

עיונים בחינוך היהודי  
כרך ז (תשנ"ה)

עורך: וולטר אקדמן  
עורך משנה: היגרה הופמן  
עריכה טכנית: הוד דוקמן

המרכז לחינוך יהודי בתפוצות שבאוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים נוסד בשנת 1968. בשנת 1976, בעקבות קבלת קרן לצמיחות, הוסב שמו ל"מרכז לחינוך היהודי בתפוצות ע"ש יהושע מנרל מלטון". פעילות המרכז כוללת: הוראה ומחקרים בחינוך יהודי, הכשרה והשתלמות למורים במוסדות חינוך יהודיים בתפוצות, ופיתוח תכניות לימודים ועזרי הוראה עבור מוסדות אלה.

## **עיונים בחינוך היהודי**

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**התחלות: ראשית דרכם של מוסדות יהודיים חינוכיים**

האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים

המרכז לחינוך יהודי בתפוצות ע"ש יהושע מנדל מלטון

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התחלות: ראשית דרכם של מוסדות יהודיים חינוכיים

ירושלים, תשנ"ה

הוצאת ספרים ע"ש י"ל מאגנס, האוניברסיטה העברית

ההסצה: הוצאת מאגנס, ת"ר 7695, ירושלים 91076, מקס 02-633370



כל הזכויות שמורות  
להוצאת ספרים ע"ש י"ל מאגנס  
האוניברסיטה העברית  
ירושלים תשנ"ה

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## פתיחת מוסד חינוכי יהודי יומי בצרפת

### יהודית קיסרי

הקהילה היהודית בצרפת מונה היום לכל הפחות כ-600,000 יהודים ולכל היותר כ-700,000 יהודים, רובם מרוכזים באזור פריס והפרברים, והשאר פזורים בכל רחבי צרפת. הריכוזים הכולטים ביותר הם בערים מרסיי, טולוז, שטרסבורג, ליון ובורדו.

האובלוסייה מורכבת משתי קבוצות עיקריות: יהודים שהגיעו ממזרח אירופה ויהודים שהגיעו מצפון אפריקה. הדור הצעיר הוא יליר צרפת כמובן, וקיים גם אחוז מסוים של ישראלים יוררים. אחוז ההתבוללות ונישואי התערובת גבוה ביותר. התרבות הצרפתית, שהיא במהותה תרבות מטמיעה, לא פסחה על הקהילה היהודית ובעיקר על השכבה האינטלקטואלית ועל השכבה המבוססת מבחינה כלכלית.

רוב האובלוסייה היהודית בצרפת איננה רתית וגם איננה משתייכת באופן רשמי לזרם זה או אחר.

הזרמים הדתיים הפעילים בקרב הקהילה היהודית הם: התרדים האולטרה-אורתודוקסים, תב"ד, האורתודוקסים, הקונסרבטיבים, הליברלים והרפורמים. לכל זרם יש בתי-כנסת משלו וקהילות שבהן חברים רשומים, המשלמים רמי חבר. מובן, שבתקופת חגי תשרי, ובעיקר ביום הכיפורים, קיימת נוכחות מסיבית של יהודים, שאינם משתייכים בהכרח לבית-הכנסת שאליו הם באים להתפלל.

התפיסה החינוכית של הזרמים השונים נובעת ישירות מהתפיסה הדתית המאפיינת כל זרם. הזרם הפעיל ביותר בהקמת מוסדות חינוך יומיים, החל בגן הילדים וכלה בתינוך העל-יסודי, הוא רווקא הזרם התרדי, אשר בעשר השנים האחרונות התחזק מאוד וצבר כוח רב. הזרמים האחרים, הקונסרבטיבי, הליברלי והרפורמי, לא פיתחו עד היום מוסדות חינוך יומיים. בין שני הקצוות האלה קיימים מוסדות חינוך יומיים אורתודוקסיים ומסורתיים, וקיימים גם שני מוסדות חינוך יומיים לא דתיים, ברוח בתי-הספר הממלכתיים בישראל. מוסדות החינוך היהודיים היומיים מתפלגים לשתי קטגוריות:

— מוסדות השייכים לרשתות אוצר התורה, אור יוסף, חב"ד, רפוז', שהן רשתות חרדיות ורשת אליאנס, שהיא רשת אורתודוקסית מסורתית.

— מוסדות אוטונומיים (אורתודוקסים ומוסדות לא דתיים), שאינם שייכים לרשת כלשהי, והוקמו כחוצאה מיוזמה פרטית של עמותות עצמאיות. ככל הרשתות קיימים ליד מוסדות התנוך היומיים גם בתי-ספר משלימים במסגרת של תלמודי תורה או "סנדייז" (בתי-ספר של יום ראשון ו/או יום רביעי). רוב בתי-הספר המשלימים שייכים לרשתות החרדיות והאורתודוקסיות, ומקצתם שייכים לזרם הליכרלי, הרפורמי או הקונסרבטיבי. זרמים אלה נמצאים היום בסימן התפתחות וצמיחה וקהילותיהם מתפרשות על פני מספר ערים בצרפת. רוב בתי-הספר השייכים לזרם התרדי אינם ציוניים, ויתסם למדינת ישראל מתמקד כעיקר בראיית ארץ ישראל כארץ הקודש. לימוד השפה העברית משמש בעיקר למטרות של תפילה ולימודי קודש. הדגש הוא על השפה ככלי טכני לקריאה מכנית, וההוראה נעשית כאמצעות השפה הצרפתית. למוסדות אלה אין כל עניין כשפה העברית היתה והמדוברת.

בבתי-הספר האורתודוקסיים-הציוניים הגישה לציונות, לישראל ולשפה היא חיוכית, כמוכן. נושא הוראת השפה העברית זוכה להתייחסות שונה, אך גם כאן עדיין משמשת השפה כעיקר ככלי עזר ללימודי הקודש, ולכן שיטות ההוראה וחומרי ההוראה נכתרים כדי לשרת צרכים אלה. התוצאות הן כהתאם: המציאות ברוך בתי-הספר האלה היא, שתלמידים הלומדים עברית כמשך 12 שנה מסוגלים אמנם, לקרוא, אך אינם יכולים לדבר או לשותת כעברית. רק למוסדות מעטים תשוב קידום השפה העברית והם נערכים למטרה זו על-ידי הגדלת מספר השעות, והתאמת תכניה הלימודים, שיטות ההוראה ותומרי הלימוד למטרה זו.

מוסדות התינוך היהודיים מוכרים על-ידי משרד התינוך הצרפתי כמוסדות פרטיים. כנושאים הכלליים תכנית הלימודים מתייכת את המוסדות הפרטיים (יהודים, קתולים וכו'), והם נמצאים כפיקות משרד התינוך הצרפתי, כמו כל מוסד ממלכתי אחר. בית-הספר זוכה להכרת משרד התינוך בתחום המקצועות הכלליים, כטוות של בין שנתיים לתמש שנים מיום היווסדו, ובתנאי שהוא ממלא את דרישות משרד התינוך. הכרה זו גוררת עמה תשלום שכרם של המורים הכלליים כההליך הדרגתי, ואף מתייכת מורים אלה להיות בעלי הכשרה רשמית מתאימה. פועל יוצא מכך הוא, שכבתי-הספר היהודיים (כולל בתי-הספר החרדיים) מורים רבים המלמדים את המקצועות הכלליים אינם יהודים. מקצועות לימודי הקודש, עברית, היסטוריה יהודית ולימודי יהדות אחרים ממומנים על-ידי בתי-הספר היהודיים. עובדה זו מהווה נטל כספי גדול על בתי-הספר ועל הנהלותיהם.

מן האמור לעיל כרור, שמוסדות התינוך פונים לארגונים יהודיים שונים כדי להיעזר בהם במימון התכנית היהודית. המוסדות והארגונים המקיימים קשר עם

מוסדות התינוך הם: הפונד סוציאל<sup>1</sup>, הקונסיסטואר<sup>2</sup>, ארגוני העל של הרשתות השונות, הסוכנות היהודית וההסתדרות הציונית העולמית, קרנות שונות (קרן פינקוס, העמותה לתינוך יהודי ועור) הקשר עם מוסדות אלה יכול להיות בתחום האדמיניסטרטיבי, הארגוני, הבספי והפדגוגי. מקורות מימון נוספים הם שבר לימוד, מסיבות, מחנות, גורמים פרטיים ועוד.

אין בצרפת מוסד להבשרת גננות ומורים למערכת התינוך היהודי. מאז 1994, קיימים ניצנים ראשונים של פיתוח מוסד מעין זה, אך בשלב זה אי אפשר להתייחס אליו כאל מוסד מקצועי להבשרת בנות אדם כהוראה. מכאן נובעת הבעיה החמורה של הגנים ושל בתי-הספר בנושא בנות אדם מיומן. רוב הגננות והמוריס בבתי-הספר אינם בוגרי מוסד להבשרת מורים. במשך השנים השתתפו גננות ומורים אלה בהשתלמויות שונות ורכשו ניסיון כלשהו בעבודה, אך העובדה שלא הובשרו להוראה מעוררת, כמובן, בעיות רבות. הנהלות בתי-הספר מתמודדות באופן קבוע עם הקשיים הנובעים מהעסקת בנות אדם כלתי מקצועי. עם זאת יש לציין כי אחוז מסוים של מורים וגננות הם בוגרי סמינר צרפתי או ישראלי, או בעלי תואר אקדמי. גם מנהלי בתי-הספר, הגיעו לתפקידיהם מסיבות שונות, לאו דווקא בשל כישוריהם הפרגוגיים או האדמיניסטרטיביים, אך זו בעיה נפרדת, הראויה לריון מיותר.

דברי רקע אלה חשובים כדי להבין את תהליך הקמתו של מוסד יהודי, במיוחד באשר מוסד זה אינו משתלב בתפיסתו התינוכית עם תפיסתם התינוכית של רוב העוסקים בתינוך היהודי במקום. במאמר זה אתייתם לשני מוסדות: בית-הספר "גגנו", שהיה התלוצ במערכה, ובית-הספר "קריית ערן". שני מוסדות

1 פונד-סוציאל — גוף נבחר: אחד מהארגונים המרכזיים של הקהילה, אשר עם ייסודו עסק בבעיות סוציאליות, וכמשך השנים התרחב לתחומים שונים, כיניהם תינוך פורמלי ולא סורמלי. גורמים שונים בישראל רואים את הארגון כמייצג הקהילה, אבל המציאות היא שונה. בארגון מתלקות שונות כגון: מתלקה סוציאלית, מתלקת נוער, מתלקת סרטומים ומתלקה לתינוך.

המתלקה לתינוך קשורה לבתי-ספר מסוימים ומקיימת קשר ארגוני, כספי ותוכני עם בתי-ספר אלה. המתלקה לתינוך מקיימת קשר עם משרד התינוך הצרפתי בנושא ההכרה בבתי-הספר היהודיים. הכרה ממשלתית בבית-ספר חשובה כאן מאור, שכן כאשר נכנס בית-הספר למסגרת של חוזה רשמי עם משרד התינוך, משרד התינוך מאשר לבית-הספר משרות של מורים למקצועות הכלליים, ובכך יש הקלה גדולה בנושא התקציבי. לפונד-סוציאל יש גם מרכזים קהילתיים בערים שונות בצרפת.

2 הקונסיסטואר — מוסד הרכנות. הקונסיסטואר המרכזי הוא הרבנות הראשית של צרפת, והקונסיסטוארים המקומיים פועלים בערים. לא תמיד פועלים המוסדות המקומיים בשיתוף פעולה עם המוסד המרכזי בעיקר בשל כעיות תקציביות. מוסדות הקונסיסטואר עוסקים בענייני בתי-כנסת, נישואין, גירושין, כשרות, סטירה. גם לקונסיסטואר יש מתלקה לתינוך, הסעילה בעיקר כמסגרות של תלמודי תורה.

אלה, שהוקמו מתוך יוזמה פרטית, נתקלו בקשיים רבים בקהילה היהודית, בשל התפיסה החינוכית השונה<sup>3</sup> שהם מייצגים.

בית-הספר וגן הילדים "גנו" בפריס נפתח בשנת 1980. בתחילה נפתחה רק כיתה גן אתה ולמדו בה עשרה חלמידים. היוזמה לפתיחת הגן היתה של קבוצת צעירים יהודים לא דתיים, שהיו כשנתיים בישראל, חזרו לצרפת, נישאו והקימו משפחות. הם תפשו דרך לתת לילדיהם חינוך יהודי לא דתי, ציוני ועברי, הקשור לחיי הקהילה ולמדינת ישראל, ברות של פלורליזם ואהבת האדם ועל בסיס פתיחות לעולם שהם חיים בו. הם לא מצאו במוסדות הקיימים את החשובה לרעיונותיהם, ולכן התליטו להקים עמותה ולפתוח גן ילדים, וממנו התפתח אתר כך גם בית-ספר יסודי.

