

## Shoshana Shoubin Cardin

### A Role Model for the Jewish People Today

BY STEVEN HUBERMAN, PH.D.

*Director of Regions, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, New York*

“Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi taught: Which is the path of virtue a person should follow?

That which brings honor to one’s Maker as well as respect from one’s fellow human beings.”

*Pirkei Avot 2:1*

Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Nasi captures the essence of Jewish leadership, whether volunteer or professional. The right path to follow should honor God and promote respect from others. *The Journal of Jewish Communal Service* has, since the Association was formed in 1899, honored distinguished professionals. Since we recognize that healthy organizations need high-quality professionals and volunteer leaders, we underscore this partnership by dedicating this *Journal* issue to a unique lay leader: Shoshana Shoubin Cardin. This is particularly fitting because the overarching theme of this issue, “Professional Recruitment and Retention,” is of particular concern to Shoshana.

For many years, *Fortune Magazine* (2004) has ranked the best companies in the United States. *Fortune* researchers survey 10,000 executives, directors, and analysts to determine the answers to these questions: What do America’s most admired companies have in common? Which success factors are reflected in the best corporations, such as Berkshire Hathaway, Southwest Airlines, General Electric, Dell, Microsoft, Johnson and Johnson, Starbucks, FedEx and IBM? *Fortune* has found that their corporate reputations reflect several key attributes: innovation, financial soundness, employee talent, quality of management, wise use of corporate assets, long-term investment, quality of products/services, and social responsibility.

Despite the success of these corporate giants, admiration for them is not as high as in the past. After today’s scandals, mismanagement, and ethical lapses, what makes companies great is integrity. Thanks to the Enron

disaster, credibility can no longer be assumed. Trust is now the sine qua non of reputation.

Just as we seek integrity in the for-profit world, lay and professional leadership in the Jewish realm need much more than charisma. Character and credibility are most valued. Shoshana Cardin has become synonymous with these attributes.

In June, 2004, I had the privilege of conducting an oral history with Shoshana, which serves as the basis for this personal tribute.

Shoshana has an all-star resume. She has served as chair or president of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, United Israel Appeal, Jerusalem 3000 Committee, CLAL: The Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, National Conference on Soviet Jewry, Council of Jewish Federations, The Associated: The Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Knowing the importance of intensive Jewish learning, she is also the founder and present chair of the Cardin Jewish Community High School of Baltimore, which was named in her honor.

Shoshana was born in Tel Aviv of modest means, though her mother cooked and baked for others as acts of *hesed*, lovingkindness, and her father inculcated in her a passion for Jewish learning. In Jewish tradition, names mean a great deal, and unfortunately, Shoshana’s elementary school principal did not like this odd-sounding name and insisted on calling this precocious young girl “Rose.” Proud of her Jewish roots, she later reclaimed “Shoshana.”

What are the lessons Shoshana has learned that are pertinent to professionals? In discussing the keys to professional and volunteer success, she underscores that both parties need to respect each other. Lay leaders respect quality, services, purposeful professionals. As Shoshana puts it, "Go into the Red Sea first. Be prepared to take calculated risks. Innovate."

We learn from Shoshana that a "lone ranger" professional cannot succeed. We must cooperate with others, share our decision-making responsibilities. And yet she believes in the difference that each voice, each individual can make at critical times, when speaking from a position of truth and fairness. For example, as head of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry when advocating at a high-level meeting with the head of Ovir, Russia's emigration unit, she would not permit the Russians to intimidate her or her delegation.

Shoshana knows how to make a cogent argument. Throughout the 1980s, she organized top leaders to go to Israel and tell the Knesset: "Do not interfere with laws of personal status of who is a Jew." Sitting face to face with Prime Minister Shamir, she convinced him not to succumb to great pressure: "Do not disenfranchise any denomination in Judaism." She taught us to confront power with power, and with righteousness.

Since the focus of this special issue is the status of the professional, we reflected on how to achieve professional excellence. Shoshana tells us that all the professionals with whom she worked were good and that she respected and trusted them. She remarks, "Professionals should share salient communications. Lay leaders and professionals should not embarrass each other, but complement each other's weaknesses." In her early communal years, Shoshana reminisces there were no professionals, no budgets, no secretaries. In the present complex, bureaucratic structure, professionals have a great influence on lay leaders, providing ideas, and options to the volunteers. There needs to be, in short, lay-professional synergy.

