schools is a specific list of curricular items. In formal education content is compartmentalized, and compartmentalization is antithetical to culture, which is a network of interrelated ideas. Culture and informal education are two sides of the same coin. In informal education the emphasis is on what one does rather than on what one achieves; the "doings" themselves are the content. When a person does, he or she learns. What a person does, in the broadest sense, is his or her culture. In Jewish terms this means that a person is a Jew if he or she *does* Judaism. We do not presume to define what "doing Judaism" means; we only insist that the Jew articulate Judaism - whatever he or she chooses it to be - coherently and honestly through his or her actions.

The next question that emerges is whether we can curricularize informal education? We must use the word "curriculum" advisedly because of its traditional connotations. In formal education curriculum refers to something that is linear, has a causal development, and is divided into clear-cut items. This meaning certainly does not apply to informal education, but the word might be helpful as we attempt to organize and give shape to this realm.

An additional dimension of informal education is that it takes place wherever people are doing whatever they are doing. There is no specific venue; the world is its campus. Nor is informal education limited to specific subject areas. Any subject that can be raised in words can be translated into the actions that represent the meaning of those words. This justifies the earlier assertion that informal education is similar to life. This gives it a great advantage in terms of receptivity over the artificially imposed formal education.

at kind of person is needed to teach informal education? Are certain characteristics required? People dealing with informal education are expected to exemplify what they do more than their counterparts in formal education. If informal education is based on doing, experiencing and learning from real-life situations, a person can not espouse it unless he or she believes in the value of the deed. The expectation that the educator and the student participate together in real-life activities means that they must view each other with a certain degree of parity. The student must feel comfortable enough to experiment freely, without fear of admonishment from a superior and the educator must be open to learning from the student as well as from their mutual experience. In fact, some sociologists consider symmetry and parity as defining factors of informal education. We do not, however, see informal education as simply two similar people interacting. One of them has to have a certain kind of vision, direction, perception, which makes him or her an educator. He or she also has to be someone who is committed to, believes in, and is good at interacting.

But informal educators have to be more than just "nice guys" who know how to talk and listen well. While they may not need to recite text and data, they do need to be knowledgeable in order to teach. Knowledge here should not be understood as being able to transmit individual items of knowledge. By themselves, the items mean very little; they can easily be researched at the library or retrieved from a computer. Knowledge in informal education is about participation in the dialogue of life. For our purposes, the informal educator has to be Jewishly knowledgeable.

Informal Jewish education must have Jewish content, and here the content has to be part of what we call "real life." A non-Jew who is very knowledgeable in Judaism could theoretically do informal education, but we would reject such an idea. The knowledge itself is secondary to the identification with the knowledge. The students must understand the educator's practice as his or her own, not as an act on a stage outside of life. The informal Jewish educator has to model Jewish commitment by doing it, and by expressing his/her knowledge in those doings.

The community's task is to determine the content of both the formal and informal education, to articulate the knowledge, values and characteristics that it

wants to transmit and to choose the educators who will embody that knowledge. The community must also train such people, which is a challenge in itself. What kind of institution is equipped to effectively train informal educators? Unfortunately, virtually all of the universities and training programs for educators belong to the intellectual tradition that gave us most of the misconceptions of informal education cited earlier.

In order to turn informal education into a serious and respected field, we must develop a cadre of professional informal educators. But we do not yet have a clear enough definition of informal education to know exactly what training of professionals will entail; we must spend more time studying informal education before attempting to build its infrastructure. It should be emphasized that Jews are not the only ones who have a stake in the successful evolvement of informal education. Numerous minority groups are dealing with the problem of preserving a distinct culture in a multicultural world. So any strides we make in this area could benefit the educational world on the whole.

We can assume that training informal educators will require the creation of unique centers of study, but exactly what these centers will be comprised of is open for discussion. They will have to be places which provide the prospective informal educators with experiences that teach the language of stories, of music, of drama. Attending plays, listening to concerts, reading novels and poetry will undoubtedly be part of the curriculum. The prospective educators will have to become accustomed to speaking about identity in the narrative form, and using paradigmatic language which involves both the speaker and the listener, The language of science (which is what they learned at university), of speaking *about* things and not requiring any action on the part of the speaker, will not be useful in these settings. These training centers should also offer professional training in group dynamics and psychology, and in specialized areas such as adult learning, camping, early childhood education.

Jewish texts will also be part of the content at these learning centers, with careful attention given to how texts should be used in info al education. We generally teach texts as if the world has not changed since the time they were written, and as if they are data to be entered into the student's mind. We should realize that texts are accounts of life experiences at their best, rendered for the next generation's enrichment. Texts should always be translated into a life situation, not simply read off the page. This translation can only take place when the student has personal contact with the text and develops a relationship with it.

The more "intellectual" sphere of languages and texts currently receives relatively little attention in the world of informal Jewish education. Most of the emphasis is still placed on learning how to play games, what to do at summer camps, and how to feel, which obviously is not enough. Those who are truly committed to Jewish continuity are not yet satisfied with what has been developed in informal education. While we have found some answers in informal education, they are often only cosmetically different from the old ways. If we are going to prevent informal education from becoming a flash in the pan or an empty slogan, we must affect fundamental changes in our thinking and attitude toward education.

One of the important new arenas of informal Jewish education is the Israel experience, which is an appropriate model for informal education because it offers a comprehensive experience and the opportunity to participate in life events. By itself, however, a trip to Israel is not a solution, not a promise for change in a person's identity. As an isolated experience it could become just another item like a summer camp in the United States or a museum. A trip to Israel can only be exploited for informal educational purposes if the principles discussed earlier - interaction, active participation in real life situations, personal relationship with the "text" - are applied to it in a conscious manner. Israel by itself won't work. In fact, some people may argue that other items in the American sphere are more important. But if the correct principles are implemented in the trip - the ones that make Israel not a new book to read but a new reality to be lived - the Israel experience could be invaluable.

Another new arena is the Jewish Community Center. As more JCCs employ full-time Jewish educators, more educational opportunities within centers are being realized. But having an educator on staff should not be confused with doing informal education. The Jewish educator could be a catalyst, but could never be responsible for all informal education at the JCC. It has to be a participatory effort by the entire staff, starting with the executive director and finishing with the telephone operator. Anyone who is part of the decor of the JCC stage should take part in the endeavor. We should not think in terms of people coming to a specific room in the JCC to participate in an informal educational activity; entering the JCC should be the beginning of the informal educational experience.

Some critics charge that informal education is simply a fad, and that it has been tried before. But what is being discussed here is a much broader idea, with an ideology, a theory, a vision. If handled well it could revolutionize Jewish education. Handling it well involves not only making changes in programs, content and staff, but in the attitude of the community. The educational sense has to be transmitted throughout the community. Education - either formal or informal - will succeed only in a community that supports it.

An analogy of the family might help illustrate this point. Everyone would agree, at some level, that becoming an involved, identified Jew is somewhat like becoming part of a family (and not like becoming part of a school). The family unit is central to the educational process of its members. Certain things happen in a family - things we cannot even pinpoint - that make children similar to their parents, or siblings like each other. Ideally, our educational efforts should work like this; they should be places where things naturally become similar to the environment in which they were created. The environment, the total context, is essential to the learning. Imagine *trying to teach Shabbat* to *a* person in a family where it is not celebrated.

One way to learn more about informal education is to turn to some non-traditional kinds of sources. Perhaps we should go to downtown Jerusalem and listen to how people talk to each other. Or see a play or listen to a piece of music. Or maybe we should go to a garage and watch how people learn to work on motors. The rules of apprenticeship might be especially useful for informal education. In an apprenticeship the relationship between the mentor and the apprentice must be

strong, the contact very close. Also, there must be an understanding that the apprentice will not be blamed for mistakes. In a sense, there are no mistakes, only learning. Imagine someone learning how to cut cloth to tailor a suit. A mistake there could be very expensive, so there must be both close physical contact and a trusting relationship between the teacher and the apprentice. But still, the apprentice learns to cut cloth by cutting the cloth. Understanding comes through doing. If people want to understand Shabbat, they must "do Shabbat" - in whatever way they choose for themselves.

We have a long way to go in establishing the ideology of informal education, and in trying to define it we have raised many questions. Thus far we have concluded that:

- Informal education is not a structure or a place; it is a way of looking at the world and the educational process.
- Informal education sees education as similar to life and it posits that we can intentionally utilize life patterns to affect people's Jewishness.
- Informal education requires certain professional skills which can be learned, indicating that a good training program should be established.
- Informal education has a curriculum, but it is not the curriculum found in a school; it is not boxed in.
- Informal education involves active participation in real life situations, and creating opportunities for people to do what they learn, and we see the JCC as an expression of this.

Ultimately, we worry about the separation between formal and informal. We would prefer to talk about education of our people in a more holistic way. But if informal education can become a powerful force in shaping Jewish identity, we are committed to expanding it and developing it as a serious resource for achieving Jewish continuity.

6. All Jewish Education Is Informal: Implications for the Field

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Introduction

I plan to show that the kind of education done in almost all North American Jewish schools does not meet the criteria for formal education, but does meet most of the criteria for informal education. (I will also examine two school types for which this characterization may not hold: day schools and *Haredi* education.) That will allow us to begin to view Jewish schooling as informal education, which is important for two reasons: first, Jewish schools may become more effective if they can better adapt themselves to the informal context in which they are functioning, and second, this new point of view may facilitate more cooperation in each community, both among educators and among institutions. In trying to understand Jewish schooling as informal education, I am not making a value judgment, e.g., "Informal education is better - or worse - than formal education." I am simply trying to understand the nature of the beast. Finally, the emphasis on informal education may help JCCs define the specific Jewish goals their programs should strive to achieve.

Making the Case

The key article on this topic is Barry Chazan's "What is Informal Jewish Education?"[1] In fact, this article is a kind of counterpoint to his. He offers eight characteristics of informal Jewish education, and contrasts it with what formal Jewish education is like. I'll use his criteria to make my case.

Formal Jewish Education. "Formal education refers to an educational approach often associated with a systematic, hierarchical, often academic, future-oriented, and well-controlled system of teaching and learning."[2] Let us examine these key characteristics of formal education to see if they apply to Jewish schooling.

Systematic and Hierarchical. Jewish schools do not constitute a coherent system, partly because they are not hierarchical. In general education, for example, each level of schooling is determined to a great degree by downward pressure from the next step up the hierarchy. Thus, high school curricula are designed to enable their graduates to meet college entrance requirements. By contrast, educators in Jewish early childhood programs worry about English reading readiness, yet there is no specific Jewish content they have to teach in order for their students to be accepted into kindergarten in a day school. Similarly, no Hebrew school worries

about meeting the entrance requirements of the local Hebrew high school, as there are no academic entrance requirements.

Academic and future-oriented. Formal education usually has "grades that lead to advanced degrees, a profession, or socioeconomic advancements.'" It's quite clear that Jewish schools do not grant recognized degrees, hence they rarely have tests, or even grades. Some Jewish kids find their studies in a Jewish school irrelevant, precisely because Jewish knowledge has no future payoff. In the words of one unrepentant Hebrew school student: "Grades wouldn't do any good. Who cares if you get an "F" in Hebrew School. It won't stop you from getting into college.'"

While it's true that some of the material covered in Jewish schools is directed to the future Bar/Bat Mitzvah, that specific material is usually covered in the last year before the ceremony, which is a fairly short-term educational goal.

Well-controlled system of teaching and learning. Chazan points out that the curricula of formal educational institutions are usually "established by outside school boards, departments of education, or testing agencies.'" Ordinarily, it is the demands of the curriculum which require that the teaching/learning process in formal education be tightly controlled. Yet none of these conditions holds for Jewish schools. Each Jewish school is totally autonomous and sets its own curriculum. Because "covering the material" does not matter in any usual sense, teachers often feel free to abandon the material as the need arises. Alternately, some teachers start with the assumption that -- especially in a Jewish school the needs of the students are more important than the demands of the curriculum. So the teaching/learning process in many Jewish schools quickly comes undone. Sam Heilman has called this phenomenon "flooding out," and documents its existence in all kinds of Jewish schools, day and supplementary, orthodox and non-orthodox.'

It is clear that most Jewish schools do not meet these criteria of formal educational institutions. Let us take a look at Chazan's characteristics of informal Jewish education, and see if, ironically, they offer a better description of what Jewish schools do.

Informal Jewish Education

Chazan offers eight characteristics of informal Jewish education, one of which I've already addressed (not being academic and future-oriented). Here are the others.

Voluntary. Jewish schooling is certainly voluntary. Chazan points out that parents sometimes coerce/convince their children to attend informal education programs ("it's good for you"), just as they do Jewish schooling or Bar Mitzvah classes. The need to coerce, in either setting, is proof that both are voluntary activities. The other "proof' that Jewish education is voluntary, is the large number of Jewish children who don't participate in either the formal or informal Jewish education networks.

Intrinsic rather than instrumental orientation. Informal Jewish education does not focus on distant goals or realities, but on "helping its participants better understand the meaning of Judaism now'" Much of formal Jewish schooling tries to

do that, too, but misses the mark because of the mistaken assumption that students, teachers and parents are already involved in a Jewish way of life.

> In what was a typical classroom lesson, a seventh grade teacher asked the students to describe in what ways the Sabbath differed from the other days of the week. In response to a student's answer that "on the Sabbath we pray," the teacher said, "But you pray every day." In this case not only was the teacher's response completely detached from reality, but the student who answered was also speaking in theoretical terms. Many of the students in the class had not been to a prayer service on the Sabbath for up to six months or more. When the teacher, who managed a restaurant on Friday evenings, then began to speak about "why don't we work on the Sabbath" students giggled incredulously (sic) because of the question's absurdity. Clearly, this lesson that was being discussed in first person terms, was, in the students' minds, about a people that was far removed from their own reality.'

Highly interactive and participatory activities. This is the criterion on which Jewish schools may be weakest at the present time, though not for lack of trying. general education has put the emphasis on an active, involved learner, Jewish education has tried to follow suit. The main stumbling block here is not a principled one, but rather the fact that the Jewish teacher corp is largely untrained. The formal educational materials currently being produced often put the emphasis on interactive and participatory activities (media, role-playing, etc.).

Informal Jewish Education has a "curriculum" [which] can change or be adapted very quickly **to new situations and needs.** This is certainly the case for the curricula in Jewish schools, though the potential for change is often not exploited to its fullest. As noted above, each school sets its own curriculum, and is free to change its overall goals (e.g., from spoken Hebrew to Biblical Hebrew to no Hebrew at all), as well as modifying shorter-term goals (e.g., adding an enrichment unit on a current topic, such as Ethiopian Jewry).

aura of fun and relaxation. This characteristic can be found in the best Jewish schools, though perhaps with an emphasis on "personally rewarding experiences" rather than relaxation. After all, to the extent education is the agenda, personal growth and change is required and that can't always be achieved in a mode of relaxation. (This critique may apply to JCCs too, as mentioned at the end of this article.) One of the students in the supplementary school which Schoem describes said that he had "nothing against the teachers, but if you did things in a fun way it would be a lot easier to learn it.'" To me, this comment reveals the fact that the students implicitly experience Jewish school as informal, hence the expectation that it could be fun, rather than just "school."

Informal educators area info al® **They are not driven to cover subject matter, and they dress and** act in a way **meant to identify them with, rather than separate them from, their charges.** This is not generally true of Jewish schools, though there are noteworthy exceptions. More importantly, there is no re on Jewish

schools could not adopt this mode, if they chose to. Jewish schools certainly aspire to affective, as well as cognitive, goals. The personal relationship between the teacher/leader and the student is an important factor on the affective agenda, and needs to be strengthened, which may require precisely the shift toward the informal discussed here.

Emphasis on the group in the process of education. Jewish schooling almost always takes place in groups, though group process per se has probably not received the emphasis it should as an important tool in achieving educational goals, e.g., the best available opportunity to create a sense of Jewish community. Indeed, several researchers have claimed that the major accomplishment of Jewish schools is their value as an agent of Jewish socialization."

Summation of the Case

I have tried to show that while Jewish schooling fails to meet the criteria of formal education, it meets most of the criteria for informal education. Moreover, one has to ask" whether or not the central goal of contemporary Jewish education is essentially instructional, in which case formal education may be the most effective paradigm. Aron contends that, especially in the supplementary schools, the key goal should be acculturation, to create a significant "Jewish space" in kids' lives which, given the condition of many of their homes, may be the only Jewish space available to them. Having done that, the challenge is to help them enjoy living in that increasingly enriched atmosphere. Thus, Reimer asserts that successful supplementary school principals "are masters at creating a homey, comfortable environment in their schools . . . aware that they are not simply running a school, but also creating a Jewish home for the students and their parents."

Thus, Aron asserts that "schools that succeed at enculturation typically pay close attention to the informal dimension of their activities.' What those dimensions might be, I will return to shortly. First, I want to finalize my assertion that Jewish schools, in their current reality and also perhaps by future design, are and should be primarily institutions of informal education. This does not rule out hard-core, intensive Jewish learning for those who want it, but even that learning will be informal, because those involved are there voluntarily, are not pursuing a degree or career advancement, etc.

Before moving to the implications of this analysis for Jewish schools and JCCs, I want to examine two apparent exceptions to my case: day schools and *Haredi* education.

Two Exceptional Test Cases

I think the foregoing analysis holds quite well for Jewish supplementary schools, the kind of school which enrolls the majority of Jewish kids. Does the analysis hold for more intensive forms of Jewish education, the day school and *Haredi* education?

Day Schools. Most day school education, especially of the non-orthodox variety, is at the elementary level. The general education component in day schools is formal education, by Chazan's criteria, e.g., the curriculum meets state education

requirements, teachers of general studies almost always have state licenses, and the studies are "academic and future oriented." Yet the Jewish studies component in the very same schools rarely exhibits any of these characteristics. Most telling in this regard is the fact that grades in Jewish studies are often not reported to the secular school to which the day-school graduate seeks admission. There are some exceptions to this informal characterization, but they are minor. For example, those eighth-graders in orthodox elementary day schools in the New York metropolitan area hoping to continue in a day high school, do participate in an area-wide high school proficiency exam administered by the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. But the whole system is voluntary, and has nowhere near the impact on the individual school and its curriculum as the New York State requirements nave on the same schools' general studies program. As for the criteria of informal education, the day schools meet them to about the same degree as supplementary schools, "falling down" slightly only on the informal school climate dimension, in terms of the "aura of fun and relaxation" and the image of the educator. Still, there is often a noticeably more relaxed climate in the Jewish studies classes, compared to general studies. On the other hand, there are dimensions in which the informal component is even stronger than in supplementary schools. For example, the day school class is usually a very coherent group, having been together for as much as eight years of education, so the impact of the group is usually considerable.

Haredi Education. Separatist Haredi schools in Monsey, Oak Park or Lakewood are another interesting test case of my hypothesis. Though there are less data available about these schools, they too seem to fail most of the criteria for formal education. While the curriculum tends to be standardized, that is by force of tradition, rather than centralized governmental authority. There may also be more variety in the curriculum than outsiders realize, e.g., *Musar* vs. *mitnagdic* yeshivot. The Jewish studies programs are non-academic (in the sense we've been using that term), though they do further the key social goal of aspiring to become a talmid chaallam, at least for the boys. Likewise, there is a strong anti-economic benefit in the Torah study program *(Torah lishma* - for its own sake).

While it fails most of the criteria for formal education, *Haredi* education cannot be characterized as informal, except for its being voluntary and, usually, intrinsic in orientation. Thus, *Haredi* education does not fully fit our informal paradigm, but exists as a kind of hybrid of its own. In sum, only *Haredi* education seems to contradict our paradigm of Jewish schooling as informal education. However, that exception does not impede the goal of this article, because *Haredi* schools do not want, and may not need, suggestions for a change in approach. Therefore, we can proceed to our last section, exploring the implications of the new paradigm for the field of "formal" Jewish education.

Implications of Jewish Schooling as Informal Education

I have tried to show that the education going on in Jewish schools is really informal education, and implicitly many of those involved realize that. Unfortunately, the explicit framework and strategy of Jewish schools remains formal education:

teachers, textbooks, desks and chairs. The clash between the informal reality and the formal strategy all but guarantees failure, and may also betray the essence of Jewish education's unique message.

> The quality of life in the Jewish school is not significantly different from that of the public school . . . . That is a painful paradox: the Jewish religious school attempts to transmit a set of norms and values which are presented as unique and different but patterns its own behavior after a manner rooted in another tradition. If the Jewish religious school is to successfully fulfill its function of socialization for Jewish life, it must itself serve as an exemplar of Jewish living. Life in the school in all its varied aspects must be informed by principles drawn from the Jewish tradition."

The question is how to remedy this situation. I suggest that people involved in Jewish schooling need to begin to relate to it as informal education. This change in orientation has implications for the goals, curriculum, staff training, settings, and methods of Jewish schooling. First I will briefly explore those implications; then comment on why so little change has taken place heretofore, together with some thoughts about how to get the ball rolling; and close with some implications for Jewish education in the JCC.

Implications For .. .

Goals. As outlined in the work of Aron", the primary goal for Jewish schools will be enculturation, rather than instruction. That means making students feel more Jewishly committed, even more religiously observant. Both of these goals will necessarily involve significant learning components, but the framework within which learning takes place will be radically different. The goal is no longer subject matter, but the subjects that can matter in the lives of the students and their families.

Curriculum. The curriculum will no longer be controlled by textbooks (as is currently the case), nor even by subject matter areas (e.g., holidays). Rather, "educators running [enculturation programs] have devoted considerable energy to analyzing and articulating the culture into which they wish to bring their students.' Specifying the particular attitudes, aspirations, skills and knowledge kids will acquire - and creating the institutional environment which could make these valued to kids and their parents - becomes the literal "order of the day".

Settings and methods. The kind of curriculum just described will require special kinds of educational methods, implemented in new settings. These methods and settings are largely borrowed from informal education at its best: interactive and participatory in an aura of, if not fun and relaxation, then at least active involvement. These activities must be planned with full realization that only intrinsic, not extrinsic, motivations are functioning in these voluntary settings. (Occasionally there have been successful schemes to link learning and achievement to extrinsic goals - Bar Mitzvah, class trips, or otherwise. Informal education, too, often generates "artificial"

motivators, like tournaments and competitions, as ways to spur involvement and achievement.)

Staff training. All of these innovations will require a new kind of Jewish educator capable of implementing them. This factor is so crucial, that one cannot underestimate the difficulty of locating and training sufficient numbers of such people in each community. Fortunately, this issue has received serious treatment elsewhere."

Why **Things Don't Change**

In some ways, the foregoing analysis and suggestions for change are not new. Indeed, one of the recommendations of the large-scale study of supplementary schools in New York's was:

> Formal and informal educational integration does not only imply the coordination of classroom and experiential settings. True integration means providing unified experiences in any of the settings. The kind of integrative education towards which some supplementary schools have begun to move involves the utilization of informal, experiential methodologies within the formal classroom. The use of such techniques as simulation, role play, social service programs and multimedia projects, through which students internalize Jewish content and reapply it within a social context, transmits Jewish learning into living experience. It is essential that these kinds of integrated experiences, too few and far between for the vast majority of our students, become the norm."

Seeing that the need for improvement in Jewish schools is widely acknowledged, and the new directions relatively well known, it is puzzling that so little seems to be have been done on this front. In large part, especially for supplementary schools, there is a lack of forceful leadership for change. Schoem has argued that such schools, by their very nature, are a part-time phenomenon for all involved, so there is no full-time person to take charge. There's also the ironic possibility that successful schools (those which really change peoples' lives) are threatening to a part of the synagogue community (as may be true in some JCCs, too). Thus, Reynolds' has demonstrated how the synagogue's need to maximize membership may simultaneously hobble its school's ability to innovate and succeed. There may also be a sense of "Better the devil you know, than the devil you don't." For all their faults, "Hebrew schools" are a known quantity, attuned to the multiple, sometimes conflicting, needs of all the parties involved. To change not just the rules of the game, but the game itself, could well jeopardize the delicately balanced status quo, with no assurance that a stable, improved model will emerge.

How to Get the all Rolling

If my hypothesis about all Jewish education being informal is correct (or at least provocative), change in Jewish schools might begin at two levels: the individual and the communal. Individual educators can decide to what extent this analysis fits their

reality. They can share this thinking with other educators and lay people, and begin to map out a new approach. Then small-scale experiments might be undertaken, involving perhaps one class section or track within a larger school setting, or one grade level for a limited time-span, e.g., from after Chanukah until Purim. Large-scale, hasty innovation is unlikely to succeed, because so many changes are needed: changes in skills, modes of behavior, and - perhaps most important yet least accessible - expectations, on the part of school personnel and students and their parents.

At the communal level, new coalitions and partnerships between formal and informal educational institutions could develop, preferably around specific projects and agendas. Creating a "community chest" of programs, resources (especially human!), and materials is one such example. The point of a shared resource is the opportunity it would provide for collaborative planning, sharing, and implementation.

Implications for Jewish Education in JCCs

For Jewish Community Centers, the emphasis does not have to be on the informal, but rather on "education." Jewish schools are a long way from having a clearly developed image of their ideal graduates, as far as the Jewish knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes they should possess. But at least many formal educators worry about trying to develop such a model. Only a clear cut set of educational goals can then be translated into a curriculum. Without such a curriculum, programming becomes "all sizzle, no steak." One reason the informal curriculum may be so easy to change is that it may not stand for much to begin with. Therefore, one challenge facing the JCCs is to specify which Jewish educational goals are so central that they cannot be changed, even if the World Series falls on Yom Kippur! Setting the goals and curriculum for the JCC is certainly a complex task, and would have to span not only the full age range of its clients, but also different kinds of target groups, e.g., those with whom the JCC hopes to have a long-term relationship, versus those who may be one-time or short-term users. At this time of concern about the Jewish community's quality of life, a clearer understanding of the limits and demands of our current educational situation may help focus our efforts at improvement. Informal education offers one particularly useful strategy for improvement, a strategy whose time has come.

Notes

1. *Journal of Jewish Communal Service,* Vol. 67, *No.* 4, Summer 1991.

2. Barry *Chazan,* "What *is* Informal Jewish Education?" *Journal of Jewish Communal Service, Vol. 67,* No. 4, Surmner *1991,* p. 304.

3. *Ibid.,* p. 302.

4. *Ibid.,* p. *302.*

5. Ibid, p. 303.

6. Samuel Heilman, *Inside the Jewish School: A Study of the Cultural Setting for Jewish Education,* New York: American Jewish Committee, 1984.

7. Barry Chazan, "What is Informal Jewish Education?" *Journal of Jewish Communal Service,* Vol. *67* No. 4, Summer 1991, p. 302.

8. David Schoem, *Ethnic Survival in America: An Ethnography of a Jewish Afternoon School,* unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California (Berkeley), 1979, p. 115.

9. *Ibid.,* p. 161.

10. Arnold Dashevsky, "What We Know About... the Effects of Jewish Education on Jewish Identification," in S. Kelman (ed.), *What We Know About Jewish Education, Los* Angeles, Torah Aura Productions, 1992.

11. As Isa Aron has so pointedly, in "The Malaise of Jewish Education," *Tikkun, Vol. 4, 1989.*

12. Joseph Reimer, *The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education,* Cleveland: Mandel Associated Foundations, 1990, 26.

13. Isa Aron, "The Malaise of Jewish Education,." *Tikkun, Vol. 4,* 1989, p. 34.

14. Walter Ackerman, "The New Curricula: Some Observations," *Conservative Judaism, Vol. 32,* No. 1, Fall 1978, p. 61.

15. Isa Aron, *op. cit.*

16. Ibid., p. 34.

17. Isa Aron, "What we know about... Jewish Teachers," in S. Kelman (ed.), *What We Know About Jewish Education,* Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 1992.

18. Jewish Supplementary Schooling: And Educational System in Need of Change, New York, BJE of Greater New York, 1988.

19. Ibid., p. 129.

20. Ronald Reynolds, "Goals and Effectiveness in Jewish Education: An Organizational Perspective," in J. Aviad (ed.), *Studies in Jewish Education III,* Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1988.

7. **Are JCCs a Fifth Denomination?**

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The question is an intriguing one. It is also a long lasting one. By the 1920s Louis Kraft, executive director of JWB, had begun a series of colloquies in print on this topic which was continued over the decades.

The metamorphosis of YMHAs, Jewish settlement houses and JCCs had been underway since the YMHAs beginnings in 1854. The first 75 years saw what can now be identified as a series of phases, each more or less of 25 years to 40 years duration. They could be called the genteel assimilatory period (roughly 18544885); the "de-Jewing" of the immigrants (roughly 18854925); the bridging of the German and East European Jews (19254945); suburbanization and "crossroads of Jews" phase (1945-1967); the re-creational emphasis period (19684985); and the "Jewification" period, 1985 to the present.

The Genteel Assimilatory Period

German Jews fulfilled the need to be Americans by refracting Christian institutions into acceptable fox m in American terms, while maintaining some Jewish frame of reference. The use of the word "Hebrew" instead of "Jewish" was no accident and reflected the *selfsame* developments of the then nascent American Reform Jewish Movement (Union of American Hebrew congregation, Hebrew Union College, *Young* Men's and Women's Hebrew Association, mimicking the Young Men's and Women's Christian Association).

A review of these Hebrew (sometimes Literary) Associations' activities reflected the move of German Jews to middle class respectability and gentility. Jewish practices and concerns were secondary to literary, social and athletic activities which allowed Jews to socialize together while often engaging in activities which, by their nature, did not emphasize differences between Jews and non-Jews nor differences between and among Jews. This essentially middle class, value-laden enterprise reflected its sponsor's values.

With the beginning of the pogroms and the subsequent over-burgeoning influx of Jews from Eastern Europe, the selfsame sponsors of YMTYWHAs continued their support. They responded, however ambivalently at first, to the need to serve the Jewish immigrants with institutions geared to the immigrants' needs (often as defined by the "enlightened" German Jews).

The "De-Jewing" of the I mmigrant

This response of "up-town Jews" abetted the explosion of the Jewish settlement house movement smack-dab in the middle of the new immigrants "ghettos" in cities throughout the country.

These glorious days saw the beginning of some of the most innovative services to families in American history. Nursery schools, kindergartens, dental clinics, job services, resident camping, day camping were but some of the innovations which grew out of the settlement house movement, with the Jewish settlements often leading the way. During this period, however, the Jewish needs of the newcomers were often de-emphasized. And while there was a proliferation of *Talmud Torahs, often* community- sponsored, throughout the country, they were infrequently supported by German Jews who instead tended to encourage the settlement houses to emphasize the Americanizing process for immigrants. This was done by not only offering much-needed English classes but frequently forbidding *the use of* Yiddish while attending settlement house activities. Fierce ideological battles between Jews played themselves out in this period, sometimes within the Jewish settlement houses but often elsewhere. The nascent Zionist movement fought its battles with the Bundists, the Culturalists, and others. There is little evidence to indicate a consistent devotion on the part of the settlement house movement to encourage and celebrate this growing diversity within Jewish life. Rather, World War I cemented the Americanizing process and the settlements and the YMHAs came together in creating JWB (the National Jewish Welfare Board - a name imported from England - to serve American Jewish servicemen and develop an association of YMHAs and Jewish settlement houses). The postwar period beckoned, and brought with it the serious development of Jewish Community Centers and mergings with YMHAs.

The Bridging of the Jews

The next period which Louis Kraft helped shape saw a great building spurt throughout the country. Mordecai Kaplan's philosophical and sociological writings about an organic Jewish community came to influence a significant minority of Center thinkers.

The Depression sent many hopes crashing on a community level , as the greatest economic disaster in American history affected Jews as it did everyone else. Merger discussions were often accelerated by economic necessity. With the Depression came other urgent developments. The doors to America had clanged shut early in the 1920s. By the 1930s ideological battles of a new kind were increasingly volatile. The burgeoning popularity of communism among many Jews was accompanied by an increasingly strident development of Zionist thought and ideologies, albeit among a much smaller number. The Centers often became the venue for these battles, for most Jews were not affiliated with synagogues. The Centers and settlement houses were often sustained professionally by staff who were being paid by federal grants through the Work Progress Administration. WPA's artists and actors, often very ideological, found the Centers and settlement houses hospitable places for their ideological advocacy - and often this was an ideology with a "cosmopolitan" tone. Jewish particularism was seen as a stepping stone to the

universalism of a socialist vision of tomorrow's possibilities. World War II brought its own realities to Centers which resulted in an even greater emphasis on the ericanization process. Air raid warden training, "victory gardens," selective service registration programs, outreach programs to Jewish service men, and paper drives were dominant. The results of Hitler's horrible nightmares were little appreciated. It was not until the height of the war that the realities began to affect Centers' public forums.

The war's end saw a massive move to the suburbs by the returning GIs. The Jews' inordinate use of the GI Bill served as their passport out of the ghettos to the gilded suburbs. The movement of Jews out of the city accelerated the merger process between settlement houses, Centers and YMHAs, and the next period then unfolded.

Crossroads for the Jews

The rush to the suburbs was accompanied by a burst of building of JCCs and synagogues in the suburbs. Some synagogues began as JCCs and some synagogues transformed themselves into JCCs. The growing affluence of Jews allowed for an outpouring of dollars to build these institutions in the suburbs, even as dollars at a level previously undreamed of found their way to support the newly founded State of Israel.

This period celebrated the Center as a meeting ground for all Jews and the role of the Center as a hospitable home for diversity without emphasizing or elevating any particular adjectival description of Jews. This resulted in a comfort about Jewish identification as a goal compatible with the best of American values. During this period more people with masters degrees in social work were employed in Centers than in any other non-governmental not-for-profit setting in the country. The philosophy of social work schools, which emphasized individual choice while acknowledging the potency of group membership, provided an appropriate framework for emphasis on a kind of generic Jewish programming. Without over-generalizing or stereotyping this period, it seems in retrospect to have been the most comfortable period for comfortable Jews who were comforted by the Center and its programmatic offerings. Cultural activities, lecture series, crafts, plastic and performing arts, often emphasized Jewish issues and concerns but they were seldom cast in terms that questioned or searched for greater meaning or more serious examination of contemporary Jewish realities. The Six Day War can be seen as a kind of watershed, for it changed the local Jewish agenda which the Center had come to dominate in many cities throughout the country.

The Re-creational Period

Retrospectively it is apparent that the American Jewish agenda changed from 1967 on. Israel became more central to the hearts, minds and pocketbooks of American Jewish leadership. In many instances, following the action and power agenda, Center executives became Federation executives. The "Israelcentrio" givers gained dominance in the Federation system, which up to 1967 had tended to be dominated by locally-focused Jewish leaders. The comfort of suburban Jewish living became increasingly jarred by major sociological changes in the attitudes and

behaviors of Jewish young adults, their reaction to the Viet Nam War, urban unrest, the disintegration of a significant number of Jewish families, the aging of American Jewry, postponed marriages, and zero population growth. At the same time Israel's draw grew; for a significant minority of Jews, visiting and studying in Israel became increasingly important.

This came to affect Centers in degrees at first not comprehended. As the Jewish community changed so did the synagogues. Such was also the case vis a vis Jewish education and its increasing importance as a tool to decelerate the burgeoning intermarriage rate.

This brief review sets the stage for discussing the last decade, the present and the immediate future regarding the question raised in this article's title.

The "Jewification" Period

The CJF 1990 Jewish Population Study confirmed what many Jews felt but were unable to quantify: that there had indeed been an explosion of intermarriage, including the children of those who had been most active in Center and Jewish community activities. In an attempt to combat this, a burst of energy, money and interest devoted to enhancing Jewish identity has swept the country and its institutions.

Centers have always both benefitted from and suffered from their central difference from synagogues. At the core, people join Centers because they want to, not because they need to. They join because the activities, not the ideology, attracts them. Thus orthodox Jews, for whom a good physical education program is important, will use Centers so long as the Center demonstrates its sensitivities to traditional Jewish requirements (e.g., separate swimming times for men and women, Sabbath and holy day observance).

The Center's leadership may enunciate a philosophy of pluralism but that philosophy seems to play itself out differently depending upon the size of the city. In many smaller and intermediate cities Jews of all persuasions and affiliational backgrounds are comfortable with the Center as a place for all Jews. Their use of Centers is driven by the need of the family or individuals to find a place for quality activities which happen to be sponsored by the Jewish community. A significant number of non-Jews also find JCCs such a place.

As community demographics and mores have changed, there are significant minorities within the Jewish community who have also grown comfortable attending JCCs because there is no ideological test involved in membership. Intermarried couples, new immigrants, single parent families, gays are but some examples of these subgroups. The associational aspects of JCCs thus provide a comfort level precisely because there is no test vis a vis Jewish behavior or belief.

This comfort level will naturally tend to be at its highest for those who do not respond well to externally (or God) generated expectations for behaviors and/or belief. The obverse is also true. Generally speaking, those for whom Jewish expression entails "required" behaviors and beliefs tend to fault JCCs for their lack of ideological expectations.

As I indicated earlier, in the smaller and intermediate size communities Jews of all ideological expression will purchase an activity at the Center if that activity coincides with their recreational or educational needs. If they choose the nursery school for their children, they expect sensitivity vis a vis Jewish calendar observance and Jewish activities which do nothing to contravene their Jewish behavioral or belief system (e.g., snacks served at the school are expected to be kosher). These members tend to be synagogue affiliates also.

In metropolitan cities, choosing the Center is more likely to be an expression of Jewish affiliation. Residual secularism among the elderly, and among the immigrants from Israel and the former Soviet Union where Jewish religious expression is an anathema or unknown, provides a significant and disproportionate source for membership. The same tends to be true with intermarried couples. Those who desire some undefined series of activities under Jewish auspices and/or Jewish activities of a pleasant and therefore acceptable level, are often more comfortable in a Center setting than in a synagogue. Jewish identity for their children is often desired without reference to a clearly defined or coherent philosophy geared to any specific outcomes. (This is not to deny that many who affiliate with synagogues also possess no coherent philosophy).

So, are we finally ready to answer the question - are JCCs a fifth denomination?

The Centers - A. Fifth **Denomination?**

I maintain that this cursory and far from comprehensive review of the metamorphosis of JCCs reveals what they are, have been, and, I hope, will be in the time ahead. Centers have engaged in programmatic, adaptive behavior since their beginnings 139 years ago. The one ideological strand which has been consistent is the ongoing love affair with America. As the expectations of America vis a vis its newcomers have changed, so the Centers have reflected the nexus of the two. As the ebb and flow of acculturation and assimilatory trends have changed, clashed, competed, and receded, so have the programmatic emphases of Centers.

A review of the writings of those who have grappled with the role of Centers in America over the past 100 years reveals a consistency of this adaptive pattern. There have been those (especially Graenumn Berger) who argued that Centers were a kind of non-religious Jewish denomination. I would maintain that most who wrote on the issue over the last seven decades took a somewhat different approach, to name some: Louis Kraft, Philip Selman, Judah Shapiro, Samuel C. Dohs, Manheim Shapiro, Nathan Cohen, Bernard Schiffman, Emanuel Berlatsky, Arnulf Pins, Sanford Solender, Herbert Millman, Morris Levin, Abe Vinik, Miriam Ephraim, Heiman Passamanek, Bert Gold, Bernard Scotch, George Brager, Bernard Reisman, Armand Lauffer, Fern Katleman, David Dubin, Gerald Bubis, Oscar Janowsky, Norman Linzer, Alex Gittennan, Joel Carp, Barry Shrage, Steven Huberman, Alter Landesman, Frank Lowenberg, Ralph Dolgoff, Deborah Miller, Cindy Chazan, Barry Chazan, Bill Kahn, Bill Budd. Each in his or her way saw the Center as a place for all Jews of all denominations and/or outlooks to come together and celebrate that which binds them together in their sameness. At the same time, almost all of the

writers saw Centers as a place where non-Jews could also belong, while hoping this would not weaken the defined Jewish purposes of the Center as reflected in practice.

Many of the aforementioned writers emphasized a strongly focussed and delineated programmatic emphasis drawing upon Jewish sources. A number of them had been influenced by the thinking and writing of Mordecai Kaplan who emphasized the notion of an organic Jewish community. A few of them saw Centers as a universalizing setting where the Jewish component should be de-emphasized.

Even as the writers discussed Centers' purposes, the members spoke with their voices and their feet. I would maintain that for the most part they do not see themselves as members of a movement, adherents of an ideology, or affiliates of a denomination. They are seekers of comfort - physical and psychological, associational and familiar - who sometimes wish to learn skills, keep well, be entertained, have their kids or parents in a caring and nourishing environment within a vaguely defined Jewish ambiance.

I would argue that this is the genius of Centers. There is no more democratic setting in the country. Center boards today most often reflect the members. Gone are the old days and ways of the "up-town" trustees deciding upon the needs and programmatic priorities for the "downtown greeners".

If the Centers had not constantly re-invented themselves they would not be here today. This strength has some deficits. Judaism on demand, rather than demanding Judaism, will more likely remain the norm in Center settings. The expectations which are central to most of Judaism's teachings can be explored in Center settings as possibilities, not expectations. Gemara and Talmud need not be alien in a Center setting, but exposure to the possibilities of serious study must be subjected to a buy-in process grounded in voluntary choice - the choice of the JCC to offer the possibilities and the choice of member to attend or not.

It is true that a synagogue member also has to decide to join. But the family that wants a bar or bat mitzvah will subject themselves to a set of expectations - study, skill mastery, etc. - which is ironically only found in Centers in some aspects of the physical education department, e.g., the competitive teams which some Centers sponsor.

This means that the challenge to Centers today remains the same as yesteryear. To remain relevant to its constituents, to provide options and opportunities, to raise sights and expectations, to stimulate personal and Jewish growth, to encourage Jewish diversity, to celebrate Jewish possibilism, to reflect and refract Jewish realities and potentialities, to encourage social responsibilities, to transmit skills Jewish and general. To do all these things in a Jewish atmosphere while encouraging intellectuality as appropriate, body and mind-stretching experiences where possible, creative and innovative application of Jewish verities, grounded in respect for past, awe of present and hope for Jewish future does not require a fifth denomination. It demands a fidelity to the larger purpose of Jewish continuity and Jewish re-creating, re-forming, re-constructing, re-shaping while conserving and revering the traditions we call Judaism. All who work in and on behalf of Centers have the charge to transmit all of these possibilities to the end that there will be a Jewish future. Ken Yehi Ratzon.

8. Jewish Educational Practice in JCCs Ten Years After COMJEE

by Barry Chazan
Jewish Educational Consultant, JCC Association

An Era of Achievement

The last two decades of the twentieth century will be recorded as the era of the blossoming of Jewish education in the Jewish Community Center movement. Early in the 1980s (a decade before the CJF Jewish Population Study), the Jewish Community Center movement focused on the state of American Jewish continuity and identity, and decided to make Jewish education, continuity and identity a central concern and commitment of the Center world.

Beginning with the Commission on Maximizing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of JCCs (COMJEE) in 1982, followed by the Committee on Enhancing Jewish Educational Effectiveness, and extending until today (after COMJEE II has been initiated), it is possible to point to a host of achievements in Jewish educational activity in the Center field in the areas of: staff development, Israel seminars, professional Jewish educators in Centers, adult education, lay leadership development, and Jewish programming. Moreover, there is a growing body of body of experience, literature, personnel, and programs which points to the emergence of a field of Jewish education in JCCs. One can now comfortably say that Jewish education and identity have become a part of the bloodstream of the JCC world.

The Practice

How has this new Jewish educational interest expressed itself in the practice of JCCs? How has Jewish education been effected in JCCs across North America in the 1980s and 1990s? What have the best Centers been doing in order to maximize Jewish educational effectiveness and strengthen Jewish continuity during the past 10 years?

An analysis of research studies conducted over the years, along with a look at anecdotal material and primary sources, enables us to delineate 12 main arenas of Jewish educational practice that have surfaced in JCCs in the past decade.

L The Committed Executive

One critical factor in the advance of Jewish education in JCCs is the executive director. Executives who believe in the importance of Jewish education for Jewish life - and the legitimate and critical role of Centers in that process - have proven to be major catalysts for change in their communities. Such executives have put Jewish education and continuity on the agenda of board meetings; they have made sure that board meetings include some Jewish study or *dvar Torah; they* have

invested in Israel staff and board seminars; they have worked to obtain a full-time Jewish educator; they have brought visiting scholars, lecture series, study programs into the community; they themselves have begun to study; they have created connections and alliances with the larger Jewish educational world locally and nationally; they have become advocates and spokespersons of the motto of Jewish education. These executives have come to regard Jewish identity, Jewish continuity, and Jewish education as important aspects of their professional life. Centers in which there has been increased Jewish educational activity have usually been led by such committed executives.