באופן טבעי הם יצרו קשר עם המתלקה לחינוך ולתרבות יהודיים בגולה של הרשות המשותפת לחינוך יהודי ציוני, אשר אותה ייצגתי באותה תקופה בפריס. המתלקה נרתמה לעזור להם בכל התחומים: הארגוני, הפדגוגי והכספי. כבר עם פתיחת גן הילדים נתקלה היוזמה בקשיים ובהתנגדות מצד המוסדות והארגונים היהודיים במקום.<sup>4</sup> כאשר הוקם בית-הספר, בשלב מאוחר יותר, בשנת 1981,

3 לשאלת ייחודם של בתי-הספר "גנו" ו"קריית ערן" בנוף החינוך היהודי בצרפת: בשני בתי-ספר אלה שוררת אווירה ברורה מאוד של קשר עם ישראל. אווירה זו מתבטאת בארגון הסביבה החינוכית, בהרגשה של הוראת עברית כשהיה חיה ומדוברת ולא רק כשפה המשמשת ללימודי קודש ולקריאה טכנית של התפילה והתנ"ך. בבתי-ספר אלה מלמדים את ההיסטוריה של העת החדשה (ולא רק את תולדות עם ישראל ער תקופת בית שני) את הגיאוגרפיה של ישראל, שירים ישראלים וריקודי עם. התלמידים סבירים בתכניות חינוך בישראל, קשורים בפעילות הקרן הקימת לישראל, בסעילות התנדבותית למען "אגודת הוועד למען התייל", מציינים את יום הזיכרון, וחוגגים את יום העצמאות ואת יום ירושלים. בנוסף לכל אלה לומדים בבתי-ספר אלה תנ"ך, היסטוריה של עם ישראל ואת תגי ישראל. כל הנושאים הנזכרים לעיל נלמדים באופן שונה ובהרגשים שונים מאלה של בתי-הספר האורתודוקסיים, ובחוראי מאלת של בתי-הספר האולטרה-אורתודוקסיים.

האוכלוסייה היהודית בצרפת אינה דתית ברובה. משום כך דגם של בתי-ספר מעין אלה מתאים מאוד לאוכלוסייה. אילו ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית היתה מתליטה להקים בתי-ספר כזה בתטותה, אין לי ספק, שהיינו יכולים לגייס אליו אלפי תלמידים.

עריין מוקדם לענות על השאלה אם יש בכוח של בתי-ספר מסוג זה להשפיע על בתי-ספר אחרים. כרגע מדובר בשני מוסדות בלבד, ולכן עויין קשה לו, מה תהיה השפעתם. אם יקומו כעשרה מוסדות נוספים כאלה, אין ספק שתהיה להם השפעה רבה מאוד. הארגונים השונים מבינים זאת אף הם ואולי זו אחת הסיבות לתגובותיהם הלא תומכות והלא אוהרות. ההתנגדות ל"גנו" ול"קריית ערן" נובעת מן העובדה, שאלה הם מוסדות ציוניים ולא דתיים. מנהל הסתלקה לחינוך של הפונד-סוציאל, שמצעו פלורליסטי, הוא אדם אורתודוקסי, אשר השקפתו החינוכית אינה תואמת את המצב המוצהר של הפונד-סוציאל. אין כל התאמה בין הכרזות המצע לבין המציאות בשטח.

הפונד-סוציאל אינו חוק ריו כרי להכריז בגלוי על תמיכה במוסדות מעין "גנו" ו"קריית ערן", מחשש שמא המוסדות האחרים יתנתקו ממנו.



היתה הקמתו ציון ררך בתולדות התינוך היהודי בצרפת, שכן ער אז לא היה בצרפת מוסר תינוכי יהודי לא רחי. התגובות להקמת בית-הספר היו תריפות ביותר, והיתה גם פנייה למר אריה רולצין ז"ל, לשעבר יושב ראש הסוכנות היהודית וההסתדרות הציונית העולמית, להתזיר אותי משליחותי בי אני "פרסונה נון גרטה". יושב ראש ההנהלה דאז הגיע לביקור, בדק את הנושא ונתן גיבוי מלא ליוזמה זו למתלקה אשר ר"ר תבין ז"ל עמר אז בראשה, לי ולקבוצה המייסדת.<sup>5</sup> גם הנהלת קרן פינקוס תמכה ביוזמה, לאתר שברקה את הנושא. לעומת זאת, התנגדו נתרצות ליוזמה זו הקונסיסטואר והממסד המקומי, ובעיקר הפונד-סוציאל, למרות העובדה שהמצע שלו פלורליסטי והיה אמור לתמוך ביוזמות מעין אלה. אני תייבת להזכיר לטובה שני רבנים, אשר העזו לתמוך בגלוי ביוזמה ועזרו לי רבות בעצם הופעתם בטקס הפתיחה, הרב פרנקפורטר (שנברחו לומדת בבית-הספר הזה) והרב גולרמן, רבה הראשי של פריס.

ארגון המנהלים של בתי-הספר היהודיים בצרפת, סירב במשך שנים לקבל את מנהלת בית-הספר "גנגו" בתברה בארגון. רק כאשר התתלף יושב ראש ארגון המנהלים, במלאת עשר שנים לקיומו של בית-הספר, שנים שבמהלכן סימו בו מאות תלמידים את תוק לימוריהם, התקבל בית-הספר בתבר בארגון. ביום מונה בית הספר 207 תלמידים. הוא מוכר על-ידי הקונסיסטואר ועל-ידי הפונד-סוציאל ומקיים קשרים עם גורמים אלה. בית-הספר אינו יכול לקלוט תלמידים נוספים במבנה הקיים, והעמותה מתפשת ררבים לפתח את בית-הספר ולהרחיבו.

בית-הספר וגן הילדים "קריית עדן" נוסרו ביוזמה פרטית של משפחת אופיר.<sup>6</sup>

- עם זאת, המציאות עושה את שלה, והיום בית-הספר "גנגו" כבר מוכר על-ידי הפונד-סוציאל ואף זוכה מדי פעם לתמיכה כלשהי ממנו. יש להניח, כי בעתיד, לאתר שיפתח ויהפוך לעובדה קיימת בשטח, יהיה גורל בית-הספר "קריית עדן" רומה לזה של "גנגו".
- 5 כעניין זכותו של "גורם תיצוני" (כגון מתלקה של הסוכנות) "להקים מוסדות המאיימים על מוסדות מקומיים", ברצוני להבהיר מספר רכרים: אנתנו, כמתלקה לתינוך של הרשות המשותפת לתינוך יהודי-ציוני, אינו מקימים או פוגרים מוסדות תינוך. תפקירנו הוא להיענות לבקשות המופנות אלינו מגוף מקומי, לכתון כל בקשה לגופה מבחינת האינטרסים של הקהילה היהודית על כל זרמיה, ומבחינת המסר שיש לנו, כתנועה ציונית, להעביר לקהילה. לעתים, נתקלים המפרים הציוניים שלנו בקשיים בקהילה, אך אין פירושו של רכר שעלינו לוותר עליהם. "יתפי ישראל-תפוצות" הם תשובים, אך אינם יכולים להיות מבופפים על ויתור או על ביסול האיריאולוגיה הציונית במסדה להשיג "שקם תעשיית" בקהילה. אנתנו קיימים על מנת לשרת את התינוך היהודי-עברי-ציוני ולעזור לו להתפתח. אנתנו קיימים כדי להיענות לכל גוף בקהילה, הרוצה לפתח זהות יהודית-עכרית-ציונית, גם אם מנמת זו אינה תואמת מסרות של ארגון קהילתי זה או אתר. אם הפעולות מאיימות על גוף כלשהו או נתקלות בהתנגדותו — אין זה מעניינו. אנתנו קייפים על מנת לתח שירותים ותמיכה לכל גוף המודהה עם מרינת ישראל ועם הציונות.
- 6 משפחת אופיר — גב' אופיר, יהודייה צרפתייה, מורה כמקצועה, אשר למרה שנתיים בארץ,

בני המשפחה בדקו ומצאו שיש דרישה לבית-ספר ציוני נוסף ומשום כך צריך להקים עוד בית-ספר בדות בית-הספר "גננו". הנהלת בית-הספר וגן הילדים הכריזו בגלוי ובאמצעות כל כלי התקשורת האפשריים (תופעה יוצאת דופן בנוף החינוך היהודי בצרפת היום), כי המוסד החינוכי אשר יקום יהיה מוסד צרפתי-ישראלי-ציוני, בדות בתי-הספר הממלכתיים בישראל. עוד הכריזו, כי בית-הספר התדש ידגיש את הוראת השפה העברית כשפה חיה ומדוברת, החל מגן הילדים, ולפיכך כל כיתה בבית-הספר תלמד עברית במשך שעה וחצי ביום. הוראת עברית באינטנסיביות כזו היא תופעה שאינה קיימת כלל בצרפת, ובאירוסה כולה יש רק בית-ספר אחד המלמד עברית באינטנסיביות דומה — בית-ספר "תחכמוני"<sup>7</sup>. בדרך כלל מכסת לימוד העברית בבתי-ספר יהודיים באירופה בכלל, ובצרפת בפרט, נעה בין 2 ל-4 שעות שבועיות.<sup>8</sup> הנהלת בית-הספר "קריית עדן" הסבירה, כי בית-הספר יקיים קשרים עם בית-ספר תאוס בישדאל, יאדגן טיול לישראל לכיתה הבוגרת של בית-הספר היסודי, ילמד יחדות בדות המסורת, ויתגוג את חגי ישראל ומדינת ישדאל. כמו כן, ידגיש בית-הספר את הקשר לקהילה היהודית מתד, ואת הפחיתות לעולם המודרני שבו התלמידים חיים, מאידך. תפיסת בית-הספר תהיה סלווליסטית, ויוכלו ללמוד בו תלמידים דתיים, מסודתיים וחילוניים כאחד. הרובע ה-12, שבו הוקם בית-הספר "קריית עדן" הוא רובע מתפתת וגרים בו יהודים רבים מאוד, ומשסתות עם ילדים בגיליס המתאימים. רבים מהיהודים הגדים במקום מעוניינים בתענוך יהודי-מסורתי סתוח, ואלמלא נפתח בית-הספר "קריית עדן" היו שולחים את ילדיהם לבית-הספר הכללי של משרד החינוך הצרפתי, ולא לבית-ספר יהודי. אוסיו המיותד של המוסד מבטית סיכוי, שילדים יגיעו גם מאזורים המשיקים לרובע ה-12. העוכדה שבית-הספר "גננו", הדומה בתפיסתו החינוכית לבית-הספר "קריית עדן", אינו מסוגל לקלוט

נישאה לישראל, מר שמואל אופיר, תורה עמו לצרפת לפני כארבע שנים והם תיים היום בסרים.

7 בית-הספר "תחכמוני" הוא בית-ספר מסורתי-עברי-ציוני. נוסד לפני כ-75 שנה באנטוורסן בלגיה. בבית-הספר כ-800 תלמידים והוא כולל את תטיבת הגן, תטיבת בית-הספר היסודי, תטיבת הביניים ובית-הספר התיכון. בבית-ספר זה הילדים לומדים עברית ברמה גבוהה, ומרכים עברית קולתת. לימודי היהדות מתנהלים בעברית. ומת הלימודים גבוהה גם במקצועות הכלליים. בית-ספר "תחכמוני" הוא הטוב ביותר מבין בתי-הספר היהודיים באירוסה. על בית-ספר זה ראוי לכתוב סרק בפני עצמו.

8 בנושא שעות ההוראה — בדרך כלל לומדים בבתי-הספר היהודיים באירוסה בין ארבע לשמונה שעות שבועיות כולל יחדות ועברית. עברית כשמה לומדים לא יותר מארבע שעות שבועיות (במקרה הטוב). בדרך כלל מסתמקים בשעתיים בשבוע וגם כאן יש להיות וזהירים: כסי שהסברתי לעיל, לימוד עברית כרוב בתי-הספר סירושו הקניית הכתיבה והקריאה לצורכי קריאת התמילה והתנ"ך במקור. תחבנה והעברית המדוברת אינם נושאים מטוסלים.