Contrary to the notion of the professional as merely a facilitator, Shoshana insists that professionals be engaged in policy discussions and guide the execution of policies. Lay people, in turn, should promote policy discussions and not become fixated on day-to-day operations or minutiae. They must consult with the professional and not go around him or her.

This lay-professional partnership is undermined by manipulation and ad hominem attacks. Shoshana bemoans the sometimes mutual bashing of professionals and lay leadership. Some professionals want the spotlight on them. The better organizations make the lay and professional leaders shine. Her dream is to have institutes where both can learn together, using third parties to amicably mediate disputes. Lay leaders are generally insufficiently trained to take on their board responsibilities. They need an apprenticeship and mentors to prosper. Both lay leaders and professionals would benefit from disciplined examination of the importance and dynamics of the lay-professional partnership. This can neither be intuited nor taken for granted.

September 11<sup>th</sup> changed the way we do business. Thanks to senior executives at the United Jewish Communities, Federation Employment and Guidance Service, UJA-Federation of New York, and the Union for Reform Judaism for sharing the following insights on post-9/11 professional leadership:

- "I perceived a need to verbally encourage federation leaders to get back to work – to raise funds, to get involved civically... to fight back against terror by helping our neighbors, Israel, supporting our government."
- "Be strong when others are losing it around you. Use humor to diffuse tension. Have excellent communication systems. Lay-professional partnership is essential."
- "Leadership by example is still the dominant methodology."

- “Be flexible in your planning and reaction to events.”
- “Don’t be sure you know all the answers.”
- “Express and foster gratitude.”
- “Community is about a sense of family and a passion for caring, about transcending despair and feeling the pain of others.”

Shoshana’s leadership style is still very much relevant, even after the 9/11 horror. What can professionals derive from the “Cardin Leadership Model?”

1. Communicate early and often: When she mobilized a Council of Jewish Federations emergency delegation to meet with Prime Minister Shamir of Israel, she was accessible, honest, and factual and made people feel part of the situation on an ongoing basis. She did not have all the answers, but demonstrated that true leaders get involved and are truly concerned about others. As an effective communicator, Shoshana uses simple, clear language, speaks with confidence, and outlines a plan to move forward.
2. Bring people together: Shoshana stresses the team approach. As a wise person once said, “No involvement, no commitment.” Professionals ought to be involved in the key decisions that affect their organizations. They will then own the decision. Shoshana gives people permission to say what they are feeling and to process those feelings. She creates safe havens, enabling others to share feelings and vent emotions without retribution.
3. Be solution oriented: Good professionals consider unconventional approaches. When Soviet Jews were not allowed to emigrate to Israel, Shoshana outlined the steps to be taken to make emigration possible. She told her colleagues exactly what was being done. Even when she does not have a solution, she shows she is working on one.
4. Focus on the future: Rather than relaxing

in recent years, Shoshana has taken on a new pursuit. She is leading the development of a Jewish community all day high school. She recognizes that the long-term vitality of *K’lal Yisrael* depends on Jewish literacy and the mutual familiarity and respect of the various religious movements, and she is prepared to do something about it.

5. Be human: Given her lengthy set of accomplishments, one might expect Shoshana to exhibit some degree of arrogance and condescension. This is antithetical to her leadership style. When asked about the highlight of her life, she states, “My children are all Jewish.”

Shifra Bronznick (2004), a highly regarded management consultant, has written persuasively about the need for equity and diversity in the Jewish community. She believes that equity must supersede all other leadership selection criteria. She has cited research finding that one of the most significant obstacles confronting women is reduced “face time”; this problem is especially troublesome for high-achieving women who frequently take on two-thirds of home and children related tasks.

In a largely male-dominated system, Shoshana has ascended to the top. Her “face time” – lengthy task hours—is comparable to that of her male peers. However, she has also taught us that operating on a 24/6 work calendar undermines your personal life and diminishes your professional productivity. Working relentless hours often produces stale and stagnant professionals. By balancing work and home and creating work environments in which our staff and volunteers can do the same, we create the essential ingredients for success – creativity and connection.

When I told Shoshana that our Association had selected her as the first lay leader to have an issue of the *Journal* dedicated in her honor, her written reply confirmed how Jewish professionals and lay leaders can achieve a true and lasting partnership.