II. Mission Process and Mission Statement

A second indicator of Jewish educational activity in a JCC is the process of developing and producing a "mission" statement, a document which presents the vision and goal of the Center vis a vis Jewish education. There are two important aspects of this domain: 1) the **process** of developing a missions statement, and 2) the document itself. The process of developing such a statement in itself educates and convinces participants of the importance of Jewish education, and the emergent document serves as a credo and evaluative tool of the Center's goals and direction.

III. Jewish Educator

The third critical factor in the implementation of Jewish education in JCCs has been the employment of a full-time educational professional who is responsible for agency-wide Jewish education. In the early 1980s, JCCs in Chicago, Boston, and Los Angeles engaged senior Jewish educators to do over-all Jewish educational planning and implementation. Throughout the 1980s, other Centers followed suit, and by 1993 there were over 60 individuals who identified Jewish education as their main or exclusive professional responsibility in the Center.

Several different models of JCC Jewish educators have emerged. In some communities these educators are part of the senior executive team of the agency, and they affect all spheres of agency policy. **In** other communities they have been dynamic educator-teachers who have developed innovative Jewish study programs for the staff, board, and members of the JCC. In other communities these individuals have focused on cultural arts, Jewish programming, early childhood education and adult learning. JCC Jewish educators operate in diverse spheres of Center life (see the essay in this volume by Chazan and Charendoff), with the purpose of being the catalyst, advocate, and quarterback of the entire Jewish educational thrust in the Jewish Community Center.

IV. Israel Seminar

Seminars in Israel for JCC staff and board members have proven to be a fourth significant arena of Jewish educational activity in JCCs. Since 1987, through

its Israel Office, the JCC Association has developed a program of educational seminars which provide Center staff and board groups with an enriching Jewish experience Israel. These two-week seminars focus on key issues of contemporary Jewry and Center life: Jewish identity, pluralism, public affairs, Israel-Diaspora relations.

Approximately one-third of North American Jewish Community Centers have participated in these programs through group and individual staff representation. In his 1987 study of JCCs, Professor Bernard Reisman cited the seminars as one of the most successful dimensions of Jewish educational change in centers. Their impact on the Center is evident in three ways: 1) they heighten the sense of the Jewish mission; 2) they deepen the personal Jewish identity and knowledge of the participants; and 3) they provide staff with new ideas and resources for Jewish activities in their local agency.

V. In-service Jewish Professional Growth

An ongoing program of in-service Jewish study for Center staff is another significant expression of Jewish educational activity in JCCs. Early in the development of the maximizing process, it became clear that there was a need to invest in a serious, ongoing study program in order to significantly enrich the Jewish background and knowledge of the center staff.

Several diverse models of training have emerged: 1) in-house courses on Judaica which are conducted by the JCC Jewish educator and/or by local rabbis or educators; 2) participation by staff members in Judaica courses at local colleges of Jewish studies or at general universities with departments of Judaica; 3) development of a series of guest speakers and teachers who are brought into the community throughout the year. In 1987 the JCC Association published the *Guide to Jewish Knowledge for JCC Professionals,* an outline and sourcebook to help guide Centers in the development Jewish studies programs for their staffs.

VI. Board Enrichment in Judaica

A sixth expression of Jewish educational activity has been the Jewish enrichment of board members. It is clear that the success of making JCCs more Jewish greatly depends on the commitment of the board to this cause. There have been two main foci of effort in this area: 1) educating the board to see Jewish education a legitimate and important responsibility of the Center; 2) educating the board members themselves so that they become more Jewishly knowledgeable and committed. The biennial meetings of the JCC Association have increasingly highlighted the movement's commitment to its Jewish agenda and to board study. In 1994 the JCC Association will publish a volume intended to assist boards to deal with Jewish issues, entitled *Mekorot: A Guide to Jewish Study for JCC Boards.*

I. Adult Learning

Outreach programs of adult Jewish learning for Center membership at large have been an important dimension of JCC Jewish educational activity in the 1980s and 1990s. Several models of adult learning have developed. The JCCs in Washington and Toronto have established extremely successful institutes for Jewish learning which encompass diverse courses, seminars, and workshops on Bible, Jewish history, Contemporary Jewry, the Jewish family, and Jewish holidays. These courses are taught by exciting adult educators and have attracted thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds.

Over 12 Centers are part of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-Schoo network - an innovative project in adult Jewish learning developed by the Hebrew University's Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora. The Melton Mini-School is a systematic, two-year course in Jewish literacy for interested adult learners. Thousands of students have completed this unique course. Several other centers offer the *Derech Torah* program - a one-year course in basic Judaism which originated at New York's 92nd Street Y, and has since spread to JCCs across the country. Some Centers conduct lecture series and develop their own courses on various aspects of Jewish history, culture, and civilizations. A few have also developed Hebrew ulpan programs.

VIII. Early Childhood

Early childhood programs are among the jewels of Center life and they are in great demand in communities across North America. Several JCCs have come to the realization that the early childhood program is potentially one of the richest areas for Jewish educational initiative that exists because young parents are not only not opposed, but are very receptive to the idea of enriching the Jewish content in the children's early years. Indeed, there is a growing recognition that young parenthood may be a critical moment for recapturing and reinvolving people whose own Jewish identity concerns were not addressed in their adolescent or young adult lives.

Hence, several Centers are investing in a variety of efforts aimed at enriching diverse aspects of their early childhood programs, including: hiring more Jewishly knowledgeable and skilled early childhood workers; enriching the Jewish education of existing staff; developing new programming and curriculum materials about holidays, Israel, customs and ceremonies, and Jewish values for use in the classroom; developing workshops on Jewish topics for parents.

I . Camping

Another promising opportunity for enriching a youngster's Jewish educational experience is the summer camp. The camp offers countless possibilities for introducing Jewish content and values in an enjoyable and accessible manner and for creating a Jewish living environment. Several Centers have made this area one of the primary responsibilities of the JCC Jewish educator, who trains staff, produces

programming material, and spends the summer in camp. Several JCC camps participate in the Israel shaliach program, which brings trained and approved Israeli counselors to the camps for the summer.

X. Ambience

One of the most important efforts in Centers has been the development of a Jewish atmosphere or environment throughout the building. This emphasis reflects an educational notion called "environment education," which suggests that the setting in which people find themselves can have significant impact on their senses, feelings, hearts, and minds. The creation of a rich Jewish environment in a Center can affect the Jewish nerve endings of everyone who enters the building.

A detailed map of the Jewish ambiance of JCCs is presented in a recent publication entitled *Enhancing the Jewish Ambience of Your JCC.* In this document Jane Penman and colleagues describe several critical areas of Jewish ambiance:

- Hearing - e.g., background music in the halls
- Sight - e.g., Jewish art, holiday decorations, Hebrew signs, Jewish personalities

  Touch- e.g., ritual objects, building a *Sukkah,* kneading *challah*
- Smell and Taste - e.g., *latices,* apples *and honey, sufganiot, hamentaschen,* blintzes, gefilte fish, *falafel*
- Mind - e.g., Judaic library, Jewish book month, Jewish quiz cube.

XL Jewish Family Education

One of the exciting new areas in Jewish education that has emerged in the past decade is Jewish family education, which refers to the development of educational activities and programs aimed at affecting the Jewishness of the entire family. Assisted by such agencies as JEF in Detroit and the Whizen Institute at the University of Judaism, many local Centers have attempted to develop programs aimed at all members of the family, such as a Shabbat *seder, seuda shlishit,* building a *sukkah,* and family trips to Israel.

XII. Jewish Programming and Curriculum Materials

Most Centers have worked diligently over the past several years on expanding the menu of programs and activities which revolve around Jewish themes. Many Centers conduct Jewish book month programs in the fall which include exhibits, the sale of books, and visiting speakers. Others display and sell Jewish art and ritual objects. There are several impressive galleries in JCCs which showcase outstanding Israeli art, and a few Centers have theater companies which present plays of Jewish interest. Visiting speakers and entertainers are regular features of many JCC programs. Increasing emphasis has been placed on ongoing programs related to Israel, with special emphasis on Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut.

How Many of the Tivelve?

How many of these 12 components are needed to maximize the Jewishness of a JCC? We do not know. However, there are certain truths which seem to emerge about these components.

First, the more, the better seems to be the case. A Center which operates on all possible levels increases the possibilities of affecting its clientele.

Second, the passion and commitment to the overall principle of Jewish continuity and education is a prerequisite to all of these components. The board and the executive director have to want to make Jewish education happen.

Third, two factors - a full-time Jewish educator and a program of Israel seminars - are critical catalysts for the realization of the other components. A full-time Jewish educator is the driving force that can make things happen, and Israel seminars provide the knowledge and stir the passion that keep the enterprise alive and well.

The best current thinking suggests that the route to Jewish education and continuity in Jewish Community Centers is best defined by massive, diverse, and constant interventions. Such a route offers no quick answers, simple recipes, or immediate payback. In the long term, however, it seems to be the most worthwhile investment.

A Check-List of Jewish Educational Activity for Your Center

Do You Have .. .

1. a committed executive director?
2. a mission statement?
3. a full-time Jewish educator on staff?
4. a staff/board seminar in Israel?
5. a Jewish study program for staff?
6. a Jewish study program for the board?
7. learning programs for adult members?
8. Judaic content in early childhood programs?
9. Judaic content in the camp program?
10. Jewish ambience?
11. Jewish family education?
12. Jewish programming and curriculum?

HL The Staffing of Jewish Education in JCCs

Jewish education not just about ideas; it is also about people. This section deals with the role of some key figures in the advancement of the JCC Jewish educational enterprise. Allan Finkelstein and Don Scher argue that the executive director of the Center is critical to any viable Jewish educational thrust. Mark Charendoff and Barry Chazan present a taxonomy of roles and responsibilities for the newly emerging profession of full-time JCC Jewish educator, and Daniel Levine outlines the evolving role of the Israeli emissary (shaliach) in the Center world.

9. The Executive Director as Educator

by Allan Finkelstein
Executive Vice President
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These are times when JCCs continue to carve out a specific and effective niche for themselves in the world of Jewish education. Regardless of the community, certain conditions exist:

- Synagogues and "formal" educational institutions (e.g., day schools, universities) have long seen themselves as the exclusive providers of Jewish education, yet fewer and fewer children, adults, and families are involved in any kind of Jewish study.

- JCC staffs are, in many communities, becoming more committed to, and more comfortable with, new ventures in Jewish education, based on their own increasing study and participation in Israel staff seminars.

  The presence of full-time Jewish educators on an increasing number of JCC staffs have created a credible and enriching atmosphere.

  Most importantly, the audience is there. Adults are used to coming to JCC to bring their children, to participate in recreational activities and cultural events. Many of them are also looking for a supportive, non-threatening environment for learning , studying, and increasing their Jewish knowledge. This is especially evident among parents of children involved in Jewish camps and youth groups.

The Florence Melton Adult Mini School, along with *Derech Torah (a program* instituted by the 92nd Street Y), community colleges, family education programs, and others, have provided an approach that addresses all of the above. These programs have been tested in a variety of JCC settings, and have, generally, met with unqualified enthusiasm and success. Implementation of a program such as the mini-school cannot, however, take place without the full involvement - from the start - of the executive director. This involves a number of elements:

e The executive must, above all, be committed to creating a meaningful and quality Jewish educational atmosphere in the JCC, as Jewish educational programs cannot exist in a vacuum. It must be nurtured by staff members

including the executive director, who are comfortable with study as a part of their own lives.

- The executive director must be "out front" in dealing with the political ramifications that might arise from the JCC's involvement in a serious and ongoing Jewish educational effort. This requires working with the players in the community - congregational rabbis, educators, other providers of Jewish education - who must buy into the concept. They need to be able to comfortably encourage their constituents to participate in the JCC program without seeing this as competition. The executive director must project an attitude that says "the more Jews that study, the better - no matter where."

- The executive must also be a visible proponent of these programs at the board of directors level. In some centers, Jewish educational activities may be viewed as a departure from traditional JCC programming; the executive's enthusiasm and support will add a measure of credibility to the development of Jewish education in the JCC.

- The executive must demonstrate personal commitment by familiarizing him/herself with potential programs and their approaches so that he/she can articulate their value to those who ask. Jewish education cannot be "just another JCC program." Jewish education is **the** lens **through** which all JCC work must be seen. It must stand on its own, and have its own life. In addition, there must be a readiness to assign the best qualified staff to work in this area. A responsible director would not assign a person who is not an early childhood professional to run the JCC nursery school, nor would he/she turn the health and physical education department over to a person without specialized training. In the case of Jewish education, the staff person must possess not only a level of, and comfort with, Jewish knowledge, but a sophistication in working with very diverse groups.

- The periodic presence of the executive director around the Jewish educational classes and programs (e.g., at breaks, at "graduation") gives a sense of importance to the enterprise. The students' commitment merits special attention by the executive director.

- The executive must be involved in the recruitment and selection of the key staff of Jewish educational programs, including master teachers and staff trainers. There may also be a need for some financial "stretching" on the part of the executive in order to both get the program off the ground and attract these very special educators. There is always a concern, at first, over the issue of subsidy, especially in difficult financial times, but the JCC must put its money where its priorities are. This cannot happen without a major commitment on the part of the executive.

Lay leadership must "buy in," both philosophically and personally. Board seminars in Israel, study retreats, and carefully selected readings at board meetings are helpful in raising the comfort level, knowledge, and commitment of lay leaders. The executive director must put Jewish education on the table in a carefully planned way, no different than the approach used to involve lay leaders in capital campaigns and other new ventures.

Jewish educational programming provides a unique opportunity for the JCC, and the executive is, as is often the case, the key figure in moving the agency in new directions. A variety of creative and effective Jewish educational programs have already been tested in a number of JCCs, which can provide a wealth of information and experience to those JCCs wishing to enhance their programming. Whatever the case, it should be clear from this brief article that Jewish education in the JCC requires both demonstrated commitment and involvement by the executive director. The short and long term payoffs are well worth the effort, and the side benefits of the JCC's placing itself on the Jewish educational map are many. But none of these will materialize without the executive director being a visible and active proponent.

Two years ago, in the midst of a major financial crisis in the Jewish community, I was about to accompany a group of 16 professional staff on a biennial staff seminar in Israel, through the JCC Association Israel office. Two different community leaders asked, "how can you justify spending dollars on a perk when funds are so limited?" My answer was as follows: "Training staff Jewishly is like turning the lights on in the building. We would not run a building and save money by working in the dark. We cannot expect staff to be the kind of Jewishly knowledgeable role models that we say we need without providing for intensive and high quality Jewish educational experiences. To me, this Israel trip is not a perk. It is an essential part of doing business." The challenge stopped at that point. An executive must be able to articulate and educate others about the critical nature of the Jewish educational work that we do. That trip took place, as did a board seminar just a few months ago.

The job of Jewish education is never done, nor can we choose only one way to approach it. A committed executive director will consistently and constantly work at it, broadening the net, and expanding the scope of the agency's Jewish educational role.

10. The Challenge of Executive Leadership

by Don Scher
Assistant Executive Director, JCC Association;
Director, Israel Office

at new insights can be added to describe the role of the successful Jewish Community Center executive director in the 1990's? We know that he/she continues to be hired primarily to **manage** the workings of the Center and to provide leadership to the staff, lay organization and community in accomplishing the espoused mission of the agency. The management function includes the abilities to meet financial objectives, employ the right personnel and to see that the organization runs as a well-oiled machine, Leadership may be somewhat harder to define, but it requires foresight, creativity and an ability to respond to and influence the course of events. But given the growing emphasis in recent years on the Jewish educational role of the JCC, are there new qualities that should guide search committees as they seek executive directors?

In several studies that have been conducted in formal Jewish education, the Jewish school's principal has been identified as the single most important factor in affecting the quality of education in the school. In the still nascent area of Jewish education in the JCC, it is likely the executive director is the most influential individual in determining the Jewish educational effectiveness of the JCC.

This paper attempts, primarily, to identify and briefly discuss a variety of management and leadership functions performed by executive directors who run "Jewish educationally effective" JCCs. Second, it offers some suggestions and insights derived from observation of a limited number of Centers where executive initiatives have proven to be helpful in achieving Jewish educational effectiveness. The prevailing theme is that today's JCC executive director has become, in addition to his/her other roles, a Jewish educational administrator. Those executives who begin to view themselves as Jewish educators, acquiring skills and knowledge in this area, will complement their management and leadership abilities and, as a result, will be more effective executives.

The JCC's Jewish Educational Mission

Jewish educational effectiveness begins with the articulation of the Center's Jewish educational philosophy, commitments and function. This constitutes the Jewish educational mission of the agency, the core of *what the* Center is in business to accomplish, which transcends the day to day management issues of Center life and addresses the condition of the Jewish People, locally, nationally and worldwide. Engaging the Center's board of directors in this discussion is an important executive leadership function. The executive's knowledge of the "Jewish condition" - what is

happening in other Centers and communities, current events, the results of the CJF 1990 Jewish Population Study and its spinoff research studies - as well as his/her own Jewish educational vision and commitment to Jewish continuity, are some of the resources that the executive can use to facilitate the engagement process. The executive can, of course, utilize outside educational resources in the process, or it can be a totally internal leadership process. Guiding the board members through the discussion and helping them to clearly articulate the Center's mission is an example of the executive functioning as an educator. The mission statement becomes the defining principle of the Center's educational enterprise.

Translating Mission Into Content

A primary expectation of the executive director is to successfully translate the institutional mission into attainable goals and quality service. This does not simply mean creating new Jewish programs; Jewish educational content in JCCs must be established within the broader context of Center services. No Center in North erica is likely to divest itself of fiscal responsibility or traditional service priorities to various population segments in order to be more Jewish educationally effective.

The executive must mobilize the Center staff to participate in the task of translating the mission into service. As an educator, the executive works with staff to develop the necessary knowledge, commitment and ability to not only develop programs, but to manage and enrich them. This requires executive management - providing the proper material resources, and in-service training; executive leadership - offering appropriate encouragement and emotional support; and educational skills - helping to shape the content of the program. When an executive him/herself lacks the specific knowledge necessary to contribute to the program content, he/she can refer the staff person to a variety of other sources.

Even the most effective Jewish educational program will not survive long unless it attracts the necessary financial resources to assure its continuity, without placing other valued services of the center in jeopardy. Fundraising is part of Jewish education. It requires the executive's ability to speak and write with knowledge and conviction about the Jewish educational mission of the Center, eliciting the necessary support for Jewish educational programs. This support is becoming increasingly available to local communities from central funding bodies, private foundations, individual donors and the Jewish Agency/WZO. In certain quarters it is necessary to speak the "language" of Jewish education in order to give credibility to funding requests.

Service Delivery

With commitment, planning and resources in place the key to delivering Jewish educational service is **staff.** As in any area of center activity, effective service requires professional staff who know their subject matter and can engage membership in the program. While for many years Centers have employed quality professionals in the disciplines traditionally associated with Center services, Jewishly knowledgeable professionals have been a bonus rather than a prerequisite. Serious commitment to

Jewish educational effectiveness must translate into employing staff who are Jewishly knowledgeable and who learn to function as Jewish educators. As a manager, it is the executive director's responsibility to recruit and hire such individuals. As a Jewish educational administrator, it is the executive director's job to introduce in-service training programs for those already employed, thus enabling them to function "Jewish educationally."

One of the most consistent guarantees of obtaining the staffs positive reaction to such training has been the executive's personal commitment to the same process of learning, regardless of his/her level of pre-existing knowledge. The most Jewishly educated individual knows that learning is a never-ending process, but for some adults, education (especially Jewish education) can be intimidating. The adult fear of exposing what one does not know, and of entering a process with no finite point of accomplishment, requires that the learners be encouraged. A "Nachshon" - one who jumps into the water first and sets an example for others - is needed, and the JCC executive is the most appropriate person to fill this role.

Israel staff seminars have also proven especially effective in producing group bonding and motivation for continued Jewish learning. Those Centers which have employed a full-time Jewish educator (more than 60 to date) have often found that the collegial relationship on a day-to-day basis with a knowledgeable teacher produces a comfort level which mollifies the intimidation of learning. Some Centers employ local community resources (e.g., rabbis, or faculty members of Jewish education departments in local universities) as teachers. These people often attract new adult learners with their charismatic personalities or their specific areas of expertise. An old Sephardic folk saying claims that "with the appetite comes the nourishment." The executive director as educator must help create that appetite.

In-service training serves an additional function in the Center: R&D. When the executive successfully engages the staff in Jewish learning and Jewish subject matter, a synergy is created that leads to more and better Jewish educational programming. People sharing ideas at a heightened level of interest and knowledge leads to creativity and excitement. It is a process that nourishes itself and generates its own rewards.

Public Interpretation, Role Modelling and Credibility

The executive director continues to be one of the primary interpreters of the Center's mission, function and services to a variety of audiences: Jewish community leaders, Center members, prospective donors and funding bodies, professional groups, the community-at-large. Virtually every Center director should be equipped to discuss Jewish continuity and the Jewish educational emphasis of the Center in sociological and demographic terms. Due to the profusion of professional journals and data on the future of the Jewish community in America, assimilation, Jewish continuity and the importance of Jewish education, most North American Jewish communal professionals can effectively articulate the "whys" of our business. It is rarer to find the professional who can speak authoritatively on the "what" and the "how" of our Jewish educational priorities.

As JCCs develop Jewish educational services, create networks with Jewish educator colleagues in the community, and try to build confidence that the Center's Jewish mission is in competent hands, it will become increasingly important that JCC staff, particularly the executive directors, show familiarity with Jewish texts and sources, and be able to distinguish curriculum from program. Just as staff must learn the language of other disciplines that function in the center, they must learn the language of Jewish education. Perhaps the latter is even more crucial because of its centrality to *the raison d'etre of* the institution and the limitless scope of the subject matter.

In recent years many executive directors, for both personal and professional reasons, have sought out intensive Jewish educational experiences. The JCC Association Executive Fellows Program provided an opportunity for 14 executive directors to study intensively in Israel for three months. Another 45 executives are presently involved in the Wexner Continuing Jewish Education Program for JCC Executives. Others have found alternative programs and resources for ongoing Jewish study. It is not a coincidence that these programs have emerged at this time and that they are oversubscribed; Jewish learning is an emerging prerequisite of executive leadership in the Center field of the 1990s. It has added benefits as a positive and highly visible executive role model for staff and community that strengthens commitment to the Center's mission.

Lay **Leadership**

No more than the executive can benignly employ "hired guns" to actualize the Jewish educational mission of the center, can credible and effective lay leadership simply pay "lip service" to the mission statement they created. Only through personalized involvement that is consistent *with the* Center's Jewish educational mission can they demonstrate responsibility to their leadership positions.

Executives make great efforts to inform and educate lay leaders on every aspect of center ideology and operation. It is a necessary function if boards are to make thoughtful and enlightened decisions which respond to the needs of local community and which contribute to Jewish continuity. Grasping the Jewish educational dimension of the Center goes beyond familiarity with the programs that are offered and the attendant management and operational implications. Personal engagement in Jewish education is no less important for the board member than for the executive.

Many Centers have pursued this objective in creative ways. Lay leadership seminars in Israel, on both local and national scales, have become increasingly prevalent. They have proven to be as motivational for lay people as for staff in developing interest in continuing study and building a sense of shared purpose in their communal roles. Some Centers conduct regular board retreats for Jewish study, begin board meetings *with divrei Torah,* or devote portions of board meetings to Jewish study. The JCC Association's biennial and board meetings have elevated Jewish education to a central theme and provide opportunities on each occasion for Jewish study with outstanding teachers. The Jewish educators employed by many Centers have formed ongoing study groups for lay leadership.

Executive directors have always been concerned with developing and nurturing quality lay leadership. Active, knowledgeable, user-member lay leadership is a central and distinctive component of the JCC. The executive can foster this using his/her own creativity, the many models extant in the field and the support and resources of the JCC Association.

Summary

North American Jewish communal leadership has come to understand that Jewish continuity is more than this year's issue; it is the primary agenda issue of the nineties. It is at the core of our future and the future of generations to come. The response to it must be Jewish education that is qualitative, creative, meaningful and participatory, the kind of education that will affect how people identify and how they lead their lives. The magnitude of this concern calls for significant changes and responses in how we go about our business.

The Jewish Community Center movement must look not only to organizational but systemic changes. For the executive director, it means a personal assessment and investment in acquiring the skills and knowledge needed to manage and lead the institution into the next century. **"Learning - learning - learning: that is the secret of** *Jewish survival." (Ahad HaAm)*

11. The JCC Jewish Educator: From Reality to Ideal

by Mark Charendoff, *Director of Judaic Cultural Development, Toronto JCC*
and Barry Chazan, *Jewish Educational Consultant, JCC Association*

In the early 1980s Jewish Community Centers in Chicago, Boston, and Los Angeles began to hire individuals to serve as full-time Jewish educator in their agencies. By the early 1990s over 60 Centers had personnel who are in some way defined as "Jewish educators." The growth of this profession has been unprecedented, uncontrollable, and completely unsystematic. This new generation of personnel has diverse backgrounds (ranging from **PhDs, to** rabbinical ordination, to social work degrees, to former Hebrew school teachers), job titles (e.g., Director of Judaica; Jewish Educational Programmer; Scholar-in-Residence), functions, and scales of remuneration. The profession of JCC Jewish educator is one of the newest, most exciting, and fastest growing professional arenas in Jewish education. In 1993 alone, six new Jewish educational positions were filled in JCCs. Moreover, this dynamic has only begun. Recent research by Barry Chazan and Steven Cohen points to the definitive impact of a full-time Jewish educator on the Jewish life of the agency. It is quite likely that the profession of Jewish educator in the JCC will expand throughout the 1990s, and it is not inconceivable that by the year 2000 almost all North American JCCs will have some sort of Jewish educator on staff.

In this article we shall discuss two aspects of this profession: a description of the roles and functions of Jewish educators in their daily life, and a description of what the Jewish educator ideally should and might be in years to come.

at Jewish Educators Do in JCCs

There have been eight roles and functions that JCC Jewish educators have filled. Not every Jewish educator has filled every function; some have concentrated on one or two roles, while others have tried to be more expansive.

One role of the Jewish educator has been to serve as the personal educator and partner of the Center executive. **In** this capacity, the Jewish educator has been concerned with shaping the executive's thinking and woridview of all aspects of Center life. In such cases, the Jewish educator has served as a senior policy planner and advisor, with direct access to the highest echelons of power and decision making.

A second role has been teacher of Judaica. Typically, this role has encompassed teaching such subjects as Jewish sources, ideas, history, and Contemporary Jewry to staff, board, and Center members, and members of the broader community. Such teaching has been effected in various contexts: extended ongoing courses; one-time seminars or study programs; pre-holiday study series.

A third role of JCC Jewish educators has been direct programming related to Jewish content. This includes such projects as: the planning and administration of a children's museum (as is the case of the JCCA in Los Angeles); the planning and

implementation of Jewish book week; the development of an Israeli film festival or Israeli art exhibit.

A fourth role has been working with different units of the agency to expand the Jewish content in their particular areas. Some Jewish educators have worked extensively with the early childhood staff to help them incorporate Jewish motifs, ideas, and programs into their daily work. Others have devoted time to working with the summer camp director and staff in order to enrich Jewish aspects of the camp.

A fifth role has been programming for adult Jewish learning. This activity has emerged as one of the strongest spheres of Jewish educational growth in Centers in the 1980s (see Chazan and Cohen, *Assessing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers - The 1994 Survey),* and the full-time educator has usually been responsible for the organization and administration of these programs. In cities like Toronto and Washington these programs have emerged as major enterprises encompassing thousands of people. In other communities this task has included organizing and teaching in the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School or the *Derech Torah* Program.

A sixth role has been to serve as the Center's "Jewish" liaison to the larger Jewish educational community. Sometimes this has meant participation in meetings of the local board of rabbis or Jewish education council, or joint programming with schools, camps, and youth organizations. Generally, the role has been to interpret the mission and role of the JCC to the broader community - synagogues, federation, schools, Jewish press - and their professionals and boards. The task in this case has ultimately been to serve as the voice of JCC Jewish education, and to give credibility to the Center's Jewish agenda.

A seventh role is advocate for the cause of Jewish education within the Center. JCCs are still new to the Jewish education game and the subject must compete with other areas of the agency for attention, funds, and credibility. The Jewish educator has to be the defense attorney for the cause.

This relates to an eighth role which might immodestly be described as "the prophetic function " or, perhaps, as "the tumulter." The Jewish educator is someone who is never fully satisfied with the status quo. If there were four hundred people at a Jewish lecture, the Jewish educator wants five hundred. He/she continually questions, pushes and wonders how the place can be more Jewish. In some ways, as disturbing as it might be for some individuals, it seems that the Jewish educator serves as the *mezuzah* on the door. When you see a *mezuzah on the door, you* know it is a Jewish building and that sets certain expectations of what goes on in there. The presence of a Jewish educator at an executive staff meeting constantly reminds staff whey the Center exists -that there is a certain reason for sitting in this building and a certain reason for calling it the Jewish Community Center.

Three Models of Jewish Educators

It is possible to talk about three categories or models of Jewish educators currently operating in JCCs.

I. The Jewish Educator as Programmer

This model sees the educator as essentially responsible for the planning and implementation of diverse and exciting Jewish events or experiences in various aspects of Center life. It is typically filled by a person who has outstanding programming skills, a passion for Jewish education, and can translate that passion into effective programs. The thrust in programming is often on younger populations and families, and in over-all Center ambience. This kind of Jewish educator is likely to work less with staff and/or board development, and these Jewish educators often have weaker Jewish backgrounds than other models.

II. The Jewish Educator as Scholar--in-Residence

This model sees the educator essentially as a teacher whose main responsibility is to teach Judaica to staff and/or board members. This job definition usually involves little or no administrative or programming responsibilities. Such personnel are expected to have excellent Jewish backgrounds, and they are likely to be rabbis, teachers ,or academics. Although the number of people with whom such educators come in contact may be limited, their impact can be profound because of their relationship with senior lay people and staff.

III. The Jewish Educator as Educational Leader

This model regards the Jewish educator as a total educational force who is responsible for Jewish education in every aspect of Center life. Such a person is teacher, programmer, planner, thinker, and implementer all in one. No corner of the JCC can be left untouched by this model of educator. He/she needs a strong Jewish background as well as educational expertise in informal and adult education. He/she must also be able to be play an active role on the executive staff and possess management and administrative skills. The educational leader is a role model as well.

From Reality to the Ideal

It is clear that Jewish educator in the JCC is still a profession in formation. Moreover, there is room for many different versions and forms which respond to unique local needs and to the different personalities of the educators in these positions. Indeed, one of the exciting aspects of this field is the diversity of skills and people filling these positions.

This is a good time to dream about some ideal traits. The ideal JCC Jewish educator should be a systemic catalyst - a person who functions throughout the whole agency and injects the Jewish dimension into all areas of Center life. He/she is a scholar who is willing to get his hands dirty, a Rabbi Alciba who learns and teaches but who also is willing and able to sit down and write a budget, develop a program, interact with the staff, and socialize with the board.

The relationship between the educator and the agency executive is critical to the educator's success. Change can't happen in a Center without the direct involvement of the executive. The other staff looks to the executive for clues and cues as to

what is important and what the Center's priorities are. The executive has to buy into Jewish education and he/she must involve the lay leaders. But the educator does not just teach the executive and the president; he/she also learns from them about their world, their lives, their perspectives on Judaism. The JCC Jewish educator believes in and cares for the professionals and lay leaders with whom he/she works.

Should the Jewish educator head a department of Jewish education or not? On one hand, a "department" implies that Jewish education is serious business in the life of the Center; it has its own office, secretary, and budget. On the other hand, Jewish education is not a department like other categories of Center activity; it is a value, an idea, a vision which should pervade all departments. To squeeze it into one office would risk turning it into simply another Center program. Jewish education should be part of every budget, *office, and* program *in* the Center. But while this is true philosophically, the practical Jewish educational needs of a Center are so great that they require an address and a structure. Jewish education may or may not need a "department" with its own discreet apparatus, but it surely does need professionals, support staff, and resources to function effectively. Moreover, it is becoming clear that this cannot be a one-person operation. The Jewish educator cannot be the "token Jew" on staff. Indeed, we are heading towards the emergence of teams or faculties of Jewish that will include: early childhood experts, adult Jewish educators, family life educators, and scholars-in-residence.

Finally, what does this ideal educator need in order to do the job?

- **Jewish Passion -** The Jewish educator must believe in the cause with the passion of Jeremiah, Hosea, and Amos.

Jewish Knowledge - The Jewish educator must pursue Jewish knowledge like a Rabbi Akiva. This field will never grow unless we have learned and knowledgeable teachers and educators.

e **Jewish Behavior and Jewish Observance -** The Jewish educator must behave as Jewishly as a Baal Shem Tov. The Jewish educator is not just a mezuzah; he/she is a Jewish role model. Observance need not be Orthodox, but it must reflect the Jewish world view. In the Center field, one cannot just talk the talk without walking the walk. Judaism has to be seen as a living, breathing part of the person and not simply academic knowledge.

Humanity - The Jewish educator must be a Hillel, someone who loves human beings and is able to communicate, relate to, and care for all people. He/she has to love Jews as well as Judaism and respect those who do not observe and know as much as those who do.

Conclusion

This is a new and evolving field; we are not at the beginning, but we are still in the formative years of this profession. That makes things exciting, but somewhat complicated, as there are no definitive answers. Models have to be adapted to different communities, and to distinct personalities. Maybe we shall be lucky and never arrive at the one model; indeed the hope of this field may be that it will continually be inhabited by all sorts of wonderful Hoseas, Aldvas, Baal Shem Toys, and Hillels.

12. The Role of the Shaliach in the JCC

by Daniel Levine
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This article will focus on two related but separate issues: the place of Israel in the Jewish Community Center, and the place of the shaliach in the Jewish Community Center.

Over the past decade, there has been a growing interest by JCC's in North America to find ways to emphasize the "Jewish" in the title Jewish Community Center. I would even say the goal has been to change the Jewish in the title from an adjective to a verb, to "Jewish-ize" the JCC. Israel has played a strong role in accomplishing this. No Jewish service agency in the Diaspora community resembles Israel as the JCC does. Both serve the entire Jewish community, are inclusive by ideology, and all Jews regardless of their individual beliefs are welcomed warmly at the JCC.

In JCCs, as in Israel, Jewish tradition is observed. Most JCCs have developed a Shabbat policy varying from total shutdown to noon openings. The Jewish calendar is highlighted in community celebrations and in activities in the various Center departments, such as in the early childhood education program or the senior adult program. The leadership is Jewish but little if any Jewish observance is required of Center leadership or members. Decisions are based mainly on pragmatic realities and needs; few JCCs turn to Talmudic precedent for guidance in crisis solution. On a macro level of community, the State of Israel shares many of these characteristics.

In the afterglow of the Six Day War, as Israel quickly became "the secular temple of the Jewish people," it was quite natural that the JCC pioneer a program to increase Jewish identity and strengthen Diaspora Jews' relationship with Israel. One of the major players in this effort was a shaliach (an Israeli emissary) to the JCC who brought his or her skills, whether they were in the field of physical fitness, arts and crafts, or dramatics to impact on Jewish programming at the JCC. Later the shaliach's role developed into that of recruiter for Israel programs, as JCC tried to increase interest among the JCC membership and the general Jewish community in traveling to Israel. During the 1970s, the JCC was active in promoting the myriad of Israel programs that catered to the Jewish world. But as the glow of the Six Day War waned, the everyday problems of occupation, the Yom Kippur War, and later the *intifada* period caused changes in the relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community. The Jewish Federations and their Jewish Community Relations Council started using the shaliach for *hasbara* (information), as a spokesperson on Israel or Middle East affairs. The community's needs forced a change in the role of the shaliach, shifting the original focus from programming to

recruitment to *hasbam*. In *many cases this also* led to a physical shift of the shaliach from the JCC to the Federation.

In 1991 the results of the CJF Jewish Population Study hit a raw nerve in the Jewish community, effecting virtually every Jewish agency in the community. The ramifications of the report were discussed and analyzed *ad nauseam*. The most quoted statistic cited a 52% intermarriage rate. In the wake of the report it became clear that the issue of intermarriage and the possibility of an unstoppable assimilation rate could spell the demographic end of the Jewish people in North America. Jewish continuity commissions emerged to discuss what can or should be done to offset the findings of the study which, in addition to the intermarriage figures, showed a declining interest in Jewish organizational affiliation, waning interest in Jewish practice, and a general reassessment in the attitude towards interdating. One of the primary suggestions that has come out of the deliberations of the Jewish continuity commissions is to increase travel to Israel. Israel trips, especially for teenagers, are perceived as possible antidote to offset some of the grave consequence of the CJF report.

Today JCC-sponsored visits to Israel and Israel programming within the JCC present new challenges for the shaliach. They provide an opportunity for him or her to function as a Jewish educator and to work together with the JCC staff *and other* community educational agencies to (1) develop innovative pre-trip materials that create an ambience of excitement and anticipation, and prepare the participants for the experience; (2) fulfill the administrative needs, including recruitment, as well as serve as the community implementor who can rise above the denominational fray; (3) plan the type of visit to Israel that could provide the possible jolt that the North American community expects (4) develop post-trip meetings and study groups to extend the experiential and cognitive aspects of the visit; and (5) prepare follow-up trips to Israel with the participants' additional goals in mind, e.g., kibbutz program, university program, yeshiva study.

Because of Israel's perceived importance in the fight against assimilation and intel marriage, facilitating Israel trips remains high on the shaliach's agenda, but this is only one aspect of the situation. The shaliach in 1994 faces a growing change in attitudes towards Israel. The majority of the Jewish community today was born after the creation of the State of Israel and after the traumatic events of the Holocaust. The days of the unabashed love affair with Israel is about over. The young people we want to attract today were born into the period of the controversial war of Lebanon in 1982 as well as the *intifada,* when Israel has been portrayed in non-flattering tems. Today's youth has not grown up on stories of Jewish suffering and Israel as a miracle or dream come true; rather Israel is perceived as a powerful Middle Eastern *country* not always fulfilling the dream of liberalism and humanism - as portrayed on the CNN screen. The challenge of the shaliach is three-fold: (1) to create an interest travelling to Israel, keeping in mind that a cursory glance of the *New York Times* Sunday edition presents pages upon pages of options for summer travel and educational experiences; (2) to improve the marketing of the

aforementioned Israel programs; and (3) to convey an image of the land and culture of Israel that is different than the one portrayed in CNN Mid-East reporting.

Israel and the JCC have a unique opportunity to serve each other. They share an ideology of striving to increase, or at least maintain, the Jewish identity of their constituencies; neither has a denominational preference (except for political convenience); both maintain public Jewish observances and rituals. Israel no longer needs to convince the JCC and Federation leaders that she can play a major role in the battle against the rising assimilatory trend in the North American Jewish community, as they have come to this conclusion themselves. But Israel must ask itself what ideological price she is willing to pay for waging this battle. The Zionist movement/State of Israel has always viewed itself as the ideological solution to the problematic existence of the *Galut*. Zeev Jabotinsky's declaration that "We must destroy the *Galut* before the *Galut* destroys us!" typifies the opinion of those who believed that the *Galut* should be ideologically de-legitimized. The Museum of the Diaspora is an example of a modern expression of this concept. Museums are usually created to protect certain artifacts from being lost or destroyed, as the Zionist ideologues predicted would happen to the Diaspora. Yet every week thousands of Jewish visitors from the Diaspora visit the Museum, somewhat comparable to thousands of dinosaurs visiting a museum of natural history to view dinosaurs on display. In Israel the Zionist heirs are currently bearing the brunt of an ideological earthquake: we are being asked and encouraged to bring Diaspora youth to Israel - not to live, but to strengthen their identity so they may go back and strengthen the Diaspora which our predecessors thought would and should disappear.

The shift in the ideological foundations, combined with the changes in the functions of the shaliach and the infrastructure of the Diaspora Jewish community, have created new opportunities for the shaliach to have an impact. Today in most Jewish communities in the United States and Canada the JCC and the Federation are the two leading agencies, usually combining about two thirds of the Jewish communal service workers, coming into contact with nearly half of the Jewish population, and having access to the most influential group of lay leaders responsible for the direction that each Jewish community center takes, These conditions allow for the shaliach to have a direct impact on both professional and lay community decision makers.

In this context, I believe that the primary role of the shaliach should be:

to serve as a living connection between the Diaspora community and Israel

to increase interest in Israel

- to recruit participants for Israel travel programs

- to create an Israel Programs Center

- to introduce Israel as an educational resource for workshops, text studies, ulpan classes, board retreats, and drama *chugim in* the JCC, in local schools, in *chavurot, in* camps (e.g., Israel and the Jewish holidays, Israel and the Bible);

- to provide educational materials and resources to various departments in the Center and agencies in the community

- to serve the local Israeli population, which is a growing reality in most North American Jewish communities. The JCC is the communal institution that Israelis frequent most because it provides important services (e.g., early childhood education, sports facilities) in an atmosphere that is suited to their needs - Jewish, but not religious. Israelis living in North America are, for the most part, financially comfortable and, if approached properly, could become a vibrant component of the Jewish community. This would not only benefit the community, but would provide the Israeli families with a positive connection to American Jewish life.

While Israel has been transformed from a Zionist dream into a tangible reality, aliyah is not a viable alternative for the vast majority of North American Jewry. Therefore, the needs of the Diaspora Jews must be met in their home communities. Israel and the shaliach must direct their attention to the issues facing the Jews in the Diaspora, namely interdating, intermarriage and assimilation, and tackle them head on. The traditional judgmental approach of "I told you so," or the fatalistic approach which equates intermarriage with a modern day Holocaust, will not lead to a solution nor even a pattern for a constructive dialogue.

It is obvious that the shaliach can combine forces with the JCC to play a positive role in this issue. The JCC, with its non-denominational stance, has proven to be the logical base for the general community to deal with the issue of intermarriage, as the Centers run programs for teenagers of dating age, and many intermarried couples send their children to JCC early childhood education programs. The shaliach could serve as a catalyst in developing programs for these target populations. The shaliach could also use his or her unique identity to offer these populations a new option in Jewish identity, by portraying Judaism as a peoplehood or nationality rather than only as a religion. For many North American Jews, being Jewish means merely affiliating with one of the four denominations and attending its temple or synagogue. They are usually not presented with alternative ways of discovering or expressing their Jewishness. The shaliach could develop educational materials on this theme.

In summary, the shaliach's future success is dependent on his or her ability to adjust to the new Jewish demographic realities and to set goals accordingly. The shaliach must recognize that he or she has not been sent to a Diaspora community to end a perceived demographic disaster inherent in the current trends, rather to join in the community's efforts to educate and preserve itself, and to serve as a resource for community needs regarding these issues. All of this would, of course, require changes in the present training process of shlichim. It may even necessitate recruiting

shlichim from different institutions, such as Melitz, Oranim, the Education Corps of the Israel Defense Forces, or the departments of education of various Israeli universities.

For the first time, the American Jewish community sees itself in danger, not of physical annihilation but of dwindling numbers and institutional disintegration. The Jewish Community Center faces the possibility of reverting to just a community center. The shaliach and the JCC share the view that °Israel is a source of positive Jewish identity and can be a springboard for channeling Jewish interaction. Does the Zionist movement and its shlichim want to play a major role in helping the Diaspora to survive the very prophecy that classical Zionism foresaw? Do we in Israel have the human resources to meet the Diaspora's Jewish educational needs? I believe the answer is yes to both. Although we can now clearly see the veracity of classical Zionist ideology, we can not stand on the sidelines with an air of superiority. We must roll up our sleeves and join in the worldwide struggle for Jewish continuity.

1T". The **Process of Doing Jewish Education in** JCCs

Jewish education is not simply another department of the Jewish Community Center; it is a process that cuts across diverse departments, spheres, and activities. The essays in this section describe the Jewish educational dimension of some of those spheres. Allan Weissglass, a lay leader in Staten Island, and Lewis Stolzenberg a Center executive, discuss the lay leader's role. Richard Juran explains the remarkable role that the Israel seminar can play in the life of a Center. Jay Levenberg focuses on a positive and pro-active approach to marketing Jewish education. A vital Plan describes in specific terms how to make Jewish education part of the agency's daily program. Jason Gaber presents an intimate, personal perspective on what it has meant to be a Jewish educational professional throughout the past decade. Parry Chazan and Mark Charendoff review some of the key terms used to talk about JCC Jewish education today.