את כל התלמידים הסונים אליו, מוכיחה כי בקרב האוכלוסייה היהודית יש דרישה לתינוך יהודי סתות, ולפיכך יש גם הצדקה לפתיחת מוסד מעין זה.

הקמת מוסד תינוכי יהודי יומי מסוג "גננו" או בית-הספר "קריית עדן" כדוכה בבעיות רבות בתחומים שונים: מיקום, שכירה או רכישת, מימון, גיוס תלמידים, גיוס צוות מורים, בניית מערכת קשרים עם עיריית הרובע ועם משרד התינוך הצרפתי ולבסוף — יחסים עם הממסד היהודי והקהילה.

מיקום: הגודם המיידר תייב לערוך בדיקת צרכים ולבתור רובע, שיוכל להבטיח התסתחות עתידית של המוסד בהתאם לאוכלוסייה היהודית והרכבה. דרושה גישה נותה מבתינת מרתק ותחבורה. יש למצוא מבנה מתאים למוסד חינוכי, שיוכל לעמוד בתנאים הכססיים העומדים לדשות המיידים, ואשר יענה על דישות הבטיחות של משרד התינוך הצרפתי וגם על דישות הביטחון של המוסד כמוסר יהודי, שסכנת התנכלות של גורמים עוינים מאיימת עליו. בעיר כמו פריס, אין מבנים רבים המתאימים להיות בתי-ספר. ברוב בתי-הספר אין תצדות (תוסעה נסוצה באירופה), ועובדה זו מקשה מאוד על תכנית הלימודים, על מערכת השעות ועל הפעלת התלמידים. יום הלימודים באירופה הוא יום לימודים ארוך, ולעתים מביאים ההורים את ילדיהם כבד בשעה 8:30 בבוקר, שעת צאתם לעבודה. עם שובם מעבודתם, בשעה 18:00, לוקחים ההורים את הילדים הביתה. יום ארוך מעין זה מתייב את בית-הספר לספק לתלמידים ארוחת עשד, ארוחת צהריים, וארוחת אדבע, עובדה המשפיעה על ארגון יום הלימודים וכדוכה בהוצאות רבות: מטבחים, תדר אוכל, העסקת עובדים. העדד תצרות למשתק מטיל עומס נוסף על המורים ועל הילדים ומתיש אותם מאוד. בגלל כל אלה, בסיום העבודה אין למורים לא רצון ולא כות, נפשי או פיזי, להכין עזרים, משתקים, לקרוא תומר ולהשתלם. מציאת מקום מתאים לבית-ספר מעורר את השאלה, אם לרכוש את המקום או לשכור אותו. טבעי שיש רצון לרכוש את המקום מכיוון שזו השקעה כספית טובה ודמי השכירות גבוהים מאוד. אך רכישת פירושה השקעת סכומי כסף גדולים, ובמרבית המקרים לגוסי הסדטיים תסדים הסכומים הדרושים לשם כך. בדרך כלל שוכדים את המבנה לשנים הראשונות, עד שהמוסד מסלם את דרכו לקבלת תמיכה כספית מגודמים שונים.

מימון: השנה הדאשונה להקמת מוסד תינוכי היא כמובן השנה הקשה ביותר. דרכי ההתמודדות של "גננו" ו"קריית עדן" מציעים אפשרויות שונות להתמודדות כזו:

בית-ספר "גננו" בתר בדרך של פתיחת המוסד בשלבים. עמותת "גננו" פתחה כיתה אחת, ובכל שנה הוסיפה כיתה אחת או שתיים, עד שהושלמו תטיבות הגן ובית-הספר היסודי. דרכה של העמותה היתה איטית וזהירה.

בית-הספר "קריית עדן" בתר בדרך של סתיחת כל השכבות יתר. גישתו היתה, שיש ליצור מן ההתלה סידמירה טובה, המבטיחה להורים המשכיות. כאשר ההורים רואים כיתה א' בלבד, הם עלולים להסס ולתשוש, שמא לא יהיה למפעל

המשך. לעומת זאת, אם פותחים את כל הכיתות בעת ובעונה אחת, מקנה הדבר תחושת כיטתון להורים. כיתת-הספר כתר לקבל מספר רב של ילדים לגן הילדים, כדי להבטיח עתודה להתפתחות רתבה יותר של כיתת-הספר בשנה השנייה. בשלב מאוחר יותר, לאתר החגים, התליטה ההנהלה לפתוח פעוטונים לילדים מגיל שלוש חורשים עד גיל שנתיים, בתקווה שהם יהיו העתודה לגן. בשנת הלימודים תשנ"ד היו כמעון 25 ילדים, כגן 70, ובכיתת-הספר 35 תלמידים. כיתות א', ב' היו מלאות ואילו כיתות ד' וה' פתוחות. כתתילת שנת הלימודים תשנ"ה הכפיל ביתת-הספר את מספר התלמידים, ומספרם הגיע ל-250, גירול כזה כמספר התלמידים בשנה אחת הוא גידול מהיר ומשמעותי.

במשך הזמן הקימו המוסדות ועד, אשר תפקידו להשיג תרומות וליצור קשרים עם גופים מתאימים. כפי שצוין לעיל, השנה הראשונה היתה השנה הקשה ביותר, שכן היה צורך להשקיע כספים רבים בהכשרת המבנה ובהתאמתו לצרכים תינוכיים, ברכישת ציוד, בתומרי לימוד, במקשור ועוד. היכולת לאתר אפשרויות רכישה זולות קובעת במידה רבה את התמרון בהשקעה.

גיוס תלמידים: ככל שיוזמת ההקמה של ביתת-הספר קורמת עור וגידים מוקדם יותר, כך גדלים הסיכויים להצליח בגיוס תלמידים. אלא שהוצאת היוזמה אל הפועל היא מורכבת מאוד ולא תמיד התהליכים צפויים וידועים מראש: את ביתת-הספר "קריית ערן" התתילו לתכנן כבר בחודשים נובמבר-דצמבר 1991. הקמת העמותה, הכנת תיק כיתת-הספר, פנייה למוסדות שונים, איתור מקום מתאים ומקורות מימון ראשוניים ארכו חודשים אחדים.

רק ביוני 1992, נחתם התוזה לשכירת המבנה שמבחינת תנאיו הפיזיים היה במצב גרוע מאוד. ב-24 ביוני נערך ערב הפתיחה הרשמי, אשר לוה במערך פרסום אינטנסיבי ככל אמצעי התקשורת. קשה היה להאמין שהרעיון יוכל לצאת אל הפועל, כי בתורשים יולי-אוגוסט הילדים יוצאים לחופשה ורובם ככולם כבר רשומים במוסדות הינוך מוכרים. בתקופה זו קשה גם להשיג קבלנים ופועלים לעבודות שיפוץ. תרף כל הקשיים לא רצו המייסדים לוותר על פתיחת ביתת-הספר בספטמבר 1992. הם מצאו קבלן ופועלים, שעבדו יומם ולילה ואף ישנו באתר. הם גייסו לעזרה חברים תומכים ברעיון. התגובה לפרסום היתה מעבר לכל המצופה. אף על פי שבתקופה זו היה ביתת-הספר כבתינת תכנית בלבד, הביעו ההורים אמון רב במייסדים ורשמו את ילדיהם לביתת-הספר. שנת הלימודים התלה בזמן עם למעלה מ-120 תלמידים.<sup>9</sup>

גיוס צוות תמורים: גורם הזמן היה מכריע גם בגיוס צוות המורים. בחודש יוני רוב המורים והגננות כבר חתמו על חוזה עבודה לשנת הלימודים הקרובה. צוות

9 מספר התלמידים ב"קריית ערן" בשנת הלימודים תשנ"ד (שנת הפתיחה) היה 130. מספר התלמידים בשנת הלימודים הנוכחית תשנ"ה הוא 250. זהו גידול מדהים, המוכיח את הדיברים שנאמרו לעיל.

ההוראה בבית-ספר יהודי מורכב ממורים המלמדים את המקצועות הכלליים על פי התכנית הרשמית של משרד החינוך, וממורים המלמדים עברית, היסטוריה של עם ישראל ומקצועות יהדות אחרים. גיוס צוות המורים לבית-הספר "גנון" היה פתוח קשה משום שבית-הספר נפתח בשלבים. בבית-הספר "קריית עדן" היתה עבודת גיוס המורים מאומצת וקשה יותר משום שבית-הספר פתח את כל שכבות הגיל יחד, ומשום שהנהלה התעקשה לגייס רק מורים מוסמכים, בעיקר בתחום המקצועות הכלליים, כדי להקל על שלבי ההכרה של משרד החינוך. עבודת הגיוס היתה קשה במיוחד גם משום שהכול התל בחודשים קריטיים מבחינת הזמן. אבל למרות הקשיים הרבים המאמצים נשאו פרי, ושנת הלימודים התלה עם צוות מורים טוב. המודה לעברית, שגויסה על-ידי המחלקה לחינוך ולתרבות יהודיים בגולה היא מודה מקצועית, בוגדת סמינר בארץ במסלול החינוך המיוחד, הנמצאת בצרפת שנים אחדות בשל שליתות בעלה. לעומת זאת היתה צורך להתפשט בכתיבת הגננות ובכתרו גננות שאינן בוגרות סמינר, אך הן בעלות ניסיון כלשהו בעבודה. בכתיבת הצוות הודגשה שליטה בשתי השפות עברית וצרפתית, סשום שהנהלת בית-הספר גרסה, כי יש ליצור אוויה של עברית בבית-הספר גם מתוך לשענות העבדית הפודמליות של בית-הספר.

בניית המערכת: על פי חוק החינוך הצרפתי, תיב כל בית-ספר ללמד מספר סוגר של ימים בשנה. הוא יכול לתמרן כרצונו בתוך המערכת הפנימית שלו, ובלבד שישלים את מספר הימים הנדרש. בעת הרכבת המערכת הנהלת בית-הספר תיבכת לחשוב על אפשרויות תיאוס מקסימליות בין המערכת הממלכתית לבין המערכת היהודית, במיוחד כאשר לעתים יכול להיווצר מצב שבספתה אתה ילד אתר לומד בבית-ספר יהודי ואתר לומד בבית-ספר ממלכתי. הבעיה מסתבכת עוד יותר, אם בית-הספר מעוניין לשלב במערכת שלו פעילות אקסטרוקולרית בנושאים של תברה ותרבות.

קשרים עם עיריית הרובע ועם משרד החינוך: על פי התוקים הנוהגים בצרפת בית-הספר המיועד חייב לקבל אישורים מתאימים משני גורמים אלה. האישורים מסודרים על פי כללים סוגרדיס היטב. התיק מוגש לעיריית הרובע ולמשרד החינוך. ובית-הספר המיועד חייב לקבל אישורים מתאימים משני גורמים אלה. האישורים מתקבלים רק לאחד עמידה בדרישות מוגדרות בתומים שונים. ללא אישורים אלה, לא יכול בית-הספר לפתוח את שעריו. הצרפתים מקפידים סאוד בנושאים אלה והם מאוד פורמליסטים בעניינים אלה. מנהל בית-הספר "קריית עדן" פיתח יתסים טובים מאוד עם עיריית הרובע. העירייה שלתה את נציגיה לערב הפתיה, לאתר פתיחת בית-הספר ערכה בו ביקור דשמי, ומאז היא מקיימת קשר שוטף עם ההנהלה. גם במשרד החינוך מצאה הנהלת בית-הספר און קשבת ותמיכה. האזור שבו הוקס בית-הספר הוא אזור מתפתת והמוסר עונה על צורכי האוכלוסייה במקום, משום כך מוכנים העדייה ומשרד החינוך לעזור למוסד להתפתת. בצרפת

נמשך תהליך ההכרה במוסד בין שנתיים לתמש שנים, אך אזורים מתפתחים זוכים לתנאים מקלים, ולכן יש סיכוי שהתהליך יתקצר.

יתסים עם הממסד היהודי ועם הקהילה: היתסים בין הקהילה היהודית לבין בית-ספר כעל תפיסה חינוכית כמו זו של "גננו" ושל "קריית עדן" הם בעייתיים. כאשר התל תכנון הקמתו של בית-הספר, הגישה ההנהלה את תיק בית-הספר לסחלקה לתינוך של הפונד-סוציאל הנתשבת למחלקה המייצגת את הקהילה היהודית בצרפת, קשורה לבתי-הספר ואף תומכת בהם. עובדה זו אינה תואמת את המתרחש במציאות. המצע המוצהר של הפונד-סוציאל הוא פלורליסטי, אך למעשה, הפלורליזם אינו ניכר כלל בשטח. במשך תורשים אחדים היה התיק של בית-הספר מונח במשרדי הפונד-סוציאל כאבן שאין לה הופכין ולא זכה לטיפול כלשהו. פניות ההנהלה נענו בלך ושוב ובתירוצים שונים של חוסר זמן.