"You have honored me beyond any expectation I may have had as a lay leader. To be the first lay leader to be selected for the honor is breath-taking. When I received your letter, which my children gave to me on Mother's Day, I could not believe the message.

To be recognized by professionals, the Jewish Communal Service Association, by dedicating its *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* in my honor is really a tribute to my family as well, for having afforded me the freedom and the encouragement to do that which I believe has contributed to and hopefully will continue to contribute to Jewish life. To have my children contribute to this honor is

the greatest gift a parent can receive, true *nachas*.

Please express my deepest appreciation to the Jewish Communal Service Association, to those who participated in making this decision, and to all of you who strive daily to make this a better world."

#### REFERENCES

- Bronznick, Shifra. (2004, May 5). Acceptance speech on receiving Kolot: Kol Isha Women's Voice Award.
- Fortune Magazine* (2004, March 15). America's most respected companies, pp. 80-120.

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*To an extraordinary  
woman,  
who has taught us and  
inspired us, and is always  
there for us.*

*We are proud to share her  
with the world.*



*With great love,  
Her children and grandchildren*

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July 1, 2004

Dear Shoshana:

Have you ever stood at the water's edge in Baltimore and thrilled to the sight of our city's official tall ship, *The Pride of Baltimore*, as she sets out on another goodwill voyage around the world? With the wind in her sails and her bow pointed toward the open sea, she's a breathtaking vision—one that inspires hope and faith and, yes, pride.

That is how our Baltimore Jewish community thinks of you. For so many years you have offered visionary leadership to our people. Your work as chairman of the board of THE ASSOCIATED remains legendary, and you continue to touch the lives of a new generation as chairman of the board of Baltimore's aptly named Shoshana S. Cardin Jewish Community High School.

Yet it is for your work beyond Baltimore that the Jewish people know you best. So you are, like that awe-inspiring tall ship, our ambassador to our global Jewish family and, indeed, to the entire world. I will not recite here your extraordinary record of leadership and accomplishment, for which you are universally admired and loved.

I will simply tell you, on behalf of THE ASSOCIATED and all of Jewish Baltimore, that our community is more vibrant, our people are stronger, and our world is more humane, because you made them so.

You are a priceless treasure of the Jewish people.

You are the Pride of Baltimore.

Sincerely,

Marc B. Terrill  
President

**Associated Krieger Building**  
101 West Mount Royal Avenue • Baltimore, Maryland 21201-5781  
410-727-4828 • fax 410-837-1327  
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THE ASSOCIATED: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore works to preserve and enhance Jewish life. It addresses charitable, educational, religious, humanitarian, health, cultural and social service needs of the Jewish community locally, nationally, in Israel and throughout the world.



Charles and Lynn  
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It is a privilege to have this opportunity to express a hearty *Kol HaKavod* to Shoshana Cardin for a lifetime of exemplary leadership in the Jewish community and to the Jewish Communal Service Association for honoring her.

For the past 40 years, Shoshana has been a leading light of the Jewish world and her activities have known no bounds. She has worked tirelessly and traveled extensively to ensure that all Jews have the freedom and the knowledge to express their Judaism in ways that mean most to them. And, through her embodiment of *yiddishkeit* and *menschlikeit*, she has helped hundreds of thousands of individual Jew recognize and embrace their responsibility to *Klal Yisrael*.

Even more impressive than what Shoshana has accomplished on her own, a list of which would fill volumes of journals like this, is the manner in which Shoshana has inspired others to join with her in service to the Jewish community. Shoshana is a spell-binding orator and a remarkable writer. She uses words to weave beautiful tapestries full of Jewish history, Jewish values and Jewish pride. To this day, she remains among the most sought-after speakers for events of great Jewish significance and someone from whom many of us will never grow tired of listening and learning.

As a woman, I marvel at what Shoshana has managed to achieve in a leadership environment that remains challenging for our gender. And, as a mother, I suspect she derives great pleasure from the fact that her children have also chosen to dedicate their time and talent to Jewish life. For both of these reasons, and many more, Shoshana is the consummate role model.

*Today rabah*, Shoshana, for your passion, sacrifices, leadership and – most importantly – friendship.

Lynn Schusterman



*To Shoshana:*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ONGOING SUPPORT  
OF DFI AND FOR  
SERVING AS A TRUE

MODEL OF LEADERSHIP TO OUR STUDENTS  
AND GRADUATES.

*Yasher Koach!*

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