13. Lay Leadership and Jewish Education

By Allan Weissglass, *Past President, JCC of Staten Island, Member of the JCC Association Board of Directors,* and Lewis Stolzenberg, *Executive Director, JCC of Staten Island*

Eleven years ago, the Jewish Community Centers Association's Commission on Maximizing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness (COMJEE) of JCCs and its Commission on Implementation began a process which has profoundly affected the extent and quality of Jewish education throughout the Center movement. Through the work of the continental commissions and numerous self-evaluations conducted by JCCs in their own communities, the Center movement has learned a great deal about what it can do to strengthen Centers' roles in fostering Jewish identity, continuity and education. This information has been utilized to improve and expand existing programs, to foster board and staff development activities, and to create exciting new initiatives such as the Executive Fellows Program in Jerusalem.

We view this paper as part of the continuing COMJEE process and hope that it will further advance the discussion within the Center movement about the role of lay leaders in fulfilling the Jewish educational mission of JCC. Although this essay will focus on lay leadership and Jewish education, we feel that it is important to first explicitly note our conviction that a strong partnership between lay and professional leaders is necessary to achieve success in all crucial aspects of a JCC's mission.

Our fundamental premise is that although professionals make the specific programming, scheduling and hiring decisions through which Jewish education at a Center is manifest, the role of lay leaders is ultimately crucial in determining the extent, quality and type of Jewish education which will take place in a JCC. Their policies and budgetary decisions create the parameters in which Jewish programs are developed and implemented. Their attitudes help to determine the extent to which a Center aggressively pursues opportunities to promote Jewish education in its broadest sense, or whether the JCC will define Jewish education as narrowly as possible, confining it to discussions about and celebrations of the Jewish holidays. Moreover, the degree to which lay leaders "walk the talk" on Jewish education ultimately colors everything the JCC does internally in this area and its impact on educational efforts of other Jewish institutions in the community.

But before continuing to write more about the role of lay leaders in determining and fulfilling the Jewish educational mission of Jewish Community Centers, it is important to first understand the background of our trustees. Lay leaders come to the Center movement with a wide range of Jewish knowledge and commitments and they become trustees of JCCs for many reasons. Generally, although their level of association with the organized Jewish community is probably somewhat higher than

the average person, their Jewish backgrounds usually resemble those of the Jewish population at large when they first become active in our agencies.

Men and women become involved with our lay structure for a variety of personal, professional and Jewish reasons. For some, engaging in community service is also a way of networking and making contacts with people who could be helpful to them socially and/or in their vocations. Many first become involved in assisting the Center through their children, agreeing to serve on a committee or do other volunteer work connected with a program their daughters and/or sons participate in. Most people are drawn to the Center because of interests that are not directly linked to Jewish education. Some might be attracted to the JCC because of its services to people with disabilities, others might be drawn to our arts classes, community theater programs or sports leagues. In addition, to varying degrees people find that assuming a leadership role in the JCC is a good way to express their positive feelings about being Jewish.

Given the variety of reasons people become lay leaders, it should not be surprising to realize that board members' levels of Jewish knowledge, intellectual and emotional commitment, and affiliation are also very varied. Trustees who have not yet recognized the need for Jewish education in their own lives and who do not try to incorporate Jewish values into their own behaviors can hardly be expected to be effective promoters of such programs within the Center or major financial supporters of Jewish educational efforts. Thus before many trustees are able and/or really interested in assuming a leadership role in Jewish education at the JCC they must be educated Jewishly and become more attuned to the centrality of the Jewish mission of the Center.

At the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island we believe that one of the primary responsibilities that senior lay and professional leaders have is to build on the Jewish sensibilities which originally inclined women and men to become trustees of a Jewish agency. We must act to broaden and strengthen their commitment to Judaism and encourage them to further their Jewish knowledge. Thus, at the Staten Island JCC we continually seek to create opportunities for lay leaders to explore their Jewish heritage and to gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the unique role that the JCC has as a Jewish institution.

The JCC of Staten Island consciously sets out to open its board members' minds in ways which will empower them to become Jewish communal leaders. Our approach includes the integration of Jewish content and perspectives into the ongoing work and atmosphere of the board, as well as formal Jewish education programs.

We use a number of different techniques to foster a Jewish atmosphere and perspective in the work of the board. By starting each board meeting with a *dvar Torah, we* set a tone which differentiates JCC board meetings from those of the any other institutions in which the trustees may be involved. As the first order of "business," the dvar Torah helps create a framework for later discussions. In addition, preparing a dvar Torah provides many lay leaders with their first opportunities to act as Jewish educators among their peers. Because one must study before he/she can teach, preparing a dvar Torah also engages lay leaders in some study and the

discovery of primary and secondary sources. Thus the *dvar Torah* becomes a learning experience both for those listening and for the person responsible for preparing it.

At the Staten Island JCC we also celebrate holidays and major events in the Jewish calendar together at board meetings. While some of these celebrations are also learning experiences for a number of lay leaders, their primary value is in creating and re-enforcing an atmosphere and sensibility about our work. The board members' frame of mind, and the way in which they approach opportunities, problems and policy discussions, is different when the group has-just lit Chanukah candles together, or spent a moment in silence as part of our commemoration of Yom HaZikaron.

During the actual work of board committees and the board as a whole, we try to explicitly focus attention on the Jewish context of the issues being discussed and/or the Jewish values which should inform our decision making. Without becoming didactic, we work to help lay leaders develop a Jewish perspective on programs which at first might not appear to be particularly part of our Jewish mission. The Staten Island JCC, for example, has very extensive programs and services for children and adults with disabling conditions. Lay leaders are very proud of the Center's work in this area and many of them would gladly support such services on purely secular, humanistic grounds. However, as Jewish leaders they need to know how these efforts fit into our Jewish mission and that they are related to fundamental Jewish values. They also need to know the importance of providing services under Jewish auspices to the minority of participants in these programs who are Jewish.

By using a Jewish perspective to discuss activities and services which are not initially seen as part of "Jewish education," lay leaders become more aware of the unique opportunities Centers have to promote Jewish education in the broadest sense of the term. Just as Judaism involves the myriad of details which are part of everyday life, the JCC regularly touches and interacts with people in many different parts of their lives. Jewish education at a JCC does not just occur in formal programs and classes. It takes place during innumerable contacts between staff and members and as part of the sights, sounds and smells of the JCC.

In addition to these more informal and continuous efforts to enhance the Jewish consciousness of our lay leaders, our JCC conducts more structured Jewish educational programs for trustees. For the past few years, the Staten Island JCC has brought an outstanding scholar to our community each fall. An important part of the scholar's work is to conduct special study sessions and lecture/discussions for our lay leaders. Last year, for example, our scholar-in-residence conducted seminars in lay leaders' homes and many trustees brought their friends, neighbors, adult children and other relatives to those sessions. This year, our Center also started a hi-weekly study program which is regularly attended by 25 lay leaders.

We have also tried a new approach to training our board members in fundraising for our capital campaign. Instead of concentrating on "nuts and bolts" issues such as "how to ask for a gift," we launched our campaign training with a motivational seminar on the meaning and centrality of tzedakah in Jewish life. Even

with the recession, our campaign is ahead of the projected schedule and promises to be the most successful one ever.

In Staten Island we have seen that by building upon and strengthening the initial attachments to Judaism which led people to become lay leaders, a JCC can help transform trustees into strong advocates for Jewish education. As trustees become more Jewishly involved and knowledgeable, they are more eager to make the decisions and allocate the resources necessary to maximize the JCC's role as a Jewish educational institution.

This has manifested itself in many ways at our Center in recent years. A couple of years ago we found that the non-Jewish enrollment in one of our nursery school programs had greatly increased. The executive staff proposed to address this issue by (1) increasing in-service training for nursery school teachers so as to help them enhance the Jewish content of the program and (2) by prominently noting the Jewish nature of our program in all of our advertising materials. This decision was made at a time when the JCC was experiencing significant reductions in government and Federation funding and the recession was having an impact on Jewish New Yorkers. Our lay leaders recognized that this approach would probably reduce non-Jewish enrollment and that we would not guarantee that these losses would be made up by greater participation by Jewish families. Yet the nursery school committee and the whole board were strongly supportive of staffs conclusions. If they had only looked at this issue with a desire to do what was most fiscally prudent, our lay leaders might have argued for waiting a while for the economy to improve or suggested that we try a less risky approach. Instead, their concern and commitment to the Center's role as a Jewish educational institution became the primary factor which influenced our lay leaders.

As we have intensified Jewish educational programs for lay leaders, the Center's board has taken numerous steps to promote the agency's role in Jewish education. Recognizing that a more Jewishly knowledgeable staff will enhance and expand Jewish programming, our lay leaders were very enthusiastic when our executive director was invited to be part of the JCC Association's Executive Fellows Program which featured a three month Jewish study sabbatical in Israel. When, upon his return from Israel, our executive director discussed the unique and moving experience he had and the importance of staff members studying in Israel; our trustees allocated funds and applauded his plans for a two week staff seminar in Israel. They have been equally in favor of our in-service Jewish education programs for staff. Our lay leaders have also been eager to share our Jewish educational resources, such as the scholar-in-residence, with synagogues and other Jewish institutions.

Although it is critical for trustees to raise and allocate funds to support a JCC's Jewish educational program, that is not enough. They must really feel an ownership of those programs. The function of leadership is to lead. It is not sufficient for all the Jewish educational initiatives to come from staff. Trustees must continually evaluate and set policies which promote Jewish education in its broadest terms. They must select and evaluate the executive director not just as manager of a major business but as a Jewish leader. Board committees can not wait for staff to raise the

"Jewishly relevant" question; they must continually prod the staff to do more, to examine new opportunities to enhance Jewish education at the JCC, and to become more Jewishly knowledgeable.

When both the lay and professional leadership are engaged in Jewish study and incorporate Jewish practices, attitudes and values into their lives and decision-making as Center leaders, then a JCC is well positioned to have the greatest impact on the Jewish education of the people it serves. As we have previously indicated, one of the hallmarks of JCC's is that we impact on people's everyday lives, not just in times of crisis and not just around key events in their life cycles. Moreover, JCC's relate to people through their lives. Thus to maximize our unique potential as Jewish educational institutions, JCCs must have lay leaders who understand and appreciate a holistic approach to Jewish education and are prepared to provide the resources and create the conditions which are needed to make Jewish education an organic part of everything the JCC does.

To such lay leaders a JCC should not say thank you. It should say *yishar* /roach, may you be strengthened.

14. The Israel Seminar as a Jewish Educational Tool for JCCs

by *Richard Juran*
Director of Educational Services, Israel Office
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In a monograph entitled "Social Change and Response," which evaluated the first five years of the campaign to maximize Jewish educational effectiveness in Jewish Community Centers, Prof. Bernard Reisman identified staff training seminars in Israel as one of the three successful components of the process.' He also reported that approximately three quarters of Centers cited board leadership programs conducted in Israel as "very effective" - three to four times the rating for similar programs held at the Center,' By the summer of 1993, six and a half years and about $2 million into the project (including approximately $750,000 in subsidy from the Jewish Agency's Joint Program for Jewish-Zionist Education), some 1,500 JCC staff and board members had made their way to Israel as part of this project. The 87 seminars that have taken place have clearly played an important role in establishing and strengthening the Jewish educational agendas in so any North American JCCs. They have generated innovations and experiments in Jewish programming for Center members of all ages, numerous educationally-conceived Israel trips for diverse Center membership groups, the reformulation of Center mission statements, and even a re-examination of Center policy regarding varying issues in Jewish institutional and communal life.

In this article, I have attempted to delve into the inner workings of these educational Israel experiences, hoping to discern what distinguishes them from other generic tourism and travel to Israel, and how they have come to play such a significant role in the Jewish educational process underway in North i erican JCCs. (In Reisman's subsequent examination of adult education trips to Israel, he concluded that educational travel to Israel is best understood as a "transforming experience') Most of the analysis applies equally to staff training and lay leadership seminars, though specific comments about one or the other have been included where appropriate.

Orientation

The seminars reflect an intentional adherence to four distinct principles: they are issue-oriented in their formulation; the central issues of the seminar are drawn from a contemporary Jewish perspective; the participants experience direct contact with Israelis and with the world of Israeli culture; and the educational ethos is client-centered in its orientation to the participants and the sponsoring agencies.

Thematic Orientation to Issues. A tourist may visit Israel with the religious motives and expectations of a pilgrim, or for leisure and recreation, or perhaps in pursuit of the sources of Western civilization (as one might visit Greece or Rome). Although these tourists are all visiting the same geographical location, some of them

are traveling to the Land of Israel, others to the State of Israel, still others to the Holy Land, and there are even those who are visiting a place that has no particular significance beyond its resorts and sunny beaches. Educational seminars in Israel may also operate in one or more of these contexts, but are first and foremost an excursion into the world of issues; the selection of sites and programmatic components, and the framing of the array of experiences are derived from a thematic, issue-oriented approach to the journey.

Orientation to Contemporary Jewry. These Israel seminars obviously bring the participants to many of the same familiar sites one would encounter on any Jewish tour, whether a generic framework, a UJA mission, a summer youth program, or even a pilgrimage. The particular "context" of each tour distinguishes the given exploration of "Israel-as-text" from the others. These seminars approach Israel through an orientation to contemporary Jewish issues on the agenda of Jews in North American communities, in Israeli society, and in other communities of the Diaspora. Examples include: strategies for Jewish continuity, models of Jewish identity, Jewish sovereign and responsibility, ties between Israel and world Jewry, Jewish culture and creativity, Jewish ethnicity, and the meeting of Jewish and Western values (issues of democracy, social equality, minority-majority relations). The seminars also incorporate issues currently on the Israeli and world Jewish agenda (immigrant absorption, the peace process, religious pluralism). This conglomeration of issues serves to determine program priorities, and provides an over-arching perspective on the relevance of the various experiences and encounters for the participants.

Orientation to People and Culture. The preferred vehicle for enhancing the participants' awareness of the pertinent contemporary Jewish issues is through direct contact with Israelis from diverse religious, ethnic, political and ideological walks of life. By encountering Israelis in authentic settings (community centers, places of work, kibbutzim, settlements, educational institutions), the participants have an opportunity to explore the Israelis' perspectives on issues under discussion, and to draw conclusions from the context and from whatever can be read between the lines. Likewise, taking part in the world of Israeli culture brings the tourist - an outsider - into the inner world of Israeli society, where the tourist can participate in the indigenous culture that has been generated by Israeli (Jewish) society; opportunities range from concerts of current Israeli music to evenings in nightclubs offering Israeli folk and pop music, to dance, theatre (with translation), and so on.

Client-Centered. As an institution servicing the entire Jewish community, the JCC must embrace all segments of the community including members of different religious denominations, non-religiously affiliating Jews, and all other ethnic, political, socio-economic and ideological groupings. As such, the Center world tends to set its course by attempting to ascertain what the client is seeking, and to be responsive to the client's own formulation of needs and objectives. This same orientation guides the work of the JCC Association Israel Office, and by extension, the work of the other members of the Israel Seminars Training Consortium (Melitz Centers for Jewish-Zionist Education, the Hebrew University's Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, the WZO's Youth & Hechalutz Department, the Israel

Association of Community Centers and the Shalom Hartman Institute). Accordingly, there is no Zionist or other ideological agenda which informs the educational design and planning of the seminars. There is no *a priori* explicit or implicit message about Israel *vis a vis* Diaspora Jewish life; rather, the seminar rationale accepts the North American Jewish community - and the people, land and State of Israel - as given, and seeks to derive the maximal Jewish educational benefit from an encounter between these two worlds. The contemporary Jewish issues which frame the seminar accelerate and enhance this encounter.

Structure

The structural premises which guide the development of Israel seminars evolved as a programmatic expression of the orientation outlined in the preceding section. Several key operating principles can be discerned, among them: the attempt to weave preparatory content, experiences, and subsequent processing and integration by individual participants and by the group; the avoidance of inconsistent programming tactics; the prerequisite structure of seminar staffing; and the use of free time.

The Rhythm of **Preparation-Experience-Reflection.** Israel seminars are designed with a broad theme which is explored in smaller thematic segments lasting from two hours to a full day. To the extent that it is feasible, each segment utilizes a similar format: an introductory, informative preparation, delivered by a member of the seminar educational staff or by an outside guest; the experience itself (e.g., a dialogue, a visit to a museum, an experiential program); and a follow-up opportunity for participants to reflect on the experience, and sharing insights about its impact or relevance to personal or professional Jewish issues. Some segments - such as a day spent exploring layers of Jewish civilization in the Jewish Quarter or Temple Mount excavations in Jerusalem's Old City - require weaving the informational and the experiential components into one. Others do not require an immediate opportunity for processing, and are better left for discussions devoted to a full two or three days of program. With all the variations, these three components underlie the design and implementation of seminars as a whole, and of each discrete programmatic segment.

Avoiding Inconsistent Programming Tactics. In this context, it is important to mention two taboos: first, the seminars are limited to genuine encounters in authentic locations, No value is seen in "staged authenticity," i.e., creating artificial settings and events, which might preempt the process by which the participant enters the Israel experience and formulates conclusions based on what has been encountered. Second, the seminar design assumes that the Center staff participants are competent professionals in terms of their generic (not specifically Jewish) professional skills, and that they possess adequate training and experience in translating ideas and objectives into programs suitable for their Center client population. This enables the seminar to place a premium on the Israel experience itself, and to avoid allocating precious time to translating the experiences into future Center programs.

Prerequisites for **Seminar Staff.** Seminar groups are generally limited to a modest size, ideally about eighteen, but ranging from 12 to 25; this is considerably

less than the tourism industry's standard bus-load (40 to 50), which is economically more efficient. Participants in a smaller group have more opportunities to participate in group processing discussions, and the seminar staff is better able to remain attuned to the nuances of each individual participant's experience.

Two full-time educators staff seminar groups: a licensed tour guide who is also a competent educator in his own right, and a member of the pool of informal "scholars-in-residence." These scholars may be employed by the JCC Association Israel Office, or by other consortium agencies, or they may be free-lance educators whose expertise in a particular field is required (e.g., Israeli early childhood education). Formally speaking, the tour guide-educator is assigned the task of presenting the site (museum, excavation, topography, etc.) to the group, bearing in mind the thematic context of the visit or the day; and the scholar is expected to use this explanation as the basis for framing questions and other comments which add depth to the given experience. However, in practice they freely shift between the two roles and build on each other's comments.

Additional speakers meet the group, either to provide an issue-oriented content preparation to an upcoming experience, or as the experience itself. All of these Israelis - tour guide-educator, scholar-in-residence, and guest speakers/educators - are selected for their own sensitivity to the issues on the seminar's agenda, their articulateness (in English), their awareness of and sensitivity to the North American Jewish community, and their own authenticity as representatives of a given slice of reality in the contemporary Israeli experience.

The Importance of Free Time, When the Israel Seminar is viewed in the context of adult education, several of its elements take on added significance. The seminar offers rich opportunities to empower and involve the learner in the learning process: preparatory assignments, individual or group excursions as part of the seminar program, and so on. Constructive use of free time invariably proves to be another powerful element in this equation. From dozens of discussions with seminar participants about their Israel experience, it is clear that some of their most significant experiences occur during free time, and could not have been programmed by the most skilled or well-intentioned planners. It would seem that the thematic, issue-oriented "handles" provide the participants with some useful ideas and perspectives, which then help facilitate valuable, spontaneous exchanges with Israelis encountered during free time. In this fashion, the participant continues to process the concepts and experiences, enhancing his or her individual journey through the world of contemporary Jewish issues.

Process

Among the myriad assumptions and suppositions which comprise and the seminar process, four in particular merit particular attention: the importance of involving the JCC (as client) in developing a seminar tailor-made to its own needs; the cooperative dynamic of seminars developed and operated under the auspices of a multi-agency consortium; the long term educational process, including the year of preparation, the seminar itself, and the months and years of post-seminar Jewish

educational work in the Center; and the presumed relationship between personal and professional Jewish growth.

Involvement of Client. The Israel Seminar team solicits - and insists upon - the Center's involvement in the development of its seminar. This includes completing a detailed proposal form (with information about prospective participants, possible thematic foci, desirable programmatic segments, objectives, preparatory and follow-up plans, and so on). The proposal form enables the team to prepare a preliminary draft of the seminar, which is circulated among relevant Israeli partners and then in the JCC. By the time the final draft is printed, the program has usually undergone between six and twelve drafts. Each of these is accompanied by an explanatory document, outlining the rationale and illustrating how the various segments serve the seminar's objectives. Center executives who are lax about participating in this process receive regular reminders about the importance of their role in developing the seminar program. Because JCC Association Israel Office staff visit most Centers at least once as part of the seminar preparation process, the Center's involvement (often including executive director, lay leadership and seminar participants) is virtually ensured.

Involvement of Consortium Members. The consortium was originally put together as a vehicle for professional cooperation, to avoid duplication among the interested agencies. In a world not unfamiliar with political and institutional competition, this rare partnership has persisted for more than six years, with results that speak for themselves. Over these years, the JCC Association Israel Office - as the Center world's Israel representative - has remained the central partner of the consortium. Each partner is involved to the extent of its ability and interest: most scholars-in-residence are members of Melitz's Overseas Department; seminars with a more academic bent are staffed by academic *faculty from the* Melton Centre; and the Youth & Hechalutz Department, the Israel Association of Community Centers, and the Shalom Hartman Institute all provide speakers, guest educators, or custom-made educational segments as needed. Periodic meetings of consortium representatives review seminar commitments and various programmatic segments, and advise the Israel Seminar team about content and other considerations, and relevant educational projects under the auspices of the consortium member agencies.

A **Longer Time Perspective: Pre- and Post-Seminar.** The brevity of staff and board seminars - usually two weeks - imposes some limitations on what can be accomplished in the overall effort to maximize the Jewish educational effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers. The actual time spent in Israel is therefore viewed as an intermediate component in a longer process. Discussions between Center executive directors and the Israel Seminar team usually begin nine to 18 months prior to the group's departure for Israel. Centers are always encouraged to assemble a preparatory program for prospective participants, to forward a copy of this program to the JCC Association Israel Office (for use in conceptualization and implementation of the seminar), and to involve Israel Seminar educators in some of the preparatory sessions, Barry Chazan has also written a *Preparation Guide for Israel*

Seminars, containing fourteen different lessons, with resource materials included, for this purpose.

In addition, the Centers are urged from an early date to devote some thought to appropriate post-seminar follow-up, and options for post-seminar educational pursuits are discussed extensively during the latter part of the seminar. Members of the seminar staff and other educators are made available for post-seminar follow-up teaching, consultation, etc., and Centers are encouraged to send copies of materials and descriptive updates of actual programs devoted to the continuing education of staff, board members, and membership-at-large.

Personal and Professional Change. The relationship between personal and professional change is perhaps the quintessentially important assumption among the many elements of the seminar process. An examination of the language and phrasing of seminar text, and of the verbal exchanges between seminar staff and participants would likely reveal that the seminars concentrate their educational energy in helping the participant - as an individual, a person - achieve a new awareness and understanding of the contemporary Jewish world, and a renewed commitment to maximizing one's own contribution to Jewish education and Jewish continuity. This observation is supported by the absence of explicit training in areas such as professional skills or program development. Yet the consortium member agencies, the participating Centers, not to mention the Jewish Agency's Joint Program for Jewish Education and more recently, the Joint Authority for Jewish-Zionist Education, are all ultimately committed to affecting the impact that the *professional* staff and the board of directors have on the Jewishness of the Jewish Community Center.

The operating principle of change can be understood as follows: the seminar attempts to bring the individual participant - usually in the supportive company of his or her colleagues - to a personal confrontation with pressing contemporary Jewish issues, as illustrated and played out in the day-to-day reality of Israel *(qua* predominantly Jewish society). The issues are often much more comprehensible in their Israeli formulation because in Israel there is a relatively clearer delineation between Jewish and Western/secular dimensions to modern existence, and because the participant is free from the inherent blind spots inhibit his or her totally objective viewing of a familiar environment. The confrontation is further enhanced by the subtle - or not-so-subtle - spiritual dimension to a visit to Israel. All this combined facilitates a rapid attainment of new perspectives on one's Jewish reality - vis-a-vis self, family, community, and world Jewry. It is believed that the participants' reflective processing of the seminar experiences and the ramifications for their own Jewish lives will spill over into their professional or leadership roles in the Center. For the nature of both professional and leadership work in the Center world - particularly in the context of maximizing Jewish educational effectiveness - is that there is a certain symbiotic exchange, if not an outright fusion, of the personal and public roles, a certain integration of what would otherwise be more compartmentalized spheres of existence. And this dynamic, which carries its own

rewards and gratification, can often fuel itself for months and years beyond the seminar experience itself.

The high esteem with which the Center world regards the Israel Seminars project can probably be attributed to its successful incorporation of so many essential ingredients into one integrated educational process: a consortium of educational agencies collaborating to educate lay and professional Center representatives, in the context of a larger Jewish educational process underway in JCCs; educating by articulating engaging contemporary Jewish themes, facilitating unmediated encounters between the participants and the world of Israeli society and culture; involving the participating agency and the participants themselves in developing the seminar program with their own needs in mind, and in processing the experiences in search of relevance and understanding; indulging the seminar with a liberal measure of educational staff, as well as free time for unstructured experience; and stretching the educational time-frame from a year before the actual seminar, to many years beyond, in hopes of facilitating an ongoing personal - and by extension, public - journey through uncharted waters of building authentic *and* relevant Jewish Community Centers, and meaningful Jewish community.

Notes

1. Bernard Reisman, "Social Change and Response - Assessing Efforts to Maximize Jewish Educational Effectiveness in Jewish Community Centers in North America," monograph, New York: JWB, 1988, pp. 48-49.

2. Ibid., p. 41.

3. Bernard Reisman, "Adult Education Trips to Israel," monograph, Jerusalem: JCC Association, Melitz and Melton Centre, 1993, p. 1.

15. Marketing the Jewish Edge

by Jay Levenberg
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Introduction

Following consumer preference surveys I have conducted on behalf of Jewish Community Centers, JCC staff and lay leaders are often confronted with the realization that virtually every JCC service is available somewhere else in the community. As the realization sets in, we usually hear, "Ali, yes, but we have the Jewish component in everything we do, and in a non-threatening environment. That's our edge!"

From a marketing and sales perspective, this "Jewish edge" has been a lofty and vague concept, one that our JCC marketing and membership staff have difficulty defining or conveying in their sales and marketing messages. Translating the "Jewish edge" into benefits that are meaningful and marketable to the broad-based JCC constituency has become an important focus of my marketing consultations with JCCs. The purpose of this paper is to define the concept of the "Jewish edge" in JCCs, and to suggest possible marketing approaches.

Distinction Between Marketing and Selling

This paper focuses on *marketing* the "Jewish edge," as opposed to *selling it.* The difference is more than semantic. Marketing is concerned with creating the environment that will be most conducive to effecting a sale. Sales, on the other hand, focuses on the actual transaction between seller and buyer. A major contention of this paper is that creating the right environment throughout the Jewish community is as much a responsibility of the Jewish educator as developing the Jewish components for JCC programs.

Defining the Jewish Edge

Jewish tradition has always glorified study, The mitzvah of study is commanded in the Torah in a paragraph that forms part of *the Sh'ma* prayer: *"And you shall* teach (the Torah) to your children, and you shall speak of it, when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise up." [1] Jewish education, including the study of Torah, is for many Jews at the core of their Jewish observance.

There is also optimism in the growth of Jewish day schools in North America, but it's analogous to what Charles Dickens said about eighteenth century Europe, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Never have so many young Jews received so intense a Jewish education; never have so many young Jews received no Jewish education at all.' For too many Jewish individuals, even those with a Jewish

day school background, Jewish education is not a lifetime endeavor. Many see Jewish education as a path reserved for the young, the observant, or the "very" religious.

The "Jewish edge" in JCCs refer to the infinite number of possibilities we have to infuse Jewish education and values into the lives of our members.' Not confined to classrooms or class schedules, we can build a Jewish component into every area of service represented in a JCC. From early childhood to physical fitness to cultural arts to senior adult programs, Jewish qualities in an open and nonthreatening environment can distinguish our programs from all others.

The challenge in marketing the "Jewish edge" is to ignite or rekindle a passion for Jewish knowledge and values, and to bridge the wisdom of five thousand years past with the complexities and challenges of modern day life. Today's Jewish educator, along with his or her departmental colleagues and marketing professionals, must build a convincing case that the "Jewish edge" can improve the quality of the member's life and his or her experience in the JCC.

Defining the Target Markets

The first marketing imperative is to define the prospective and likely candidates for the JCC's brand of informal Jewish education in a given community. We know that early childhood programs, camps, and after school programs in the JCC are viewed by many families as important Jewish educational opportunities for their children. So, a primary target market is children, But, we also know that an early childhood program which emphasizes parental involvement is associated with a significant positive change in the family's Jewish practice.' Parents of children enrolled in programs sponsored by the Jewish community celebrate more Jewish holidays, observe more Jewish rituals, increase the number of Jewish friendships, are more aware of the Jewish calendar, and have a desire to learn more about Judaism.'

So, we have two target markets related to early childhood with two discrete marketing messages. The message centered around the child is that we're building a foundation of Jewish awareness and custom. The message targeted to the parent(s) is that the child can bring his or her pride of Jewish knowledge into the home. Not only does this represent an opportunity for the child to play an important role in shaping Jewish practice in the home, it will add to the self esteem of the child as he or she sees the impact of the Jewish knowledge gained at the JCC.

The JCC's opportunity to enrich American Jewish life corresponds to every building block of American Judaism. [6] What a unique position for the JCC! For every area of service in a JCC, we can find opportunities to weave in elements of these building blocks. This is the realm of program development. The marketing challenge, on the other hand, is to define and communicate the benefits of these "value-added" Jewish components to every JCC member.

Involving and Motivating

Individuals who may be identified as candidates for Jewish education (programs or Jewish components in otherwise secular activities) would probably not articulate a precise yearning for Jewish education or values. An effective marketing strategy must

first help people identify needs in their own hearts and souls, and must secondly demonstrate how Jewish education can fulfill those needs. Interest in Jewish education or the JCC's Jewish components will not likely happen until underlying needs or motives are activated.

As Jewish educators and their consultants develop promotional strategies everything from publicity to program brochures - they must be zealous students of the *psychology of buying. "What* will make **people want to participate in Jewish education** programs or **programs that reflect Jewish values?"**

All the individuals who can be identified as potential candidates for Jewish education will have discrete reasons to become involved. Promotional stimuli must directly correlate to these reasons if they are going to produce *involvement, a* reflection of a strong motivation in the form of high perceived *personal relevance. It* means that people will begin looking for Jewish components at the Jewish Community Center even before the actual program flyers are distributed. If all marketing efforts leave ample "hints" about the personal relevance of the JCC's "Jewish edge," individuals will be more proactive in seeking out the program being promoted.

For each type of member (young, old, single, married, Jewishly active, not so Jewishly active, etc.) the level of involvement in the program must be raised through advance publicity and actual sales materials. Once the individual is "involved" in what is being offered, the next goal is to motivate actual and ongoing participation. An individual is *motivated* when his or her system is energized (aroused), made active, and behavior is directed toward a desired goal. Motivational research has documented the primary needs that drive consumer behavior towards certain services or products.

It will be helpful to understand these primary consumer needs as a JCC markets its Jewish elements. All promotional and sales messages should make the connection between *program benefits* and one or more of the following underlying consumer needs.'

- Physiological: fundamentals of survival, including hunger, thirst, and other bodily needs

  Safety: concern over physical survival and safety
- Affiliation and Belongingness: a need to be accepted by others, to be an important person to them
- ❑ Achievement: a basic desire for success in meeting personal goals
- ❑ Power: a desire to gain control over one's destiny as well as that of others
- ❑ Self expression: the need to develop freedom in self-e and to be perceived by others as significant
- Order and understanding: the desire to achieve self-actualization through knowing, understanding, systematizing, and constructing a system of values
- ❑ Variety Seeking: maintenance of a preferred level of physiological arousal and stimulation often expressed as variety seeking
- ❑ Attribution of Causality: understanding the causality of events and actions

While studying these motivations behind consumer behavior, it is important to note that previously ignored desires (like Jewish education) exert themselves most frequently *after* other purchases have satisfied the more dominant needs (e.g., physiological, safety, affiliation). This explains why an older, successful business or professional person in his or her 50s can move away from status as a dominant motive into more leisurely pursuits of cultural interests like art, music and adult education.

Another factor in consumer motivations involves the transitions in one's life. For example, a child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah may satisfy one parental need, and almost immediately begin to stir up other needs, like planning for college and enriching the parents' own Jewish education now that they have seen what their son or daughter has accomplished.

The promotional messages for the JCC's "Jewish edge" should suggest links between program benefits and recognized consumer needs. The motivational factors that may lead to the "purchases" of Jewish curricula should be defined for each individual (or category of individuals). As these connections are developed, marketing should be timed to the transitions in people's lives, and to their schedule of satisfying their more basic needs.

Market Positioning - Developing Relationships

In marketing any Jewish program or component, the Jewish Community Center should be presented as the logical, safe and comfortable place for this type of Jewish education. The marketing messages should refer to the successful history of relationships between the JCC and its members, the kind of relationship that understand and cater to unique (Jewish) needs. But the added requirement is to demonstrate how the JCC is ready and able to apply this unique positioning to Jewish education in a community. If the JCC has successfully offered Jewish education in the past, it should make reference to previous successes as it *positions any* new programs.

Jewish consumers have many other choices towards fulfilling needs for their Jewish education. Positioning involves more than just letting the community know that an organization is now in the "Jewish education business," it demands that a special relationship be created between the organization and the program candidates.

Toward fulfilling this aspect of the marketing strategy, JCC staff (including Jewish educators and marketing and membership professionals) should begin reviewing the ways to communicate unique accreditation or credentials to offer Jewish education. Language should be used that distinguishes the JCC program from competing programs. It should prompt the potential candidate to declare, "The Jewish Community Center, what a logical place to begin or continue my Jewish education."

Taking the First Step - Word-of-Mouth Marketing

There is no more powerful marketing force than word-of-mouth *communication* about a product or service. A friend or colleague giving testimony to the benefits of

a program is infinitely more meaningful to new prospects than anything the Jewish educator or marketer can say or do.

How are word-of-mouth advertising and testimonials developed, especially if the Jewish education program or departmental components are new to a JCC? Even your formal Jewish education classes can offer "free samples." As target markets and profiles discussed earlier are developed, individuals who are the most likely candidates for enhancing their Jewish lives can be recruited. They can be asked to host a sample lesson or two for their friends, maybe in their home. Not only does this begin to create word-of-mouth advertising for a new concept, it creates publicity about teachers and their unique styles in presenting the subject matter.

For areas of service where you've always had the Jewish component (early childhood, for example), begin to ask your members and then document how the Jewish component has enhanced the child's and the family's Jewish life. Additionally, define and document how any Jewish component generally improved the quality of the program and the JCC experience. Begin using these types of testimonials in your marketing and publicity tools.

Conditioning the Market - Developing Publicity

While identifying potential candidates and developing world-of-mouth testimony, widespread publicity campaigns should also be instituted. Ongoing publicity campaigns should accomplish the following:

- Raise the consciousness of the community about the importance of Jewish education as a lifelon process.
- Heighten awareness of available JCC programs and Jewish components, and the unique selling points' in offering them.
- Build the bridge for consumers between their individual yearnings and program benefits.

  Provide examples of likely participants so potential candidates can see themselves in the Jewish education picture.
- Position the Jewish Community Center (among consumers/members and community lay leaders) as a uniquely qualified "vendor" of Jewish education and as a "major player" in the community's Jewish continuity efforts.

Publicity should be ongoing, and should precede by many months the launch of any program, class, or newly added Jewish component. The very fact that a new program or Jewish ingredient is being developed is a story in itself for the Jewish and secular press. It can contain the elements noted above, and can be an ongoing series about how the program was conceived, launched, and ultimately offered. Subsequent stories can relate the impact of the program on the lives of its participants. Publicity helps *condition the market* to pay special attention to future sales messages. When the JCC is ready to make sales presentations for the program (personally, through direct mail, or by advertising), prospects will be better prepared and more likely to participate.

Summary

Marketing the "Jewish edge" in a JCC requires a dedicated effort to creating the right environment. Programs and curricula have to be presented as having an exciting relevance to today's North American Jewish lifestyle. There are myths and misconceptions to overcome, namely that Jewish education is the province of the young, the observant, or the "very" religious. But, there is also an ample record of achievement and fulfillment that can be testified to by participants in a JCC's Jewish education programs or programs with Jewish components. These are the best salespeople for motivating others to participate.

In one of her later essays on the politics of North American Jews, Lucy Dawidowicz wrote, "If Jews need to know their own interests as well as the interests of others, they also need to know the art of politics as well as the books of Torah. They need, in short, to live in this world, not in the world of the politically utopian or the religiously messianic.° The "Jewish edge" refers to the unlimited opportunities for a JCC to strengthen the Jewish lives of its members, no matter what their background or present lifestyles. The aim of marketing the "Jewish edge" is not only to let all Jews know that they "also need to know the books of the Torah," but that Jewish education is always a timely source of wisdom and guidance for leading a more fulfilling life.

Notes

1. Deuteronomy 6:7; as quoted and discussed by Rabbi Joseph Telushkin in *Jewish Literacy, The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History (New York:* William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1991).

2. *Ibid.,* p. 425.

3. Dr. Barry Chazan, Consultant on Jewish Education for the JCC Association, refers to informal Jewish education at the JCC as a "powerful kind of education that is aimed at enabling people to participate in a diverse series of interactive experiences which reflect values and behaviors that are considered worthwhile." He also refers to the JCC as the "new neighborhood of Jewish life," a place where "Jewish oxygen flows."

4. Ruth Ravid & Marvell Ginsburg, *The Relationship Between Jewish Early Childhood Education and Family Jewish Practices: Phase II,* a consultative research paper presented to the Metropolitan Chicago Board of Jewish Education, 1989.

5. Ruth Pinkenson Feldman, Ed.D., *From Early Childhood Programs to Jewish Family Centers, A Statement of Key Ideas, a* report presented to the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago, 1987 and 1992.

6. Rabbi Yehiel Poupko, Director of Judaica for JCCs of Chicago, has defined the building blocks of North American Judaism as synagogue, North American Jewish history, Israel, North American society, community, ethics, home/family, learning, life-cycle, history, and calendar.

7. Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, *Consumer Behavior,* chapter 10 (Chicago: Dryden Press, 1990).

8. "Selling points" are the major arguments for buying a product or service. Comprehensive information about customer needs and wants, as well as the product's competitive strengths, helps the marketing team choose the best selling points to communicate in an array of marketing tools.

9. Lucy Dawidowicz, *What is the Use of Jewish History?* (New York: Schocken Books, 1992).

16. A Lexicon of Jewish Educational Terms

Mark Charendoff, *Director of Judaic Cultural Development, Toronto JCC, and*
Barry Chazan, *Jewish Educational Consultant, JCC Association*

As Jewish education in Jewish Community Centers has emerged as a recognized field a professional jargon has developed along with it. Below is a list of terms which appear throughout this anthology and which are used often in the Center world today. While some of them are self-evident, some specific definitions may be helpful in furthering the development and professionalization of the field.

Maximizing Jewish educational effectiveness is a phrase that was adopted by the Jewish Community Center movement in the 1980s to describe its involvement in Jewish education. The then JWB (today the JCC Association) specifically chose to emphasize the term "Jewish education" to demonstrate its commitment to the cause, but added the word "effectiveness" to suggest that JCCs have a different approach than that of formal Jewish educational institutions. The Commission **on Maximizing Jewish Educational Effectiveness in JCCs** (COMJEE) conducted an extensive study of North American JCCs and in 1984 published the report which launched the current Jewish educational effort in the Center movement. COMJEE II refers to a recently formed committee of the JCC Association which was established to develop a plan of action for enhancing Jewish educational effectiveness in JCCs into the year 2,000.

The entire COMJEE process has led to the question of ideology in the JCC, an overarching philosophy which defines the priorities, guides the policy decisions and shapes the world view of the Center movement, on both a local and national level. In many JCCs, the ideology is manifested in a carefully articulated mission statement.

A **JCC Jewish educator** is a professional employed by a Center to deal with Jewish educational effectiveness. Typically this person has a combination of extensive Jewish knowledge and skills in informal Jewish education. The Forum **of Jewish Educators for JCCs** is the body of professionals working in JCCs who identify their primary function as that of a Jewish educator. The Forum has existed in North America since 1988 and in 1992 an Israeli counterpart emerged, comprised of formal and informal Jewish educators who work in the area of Diaspora Jewish education.

A **lay person** is an individual serving in a volunteer capacity on committees or on the board of directors of a JCC. The lay person is taken very seriously in the Center world and has significant influence on the direction of the JCC. Therefore, lay people are instrumental in the perpetuation of the Jewish educational mission of the JCC, as they are active partners in Jewish programming.

Jewish **programming** refers to an approach of introducing Jewish topics into Centers where an activity, package or series of activities is developed around a specific Jewish theme - a holiday, an event or a Jewish value. Jewish programming is practically oriented; its goal is to convey a specific Jewish lesson or message and to directly touch its participants. The phrase is sometimes used in contradistinction to "Jewish education" which is usually regarded as a more systematic, ongoing process.

In addition to Jewish programming, JCCs today are concerned with creating Jewish ambience. This is an attempt to affect the prevailing culture of an agency, including its sights, sounds, tastes and smells. Everything from the outer appearance of the building, to the displays in the lobby, to the verbal and written use of Hebrew, to the activities that take place in full view of the membership, are part of the effort to recreate the ambience of the lost Jewish neighborhood within the Center setting.

Adult Jewish learning is a burgeoning area of Center life, paralleling the rise of adult learning in the general educational world over the past two decades. Adult learning recognizes that adults learn differently than children or young people, and therefore unique approaches, techniques and materials need to be developed for them. Adult Jewish learning reflects the dramatic growth in post-adolescent and post-young adult Jews who are becoming interested in Jewishness. As a result of the demand for adult learning programs, a new breed of teacher is emerging to deal with this realm. Three typical models of adult learning in the JCC are: lay leadership development, staff training and membership or community education.

One example of community education is the Florence Melton **Adult** Mini School - a two-year program for often unaffiliated adults which provides a comprehensive overview of Judaism. The Mini-School curriculum encompasses five subject areas: the vocabulary, rhythms, dilemmas, purposes and ethics of Jewish living. The curriculum was developed by academics and educators at the Hebrew University's Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora and has, to date, been implemented in over 12, JCCs and many other agencies throughout North America.

Another example is *Dom* Torah - a* yearlong course in basic Jewish literacy, originally developed by the 92nd Street Y in New York. The program covers the basic dimensions of Judaism and it is typically taught in a small group format in the students' homes. One of the program's initial targets was intermarried families but it is now being utilized for a variety of populations by over a dozen JCCs.

Staff education has two major roles: to increase the Jewish knowledge and confidence of JCC staff, and to help them better serve as promoters of Jewish education and Jewish educational effectiveness. Israel Seminars have become a critical tool for the training of JCC staff and the leadership development of board members. The seminars last approximately two weeks, and are usually preceded by orientation and study sessions, and followed by some ongoing educational process upon return. The goals of the seminar are to enable the staff and board members to experience Israel in an intensive and educational framework; to explore their own sense of Judaism or connection to Jewishness; and to examine their role in the JCC as a purveyor of Jewish consciousness.

Early childhood Jewish education is seen as an important frontier in almost all JCCs, as it is a gateway to reaching young families. Current experiments include the *B'yachad program* in Toronto, utilizing the Florence Melton Adult Mini School Curriculum. The early childhood program is regarded as a particularly important arena for Jewish education because of its potential to affect young children and young parents at a particularly sensitive period in their lives.

sh family education is a new category of Jewish education which has been influenced by general education. With the shift in the nature of families, a new phenomenon has arisen - sometimes called family life education - which attempts to utilize the family unit as a means of transmitting ideas and values. JFE aims Jewish programming and activities at the whole family so as to enable all of its members to become catalysts for effecting Jewish change in their homes and in their daily lives.

Jewish arts and culture refers to the utilization of music, dance, theater, literature and the plastic arts as both outlets of Jewish creativity and reflections of Jewish themes and values. Many Centers throughout North America promote Jewish arts and culture through theater troupes, galleries, museums, book fairs, and other community-wide events.