לאחר שהפניות הרבות לא נענו, פנתה הנהלת בית-הספר לשגרירות ישראל בפריס, שם מצאו נציגיה אוון קשבת והופנו אל נציגת המחלקה לתינוך ולתדכות יהודיים בגולה של הרשות המשותפת לתינוך יהודי-ציוני. לאחר פגישות אחדות בנושא התליטה נציגת המחלקה, בשם הנהלת המחלקה, לתמוך ביוזמה ציונית זו בכל התחומים האפשריים. תוך שיתוף פעולה מלא עם הנהלת בית-הספר, עסקה המתלקה בגיוס צוות ההוראה בגן ובבית-הספר: בראיון, במיון ובשיבוץ. המתלקה דאגה לתכנית הלימודים, להכשרת הגנות והמורים ולהכנתם לעבודה בגן ובבית-הספר. מאז הקמת הגן ובית-הספר מלווה אותם המתלקה באופן קבוע ושוטף. המתלקה לתינוך של הפונד-סוציאל לא היתה הגורם היחיד שהתנגד להקמת בית-הספר. הקמתו נתקלה בהתנגדותם של גודמים נוספים. בשלב מסוים נתקבלו שיתות טלפון בבתיס של מספר משפחות ונאמר להם, כי רצוי שיוציאו את ילדיהם מבית-ספר לא דתי זה. ארגון מנהלי בתי-הספר היהודיים עדיין לא קיבל את הנהלת בית-הספר לתברות בארגון. פנייתה של הנהלת בית-הספר לקבלת תמיכה מהפונד-סוציאל לא נענתה עד עצם היום הזה. רק קרן פינקוס אישרה את פרויקט הגן בבית-הספר "קריית עדן" כמו בזה של "גננו" ונענתה בחיוב לבקשת הנהלת הגן.

קשריו של בית-הספר עם שגרירות ישראל, עם ההסתדרות הציונית העולמית ועם הקרן הקיימת לישראל טובים מאוד. המוסדות הדתיים תוששים מאוד מהתפתחותו של בית-הספר "קריית עדן", ויש להניח שבית-הספר ייתקל עוד בקשיים לא מעטים עקב גישה עוינת זו. הניסיון של בית-הספר "גננו" מוכיח, כי המציאות והצורך תזקיס מרצונם של הגודמים המתנגדים וזרם ההדשמה לשנת הלימודים הבאה מוכיח, כי יש תקווה שבית-הספר "קריית עדן" יתקבל בסופו של דבר גם על-ידי ארגוני הממסד הקהילתי.

מוקדם עדיין לשפוט בצורה מדויקת, אך כבר עתה ניתן לומר שמבחינת האווירה היהודית הישראלית הפתוחה, ומבחינת לימוד העברית, בית-הספר קרוב מאוד לרעיון ולתכנון המקוריים. על פי מבחנים שנערכו בדרישת משרד התינוך

הגיעו התלמידים להישגים טובים הן בתתום המקצועות הכלליים והן בתתום המקצועות היהודיים. במבנהו הנוכחי יוכל כית-הספר להכיל כ-300 תלמידים, וכבר היום לומרים בו 250 תלמידים. צוות ההוראה, להוציא מקרים בודדים, מוכית עצמו כצוות טוב ומסור לרעיון. אם בית-הספר ימשיך לתפקד בדרך זו, הוא יתקרב מאוד להגשמת הרעיון המקורי ולביצוע מרכי של התכנון הראשוני.

הנהלת כית-הספר שואפת לתזק את הקשר עם משרד התינוך ולורז את תהליך ההכרה. בו כרי להבטית את עתירו ולהקל על כעיות המימון של בית-הספר. יש להגית, כי כאשר בית-הספר יקבל את הכרת משרד התינוך ויהפוך לעוכדה קיימת בשטת, יתעוררו גם ארגוני הממסד המקומי וימתנו את יתסם לבית-הספר ואת התייתסותם אליו. בית-הספר שואף לנצל את המבנה גם לפעילות קהילתית בשעות הערב. כבר השנה נפתח אולפן למבוגרים בשתי כיתות, וכהן לומרים 30 תלמידים, רובם הורים של תלמידים ככית-הספר, ובעתיד ישמש המבנה להרצאות ולתוגים לילרים ולמכוגרים מהסביבה, אף אם לא יהיו קשורים באופן ישיר לבית-הספר. האוכלוסייה היהודית בצרפת, אינה דתית ברובה, תיפוש זה אתר זהות יהודית, שאינה בהכרת דתית מבטית את סיכויו של בית-הספר להתפתת, על אף הקשיים ולמרות ההתנגדויות.





**STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION**

*Volume VII*

**ORIGINS: THE BEGINNINGS OF  
JEWISH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

# STUDIES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

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Walter Ackerman

*Managing Editor*

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The Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, founded in 1968, was renamed in honor of Samuel Mendel Melton, in acknowledgement of an endowment in perpetuity. The Centre's activities include research and teaching in Jewish education, training and continuing education of personnel for Jewish educational institutions in the Diaspora and the development of curricular and teaching material for these institutions.

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

*The Melton Centre for Jewish Education in the Diaspora*

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*Dedicated to  
Moshe Davis*

A great originator and where the book began



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## THE CONTRIBUTORS

**WALTER ACKERMAN** is the Shanc Family Professor of Education Emeritus at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

**SIMON CAPLAN**, a graduate of the Jerusalem Fellows Program, is currently a freelance educational consultant working with communities in the Diaspora.

**WILLIAM CUTTER** is Professor of Education and Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, and Founding Director of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education.

**DMITRI ELYASHEVICH** is the Pro-Rector of Science at Petersburg Jewish University.

**PAMELA JAY GOTTFRIED**, a Rabbi, is assistant to the Dean of the List College of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and is pursuing a doctorate in Talmud.

**CHARLES HERMAN** is the Executive Director and Founder of the Nesiya Institute.

**GILA KATZ** is a Senior Teacher of the Tali School in Chernowitz, and representative of Midreshet Yerushalayim in the Ukraine.

**YEHUDIT KESSARY** is the Assistant Director of the Department of Jewish Education and Culture in the Diaspora of the Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education.

**CHERIE KOLLER-FOX** is the Rabbi and Educational Director of Congregation Etz Chayim in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

**LEE L. LEVINE** is Professor of Jewish History and Archaeology at the Hebrew University, and Rector of the Seminary of Judaic Studies, Jerusalem.

**GUSTAVO DANIEL PEREDNIK** is the Director of the Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad, and lectures on Jewish Thought at the Rothberg School of the Hebrew University.

**ALICE SHALVI**, Founding Chairwoman of the Israel Women's Network, was a Professor of English Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Principal of the Pelech Experimental High School for Girls, Jerusalem.

**MICHAEL SWIRSKY** is a Jerusalem writer and educator, and Founding Director of the Pardes Institute.

**DEBORAH WEISSMAN** is the Director of the Kerem Institute for training Israeli teachers in "Humanistic Jewish Education."

## FOREWORD

The world of Jewish education has entered a significant stage of growth and transformation. This process of change can be discerned in the dramatic growth of the Yeshiva world and the burgeoning number of Reform day schools, it can be perceived in the renaissance of Jewish education in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the intriguing turn of Jewish intellectuals in France to Judaic themes, and the ambitious educational goals of Jewish Continuity in Great Britain. To this list we could add the rapid spread of family education, and the continuing efforts to maximize the Jewish educational content of community centers, together with the creation of new training programs for educators and lay leaders in Israel and the Diaspora. In this new climate of Jewish awakening it is important to note that community leaders worldwide are directing more of their time, energy and substance to building the instrumentalities that will hopefully contribute to the creative continuity of the Jewish people.

These developments, and more, are part of the Jewish response to a series of momentous shifts that are making themselves felt throughout the world — changes in political fortunes, the reordering of global economic preeminence, the threat of ecological catastrophe, shifting patterns of religious affiliations and commitment, the rethinking of ethnic roots and cultural traditions in the light of the enormities of the last 50 years — all of these have also left their profound imprint on the assumptions, beliefs, and priorities of Jewish communities worldwide.

The pioneering stories narrated in this volume, however, highlight the initiative of those who swam against the current; they document the deeds of those who came before their time. "Origins" tells the story of those who showed the way long before most of us sensed that the signposts of the predictable and stable were coming down, and that we were entering into waters that were both uncharted and often treacherous. They gave us their deeds and left us a legacy of courage and hope.

ZE'EV MANKOWITZ

*Director, The Melton Centre for Jewish  
Education in the Diaspora*



## INTRODUCTION

The title of this book accurately describes its contents: the beginnings of Jewish educational institutions. A number of considerations led to the decision to devote this latest volume of *Studies in Jewish Education* to this topic. It was thought that the record of institutional origins around the world would constitute an important contribution to the history of Jewish education. The early years of life, whether of individuals or institutions, are critical to subsequent development and often provide an understanding of later behavior. The circumstances which led to the creation of new institutions, the difficulties encountered, and the fit between the idea of the institution and its actuality seemed worth describing, not only for reasons of historical and intrinsic interest but also because of what these accounts might tell us of the Jewish polity around the world. Lastly, of course, was the tempered hope that what happened in the past might help those today who are contemplating the creation of new settings for Jewish education.

The institutions whose origins are recounted in this volume are not meant to exhaust the varieties of the Jewish educational experience. They were chosen after consultation with colleagues as instructive examples of the process the book seeks to document and explore. The several chapters taken together provide a picture of some of the institutions Jews use in their efforts to transmit their culture across generations. There is obviously no attempt to assess the effectiveness of the institutions whose "stories" have been collected here.

Any attempt to generalize from the specific cases discussed in the book must begin with a consideration of the political and social cultures in which they originated. The Israeli institutions came into being in a sovereign Jewish state; two of them — Pelech and the TAL schools — are part of a state school system. The others were established in countries where Jews are a minority and where there are different patterns of relationships between the state and religion, government-sponsored and nongovernment education activities, and the majority of the population and religious and ethnic groups who seek tolerance and support for their efforts to maintain distinctive identities. These variables affect the way Jews think about them-

selves and condition efforts to insure Jewish continuity. Even though the general contours of Jewish education are everywhere remarkably the same, as is the case with education in general, there are important nuances of differentiation which reflect local conditions.

The immediate environments surrounding each of the institutions also differ from one another and must surely have affected the style of their growth and development. The Rhea Hirsch School of Education and the Ramah Camps are part of larger organizations whose sense of themselves and their needs are not necessarily congruent with the demands created by the new institution. The newly acquired right of free association, a cardinal principle of democratic culture, which permitted the transformation of a dangerous underground activity into the public program of the Petersburg Jewish University and the government-supported school in Chernowitz, let alone Russian and Ukrainian educational traditions, must surely affect the way in which those institutions function today. The beginnings of CAJE,<sup>1</sup> even the name itself and its subsequent pattern of activity, bear the stamp of the cultural ambiance of the U.S. in the 1960s.

Only one of the institutions whose beginnings are described here, Immanuel College in London, was a product of communal planning. All the others, both in Israel and the Diaspora, came into being through private effort, often individual, and almost always in the face of opposition from established institutions and people of authority. Most Jewish communities do not have sophisticated planning mechanisms; even where they exist they are not always able to respond with alacrity to the specific needs of the particular populations that comprise an increasingly pluralistic community. Changing circumstances, different "players" and new ideas move more quickly than the machinery of communal government. It is hard to imagine the highly centralized and ideologically bifurcated Israel Ministry of Education and Culture, as the driving force behind the establishment of Pelech and the creation of the TALI school network.<sup>2</sup> Even such ideologically disparate groups as Bais Ya'akov and the Hebrew

1 The letters are an acronym: Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education; the original name was Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education.

2 There has been a noticeable trend towards decentralization in recent years. The delegation of authority to lower levels of the bureaucratic structure reflects a larger pattern of privatization and empowerment of local agencies. This will undoubtedly encourage an increase in extra-governmental initiatives.

Gymnasium in Wirballen are alike in that they were both a product of partisan initiative.

Just as Jewish communities in a free society cannot compel membership,<sup>3</sup> so are they unable to dictate the behavior of those who consider themselves members of the community. Tightly organized communities might be able to erect obstacles in the way of new initiatives; they cannot, however, prevent them. Sometimes law is an ally; the founders of Pelech and TALI found legitimization for their efforts, if not approval, in an infrequently exploited section of the State Education Act of 1953 which permits parents and school Pedagogic Councils to appropriate as much as twenty-five percent of the official curriculum for programs of their own design and preference. None of the other institutions required an "official" seal of approval.

Some of the initiatives sprung from the ground of personal experience. Others could claim a broader base of need and interest. All the institutions were established because their founders felt that no existing agency was doing what they thought had to be done. They obviously also believed that there was little point in attempting to move existing institutions in the direction of their demands.

New institutions in education, Jewish or otherwise, find their justification by appeal to ideology, methodology or content, sometimes to all three. The network of TALI schools in Israel was born of dissatisfaction with the way in which Judaism was conceptualized and presented in both the state and state religious school systems. Kiryat Eden is a response to the non-Zionist character of most of the day schools in Paris. The Hebrew Gymnasium in Wirballen was also driven by Zionist ideology, but it took pride as well in its progressive methods and enlightened attitude towards students, characteristics all but absent in the traditional schools of its time and place. The emphasis on Hebrew language and literature, subject matter areas, in both the gymnasium and Kiryat Eden is a function of the ideology that inspired the establishment of each. The curriculum of the Bais Ya'akov schools introduced new content into the education of Orthodox women.

3 Even in the few countries where civil law mandates membership in the Jewish community, Jews who wish to disassociate themselves may easily do so. That, for example, was the case in Italy until 1984 when a ruling of the Supreme Court declared the obligation of association unconstitutional.

Many of the new schools and organizations encountered opposition and resistance of varying degree and character. Some of this was conceptual; the way the Jewish Theological Seminary, a rabbinical school, saw itself did not easily accommodate summer camps for children nor give them high priority. Ideology also produces protest; the religious establishment of Israel denies the validity of the assumptions which inform the TALI schools and warns parents that Jewish law forbids enrolling children in these schools. Opposition may also stem from material concerns; a new institution means yet another claimant on communal resources, financial and others. New institutions, particularly those whose innovation is largely methodological, arouse hostility because they require new modes of attitude and behavior. Founders of new institutions often move out of existing settings because they despair of introducing the changes their ideas require. New institutions also elicit resistance because they create new centers of power and authority, at least for their supporters who have shifted allegiance.

Several of the accounts before us relate the work of the new institutions to some broader social vision, even if in varying degree. The teachers of the Hebrew Gymnasium believed that they were preparing their students to take an active role in shaping the evolving society in Palestine. The use of Hebrew and other day-to-day rituals were meant to separate the youngsters from their immediate environment. This is quite different from the social service projects and other activities of Pelech which may be considered efforts at *Tikun Olam*. It's not altogether clear whether or not Kehillat Yonah, established in part as an alternative to left-wing youth groups in Argentina, thought of itself as an instrument for changing conditions in that country. CAJE, despite its concentration on education, was moved by an idea of a Jewish community governed by standards other than those which obtained at the time of the organization's inception. Some of the institutions were established in order to guarantee the continued existence of established norms. New institutions do not necessarily mean a rejection of the old.

The book does not include an instance of failure, at least not in the sense of not surviving beyond an initial period. Enrollments in the most recent of the schools, TALI in Chernowitz and Kiryat Eden in Paris, point to growth and stability. The omission of failure is probably a mistake; success is not the only teacher. Each of the institu-



tions survived "childhood" and moved into later stages of development with relative ease. The threats to existence were less ideational than material — funds were not always available nor proper personnel readily at hand. The normal strains of growth, however, do not seem to have drawn any of the institutions far away from their original purpose. Changed circumstance and the wisdom of experience may have shifted attention to new areas of concern, but there remains a high degree of fit between the original concepts and actual practice over the years.

The different chapters introduce the reader to a variety of educational settings — schools, educational networks, organizations and programs of informal education. These obviously are not the only educational efforts in the configuration of Jewish education in present-day Jewish communities of a reasonable size. We might have included the stories of newspapers, libraries and radio programs, to name but a few possibilities. The concentration has been on institutions engaged in planned, systematic and continuous educational efforts, institutions which Cremin calls "instruments of deliberate nurture." Their work may not be a sufficient guarantee of Jewish existence in the modern world but it obviously is a necessary condition.

WALTER ACKERMAN

*Beer Sheva*  
1994



*Section I*

*FORMAL EDUCATION*



## **JEWISH SCHOOL [NO. 51] TALI-CHERNOWITZ**

**Gila Katz**

Chernowitz is a beautiful city nestled among the Carpathian Mountains, which lend it a unique atmosphere. The region, known as Bukovina, has always been home to Germans, Romanians, Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, and Armenians, but at one time more than fifty percent of its residents were Jews. Until World War II, although there was anti-Semitism, there had never been a pogrom and relations between Jews and non-Jews were generally good. The city was famous throughout Europe, and within the Jewish community there were well-known actors, singers, lawyers, and physicians. The community boasted an excellent Jewish theater, and elders of the community today recall a rich cultural life and an unparalleled spiritual atmosphere.

All this changed in 1940 with the "liberation" of Chernowitz by the Red Army. That period witnessed the beginning of the "actions" against a population of whom ninety percent were Jews. Within a year, the atmosphere in the city had changed completely.

During the war, almost the entire Jewish population of Chernowitz and the surrounding towns was interred in camps or ghettos of the German or Romanian Army. In Novosialicia, a small city near Chernowitz, a major "action" was conducted in which thirty-seven thousand Jews were killed in just a few days. Many Jews were also killed in the Transnistria camp. Only a very small percentage of the Jewish population survived the war. Those who did return after evacuation of the camps harbored hopes of reviving the earlier atmosphere. Between 1946 and 1950 life in general was very difficult, but even more so for the Jews.

Gradually, the Jewish schools and the Jewish theater were closed. Later, even speaking Yiddish and celebrating Jewish holidays were forbidden. Before World War II there were some sixty synagogues in Chernowitz, as well as many schools and Jewish organizations, but after the war almost all were closed. Only one small synagogue remained, which was barely attended except on Yom Kippur.

For a very brief period in 1948, anyone who wished to be repatriated to Romania was allowed to leave, providing the only opportunity for Jews who wished to move to Israel. In just months, half of the Jewish population moved to Romania and from there to Israel. Many people have told me of the tremendous fear that existed of revealing one's intentions to leave Chernowitz at that time, and in some instances people who chatted with their friends in the evening were gone the next morning. Only much later was it learned that almost everyone who went to Bucharest left immediately for Israel. Throughout that period there were Jews who continued to observe Jewish tradition, secretly, and those families raised children who knew they were Jews and were not embarrassed by it.

From 1948 until the early seventies everything connected with Judaism was forbidden. There were families in which the children did not even know they were Jewish. In grandparents' homes people refrained from speaking Yiddish. But alongside these families, there were others that maintained tradition and carried out holiday observances in secret. There were families that baked matzot for Pesah each year. There was one old man who always knew when the holiday would begin, and he would go from family to family announcing that they could now buy matzot. The Jews knew which house to go to, and at night-time, clandestinely, they would go to buy their matzot.

The aliyah movement emerged in the 1970s, and there was a very large emigration from Chernowitz. During that period many people — for the first time — wanted to know more about Eretz Yisrael. Groups formed to study Hebrew in secret. Books about the Holocaust began to appear at that time; I don't know where they came from. I knew that most of my family had perished, but this was the first time that I read about the *Shoah*. The material passed from friend to friend. These were not published books, but manuscripts or photocopies, sometimes fragmentary. We knew that it was very dangerous to read these books, to study Hebrew, or to celebrate the Jewish holidays. All the newspapers were full of denunciations of Israel and Zionism.

After several years the borders were all but sealed, and only a very small percentage of the applicants were granted permission to emigrate to Israel. The families of "refuseniks" were in a dire situation. They were not allowed to work. We know they received help from

Israel in the form of money and packages, and that "refuseniks" from various cities were in communication with each other. The Chernowitz "refusenik" community included several well-known individuals, including David Tucker, Yuli Edelstein, Yosef Zissels, and many others.

With the advent of perestroika in 1988, a swift revival of Jewish life in Chernowitz also began to appear. Small groups were organized to study Hebrew, and holiday celebrations were held in private apartments. The "Jewish Cultural and Social Fund" was established at that time. Its founders were intellectuals who knew each other even before the days of perestroika. First among them were Yosef Zissels, Kurt Abraham, Alec Bubis, Marek Harekh (of whom the last three moved to Israel), Slavek Baks (today living in the U.S.), Buma Tutelbaum, Volodia and Aryeh Boiko, and myself (these last living in Chernowitz and active in Midreshet Yerushalayim). It appears that from the beginning there was Israeli support, but the extent of that support is not clear. Kosher food was even sent to the first seder held by the group. The Fund's leaders worked with the Jewish community to restore the Jewish cemetery, with financial help from Israel. The head of the fund was Yosef Zissels, who did much to bring about the Jewish cultural revival in Chernowitz. He brought us books about Israel and invited the first group of Israelis to come to the USSR. Fund members published a small newspaper with information about Israel and about the history of Chernowitz Jewry, and it publicized the availability of classes in Hebrew and Yiddish and the JDC<sup>1</sup>-sponsored Jewish library, located at the time in the Boiko home.

A year later a children's group was set up to study Hebrew and to learn about Jewish tradition and Jewish holidays. Initially, the teachers were Israelis. (I later took over from them.) When the members of the Fund saw how many children were interested in studying these subjects, the idea of opening a Jewish school was born. Chernowitz Jews not associated with the Fund said the idea was crazy, but Zissels began to search in Israel for people ready to help make the dream come true. A small group worked with him: Volodia and Aryeh Boiko, Leonid Finkel, and myself. Some time later, a conference of Ukrainian Jews was held in Kiev, and there Zissels hap-

1 Joint Distribution Committee.

pened to meet Yossi Pnini, a Jewish educator and rabbinical student who was investigating various possibilities of educational activities in the Commonwealth of Independent States for the Seminary of Judaic Studies (Beit Midrash) in Jerusalem, operating through its Midreshet Yerushalayim arms. Zissels told him about the idea of starting a Jewish school in Chernowitz and Pnini invited Zissels to visit the Beit Midrash in Jerusalem for more serious talks on the subject. After that visit work began in two locations — in Chernowitz, where a group approached the Ministry of Education about the possibility of gathering Jewish children from all the schools in Chernowitz; and in Jerusalem, where curricula were being designed specifically for this school.

In the spring of 1990 Rabbi Moshe Tutnauer and his wife Marjorie arrived in Chernowitz to work under the sponsorship of Midreshet Yerushalayim. They worked with parents and children, with teachers of general subjects who had expressed interest in working in the Jewish school, and with teachers who were then teaching the children Hebrew and about Jewish holidays. This encounter was particularly important — it was the first time that those who had conceived the idea realized just how complicated it was, what a tremendous responsibility they were undertaking, and that among themselves there were differences of educational philosophy.

We wanted a school where the relationship between teachers and students was warm and constructive, to distinguish it from the standard Soviet institution where children were afraid to ask the teacher a question. We wanted a school with less rigid discipline, a school that placed the child and his or her family at the center. Some wanted to settle for a standard program with the addition of Hebrew and Jewish songs, and felt no need for a new educational concept. Others were wary of moving too closely toward Zionism. Rabbi Tutnauer described Israel's TALI schools and their educational philosophy. Everyone present at that meeting began to think more seriously about the project of opening a Jewish school in Chernowitz.

For two weeks in July 1991 the first Midreshet Yerushalayim teachers' seminar, led by Yossi Pnini, took place at Yarmula near the Latvian city of Riga. The Israeli teachers who taught at that seminar, Rachel Lior, Moshe Cohen, and Ruhama Weiss, worked on the basis of a curriculum that had been developed at the Beit Midrash for schools in Moscow and Chernowitz. The first week was dedicated



entirely to study. During the second week, only the teachers from Chernowitz and Moscow remained, and they worked day and night to prepare a detailed curriculum plan for several subjects, including Hebrew, Jewish tradition, Jewish history, as well as songs and games. This was the first time that the participants had heard about several important aspects of Jewish education, aspects that were entirely foreign to us. For me, the seminar aroused dual feelings of joy and fear. I am sure that the Jewish school of Chernowitz began at Yarmula.

Opening the school was extremely difficult because the government, which had given a verbal promise of support, actually did everything it could to undermine the project. For example, we had been told that there was a school that was under-enrolled due to the large number of old people in the neighborhood, and that the government intended to close it and turn the building over to us. Notification to that effect was also given to the school. The Fund leaders wanted to avoid a situation in which it would be said that the Jews took away the school and the jobs of those employed there. Their suspicion was borne out when the government announced that "an error had been made." On other occasions, the Ministry of Education suggested sites that were totally unsuitable, e.g., buildings without toilets. Only at the end of August — after many meetings with responsible officials at various levels, after we had telegraphed Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk, after all the parents had written to the newspapers — did we receive a building, one in which a preschool had been housed and had vacated due to its inappropriateness. We made do.