The Israel Experience has become a catch-phrase for all of the varied models of travel to Israel by young people. Empirical and anecdotal evidence have demonstrated the positive impact that short, medium or long-term experiences in Israel can have on the Jewish identity of teenagers and young adults. any people regard this as one of the critical challenges and most promising areas of Jewish education for the next decade.

Outreach refers to the JCC's responsibility to provide a positive Jewish experience and Jewish educational opportunities to unaffiliated, under-affiliated or other-affiliated Jews, Outreach is also sometimes a code word for working with non-Jews and intermarried couples. A 52% **intermarriage rate** among North .. erican Jews was the alarming statistic cited in the 1990 CJF National Jewish Population Study which became a red flag and bol of the crisis of assimilation for the American Jewish commu

Jewish identity is a term popularly used to refer to degree of Jewish involvement or commitment of an individual. The crisis of Jewish identity refers to the low degree of Jewishness of many contemporary Jews. The term "identity" technically comes from the field of psychology where it refers to an individual's sense of self. Identification is a term derived from sociology which refers to a person's degree of linkage or connection to some reference group.

17. A Voice From the Field: Notes on the Ideology of Curriculum in JCCs

by Avital Plan
Jewish Education Specialist
Berkeley Richmond JCC

Jewish education in JCCs is ultimately about day-to-day work with real people in real settings. For the past five years I have been involved in building Jewish study experiences for and together with different groups at the Berkeley Richmond JCC (children, parents, women, seniors, staff, Israelis and non-affiliated Jews as well as members). The study experiences that have been developed for various populations have included celebrations, ritual observances, workshops, study groups, written materials and holiday exhibits. Many of the members of the Berkeley JCC are, to a large degree, removed from practice and/or knowledge of Jewish tradition. Many may be considered liberal intellectuals and their presence at the Center influences the atmosphere at the Center, contributing not only to an interest in study (which is now common in many JCCs) but also to a willingness to take part in experimental forms The following is an attempt to summarize some of the ideas that have emerged during the course of this work, and from my many contacts with other Jewish educators.

Guiding Principles

In planning and implementing my efforts to develop and expand Jewish study experiences for Center members, I have been guided by the following principles:

- the importance of a dynamic and diverse curriculum that is responsive to learners;

- the need for support systems that reinforce the learning experience in order to faun a long lasting engagement with Jewish culture and tradition;

- the desirability of both building the Jewish Community Center as a common in its own right and strengthening bonds between the Center and other Jewish institutions.

All of these dimensions play a role in the various Jewish educational activities which are part of my work.

An Approach to Curriculum

In developing the overall approach, I have kept these principles in mind while also considering the Center's mission and the needs of its members. Attempting to meet this challenge, I continuously review plans and evaluate the degree to which the curriculum meets the following criteria.

- A curriculum that is multi-sensory, transmitted through a variety of vehicles (Jewish art, music, books, the fragrance of *challah), with* the Center changing its appearance in response to the Jewish calendar and to other Jewish themes.

- A curriculum that is multi-disciplinary, drawing from history, theology, Bible studies, archaeology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology, art poetry and literature, with an emphasis on Jewish text. "Jewish culture is the sum of its sources and its continuity stands (and falls) on commitment to these sources," says Abba Kovner.'

- A curriculum that balances affective with cognitive learning, attempting to respond to participants' intellectual, spiritual and emotional needs, and includes a strong experiential component.

- A curriculum that is participatory and invites students to engage in interpretative learning of text and themes.

- A curriculum that is dynamic and changes in response to the needs and development of both the participants and the community.

Instructional Materials

After determining what I wanted to do, I have experimented with different types of instructional materials for implementing a curriculum, including specific programs, teaching plans, and activities. Below are some of the types materials that I have found useful in teaching adults in Berkeley.

- ❑ Materials focusing on basic knowledge and skills for the observance of the Jewish calendar year. Many of the participants in workshops and study groups either never learned or only vaguely remember Jewish rituals and their meanings.

- Materials that enable the participants to orient themselves within Jewish history and literature, and that illustrate patterns of events that have led to intensified cultural growth. This type of material (such as charts and timelines) helps participants understand some of the forces that have shaped Jewish culture and provides them with valuable, schematic information.

- ❑ Materials which portray Jewish tradition as dynamic and encourage learners to engage in a dialogue with tradition, moving between dimensions of personal biography, history and text. Jewish culture was created and recreated overt a long period of time (e.g., layers of commentary), responding to events and phases in group biography. Both vulnerable moments in this biography and encounters with other cultures seemed to have produced surges of cultural growth. Gaining this perspective of the adaptability of Jewish culture may encourage one to a deeper interpretation of elements of text and ritual. Says Zvi Bekerman: "We should not forget that Judaism, as any other culture, is at its worst a set of vanishing memories and at its best a present connecting hermeneutical pattern which helps us make particular sense of our reality. In a sense, culture is the narrative of what for and why. The problem we confront in the Jewish world is not a problem of literacy but of meaning."'

- ❑ Materials that highlight the uniqueness of Jewish culture and the place of education within it, as expressed by Abba Kovner: "The Jewish experience is an educational experience. We built ourselves in history through education." The more one studies, the more one becomes aware of the vast resources Judaism holds, thus building a curiosity and an interest in further study.

- ❑ Materials that acquaint participants with some of Israel's many faces, Israel's uniqueness and place within Jewish culture, and that emphasize Israel's role as the place of origin and continuing focus of many rituals and customs throughout the year. Developing an awareness of this and of Israel's vast resources for learning and experiencing Jewish culture is an important part of my work at the Center.

- Materials that engage participants in Jewish learning which enhances their lives, their search for meaning and their growth. Examples are those materials which highlight Judaism's response to human struggle in its many forms, and to our place in the web of life. Within Jewish tradition one may find responses to some dilemmas that are part of the modern urban experience, such as anonymity, lack of community, alienation from nature and scarcity of meaning. Barry Chazan writes: "The study and knowledge of Judaism is not intended to be an oppressive or limiting force for today's Jews; furthermore, it is not a body of wisdom which is irrelevant or outdated for them, rather the issues and knowledge dealt with by Judaism address the great human issues that we all experience and can potentially add meaning and understanding to our lives in these years of the waning twentieth century."'

- Materials which help build Jewish memories through repeated celebration and ritual, as well as those which use others' memories as a vehicle for learning. Memories, even borrowed ones, strengthen the sense of being part of a tribe,

providing a grounding in group identity. The personal tone of memories make materials presented this way easily accessible.

- Materials which reinforce the notion *of Klal Yisrael,* the Jewish people as one. In my work at the Center I have observed the lack of mutual understanding of groups such as Israelis and American Jews. Building experiences that are aimed at bringing members of these two groups together for a guided dialogue is something Rabbi Einat Ramon and I have been experimenting with in a monthly program called *Gesharim* (Bridges).

- Materials which facilitate group bonding within a Jewish context. Positive, ongoing group interaction as part of the study experience is both a Jewish tradition (i.e., learning in *chevruta)* and a tremendous enhancer of the learning process. At the BRJCC, the early childhood education staff has been involved in monthly holiday workshops for the past five years. The bonding that has emerged with this process sets a warm and intimate tone to the workshops and intensifies the learning.

- Materials which strengthen the community as a whole through the creation of a network of reinforcements between the school, community and home, and which will strengthen the family as a source for cultural growth. Such materials increase participants' awareness of their place in a chain of generations and the joint responsibility in the continuation of the culture. Layering the learning experiences by, for example, putting together inter-generational celebrations, developing workshops for parents and for staff, creating special community-wide programs, etc. - makes this more viable. Each element then contributes to the other, with the school, community and home eventually becoming partners in the process of building more contact points between Jewish tradition and Jewish people.

In my search for appropriate materials that would adequately meet the challenges outlined above, I have become repeatedly aware of the complementary value of materials produced in Israel with those produced in North America. That is especially true for materials about the holidays which I often use as a gateway through which to explore other elements of Jewish tradition (namely literature, ethics and history). Scholars in Israel such as Aryeh Ben Gurion, Tsvi Shu'ah, Yoel Rappel, Yom Tov Levinski, Nahum Wharman and Meir Ayali have compiled rich anthologies which make an amazing array of text and information accessible. More emphasis on theology is found in Eliezer Schweid's book, as well as the writings that come from the Shalom Hartman Institute. Materials produced in the United States tend to be less comprehensive, but contain elements of experimentation, meaning exploration and even playfulness, which lend renewed life to text, customs and rituals. Some of these are books by: Arthur Waskow, Michael Strassfeld, Mordecai Kaplan, David Rosenberg, Irving Greenberg and Jo Milgrom.

Attached are the outlines of two workshops which were developed for staff at the BRJCC. These are examples of how holiday workshops are used to explore contemporary themes through text, as well as through the study of selected chapters in Jewish history. They are aimed at shedding some light on the process through *which the* holidays *evolved, and on* their significance to the **culture.**

Problems From the Field

In teaching such subjects I have periodically met with certain kinds of paradigmatic problems, and it might be worthwhile to share them with you.

- One of the many issues we confront is how to balance the needs of the individual with the efforts towards building a community, or attempting to maintain a truly tolerant, Jewishly pluralistic atmosphere and still move forward with strengthening the group as a whole. Kaplan wrote: "A satisfactory rationale for Jewish usage is one that would recognize in it both a method of group survival and a means to their personal self fulfillment. . . . The benefit which the individual hoped to derive from ritual usage is dependent on their power to effect his self identification with the Jewish group."'

- I have learned (as I am sure others have) to accept a trial and error period for experimental programs, and have convinced both myself and others to stay in the ring and see new ideas through to a smoother phase.

- We have devoted much time and energy to overcoming resistance to study. When we first started the monthly workshops for staff at the BRJCC, there were those who objected to taking the time for such a process. As we progressed, the workshops added significantly to the Jewish content of the Center and to a deeper connection between all participating *staff with Jewish culture.* Turnover of staff, probably brought about by the Center reaffi rming its commitment to Jewish education, also contributed to the overall change in attitude towards study.

- As this work contains elements of experimentation, obtaining constants feedback from participants and colleagues is necessary. The existence and nature of the Jewish Educators Forum has been an outstanding source of both feedback and support for many of its members.

- The Center field has made Jewish education a priority despite the fact that it is not a source of revenue. In fact, providing quality Jewish education demands a disproportionate amount of the staff's time and resources. At the BRJCC we have come to depend on alternative sources of funding, as well as on volunteers to carry out some of this work. One of our main challenges is to continue to find these supports as we plan expansion of our programs.

Notes

1. Abba Kovner, from notes in the Jewish Holidays Archive, Kibbutz Beit Hashitah, Israel.

2. Zvi Bekerman, from a lecture presented to the Forum of Jewish Educators for JCCs, Jerusalem, June 22, 1993.

3. Barry Chazan, "A Jewish Educational Philosophy for JCCs," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service,* Volume 63, No. 3, Spring 1987.

4. Mordecai Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion,* New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1962.

Appendix A

Workshop: Tu Bishvat Through History
The Festival of Trees Ways of Repairing the World

Prepared by Avital Plan

I. The Temple

While the Temple in Jerusalem still stood, Tu Bishvat was a day for figuring out the tithe. Fruit and grain of the seven species as well as other crops were brought to the Temple.

Setting: ancient agrarian culture
Text: Mishnah, Hai Gaon

II. Exile

When the Land and the Temple were lost in exile 2000 years ago, Tu Bishvat became a holiday for eating the fruit from the Land of Israel. In some communities it was called *Chamishosar.*

Setting: off the Land
Text: Braslav

III. Middle Ages

In the 16th century, a group of Kabbalists in Tsfat created the Tu Bishvat seder.

Setting: post-Expulsion
Text: Pre Etz Hadar, Carol Belton

IV. Settlement of the Land of Israel

One hundred years ago the Jewish pioneers in Israel drained the swamps and reversed erosion by planting trees. Tu Bishvat became a holiday of planting.

Setting: eroded land
Text: A.D. Gordon, Rachel, Lewis Thomas, Arthur Waskow.

Appendix B

Workshop: Sukkot

Prepared by Avital Plan

"All the seven days (of Sukkot) a man makes his sukkah his permanent dwelling and his home his temporary one." *(Mishnah, Sukkah 1.9)*

L Exploring the Concept of Sukkah
Questions for participants: How is a sukkah different from a home? at experiences and perceptions may it provide the one who lives in it?

After a group discussion, summarize the participants' responses and pull in the following ideas:

Our homes protect us and the objects we cherish; help us define who we are; give us comfort and safety and an easy togetherness with family and friends. Our homes enclose us so that we are only partially exposed to the elements. They wall us in not only from much of the physical world but also from other realities of human existence by providing a shelter in which a variety of distracting activities may take place. We fill our time with music, reading, etc. and build routines that often shield us from an awareness of our place in the world.

The sukkah, this temporary, frail shelter, does not keep out the wind and rain. **In** it we shed our routines and have to make do with simple things. There is no clutter nor the constant stimuli of modern life. In it we are vulnerable not only to the elements but also to a keener realization of our place in creation, to our transience and morality. The sukkah offers an opportunity to detach from an ordered life and view it critically. The sukkah, according to Mordecai Kaplan (a twentieth century Jewish theologian), is a symbol of protest against the artificiality and the injustice of current civilization.

IL Exploring the Sukkah and Sukkot as Vehicles of Connections
Questions for *Participants:* How do themes of Sukkot connect us with nature? with history? with our ancestors? with our community? with Jewish sources?

There should be a group discussion about each of the above five questions. Participants' responses should be woven into the summaries presented below.

Nature. Sukkot is a fall harvest holiday. It is called "The Time of Our Joy." It is also said that the one who did not see the joy *of Be* Hasho'evah* did not see a joy of their life. This refers to daily rituals during Sukkot which were enacted during the

time of the Second Temple in Jerusalem about 20 centuries ago. These rituals had to do with the sun and the rain and involved the lighting of a great number of torches and pouring water on the altar to stimulate desired occurrences in nature. Our ancestors, more keenly aware of human dependence on the earth and its bounty, celebrated this time of year, the end and beginning of an agricultural season, with great abundance. Great scholars such as Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel and Rabbi Hind took active part in the festive activities. (see *Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 53). Today* we continue the old custom of sitting in the Sukkah, which has to be built in such a way that the stars can be viewed through its roof. We bring into the Sukkah the four species, *etrog and lulav,* and shake them all around. Willow branches are beaten till they lose their leaves and prayers for rain are recited in the synagogues.

History: At Sukkot we remember our homelessness, our wandering in the Sinai Desert on the way to Canaan (ancient Israel) about 3300 years ago. Like all our holidays, Sukkot takes on new and added meanings and content during different periods of our history (added to the original customs which were often part of ancient agrarian folk culture). This is especially true after the first exile, during later diaspora, in 16th century Tsfat, and on returning to the land of Israel about 100 years ago. Today's celebration is an amalgamation of creative forces that grew out of specific events and experiences in Jewish history. For example, during the difficult and landless times of diaspora, the Sukkah became a symbol of protection and peace, and *the etrog and lulav a symbol of* longing for the land of Israel. The intense joy of the farmer was replaced by a lingering memory which survived to be revived again as an agricultural holiday with the return to the land of Israel.

Ancestors: As a culture we are said to be the sum of our history, and as a people the sum of the people who went before us, our ancestors. During Sukkot we invite some of our ancestors into the Sukkah, the *ushpizin* ("guests" in Aramaic). It is interesting to note that those who are traditionally invited have been wanderers at some time in r lives (wandering and impermanence being a central theme of this holiday). This din was developed by the kabbalists of the 16th century in Tsfat, Israel.

munity: While the intense and communally shared joy of Sukkot was tempered oy the advent of exile, more modest expressions of communal celebration exist both here and in Israel. At Sukkot we are reminded again of our responsibility towards the less fortunate members of our community who are homeless. One of the *midsrashim on* the *etrog and lulav* also talks of our responsibility for each other.

Sources: Sukkot is a multi-layered holiday full of contrasts and contradictions not unlike the book of *Kohelet* assigned to it, and not unlike human experience. The following lines are from David Rosenberg's interpretive translation of *Kohelet. "You* can't take it with you / a breath / all we take in // in a life of action / and exhaustive playback / breath into breath // ... generations rise and fall / to the earth that hardly changes.. . ." As we confront our vulnerabilities as mortals passing through, we also

gain a strong measure of connectedness with the world and our place in it. Sukkot provides an opportunity for us to physically step out of our routines and reaffirm our priorities.

III. Curriculum Building

The second hour of the workshop is devoted to brainstorming of curriculum ideas. Various angles of engaging in the material are explored i.e., drama, story, science, nature, music, art and discussion. A school-wide, or Center-wide, celebration is also planned at this time.

IiV, Resources Used in Planning this Workshop

Aryeh Ben Gurion and Tsvi Shu'ah, *Yalkut Sukkot*
Barry Chazan and Yehiel Poupko, *Guide to Jewish Knowledge for the Center Professional*
Theodore Gaster, *Festivals of the Jewish Year*
Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*
Mordecai Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*
Yom Tov Levinsky, *Sefer Hamo'adim*, Volume 4
Jacob Licht (ed.), *Time and Holidays*, The Biblical Encyclopedia Library
Yoel Rappel, *Jewish Holidays Encyclopedia*
Eliezer Schweid, *The Cycle of Appointed Times*
Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays*
Arthur Waskow, *Seasons of Our Joy*
Nahum Wharman, *The Holidays and Festival of the Jewish People*

18. Reflections of a Jewish Educator

by Jason Gaber
Formerly Assistant Director, San Francisco JCC

A Career in a Jewish Community Center

In July of 1981, fresh out of school and proud of my newly acquired master of social work degree, I joined the staff of the San Francisco Jewish Community Center. I was hired to coordinate Jewish programs with an emphasis on outreach to Jewish singles in the Bay Area. (When does anyone ever focus on just one issue at a time at a JCC?) I remember in depth discussions with my supervisor about choosing an appropriate job title for my new position. After extensive input from various members of the executive staff and much discussion, we settled on the title "group services coordinator." After reviewing my duties and looking at the tasks before me, I concluded that a more appropriate title was "community facilitator," because that is how I saw my function in the Center. Indeed, for the next 12 years that is what I did at the SFJCC, first as group services coordinator, then as program development supervisor, followed by adult services director, program director and, finally, assistant executive director. In all of these positions I facilitated community by bringing people together for the purposes of personal growth, building relationship and fostering connections to the Jewish community.

Prior to joining the JCC, I had worked in medical and psychiatric social work settings and in the world of Jewish education. My social work internships left me feeling as though I was putting psychological band-aids on clients. The results felt temporary and not very satisfying. While I was able to function effectively in these settings, it became clear to me that I wanted to work in an environment that brought people together in a positive context and allowed for personal growth. People are social beings who need to be part of a group, a society. I saw my work at the JCC as promoting mental health, believing that if people felt a sense of community and had healthy, purposeful relationships, they would not need mental health services later.

The Emergence of Jewish Education in the SFJCC

My training in Jewish education, which included 12 years of yeshiva education, one and a half years of study in Israel, and six years of teaching in various religious schools, combined with my social work skills gave me a solid foundation to begin my work in Jewish Centers. Inspired by the vision of new possibilities that the JCC offered, I embarked on my journey toward innovations in Jewish life.

Throughout my career at the SFJCC, I continuously functioned as the Jewish educator and resource for the agency. Regardless of the additional duties and responsibilities that came with job advancement, my role as Jewish educator was always a crucial and meaningful component of my professional life. At first my

programs were limited to the adult department, focussing mainly on creating *chavurot for* singles, *a* monthly Shabbat dinner program, and various workshops and Judaic classes for adults. With time I became involved in Center-wide activities. I coordinated a number of holiday festivals and the community Passover seder, Moving into a supervisory role, I was able to weave more Jewish substance into the planning of other Center programs. I foliated the Jewish program committee, which later became a committee of the board of directors, to help direct and enhance Jewish education at our Center.

The evolvement of my role paralleled the changes that were taking place in the Center field as a whole. The work of the then JWB Commission on Maximizing Jewish Educational Effectiveness in JCCs was at its peak. The JCC was becoming recognized as an important institution in the campaign for Jewish continuity. Permanent staff positions for Jewish educators were being created in Centers across the country, and the Center movement was investing new energy in providing Jewish programs for all who wanted them.

As adult services director, I created a departmental team of various professionals who were committed to transmitting Jewish ideals and values through Center programming. The team grew to include a Jewish family program coordinator, an interfaith program coordinator, a coordinator of the 12 Step Recovery Program for adult Jewish addicts, as well as singles workers, adult education coordinators and various social work interns. This group of eight professionals worked together, sharing energies, ideas and resources. A number of seed grants from Federation and the Bureau of Jewish Education allowed us to hire Jewish resource specialists to help round out the team and maximize our impact in the community. At our weekly adult department staff meetings we spent 20 minutes studying, discussing and exploring the weekly Torah portion. At first I led the discussion each week, but soon we were taking turns, each person discovering his or her own style in presenting the material. It was a bonding experience which helped to unify our purpose. As the word spread around the agency about our Torah study sessions, various staff members from other departments asked to join us. Their participation added new insight and varied perspectives to our discussions. When guest lecturers visited the Center, we invited them to be part of our staff Torah learning. These weekly study sessions continued for more than five years, solidifying our team spirit while providing staff members with the basic Jewish tool of having access to the Torah, When I reflect on my years at the SFJCC, or reminisce with other former adult department staff members, these brief but consistent Torah study sessions are always remembered as an important part of our professional and personal growth while at the Center.

As I moved into the position of program director, I had more direct access to the entire Center staff. My weekly Torah study sessions with the adult department staff grew into teachings and discussions with the full *staff on Piricei Avot* (The Teachings of Our Fathers). Twice a month for more than *three years, we spent* the first 15 minutes of each staff meeting studying a few sentences of this important Jewish text. The discussions were always lively and staff worked hard to find the applications of these teachings to their daily work at the Center. These discussions

helped to bridge the gap often felt between the various departments and the different program areas. Many non- Jewish staff members were most appreciative of this opportunity to have access to Jewish texts and were often the most vocal in our discussions. These teachings always served as a unifying force to tackle whatever issues we needed to address as a staff.

In time "The Institute for Jewish Living and Learning at the SFJCC" was created as an umbrella for Jewish programming at our Center. The Institute grew as more and more local Jewish agencies began to sponsor Jewish programs and services. A lecture series that was co-sponsored by 10 agencies allowed us to bring top level Jewish lecturers, authors and workshop leaders to the community. Many of these programs, while planned at the JCC, took place in other agencies, synagogues or community locations, including a monthly lunchtime lecture series that met in a downtown law office, and *various family chavurah* groups that met in different neighborhoods around town. An annual "Interfaith *Sukkat Shalom"* program was developed in cooperation with the Jewish Community Relations Council that focused on social concerns including homelessness, world hunger and disarmament, This program brought civic and religious leaders together to address these issues while creating modern day adaptations for age-old rituals and customs. It became a community tradition that lasted for seven years. In addition to the positive spotlight they put on our Center, the *Sukkat Shalom* events fostered important relationships between Jewish community leaders and leaders from different religious groups, which later resulted in other cooperative ventures.

The Spiritual Side of Jewish Programming

Jewish classes and programs continued to expand and more *chavurot* were formed by the participants. Programs on Jewish spirituality were especially well attended as adults in our community turned to the JCC for meaningful and purposeful Jewish experiences. While carefully avoiding turf wars with local synagogues, the JCC developed a series of weekend workshops on Jewish spirituality. These weekends attracted Jews who were turned on and tuned into spiritual experiences through yoga, zen, and other mystical paths but were searching for a spiritual thread in their own religion. Over a period of three years, nine retreats took place, each attracting between 40 and 80 people. These workshops proved to be an important community building tool. Much like the positive experiences reported from Israel trips and Jewish summer camps, these retreats created a total Jewish environment, if only for the weekend. As a result of the relationships that developed among the participants, six different *chavurot* were formed according to geographic regions. At least three of these *chavurot* are still flourishing today - six years later.

Through these retreats and through the SFJCC's outreach program for addicted Jews, I worked first hand with dozens of Jewish people burning with spiritual passion who wanted desperately to connect with their Jewish roots and warm their hearts, souls and bodies by a Jewish fire. Once connected, many of these individuals contribute much to the Center and the community through volunteer projects, lay leadership positions and financial contributions. But how do we in JCCs reach these

people in our communities who are waiting to be invited in and longing for a taste of Jewish life? How do we make it safe, comfortable and meaningful? The JCC is in a unique position of being able to bring people together for various reasons because of its many dimensions. Jewish spirituality and spiritual growth should be a rallying point for attracting adults and families to the JCC. Where else can unaffiliated Jews searching for spiritual threads begin their journey? If JCCs are the "gateway into the Jewish community" and Jewish continuity is one of the central purposes of our Centers today, doesn't it make sense to welcome people with open arms and provide the programs and services they want and need? We can offer programs that fulfill the spiritual needs of Jews within the context of the Jewish community. This may later lead people to synagogues and other Jewish affiliations that pave the way to Jewish continuity and a feeling of enhanced belonging and participation in Jewish communal life. The more people who become involved in Jewish life, the stronger all our agencies become and the entire Jewish community benefits.

Programs with specific Jewish content are usually both educational and spiritually fulfilling. An excellent example of this is SFJCC's *Tikun Olam* Social Action Program which provided those involved with the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on their community while learning about Jewish values and ideas. For more than five years, the program highlighted a different issue of social concern each month, always weaving Jewish threads and teachings into the process. The Center became involved in the Jewish Sanctuary Coalition, in a project of providing meals for a homeless shelter, and interfaith programs addressing world hunger and world peace. The Jewish Community Relations Council was always supported, and often co-sponsored, these programs, helping with needed resources. Events dealing with AIDS education, including a display of portions of the Names Quilt, both from the local area and from Israel, were an important part of this program. Other activities focused on domestic violence in the Jewish community, Native American Indians, important ballot propositions and issues of public school education. While educating participants with important information, these programs also encouraged people to work towards change. More permanent volunteer opportunities often grew out of the *Tikun Olam* events, enabling participants to make a difference in their lives and their world.

Concluding Thoughts

One year before I left the SFJCC, a long range plan for Jewish programming was developed which successfully lays out a crucial vision for our Center over the next five years. This process, while timely and labor intensive, proved to be a valuable and energizing experience. It is my hope that in the months ahead we will be able to document this process and create a step-by-step tool that can be used in other Jewish Community Centers.

Eight months ago I left the SFJCC for health reasons. As I reflect on my 12 years in the field, I feel that I worked in an environment that fostered positive mental health, Jewish education and values, and social responsibility. I am fortunate to have worked at a Center that encouraged creativity and allowed me to actively weave Jewish educational threads into a lively Jewish setting. I am blessed to have

weave Jewish educational threads into a lively Jewish setting. I am blessed to have worked with my colleagues in San Francisco and count these people among the family of my heart. We lived and grew together in ways that changed our world and the world around us. I was also blessed with lay leaders that care deeply about the Jewish community and always supported my ideas and ventures. In the Forum of Jewish Educators of the JCC Association I found kindred spirits from around the country, Canada and in Israel who understood the daily challenges of my work. I am grateful for having shared a world that included all these people, working toward and believing in the power, dynamics and relevancy of Jewish teachings and the strength they hold for personal growth, social change, and conscious living.

Settings and Contexts of Jewish Education in JCCs

This section presents case studies of Jewish education in Centers across North America. Esther Netter illustrates some of the principles of family education, and in a second article, describes an innovative venture in family and early childhood education. Jody Hirsh looks at the possibilities for utilizing the cultural arts for Jewish education and Marta Wassertzug presents some guidelines for a JCC Judaic library. Johnny Arid, Alan Feldman, and Marta Wassertzug look at different dimensions of adult Jewish learning in the Center context. Jack Boelco raises challenges for the Jewish development of teenagers, and Tzivia Blumberg focuses on the Jewish education of Soviet immigrants. The essays in this section examine the practice of Jewish education in all corners of the Center building.

19. Some Thoughts on Teaching Our Center Family through Jewish Family Education

by Esther Netter
Jewish Action Director, JCC Association, Los Angeles

Jewish Family Education (JFE) provides a framework to explore new and innovative ways to touch and teach those who come to our Jewish Community Centers. JFE focuses on the needs of the family as a system and provides experiences that enrich Jewish family life in the home. Through its programs and services, JFE provides opportunities for family interaction and tools for adults to become Jewish role models and teachers for their children. JFE stresses interactive, participatory learning experiences. JFE is inter-generational, or adult focused, or child focused, or a combination of the above. The results of adults and children learning and experiencing side by side are powerful. Through family participation in JFE, each person touches and enriches the other. Rather than focusing on individuals as individuals, JFE looks at individuals as parts of a larger whole - a family, *a chavurah, a group of* friends, a member of the Jewish community.

That JFE is well-suited for JCCs has been established. Harlene Appelman, a nationally known author and lecturer in the field of Jewish Family Education recently observed *(JCC Circle,* October, 1991): "From the outset, it was clear that Jewish education and the Jewish Community Center were a perfect match: In its short history as an evolving field, Jewish Family Education has developed under the banner of creating multiple entry points for a broad spectrum of Jews to leam about and become involved in the Jewish community. In its long history, the Jewish Community Center has been the gateway through which Jews of all shapes and sizes and beliefs have passed on their way to belonging to the Jewish commun

There are those who say JFE is another in a long line of educational fads; I humbly disagree. JFE is developing as its own field. Moreover, JFE is what Jewish Centers can do, and in many cases have been doing for some time. Concentrating on the family as a whole enables us to be more creative when programming for and educating adults, teaching and learning from children, providing experiences for the entire family and reorganizing how our professional and lay committees interact with different age groups, JFE directs us to re-examine how we think about our Center families and challenges us to actualize three potentials: one, to provide multiple entry points for individuals and families into the Jewish community; two, to serve Jewish families in their varied configurations and in their different places on the spectrum of Jewish knowledge, identity and affiliation; three, to enable families to become part of a larger family, namely, the Jewish community.

What follows is a proposal for ways to restructure the way we think about education, program development, staff and lay relationships, and, most importantly, how we think about adults and children as learners.

When we think of those we educate, more often than not we think of children - from pre-school age to high school. Undergraduate and graduate programs in education train educators who teach, write articles and design curricula primarily for children. We are trained to think of adults as teachers and children as students. I would like to suggest that we also look at children in their capacities as our teachers. "Out of the mouths of babes..." is not merely a cliche. Children are wise and insightful and have much to teach adults. We need to create opportunities for children to share their thoughts and teach us. JFE provides a vehicle for this. Centers are filled with young children, and to acknowledge their role in teaching us and to creatively design programs that allow for children to think, speak and share with adults is a logical outgrowth of existing Center programs.

I want to relate a story. At My Jewish Discovery Place Children's Museum of Jewish Community Centers of Los Angeles there was a "Back in Time" exhibit designed to simulate sending children and their families back to the time of Pharaoh, when the Jews were slaves in Egypt, and to re-enact the Exodus from Egypt. The first room of the exhibit was a time machine," equipped with telephones and two talking dolls, Abraham and Joseph. The second room represented ancient Egypt, where Pharaoh would tell the slaves to work harder, build faster and listen better as they schlep and build. The visitors then "escaped" through the "Red Sea" to the third room where they were led by Moses through the desert. One day, a group of five-year-old girls from a local yeshiva day school had come to the museum. Four of them ran into the "Back in Time" exhibit and prepared themselves in costume to travel back to Egypt. As they entered Egypt through the magic time machine curtain, Pharaoh's voice could be heard, "You must work harder, make more bricks, don't be lazy, work!" The girls were angry. One girl told the others that she was going to make Pharaoh be nicer. She ran back into the time machine room, picked up the play phone and said, "HaShem (God), you need to tell Pharaoh to stop yelling at us. It's not fair. We slaves have a hard life. We keep working and working and Pharaoh keeps yelling." She paused and listened - the play phone still at her ear. The little girl nodded and said, "Yes...okay...okay...Bye." She hung up the phone and returned to her friends, who were still busy building the pyramids, and told them that, "Everything is going to be okay. HaShem (God) will make Pharaoh be nicer."

It was wonderful! This little girl called God! No magic, no time machine could have made a better connection for her, She just picked up the phone, direct dialed and spoke to God. What a gift children have - creativity, imagination, a willingness to suspend reality and immerse oneself in the experience of the moment. This young girl taught us as adults that we can have a conversation with God anytime, anywhere,

She also taught those of us who work at JCCs an important lesson: this museum experience is an excellent trigger for families, adults and children, to discuss feelings and questions about God. at an opportunity we have at our Centers. Our

buildings are full of children and with them come parents, grandparents, siblings, extended families. Moses, Pharaoh, Shabbat, even God can visit and exist in our Centers through creative planning of JFE programs. With all of this "traffic" through our JCCs, there is rich potential for Jewish experiences and Jewish learning for children and their families. My Jewish Discovery Place and other excellent programs at different JCCs provide example after example of just how much we can learn from our Centers' children, from our own children. They open up the channels for rich, personal Jewish discussions. That day in the museum, the girls shared their experience in Egypt with their classmates and teachers. Each day the museum is open, experiences are shared and conversations of discovery take place between children, their families, their teachers and their counselors.

If we look at children not only as our students but as our teachers, it follows that we look at adults not only as providers of education but also as learners. While our Centers allocate dollars and staff time to the development of a whole range of programs for children from pre-school through college, it should also be a priority to allocate funds for the same types of events and programs for adults. Adults certainly need to be as involved and active in their own Jewish learning and Jewish growth as the children we educate. Our Centers are the addresses where family members of all ages find the answers to their questions, those they ask and those they do not even know how to ask. The adults we have the opportunity to touch include not only the parents of our Center pre-schoolers, campers and teens, or our senior adults, but also our Centers' staff, boards and volunteers. The Centers' JFE programs need to include adult learning opportunities for all these adults. As Jewish adult members of the "Center family", the staff, lay leaders and volunteers need to be provided with Jewish family experiences that enrich, connect and teach.

As we speak of adult learning, a review of traditional methodologies in educating children is very instructive. When we teach young children about Hanukkah, we tell them the story, but we also make *latkes,* and dress them up as candles as they act out the lighting of the *Hannukiah, or* "introduce" them to Judah Maccabee, who in reality is a teacher in costume. When we teach children about our Sephardic culture, we dress them in costumes, let them make *bourekas,* listen to Sephardic music and re-enact what it might have been like to live in Spain. To learn about Shabbat, the children bake challah, dress in special Shabbat clothes, sing Shabbat songs and celebrate the joys of the day. Children regularly concretize a lesson through an elaborate art project.

Who decided that at a certain age people learn better sitting in a chair and passively listening to a frontal lecture? Who was it who decided that at a certain age we stop doing art projects and we stop cooking and we stop singing together and we stop getting dressed up in costumes because we learn better by reading books and articles or sitting in darkness watching a film? We have seen our Centers successfully create a stimulating learning environment for ehildren; we should do likewise for adults.

Programs that are experiential need not be pediatric. We can provide age-appropriate activities for adults that involve as many senses as possible, have adults

sit for the least amount of time, use active learning centers and divide participants into different group sizes for different programs. Activities can change often, be self-pa d, self-directed, and, where appropriate, self-correcting.

Let me share one example that illustrates how to engage adults. I was at a play recently, a very entertaining musical comedy. Two-thirds of the way through the show the performers invited the audience to sing along in the chorus of a certain song. It was a very simple song - those that did not know it certainly learned it quickly - and it completely changed the atmosphere in the theatre. After the audience began to sing, there was a palpably different level of engagement, and a new level of attention focused on the stage. The actors were just as good irrespective of audience participation. What changed was the experience of the audience. Like that musical play, Centers can invite our adults and families to join us in singing, connecting them with the drama and melody of Jewish life.

My next suggestion is to look at the staff that develops and implements programs in a new way. Most Center staff are assigned portfolios that focus on a limited population. Early childhood specialists serve pre-school aged children; adult programmers are responsible for adults; senior adult workers work with seniors; teen directors work with the junior and senior high school age. It is rarely seen as the responsibility of any one staff member to consider the needs of every member of the family. Even when we do try to incorporate two different populations into one program, we often produce pre-school family programs which focus on the child, and ignore the adults, or parent-grandchild afternoons, where the children may end up unsupervised and disruptive. This could be corrected if one individual, ultimately responsible for the program, could convene a team of staff members, each with a different areas of specialty, to work together for family programming. Each staff person comes to the team with his or her own area of expertise and insures the inclusion of all family members. By building staff teams, the children, the grandparents and the families would each have an advocate in the process of program development and implementation. Furthermore, the convener of these teams can draw on the full range of talents of each member. The pre-school director may also be a folk dancer, or the P.B. staff person may also be a song leader. By filling different roles, our staff members expand and strengthen their connection to the Center.

If building teams and building on collective strengths is effective for staff, how much more does it apply to building teams of lay people? Again, we have chairs of adult committees, children's program committees and education committees, focusing on one particular set of programs or population. Representatives from each of these committees should be brought together to form a committee that would oversee the JFE programs. The adult committee chairperson, a nursery school committee member and a camp volunteer would work together with a staff team to develop, build and implement programs that serve the family. Each would bring not only his/her lay expertise from their Center involvement, but also his/her own hidden talents and additional areas of expertise that may not have been fully utilized in the one committee on which he/she served.

Finally, involving older teenagers, young adults and older adults in the development and implementation of the programs develops a sense of ownership for the program in the minds of the family participants. Different adults have different skills and life experiences that may help in a particular program. There may be participants who are able to lead groups, teach singing, design a program or help with publicity. All of this will fortify individual connections and commitment to the program itself, to the Center and to the community.

The story is related in Avot *De Rabbi Natan,* about the beginnings of one of our great rabbis. Rabbi Akiba, illiterate until the age of 40, began to study Torah. The text says, "Rabbi Akiba went together with his son and there appeared before them an elementary teacher. Said Rabbi Akiba to him,°Master, teach me Torah.' And Rabbi Akiba took hold of one end of the tablet and his son the other end of the tablet. The teacher wrote down 'aleph bet' for him and he learned it, 'aleph tav' and he learned it; the Book of Leviticus and he learned it. He went on studying until he learned the whole Torah."

When Rabbi Akiba began to learn as an adult, he studied at the side of his son. Each of them took hold of the blackboard and together they studied, from the basics to the complex. Fathers and sons, grandparents and grandchildren, mothers and children, whole families, adults and children of all ages come to our Centers. Like Rabbi Akiba and his son, adult and child study, learn and experience together. Some begin with the basics and others the more complex. Children teach adults and adults are teachers of children. Our Center staff, lay leaders and volunteers learn together and work together in the creation and implementation of Jewish Family Education programs. Our Jewish Community Centers are the gateways and Jewish Family Education is a path through which adults, children and families can enter into the world that Rabbi Akiba entered and mastered at the age of 40.

20. **The Arts, Discourse, Meaning, and Jewish Education**

by Jody Hirsh
Jewish Education Specialist, Jewish Community Center of Houston

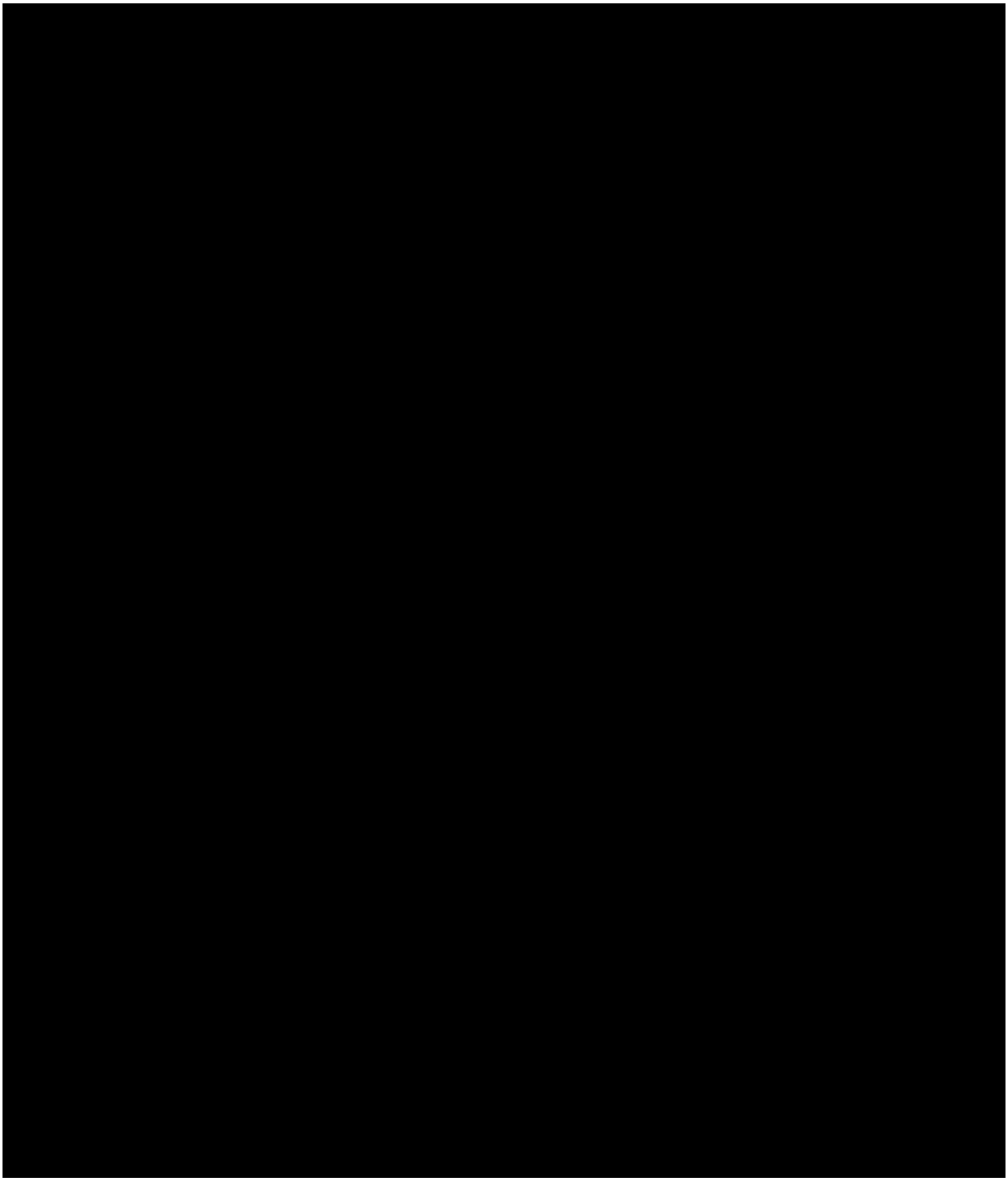

Figure 2: Vom Golus nach Zion, Gedenkblatt zum funften Zionisten Kongress in Basil (From Exile to Zion, Souvenir page from the Fifth Zionist Congress), 1902.

In any case, the question of meaning in art is central to our concerns - what, exactly, is the meaning of E.M. Lilien's Ex Libris (figure 1), or for that matter, any work of art? And, what are its educational implications?

Born in Galicia, Moshe Ephraim Lilien (1874-1925) was a well known illustrator, first in Munich and later in Berlin. As *the* official artist of the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1902, he tried to develop a "Zionist art." Lilien created a souvenir poster (figure 2) which well illustrates his use of symbols: the downtrodden Diaspora Jew, imprisoned by thorns, needs the angel to point to a distant horizon on which a Jewish farmer, complete with skullcap, is seen plowing a field as he approaches the rising sun. This illustration of the Zionist dream was so important to Lilien that it can be seen hanging on the wall over his desk in his own self portrait (figure 3).

Lilien's illustration for the book plates (figure 1) in his own library is intriguing, to say the least, and shows us another, more outrageous, facet of his work. A nude *young women* demurely covers her face with a book. Note, again, the thorns at her feet - a recurring theme in the works of Lilien. Most intriguing, however, is the artist's use of Hebrew. In the right margin is a Hebrew inscription: *"LaT'horim, Kol* Tahoe (for the pure, all is pure). Lilien, who designed book plates for writers and

thinkers ranging from Maxim Gorky to Stephan Zweig, chose a provocative subject for his own book plates. Responding to those who would censure his work, he made it exceedingly clear that anyone objecting to nudity is exposing his own lewdness, rather than presenting any valid criticism of Lilien's work. Lilien attempts to show us that for those who are indeed pure, the nude illustrations could not be seen as objectionable.