On September 1 all the other children in Chernowitz began their school year. Only the children who were enrolled in the first Jewish school in the Ukraine did not begin school on that day because the building had neither doors nor tables nor blackboards nor other basic items essential for a school. There were four rooms, a hallway, and a small room for the principal and teachers. For two weeks, workmen, parents, and teachers worked side by side to rehabilitate the place. For the first month, there were still some classrooms without blackboards.

Despite the condition of the building, we held a festive opening with the participation of all the children, parents and teachers, as well as a number of guests. The high point of the ceremony was the

affixing of a mezuzah to the main entrance. The atmosphere was very emotional — children sang Hebrew songs and danced Israeli folk dances, and all this was such a new, potent experience that everyone who was present remembers it as an important and joyous event, although a somewhat sad one as well.

On September 16, 1991 our first school year finally began. Its official name: Jewish School [No. 51] TALI – Chernowitz. On that day, despite the lack of many elements that characterize any normal school, there was great satisfaction on the part of children and teachers alike that the school year had finally begun. There were eight grades, first through eighth, but since the school had only four rooms they learned in “double session:” the younger students from 9:00 to 1:00 and the older students from 1:30 to 5:00. There were several youngsters who were too old for the grades provided, and in that first year we were unable to accommodate them within the framework of the school; however, in order to respond to their needs we opened a Sunday school. In all, there were about one hundred students in the day school (approximately fifteen per grade) and about forty in the Sunday school program.

In January 1992 Midreshet Yerushalayim held its second teachers’ seminar, this time in Moscow. It was conducted by Yossi Pnini, and with him on the teaching staff were Dr. Zvi Tsameret, Michael Rivkin, Ruhama Weiss, and Valerie Stessin. In addition, there was a young couple, Ayelet and David Drori, who came as emissaries of Midreshet Yerushalayim and spent four months in Chernowitz. They helped to prepare activities and taught us many new things. The topics of the mid-winter seminar were the holidays of *Tu be-shvat*, Purim and Pesah, Shabbat, and the history of Zionism and settlement in Eretz Yisrael. The Chernowitz teachers met the teachers from Moscow, as well as people interested in opening schools like ours in other places in Russia and the Ukraine. The teachers from Chernowitz and Moscow met as good friends, each having come a long way — one that had been both difficult and rewarding. We sat together, telling about our students, our experiences, and our problems, and trading useful “tips” (songs, games, and the like). I understood that this seminar was more serious than the first, both in terms of its level and because the entire teaching staff of the Chernowitz school took part — Jewish studies teachers and general studies teachers, some of whom were not Jewish. We acquired a great deal of new knowledge

from that seminar, a feeling of togetherness, and a desire for continued cooperative efforts. Before the seminar, the general studies teachers had thought it would be a vacation trip. They did not believe us when we told them that people work there all day. Later they saw what we meant, and we all came away with a strong desire to work as a team and to plan Shabbat and holiday programs together. The general studies teachers came to understand how important it was that the atmosphere of the school be pleasant and friendly. The seminar imbued us with a feeling that we were all involved in a program in which it was our privilege to be involved.

Another important milestone was the seminar held in the summer of 1992 in Zvinogorod, near Moscow. This was a very special seminar because it took place alongside a Camp Ramah summer camp for children from Moscow's TALI school. This third seminar opened up a new world for teachers of Jewish studies. There were many things I encountered there for the first time in my life. There were *shaharit* services, Torah study sessions, and lessons in Jewish philosophy. It was also fun to observe the Ramah campers. Sometimes, though, I found it hard to understand how and why children who had never prayed in their lives were doing so in such a natural and emotional way. Many times during that seminar I asked myself whether it was a good idea to try to attract the children to religion, since I was not sure that religion could be important to children who were raised in the Soviet Union. I wondered whether it might not be dangerous to do so, but after a few meetings with the children, a joint *kabbalat shabbat*, and a lesson I conducted, I felt confident that this was indeed the correct path. At that seminar, I realized for the first time how important my work in the school, and Judaism in general, were to me. I spoke many times with my colleagues from Moscow and Chernowitz, and for all of them this seminar was of prime significance. A group of teachers from Lvov who had joined us for the first time felt somewhat alienated in relation to the veteran participants: less thirsty for knowledge, less ready to develop and to speak about Jewish identity and the like. Here we once again worked together to build a curriculum, this time for the school's second year.

This seminar marked my first encounter with the Bible. There were classes that taught about the Bible and provided us with the opportunity to gain experience with various methods of teaching Bible to children. The seminar was like a frontier I had crossed, like a person

standing before a door, aware that there is something very interesting on the other side, when suddenly that door is opened.

At Zvinigorod I understood that Jewish education is an ethical matter, that the Hebrew language, for example, is like a key to a new world in the hands of students, a world that would enable them to internalize a feeling of being part of the wide world of Judaism. Most of the children had lived with the feeling that their Jewishness was an unpleasant burden they had to bear; now they understood for the first time that this was not so and they need not be embarrassed, that our history is interesting, our culture rich, and our religion ethical.

At first we had a goal: to open the school. This project reinforced our sense of being Jewish, but it was a very vague feeling; we did not define the educational goals more precisely. During my year working with the children I had met numerous people, not necessarily Jewish, who were involved in education and we were all keenly aware that our children live today in a country that has lost so many of its positive traits. They see around them so much evil and aggression. There is no feeling of security, sometimes not even within the family. I saw that our school and the camp gave the children tremendous joy, an opportunity to be open with friends and teachers and an awareness that there are many important spiritual elements to life. We believe that it is important that the tradition the children are exposed to in school enter their family lives as well.

The first year seems to me to have been the most important, primarily because there were so many people who did not believe that our school would come into being. The teachers worked very hard and did everything they could to ensure that each child would feel at home in the new school. The place was small and cramped and lacked many basic items, but there was a wonderful social atmosphere among the children, among the teachers, and between the two groups. We held *kabbalat shabbat* programs together with parents. We celebrated Jewish and Israeli holidays, including *Yom ha-atzma'ut*. We went on trips together and held evening programs of singing (*arvei shira*), Israeli-style. Slowly, word spread around the city that our school was a special place, a very good place for children, where everyone was like one big family. The impressions of that first year are deeply engraved on the hearts of the children, parents, and teachers.

At the end of the first school year we learned that the school was in

danger of being closed down because there was no room for a new first grade and for a number of ancillary facilities required by Ukrainian law, such as physics and chemistry labs, a gymnasium, and so on. The Ministry of Education informed us that we would not be assigned a different building. Another battle began, this time for a new building. Once again, we did not know until as late as August whether we would begin the new school year. The students and their parents sent petitions to the President of the Ukraine, asking for help. That year again, we were told a week later that we would be getting an excellent building for our school. In practice, however, taking possession was not so simple. The building was then occupied by a teachers' in-service training institute that refused to vacate the premises. In the end, the institute left on August 30. On August 31, from six in the morning till well after midnight, all the teachers, older students, and parents worked to get the building ready to open the next morning. From ninety-eight students in the first year, registration for the eight grades was now doubled. As pleased as we were, of course, about the new students and the new building with its numerous classrooms and sufficient space for everyone, the second year was a very difficult one. Creating a family atmosphere like the one that had prevailed until then was a nearly impossible task. The new teachers, like the new students, had trouble adjusting to many strange and unusual features, such as our unique atmosphere, students addressing teachers by their first names, and the expectation that students would ask teachers questions about things they did not understand as well as voice disagreements with the teachers. Students who had been in the school the previous year often said they missed the first school. I found it rather painful to hear them say that. The faculty met numerous times to consider ways of restoring the earlier atmosphere. We practiced for two months for a *tzedaka* concert before Purim, and with the proceeds prepared *mishloah manot* for the elderly. These food parcels were delivered by groups, each composed of new and veteran students, a teacher, and a parent. For Purim itself, we organized a large game in which everyone in the school would participate — each person drew a name from a big sack containing the names of students, teachers, and the principal, and a personal gift was presented to the person whose name was drawn. Such moments drew the members of the school community closer together.

We held a number of informal extracurricular activities. We observed all the holidays with ceremonies and social events, class by class or school-wide. Each Friday, one class met, students and parents together, for *kabbalat shabbat*. For many parents this was their very first experience of such a ceremony. We lit candles, saying the blessings, and learned a Shabbat song. Each time, the class presented a dance or a skit in Hebrew and exhibited their paintings. At that stage we did not yet include prayer services. Conducting the programs were myself, Volodia Boiko, and teachers of Hebrew and Jewish studies in the school. The other teachers took part as well. Occasionally, we invited a guest to tell about the history of the Chernowitz Jewish community before the war. It was very gratifying, after *kabbalat shabbat* programs, to receive requests from parents for the text of the blessings as their children had asked that they do *kabbalat shabbat* at home.

On Hanukka, to offer another example, we held a school-wide celebration, and on each day of the festival another class prepared an activity for the whole school and the whole school participated in lighting the candles that day. Before Pesah the children went out in small groups to visit elderly members of the community, bringing them matzot. Occasionally, we organized trips for the students and parents to Jewish historical sites.

Several times during the second year, Midreshet Yerushalayim sent *shlichim* who taught the teachers, contributed new ideas and, in addition to their help with the school program, helped us to make the school a Jewish cultural center. The school gained a good reputation in Chernowitz as a result of all this activity, and more and more new students streamed in all the time.

In February 1993 a local teachers' seminar was held in Chernowitz. Devora David-Schwarz and Valerie Stessin came from Israel to run it. The focus was on the Book of Exodus and on informal activities in preparation for Pesah.

The Passover seder is a topic unto itself. The first year, we held the seder in the best restaurant in town, with four hundred people attending, led by Margie and Moshe Tutnauer. The second year, thanks to Midreshet Yerushalayim, which prepared us, we had enough experience and knowledge to understand that it would be better to hold the seder in small groups, in a more family-style atmosphere. This program was more successful, since everything took place as a coopera-

tive effort of students, parents, and teachers. They prepared the food, decorated the hall, and prepared small presentations. It was moving to hear a seven-year-old child recite the blessings in Hebrew, his parents translating into Russian.

At the end of that school year the fourth Midreshet Yerushalayim teachers' seminar was held at Zvinigorod. The participants were teachers from the two TALI schools in Moscow, TALI Chernowitz and TALI Berdichev. The atmosphere was that of a large, very friendly family gathering. The same may be said of the Israeli staff, since we had been working with the same staff of teachers and advisors for two years. In every situation, we received assistance and a sense that we were accompanied on our path by good, loyal friends. The Zvinigorod seminar worked in several directions. The general studies teachers studied Jewish subjects and Hebrew. The Jewish studies teachers studied topics in *Pirkei Avot*, Bible, and liturgy. Among the Jewish studies teachers there were two groups: one group whose Hebrew was sufficiently advanced studied in Hebrew, thereby improving their language skills as well; instruction for the other group took place in Hebrew with Russian translation. Both groups together learned songs, games, and other new skills. At the end of the seminar each group prepared a presentation, offered in a festive atmosphere. Preparing those presentations provided us with experience we could later apply in the schools. Furthermore, there were evening programs in which participants spoke about their own paths to Jewishness and to religion. These stories proved to be engaging and significant, significant because such stories are told only after trust has been established among the members of a group.

In the summer of 1993 a joint Ramah Camp program, Ramah Yahad, brought together participants from all the TALI schools in the CIS.<sup>2</sup> This was a second summer of Ramah camping for the young people from Moscow, but for the children of Berdichev and Chernowitz this was their first Ramah experience. Many had taken part in Jewish Agency summer camps, and I was a bit hesitant since I was sure that at Ramah the atmosphere and the topics treated would be different. For the Moscow youngsters, prayer was no longer a new undertaking, but for the Chernowitz and Berdichev children this was their first encounter with prayer. Almost all displayed interest upon

2 Commonwealth of Independent States.

exposure to this new experience, and some even asked why they didn't have *tefilla* in school. I taught Hebrew at that camp, but I also learned an enormous amount, both in the classes that were held each morning for the teachers and counselors and from the children. The morning study session for adults was held even before morning prayers. Each participant was asked to choose one of three topics: the Binding of Isaac, Introduction to Jewish Tradition, and Introduction to Hebrew.

The camp proved to be very important to the children who participated. Even at this writing, nearly a year later, the children still dream about the next camping session. As a result of the camp experience, *tefilla* entered the life of the school. All the children from first to eleventh grade know the prayers from the siddur and eagerly sing them in Hebrew and Jewish studies classes and on holidays. The siddur, created especially for Camp Ramah Yahad, contains all the basic prayers in Hebrew with parallel Cyrillic transcription and Russian translation. Each Shabbat, there is an optional morning service at the school. Children of all ages come, along with parents and teachers, to pray, discuss *parshat ha-shavua*, have kiddush, and sometimes later take a walk to some interesting place in Chernowitz.

During the winter of 1993–1994, along with a group of Chernowitz teenagers and a few young teachers, we travelled to Moscow for a summer camp staff-training seminar. A number of Israelis, including Hagar Fein and (now Rabbi) Valerie Stessin, worked with us to plan the program for a summer camp in the Ukraine. At this writing, I am convinced that our camp will have a staff that is young but strong enough, since they had already experienced a variety of activities that will be helpful to them on the job. We spent a wonderful Shabbat together with camp counselors from Moscow. If I had not been sure the previous summer that the feeling of togetherness was entirely genuine, I felt so during that Shabbat.

The third school year is still underway, and I am certain that the future holds both joy and difficulties in no smaller measure. I have none of the doubts I had at the beginning, though. Many people deserve our thanks, people from Chernowitz and from Moscow, but most of all people from Israel, who took up the call with us to revive Jewish life in the CIS.

Today, our school provides assistance to other schools in the



western Ukraine. I serve as a consultant to the Sunday school in Berdichev, and we maintain contact with Tarnopol and Lvov.

The TALI School in Chernowitz today comprises a day school for grades one to eleven, with three hundred and sixty students, and a Sunday program for young children, university students, and parents, with nearly two hundred participants. The Sunday program, directed by Irina Boika, provides instruction in Hebrew, Jewish tradition, history, folk dance, and art. The Sunday school began at the end of November 1991, a few months after the opening of the day school. Its first students were several fourteen and fifteen year olds who had wanted to study in the day school but could not be accommodated due to the space limitations described above. A group of parents studied in the Sunday school as well. In the second year, the school's population expanded to include two large groups of five and six year olds, a group of thirteen and fourteen year olds, and many older adult students, some of them grandparents of the school-children. The school became a buzz of activity. In the third year, the Sunday school continued to expand, adding a program for about thirty university students and drawing a number of other adults — parents, teachers of general subjects in the school, and others simply interested in coming closer to Judaism.

There are no other formal Jewish educational institutions in Chernowitz, and most of Jewish life in the city is centered around our school. The Jewish Agency organizes Hebrew *ulpanim* from time to time. There is a cultural organization called Kehillah, dedicated to the memory of Eliezer Steinberg, a prominent Hebrew writer who was a well-known resident of Chernowitz. The Jewish Cultural Fund and the Israeli Cultural Center in the Diaspora sponsor a variety of cultural activities, provide assistance to those planning aliyah, and maintain a Jewish library. The Jewish Cultural Fund works in cooperation with Midreshet Yerushalayim to operate the Jewish school, as well as providing assistance to the community's elderly.

Most of the teachers who came to work in the school are teachers who were sought out. Most had previously been in contact with the school or the Fund. At the beginning, we also placed an ad in the newspaper, but it was mostly by word of mouth. We gathered a large group of teachers and began to meet every two weeks to talk about the school, about Judaism, and about the TALI schools — a network of schools within the Israeli public school system. Some of the

teachers simply dropped out along the way, some felt they were unsuitable, and others remained. By the spring of 1991 there was a stable group of teachers who taught in the school during its first year. During the second year, many of the teachers emigrated to Israel or other countries (reflecting the trend of young people attempting to leave the Ukraine). Finding teachers for the various subjects is now a serious difficulty, given that we prefer excellent teachers who are also Jewish.

A regular Russian school generally consists of grades one to eleven. Grades one through three constitute the primary school. (There is no fourth grade.) Primary school classes usually number thirty-five to forty students. They study writing, reading, arithmetic, singing, physical education, and art. At our day school, students study those subjects and in addition receive four 45-minute periods of Jewish studies (each week). These lessons include instruction in Hebrew, Bible stories, tradition, and holidays. Grades five through nine constitute the middle school in which classes are slightly smaller. New subject matter is added to the curriculum at this level: physics, geography, biology, chemistry, literature, and a foreign language (English). In the TALI Chernowitz primary school, instruction is in Ukrainian, but from middle school on, the instruction is in Russian. In the middle school, students have three periods of Hebrew and one of Jewish history, along with two periods a week of Jewish tradition. In the area of Jewish tradition, all the classes study the Book of Genesis and Jewish liturgy. Holidays receive more stress than other topics in the curriculum, but at the middle school level the Jewish life-cycle is added. In the high school, I have begun to teach *Avot* using a text written by Ruhama Weiss for Midreshet Yerushalayim.

Something should be said about the attitude of the Ukrainian government toward ethnic minorities, among them Jews. Once the period of perestroika began, revival movements began to spring up not only among the Jews but also among other ethnic minorities in the Ukraine, mainly Poles, Romanians, and Germans. Chernowitz has a Romanian day school and Polish and German Sunday schools. At present, the government's attitude toward our school is relatively positive. There are strained relations with a number of people, but that is a problem of personalities. The government as such does not make trouble for us.

The Ministry of Education is not very happy about the existence of our school. The school has a good name, and many families, including some non-Jewish families, are interested in enrolling their children. According to our contract with the Ministry of Education, we are obligated to accept a quota of ten to fifteen percent non-Jewish children. Their original demand was that we accept any interested applicant.

The Ministry's most recent examination of the school was conducted by a group of twelve inspectors, educational psychologists, and "unidentified persons" who spent ten days in the school with the authority to enter any classroom, intervene in any lesson, and interrogate any teacher at length. In their report, we were criticized for overemphasizing Zionism and neglecting the development of Ukrainian national identity. We are constantly under pressure from government and other Jewish organizations with regard to language: there are those who insist we should be teaching Yiddish "because it is the language of Ukrainian Jews," and not Hebrew. In the context of that thorough examination the students are given "psychological tests." One of the questions asked is: "Are you happy to come to school?" It should be pointed out that the average positive response rate to that question throughout the Ukraine is seven percent. In Chernowitz, an experimental school was established with a tremendous investment of resources and a concentration of the best teachers in the city. The positive response rate at that school was twenty-three percent. At our school, the percentage of students reporting that they gladly come to school was ninety-four percent.

That statistic reflects the nature of our investment and the return we have enjoyed. It is also a source of danger to the very existence of the school, situated as it is in a hostile environment and dependent on a government not favorably disposed to our activities.

## A JEWISH DAY SCHOOL IN FRANCE\*

Yehudit Kessary

The writer begins with an overview of the demography of the Jewish population of France, its geographical origins and religious affiliations. Most of the approximately 650,000 Jews are neither religious nor affiliated with any particular stream of Judaism. On the other hand, most of the educational institutions are affiliated with either the ultra-Orthodox or Orthodox sectors.

This article focuses on the difficulties encountered in opening a pluralistic, Zionist, Jewish day school in France. The "Ganeinu" kindergarten and school, which opened in 1980, was started by a group of parents seeking an education for their children that would stress the importance of Zionism, the Hebrew language, and the State of Israel. This was in contrast to the existing Orthodox day schools, which viewed Israel mainly in terms of its religious significance and taught Hebrew chiefly as a means to understanding religious texts.

The "Ganeinu" school encountered serious opposition from the mainstream Jewish organizations in France and was only recognized by the "Fonds Social" and the "Consistoire" after years of conflict with them. The writer describes the role played by the Israeli Embassy, the World Zionist Organization, and the Pincas Fund in supporting the creation of the school.

After the initial success of the "Ganeinu" model, another school with a similar outlook was proposed. The "Kiryat Eden" school opened its doors in September 1992, again amid firm opposition from the more Orthodox mainstream organizations. The "Fonds Social," although ostensibly in favor of projects that encouraged pluralism, demonstrated the gap between theory and practice and blocked requests for support.

This article compares the problems encountered in setting up both schools, as well as how they were solved. Difficulties, such as obtaining necessary authorizations, finding a suitable location, soliciting financial support, enrolling students, hiring qualified teaching staff,

\* For extended article, see Hebrew section.

and developing a curriculum, are discussed. The conflicts with Jewish community organizations are highlighted.

Although it is still too early to draw final conclusions, it appears that both schools are meeting the expectations of their founders. Enrollment is high and rising, and educational standards are above average. An active Zionist learning environment has been achieved, with the teaching of Hebrew language central to the curriculum.

## 2. Secondary

### "NACH PALÄSTINA DURCH WIRBALLEN" — A HEBREW GYMNASIUM IN LITHUANIA

Walter Ackerman

The establishment and maintenance of several networks of modern Jewish schools, which made it possible for Jewish children to progress from nursery school to the end of high school in institutions whose language of instruction was either Hebrew or Yiddish, was one of the great achievements of Lithuanian Jewry in the period between the two world wars. At one point some ninety-three percent of all the Jewish children of school age in the country were enrolled in Jewish schools; despite a gradual increase in their number over the years, only fifteen percent of Jewish youngsters were enrolled in government schools on the eve of World War II.<sup>1</sup> Government subventions often covered a substantial portion of the operating expenses of these schools, although to a significantly lesser degree after the accession to power in 1926 of right-wing nationalist parties. The burden of support was, however, primarily the responsibility of the Jewish community, especially in the case of high schools. That community, a thin stratum of businessmen, industrialists and professionals notwithstanding, consisted largely of a lower middle class and proletarian shopkeepers and artisans.<sup>2</sup>

Parents who found that neither the traditional heder nor the Lithuanian government schools satisfied their needs could choose from among four kinds of schools, each affiliated with loosely organized networks that spread across Lithuania and other Eastern European countries. The largest of these school "systems" was Tarbut — secular, Zionist and fiercely Hebraic. The Tarbut system also included the Pshore (compromise) schools — Hebrew centered but religiously Orthodox. The religious community also sponsored the Yavneh schools which, unlike ultra-Orthodox institutions, in-

1 S. Gringauz, "Jewish National Autonomy in Lithuania (1918-1925)," *Jewish Social Studies*, 17:3 (July 1952), pp. 225-246.

2 Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 225-227.

cluded the state-designed program of secular studies in their curriculum. The leftist Yiddishist schools of the Kultur Lige (Cultural League) were the fewest in number. The distribution of Jewish children among these various schools during the 1921–22 school year was as follows:<sup>3</sup>

System	No. of schools	No. of pupils	% of pupils in Jewish schools
Tarbut	46	4,339	32
Pshore	68	4,120	30
Yavne	30	3,362	25
Culture-League	16	1,754	13
	160	13,575	100

During that same year less than a thousand children attended non-Jewish schools of various kinds. Statistics for the Tarbut schools for the period between 1926–27 and 1938–39, the eve of the war, provide a picture of the extent of their influence:<sup>4</sup>

Type	1926–27			1930–31			1938–39		
	Sch.	Teach.	Pup.	Sch.	Teach.	Pup.	Sch.	Teach.	Pup.
Nursery	10	18	323	18	28	476	16	31	450
Elementary	86	241	6,217	81	312	10,491	78	346	9,699
Secondary	22	205	3,826	22	205	3,999	14	170	2,800
Teachers'									
Seminary	1	9	40	1	7	30	–	–	–
Total	119	473	10,406	122	542	14,996	108	547	12,949

Sch. = Schools, Teach. = Teachers, Pup. = Pupils.

3 Gringauz, "Jewish National Autonomy in Lithuania."

4 D. Lipetz, "Hebrew Education and the Hebrew Movement in Independent Lithuania (1929–1940)" (Hebrew), *Lithuanian Jewry*, ed. R. Hasmen (Tel Aviv: Yotzei Litah, 1972), Vol. II, p. 119.

At one point during this period there were more Jewish high schools in Lithuania, where there were approximately two hundred thousand Jews, than in Poland with its Jewish population of some three million.

The minority treaties which were part of the peace agreements that followed World War I and the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires provided the legal basis for the establishment of nongovernmental schools in Lithuania and other newly created independent states in various parts of Europe. In August of 1919 the leaders of Lithuania promised the Jews autonomy in their internal affairs, including "religion, welfare, social help, education and culture in general."<sup>5</sup> More specifically, the new government committed itself to providing Jewish schools, as well as those of other minorities, with "an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of public funds which might be allotted for educational, religious and charitable purposes."<sup>6</sup> The recognition granted Jews as an autonomous national minority included such important symbolic measures as permitting Jewish deputies to address Parliament in Yiddish and the posting of street signs in Hebrew characters in Kaunas, the capital city. Proponents of Jewish Diaspora nationalism celebrated the realization of their theory. This generous attitude, however, eroded over time; but the retreat from promises made in the heady days of newly gained independence did not prevent the spread of Jewish schools all over the country.