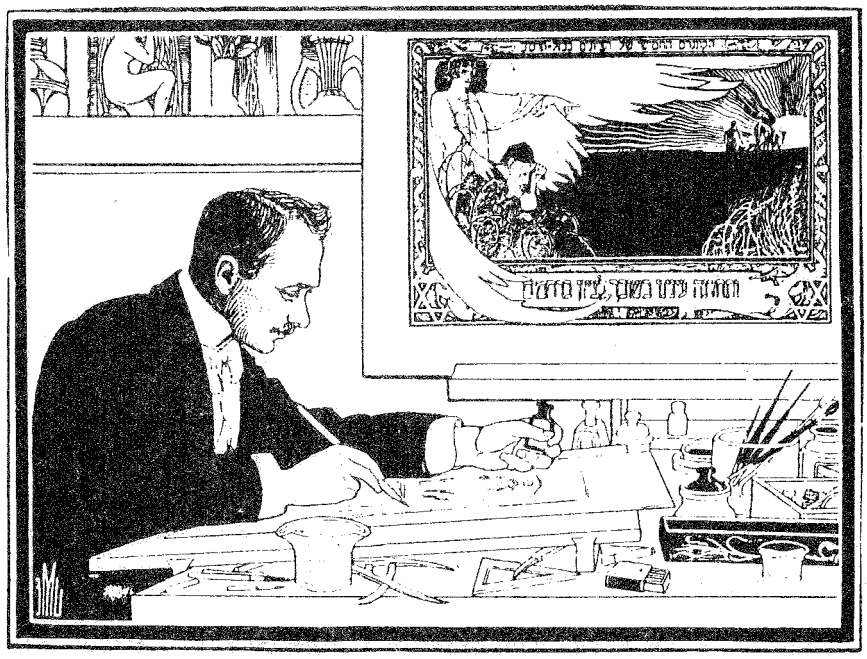

Figure 3: E.M. Lilien, "Selbstportrait" (Self Portrait)

The Arts and Meaning

The above is a necessarily brief overview of the work of *Lilian as might be* presented by an art historian. The question remains, however, what the "meaning" of these works is, or for that matter, of the works of Lilien in general? How do we understand that meaning? What is the impact on the viewer? Does a person need extra historical or technical knowledge of art to understand the meaning, or a meaning of the work? How can this art be exploited in an educational context?

Modern literary and hermeneutical theory [hermeneutics is the study of interpretation] might shed some light on our problem of understanding and exploiting the meaning of a work of art. In many modern theories, a literary text is referred to as a "discourse" - that is, a dialogue with the reader. For our purposes, then, any work of art (graphic, musical, literary) is just such a discourse, In the words of the Italian philosopher and pioneer of the field of hermeneutics, Emelio Betti,

> In truth, people do not establish mutual understanding by exchanging the material signs of objects or by the mutual production of the same thought with the help of an automatic transference, but rather through the reciprocal mobilization of corresponding elements in the chain of their conceptual universe and the striking of the same chord on their mental instrument to bring forth thoughts that correspond to those of the speaker.

In addition to the cognitive elements of art, there are affective elements as well. Art appeals to the emotions, feelings, and moods. A purple painting can make you feel happy if purple is your favorite color, or angry if it is your least favorite. It can be warm, nurturing or discomforting. It can make you cry or laugh.

In short, the possibilities of art are endless. The very nature of art, in fact, is that it is infinitely meaningful. Art (and especially good art) is able to condense meaning and feelings in a way that plain writing or talking could not possibly succeed.

Our perception of the work of art, then, is dependent on two things: 1) our understanding and knowledge of the facts about the work that can be said to be "intrinsic," that is, the details about the artist and the milieu or the artistic faun that are not dependent on our own personal attitude and that contribute to the ‘ ’ork of art whether we know about them or not; and 2) the understanding we bring to the work that can be said to be "extrinsic," that is, those personal experiences and attitudes which color our perception of the work. A useful scheme is that of the art critic Richard Wollheim who tells us that "often careful, sensitive, and generally informed, scrutiny of the painting will extract from it the very information that is needed to understand it."' Wollheim suggests that we acquire "cognitive stock," i.e., knowledge that contributes to our understanding of the intrinsic elements of the work of art. The more we know about the artist and his/her milieu, and the subject matter of the work of art, the more that knowledge can contribute to our understanding of the work. Our understanding depends on the combination of our accumulated "academic" knowledge and our own personal and unique experiences.

Is there, then, a correct interpretation of a work of art? It is easy to see that, depending on the type of cognitive stock that one acquires, one could come to any number of conclusions about the meaning of a work of art. Without the proper understanding, one could, in fact, misinterpret a work of art based on lack of knowledge. Some interpretations might be better than others. However, where some interpretations might be incorrect insofar as history of art is concerned, say, or the biography of M.E. Lilien, they might be valuable for self expression of the viewer, or clarification of values, or even as a catalyst for personal fantasy. Perhaps some cognitive stock is necessary to create a "correct" interpretation (or one of many correct interpretations), but clearly historically incorrect interpretations might be valid as a personal statement of the reader/viewer/listener.

The Arts as Transmitters of Jewish Culture

The arts have always contributed to the transmission of Jewish values and culture. The Bible itself is a work of art - that is, it has the same openness of meaning discussed above. The turn of the century philosopher Ahad HaAfn pointed out that each generation has read the Bible and filled it with meanings and concerns relevant to that generation. The liturgy, as well, contains much poetry which is read and interpreted differently in every generation. The artistic nature of the Bible and of prayer has created many layers of meaning - from the universal to the personal, from the historical to the contemporary - in both of them.

It is precisely because the meaning of art is so open-ended that it is capable o drawing Jews, forcing interpretation, and finding contemporary and personal relevance. Yehuda Wurtze , in an unpublished paper, pointed out that,

> We live in a world in which many, perhaps even a majority of Jews don't know why they should bother being Jewish at all. The continuity of the Jewish people will, of course, be impossible if people don't know why the whole thing matters in the first place. So it would seem that our single most important task is to help Jews know why they should be Jewish. But this 'knowing' depends upon a particular kind of knowledge that can be successfully transmitted only in particular ways.
>
> We know of only three major arenas for transmissions of that sort. Two of them - the social matrix of the family/community, and ritual - have all but ceased to be a sufficient option for literally millions of Jews. The third arena, art and media, is still available to us. It seems to me that if we take our concern for Jewish survival seriously, we should feel obligated to come to grips with art and media as Jewish education, to come to some kind of theoretical clarity about the issues involved and to create experiments and innovations leading to a strategy for culture continuity and culture change.'

It is certainly true that in our current age, the close knit Jewish family no longer exists as it did a generation ago. Families are spread out. Holiday celebrations no longer include all the brothers, sisters, parents, aunts and uncles. Many Jews today are struggling to create new family structures. Often Jewish parents are at a loss when it comes to celebrating Jewish holidays and life-cycle events. Even maintaining a Jewish home often seems ovelwhelming. Ritual, as well, does not hold the appeal or elicit the commitment it did a generation ago, Many are alienated from Judaism. Perhaps the arts can be an entry point. The arts can be personal as well as communal; an individual can find meaning in them regardless of his/her degree of affiliation or commitment with the Jewish people or with the Jewish religion. The arts can be a tool for bringing Jews to Jewish education.

The Arts and Jewish Education

The potential of the arts in Jewish education are li Works of art can be exploited endlessly. (One whole aspect of art not explored in this paper is the creation of works of art by the learners - certainly a powerful educational experience.) There are five ways in which existing works of art can be used as an educational tool:

A. The work of art can be read/viewed/heard by itself without any particular preparation or direction or study. Reading a poem or novel, attending an art exhibit, listening to a musical work, or watching a play or a film is automatically educational without any additional preparation or study. Because a work of art, by definition, is infinitely meaningful, one can find meaning(s) without any help.

B. The work of art can be studied for itself. It can be taught with attention to context, form, and affect. It can be studied briefly or in extensive detail. Every work of art is a text. In a Jewish educational world in which texts are venerated, especially the classical ones, we need to venerate works of art as texts as well. Our tradition teaches us that "there are seventy faces to the Torah."' We need to realize that all texts, all works of art, are similarly endowed with meaning.

C. The work of art can be studied as en introduction to a topic or particular course of study. It can set the parameters - il luminate the principal ideas that are to be discussed. In the case of Lilien, frt. L. tple, the topic could be Zionism, or Jewish art, or the second commandment, or p arity, or the influence of modern life on Jewish culture.

D. The work of art can be studied as an illustration of a toy that is covered extensively. It can vary the point of view or emphasis, It car 1i se or review learning.

E. The work of art can be it self and values clarification. It can be used as an exploration of pen notions a i its,. Because the work of art is so packed with meaning, it can dr ity and influen - our feelings and attitudes.

A few words must be said about the context of art as education in a Jewish Community Center. JCCs already host a wide variety of cultural and artistic events: concerts, theater, film festivals, cabarets, art exhibits, poetry readings, book fairs, even stand-up comedy performances. Although it is not particularly easy to define what constitutes "Jewish art," (a topic, perhaps, for a future paper), and Jewish Community Centers have not traditionally presented exclusively Jewish programming, many of the above events do, in fact, center around Jewish art. Jewish art presentations, concerts, films. and exli eis attract Jews. The very act of attending a Jewish artistic function implies son- ,l of Jewis' 'dentity and commitment ranging from the most profound to * most supel F

A perfect example of the appeal of Jewish art is the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. This annual event has lance e f any Jewish event in the San Francisco area, some 28,000 pe g Jewish community attend the festival: affiliated, unaffilia , aigion J,-., n nstream, fringe, committed, estranged. Why? For many JP are silk: :Jed a. the Jewish establishment and uninterested i- synagogue iwish culture and the arts represent the last opportunity fe. il to hold or) some modicum of Jewish identity. For those who are active in ynagogue or Jewish community affairs, the arts encourage an exploration of Jewish identity a ' Jewish life.

Certainly a distinct advr of a Jewish C 'ºy Center is its commitment to pluralism. Center membersl °n represents a wide cross-section of the Jewish population, regardless of its ideology or degree of identification. JCC members may be religious or anti-religious, politically conservative or socially progressive, members of other Jewish organizations or totally removed from Jewish communal life. Because the JCC is "neutral ground," it is a non-threate ug place for every Jew. Its art exhibits or theater festivals can be free of any idea=l Mal or theological

framework necessary in other more sectarian institutions such as synagogues. (This is not to say that sectarian demands are not made upon Jewish Community Centers, such as the demand that exhibits or events not express theological or political blasphemy in the eyes of particular viewers.)

What, then, should be the educational goals of the arts in Jewish Community Centers? The educational approach of the arts is, by necessity, multi-layered and multi-dimensional. Just getting the public in the door is the beginning of an educational experience, but the goal of the JCC should be to maximize the educational potential of the experience. For some, just viewing the exhibit or film or theater piece, or listening to the concert or comedy sketch will be the most one could expect. However, the Jewish Community Center must provide other options as well, options which maximize the educational moment. Such options might be "one shot deals" or extended courses. They could include one or several of the following:

- program notes on a performance or articles about it in the Center newsletter
- lectures, panel discussions or discussion groups with the actors, directors, artists, curators, composers, poets, or playwrights of the performance/exhibit
- courses in the arts which use the resources and availability of the entries in the JCC artistic season

reactions of local artists to exhibits/events at the JCC

- exploration of the Jewish content of individual works, exhibits, or events
- e exploration of the social or intellectual dynamics of the events or exhibits

simulations, reconstructions, quiz games and gallery searches

- journal writing and interviews
- Jewish identity workshops using the particular event/exhibit/performance as a takeoff point.

The vast variety of educational contexts, along with the constantly expanding "me ing" of art, make the potential educational possibilities endless.

In today's Jewish world of competition for "continuity " funds, of turf wars, and of competition among various Jewish communal and congregational institutions, the Jewish Community Centers are in a unique position to offer something to the Jewish community. By providing opportunities to partake of the Jewish arts in a welcoming atmosphere, and by maximizing their educational potential through thoughtfully planned programs, JCCs can be one of the most significant guardians of Jewish continuity.

Notes

1. Emilio Betti, 'Hermeneutics as the general methodology of the Geistewissenschaften,'' *Contemporary Hermeneutics,* Josef Bleicher, ed., London: Routledge, 1955.

2. Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art,* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987.

3. Yehuda Wurtzel, 'Towards a General Theory of Symbols, Art, and Media in Jewish Education," p. 21 ff.

4. *Kohelet Rabba 1: 29.*

21. "From the Outside In": Adult Education in the JCC Context

by Jonny Ariel
Jerusalem Fellow

"There is no one today . . . who does not contain within himself some small fraction of alienation. All of us to whom Judaism, to whom being a Jew, has again become the pivot of our lives ... know that in being Jews we must not give up anything, not renounce anything, but lead everything back to Judaism. From the periphery back to the center, from the outside, in . . . .°°

Franz Rosenzweig's oft-quoted address to the remarkable Frankfurt Lehrhaus could serve as an ideal text for discussion in every Jewish Community Center on the subject of adult education. It analyzes the problem of how Jews, finding their spiritual and intellectual home outside the Jewish world, will come to see Jewish tradition as the central prism through which they can lead significant lives. It suggests a multi-faceted program of Jewish learning. Its openness reflects a central dilemma of the non-ideological JCCs: how to welcome everyone as they are and yet offer compelling (and competing?) role models of Jewish learning and commitment.

Education is like a bicycle: riding downhill is easy; going uphill is difficult; but when you stand still you fall off! There is only one direction for adult education and that is uphill. This is hard, frustrating and complicated, but genuine, risky and real. Our participants are voluntary learners, but they can be stimulated by issues that enable them to draw from their own rich experience - especially when their experience confronts fresh panoramas and produces novel encounters. The planners of adult education programs take many factors into account, from the macro (e.g., the social context) to the micro (e.g., the layout of the room). This article describes ten such factors as they pertain to the JCC.

L Hope in a World of Change

The last years have witnessed technological advances of such magnitude that they pose challenges to the fabric of society - its social relations, its cultural ambience, its economic structure and its political environment. The "Global Village" threatens to undermine local traditions and convert them to quaint folk-memories. The mobility of the population spreads families around the globe while it breaks cultural barriers. Inter-generational antagonisms are to some extent neutralized, but communal bonds are weakened by the events that cut across established lines: landing on the moon and the space exploration program; earthquakes and other natural disasters; one country's aggressive invasion of another; and the desire to protect the environment. People are united in imagination, vicarious grief, indignation and solidarity. There is a seeming unanimity that these issues constitute

the universal agenda, irrespective of age, cultural background or ethnic origin. Jack Tivey writes:

> It is hard to give oneself the illusion of being sure of many things any ore.. . one lives in a world almost but not quite out of human control, its accumulated information so vast that the most learned of men know that they are ignorant. . .. We try to come to terms with material power such as there never was, matched by an individual uncertainty of the soul unparalleled since the Black Death. A new-age is a-borning, it is probably here. But nobody I have met or read understands it and not many even pretend to.'

That there are threats to our established ways of maintaining communities should not blind us to the attendant opportunities that result in any situation of change. A feature of recent philosophical writings is the widespread return to the need for a mediating group between the individual and the state. It is suggested that the excessive stress on the self, coupled with the changing nature of the family, and the decline of identification with the nation-state, will give rise to a more pressing desire for community. The atomized self will recreate patterns of intimate association. This new community will not be a copy of what was; it will be something that will emerge. The JCC seems to provide a framework that encourages people to proceed from where they are. This is no small achievement in the fractured world of contemporary Jews, but it is extremely doubtful whether Jews, as dispersed as they are, will have uniform communities. Perhaps the need for belonging, propagated by elements within the majority culture, gives cause for hope in those of us who sustain a model of a Jewish community which integrates behaving, believing and belonging. If non-Jews are doing it, will not Jews do it too?

2. **Using the Adult Learning Curve**

Naturally, this time of uncertainty is most keenly felt by adults, who have witnessed the changes first-hand. A.N. Whitehead commented that the time span of major cultural change used to be greater than the life span of an individual.' at one learned in childhood remained valid for life. But scientific and economic changes, and with them their social and political ramifications, have gathered pace. Whilst human beings are living longer, the time span of cultural change has shortened. Knowledge and skills learned through dedicated application at school become obsolete. They are quickly superseded by new discoveries which undermine long-held values and attitudes. Can these same values still serve adulthood?

When these universal developments are added to the exhilarating, but exacting, two hundred-year-old Jewish encounter with modernity, any Jews' sense of uncertainty is exacerbated. The old adage that "Jews are like everyone else only more so" applies to the challenge of adult education as well. at are the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills necessary to be an adult Jew today? Is the authority for deciding these matters God or the Jewish People? From where do we

draw our inspiration, to whom do we owe our allegiance and on what basis do we decide?

In the recent past we Jews have experienced dramatic shifts in the fortunes of our people: the *Shoah* and the establishment of the State of Israel; the campaigns to free Soviet Jewry and the mass Exodus; the vitriolic anti-Zionist campaign and the creation of diplomatic ties between Israel and many former adversaries; buoyant confidence in the future of Diaspora Jewry and deep suspicions over its very viability; the strong bonds between the Diaspora and Israel and crises of confidence in those relations; and the trauma of PLO terrorism and the recent peace accord. Is it any wonder that Jewish adults are no longer sure who they are, where they have come from and where they are going? When people sense that their world is undermined they can either deny the process is occurring or accept it. For those that accept, there is much work to be done to discover the implications of the new options and choices available. This can be the lifeblood of educational initiative which brings a rise in the adult learning curve.

3. Adult Education Is **a Voluntary Enterprise**

There is a range of motivations for participation in adult education.' Participants at different life stages will be exercised by various concerns and time pressures, but all will continue to attend only if their needs are met. Some consumers will seek to learn how to perform specific functions or be in search of concrete answers to pertinent questions; others will be in search of intellectual stimulation and a hazy notion of general enlightenment; and some may be desiring of companionship and fraternity. The initiative to get involved might be a change in family circumstance - marriage, divorce, birth or death - or it might be new employment. new unemployment or retirement. Some might attend driven by peer pressure, a desire for status, inner peace, self-esteem, or from feeling guilty, or for having fun. Adults usually respond more enthusiastically when the subject matter of the educational activity is perceived as having immediate value.

Such a voluntary educational enterprise can be viewed as a "moving escalator" in a multi-story building, People make very different entrances, they look around and enjoy the variety, and then move to a higher floor to explore a new range of delights. If they so desire, they can go down and repeat the process. At times of great change, humans struggle to create new identities, to establish a new internal equilibrium. They may wish to express doubts and fears or relish in establishing choices and making decisions, but always they are autonomous, and in control of their educational agenda.

4. Each Adult **Has an Educational DNA**

In much the same way that each of us is distinctive on the outside, it is a fair bet that our minds too are unique. As we have our own fingerprints, perhaps we also have our own learning processes. The connections we make, the associations we forge, and the meanings we derive from educational endeavor might well be very personal. Therefore there can be no set formulae for the way in which people

"should" learn, As we become more adult, our cumulative -fence becomes more and more unlike everyone else's. We become more pecnliaiiy ourselves and thus our learning faculties become progressively more unique. The t ducational consequence **of this** perception is that a JCC's program should be varied, as no one learning style or pace will suit all.

The three key motifs of JCC adult educati provisioi could be variety, integration and adaptation. In this text, f cf th ;es need not only be **child's** play; many adults enjoy th ilaiion activities, music, drama and stories too. They may wish to tali , co- Vorld Jew Communities which **runs** concurrently with the sir i bi -'s prove ion of kosher e ...ink foods, whilst in the lobby there is a multi-media, i :eractive family exhibit on the Jews of the world. **Cultural** continuity will best be constructed from a seamless web of various social, intellectual, recreational and political activities that are integrated one with the other. **It is a rare** model that will be good for all individuals, all times and all places and so adaptation will be the hallmark of **diva** tity.

5. Adult Education Exploits E.

Adults bring with them to rational setting sackful of life experiences. They carry within them a cache of p _y sources which are exci ll nit material for common learning. Time must be se:: i r the participants to it -Mute, to allow the cognitive and the affective integi t - 5 Adults merit ea ent, which suggests that there should be ilfantilization or trivialization i abject matter or individual perspective. i rirough interao 'on, diverse and *rich* pc aanal experience can illuminate and enhance the common

The result will be that a careful shift om 'n lectures to small group courses might well pay dividends. Lzc, 'oil fo p a imadmum of 20 minutes for delivering hard-core information.' Sut y, attei._ion and retention dwindles significantly. Stimulating talks can have (of raising consciousness or morale, but that does not detract from the essei he limited long-term impact of non-participatory learning The us(f mulzti games, participatory exercises and intimate discussion groups v 5 le worth of the individual and provide autonomy for the voluntary learners.

6. Adult Consumers Become Educational

The variety of educational pro] ' ion sh e ,s,;f organizational structures and participants should si in pi— inlaid, feedback and evaluation. Participant initiatives sic lid tie aodga ;outraged, and each participant should be aided to build an evaluation -, r .for him/herself. A broad base for planning goals and assessing needs, in Iat free from tension, will yield programs that are adaptable tc marketable he unique features of each community. Houle developed four c _ s of educational design each determined by the consumer of the service: 7

(a) The Individual (e.g., the JCC executive director teaches him/herself Hebrew; or the aquatics dire(')1- reques' board member systematically introduce him/her to the mo, i Jewish ex erience);

(b) The Group (e.g., t'- cultural arts (El itor organizes a group that selects, reads and discusses the v i , of A.B. Yel and Philip Roth; or a local historian helps senior citizen Nho are sore_ lough their memorabilia to mount an exhibition on the recent hisamy of the Ji m rrlrnrirri

(c) The Institution (e.g., a cross-g at. 1 nal team designs and creates a new JCC environmental center: or staff from th 2, the Jewish Family Services and the local Federation design a combined in-service training program);

(d) A Mass Audience (e.g., the JCC's six-week introductory course for new arrivals, which visits different local Jewish communal institutions, is filmed for screening on cable television

By converting consumers into planners, the educational process retains its vitality and becomes ever more accessible to marginal under-resourced groups.

7. Education Is Possible Anytime, Anyplace, Anywhere

There are all sorts of places that can become educational venues. Within the JCC, aside from the courses, lectures and seminars, educational means can include the life-size talking exhibits in the lobby, the music that is piped into the locker room, and the reading material that is available in the lavatory. Outside the building, structured tour education is a developing field, and visits to meet personnel at the *miluveh* and the museum, in Texas, Toledo or Tel Aviv add vitality to program activity, as long as they do not just duplicate classroom techniques. Programming at irregular hours adds dynamism and effectively sends the significant message that education is as important as sleep or sport to human well-being.

Given technological innovation, we can reassess the word "center." Center implies that there is a periphery. But now the periphery does not have to physically visit the Center to enjoy some of its provision. Distance education for adults has blossomed in the last thirty years, aided by technology. The "information highway" which will enable us to link our televisions. computers and telephones is on the horizon. It carries risks t any community that values human interaction, but it brings opportunities. such a system, the JCC could offer anything from *challah* recipes to a course on St "wry, a: i i-:plate on features from the Israeli press to a notice board of those lool g for t rs to sift Talmud. It could better cater to minority interests as the radius fo tiv ex- ei ver a greater area, enabling groups of geographically distant tubers to me e t physically periodically, but on-line frequently. Irregular leisure time and conflicting schedules will no longer be a barrier to participation in educational activity,

8. The Adult Educator Is Like a Gardener

The educational staff of the adult progre I have a very delicate, non-scientific role with their group. The pace of curricular 'gress and the blend of educational styles is always unique. The gardener wateis hie plants and carefully and skillfully

removes weeds to allow the plant to flower at its own pace, in its own colors, in its own direction. In the midst of encouraging the participants into community, the formal and informal program should encourage participants to share their similarities, their differences and encourage autonomous growth. And yet, simultaneously, there is a need for a sense of vision, of a dream mapping out a route to the future. Thus even though adult educators have to be flexible with their curriculum in dialogue with their participants, this does not mean that they must agree to all suggestions. The program has to be negotiated with the educator who is representing the subject matter - the interests of past, present and future Jews.

Planning informal or experiential activities, including the careful set-up of the room and additional aids often takes longer than preparing a lecture. Staff time has to be allotted too for the all-important coffee and biscuits. Such a demanding and sensitive role requires in-service training for the corps of educators. For the gardener also needs sustenance; all adult educators are learners too. They have spent a good period of time getting themselves ready to teach, but they should be encouraged to show their willingness to learn within the same institution. If the Jewish history tutor learns Torah and the Torah tutor takes the Jewish cuisine class and the cookery expert takes history, then the model of a learning community becomes reality. The message that we all have what to learn and to teach is intrinsic to adult education.

9. Education Requires Authenticity

The creation of Jewish community in the modern era will always be confronted with the daunting reality that whereas meaning will be personally derived in the present, our survival as a people depends, in part, on an ancient culture. Yehuda Gellman writes in another context:

> Consider the first human being ever to have danced a dance. It was surely a complete expression of the person's reason for dancing. All of his joy, or sorrow, or homage, was in that dance. But consider now the second person ever to have danced a dance. For him it was harder to dance his own dance. Why? Because he had seen someone else dance, and now there was a danger of dancing not his own dance, but someone else's. There was a danger of allowing the form of the dance to replace its essence. And the more mankind has danced, the harder it has become to dance one's very own dance.'

Culture is produced by individuals building an intricate, close-knit fishing net of associations, tastes, ideas and language - people dancing their own dance.' But how is culture r4rodaced? How do we teach people to dance their own dance but with Jewish steps and Jewish rhythms? Does it still have the authenticity of one's own dance? at makes the steps of Jewish California identifiable to, and representative of, the Jews of Casablanca from both the 2nd and the 22nd centuries? Perhaps Jews originally came to the JCCs because they were Jewish; today people attend in order to become Jewish. Therefore there is every reason why the adult education provision should not only be consumer-driven but should cover the whole gamut of Jewish

learning. The voice of Jewish tradition has to be heard. The requirement of authenticity simultaneously makes individual and communal demands; each is constructed by and dependent on the other. This process is long and complicated and dovetails with the perspective of human growth that so animates the JCCs, for it encourages the view that a Jewish philosophy will emerge, not at the beginning of the education process, but at some stage in the lifelong endeavor.

I. Education Creates Community

If the educational goal is to generate creative continuity, then the JCC is in an enviable position. Cultural continuity is not only a matter of education, it is also a matter of socialization, of community. Not all Jewish education necessarily leads to Jewish continuity (i.e., knowledge of Judaism does not necessarily make one a Jew) and continuity is not only generated by Jewish education (i.e., social, familial and religious rites are also critical). A community is made up of a range of people with differing concerns and passions, and already the JCC caters to a variety of recreational, cultural and educational interests. It is the very strength of the JCC that its program is multi-dimensional. The link with all children and youth programs is central. That only children learn from parents is undoubtedly false; there is a symbiotic relationship. The tough questions of searching teens can be transformed into parental needs for knowledge and insight. Early childhood Hebrew songs can be repackaged as a first step ulpan for parents. Judaism is hereditary, but as they about insanity, you might get it from your kids. Writes John Dewey: "Men live in a community by virtue of the things they have in **common;** and **communication** is the way in which they come to possess things in common." And Dewey was able to conclude from this that "not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative." This is the distinctive niche of the JCC.

The almost inevitable consequence of an adult education program built around these ideas is that it will look chaotic, rambling and sporadic. It will certainly be difficult to design the brochure, fix the timetable and reserve the rooms. So be it. Our starting point was that we live in an age of discontinuity and that the only genuine way to service all our members is a concerted effort to meet them wherever they are. And they are everywhere. So too should be the JCC. But we have a vision of a teaching-learning-doing community and to struggle for its creation is truly a noble Jewish-human endeavor. It is said that there are "70 faces to the Torah", which suggests that there should be 70 contexts for Jewish education. The JCC can provide the range of settings. How many faces does your JCC have? The answer will help determine how many of today's Jews move "from the outside in."

Notes

1. Franz Rosenzweig, "Upon Opening the Judisches Lehrhaus," *in On Jewish Learning,* Nachum Glatzer, ed., 1965.

2. Jack Tivey, "From Policy to Practice," *in The ACACE Report,* Leicester: The National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education, 1982.

3. A. N. Whitehead, 1931, quoted in Malcolm Knowles, 1970, cit.

4. Malcolm Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education,* New York: Associated Press, 1970.

5. David Kolb, *Experiential Learning,* New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984.

6. Donald Bligh, *What's the Use of Lectures?,* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.

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2L The Needs of the Adult Learner and Target Groups for Adult Jewish Education at the Jewish Community Center

by Alan Feldman
Executive Director, JCC of Charlotte

The **Adult Learner**

Any discussion of the needs of the adult learner must give high regard to the work of Malcolm Knowles and his approach to adult learning called, andragogy - the art and science of helping adults learn.'" Perhaps the greatest contribution of andragogy is the recognition of the difference between the adult and child learners. Adult learners:

- bring a massive amount of acquired knowledge and experience to any new learning situation. They also possess considerable practical experience in the process of acquiring new knowledge, opinions and skills.
- themselves, are the richest resources for one another.
  are motivated learners. The most potent motivators usually emanate from within the individual and include the desire (or need) for:
  - improved self-esteem/self-confidence
  - social recognition (approval)
  - better quality of life
  - solving problems
  - pleasurable experience
  - attempting something new
  - discovering if I can"
  - human connectedness (i.e., meeting people).
- respond to new material that is relevant, meaningful, interesting and useful.
- ❑ learn best in a climate of mutual respect between facilitator (teacher) and learner.
- ❑ prefer a climate of collaborativeness, where participants are put into a sharing relationship from the outset (as opposed to highly competitive settings).
  invest themselves in study as a consequence of relationships of mutual trust.
- respond openly and willingly, risking new ideas and behaviors, in authentic situations void of pretense.
- need to be participants in their own educational process.
- are gratified by adventurous educational experiences that are spiced with the excitement of discovery and are fun.

Although with some items it is simply repeating the opposite of the incentive, it is equally important to list the disincentives to adult learning. They include:

Sense is the feeling something arouses in us and is heavily dependent on the context in which it occurs. For example, a bear can be a scary creature or a warm, cuddly friend. Meaning is precise, as in a dictionary definition, and remains stable across contexts. The adult Jewish learner needs both - a range of meanings of Judaic concepts, and a sense of how they fit into his/her own personal life situation. Two, the adult learner must be allowed to bring his/her own personal background to bear on his/her interaction with Jewish culture. This encourages the learner to participate, articulate and, possibly re-learn in a new way something he/she may already know.

Finally, it is crucial that we understand that adult education lives in the interaction between the teacher and the learner. It is here that Jewish education and the JCC's social work underpinnings part company. Although both strive to leflect community values, traditional social work demands that the professional consciously separate personal and professional selves. But in our roles as Jewish educators, we MUST personalize our approach. The effective Jewish educational experience will be marked by the infusion of the Jewish persona of the instructor into the encounter. Teachers must put their "self' into teaching, using their identities as teachers and as Jews as models for their students. "What we need more than anything else is not textbooks but text-people. It is the personality of the teacher which is the text that the pupils read; the text that they will never forget."

Target Groups at the JCC

Delineating target groups for adult education at the JCC must begin with a clear understanding of who we are as JCC professionals. Only when every staff member regards him/herself as a Jewish educator will the Center be poised to maximize its potential as an institution for Jewish learning.

Our target groups walk through our doors as individuals. They are not delivered, in large numerical gatherings, on silver platters, soliciting our Jewish educational services. Most come to us alone and unsure of exactly what they want. Or, if they do know, they are unsure of how to ask for it. Some are searching for Jewish history, some for Jewish memories, some for spiritual awakening. Some come to the Center merely for a schvitz and a swim. They seek acceptance by those with whom they can identify. All, or mostly all, endeavor to find some kind of personal interconnectedness.

If we couple our understanding of the adult learner's need for a respectful student-teacher relationship with our acceptance of the notion that JCC workers should maintain a primary professional identity as that of a Jewish educator, we create a dynamic merger that uncovers target groups we have yet to imagine. Our tasks as JCC professionals are two-fold. First, we must reach out to individuals as they walk through our doors, get to know them, understand them, like them, and steer them towards the appropriate connections with others that they may seek. (Even for those who seek only the "schvitz and swim" functions of the Center, we recognize that affiliation is the precursor of identity.) Second, we need to insure that the Center's Jewish educational agenda is presented as both relevant and central to every population group within the Center. Therefore, our list of target groups for

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Notes

1. As opposed to pedagogy, which literally means "the art and science of teaching children." See the following works (among others) by Malcolm Knowles: *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy,* New York: Cambridge Books, 1970; *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: From Pedagogy to Andragogy* (Second Edition), New York: Cambridge Books, 1980; *Andragogy in Action: Applying Modern Principles of Adult Learning,* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985.

2. See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures,* New York: Cambridge Books, 1973.

3. **See** L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978. Also, William Crain, "Vygotsky's Social-Historical Theory of Cognitive Development" in *Theories of Development: Concepts and Applications,* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992.

4. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom,* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966, p. 237.

23. The Teaching of Hebrew at the Jewish Community Center

by Marta Wassertzug
Director Ulpan Ben Yehuda, Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington

The Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington has been offering Hebrew classes to the community for over 20 years. In the Fall of 1993, *Ulpan Ben Yehuda, the* Center's Hebrew program, offered 16 classes on several different levels, from beginners to advanced, from phonetic reading to Israeli modem literature in Hebrew. The faculty includes 12 instructors, an enrichment specialist and a coordinator. Marta Wassertzug, current *Ulpan* coordinator, began her career at the Center as a Hebrew instructor in the Fall of 1977. Her reflections flow from her own insight and experience.

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A Jewish Community Center must offer Hebrew classes if it wants to adhere to its mandate to facilitate the exploration of every single facet of Judaism, Hebrew being one of them, to the Jewish community. Hebrew opens new dimensions of Jewish identity and knowledge and becomes the bridge to communicate with other Jews in Israel and all over the world. Hebrew is the key to unlocking the treasure of centuries of Jewish wisdom. The teaching of Hebrews to adults in Jewish Community Centers, though, has not been adequately addressed; its failure seems to outweigh its successes. I believe that the time has come to make a concerted effort to analyze the problem and work toward a solution. In order to begin we have to look at the components: curriculum, books and other learning materials, and instructors.

Curriculum

When a prospective students come to us, we have to ascertain their specific goals. If someone wants to achieve competency in reading the *Siddur,* the recommended track is clear. There are several good methods available commercially, either for self-study or for classroom use. With practice and a little bit of guidance, good results can be achieved. However, many synagogues, with the help of volunteers, offer this kind of literacy class free of charge. *Ulpan Ben Yehuda offers* just one literacy class every semester, for a duration of 12 weeks - enough to master the alphabet. Classes usually have the bare minimum of students necessary, a clear indication that this is not our constituency.

If, on the other hand, the student is interested in conversational Hebrew, what do we? If the person's goal is making *aliyah in* the near future, anything will be helpful to get his/her brain ready to receive the full impact of the language upon arrival in Israel. If he/she wants to learn a few phrases before an impending visit to Israel, a class called "Survival Hebrew for Tourists" for a few weeks is indicated. (I

have taught such a class in the spring for summer travelers for many years, with great success.) But the majority of our students come to classes to enable them to help their children with their day school homework, or to do "something Jewish that is not religious." at do we teach them then? We usually pick up a book that is used in an *ulpan* in Israel and go through its This is all the thought we give to the curriculum.

her Rivlin, former director of the Department of Culture and Education of the World Zionist Organization, American Branch, and a good friend of *Ulpan Ben Yehuda,* framed the problem thus: "Hebrew cannot be taught in the Diaspora as a second language, but as a foreign language." Of course, Hebrew is not "foreign" to Jews but, for methodological purposes, Rivlin was right. Hebrew is a second language to immigrants in Israel who have to work and study in the language, who must learn to function in a Hebrew-speaking environment in the shortest time possible. It is comparable to immigrants to the United States learning English. But Hebrew in the United States is definitely not the primary language of communication. The way it is acquired, practiced and reinforced has to be analyzed and a curriculum must be written that takes all of the above into consideration.

Books and Other Learning **Materials**

Adult Hebrew classes are usually offered once a week for two-three hours. Classes correspond to the academic calendar year, that is, their schedule must conform with holidays and vacation periods. Thirty meetings a year is the norm for *ulpan* classes. If the textbook used is one published in Israel - where students come from all over the world - there are no translations or explanations of grammar points in English. How does the student review from one week to the next, or, even worse, from June to September? If there are no audio or video cassettes for practice, how can we expect the student to acquire any fluency at all?

In 1989, at the world symposium on the Hebrew language which convened at the University of Maryland in honor of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Council for the Hebrew Language, professors, grammarians and other luminaries of the Hebrew language, were assembled. I represented *Ulpan Ben Yehuda,* which is the largest *ulpan* in a Jewish Community Center. I heard scholarly dissertations about the language, as well as mourning bells for its beautiful past in America. At the end of the congress, after days of presentations, I asked the august personalities present to descend from their ivory towers and to address the problem of the current teaching of Hebrew in America, specifically the problem of the lack of adequate textbooks and teaching materials. My comments did not even make it into the minutes of the conference. My request was not of scholarly interest.

In the meantime, we continue teaching from Israeli textbooks that load the students' memories with words like "absorption center" or " ministry of absorption" which are useless in the Diaspora. Those textbooks are of substandard printing. Either they are photocopies of photocopies (like *"Sifron Lastudent"), or* are produced by word processors with letters that are so fancy that they confuse the students. Also, almost across the board (except for *B'Al Pe Uvichtav),* the print is too small for adult

almost across the board *(except for BA] Pe Uvichtav),* the print is too small for adult students studying at night, after a full day of work. Furthei more, the books fall apart after one semester. (It must be noted that a book like *"Choveret Lamatchiliin"* which in Israel probably takes a semester to finish, will take over three years in the Diaspora.)

I believe that we must look at the books available to learn French, Spanish, Italian, etc., for ideas on how to produce a book that is pleasant, useful and lasting. Of course, the market for such a Hebrew book would be insignificant in comparison to the demand for Romance languages books, so it may be difficult to find a publisher for such an undertaking. However, we must try. In the meantime, I would gladly share with anyone interested my findings about the different texts available from Israel.

Inst ruetors

Good instructors can save the class from a bad curriculum or a deficient textbook, but who will save the class if the instructor is incompetent? The choice of instructors is crucial, and very difficult when the offer is limited. Instructors must be Israeli in order to model the correct pronunciation; they must have a background in education; they must speak correct Hebrew, not slang, and know grammar. There are few *ulpan* teachers who arrive at the job ready to teach. Very few new Israeli teachers can grasp the fact, for example, one semester of *ulpan in* Israel corresponds to 10 years of classes in the Diaspora!

Because of the lack of adequate personnel, I hold training sessions for my instructors, and monitor their work closely. Most of the Israeli instructors I employ arrive in the Washington area on a temporary basis. Because the training process consumes much time, I will not consider people who are in town for only one year or one semester. Even the savviest of teachers will need a semester to get used to the new environment. I insist on an education background, so that I do not have to explain what a lesson plan is, or how to conduct a class. If I had a choice, I would also choose instructors with a vivacious personality who can hold the students' attention and interest, even late in the evening, and creative people who can present the same grammar point in a variety of ways until it is clearly understood. A good instructor must also understand that different students learn differently, so that activities will cater to the different learning styles. Finally, the instructor must be a group leader, creating a non-threatening atmosphere in the class, and a spirit of cooperation. In a relaxed group, friendships between people will flourish.

Writing or finding short plays to perform at the end of the year is an excellent way to showcase the accomplished class and the efforts of its instructor. Our *ulpan* holds an end-of-the-year party, *Cafe Dizengoff,* at which an Israeli meal is served, followed by a sing-along, class skits and Israeli dancing. Students, as well as their families and teachers, looks forward to the event. A. couple of times, the entire *ulpan* population was hosted by the Israeli Embassy in Washington, which lent a very special dimension to the Hebrew learning pursuit.

Summing Up

We owe the Hebrew students a revamping of the Hebrew program in our Centers. Before a program is offered, we must ask ourselves important basic questions: at is the desired track; which textbook will better get us there and how competent is the instructor to take the students where they want to go? We must break the chain of failure that plagues most of the existent Hebrew programs, for the sake of our Centers and for the sake of Hebrew itself.

24. **Implementing Operation Joseph: The Rescue of North American Jewish Youth - A Plan for Action for JCCs**[1]

by Jack Boeko
Executive Director, United Jewish Centers of MetroWest, N.J.

Prologue

Genesis

Joseph, the favored son of Jacob, was lost to the Ishmaelites. After he was abandoned by his brothers and sold into slavery, his father, Jacob, rent his clothes and mourned his son. Years later, Joseph was able to find redemption, came back to his people and became a great leader.

Post World War **II**

Prior to World War II, the Jewish community was en route to becoming one of the typical, integrated ethnic groups of America. It appeared to be another success story of the American melting pot, very similar to that of the Italians, the Germans, the Swedes, and many others. It was the horror of the Holocaust that delayed this integration and united American Jewry. The memory of the Holocaust also became the most significant force and rallying cry for the creation of a Jewish State. This Jewish State then became the centrality of Jewish life, and a series of programs and organizations dedicated to maintaining the security and stability of the State of Israel were created. During the last decade, we have seen the decline of this support in terms of the dollars directed to Israel, and in the increasing public criticism of Israeli policies by American Jews and Jewish organizations.

The I980s

Operation Solomon: the spine tingles! Operation Moses: how we rallied to the cause. Operation Exodus: we gave, we borrowed, we sacrificed. While we were occupied with these honorable tasks, we lost a generation.

The 1990s

Now is the time to rescue our own American Jewish youth; now is the time for Operation Joseph.

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[1] Reprinted with permission from *The Journal of Jewish Communal Service, Vol. 70,* No. 1, Fall, 1993, pp. 81 - *86.*

Operation Joseph

Since the publication of the Council of Jewish Federation (CJF) 1990 Jewish Population Study, there has been much agonizing by the North American Jewish community. New initiatives to enhance Jewish education and outreach to intermarried families are underway. However, there has not been a major initiative of outreach to youth that attempts to reconnect them to the total community. Operation Joseph will be that initiative.

Before examining the specifics of Operation Joseph, consider briefly the present state of Jewish youth.

- There are currently 1.9 million children under the age of 18 in ' erica, of which 62 percent are in the core Jewish population. The core population consists of 267,000 households, of which 29 percent include a child under 18.
- Just under half of all children in the CJF surveyed households are currently being raised with Judaism as their religion.
- 16 percent of the core population qualify as secular Jews.
- One in three Jewish households has synagogue affiliation.
- One in five participates-in Yom HaAtzmaut celebrations.
- 44 percent of all surveyed households contribute to a Jewish charity, and one in four contribute to United Jewish Appeal (UJA).
- One in two households of the core population enrolls their children in some form of Jewish education.

If we have learned anything from the CJF study, it is the simple fact that a significant number of American Jews do not maintain effective connections to qualitative communal Jewish life. Future projections will be even more dismaying if we do not instill a new sense of belonging and purpose to our youth. This generation of youth and the next will have extensive choices of affiliation and volunteerism within and without the Jewish community. No other generation of Jews will have such a wide variety of options available to them, nor will any be romanced so aggressively for their charitable dollars. If we do not reverse this trend, such future decisions will be made by individuals who lack knowledge, Jewish pride, and a sense of community.

In preparing the tenets of Operation Joseph, several hypotheses must be posited:

UNLESS WE BEGIN TO ALLOCATE LARGE SUMS TO INCREASING AND ENHANCING PROGRAMS DEDICATED TO YOUTH, THERE WILL BE A FURTHER DECLINE OF COMMITTED JEWS INVOLVED IN OUR COMMUNITIES. There are no accurate statistics available on resources now directed to youth programs within the Jewish community. We do know that of 175 Jewish Community Centers, (JCCs) in the United States and Canada, only 39 currently have full-time positions labeled as Teen Director or Youth Director. CJF

statistics only isolate dollars allocated to local and regional Hillels, which amounted to $922,000 in 1990.

UNLESS WE BECOME INVOLVED IN KINDLING WITHIN YOUTH A PASSION FOR AND IDENTITY TO ISRAEL, WE WILL WITNESS A FURTHER EROSION OF SUPPORT TO ISRAEL. Born during the Depression, my generation experienced a childhood during the war years, and an adolescence with the horrors of the Holocaust revealed. In early adulthood we celebrated the birth of Israel; no school could have instilled within us the experiential pride and deep connection to Israel that burned within us. With that ember firmly implanted in our hearts, the flame could rage uncontrolled at the slightest provocation. During the War of Independence, the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War, our hearts literally stopped as we awaited the early news. Uncontrolled tears of joy ran down our faces as we celebrated the victories.

Simcha Dinitz, Chairman of the Jewish Agency, has called for a goal of 100,000 Jewish youth to visit Israel each year. We must accept his challenge. In 1991, 12,000 of 600,000 American Jewish youth, aged 1549, visited Israel. If this rate continues, then we can assume that nine out of ten youth will enter young adulthood with no direct exposure to a vibrant Israel.

UNLESS WE INVOLVE JEWISH YOUTH IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS THEY WILL LOSE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP. Active participation in the political process has been a significant part of American Jewish life. Because of the assimilation of American Jews in the last three decades, this political involvement has become very sophisticated and while it is barely existent to the average American Jewish adult, it is probably nonexistent to American Jewish youth.

A study commissioned by the Synagogue Council of America shows that one in five American Jewish adults is currently not registered to vote. Most of the unregistered voters are under the age of 35, while Jews in their twenties are three times as unlikely as those in their sixties to be unregistered. (JTA, June 29, 1992.) If this trend continues, we can anticipate the loss of a significant voice in the political process. Operation Joseph must include programs to educate Jewish youth about the political process and involve them in that process.

UNLESS WE INVOLVE JEWISH YOUTH IN MEANINGFUL UJA CAMPAIGN EXPERIENCES AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO ACCEPT THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY AGENCIES, WE WILL SEE A RAPID EROSION OF CONTRIBUTORS, SOLICITORS, AND AGENCY LEADERSHIP. A recent study by the American Jewish Committee, "Organizational Affiliation of American Jews" by Drs. Renae Cohen and Sherry Rosen, showed that American Jews generally have high regard for those involved in Jewish communal affairs but that the level of commitment is not very deep. A deep commitment must begin with knowledge and then be honed by experience. Our communities are rich

with agencies pulsating with stories and real people that can remain embedded in the life streams of youth if we create opportunities for them to be involved with these agencies.

These opportunities will not open by themselves. They must be part of a finely tuned plan that operates within a nourishing environment, staffed by knowledgeable professionals who are prepared to be challenged and are able to respond to the probing questions these experiences will provoke. Programs for the next generation of communal leaders must create bridges between information, involvement, and commitment.

UNLESS WE DEVELOP A CADRE OF EXCEPTIONAL CAREER YOUTH WORKERS FINELY HONED IN THEIR CRAFT, WE WILL CONTINUE TO OPERATE FROM HUNCH TO HAPPENSTANCES, WITH NO OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM THE BEST AND FROM PREVIOUS FAILED EFFORTS. Currently our communities and our national organizations are involved in training teachers, social planners, fundraisers, membership directors, executive directors, physical education specialists, comptrollers, and other communal professionals. However, pitiful sums are allocated to ongoing training of youth workers.

If you reject these premises, you need not read on. However, if you are in agreement thus far, we must create a plan that will correct the course of the past and navigate an exciting new era of leadership dedicated to this population. Within this spirit, I propose Operation Joseph to be an effort to rescue future generations of Jews and create new, informed constituencies for our agencies, our synagogues, and our communities. Operation Joseph will provide opportunities for young people to deal with their identity conflicts and their cultural ambivalence. Operation Joseph will expand the definition of Jewish education as it is currently known within most Jewish communities. Experiential education will become the focal point, discussion based on encounter will become the formal classroom. Under no circumstances should Operation Joseph replace any efforts to enhance formal [redacted] within Jewish schools, synagogues and homes.

Operation Joseph Rescue Plan 1: The Emergency Campaign

Every community will conduct its annual campaigns with a new line added to the campaign goals. This new line, "Operation Joseph," will be similar to those added during the campaigns devoted to Operation Exodus, Operation Moses, etc. The objective will be to create a community endowment fund equal to fifty percent of the annual UJA objective. Gifts will be payable over five years. The annual income of this fund will subsidize new programs dedicated to youth.

The rescue of American Jewish youth will require a massive effort by our local and national communities. It will not be accomplished with the dollars currently allocated to this purpose, nor with the addition of a few new workers. The funding of this project must demand the same financial planning that went into the effort to

bring hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews to Israel and to America. We must be as meticulous in our planning as those involved in the rescue of 15,000 Ethiopians Jews in one day.

Therefore, a third line campaign, providing restricted funds exclusively for Operation Joseph programs, is necessary. The excitement and ambitious nature of this project should also attract designated endowment funds and, hopefully, initial seed money for several lead communities will be provided by major Jewish foundations.

Operation Joseph Rescue Plan 2: **Community Youth Departments**

Each community will create a department of youth, under the supervision of one of the quality agencies of the community. If there is no such agency, supervision and coordination can be centralized within Federation. This department of youth will plan and coordinate a series of programs that combine programs related to *tikun olam* and *pikuach nefesh with* appropriate adolescent recreation and leadership development activities.

These community youth departments will make their professional resources available to all youth programs in the community, those in JCCs, synagogues, Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE), Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), B'nai Brith, etc. These resources will be available for upgrading of programs, leadership training, and community-wide events. Membership requirements should be minimized, fees affordable and, when necessary, scholarships available to youth from low income families.

JCCs are uniquely qualified to create and coordinate these community youth departments, as they have the facilities to house a diverse range of activities; they can attract youth from all segments of the community; and they can play a central role in planning for a diverse range of ideologies.

Operation Joseph Rescue Plan 3: Training Youth Workers

National training programs for staff engaged in youth work will be conducted regionally and nationally. Participants in these local and national training institutes will study and create models of programs that can be replicated in local communities and develop programs that will add momentum to the creation of a Jewish National Youth Movement. Collaborative training programs will be provided for teachers, JCC youth workers, and synagogue youth workers. By combining these training opportunities we will see models of programs that blend the unique characteristics of each institution and the expansive skills of the professional youth staff.

The net result of these ongoing training institutes will be the development of a cadre of highly trained workers with the skills and knowledge to move from cognitive to experiential, from sports to counseling, from individual needs to group needs with full knowledge of the opportunities each skill provides and understanding of the limitations of their pandemic skills.

Operation Joseph Rescue Plan 4: Involvement in UJA and Community

Each community will create within its campaign structure a division whose purpose is to solicit targeted youth in the community for donations. This division will recruit leadership from within the youth community to develop their campaign literature and public relations as well as plan all youth campaign functions.

Programs will be designed to involve and connect young people to their communities, educate them in the missions of communal agencies, and involve them in the UJA process. These programs will provide innovative opportunities that link donations to services, professional to volunteer, and local to national and international.

Here too JCCs can play a significant role. Fundraising for teens can be integrated with a series of educational and recreational activities that blend together communal youth groups into a concerned voice of opinion and action.

Operation Joseph Rescue Plan 5: The Israel Connection

Utilizing Operation Joseph funds, every Jewish community will allocate $1,000 in the name of every Jewish teenager on his or her thirteenth birthday. This money can be withdrawn by the teen on their sixteenth, seventeenth, or eighteenth birthday as partial payment toward an approved Israel trip program. uent members of the community, who require no subsidy, can place their allocation into a fund for those with financial needs. Teens who still cannot afford the program can be assigned work projects at JCCs, Federations, or through a Job Opportunities for Youth Bank (JOY) created by community leaders.

However, the trip itself can only be one step in the connecting process. Pre-trip and post-trip programs are essential in order to firmly plant the seeds of lifetime attitudes and relationships. These programs must also connect the Israel experience to the local community and provide avenues of communal dialogue that lead to opportunities for involvement and expression. Upon return from the Israel trip, the teenager must enroll in a community youth leadership program, which includes projects *of tikun olam,* community service, and participation in the UJA youth program.

If JCCs become involved in the training of communal youth leaders as well as coordinating effective youth UJA campaigns, the Israel trips become a natural progression of their communal roles. By staffing these trips, JCC workers will have opportunities to connect youth to a variety of pre- and post-trip activities that engage youth in the educational impact of Israel.

Operation Joseph Rescue Plan 6: Youth Leadership Development

Each community will put into effect a leadership development program for youth. These programs will be curricularized, so that over a span of three to four years a teenager will be able to enroll in sequential programs and institutes, and ultimately earn a designated title that will have national significance and status (similar to the Wexner Fellows, key societies, MacArthur fellowships). These programs will be conducted within existing networks of youth affiliation such as

synagogue youth groups, B'nai Brith Youth Organization (BBYO), Zionist youth groups, BJEs and JCCs, with counselors at resident camps and day camps, etc. These groups will develop leadership and group relations skills that will be utilized within projects benefitting their own agencies and communities.

Operation Joseph Rescue Plan 7: National Programs

National programs will be conducted to bring together youth from local communities. A current example of this is the Jewish Community Center North American Maccabi Games. Other models that must be continued and expanded are the JCC Association Leadership Mission to Washington (in Canada, to Ottawa) and The March of The Living. These models must be enhanced and increased to include the arts, intellectual endeavors, and exchange visits. Extensive planning on the local level is needed to create continuous year-round programs that relate these national and international programs to local issues and to the work of local agencies.

A series of national leadership development programs will be conducted in order to bring outstanding teen leaders together to continue the binding efforts. These programs will also include development of communications skills.

Operation Joseph Rescue Plan 8: **Communications**

National media formats that provide ongoing information to youth must be created. This will include an expansion of JCC Association's *Teenscene as* well *as* the creation of satellite conferences and video workshops that will develop programs for inclusion within a nationally planned utilization of public access television. Each community will be equipped with modern communication systems and will train youth to operate these systems.

Operation Joseph Rescue Plan 9: The Political Process

Local youth collaborations must be established with the American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC), the Center on Mid-East Studies, community relation councils (CRCs) and other influential organizations to create programs that will educate our youth to the value of involvement in the political process. They must be encouraged to speak out on important issues. Active local programs can be conducted including voter registration, programs that debate the issues and provide opportunities to meet and question political candidates and elected officials. Programs of action within their own communities and within the local Jewish political system must also be encouraged.

Operation Joseph Plan 10: Community Relations

If we are to succeed in bringing young people into the mainstream of Jewish community life, it must be done in the context of living within American society. It must not be isolated from the important issues impacting American society. Well-intentioned, politically active youth must see their role in the entire political spectrum, rather than merely in regard to Jewish issues. American Jewish youth do not want to be isolated within the Jewish community, but at this time do not have the

knowledge, the pride, or the commitment to effectively create strong anchors to the Jewish community while at the same time creating bridges to the greater society. Thus our challenge in community relations will be to provide information on societal problems within an acceptable Jewish framework so that our youth will be able to engage in intellectual debate and discussion with other ethnic groups and individuals on campus, in their neighborhoods, and within their communities.

I believe that this project must be undertaken in a Jewish world that sees the Diaspora as a viable future for world Jewry. Young people today will reject the concept of Israel solely as an ingathering homeland for all Jews. They must be able to understand the value and concept of Israel as the centrality of world Jewry without rejecting their own country.

The Environment Necessary for JCCs to Assume a Leadership Role

Jewish Community Centers are well positioned to assume leadership to fulfill Operation Joseph objectives. Many of the goals described require coordination and collaboration between numerous community organiiations. The centrality of the JCC makes it a prime candidate for this central role. However, several points must be emphasized if this suit is to fit.

A. The JCC must recognize that this function is a community function and not a membership function. This will require a close examination and revision of policies and priorities now in place.

B. Youth service must become a priority within the JCC. This priority must be expressed through the actions of the board of directors, the personnel committee, the budget and finance committee, and the executive director.

C. If the executive director does not support this priority, it is doomed to failure. Support must be evidenced through his/her lobbying efforts, an open door policy to youth staff and teenagers, visible participation in some aspects of the youth program, and in his/her personal efforts to seek out Federation support as well as private endowments for this purpose.

D. The range of participating agencies and their ideologies will be vast. The participating organizations will include synagogues, BJEs, national youth organizations, day schools, etc. In fulfilling the objectives of Operation Joseph all the participating ideologies of the partners must be preserved. The JCC's role thus becomes one of strengthening youth service vehicles within the community by creating programs and providing professional leadership and coordination.

E. Career tracks for youth workers must be created within the JCC. Pied Pipers are rare in this day and age. When several do emerge, we must make it possible for them to maintain these positions for many years. This will require upgrade of salaries, particularly when they have successfully functioned for more than three

years. It should be possible for a ten-year youth worker to earn the same as a major department head.

Conclusion

Operation Joseph will focus on the vitality of the Jewish Self within our communities. It will focus on helping young people to probe their own lives and their communities while we supply them with the knowledge and the opportunity to improve their own lives, build communities based on moral example, and participate effectively within the rhythm of their political systems. They will not be followers of change, but the creative minds for change.

During the next decade, American youth will have to redefine the American dream. The economic reversal of the 1990s has redefined the career ladders of the last 40 years. I do hope that while American Jewish youth are grappling with these new economic realities, Operation Joseph will have firmly implanted in them a strong Jewish communal identity that will provide the leadership to withstand the trials and tribulations of Jewish life in the new century.

25. My Jewish Discovery Place: A Home for the Jewish Imagination of Families

by Esther Netter
Jewish Action Director, JCC Association, Los Angeles

Imagine

Imagine holding the hand of your six-year-old child, walking together through a magic curtain and entering a time machine room. Once inside, you are greeted by Moses Ben Maimon and Don Isaac Abravanel. They introduce themselves to you and describe the journey you are about to begin. There are costumes, turbans, scarves, jewels, belts and shoes to adorn you on your journey "back in time." You and your child follow the instructions and in the blink of an eye, you pass through another magic curtain and find yourself standing in a Sephardic home in Spain in the early 1400's.

Before you know it, you have visited the surrounding neighborhood, synagogue and outdoor marketplace. The smells of the fruits, vegetables and flowers, the people you've met along the way, the songs and sounds of your Sephardic journey, are reinforced by your next experience, and the next, and the next . . . .

No sooner have you and your child left Spain, than you are standing in the sandals of Judah Maccabee when he led the revolt against the Syrians. Then your child is transformed into Colonel Uri, who fought to liberate Jerusalem in the Six Day War in Israel. Just moments later, you board an El Al plane to Israel, with your child as the captain. You fasten your seatbelt and the flight begins. The views from the plane as you begin your descent are spectacular. In Israel, your travels know no bounds. From Safed to Eilat, you meet new Israeli friends and discover just how much you have in common. Your last stop is Jerusalem, the City of Gold. There you write special notes and prayers and put them into the cracks of the *Kotel,* the Western Wall. It has been a busy afternoon, and now it's time for you and your child to return home and end that day's special journey at My Jewish Discovery Place Children's **Museum.**

Why Create a Jewish Children's Museum?

Forty years have passed since the transforming events of Jewish life in the twentieth century - the Holocaust and the rebirth of the State of Israel. These events no longer evoke the same powerful emotions for the children and grandchildren of those who experienced them. Many contemporary Jews are as far removed from these events as from the exodus from Egypt. Where once these events served as unifying forces for Jewish survival, they can no longer serve to ensure Jewish continuity. The constantly increasing rate of intermarriage and non-affiliation,

combined with the decline in the birthrate, threaten the existence of the Jewish people as never before.

"So our challenge today," according to a recent study of Jewish continuity, "is to bring to life for a new generation the lessons and inspirations of our past and a fervent hope of our future." Our children and grandchildren do not have many of the reinforcements that supported the building of our own Jewish identities: neighborhoods with the sights, sounds, and smells of an enriched Jewish lifestyle; an older generation with first-hand memories of Jewish culture from around the world; family members who may have experienced the suffering of the Holocaust; the thrill of the creation of the State of Israel. The Jewish community turned to Jewish schools to inculcate in its children what was traditionally absorbed simply by living in a Jewish household in a Jewish neighborhood. After several decades of unrealistic expectations of our schools, we now know that this approach alone cannot work. Children will not integrate lessons into their lives that are not reinforced at home or reinforced in other parts of our community. They must experience, as well as study, what it means to live a Jewish life.

My Jewish Discovery Place (MJDP) of Jewish Community Centers Association of Greater Los Angeles was established to replicate experiential learning for the child and the adult which has been lost in their daily living as each generation has become more and more assimilated. It has been designed as an interactive parent-child learning environment which seeks to promote the participation of parents and families in the Jewish education of their children and to reinforce living a Jewish life.

The family is the primary focus for transmitting Jewish values and traditions during a child's formative years, but changes in the traditional pattern of the family have called for new and innovative ways, like the museum, to reach family members and answer their changing needs. Through learning at the museum, the Jewish identity and Jewish connection of families is strengthened.

The concept of MJDP was developed by JCC Association of North America and originally funded by the Avi Chai Foundation for demonstration projects at four Centers. Jewish Community Centers Association of Los Angeles was selected as one of these sites, with the others in Allentown, Cleveland and Detroit. In Los Angeles, additional construction and exhibit monies were awarded in grants from the Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles, the Maurice Amado Foundation and the Metro Region of the Jewish Federation Council of hos Angeles. For the development of exhibits in Los Angeles, educators, experts in experiential education, designers of creative children's educational games and materials, computer programs and interior designs were consulted, as were the professional staffs of children's museums, teacher resource centers and organizations providing "hands-on" experiences.

Experiences - The Theory Behind the Museum Exhibits

Positive, meaningful experiences in the exhibits and learning areas are presented on two levels: first, as a series of interactive experiences which introduce children to key elements in Jewish life in a joyful, celebratory manner; and second, as a teaching

resource which instructs and prompts adults, reinforcing and structuring their own Jewish learning.

Experiential learning by children, before the intellectual process begins, strongly impacts upon future feelings. Children at an early age learn through the senses: touching, hearing, seeing, tasting and smelling. This learning, when shared by a parent, reinforces the strong emotional influence of the experience. MJDP was conceived to address the experiential learning of children and the positive reinforcement that ensues when this learning is imparted by the parents.

The museum is a transformed space. Each museum experience is part of a created, designated environment in which families learn together. The concept of environmental learning - using space to teach - is key to the impact and success of the museum. Walls, ceilings and floor space all become teaching tools in every area of the museum. By using the total environment, the museum immerses the visitor in a particular setting, recreating experiences that are interactive and engage the senses. During the one and a half hour visit, the museum visitor is in Spain in the 1400's, or in Egypt as a slave, or on a flight to Israel. *While on a much smaller* scale, the theory behind museum education is similar to that of summer camps and Israel experiences. The power and success of a summer camp or Israel experience lie in its intensity and fullness. The museum, in a limited time frame, tries to create a "slice" of a day by building complete and full experiences in space.

These transformed museum spaces are also "safe" spaces for children, and especially for adults, to "do" and "learn" Jewish. Museum participants are free to explore, discover and question. Each museum experience is self-directed, self-paced and, when needed, self-correcting. This helps build Jewish self-confidence and Jewish self-esteem in children, parents, grandparents, teachers, museum docents (which will be described later) and all those who work with and visit MJDP. The museum empowers the adult to be the teacher. Parents and grandparents are given the tools, the explanations and the answers to become Jewish educators of their children and grandchildren. For the adult visitor, bolstering one's Jewish parenting ability is a powerful outgrowth of a visit to the museum. Each museum experience takes into consideration the different learning styles of individuals, allowing the museum to serve as a versatile educator. These are the issues that guide the design and creation of the multi-faceted exhibits in the museum.

The museum houses the tools for families to fashion their own experiences. Each exhibit is presented with enough fullness and triggers for further exploration. The triggers or tools cover a wide range to accommodate the different needs of each family. In the model of the Jewish Community Center itself, the museum experiences each have a variety of entry points to engage different ages, Jews of different backgrounds, the general community and families of different configurations.

The open-endedness of the museum encourages reciprocal learning between adult and child. We normally think of the adult in the role of teacher, but at the museum one often observes the opposite - a child opening a window of opportunity for the adult to learn. The children experience the museum with a full and willing suspension of reality, which prompts the adult to find the child inside him and her.

Whether it is a child asking a parent or teacher to put on a costume, or making sure the adult puts on a seatbelt so as not to "fall" out of the model plane, the child has created a safe, imagination-filled place in which the adult is free to be creative, playful and inquisitive.

This meeting of the minds, hearts and hands of adults and children takes place throughout the museum. It also lays the foundation for families to share and create their own stories and traditions. The telling of family stories is repeatedly triggered in the "Family Routes and Roots" section on genealogy. In this area, families share their personal journeys and those of others who have traveled worldwide. Storytelling is also triggered as families stand in front of the Giant Torah Scroll, measuring 15 X 8 feet. In the center of the Torah is an ark. Inside the ark are felt board Torahs, a beautiful Sephardic Torah, *kippot* (head coverings), *tallitot* (prayer shawls) and many *sets of tefillin* (phylacteries), each in its own special embroidered bag. The *tefillin in* particular have been a rich source of family storytelling. One day it may be a mother describing her memory of her grandfather, who used to put on his *tefillin* each morning. She tells how, as a small girl, she used to watch her grandfather secretly from the other room. Or there is the son who asks his father to try and put the *tefillin on* his arm. The father recalls the last time he had seen his own *tefillin,* which was 23 years ago at his Bar Mitzvah. The father remembers that his *tefillin are* packed away in the garage and promises his son that at home they will find them. Another day it is a group of women and their young children, who had never seen *tefillin up close and* certainly had never tried to put them on. While attempting to *strap on the tefillin* and practicing wrapping them around their arms and hands, they exchange stories of their fathers and grandfathers and talk about being young girls in religious homes. The museum is full of symbols, objects and experiences that, like the *tefillin,* prompt visitors to become Jewish storytellers.

The Current Museum Experiences:

At the time of this writing, the newest exhibit, "Our Sephardic Communities: Through the Eyes of Children," is in the west side of our museum. As children and families, schools, synagogues and community groups enter, they pass through a giant archway, architecturally designed as a Spanish tower, surrounded by latticework with woven vines and flowers. The first section of the exhibit is a three-room odyssey, "Back in Time." The first room, with beaded curtains and a telephone time machine, has two lifesize (childsize) talking dolls, Moses Ben Maimon and Don Isaac Abravanel. The dolls introduce themselves and the upcoming adventure and instruct adults and children alike to put on costumes. Three overflowing trunks of custom designed costumes and head coverings, accessories and jewelry, purses and shoes are available. In the second room museum participants are greeted by a doll Dona Grasia Nasi, a famous Marrano. She welcomes everyone to her home, invites them to sit on the pillows and rugs, fix food, set the table and complete the beautiful tapestry on the wall. She asks them to join her in song as she sings her favorite Ladino melodies. The home is full of Sephardic ritual objects, typical household items of that time and childsize furniture. After leaving her home, they go to the

synagogue, complete with specially designed benches, the *hechal in* the center of the synagogue, an *aron kadosh* filled with Sephardic Torahs, *tallitot and kippot.* This room is surrounded by a replica of a marble balcony found in Sephardic synagogues from that time. Above is an eternal lamp, and along the bottom of the synagogue walls are ritual object puzzles for children to complete and decorate their synagogue. In the synagogue, a doll identified as a Rabbi describes the synagogue, shares prayers and melodies and questions the children and adults about what they are experiencing. Each area is covered with murals, backdrops, colorful ceilings and floor coverings which were designed according to photos and depictions of homes, synagogues and the architecture of the time.

In the open area adjacent to the three-room exhibit is a recreation of an outdoor market, Plaza Maimonides, complete with a platform, mural, roof covering, large baskets overflowing with fruits, vegetables, flowers, eggs, and jewelry. Smaller baskets, bags and pots are ready for the children and adults to fill. More costumes are set up in the marketplace and as the families play they can view themselves on a television monitor which focuses on this plaza. Additional areas throughout the museum reinforce the Sephardic theme. Adjacent to the marketplace, an audio-visual exhibit with six telephones, each connected to a cassette recorder, plays a continuous tape that guides listeners as they view a 180 degree mini-mural of different Sephardim in a variety of scenes depicting lifecycle events and everyday life.

Six wooden dolls, each four feet high, stand in an area called Shticky City. With velcro, museum participants can dress and adorn these dolls. Mixing and matching costume tops and bottoms and hats allows the children to dress new "friends" and incorporate them into their imaginative play in other areas of the museum.

Our rubbing table has been changed into a Sephardic rubbing table, where children use crayon and paper to uncover hidden symbols and letters and use the border designs to create pieces of art. *"Efo Eitan," our* hidden picture exhibit, with both written and visual keys, challenges families to find and identify over fifty characters, symbols and situations. A beautiful one-of-a-kind picture, overflowing with ritual objects, provides another opportunity for educational hide and seek which engages both adults and children.

This Sephardic experience is a rotating exhibit which encompasses only one area of the museum. The other rotating and permanent exhibits housed at the museum include:

Miniature Model Synagogue - A dollhouse-like structure, complete with sanctuary, lecterns, ark, Torahs, miniature *tallitot* and siddurim, dolls in all shapes and sizes - demonstrating the diversity amongst the Jewish people - allows for creative play.

Giant Torah Scroll - With an adult, children can open the ark and play with the Torahs (which unfold into flannel boards), the *tallitot* and *tefillin. With a giant*

yad, Hebrew letter identification and other games captivate the children as they touch and see their reflection in the 15 X 8 foot Torah.

My **Family's Routes and Roots Genealogy Center -** Features an eight foot tall electronic, colorful, talking Statue of Liberty. She introduces museum visitors to a variety of immigrant experiences. The body of the Statue houses a series of interactive games and hidden treasures that tell the stories of Jews from around the world. This exhibit also includes a map of the world and other tools for children and parents to trace their family's journey to America. A giant tree with detachable special family heirlooms covers one wall. Shoes of famous Jews, from Biblical times to the present, are available for children to try on and "step into the lives of others," past, present and future. Activity kits focusing on the °migrant experience and Jews from around the world also are found here.

Israel is a major focus of the museum and there are a series of opportunities for visitors to experience Israel:

El Al **Plane -** Visitors buckle up, listen to the pilots, and travel to Israel. Actual sounds and sights of travel and Israel are part of this imaginary flight. A video display designed to show Israel from the perspective of a child makes Israel feel like home.

Map of Israel - A large plexiglass map of Israel with hidden pictures, lights and markers fascinates the children as they roam about the land.

Israel Costume Corner - Army uniforms, kibbutz work clothes, Hasidic dress, Arab headdresses, tourist clothes for adults and children are available.

Jerusalem S line and the Kotel - Under the outline of the Jerusalem sky, children and adults have the opportunity to make pictures or write prayers and put them into the Kotel.

MJDP Library Center - Carefully selected books for children and resource materials for adults are available. Topics relate to permanent and rotating exhibits and being Jewish in today's world.

Listening Center - A table and chairs and a specially designed set of tape recorders and earphones allow children to listen to stories and music that relate to permanent and rotating exhibits and being Jewish in erica today, and to hear custom recordings of books from the library.

Quiz Wall An adaptable electronic Quiz Wall reinforces the museum experiences. A library of question and answer cards allows the museum to change and customize the wall on a regular basis.

Shticky City Over-sized, stuffed Jewish symbols, and arms, legs and heads, which can be combined to create a variety of characters.

As with all MJDP exhibits, family guides and materials are placed throughout these exhibit areas, suggesting questions and activities for adults to do with their children. In depth, background information about the exhibits is also posted for adults and older children. Take-home family activity sheets provide creative ways for the learning from the museum experience to continue at home, Teacher resource materials allow schools to do preparatory and follow up lessons in connection with all museum experiences.

A wall of museum activity kits was developed to expand the capacity of the museum to serve large school, camp and family *chavurot groups. These kits also* serve as a model for activity kits that are being developed for use at home. JAK-in-boxes (Jewish Activity Kits) create positive, interactive Jewish learning experiences in the museum. The museum kits are all self-facilitating, self-directed and self-paced for families to do together. There are 15-20 kits in the museum and they rotate every three months. The kits include activities that reinforce Jewish symbols, concepts and values by providing sensory and active experiences. Kits are convenient, user-friendly and fun. Kit titles include: "What's the Grog in the Groer?" (matching sounds that groggers make), "Oy, I'm Stuffed" (Jewish foods that have other foods inside them), Touch Box (identify Jewish objects by touch within a covered box), "Make a Face" (hats from Jews around the world attached to wipe and erase boards; children draw faces). Other kits focus on sequencing (holidays, Shabbat rituals) and sorting (Kosher/non-Kosher food, symbols).

o Visits **the Museum?**

My Jewish Discovery Place serves the Jewish and general communities of Los Angeles. MJDP is for children three and up and their parents. Schools, camps and synagogues who serve pre-school, kindergarten, first and second grades also visit MJDP. Families from the unaffiliated to the ultra-Orthodox participate in the museum. The museum is truly pluralistic, in the best sense of the word, addressing the needs of a wide range of Jewish families and family configurations a non-threatening and inviting way.

In addition, MJDP is available to the general public through public and private schools, exposing the multi-ethnic Los Angeles community to all parts of the Jewish population. MJDP helps bridge understanding with knowledge by demonstrating that our city's diverse communities share much in common.

For school groups, teacher materials (different designs are available for Jewish schools and non-Jewish schools) assist in the teaching about our diverse Jewish community, Jews are not monolithic and the beauty and richness of our different traditions speak to the importance of preserving each individual community's culture.

Museum Infrastructure

The museum staff consists of a full-time museum director, part-time museum staff hired as needed and an executive JCCA staff person who serves as executive director of the museum. In addition, graduate student interns work with the museum staff and together all are involved in the development of exhibits, recruiting and training lay leadership, evaluating and promoting the museum. As critical as professional staff are to the success of an institution, equally valuable has been the partnership forged with an ever-growing treasure of volunteers, patrons and lay leaders. It is a priority of the museum to educate and involve its volunteers in meaningful, worthwhile, Jewish educational work.

From the onset of the museum's development, the role of the chairperson of the museum's board of directors was of utmost importance. The chair served as an anchor, in securing community support and as a magnet for involving others in the community on the museum's board and committees. Together with staff, the chair and board have been successful in articulating and sharing the museum's vision. The board and committees are comprised of Jewish community lay leaders, donors, program participants, representatives of other community organizations, educators, artists and museum experts. The lay involvement in the museum has been invaluable to its growth and success. Together the board and staff help raise the necessary funds to operate and expand the museum. An annual membership campaign, which helps fund the operating costs, began when the museum opened. Founding grants and endowment opportunities have been developed to help the museum build a stronger base. Additional fundraising events throughout the year raise needed dollars. Fees from family and group visits are an additional source of income. Grants provide the final source of funding for new museum exhibits and programs.

The executive board oversees the board of directors and all committees. Each board member serves on at least one committee. Committees include: Patrons and Membership, Fundraising Events, Public Relations, Program Events, Multi-Ethnic Outreach, Community Events, Docents, Fine Arts Programs, Cultural Arts Programs, Newsletter, Artistic Advisory Board. This wide range of committees has made it easy for new lay people to find their niche and work on behalf of the museum. It has also created many opportunities for people of different Jewish backgrounds, different ages and stages in life, and different social groups to meet, work and develop relationships with one another. Board and patron events have been a strong component of building and educating board members. Whether it be celebrating Havdalah together, or an evening of Jewish learning with a visiting scholar, or a concert of Jewish music, they are all opportunities to build Jewish community amongst the lay leaders, their families and friends. One amazing success of the museum's lay structure that warrants further elaboration is that of the docent program.

Museum Docents

Early in this first year of the museum, it became clear that the museum needed to expand its hours and thus needed more people trained to run the museum, work with groups and serve as part of the museum team. The museum began its docents

training program to answer this need. A docent committee was formed with the help of the docent chairperson. The role of the committee is two-fold: 1) to help establish criteria for docents and work on the development of the docent training program; 2) to recruit potential docents. In both there has been tremendous success. The docent training is a six-hour course, divided into two sessions, covering the history of the museum, logistics of the museum operations, group dynamics, an early childhood educational overview (learning styles, discipline) and Jewish study. After attendance at these sessions, docents, our museum's roaming interpreters, receive a docent manual with additional resources and review materials. Before docents work on their own, they apprentice with a staff person 3-4 times in the museum. Once the docent has experience and confidence, he/she can begin to work with other docents and run sections of the museum on his/her own. The museum has trained two groups of docents (total of 38) and will be offering training for new docents and continued training for current docents on a regular basis. The docents are all committed to Jewish education, working with children and their families. The different docents each add a unique and personalized flavor to the museum experience for family and group visitors.

The docent program has not only benefitted the museum and its visitors, it has also had a powerful impact on the docents themselves. The training program enables the docents to work as Jewish educators, as the people with the answers in the museum. For some docents, this is their first entree into the Jewish community. For others, it has given them the opportunity to use their own professional skills to enhance what the museum has to offer. Others simply enjoy working with children and families. The words used most often by docents when evaluating and reflecting upon their experiences are "transforming," "rewarding" and "satisfying." As a result, docent recruitment is skyrocketing. The docent program, which recruits, trains, empowers and rewards the volunteers, is a wonderful model for involving and educating lay volunteers that is applied to other aspects of the museum.

at Next?

As the museum continues to grow and establish itself as a resource for families, Centers, schools, synagogues, camps and the community in general, new areas of expansion are under development. The concept of "a museum without walls" involves the museum serving as a home base for fine arts and cultural arts workshops and classes for children and families. This is currently underway with a summer series of storytelling and inter-generational art classes. In the fall and winter, a series of performing arts programs (drama, music, dance) will be offered, culminating in performances in the museum's theatre area (a convertible space where the outdoor marketplace is located). The museum without walls encompasses travelling museum exhibits that would visit schools (Jewish and non-Jewish, private and public) throughout Los Angeles. As new exhibits are developed, the notion of portability of key components is a critical consideration, in order to include as many exhibits as possible in the museum without walls programs.

The creation of a museum or museum-like space is a powerful way to reach and teach families with young children and to offer a positive Jewish experience. The ideas and concepts behind the development of MJDP have wide range applicability to a variety of community institutions. If a Jewish Community Center or other institution has a permanent space which can be allocated, the museum can be replicated in fill and a relationship established to share exhibits and cooperate on the creation of new experiences. If a Center or institution has space that can be allocated only on a temporary basis (i.e., one month per year), there are ways to design exhibits that will transform that space temporarily. Even if a community does not have a large space to designate, there are ways to apply the museum's approach to the transformation of space to create family learning environments in a classroom, a Center or school lobby, or in a corner of a synagogue foyer. At a time when the family needs strengthening and our Jewish community needs more opportunities to celebrate living and learning Jewishly, the museum model provides some answers.

Now **Imagine**

You and your family have just spent a Sunday afternoon with Abraham, Joseph and Sara. You participated in an archaeological dig and you attended two Bar Mitzvahs and a wedding. You spent time talking to Arabs, *kibbutznikim*, soldiers and new immigrants, all of whom you met in Israel. Luckily they all spoke English. You visited the Statue of Liberty and met Jewish families from around the globe. *Bubbie* Rachel showed you her favorite candlesticks, which look like yours at home. You found hidden objects everywhere but you know you did not find them all. Imagine that you did all of that in one afternoon visit to My Jewish Discovery Place Children's Museum.

26. **JCCs of Chicago and the Soviet Experience**

by Tzivia Blumberg
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The JCC and Jewish Education

This is a story of how a Jewish Community Center works to meet the educational needs of its community. During the ten years following the Commission on Maximizing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of JCCs, Centers have begun to recognize their potential as Jewish educational institutions. Jewish studies programs have been developed for JCC staff members. Adult education programs have been expanded to offer a range of services including lecture series, cultural arts programs, courses in Hebrew and Yiddish, "Lunch and Learn" programs, and a network of Melton Mini-Schools, among others. Children and youth services incorporate increased Judaic content and target new segments of the community to serve, including families seeking collective Jewish experiences and learning. Early childhood and parenting programs have newly enhanced curricula, incorporating more Jewish objectives. These developments all point to the fact that Centers are defining themselves more and more as agencies which have much to contribute in the area of Jewish education.

The following description of the development of a Jewish educational experiment called *Shalom Sunday: The Family School,* reflects the ideology and Jewish mission of JCC Chicago. It is an ideology which espouses a commitment to meet the Jewish educational needs of the varied communities which it serves, within the Center setting.

Background

In 1987 a new wave of immigration began to flow into the United States from the then Soviet Union. The immigrants came to the U.S. with immediate needs for food, clothing and shelter. They required language instruction, job training, medical and dental care, orientation to life in a free society. They needed significant support in many different areas as they began to resettle in their new communities. They came seeking the American dream, as generations of immigrants had done before them. For most, the primal'), goal was a more hopeful future for their children, a future which held choices, options, freedom, promise.

When the organized Jewish community of Chicago, under the direction of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, began to plan its program of resettlement, a serious set of questions was posed concerning the "Jewish resettlement" of the families, The planners asked: how can we welcome the families Jewishly, offer appropriate Jewish educational opportunities for the children and the adults, and in general, create a Jewish support system that will sustain the families during the difficult transition period? How do we communicate the idea that a

Jewish identity need not be negative, that to be Jewish can be both positive and desirable? After 70 years of forced separation, how do we support what we began to consider the "reunification of the Jewish family"?

The agencies involved in the planning process, Federation, the JCC, Jewish Family Service, the Board of Jewish Education and the Associated Talmud Torahs among others, all began to view the process on which we were embarking as a historic one. In the words of Rabbi Yehiel Poupko, who served a central role in developing the philosophy of the community plan: "Never before have the Jewish people been given an opportunity to reclaim a community that had been lost" We had been catapulted onto the stage of Jewish history and were determined to respond effectively to the challenge offered.

The Jewish Community Centers of Chicago

The Jewish Community Centers has historically played an important role in the absorption of new immigrants. A unique institution, it has the ability to function as a reception center, a recreation center, an informal learning center, a social center, a meeting place and a space for Jewish ingathering. All of these functions were called into play in the Jewish resettlement of the new families. Also, although clearly recognizable as a Jewish institution, the JCC has no faith or behavioral requirements associated with membership. There are no assumptions that a person has to "do Jewish" to "be Jewish." As the Jewish identity of Soviet Jews is largely one of "being" and not of "doing," the Center provided a comfortable and logical entry point into the Jewish community.

Perhaps most importantly, JCC Chicago has a well-defined Jewish mission. Jerry Witkovsky, General Executive Director, and Yehiel Poupko, Director of Judaica, have together developed a set of Jewish priorities for the agency. Based on these priorities, it was clear that the opportunity to play a pivotal role in the Jewish acculturation and resettlement of the thousands of Soviet immigrants coming to Chicago would be seized with creativity and dedication.

The Partnership

The general resettlement issues which were considered in the planning stage were addressed with a series of proposals. The specific Jewish educational matters were to be dealt with by the creation of a "Partnership for Jewish Education." It was a partnership of three educational agencies in the community: the Associated Talmud Torahs (An"), responsible for the orthodox and traditional supplementary and day schools; the Board of Jewish Education (ME), responsible for the Conservative and Reform supplementary and day schools; and the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago (JCC), responsible for informal Jewish education in the community. The partners established a task force to develop appropriate Jewish educational offerings and deliberate on all potential projects.

The Partnership for Jewish Education determined that each agency would administer a different program. There would be a one year transitional day school administered by the ATT whose students would eventually transfer into community

day schools. A synagogue school voucher program would be developed by the BJE which would facilitate the emigre families' initial affiliation with synagogue schools. A non-denominational Sunday school program for children aged four to 12 would be directed by the JCC. Finally, a Sunday school program for high school students would be cooperatively directed by two agencies sharing responsibility for formal (ATT) and informal (JCC) learning components.

Shalom Sunday: The Family School

As Director of Jewish Educational Services for the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago, I was given the opportunity to develop the non-denominational Sunday school program for the 4 - 12 year old children. It was conceived as a family school to include programming for children, parents and grandparents. This multi-generational feature of the school was based on the recognition that extended families were emigrating and living together. We hoped that Sunday would become a Jewish focal point in the week.

Each session for the children would include Judaica classes, *shira b'tzibur* (group singing) and cultural enrichment classes. Adult classes would meet concurrently with the children's classes. In addition, informally, there would be a parent lounge where people could meet and relax over coffee and tea during the morning. A member of the acculturation staff was scheduled to be available during Shalom Sunday hours to answer questions and be helpful. Thus it was hoped that there would be balance between the planned and the unplanned, the written curriculum and the unwritten. The program for youngsters, parents and grandparents would provide a welcome respite from the tasks and pressures of resettlement, while providing an ongoing introduction to the Jewish community, to their Jewish heritage and to American society. Bringing families together at the Center would foster new friendships and encourage the building of community. The goal was to have Shalom Sunday families see the JCC as their Center, a place where they could gather and feel at home. We believed that a sense of community would develop with Shalom Sunday serving as its foundation.

Philosophy of the Program

Above all, the program reflected a coherent philosophy. Rabbi Yehiel Poupko supervised the program and served as its spiritual guide. He steered the development of Shalom Sunday along its course. He would say to new *families, "Yevreiski narod eta nie narod eta semya - The Jewish people is not a people, rather it is a family."* This simple phrase expressed the core of our philosophy and was reflected in the attitude of everyone involved in Shalom Sunday. We were welcoming family members to a grand family reunion. Entirely voluntary, the program would either succeed or fail based on the emigres' desire to participate. The program had to be perceived as being of value to the families, so our job was to understand the community's needs and to design a program which would reintroduce them to their Jewish heritage.

Incentives

Incentives for participation in Shalom Sunday were created by offering a free membership to the JCC in a family's first year of resettlement and discounted membership fees in the second and third years. Membership was viewed as desirable, as families wanted to use the sports facilities and felt comfortable meeting and congregating at the Center.

Even before Shalom Sunday began, the JCC had developed a Russian Jewish Cultural Center which offered varied programs including lectures, music and folk art events, speakers on resettlement issues, Shabbat baskets, home welcome visits, teen welcome visits, an after school club, and drivers' education classes. In short, the Center was becoming the locus of rich and varied programming for the new immigrant families.

Eligibility

Enrollment in Shalom Sunday was offered to all emigre children who entered public school as well as to those who went to the transitional day school. This decision was made in order to ensure that those children who did not continue their Jewish education in a community day school in their second year would have an ongoing tie to the Jewish community through Shalom Sunday.

Identity

The children in the program all received Shalom Sunday t-shirts and stickers with a specially designed logo. On the day of the Walk with Israel, parents who walked with their children also received Shalom Sunday t-shirts. There were even Shalom Sunday helium balloons and "Be Happy - It's Adar" Shalom Sunday buttons for Purim. The participants began to feel that they were part of a special, members-only club. This idea of "club" is very much a part of Soviet culture and was experienced as something familiar. The fact that Shalom Sunday children wore t-shirts emblazoned with a Jewish star while out in public was a reflection of a profound change that was taking place. They were no longer hiding their Jewishness; they were beginning to recognize that it was safe to be identified as part of the Jewish community in their new home.

Curriculum

There were three points of focus in the curriculum. The first was the Jewish calendar as a foundation of Jewish life. The calendar shapes the rhythm of the Jewish year. Each season has its events, its holidays, its special rituals and customs, its foods, its *mitzvot.* All of this was unfamiliar to the population of Shalom Sunday. They had no sense of "Jewish time." The seasons did not evoke associations of Sukkot or Purim. The families were welcomed into a new "time frame" through learning and celebration.

The second focus was community. Recognizing that for Shalom Sunday families, everything familiar had vanished - friends, language, culture, neighborhood, we attempted to familiarize them with their Jewish community. Combining the theme

of community with history and heritage, which parents had identified as particular learning goals, this part of the curriculum presented the Jewish community during different eras of Jewish history. Thus, we built curricular units about the community in the period of the Torah, the period of the Kings, following the destruction of the Second Temple, in the Golden Age of Spain, in the world of the *shtetl,* and in modern Israel. Each unit addressed the questions: How was the society organized? Who was one of its important leaders? at religious developments took place? at was a critical idea of the time? Storytelling, drama and arts & crafts projects played important roles in the teaching and learning of this theme.

The third focus, *kedusha,* presented a different kind of challenge, *as kedusha is* a specifically religious concept. We used a definition of *kedusha as "separate* and special," as the verb *l'kadesh* means "to separate." That is, the Jewish people are an *am kadosh - a* separate and special people, and Shabbat is *a yom kadosh - a separate* and special day. In this way, we tried to emphasize the idea that the ways in which Jews are different can be viewed as special and positive, not ways which necessarily single them out for persecution.

Language

The language of instruction in the children's Judaic classes was English. This was important because it supported the resettlement process. However, to make the environment more welcoming, to facilitate understanding and to assist the newest arrivals, there was a bi-lingual teenage aide in each class. The teen served not only as a translator, but as a role model for the youngsters in each class.

Cultural Enrichment Classes

In addition to the Jewish education classes, the program offered cultural enrichment classes in the arts. The decision to include such classes was made as a result of the views expressed by the newly arrived parents of youngsters who would participate in the 1988 pilot program. The parents believed that without the rigor of Soviet school art programs, their children would not develop skills in art, chess, dance, singing and drama. Based on this information, we identified teachers living in our community who were originally from the Commonwealth of Independent States who would bring their unique training and knowledge to this teaching opportunity in America. (Many of these emigre teachers also gradually found their way onto the general JCC recreational teaching staff.)

Faculty

The question of who should teach in this program was not a simple one to answer. Clearly, we did not want to present just one denomination's view of Judaism. As a program developed in the JCC, it was important that it reflect a pluralistic philosophy. We wanted teachers who were committed Jews, no matter what their affiliation; people who could respond authentically, based on their own life experience, to questions about things Jewish. We wanted teachers who were knowledgeable and experienced. We knew that the success of the program depended

almost solely upon the flexibility and creativity of the teachers. And so, the recruitment began.

Ultimately, teachers came from all segments of the Jewish community and were highly qualified to teach the content of the curriculum. In addition to the qualities listed above, we sought teachers who had a high energy level, balanced optimism about working with immigrants, tolerance for frustration and, above all, a desire to participate in an ongoing experiment.

We constantly emphasized the fact that Shalom Sunday was an ongoing experiment and never pretended to have absolute answers. When teachers were hired to teach in the program they were given articles and books to read about the Jewish community in the Soviet Union, about education and family structure in the Soviet Union, about the nature of immigration and the resettlement process, about Jewish identity in the emigre community. Teachers were also given a basic Russian vocabulary list to help them greet students and parents. They were encouraged to evaluate their classes each week to see what was and was not working in the curriculum. They were urged to remember that they were teaching in a Jewish Community Center and to be inclusive in their approach.

Parent Classes and Family Workshops

Shalom Sunday featured parent classes and family holiday workshops. The parent classes parallelled the curriculum of the children's classes but at an adult learning level. The parent classes were taught in a combination of Russian and English in Russian to encourage participation, and in English to acknowledge the progress that the parents were making in their acquisition of the new language. Once the classes were established, the subject matter was refined and redirected as the parents desired.

The holiday workshops served to both instruct and to offer models of celebrations. Five times during the year, on Sukkot, Hanukkah, Purim, Pesach and Shavuot, there were special workshops which incorporated both learning and celebration for whole families. In addition, there were Shabbat dinners scheduled through the year for families to "learn and do" Shabbat. A series of bilingual *Family Guides to the Holidays was* developed to reinforce the workshops and to offer basic information for home celebrations,

Parent Committees

The school's parent committee was established in the program's very first year. Believing that lay leadership is an essential ingredient in program development, we identified and selected candidates for a parent board of directors. The earliest meetings were designed to help members understand the function of this kind of committee in a democratic society. Freedom of expression was encouraged, but old behavior patterns were hard to break. People were accustomed to being on committees in the Former Soviet Union in which their participation was inconsequential, i.e., they would attend meetings, conduct private conversations throughout the meeting, determine whether the chair wanted them to vote *da or nyet,*

vote appropriately and leave at the meeting's end. We emphasized that our Shalom Sunday parent committee meetings were different, that we truly needed the participation and thinking of members in order to make appropriate decisions for our school. The meetings were conducted in English and Russian with translation available in both directions. It was arduous work, but we were determined to have Shalom Sunday governed by its own board and not by staff members.

The monthly dinner meetings became a forum for curricular matters, budget, issues, resettlement questions and basic Jewish learning for its constituent members. Many committee members also participated in the parent classes on Sunday mornings and began to form the new leadership group which was so needed in the emigre community. They gradually became responsible for recruitment of new students, setting a sliding scale for fees, monitoring classes, welcoming new families, helping coordinate family workshops and celebrations, planning teacher appreciation nights and volunteering for the JUF phonothon. This committee also gradually emerged as the community spokesperson for Shalom Sunday's future.

Synagogue Partnerships

Knowing that there is more to Jewish life than participation in programs at the Jewish Community Center, Shalom Sunday created partnerships between its classes and synagogue school classes. The partnership proved to be worthwhile for the children and families, the teachers, the educational directors and the rabbis. Everyone involved recognized that they were doing something unprecedented.

For example, the Shalom Sunday *Aleph class was* paired with an Aleph class in one of the Reform congregations in the community, and the teachers and educational directors designed four programs which the children would share during the course of the program year. Two of the programs met at the synagogue and two at the Center. In addition, the parents of the classes were invited to a Shabbat dinner or a holiday program at the synagogue and had an opportunity to visit the synagogue, meet the rabbi and get to know the parents of their children's American peers. The partnerships were created with classes in Reform and Conservative congregations and have resulted in some Shalom Sunday families' exploring membership and joining the synagogues.

Summary and Implications for the Future

In the spring of 1988, Shalom Sunday: The Family School opened its doors to about 40 youngsters. At this writing in the summer of 1993, there are more than four hundred children aged 3 - 13 in the program which now meets in two sites. Some children have moved from Shalom Sunday into synagogues and day schools. Others have remained in Shalom Sunday and made it "their" school. The program has become an institution in Chicago's Russian-speaking Jewish community. Originally conceived to be part of the resettlement and acculturation program, it continues to serve a special function in the program's first phase. However, it has also come to be viewed as an ongoing community school for many of its participants. Classes in

Hebrew have been added to the core curriculum in response to parent requests. Teenagers who were once students in the upper *classes of* Shalom Sunday *are now* serving as aides in the classroom. A school calendar and handbook was printed this year which highlights all of the special events that have evolved and have been incorporated into the yearly program during the past five years.

Shalom Sunday continues to grow because of the unswerving commitment and vision of the leadership of Jewish Community Centers of Chicago. It could not exist however, without significant financial support of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. Federation has never failed to recognize the importance of the program to the Russian-speaking community and its potential value to the future of the Chicago Jewish community. Federation's fiscal support has been essential to ensure our ability to recruit and retain quality teaching staff and administration, to continue to treat each week as an experiment with curricular changes, new family programs and the development of innovative materials and activities.

The presence of hundreds of Shalom Sunday children and their families each week at the Bernard Horwich JCC and the Mayer Kaplan JCC has had a tremendous impact on the culture of these Centers. The directors and staff have had to think about offering new programs which will continue to attract these families who are becoming regular users of the center. The Russian-speaking community is represented on the Centers' boards by members who arrived in the first years of this wave of immigration. Russian-speaking teachers have been hired for some of the karate and dance classes. There are new chess classes, clubs and tournaments. Special new programs have been added to the calendar, such as a commemoration service for the Jews of Minsk on the day of their town's massacre, a Pesach preparation workshop for American and former Soviet families who are matched in the Family to Family program, and the formation of the *Dietsky Club - an* afterschool club with a Russian twist. Center-wide holiday celebrations are advertised with posters and fliers in both Russian and English. An annual community Passover seder has been conducted in Russian at the Horwich Center for several years. The Family to Family staff places newly arrived families in American homes for Rosh Hashana dinner and Passover seders.

If, as Rabbi Poupko articulated, this was a "historic moment" which had to be seized, the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago has attempted to respond effectively. One of the critical goals of the program was to establish a strong bond between the Center, the Jewish community and its newest members, in order to strengthen the community into the next century. A class study to evaluate the impact of the program is currently being planned.

27 The Center's Judaic Library

by Marta Wassertzug,
Judaic Programs Director, JCC of Greater Washington

The Kass Judaic Library has enriched the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington since the building opened in its current location in Rockville, Maryland in 1969. Its success underscores the desirability of such a library in every Center.

y Have a Jewish Library at a JCC?

Although the reasons seem obvious, it is worth repeating them. JCCs are asserting themselves as a primary educational, cultural and recreational force in modern Jewish life. The reputation that Jews have gained throughout the centuries as "the people of the book" was due, in the past, to the Talmudic and scholarly libraries in Babylonia, Alexandria and in the great centers of Jewish learning destroyed in Eastern Europe. It behooves our modern Jewish institutions to recreate that spendor in the hope that many Jews will flock to the libraries to soak up Jewish knowledge.

When contemplating a new Judaic Iibraay, boards of directors and administrators have to scrutinize the cost of this service and balance it against the contribution to the entire organization and its priorities. at are the priorities of JCCs? JCCs are dedicated to enriching the life of the individual Jew and of the Jewish community. They are devoted to activities with Jewish content, and to facilitating the individual's growth in his/her search for meaningful Jewish living. A Judaic library will, indeed, fulfill each and every aspect of this mandate.

It is obvious that an undertaking such as establishing a Judaic library can only be assumed after a thorough study by both lay and staff members. They must determine the scope of the library (taking into consideration the proximity of other similar libraries), its location, its mode of operation (staff or volunteers), its budget, its book collection acquisition, its operating policies and its use.

o Are the Potential Patrons?

The Center's Judaic library ought to be appealing to both children and adults through its collection, its programs and its activities. Center members will be its primary users, but the collection may also attract a wider community clientele. The public library, for instance, may refer patrons, Jewish and non-Jewish, looking for specialized materials. (I recently helped a black man looking for material pertaining to the emblems of the Twelve Tribes, for use in his Sunday sermon in a Baptist Church!) While anyone can come into the library to peruse books and periodicals there, circulation must be reserved for Center members only if the collection is limited,

The Book Collection

Our Kass Judaic Library has over 5,000 volumes, many of which were received as free advance copies from the publishers. This is, of course, very helpful when the purchasing budget is small. It befalls the librarian, hopefully a trained professional, to foster a relationship with Jewish and non-Jewish publishing houses. The book collection is the backbone of any library, and careful planning and selection can produce excellent results over the years. Although the librarian ought to have the final say, he/she can be helped in the selection by a devoted committee who could, among other things, collect clippings and book reviews from periodicals and newspapers, reach the books and make recommendations. When appraising new books, the committee has to keep in mind their time value, their demand and possible use, and what authorities in the field are saying about them. The Association of Jewish Libraries can provide assistance with the names of publications and help in the selection of books and where to buy them. Non-book materials may include, besides the usual periodicals and newspapers, audio-visual materials, recordings, maps, clippings, pamphlets and pictures - in other words, knowledge and information in whatever media or form it appears.

Lest a librarian be tempted to enlarge a collection through donations, he/she should read the following:

Good Friends and Good Intentions

People with good intentions will donate books or magazines or try to. Since you have limited space, you have to decide what to take and what to reject./ Whatever you do will make somebody angry. Taking everything will eat up your time in getting things sorted and stored. Much is not usable anyway - outdated books, marked-up textbooks, books you already have, old books of no antiquarian interest . . . you may find a book you can use or a magazine to complete a run, but not often.

Sometimes what people say they want to donate is really what they want to unload. I once rejected an entire pick-up truck full of paperbacks that I was assured were "just a little damp." They were crawling with mildew, but the prospective donor couldn't understand that I didn't dare accept them because mildew is as deadly to books as smallpox is to people, and as contagious. The "donor" went away mad. So do the people who want to donate several years of "National Geographic." Since they don't sell well locally, and we have our own subscription, I generally suggest giving them to a nursing home or a school or throwing them away. The latter shocks people. Would-be donors sneak them into the library or the bookdrop anyway, in parcels neatly tied up with string. This makes them easier to take out to the dumpster.

It's hard to make people understand that they aren't doing you a favor by donating long round of the "Geographic" or a 1962 encyclopedia. They mean well, and you don't want to hurt their feelings. All you can do is wait until they

have left the building before you put the donations in the dumpster. Unless you are a professional appraiser on the side, don't do it. Life is tough enough without adding the IRS to your problems."
(From "The Public Library" by Kathleen Stipek, as it appeared in *The How To Do It Manual For Small Libraries,* edited by Bill Katz, Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., New York, 1988.)

Library-centered Programs

Programming around the Judaic library enhances its visibility at the Center. The JCC's annual book fair can become an important community event, through sponsorship with other interested organizations, and the appearance of guest authors whose books the fair features. Planning the event will take months of hard work and the solid commitment of a devoted committee. The fair can offer under one roof a large selection of books, from the newest titles to important classics and reference books, from books in the Jewish language (Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, etc.) to children's books or cookbooks, records, tapes, video-cassettes and calendars. The materials will have to be received in consignment, and careful bookkeeping and accountability will be demanded from anybody involved in their marking and selling. Special book fair programs may include meet-the-author events consisting of lectures and autograph sessions by outstanding writers of new Jewish works, story telling sessions, performances and other events especially designed for children.

An active Judaic library will offer programs year-round under the heading of Literary Arts. Courses, book discussions and author events can enrich the Center's cultural *life* as well as the community's. (I have seen the entire community galvanized by the visit to our Center of great personalities like Natan Sharansky and Simon Wisenthal, who patiently greeted and autographed books for hundreds of people after their lectures. These visits were organized by our maverick former librarian Tommy Feldman, and her lay committees, who never neglected a bit of information or connection that could bring *these* guests to our Center within her budget.)

Helpful References

Although the information above may be enough to whet your appetite to start a Center-based Judaic library, or to justify having one, it is hardly concrete enough to begin to put it together. You will need to make nuts-and-bolts decisions, from shelving to cataloguing, from accessing to classifying. Luckily, there are manuals available both from the Jewish Book Council (of the JCC Association) and from the Association of Jewish Libraries. These organizations jointly published the guide *12 Steps to Starting a Judaic Library,* by Marcia W. Posner, MLS, PhD, which can be obtained from either office.

t Is the Connection Between Israel and the KCs?

The JCC movement has had special connections with Israel for several decades, and Israel has become an important part of Center life. The nature of the relationship between Israel and JCCs is a subject which invites much deliberation and debate. The essays by Debbie Weissman, Debbie Sapir, and Mark Charendoff and by Ezra Korman discuss some of the basic issues of Israel's meaning for the JCC. Elan Ezrachi deals with some of the difficulties and challenges of the interaction between Israelis and North American Jews. Shaul Lilach and Yaron Sokolov examine similarities and differences between a community center in Israel and a JCC in North America. Collectively, these essays help us to better understand the premises and promises of the Israel - North American connection for the Center world.

28. at Does Israel Mean?

by Mark Charendoff, *Director of Judaic Cultural Development, JCC of Toronto,*
Debbie Sapir, *JCC Association Israel Office,* and
Debbie Weissman, *Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora,*
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

This article represents a culmination of several conversations that took place among Mark Charendoff, Debbie Sapir and Debbie Weissman. They discussed some of the elements of the relationship between North American Jews and Israel, how attitudes have changed and how, ideally, they should be cultivated. The focus of these discussions was the role that the Jewish Community Center could play in enhancing this relationship, and the role of Israel in augmenting the JCC's Jewish educational mission.

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As Jewish education has moved to the forefront of the Jewish Community Center movement, attention to Israel has grown as well. But in most JCCs in North America, Israel's role is still ambivalent. North American Jewry's relationship with Israel remains, on the whole, a reactive one. The generations that watched the establishment and early development of the Jewish State continue to *respond to* events there - with worry for her safety, support for her welfare, criticism of her actions, pride in her accomplishments. They even interpret world political events, to a large extent, according to "whether or not it's good for Israel." Except for the sense of dignity that the Diaspora received from Israel in the aftermath of the Six Day War, the relationship has been primarily one-sided.

Recent research suggests that Israel seems to be a less prominent factor in the daily conscience of North American youth when compared with previous generations. For the young Jews who never experienced life without a Jewish State and did not live through the anguish and glory of 1967, the strongest images of Israel begin with the war in Lebanon and end with the *intifada.* The recent peace accords are causing a change in perceptions, but the media is still primarily responsible for forming these young people's opinions of Israel. Although they are loyal to the ideal of the State of Israel, they cannot cogently defend their position. They lack the building blocks for constructing a positive, interactive relationship with Israel.

With the proper educational investment, this could change. Israel could come to serve as a source of energy for Jews all over the world, a place and a concept that they could "plug into" to find Jewish interests and excitement. This idea of drawing energy and enthusiasm from Israel is one that guides many Israeli institutions involved in fundraising and leadership development, but it is underemployed with the American Jewish community at large. Perhaps more effort should be invested in

developing ways that Israel could serve as this Jewish generator. This article will examine three areas for such development: bringing Jews to Israel; bringing Israel into the JCC; and bringing to light some of the philosophical questions that Israel raises.

The Connection Between Israel and the JCC

The Jewish Community Center is a natural partner in this effort because of the institution's unique character. A JCC can be viewed as a microcosm of Israel. Israel is a place that unites Jews, where Jews come to meet (or live among) other Jews; the JCC is often the local gathering place of the Jewish community. Israel is not restricted to certain denominations of Judaism; the JCC is pluralistic in its philosophy *as well. Jews* often come to a JCC seeking a public celebration of the Jewish holidays; in Israel all holidays are celebrated publicly. Some Jews come to a JCC because they are interested in learning or speaking Hebrew; in Israel, Hebrew is a living language. Israel engages people in the dynamic of Jewish tradition and creativity; a good JCC does the same. In fact, Israel has several of the positive things people look for in JCCs but writ large. This is not to say that every characteristic of Israel can be easily translated to a JCC, or that Israel has everything to offer that a JCC does, but the overlap is rich with educational potential.

Travelling to Israel

Efforts in JCCs are primarily geared toward bringing organizational staff or leadership to Israel because the effects on them are believed to filter down to the rest of the community. While this is true, and has proven to be a powerful force in shaping the Jewish mission of JCCs, more time and money needs to be directed at bringing the rank and file members of the community. Trips for different population groups, such as singles or young families, exist *but they* are not usually conducted by Jewish Community Centers. JCC trips might be better suited because of their focus on community, family, education, and Jewish identity, and because of their transformational nature.

Spending a significant period of time in Israel should become one of the accepted rites of passage for every North American Jew, just like a bar/bat mitzvah. It could be a semester of university studies, a year, or at least a whole summer. In Orthodox circles its very common for *yeshiva* students or young couples to spend a year in Israel. With the proper priority-setting, it could become just as common among the population at large. A person who experiences Purim, Passover, *Yom* HaShoah, Yom HaZikaron, Yom HaAtzmaut, Yom Yerushalayim, and Shavuot in Israel cannot help but be profoundly affected. The cycle of those holidays can have a deep and lasting effect on one's Jewish identity and become central to a person's life as a Jew. Studies have shown that a trip to Israel can have long-term impact, even reducing the likelihood of intermarriage.

at causes this impact? at, specifically, does Israel offer its visitors? Below are some of the key elements, but this is by no means an exhaustive list.

Community. People who join JCCs do so because they want to be a part of a community. A short-term visitor to Israel may not automatically feel a part of the Israeli community, but a carefully orchestrated, educational visit exposes the visitor to different models of community (e.g., secular kibbutz, religious *moshav, mitzpeh) with* which he/she may identify. Not all of these models are relevant to the North American experience - some of them might simply be curiosities to the tourist - but some of the ideas by which they operate could be transferable. For example, a visit to a kibbutz or to a *yishuv, or even to a* neighborhood synagogue, could inspire the establishment of a *chavurah in* one's own community, where families get together to celebrate Shabbat and *chagim;* or where the parents of a Sunday school class study together. The notion of fellowship - getting together with friends, neighbors or relatives to eat, sing, learn and celebrate, or to share sorrows - is a basic Jewish idea. Visitors might witness this fellowship in a variety of places in Israel and take this idea home with them.

A more direct way of creating a sense of community for visitors is to facilitate individual or small group meetings with Israeli citizens, where people can get acquainted on a personal level. Over the past decade, it has been common to take visiting groups to their Project Renewal counterpart communities where "people-to-people contact" was welcomed by both sides. But now many Project Renewal programs have either been phased out, or have become passe for second- and third-time travellers to Israel.

North American Jews who are involved in some way in Jewish education appreciate meeting members of Israel's formal and informal educational community - the people who work at the JCC Association, Maltz, the Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, for example. The visitors often do feel a sense of belonging *with this chevreh,* and are excited to know that they have counterparts in Israel working on similar agendas, that there are people with whom they can talk, rather than just listening to Members of Knesset and ideologues. And they are sometimes surprised to hear that so much activity is taking place in Israel on their behalf.

In addition to feeling a part of the Israeli and world Jewish community, visitors can gain valuable insights into the process of creating a community, for Israel on a macro level is an experiment in building community. This is especially relevant for JCC staff, leadership and members who are involved in a similar struggle back home. As the Jewish State, Israel must define its Judaism *as a sukkah in which* all *of its* citizens can sit. As a central institution in the Jewish community, the JCC must also be a place where people can come together comfortably. There is tension between wanting to create a Jewish Community Center rather than just a community center for Jews, and at the same time not establishing an atmosphere that is so Jewish that it deters some members from using the general facilities. This balance is difficult to achieve, but the struggle encourages creativity. Israel can serve as a model,

Identity. Israel, more than any place in the world, has a concentration of alternatives models of meaningful Jewish identity - religious and secular, cultural and traditional, all types of ethnic variations. It is important for people to be exposed to that. In North America there are many different forms of religious expression, but

not the different combinations one may encounter in Israel. For example, a teenage Israeli *with a kippah who* celebrates Shabbat with his family on Friday evening and attends a soccer game on Saturday, might be somewhat of an inspiration to an American teenager who always perceived religious observance in more black and white terms.

On most organized trips to Israel, visitors encounter personalities - everyone from their tour educator to guest speakers - who have strong, crystallized Jewish identities. These identities, of course, take all forms, but they are all excellent representatives of the various approaches to Judaism; they are people who live intensely Jewish lives. This can at times be intimidating, because they are models that the visitors feel they themselves will never achieve, but the exposure to them usually has a profound effect.

Self-understanding. Very often people find out more *about who they are* by discovering who they are not. Israel provides a way for American Jews to understand themselves better by seeing the life they have chosen as one alternative among several, which is only evident to the person who witnesses it first-hand - by coming to Israel, seeing how different Israeli populations live, and meeting Jews from other countries. The usual dichotomy of Israeli Jews vs. Diaspora Jews is quickly exposed as superficial. French Jews and South African Jews are different from American Jews, and Yemenite Israelis are different from Moroccan Israelis. Israel offers a way to learn more about one's own community structure and lifestyle by seeing what the other possibilities have been. This comparative analysis may give an American Jew who comes from a vibrant, creative Jewish community a sense of pride in what he/she and his/her contemporaries have accomplished in the Diaspora, but it should be tempered by recognition of the problems their choice may have created. For example, high assimilation is one of the prices of living in a free, open, democratic society. Obviously most Jews think its a price worth paying, but perhaps they will see that there are steps they have to take in order to compensate for it. They may realize the importance of strengthening the educational institutions in their community, or of promoting educational trips to Israel for the youth in their community, for example. Being in Israel puts that all in perspective.

A Total Environment. Being in Israel means being in a total Jewish environment. For the visitor, everything seen, touched, heard, felt and even tasted is part of a Jewish experience. The people on the street, the stores where souvenirs are purchased, even the free time spent in the hotel lounge, all help to broaden the visitor's perceptions of Israel and Judaism. For many, feeling a part of the majority culture for the first time offers a new sense of comfort with his/her own Jewishness. Being more aware of the Jewish calendar than the Gregorian calendar and experiencing the Jewish rhythm of time lends a special flavor to the trip. Visiting the sites and re-living the events that shaped the Jewish nation provides a new appreciation for our people's past. A one-day exploration of Jerusalem can unravel two thousand years of history for a tourist - not just by providing a chronological perspective, but by illuminating the issues and ideals that have sustained the Jewish people.

There are few, if any, other places in the world where one can sense the Jewishness on the street. Perhaps the Lower East Side 40 years ago, or Berdichev during the last century could have qualified, but today Israel is unique as a total Jewish community. Everyone who lives in Israel is part of the Jewish experiment; just by waking up in the morning an Israeli is involved in the struggle of how a modern Jewish State should look and act. This constant struggle can be exhausting for its citizens, but it might be inspirational to its visitors. They can, if they are receptive to it, get involved in the issues, emotionally if not physically, during their sojourn in Israel, and take their new understanding of the modern Jewish challenge back home with them. For example, many North American Jewish women "reject" traditional Judaism because of the way they perceive it treats women. These women have the option of relinquishing Judaism to those who define it unfairly, or they can become part of shaping it for the next generation. For a serious feminist, the choice is clear, but the average North American Jew can easily opt out of the struggle. Israelis can not as easily ignore these types of battles because they affect a greater portion of their daily life. If they intend to remain in the country, they must be a part of shaping it. Motivated by their example, the enthusiastic Diaspora Jews returning from Israel will become more actively involved in the decision-making process of their own Jewish community.

How Should Israel Be Used in the JCC?

Travelling to the country is not the only way that Israel's influence can be felt. Many of the concepts and values apparent there can be introduced into the Center setting. Below are several examples of ways in which the JCC can help its members to internalize parts of the Israel experience.

Hebrew signs, with transliteration, should be abundant. Things should be given their Hebrew name in all of the Center's publications, activities, and public events. Constant reinforcement by staff and lay leadership will facilitate members' learning the Hebrew terms. If a Center member learns to use the Hebrew names for *breichat schiya, or kaytana,* he/she will come to realize that there is something about that space that distinguishes it from the outside. There is no argument that Hebrew is inextricably related to Israel, but will recognition of Hebrew words strengthen a person's relationship with Israel? It can certainly strengthen a person's Jewish identity, just as knowing one's Hebrew name strengthens Jewish identity by creating a connection with Biblical characters, Jewish heroes, and Israeli personalities. If, for example, an American Jewish boy knows that his Hebrew name is Yitzchak, he can identify with two former presidents, one former prime minister, and the current prime minister of Israel. How did Yitzchak Rabin get his name? Maybe he was named for his grandfather, just like the American Jewish boy was, and maybe both grandfathers came from the same place. That can have a strong impression on a child.

Most JCCs celebrate holidays. Part of a holiday celebration in Omaha could be a display of how that same chag is being celebrated in Ashkelon. A space in the JCC could be created that is meant to be Israel - not limited to holidays, but reflecting all kinds of natural and current events taking place in Israel. What are the seasons like

in Israel? What kinds of fruits and vegetables are abundant in the marketplace right now? at flowers are in bloom in the Galilee this month? The agricultural cycle and calendar provides one of the foundations of the Jewish religion and culture. We cannot understand the earliest Jewish sources without knowing how to relate them to the nature and agriculture and the land of Israel, Today when there is growing concern about ecology, Jewish ecology as related to the Land of Israel could be a topic of interest in JCCs. These are not new ideas; projects such as My Jewish Discovery Place in Los Angeles are already addressing these issues, but we should raise the ideas again and again until they become commonplace.

There has been an attempt to bring Israeli cultural arts into JCCs, to highlight Israeli literature during book fairs, or Israeli art in temporary exhibits. This is an important effort and it should be expanded. Language may sometimes present a barrier, but it is not instil mountable, It would be ideal if more people would study Hebrew so that they could appreciate Israeli literature, films, plays and music in their original form, but even in translation the value of these can be recognized. In fact, we read most of the world's great literary works in translation.

When we teach Hebrew in JCCs or in other informal settings, the goal is not to make someone fluent enough to read Hebrew literature. Rather, the goal is to help the student to appreciate the language, to understand how it is structured and how it reflects Jewish tradition and culture. It is not more important or less important to teach *siddur* Hebrew or modern spoken Hebrew; it is most important to teach the connection between the two. For example, does a Jew living in erica need to know the word *mis'ada* (restaurant) if s/he only goes to restaurants in erica? Perhaps not, but it is important for her/him to know that the word is related to *Seudat Shabbat and Seudah Shlishit.* In the *skldur* we have a prayer *Elohirn yis'adaynu (God* will sustain us) and in Israel we have *Misrad Hasa'ad* (Ministry of Social Welfare). Ensuring a person's welfare by providing him/her with the most basic need of food is a fundamental Jewish concept. Israel, Hebrew, Judaism should not be divided up; they should be taught as an integrated whole. By plugging into Hebrew, one can plug into Israel, and by plugging into Israel, one can plug into Jewishness, or vice versa.

The possibilities for "plugging in" are so numerous that virtually everyone can find a way; exactly how an individual plugs in does not matter. *For some* - i erican youth the point of connection might be the soccer field. They might be interested to learn that in soccer games in Israel the Hebrew word *teku* is used for a tie game. is a *Talmudic* word which means "it is standing" or "at a standstill," But there's a *drash that* explains the word *teku as an acronym for tishbi yetaretz kushiyot uba'ayot,* which means *that Eliyahu Hatishbi, the* harbinger of the messiah, is going to come and answer unsolved questions for us. One of the questions Elijah is going to answer for us is whether we should drink four or five cups of wine at the seder - a basic controversy among commentators. According to the Gemara it appears that we should drink five cups of wine, one for each of the five expressions of **the promise of redemption, but we drink only four because the fifth phrase - "I brought them** into the land . . . - was reversed. We never returned to Egypt as slaves, but we

were kicked out of our land. So the question that has arisen is at what point will be able to drink a fifth cup of wine? Some say when we are all back in the Land for good. Some people say we should drink it now, in honor of the State of Israel. Most of us continue to drink four cups and we leave an extra cup for Elijah, and when he comes he will let us know whether we should drink from that cup too. Maybe another thing he will be able to answer is who really won that soccer game that seems to be a tie. Young American Jewish soccer players might find all of this interesting. They have probably all been to *seders and are* familiar with the Cup of Elijah. They may think it's neat to see a connection between something at *the seder* table and what goes on in the soccer field.

At the Israel Museum in Jerusalem the phrase *chadashot b'atikot is used* often. It means "what's new in the world of the ancient?" Not all young people like archaeology, but some love it, Today there is a craze about old things, like dinosaurs. This might be another way of plugging into Israel. A JCC could have an archaeology club which tries to relate local archaeological finds (e.g., Indian arrowheads) to things that club members might find if they were digging in Israel (e.g., Nebuchadnezzer's arrowheads, or ancient coins). Everything that children are interested in - coin collecting, stamp collecting, etc. - can be in someway related to Israel, and by extension, related to them as Jews. Such activities already take place in some JCCs, but they may not always be recognized as opportunities for making the link between a North American Jewish child and Israel.

With adults the links are much easier to establish. Adults who come to a JCC are conscious of the fact that they want a connection to the Jewish community. They do not usually choose to join the JCC health club over a generic health club because the facilities are better; they are looking for some kind of connection, a particular kind of interaction. Maybe some adults choose to be affiliated with the JCC rather than with a synagogue or with IAA because they do not subscribe to the image of the relationship with Israel that those places represent (e.g., a religious relationship or a philanthropic relationship). The JCC has to present a different picture of what a relationship with Israel could be. It has to portray Israel as an incredibly exciting place, not only because of the good things that happen there but also because of problems and issues that make it interesting, and it has to offer the kind of programming that allows its members to explore the many faces and facets of Israel.

The JCC should also help its members bring Israel into their homes. The most appropriate times to encourage this are, naturally, holidays or Friday nights. The Boston Children's Museum used to rent different cultural kits, complete with costumes, music, recipes, stories, and videos from different countries, which would allow families, for example, to "go to Japan for the weekend." This creative idea could be developed for different communities in Israel, or for different periods of Jewish history, e.g., a kit that would help a family simulate life on a kibbutz, or pretend to be Ethiopian Jews for the weekend. Maybe several families could do it together.

Centers should also take advantage of the technology that people now have in their homes by developing specialized Jewish educational interactive computer programs, and video lending libraries that are open to the public. The JCC could

fairly easily maintain a good selection of Israeli films which its members could rent for home viewing at a nominal fee. Perhaps attached to each box could be some questions to think about after watching the film, or suggestions for further reading or other films on that topic, or notices about upcoming speakers, events in the community that might be related to the topic.

Israel in Our Thinking

There are endless ways of bringing Israel to life at the JCC, or within the homes of members, but a bigger challenge is finding ways to put Israel into their minds. What should Israel mean on a day to day basis in the consciousness of a North American Jew? How can we encourage the majority of North American adult Jews break out of that solely "reactive" mindset described above? Israel is the place where the Jewish people are confronting, on a national level, the key issues of being a Jew in a modern world. These are the issues that Jews outside of Israel think about on an individual, family and community level; in Israel those levels exist as well but are compounded by the national level. If an individual Jew in America thinks about his/her relationship to the Jewish tradition, he/she thinks about it in terms of his personal, family and communal life. In Israel, there is the additional responsibility to think about it on a national level. In other words, "Can a secular, democratic state have a meaningful relationship with tradition?" A Diaspora Jew has to determine for him/herself how to observe Shabbat with his/her family and community, but how does a whole society deal with Shabbat? Israelis must figure out how to maintain the special character of Shabbat in a Jewish State while continuing to provide services (medical care, public transportation, commerce) to the citizens of a modern, Western country. Jews outside of Israel must constantly consider their relationship to the non-Jewish world; in Israel, the nation must consider how it relates to a non-Jewish minority in its midst. Israelis must ask questions like "Is there such a thing as Jewish foreign policy? What are Judaism's guidelines for arms sales?" Another issue that modern Jews do not relate to except in Israel is that of power, specifically the use and abuse of military power.

Israel is indeed the "living laboratory of Judaism." Here we have the opportunity to explore questions like "Does Judaism have something to say about ecology? about the welfare system? about health care? about bio-medical ethics?" A serious adult Jew who is concerned with these and other current world topics could be shown that Israel relates to all of these issues. Peace in the Middle East is not Israel's only agenda item. In fact, Israel has much knowledge and experience to offer other countries in certain realms. One such area is the absorption of people from different cultural backgrounds. Israel has been dealing with immigration and multiculturalism , which today is a hot issue worldwide, with varying degrees of success for a long time. North American Jewish communities that are currently involved in absorbing immigrants from the former Soviet Union could benefit from Israel's experience, and learn from Israel's mistakes as well.

Zionism

Even with the dramatic increase in Israel awareness in the North American Jewish community and the heavier emphasis on Israel within the JCC movement, there is still significant discomfort with the concept of Zionism. Zionism as an expression of Judaism is recognized and accepted, but Zionism divorced from Jewish practice and Jewish education, defined as a national movement, is anathema among most North American Jews. The concept of a secular, national movement stands in opposition to their perception of a Jewish state. Aliyah is not an item on the North American Jewish agenda. In fact, many people genuinely fear a shaliach who has to show a tally at the end of his/her stay in a community of how many young people he/she convinced to make aliyah. They do not emphasize aliyah as a communal objective because it contradicts the primary goal of building a strong, indigenous Jewish community. Furthermore, if aliyah is upheld as a commendable action, those not making aliyah may feel uncomfortable about how this reflects on them.

Unfortunately, these reservations prevent people who are committed to making aliyah from receiving the communal support due them. It is possible to celebrate aliyah without exalting it. *Olim* from a particular community can help build further connections between their home town and Israel. *Olim* should be viewed as positive role models for the American Jewish community, though certainly not the only positive role models.

Differences

While this article has focussed on the common ground between Israel and the North American Jewish community, we cannot ignore the other side of the dialectic. Israel may be like a macro JCC, but we must also consider how we differ. Jewish life in a sovereign Jewish country, with a Jewish majority, where the national language is Hebrew is very different from being an ethnic minority in an open, democratic society. For many North American Jews, the JCC is their sole affiliation with Jewish life. As the embodiment of Judaism for these people, the JCC has an added responsibility to maintain a certain Jewish standard. For example, there are ongoing debates in many Centers about whether they should operate on Shabbat. One school of thought says, "Not all Jews observe Shabbat according *to halacha. It* would be better for them to spend Saturday at the JCC doing something connected to the Jewish community than to spend it at the shopping mall." Another school claims that by the JCC being closed on Shabbat, it demonstrates that Shabbat is a day of rest for the entire Jewish community. It is not a question of satisfying the Orthodox population; it is an issue of sending out the correct educational message about an institution that defines itself as Jewish. There is obviously no clear-cut answer to the dilemma.

Sometimes in the Diaspora there is more Jewish consciousness than content, and among Israelis there is often content without consciousness. As part of the majority culture, many things come naturally. One does not have to invest much thought in the things that the society takes care of, such as Jewish education for children, respecting the Jewish calendar, observing kashrut in public places. (This

causes enormous problems for Israelis living outside of Israel - they do not know how to function, how to educate their children, how to observe holidays.) On the other hand, when there is only consciousness, there is no guarantee that it can be perpetuated. One of the potential pitfalls of our enthusiastic campaign to make Jewish education the new motto of the JCC movement is misinterpreting consciousness for content. There is a fear that JCC boards will define the Jewishness of their Centers by the Jewish membership, or by the symbols in the building, or by the Jewish ambience of their events. These things are vitally important, as they serve to raise consciousness, but they are not enough. Consciousness can be used as a means for getting people involved in Judaism, and in real education, but it cannot be an end in itself. Ethnic awareness without content will not keep the next generation Jewish.

A Holistic Approach

In the attempt to move beyond the level of consciousness, Israel can be helpful. Israel trips, Israel-related programming, and establishing connections with Israel can be employed to actualize many of the symbols we use in Jewish education. The JCC's approach to Israel should be experiential, intellectual, physical. It should be geared for families, for adults, for kids, for everyone. Israel, Jewish culture, Jewish identity and Jewish community should be portrayed as an integrated whole. Ideally, JCCs and Israelis will come to view themselves as partners in a mutually beneficial relationship, both coming from a position of strength, both with something to offer. The JCCs should look to Israel as an educational resource center, as a model for what they are trying to achieve, as a challenge being posed to them to create a Jewish community. And Israel should look at JCCs as examples of tolerance, democratic decision-making, professionalism of education, and the positive aspects of leadership. JCCs also have much to teach about the relationship between lay people and professionals, and between lay people and the rabbinate.

The existence of the State of Israel constitutes a unique moment in Jewish history, one which offers inspiration to Diaspora Jewry. For JCC Jewish educators it *also* represents *the* privilege *and* responsibility of making Israel part of the Center world.

29. Israel, Israeli Culture and Israelis - and the North i erican C

by Elan Ezrachi
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A number of years ago I happened to spend Yom HaAtzmaut in a Jewish Community Center located in the Midwest. As a visiting scholar in the community, my lectures were offered as part of the Yom HaAtzmaut activities. As an Israeli, I was curious to see how a Diaspora community relates to Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel's Independence Day. Yom HaAtzmaut has a great significance in both my personal and communal expressions. Though it was not the first time I was away from Israel during Yom HaAtzmaut, this time 1 had the opportunity to examine an organized Diaspora version of Israel's Independence celebration.

When I entered the Center building I noticed the special decorations, Israeli flags and posters all around, a photo exhibit of Israeli scenery and Israeli music playing in the background. The Center staff did a fine job creating a special atmosphere by designing the public space. Upon entering the JCC, visitors received a mock Israeli passport and an El Al ticket to Israel.

The first organized activity to which I was invited was an Israeli fair. Various areas around the building were turned into stations where Israeli cultural features were presented. Families visiting on that Sunday afternoon (which, by the way, was not the exact calendar day but, rather, the closest Sunday to Yom HaAtzmaut) engaged in the various activities. There was folk dancing, T-shirts making, a slide show, Israeli singing, arts and crafts workshops and the most popular of all stations - an Israeli food stand featuring falafel and humus. People seemed to be having a good time and the organizers were pleased.

When I arrived in the community I was told that there were any Israelis living in the area, mostly associated with the local university. As far as I could tell, there were hardly any Israelis at the fair. The fair was dominated by Americans who came to get what the promotion flyers called "a taste of Israel."

Later that evening there was a performance by an Israeli entertainer. The main social hall was set up as a typical "Israeli Cafe" (a term used only outside of Israel). People were seated around candle-lit tables ready for the program to start. This time, it was evident that the majority of the audience was Israeli. The Israeli singer was fairly known to the Israelis present but unknown to the ericans. The entertainer's repertoire included a broad range of popular Israeli songs, *fro"* periods, all sung in Hebrew. One should note here that Yom HaAtzmaut oe_ _ s o_n opportunity in Israel to engage in singing songs that reflect the entire gamut of Israeli

popular music. The Israelis were singing along, enjoying this opportunity to celebrate while away from Israel. The Americans in the audience were passively listening, unable to understand the lyrics of the songs (in a few cases the singer translated some verses into English).

The two programs seemed to have served two different purposes. The Israeli fair was designed for an American Jewish audience, while the concert answered the cultural needs of the Israeli community. (The Israelis also told me that they conducted a memorial service earlier that day commemorating fallen Israeli soldiers.) The concert enabled the Israelis to feel closer to their national home at a time when they were homesick and torn between two cultures.

Israel's Place in Diaspora Communities

The Yom HaAtzmaut description raises several issues. When we discuss Diaspora Jews' relations to Israel, we are actually referring to three separate aspects. The first is the way Diaspora Jews view Israel as a concept. For many Jews in the Diaspora, Israel holds a special place as a value, a symbol, an element of faith. In this case, while Israel might be extremely meaningful, it is still an abstract notion, physically and culturally removed (one can maintain such an attitude without even setting foot in Israel). Many Jews are driven to relate to Israel on such a basis and find it personally meaningful.

The second aspect is a familiarity with Israeli culture. The assumption here is that Israel is not only an important source of pride and identification for the Diaspora; it is, first and foremost, a cultural entity where Judaism is practiced in the form of a national public culture. Jews in the Diaspora cannot have a relationship to Israel without understanding something of Israeli culture i.e., language, politics, music, history, etc. Israeli culture, so it is argued, can contribute to the continuity of Diaspora Judaism, because of its dynamism and creativity. This perception of Israel through its culture requires of Diaspora Jews a certain level of literacy that is obtained through Jewish education. Particularly, spending a significant time in Israel is seen as the most effective way to connect to Israel's comprehensive culture.

Finally, there is the issue of a relationship with Israelis. Most Diaspora Jews do not have significant personal contact with Israelis and vice versa. Israelis, at best, are represented to the North American audience through the Israeli culture that the latter come in contact with, and at worst, as stereotypical characters, representing the myth of Israel rather than the reality (Ali Ben Canaan, the kibbutz type, the soldier).

These models of relations to Israel suggest that Diaspora Jews should relate to Israel on an ideological basis, as well as increase their familiarity with Israeli culture and pursue personal relationship with Israelis.

The Jewish Community Center as **the Hub for Israel Appreciation**

Israel became a central feature of North American Jewish life after the 1967 Six Day War. The American Jewish community was deeply affected by the war and its outcome; Israel became a focus of pride and support for many sectors of American Jewish life. In the post-1967 period a policy of "Israel appreciation" was implemented

in schools, synagogues, federations, summer camps and JCCs.[1] Jewish Community Centers developed their unique ways of demonstrating the connection to Israel. A quick inventory of Israel activities might include the following: decorating the building with Israeli objects (posters, flags, art work, etc.); naming parts of the building after places in Israel; including Israel in adult education programs; organizing special events in support of Israel (parades, fundrasing campaigns, Yom HaAtzmaut festivities); offering "Israeli" cultural programs (folk dancing, film festivals, art exhibits, visiting scholars); sending a teen group to Israel during the summer; and hosting Israelis in the community (summer camp *shlichim,* or teens from Project Renewal neighborhoods). In many communities a community shaliach could be found at the local Jewish Federation or even as part of the JCC staff. The community shaliach became a central resource reflecting Israeli culture through his/her professional work. [2]

Why the Center?

At first glance, it appears that the JCC is the most effective place for the Jewish community to express its attachment to Israel. The JCC is a community-based institution reflecting all walks of Jewish life. There is broad consensus of support for Israel among American Jews. Israel is loved by all religious and cultural groups and is a high priority on the agenda of most community and national organizations. The Jewish Community Center is the most natural place to express this sentiment toward Israel.'

Second, the JCC provides physical space that can be controlled and designed to convey a sample of Israeli culture, both in its permanent structure and through temporary exhibits. Many members of the Jewish community pass through this space and, therefore, can be exposed to certain Israeli features (photographs, art, video clips, background music, Hebrew signs).

Third, Israeli culture is best represented through informal educational programs. The Jewish Community Center is the leading agency in the community that can conduct high level informal programming. Israeli themes can be brought to the community through ongoing activities or one-shot events. Lectures, courses, films, theater, festivals. book fairs are all typically conducted in the Centers.

Fourth, the JCC has several unique characteristics that are similar to those of Israel. As a secular, non-sectarian institution the JCC confronts many issues that are paralleled in Israel. For example, the unresolved issue concerning opening the Center on Shabbat parallels a key question in public debates in Israel. The dilemma between certain traditional Jewish codes and the desires of different segments in the community is also one of the prominent aspects of Israeli life. The Center movement has a great deal to share with Israel in terms of policy making, problem solving and regulation of diverse forces.

Add to all this the input of the shaliach who is often based in the Center, the presence of Israelis among the staff and membership, and the cumulative effect of the staff training seminars in Israel, and one realizes the richness of the JCC as an Israel resource.

The Drawbacks

After describing the appropriateness of the JCC as the leading force of the Israel connection in North American I would like to outline the problems of transmitting authentic Israeli culture through this vehicle.

The first issue which comes up in such a discussion is the question of language. Hebrew is the basis of Israeli culture. With the revival of modern Hebrew, Israeli culture is limited in its ability to be transferred to a non-Hebrew speaking environment. Novels, poems, popular music, humor and political debates need to be translated in order to reach the English speaking audience.

Second, Israeli culture is local, reflecting the peculiarities of life in the Jewish state; life in Israel is dramatically different from the U.S. and Canada. Israel is a small, intimate society dominated by its historical struggle for security (and peace). Israeli culture is complex, at times, esoteric and difficult to articulate. American Jews are not plugged into the mainstream of Israeli culture and what they are exposed to is usually a packaged version designed for export.'

Third, Israeli identity is significantly different than the American Jewish identity. Israelis are a mixture of European Jews and Sephardi Jews (originating from Moslem cultures). Israeli Judaism is a reflection of this social division and is marked by a sharp dichotomy between secular *and* religious (orthodox) groups. Most Israelis are not familiar with the liberal aspects of Judaism which dominate the North American community.

Finally, when American Jews meet Israelis the outcomes of these encounters are not always positive. Israelis tend to be loyal to a specific interpretation of Zionist ideology which requires all Jews to live in Israel and play down the importance or even the relevance of American Judaism. Dialogue between American Jews and Israelis can be a frustrating experience. North American Jews feel judged by the Israelis and feel that their efforts on behalf of Israel are not appreciated.

With all this in mind, it can be argued that the issue of Israeli culture in the Jewish Community Center is, at best, a complicated matter. Culture is an organic expression of a society reflecting its main historical and social experiences. The moment cultural elements are transferred to a different environment there is bound to be a distortion and reduction of the totality of that culture. Take, for example, the issue of the Israeli army. The military is one of the most prominent experiences in the life of Israelis. It is also an aspect of Israeli life that fascinates Diaspora Jews. However, the moment a certain expression of the Israeli military is brought to the Diaspora (through films, stories, testimonies, or uniforms), it is far removed from its original context, and therefore, highly problematic.

I mplications and Recommendations

Let's go back to the Yom HaAtzmaut case. Clearly, that Center was interested in raising the level of Israel appreciation through the overall program. The Israeli fair attracted many families whose parents wished to instill this basic sentiment in their children. However, such activities cannot go beyond presenting a thin superficial aspect of Israel (in a way that might not even exist in the current Israeli culture).

The evening concert represented a desire to broaden the exposure and allow for a deeper encounter with Israeli culture. The fact that less Americans showed up and more Israelis were present shows us that Israeli culture is not easily transmitted. Finally, I did not see any attempt to bring the Americans and the Israelis in that community together to partake in some kind of a mutually meaningful endeavor.

With the realization that the JCC is the best place for practicing the connection to Israel, it is important to be aware of the possibilities and limitations of this framework. The JCC will continue to operate as an American/Canadian Jewish agency, while Israel is geographically and culturally removed from the Center's day-to-day life. Therefore, the role of the Centers' professionals is vital in creating this Israel connection.

One of the best ways to elevate the connection to Israel beyond the symbolic realm is ensuring that all Center staff and lay leaders visit Israel and examine the Israeli reality first-hand. Today, we can find large numbers of Center workers who have been to Israel, whether with their Centers or on their own. The exposure to Israel has given them any clues to the understanding of Israeli culture and what Israeli features can be brought to the Center.

After realizing that any import of Israeli culture will be somewhat of a distortion, it is vital to distinguish between programs **that are of high** quality and those that are superficial and ineffective. Israel should not only be introduced to the local community as a mythical ideal entity. Diaspora Jews should not be spared from dealing with difficult issues, problems and dilemmas that are associated with modern Israel. A literate North t erican Jew should be aware of Israel's complexities and attempt to become familiar with Israel from an insider's point of view. ne Center can play an important role in raising the literacy level of its members through adult education, literary clubs, film festivals, art exhibits and cultural tours to Israel.

There are certain modes of communication that lend themselves to a better mutual understanding in cross-cultural settings. The arts, for example, are an excellent vehicle to transmit ideas, feelings and images. Art also has many areas where language is secondary and communication does not suffer from the linguistic gaps.

Finally, the Center should play a role in creating direct, face-to-face opportunities for North American Jews to meet their Israeli counterparts. Israelis can be found all over North America in a variety of capacities (visitors, students, *shlidhim,* immigrants). Those Israelis should not be brought to the Centers as token representatives, but as partners for dialogue. Individuals both in the Diaspora and Israel should have a chance to meet their peers, exchange ideas and undergo joint programs that can provide growth for both groups. Similarly, an effective visit to Israel should include dialogue with Israelis. Including the Israelis in the Center's target population adds a whole new dimension to the expression of Israeli culture. The joint activities can reach deeper levels of substance, allowing for both parties to examine their different and common identities. For example, the issue of Jewish continuity, which is so critical in the North American agenda, can be discussed in such joint activities, bringing new insights to the issue. [5]

Jewish Community Centers can spearhead these new directions. The Centers can be vibrant vehicles for displaying Israeli culture beyond the myth. As the relations between Israel and the Diaspora moves to a new stage, beyond classical Zionist ideology, the Jewish Community Center takes on a central role in developing a natural tie between its constituents and the rapidly changing Israeli culture.

Notes

1. See Jonathan Woocher's analysis of the "Jewish Civil Religion" in America in *Sacred Survival,* Indiana University Press, 1986.

2. See a separate discussion of shlichim in this volume.

3. Jonathan Woocher, ibid., and Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity,* Tavistock, New York, 1983.

4. Charles S. Liebman and Steven M. Cohen, *Two Worlds* of *Judaism: The Israeli and American Experiences,* Yale University Press, 1990.

5. The Berkeley Richmond JCC is conducting a program called *Gesher* which brings Israelis and Americans together for joint programs.

30. Israel: A Place to Visit, A Place to Search

by Ezra Korman
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The basis for the monumental effect a visit to Israel has on the North American Jew can be found in the nature of Jewish Peoplehood today. The State of Israel is, after all, a coupling of the four thousand year heritage of the Jewish People and the challenges of modern nationalism. Thus, a Jew visiting Israel is both visiting another country, and experiencing his/her Judaism in a manner quite different from the norm.

Jews travel to Israel for a variety of reasons. For some, the most important element of the trip is vacation. For others, there is a search for personal and communal roots. Still for others there is the desire to use Israel in their family life in order to instill a certain love of Jewish tradition and the State of Israel. The overriding majority of Jewish visitors from North America seem to be a combination of all of the above. It is therefore no surprise that the places people "need" to visit include sites of Jewish historical importance as well as straightforward tourist sites which seem to have no intrinsic Jewish value, and could in essence be found in any country in the world.

The Tourist and the Searcher

Upon arriving in Israel, the North American Jew is faced with a Jewish lexicon which uses many terms and concepts familiar to him, yet puts them into new contexts, thereby changing his/her perceptions regarding Judaism and Israel. For the "tourist" element, these different meanings are interesting, even amusing, as they would be for an American tourist who arrives in London and finds out that the word "boot" refers to the trunk of a car. However, for the "Jewish Searcher," these differing meanings raise serious questions relating to Jewish identity and the roles that Judaism and Israel play - or should play - in daily life.

A perfect example of this is the */canyon* (shopping mall) in Jerusalem. The mall has been open for one year, and has become part of modern Jerusalem's culture. To many of the residents of Jerusalem, it signifies the arrival of the post modern world in the three thousand year old City of David. In essence, it is one of the best places to find the combination of Jewish history and modernism: the up-to-date architecture constructed in traditional Jerusalem stone; the fancy fast food market that is divided into meat and milk sections; the bookstores that hold the best of western literature, with mezuzas on every door. . . the list goes on and on. Most importantly, for Jerusalemites it is a great place to shop, eat a meal or see a movie, away from the hot sun in the summer and the cold rain in the winter.

For many North American Jews, however, the mall is a problem. It somehow removes the romantic Jewish aura they expected to find in the Land of Israel. This meeting point of tradition and modernity does not seem to fit the North American

Jewish lexicon. Other locations in Israel that are simply sites of natural beauty, or even man-made beauty, with no obvious Jewish connotations, are not problematic, as they answer the "tourist" needs. The "searcher" is set aside during visits to the grottos at Rosh Hanikra on the Lebanese border or the St. George Monastery built into a cliff in the Judaean Desert.

The Israel - Diaspora Dichotomy

The Israel Experience often begins or continues a process of deepening the understanding one has for Judaism and the State of Israel. It is confrontations with the reality of modern Israel that most often trigger the process of learning and searching for the meaning of Jewish life. At times these confrontations can be quite difficult. Why is it that in the Jewish State not everyone keeps kosher? Why do people drive on Shabbat? Why does a Jewish army do things that don't appear to be Jewish? Only through experiencing these questions and examining the circumstances which surround them can the true issues of Jewish Peoplehood and existence be addressed.

When discussing contemporary visits to Israel, one cannot ignore the transformation the Jewish People has undergone during the last century. The choices that families made 100, 50 and even 25 years ago, about their homes and lifestyles greatly affect the modern day visitor to Israel. Families that once lived in the same little village in Eastern Europe are now separated by continents and oceans. They have spent the last several decades building Jewish lives that are not only different from life in the "old country," but different from each other as well. There is a certain perception among American Jews that Israel is a wonderful country that has yet to make into the first world, bureaucratically, economically and technologically. Conversely, there is a perception among Israelis that American Jews are living on borrowed time, that their futures are uncertain and that their apparent material success is at the expense of a true Jewish life. These, of course, are all well-entrenched stereotypes resulting from effective propaganda campaigns in both directions. In reality, committed Jews in both Israel and North America want to continue being Jews and are generally struggling with their respective realities, attempting to find the best way to perpetuate their Jewish lives, whatever or wherever they may be.

All of this fits nicely into a theoretical discussion of the Israel-Diaspora relationship. However, when a North American Jew comes to Israel, the theoretical discussion vanishes and he/she has to deal with a reality that challenges the foundation of Jewish life in the Diaspora. In Israel the Jewish environment is all encompassing. There is Hebrew everywhere. The yearly calendar is determined by the moon and by various rabbinical decisions to add another month or change the day of a specific holiday because of Shabbat. Jewish issues that rarely surface in the Diaspora are the subject of daily discourse in Israel, and discussions that would be reserved for religious circles in the Diaspora are matters of mundane routine for many Israelis. And the list continues.

The question that Jewish educators must address, therefore, is how a Jew from the Diaspora can utilize the Israel experience to strengthen his/ her own Jewishness and connection to the Jewish People.

at Israel Represents

The existential search that the Israel visit generates can potentially help Diaspora Jews conceptualize the complexities of Jewish living in the modern age and can, in fact, broaden the basis of their Jewish lives. It can help them make the transition from viewing Judaism as a weekly or yearly religious obligation, or a cultural club, to an all-encompassing environment which addresses issues of day to day existence. The first step in this process is understanding how Jewish peoplehood was redefined by the advent of the modern Jewish nationalism around a century ago. The State of Israel is the manifestation of the modern Jewish desire, based on a four thousand year old tradition, to take control of one's own affairs. As a result, during the early yeafs of the State, there was almost total disdain on the part of Israelis toward the Diaspora Jewish community. In fact, only recently have growing sectors of the Israeli population recognized the need to develop dialogues with Diaspora Jews in a manner which does not convey a sense of Israeli superiority.

For the Jewish visitors to Israel, this dynamic is not always obvious. The primary focus of their visit is usually the romantic vision of the early pioneers and the healthy, able-bodied Israeli soldiers. The amazing feat of creating a state in a few short decades, the sacrifices and rewards, and the constant challenges all lend themselves to a glorified, well-deserved, awe-inspired response. This, however, is not enough. If a Jewish visitor leaves the country talking in glowing terms about "the Israelis' country" and "the Israeli achievements," the Jewish State continues to be something removed from the Diaspora reality; all of the "Jewish" achievements, be they economic or philosophical, secular or religious, cultural or national, remain the domain of the local Israeli Jew and not the visiting Diaspora Jews who, in fact, should be able to take a sense of the achievements home with them.

The Essence of the Israel Experience

The Israel experience is much more than just a visit. It is an exploration into the Jewish past, an examination of the roots of Jewish tradition - the same tradition that molded Jewish life in the Diaspora. It is also an exploration of the Jewish present, an attempt to understand how the four thousand years of Jewish history have guided a people into creating an environment where everything is seen in Jewish terms. It is a challenge to the Diaspora Jewish existence because it does not categorize various aspects of life into Jewish or otherwise. A Jew who comes to Israel and truly attempts to understand why a secular kibbutz celebrates Pesach without mentioning the name of God, or why a Jewish country has religious political parties who deal in all of the worldly matters generally associated with ugly politics, or what the concept of modern Jewish sovereignty is all about, can begin to translate the Jewish life of modern Israel into contemporary Jewish life in the Diaspora.

As the great modern Jewish endeavor, the State of Israel is both the challenge and accomplishment of Jews all over the world. It is the center where Jews come

together - not always comfortably but overall, successfully - to create a vibrant Jewish nation. Visitors who experiences the essence of Israel will recognize the importance of Israel to their personal, family and communal life, and will strengthen their connection with the four thousand year old continuum. A Jew who comes to the State of Israel, for two weeks or for a lifetime, has the unique opportunity of taking part in shaping the course of Jewish history.

31. JCCs and the Israel Association of Community Centers: Differences, Similarities, Common Denominators

by Shaul Lilach
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The Jewish Community Centers in North America and the *matnassim (Mercazei Tarbut, Noar v'Sport* - centers for culture, youth and sport) in Israel were born in different eras, in different countries and for different purposes. A span of about 100 years divides the first Jewish Community Center in North America and the first *matnas in* Israel. In this paper I will address the following issues:

- the aims of establishing a JCC and a *matnas,* and the subsequent changes in these aims
- the similarities between the JCC and the *matnas*
- the basis for cooperation and dialogue between them.

Initial Aims and Subsequent Changes of JCCs

The first YMHA was initiated in 1854 by German Jews. According to Benjamin Rabinowitz, its aim was to provide a framework in which young men could hold evenings of literature and poetry reading. This aim, which was limited to a specific population, was expanded very soon thereafter when the sports program was initiated. The large influx of Jews from Eastern Europe gave rise to the second type of Jewish center, as the German Jews felt the need to take care of the immigrants and "Americanize" them as soon as possible. Thus the settlement houses were erected. The first ones - the educational alliance - developed programs of English lessons, teaching the immigrants a profession, as well as social services to the immigrant families. The combination of Americanization, educational and cultural programs were the main activities of the JCCs for many decades.

The establishment of the State of Israel influenced some of the programs. JCCs began to celebrate Israel Independence Day, host *Israeli shlichim,* and send groups of teenagers on summer trips to Israel. The other activities of the JCC did not change much, except that the social services element disappeared from the JCC as a separate organization - Jewish Family Service - developed. There was not a central emphasis on Jewish-Zionist programming.

Under the initiative of the central body of JCCs, the JWB (today the JCC Association), a significant change occurred in JCCs in the early 1980s. A new goal was defined for the JCC movement: Jewish education. Worrying findings from demographic studies motivated the JWB to establish a large, impressive public commission which investigated the situation and made the following recommendations:

that Jewish education permeate JCCs; and
that Jewish education be geared toward children, teens and adults.

This new direction has dominated the field for the past decade, resulting in numerous innovations in JCCs in North America. any JCCs now have a permanent Jewish educator on their staffs, Jewish study programs for members, lay leaders and professionals, and staff training seminars in Israel.

We can see, therefore, that the focus of the Jewish Community Center has been transformed over the last 140 years, from being a cultural and sport center for young men, to becoming a vehicle for "Americanization" to help in the rapid absorption of immigrant families, to attempting to strengthen the Jewish identity of American Jews and assure Jewish existence. The centrality of Israel to the JCC's Jewish educational programs is a separate, complicated issue which I shall not discuss here.

Initial Aims **and Subsequent Changes in *Matnassim***

The matnassim in Israel, *as* their name indicates, were established *with the* purpose of being cultural, youth and sport centers. Initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, during the period of the late Minister Zalman Aranne, the *matnassim were* intended to address the sentiment in development towns and distressed neighborhoods that their populations were cut off from the central flow of cultural and social activities in Israel. The Ministry adopted the outlook that "the things due the inhabitants of Tel Aviv also have to reach the population in eit Shemin" Towards this end, it was necessary to ensure that theater, musical performances, and other cultural activities would travel from the cultural centers to the peripheral areas and that in these areas there would be a suitable place to house these programs.

The first *matnas* was opened in Kiryat Shmoneh in 1968 by the Ministry of Education and the directorate of the *Hevrah L'Matnassim* (The Israel Association of Community Centers). Immediately following the opening, the goals of the organization began to undergo changes. Each *matnas* had its own local board of directors - the first experiment of its kind in Israel, based on the American model. This local committee started to espouse its own ideas, according to the needs of its community, about what each *matnas* should do. Development of community services - or in essence, community development - was not the original basis for the establishment of the Israeli *matnas, but* this quickly became the central concern of the Association shortly *after the matnassim* started to appear. This new direction immediately effected the programs and functioning of the *matnassim;* it was reflected in the concept of public committees, in the emphasis of community versus state, in the new enthusiasm for community work, involvement and membership.

Ten years after the establishment of the Israel Association of Community Centers, a new organizational aim emerged. The peripheral areas' sense of being cut off from Israeli society had not dissipated. The central body decided that what was needed was an intensive educational program which would strengthen the connection between the people in these communities with the land and its heritage. The

Amatzia (Ahavat Ha'aretz, Masora, Tzionut, Yahadut - Love for the Land, Tradition, Zionism and Judaism) program was developed. It later became the *Eretz Moreshet* (Land of My Heritage) program. The idea, surprisingly similar to the idea of the JCCs, was to find a way to make the Israeli Jew a partner to his/her Jewish-Zionist heritage. It was quite obvious that, just as there was no strong Israel component in American JCCs' Jewish education, there was no element dealing with the Diaspora *in* Israeli *matnassim*. Herein I see a possible for a future relationship and dialogue.

Similarities and Differences of *Matnassim* and JCCs

The above descriptions of the original aims and evolution of the JCC and the *mamas* reveal interesting similarities and differences in the nature of these two institutions.

The North American JCC is characterized by the following:

It is established, built and financed by the individual community.

- It is directed by a volunteer board from within the community.
- This board is comprised of active users as well as major financial figures who affect policy and practices of the Center.
- The executive director and the staff are employed by this board.

I he Israeli *mamas* is characterized by the following:

- ❑ It is erected at the initiation of the central government in conjunction with the local government. The actual building is financed by the central government and by investors outside of the community.
- It is directed by a public body which is comprised of politicians and appointees of the local and central government.
- A significant portion of its budget comes from the local and central government.

The director is appointed and employed by the central organization (IACC).

JCCs and matnassim both aspire to develop and strengthen the sense of community, albeit that means something different to each organization. The JCC wants to preserve the community in order to retain its Jewishness, The *mamas* wants to strengthen the local community as a counterbalance to the heavily centralized governmental influence which is characteristic of Israeli society.

Both organizations have to deal with the issue of recruitment of financial resources independent of membership fees. This fact sometimes suggests a conservative approach to programming and expenditures in order to avoid budgetary crises. In the Israeli context, the reality of local political dynamics sometimes ironically enables a more experimental use of resources to meet unique local needs and desires.

There are differences in staffing. In the Israeli *matnas* the director is often called upon to fill many roles, e.g., financial manager and program director.

Department coordinators, if there are any, usually hold more than one position. The number of staff members in the North American JCC is generally much larger, and there is a greater degree of professional departmentalization. In *the matnass* world the director is engaged with functions and tasks which usually do not enable him/her to work with lay leaders, to engage in public relations activities, to broaden the support for his/her institution, or to enlarge membership. In the North America context, the director is intimately involved with lay leadership, outreach to other communal institutions, educational planning, and administrative and financial leadership.

A Common Denominator?

The issue of its future has become a major concern of the North American Jewish community. There is an emerging sense in both Israel and North America that the North American Jewish community could strengthen itself in its struggle to prevent further assimilation and the dwindling of American Jewry by fortifying its connection with Israel. The Zionist educational leadership in Israel also understands that a new relationship with the North American Jew must be developed, as the link based on monetary donations and perfunctory visits is not the answer.

As previously mentioned, on both sides of the ocean new programs are developing which can be labelled as "Jewish." This is an opening for a common platform and a new dialogue. Such a dialogue has to be initiated, encouraged and developed so that the leadership, the professional staff, and the members of JCCs and *matnassim* will become familiar with each other and incorporate this common ground into their Jewish educational programs. The Jews in the Diaspora will come to recognize that there can be no strengthening of Jewish existence in the Diaspora without Israel. Israel will be personal, believable, and clear if presented within the context of a concrete dialogue with the *matnassim*. The Israeli Jews will learn that they belong to a nation that is partially scattered in the Diaspora, but that this part is essential and important to their own existence. It is possible, and necessary, to create programs that join people and groups, and develop a relationship based on partnership and mutual destiny.

The *matnas* and the JCC are both community centers; both have professional staff with much in common; and both have a primary goal of Jewish education. I propose that these two frameworks come together in their efforts to reach out to Jews in North America and in Israel whose desire it is to strengthen their Jewishness and to rem ai.n part of the Jewish nation.

3L **Is There a Common Language** Between **The Community Centers in Israel and the** JCC?

by Yaron Sokolov
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Israel Association of Community Centers

To belong, to be along with rather than alongside
To be a part of, together with others
To be a Jew
A part of something bigger
A people, a society, a state, a belief, a connection.
[From: "To Belong," in memory of Haim Zippori

Introduction

When I was asked to write an article on the question "Do the community *centers (matnassim) in* Israel have a common language with the Jewish Community Centers in North America?," it seemed to me that the best way of answering this question was to assemble a small group of colleagues who would engage in a comprehensive and fruitful discussion of the topic. The following is a summary of the major points brought up in that discussion. I wish to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the group for their valuable contributions.

Participating in the discussion were: Don Scher, Assistant Executive Director of the Jewish Community Center Association of North America and Director of the Israel Office; Sara Bogen, Head of Community Affairs and Community Centers of JDC-Israel and former *shlicha to* Metro West, New Jersey; Dr. Moshe An, head of the Division for Training, Programs and Community Development of the Israel Association of Community Centers, former *shaliach to* Seattle and Philadelphia; Shlomit Shimron, Director of the Haim Zippori Jerusalem Forest Educational Center and former *shlicha to* Cincinnati (who also hosted the participants); Uri Strizover, Director of the Arts and Culture Project for Youth, A.C.Y., and former Director of *Noar LWoar* (B.B.Y.O.) in Israel; Mickey Friedman, Director of the Professif al Training Unit of the Israel Association of Community Centers and former s[i]0 0 Milwaukee and Cleveland, and myself.

This article begins by presenting the basic concepts that govern the work of the *matnassim* in Israel and a brief summary of facts and figures demonstrating the scope of their activities, with an emphasis on the challenges and central goals facing community centers in Israel. This will help illustrate the similarities and differences

[1]Haim Zippori was the founder and first director general of the Israel Association of Community Centers.

between the community centers in Israel and the JCCs, and how each of these organizations can learn from one another.

at is a *matnas?*

The idea behind the community center, or *matnas*[2] as it is known in Israel, developed as the result of a search for new ways to accelerate the socialization processes within developing communities and among weaker population groups. In 1969, the idea became a reality when the late Mr. al an Aranne, then Minister of Education, appointed the late Haim Zippori to establish the Israel Association of Community Centers (MCC). The function of the *matnas* is to improve the quality of life within the community, on the basis of those values and needs which are indigenous to that community. Its educational programs are varied and its goals are manifold. The *matnas* is a multifaceted body, geared towards a variety of ages, and its programming is comprehensive.

The matnas is not a conglomeration of various services, but rather a local, social body based on the principle of extensive involvement on the part of individuals, groups, institutions and organizations, all working for a common goal: the advancement of the community. The *matnas* serves as the focal point for educating individual members of the community, enriching their world, developing their skills and enhancing their personal contentment. Serving as a focus for group social activity (even when geared towards specific ages, families, interests and goals), its activities are directed towards various social processes. At the same *time, the matnas* sets its sights on community activities involving interrelationships between various groups within the community, while giving special attention to weaker populations.

The *matnas is an* autonomous, legal entity. Each *matnas* is governed by a voluntary public board of directors, with legal and public responsibilities.

Several Facts and Figures About *Matnassim*

160 *matnassim* currently operate within the framework of the Israel Association of Community Centers, from Metulla in the north to Eilat in the south. Of these, 22 are in the non-Jewish sector (Arab, Bedouin, Circassian).

- About 8,000 full- or part-time employees benefit from hundreds of hours of professional training organized by the MCC. Each employee receives training in his/her field of expertise, as well as in general subjects.

The *matnas provides* services *to more* than *one* million *Israeli* residents, comprising *about* 20% of the *general population.*

[2]Throughout this article, the word mamas (an acronym for *Mercaz Tarbut* Naar V'Sport - Center for Culture, Youth and Sport) is used to distinguish between the cormnunity center in Israel and the JCC in North America.

The annual turnover of the matnassim is approximately $300 million, not including building and development budgets.

Future Challenges and Central Goals of the Massim

The Israel Association of Community Centers, in its capacity as a central and significant force in Israeli social life, has taken on the national goals that are of the highest priority in the State of Israel. It initiates, creates, promotes, encourages and nurtures specific programs through the various community centers, in accordance with the profile and specific needs of each community. These goals include: Jewish Israeli education, which aims at enhancing the sense of identity, the quest for learning and experience of our Jewish and Zionist heritage, and instilling a love of country; immigrant absorption - to absorb the large influx of immigrants of recent years; reducing educational gaps in the areas of science, technology and community communications, by establishing multipurpose training frameworks in various fields for the local population; Jewish-Arab coexistence, decreasing the sense of alienation and creating frameworks for contacts between the two peoples.

At the same time, the IACC advances special projects and models of national interest which have developed in a given area, helping to disseminate them in other areas as well. An example are the learning centers, which first developed in localities where educational gaps were discovered, and which nurture the individual child's hidden potential. Another example are projects aimed at improving the environment.

The IACC also invests a great deal of effort in the professional advancement of the community center's directors and staff and in the development of community studies. With this purpose in mind, the Haim Zippori World Center for Community Education was established in the Jerusalem Forest, serving as a resource center for the vast amount of knowledge gathered in the field of community education and aimed at providing a learning base for educators.

Similarities and Differences Between the Massim and the JCCs

During the course of the discussion, we frequently found it difficult to decide whether the issues raised demonstrated the similarities or differences between the matnassim and the JCCs. It turned out that there was no clear-cut answer, and that one subject may be more predominant in Israel and another more predominant in the United States. Despite this fact, both organizations have a similar framework, both are dynamic, and both undergo continual changes and developments.

Similarities

Goal: Both organizations have the common goal of strengthening the local community and improving the quality of life within it. The means of implementing this goal are similar in both organizations: providing solutions to needs, enhancing community involvement, providing services while inculcating Jewish and universal values. Both organizations demonstrate a sense of responsibility towards the community which they serve. These organizations do not merely provide services, but early a social and educational message for the community as a whole.

Umbrella organization: There are umbrella organizations both in Israel and in North America. **In** Israel, the umbrella organization is the Israel Association of Community Centers; in North America it is the JCC Association. These two organizations play a central role in developing the ideological leadership of volunteers and professionals. The boards of directors and the directors formulate and market national goals, above and beyond local goals and aims. For example, in North America the JCC Association has undertaken the development of Jewish education as a primary goal, as a result of statistics showing a large degree of assimilation and alienation from Jewish values. In Israel, the national goal is immigrant absorption, resulting from the tremendous influx of immigrants to the country from the Confederation of Independent States, Ethiopia, Yemen, and perhaps - with the developing peace process in the Middle East - from other Arab countries. In addition, both organizations deal in the recruitment, training and enrichment of professional staff people, the dissemination of information and knowledge, including models and programs for Fundraising for community educational projects. Both, of course, place a professional consultant at the disposal of the workers in the field.

Organizational structure and management: Each community center, both in Israel and in North America, is a legal entity, and a non-profit organization. A voluntary public body governs each organization and determines the policies of the center; a director and professional staff implement these policies. They are assisted by a large number of volunteers, as part of the ideology that favors active involvement of the participants. In recent years the prevalent management strategy has been an economic marketing one, given the necessity of competing with other organizations in the community and fulfilling the high expectations of consumers, who choose the service provider according to the quality of the "product," rather than on the basis of Jewish or community loyalty.

Pluralistic organization: Both organizations are ideologically pluralistic in outlook. Services are provided on a national, rather than on a religious or social basis. All those who come to the center are welcome - religious and non-religious, from Western as well as Eastern countries, immigrants and veteran Israelis, rich and poor. In Israel, the *matnassim* in the non-Jewish sectors also operate within the framework of the umbrella organization.

Range of ages: Both in Israel and in North America, the centers provide services to all age groups, all under one roof, from infancy to old age. Their basic ideology is that just as different age groups live together in the same community and in the same family (where there are three generations - grandparents, parents and children), this must be so in the community center as well. While attention is given to the specific needs of each age group, there are many opportunities for fruitful contact and joint activities among the various ages.

Content: There is a great deal of similarity between the program content and the spheres of activity. Both organizations operate programs for pre-kindergarten, children and youth, adults and senior citizens, as well as artistic, sports, community and Jewish cultural activities. Both provide services to the community, including youth guidance, assistance to single-parent families, hot meals for the elderly, etc,, along with leisure time and entertainment activities.

Facilities: If we were to switch the signs in the Israeli *matnassim* with those in the North American community centers, we would easily recognize the similarities. The physical concept of what a community center should contain is identical and we find that both places have areas serving as meeting places, exhibit halls, swimming pools, auditoriums, physical fitness rooms, tennis courts, activity rooms, etc. Newer American facilities, however, are built according to higher American standards.

Differences

Despite the many similarities between the *matnassim* and the JCCs, there are also several differences:

The idea and its implementation: In Israel, the central idea behind the community center was initiated and formulated by the national government through its Ministry of Education and Culture. The IACC was established as a central and national institution. Only then were the first community centers initiated in the disadvantaged areas and development towns and in the most condensed immigrant settlements. The IACC's development started at the top and filtered down to the community level. Today, *matnassim also exist in* the large cities, and in well-to-do neighborhoods and localities. All this has been made possible with the financial support of the Israel Association of Community Centers.

In North America, the idea began at the bottom - at the initiative of the communities themselves - who also financed this enterprise. The JCC's main task was, originally, to help Jewish immigrants to adjust to American society. The JCC Association was established later, and itself is supported by the local Jewish Community Centers.

Management: The board of directors of the *mamas* is comprised of local politicians and officials - such as the treasurer of the local authority, the director of the department of education, the director of the social welfare department, and representatives of organizations and other participants. The board of directors is appointed by the mayor, in coordination with the IACC. This system gives a disproportionately large number of seats on the board to local politicians, thus imbuing it with a more institutionalized character. The ideal balance in the composition of the board would be to have each group comprise one-third of the total number: politicians, professionals and participants. However, this proportion is not always maintained.

The board of directors of Jewish Community Centers in North America is comprised of community leaders. At first, the wealthy members of the community who gave financial support to the Center comprised the majority of the board. Over the past few years many professionals and businessmen have become involved in local leadership along with other active members of the JCC, as a result of a long process of communal development. Today, these board members assist the director in the prudent economic administration of the Center in this age of competition and economic recession.

The director: In Israel, the director is employed by the umbrella organization, the IACC, and his/her salary is determined according to a work contract that applies

to all IACC employees. This is a unique situation, as the director is employed by one body but is subject to the policies and decisions of an autonomous public board of directors. In addition, the director must consider the policies and wishes of the local mayor, who views the *matnas* as an instrument of social change, who assigns it local social, educational and welfare tasks, and who grants it financial support. The job of the community center director is an exhausting one, requiring ongoing training and support from the IACC. The Israeli director does most of his/her work °thin the organization, advising the board of directors, guiding his staff, planning the programs and budgets, and being generally involved in everything that takes place in the community center.

The JCC director in North America is employed by the local community center, whose board of directors deteimines his/her salary. In addition to the tasks of managing and supervising the activities of the JCC, the director's work includes functions that are largely directed outside of the Center: devoting time to the board of directors, raising funds, and maintaining working and public relations with relevant organizations - especially the local Federation, Working alongside him/her is a staff of senior professionals, who are generally responsible for program content and administration.

The staff: In Israel, the senior professional staff in the *matnas* is taken largely from the field of formal and informal education, as well as from the field of social work. The staff has overall responsibility for the *rnatnasIs* activities. When necessary (during military reserve duty or illness), each senior staff member can replace his/her colleague. The staff works mainly with the community, demonstrating flexibility, initiative, creativity, and informality.

Employees are given on-the-job training within the community center, as well as external training as part of the IACC's highly developed training system. Training includes providing professional models on such general topics as: planning and budgeting, program dissemination, negotiating, fundraising, project design, etc. In addition, there are specific models for professionals working as prekindergarten coordinators, cultural coordinators, sports coordinators, secretaries, housekeeping administrators, etc.

In North America, the Center's staff is more specialized, with each member of the staff taking responsibility within his/her field of expertise. Most of the senior professional staff has been trained as social workers. An internal training system exists, comprised of supervision and evaluation. Given the large distances between the various community centers and the high cost of travel, on-the-job training became the most practical method. Despite this fact, however, professional seminars and national conferences are held,

The community: In Israel, the *matnas* is a municipal service geared towards an entire geographic community within a given locality and taking social responsibility for all groups and socio-economic levels. In North America, on the other hand, the JCC serves mainly the Jewish community within a particular geographic region (although it is open to non-Jews as well).

Membership: The concept of membership is practically non-existent in the *Israeli rnatnas.* Every resident of the community is entitled to participate in the activities of the *matnas* and is even encouraged to do so. Most services are provided on a sliding scale basis, while some are given either for a nominal fee or free-of-charge. These include central events for the entire community, for example Independence Day celebrations, Purim carnivals, etc. A yearly subscription can be purchased for some programs, such as the swimming pool or a series of plays and concerts. In North erica, the concept of membership is deeply rooted in the Jewish Community Centers. Membership entitles one to a package of basic services. For additional services, including pre-kindergarten programs, health clubs, and so on, members often must pay separately.

Financial sources: The chief source of financial support *for the matnas in* Israel is the income of individuals participating in the various activities. However, no less important is the support of the local authority. In addition to the IACC, government ministries and other bodies, some financial support is derived from grants and private sources. The principal source of financial support in North America are membership fees and payment for various services, by the Federation, rather than donations and grants.

What **Can We Learn From One Another?**

what has been described above, it appears that there are more similarities than C -erences between the *matnassim* in Israel and the Jewish Community Centers in North America. Thus, it is important that we learn from one another, particularly in those spheres where one organization has been more successful, or where one organization has spearheaded the development of a new area of activity or new work methods. There is a broad basis for mutual collaboration; Israel's *matnassim* would benefit from elaborating on the following spheres of activi :

I. Policy **planning -** Organizational plalming, priorities and determination of standards are a major attribute of the management culture of the North American Jewish Community Centers. Systematic work on the basis of an annual or multi-annual plan streamlines the work, although, under Israel's dynamic conditions, it could at times hamper flexibility or the ability to meet immediate needs, and might hinder new initiatives. Gathering information, processing it, and putting it to use are an integral part of policy planning which are highly developed in North America.

2. Leadership - Development of local leadership and a network of volunteers are part of the world view in North America. Education towards these values begins in early childhood and serves as an important building block for future activity within the North American community centers.

3. Training **and evaluation .** A large part of the organization's financial resources is allocated to systematic training within the organization, whether through

staff meetings or personal supervision. Allocations are also made for developing a system of worker evaluation as an integral part of the training program.

4. **Business administration -** In recent years, the management strategy of the North American centers has been an economic marketing strategy. Thus, directors are selected in accordance with their ability to carry out this strategy, while adapting it to the basic overall goals of the community center.

5. **Public relations and fundraising -** Public relations and fundraising are highly developed spheres of activity and serve as important tools in the economic survival of the community center. Dealing with the network of public relations and inter-organizational relationships, as part of the management culture in the North American community centers, comprises one of the director's central tasks.

On the other side, as the *matnassim have* proved themselves as a professional communal institution, some of our fields of expertise are worthy of study by our counterparts abroad:

1. **Jewish education -** Because *the matnas's* entire annual plan is based on the Jewish calendar, and because Israel is a "melting pot" of Jewish heritage and tradition, these programs are interspersed within the general activities of every community center in the Jewish sector in Israel. The programs are based on learning through experience, which is the most effective way of internalizing this important subject.

2. **Screening, selection process and training -** The network of *matnassim* in Israel has developed an evaluation center for selecting and training directors and senior staff, with the purpose of hiring the most suitable directors and employees who are most likely to remain within the system over a long period of time.

3. **Community** director - The management orientation in Israel is community-directed. The director guides the senior staff of the *matnas,* is involved in the activities and in the community which he/she serves. This enables him/her to be cognizant of the community's needs and to adapt the programs accordingly.

4. **Training** network - The *matnassim* in Israel operate an extensive training network that encompasses all the fields of activity *of the matnassim* and provides solutions to the problems experienced by every professional worker. This network develops training tools, professional literature and demonstration centers, and maintains close contact with the universities in Israel.

5. **Entrepreneurship -** The directors and senior staff also initiate new projects. As a result, each year, a large number of educational and community projects are developed. The key word here is creativity.

Conclusion

In this article, I have attempted to succinctly describe the Israeli *matnas* and its role in the fabric of the community, and in the educational and cultural affairs of Israeli society. I have also offered a list the similarities and differences with the North American Jewish Community Centers and pointed to those areas where each can learn from the other. In my opinion, and in the opinion of my colleagues who took part in the discussion, the conclusion which we must reach is that a broad common denominator exists between the community centers in Israel and in North America, and that there is room for cooperative effort, combining professional contacts with personal and group meetings, mutual learning and experiences, aimed at enriching all of us working in community educational services throughout the Jewish world.

f7L Selected Jewish Education Bibliography for JCCs

Bibliography

This is a very selective (and idiosyncratic) bibliography of writings that might be helpful when thinking about Jewish education and J CCs. At the moment, there is no definitive nor conclusive literature on the subject. There are, however, valuable writings from many diverse fields which can be helpful to anyone concerned with education, change, and the Center.

Bettelheim, Bruno. *Love is Not Enough.* New York: Collier Books, 1965.
Ostensibly a description of a school for problematic children that Bettelheim established at the University of Chicago in the 1950s; in fact, a primer about how to make every minute and corner of an agency an educational experience.

Brookfield, Steven D. *Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning. San* Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988.
An examination of current approaches to adult learning and a comprehensive review of how adults learn.

Chazan, Barry. "What is Informal Jewish Education?" *Journal of Jewish Communal Service.* Volume 67, No. 4, Summer, 1991.
An attempt to define the concept "informal Jewish education" and to distinguish it from other kinds of educating.

- - - "A Jewish Educational Philosophy for JCCs," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service.* Vol. 63, No. 3, Spring, 1988.
A discussion of underlying Jewish and educational principles for the daily life of Centers.

- - - *The Israel Trip: A New Form of Jewish Education.* New York: JESNA, 1994.
A look at the Israel youth trip as an exciting new arena for Jewish education and identity development.

- - - and Steven Cohen. *Assessing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of JCCs: The 1994 Study.* New York: JCC Association, 1994.
A study of the state of Jewish education in North American JCCs in the 1990s.

- - - and Yehiel Poupko. *Guide to Jewish Knowledge for JCC Professionals and Mekorot: Jewish Sources for JCC Lay Leaders.* New *York:* JCC *Association,* 1988 and 1994.
Two handbooks about Jewish knowledge and sources especially written for the needs of JCCs.

Cohen, Steven M. and Hyman, Paula, editors. *The Jewish Family: Myths and Reality*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1986.
A collection of essays on the Jewish family in traditional society, modern times, literature, and research.

Cohen, Steven M. and Wall, Susan. *The Good Israel Trip*. New York: JESNA, 1994.
A study of several summer teen trips to Israel and an analysis of the desirable educational principles for such programs.

Dewey, John. *Experience and Education*. New York: Collier Books, 1954.
An explicit statement by the great twentieth century American philosopher about experience and growth as the heart of the educational enterprise.

Dimitrovsky, Haim, editor. *Exploring the Talmud*. New York: Ktav, 1976.
An collection of essays which deal with basic Jewish perspectives on: educational goals, the teacher, the student, the educational process and schools. See especially articles by Gordis, Arzt, Kirschenbaum, and Ginzberg.

Dubin, David. "Our Jewish Renaissance: Reflections and Renewal," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*. Fall, 1986, pp. *33-39*.
A discussion of the Jewishness of JCCs by one of the movement's important reflective practitioners.

Goldman, Israel. *Life-long Learning Among Jews*. New York: Ktav, 1975.
A detailed analysis - with sources - of adult education in Judaism from Biblical times to the twentieth century.

Greenberg, Irving. *The Jewish Way*. New York: Summit Books, 1988.
A very helpful handbook and overview of key values and practices related to Jewish holidays, calendar and life cycle.

Holtz, Barry, editor. *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*. New York: Summit Books, 1984.
A comprehensive guide to the great books of Jewish tradition.

Janowsky, *Oscar. The* JWB *Study*. New *York: Dial* Press, *1948*.
A now-classic study, written around the time of the founding of the State of Israel, about the state and future of JCCs in North America.

Journal of Jewish Communal Service, The.
The journal which deals with the central practical, theoretical, and research issues of the JCC field.

Kaplan, Mordecai. *Judaism as a Civilization.* New York: Schocken, 1967.
The classic analysis of the state and future of American Jewish life - with implications for the JCC - by one of twenty-century American Jewry's great thinkers.

Kelman, Stuart, editor. *at We Know About Jewish Education.* Los Angeles: Tora Aura, 1992.
A handbook of "today's research for tomorrow's Jewish education." See especially the essays by Feldman, Alexander and Russ, Katz, Cohen, Chazan and Juran, Reimer, and Reisman.

Knowles, M. *S. The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species.* Houston: Gulf, 1984.
Discussion of the unique qualities of the adult as a learner and of the field of "androgogy" - the science of adult learning.

Kraemer, David, editor. *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
A collection of thirteen essays by leading scholars about the Jewish family both in its historical reality and as it has been perceived and imagined by Jews over the centuries.

Kraft, Louis. *The Development of the Jewish Community Center: Purposes, Principles, and Practice.* New *York:* National Association of Jewish Center Workers, n.d.
A valuable compendium of history and thought from the 1960s about the Center movement by one of its influential personalities.

Matzner-Bekerman, Shoshana. *The Jewish Child: Halakhic Perspectives.* New York: Ktav, 1984.
A helpful discussion and anthology of traditional Jewish sources on child rearing and child development.

Max Tasgal Lectures.
A regular series of lectures and monographs written by outstanding executives in the Center field and produced by the Association of Jewish Communal Professionals; see recent lectures by Jerry Wische, Allan Finkelstein, and David Kleinman.

Melton Journal. New York: Mellon Research Center, 3080 Broadway, New York, NY.
A regularly published journal which presents a broad array of in-depth articles dealing with a diversity of topics related to Jewish education.

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Ozick, Cynthia. *Cannibal Galaxy*. New York, Knopf, 1983.
A novel about a fictitious Jewish day school in the Midwest and its principal. Ultimately, a very pointed discussion of two essential issues for Jewish education: (1) What does it really can to "educate" someone? and (2) Can Judaism and general culture co-exist?

Pe an, Jane. *Enhancing the Jewish Ambience of Your JCC.* New York, JCC Association, 1992.
A very helpful review of how to introduce Jewish symbols, content, and atmosphere into all areas of Center life.

Rosenak, Michael. *Commandments and Concerns: Jewish Education in Secular Society*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987.
An important discussion of key philosophic issues in contemporary Jewish education.

Rosenzweig, Franz. *On Jewish Learning.* New York: Schocken Books, 1955.
A brief collection of some powerful writings on adult education and learning by the great 20th century German Jewish philosopher.

Studies in Jewish Education. Jerusalem: Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
A biyearly series of volumes produced by the Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora of the Hebrew University on diverse subjects related to Jewish education.

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