The Jews, of course, were not the only minority group in postwar Europe that looked to the government for the support of activities, educational and others, intended to nurture or preserve ethnic or national identities. There was, however, a major difference: the claim of the other minority groups was territorial — they sought recognition of their independence together with the establishment of states carved out of the areas controlled by the regimes of which they were part. Such claims as Jews had to Palestine required no concessions of territory from the states of their citizenship; they sought civil, cultural and even economic autonomy within the countries to which they pledged their loyalty.

<sup>5</sup> Mendelsohn, "The Jews of East Central Europe," p. 220.

<sup>6</sup> Oscar Janowsky, *The Jews and Minority Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), p. 381.



Even though the development of Jewish education in Lithuania between the two world wars was related to similar patterns in other noncommunist countries in Eastern Europe, it bore the stamp of the history of that particular community. Lithuanian Jewry had long been noted for its tradition of learning, its attachment to traditional forms of Jewish life even in modern times, and a deep rooted nationalism. During World War I some two hundred thousand Jews had been deported to the Russian interior by the Czarist government; the more urbanized or less rooted younger generation remained in the Soviet Union after the cessation of hostilities. The majority who returned, some 150,000, were strongly attached to the "shtetl" and had close family and folk ties. Lithuanian Jewry was culturally homogenous and one of the least assimilated in all of Europe — in part a function of the low level of Lithuanian culture, at least as perceived by Jews. As pointed out by Mendelsohn, "Jews growing up in Lithuania learned the language of the land but rarely considered themselves Lithuanians by nationality. That they did not was doubtless the result both of the relative backwardness of Lithuanian culture and of the deep roots of Lithuanian Jewry, whose process of secularization was accompanied not by assimilation but by the adoption of modern Jewish nationalism."<sup>7</sup>

The commitment to learning, which was one of the hallmarks of traditional Lithuanian Jewry, did not waiver with the onset of modern Jewish education at the end of the nineteenth century. Despite the opposition of the *melamdim* in the city, then a part of Czarist Russia, supporters of the idea of national revival established a school for girls in 1893 in Vilna, the symbol of rabbinical learning, for the purpose of teaching Hebrew as a living language.<sup>8</sup> The curriculum of the school, Yehudiah by name, consisted of Hebrew language, Bible, Jewish history, and general subjects. Because they had no government permit, the volunteer teachers did their work in secret in ten private homes in different parts of the city. The work of these early nationalist educators, and the many others who later established schools in Jewish communities around the world, is an important example of the way in which social institutions of long standing, in our case schools, may be invested with new systems of meaning.

7 Mendelsohn, "The Jews of East Central Europe," p. 227.

8 Israel Cohen, *Vilna* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1943), p. 354.

There is a considerable literature<sup>9</sup> that deals with the growth and development of modern Jewish education — religious, Zionist, and Yiddishist — in Eastern Europe in the period between the two world wars. Much of this material, however, might best be described as organizational history — statistics of enrollment over time, census of schools, relations with governments in different countries, schools in the context of Jewish communal organizations, general outlines of curricula, and broad statements of purpose. The treatment is systemic and lacks the detail that is necessary if we are to understand what these schools were really like. Memorial volumes sometimes provide particulars about schools in specific places; the approach, however, is generally hagiographic. Some of these limitations are overcome in *Achsanya shel Torah*, a slim volume published in 1921 by the faculty of the Hebrew gymnasium in the Lithuanian town of Wirballen.<sup>10</sup> The book paints a picture of the first two and a half years in the history of a high school which, despite increasing difficulties, maintained itself until 1937. We do not know whether or not life in the school was lived as described in the text. It is safe, however, to assume that the recorded account reflects the beliefs of its authors; it offers a glimpse into the minds of the teachers who established the school, designed its program, and molded its ethos. At the least, the account before us tells what its teachers would have liked the school to be.

The Jewish community of Wirballen<sup>11</sup> dated back to the middle of the seventeenth century. A decree of the Polish king Sigmund III issued on July 5, 1669 forbids the building of a synagogue — a sign that the number of Jews was sufficient to the organization of

9 Miriam Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland (1919–39)* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1950); Zvi Scharfstein, *History of Jewish Education* (Hebrew) (Vol.III) (New York: Ogen, 1949). Ezra Mendelsohn *Zionism in Poland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 186–222; Ernst Simon, Aharon Kleinberger, and Azriel Shochet. *The Educational Encyclopedia* (Hebrew) (Vol.IV) (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Bialik Institute, 1964), pp. 673–836; Z. Scharfstein, *Hebrew Education and Culture in Europe between the World Wars* (Hebrew) (Ogen, New York, 1949); S. Rozenhek, "The Jewish School System in Poland between the Two World Wars," *The House of Israel in Poland*, ed. I. Halpern (Hebrew) (Vol. II) (Jerusalem: Youth Department, World Zionist Organization, 1954), pp. 142–154.

10 Faculty (ed.), *A Place of Torah* (Hebrew) (Wirballen, 1921).

11 Sometimes called Verbalis.

communal services.<sup>12</sup> The location of the town on the Prussian border affected the economic and cultural life of the Jews. Trade with Germany made them relatively prosperous; the Jewish tobacco plantations in the area were the largest in Lithuania and together with light industries formed the basis of the export trade. In later years the town's situation attracted people fleeing from Czarist Russia who hoped to cross over into Germany; the presence of this transient population undoubtedly contributed to a weakening of traditional patterns of life. As early as 1839 Jewish children were enrolled in a Polish elementary school; a private *heder metukan* was established in 1875, some years in advance of the spread of this type of Jewish school. Approximately 1250 Jews lived in Wirballen at the time of the opening of the Hebrew Gymnasium, the second such school in all of Lithuania. The first had been established in nearby Mariampolė a year earlier.

The idea of the school as first announced in the spring of 1919 by the Planning Committee, composed of veteran communal leaders and young Zionists, attracted two hundred applicants; one hundred and eighty were selected and, divided into five classes, began their studies, as was customary, in the late summer of that year.

The Lithuanian Ministry of Education granted the school official recognition in a letter dated May 30, 1919. Its status, rights, and privileges were similar to those granted other private schools in the country.<sup>13</sup> These included government recognition of the school's matriculation certificate when that stage was reached, recognition of the diploma awarded to pupils who did not complete the entire course of study and did not acquire the matriculation certificate, and deferment of army service for regularly enrolled pupils. The school, for its part, was obligated to submit periodic reports regarding organization, finances and activities. Faculty appointments were subject to the approval of the government. The document also stated the government's obligation to make up the difference between income from tuitions and the expenses incurred by teachers' salaries, administration, and purchase of supplies or equipment. The school was free to develop the program of Jewish studies as it saw fit.

12 Berl Kagan, *Jewish Cities, Towns and Villages in Lithuania* (Yiddish) (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1990), pp. 125–132.

13 There were at that time only five government high schools in all of Lithuania.

The regular education of most of the children enrolled in the gymnasium in that first year had been disrupted by the war that had ended less than a year before. Some of them had studied in German schools, others in Russian institutions. Their knowledge of Hebrew had been acquired in various settings — Talmud Torah, private instruction and even yeshivot. There were significant differences in the knowledge and skills that children of the same age brought to their studies, and grade level assignments were often arbitrary.

The new school drew from all sectors of the community. The largely "modern and secular" faculty was not always able to contain arguments between observant and nonobservant pupils, or to guarantee each pupil the opportunity "of expressing those things which bothered him most." Despite the officially neutral stance of the school in matters of religion, a minyan was organized and led by a teacher for those youngsters who wanted to pray each morning. Scholarships were available to families who could not afford the tuition; on more than one occasion the school provided shoes and clothing for needy children. The differences in background and status troubled the youngsters less than their parents; prosperous families complained about the presence of the less advantaged for fear of the influence of their "bad habits" on their own children.

Girls made up approximately one-half of the student body. The idea of coeducation, even today a matter of debate in a variety of circles, was justified on several counts. Material circumstances made it impossible to establish separate schools for boys or girls. Moreover, the non-Jewish schools in Wirballen had long been coeducational. Equally important, however, was the conviction of the founders of the school that women were in every way the equals of men — as evidenced by the work they had done during the war — and capable of participating fully in the task of national revival. Needless to say, the argument that coeducation encouraged "immoral behavior" was rejected; the faculty believed that experience in coeducational schools taught the opposite.

The school was first housed in a building that had been badly damaged during the war. Funds for the renovation of the building and other expenses connected with the conduct of the school came from contributions, events sponsored by the parent's organization, and tuition. The acquisition of a second building during the school's third year was made possible largely because of the contributions of

*landsleit* living in the United States; that same source provided about twenty percent of the monies required to cover operating expenses. The Lithuanian Government rarely honored its financial obligations to the school in full.

While nowhere in *Achsanya shel Torah* is there an explicit statement of purpose, the very name of the school, Ha-gymnasia Ha-ivrit, locates the institution on the map of secular Zionist education. The emphasis on Hebrew reflects the belief, most succinctly stated by Ahad Ha'am, that the language and its literature, more than anything else, was the medium that would tie children "with bonds of love and reverence to their people and its land and...awaken in them the desire to dedicate themselves to the service of their people and to contribute to the national rebirth."<sup>14</sup> The founders of the school in Wirballen, and others of similar spirit in Jewish communities around the world, thought of Hebrew not only as a tool for fixing the boundaries of national identity or loyalty but also as the medium of a new consciousness. The "Hebraization of thought" was a condition for the creation of an environment capable of nurturing "*Ha-ivri he-hadash*" — The New Hebrew<sup>15</sup> — "a complete person in whom man and Jew are joined in a harmonious whole."<sup>16</sup>

The adoption of the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew as the "official" usage of the school was one of the early decisions made by the faculty. The Zionist orientation of the institution led quite naturally to that choice. The Sephardic pronunciation was one of the consciously created symbols of the nationalist effort in Palestine. The desire for a uniform pronunciation was another factor. The Hebrew spoken by teachers or pupils from different places in Lithuania or other countries often created a cacophony of Ashkenazic pronunciations.

The sometimes doctrinaire commitment to Hebrew — as the language of instruction in all subjects, Jewish and general, and as the language of life in the school<sup>17</sup> — was accompanied by a belief in the

14 Ahad Ha'am, "The Truth from Eretz Yisrael" (Hebrew), *Collected Writings* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1947), p. 33.

15 The designation was deliberate and intended to separate the coming generations from all the negative connotations associated with the appellation Jew.

16 Ibid.

17 "The soul of Hebrew education is its wholeness. Hebraism which envelops all levels of education from the beginning to the end, from the nursery school through higher education. Hebraism which colors every expression of education

spirit of the "new education." The fairly traditional and overloaded subject matter curriculum, designed by the teachers alone, was informed by a regard for the significance of childhood, an appreciation of the role of active experience in the learning process, and attention to the formative influence of a carefully designed environment. Like other progressive educators of that time, and even later, the teachers in Wirballen seem to have been deeply concerned about the individual student; they emphasized learning how to learn and prized creative effort. The shortage of equipment, particularly in the sciences, was turned to advantage because makeshift arrangements, designed by pupils working together with teachers, demanded more ingenuity and a deeper knowledge of the subject matter than generally required in more abundant circumstances. Pupils were expected to do more than simply repeat what they had been told by teachers; they were asked to "imprint the stamp of their own personalities on the material." And even if they did not succeed in being entirely original, the effort itself was important. The concern for the individual was perhaps most marked in the school's method of evaluation. "In evaluating pupils we always considered the individual (student) and adapted our demands accordingly. We did not apply absolute standards. Each teacher knew how his pupils were doing in all the subjects, not only his own, and was acquainted with the abilities youngsters displayed in activities outside of school. As an example: Pupil A excelled in Math but was weak in other subjects; accordingly we did not demand as much of her in Literature. Pupil B was an excellent actor but weak in Geometry; we asked less of him in that subject." A belief in the ability of young people to judge their own progress led to the practice that permitted a pupil whose knowledge in a particular area did not meet the requirements of the grade level associated with his age to participate in class as an "auditor" and then, when judging himself ready, to ask for an examination that would regularize his status. Pupils were given the opportunity to evaluate teachers and to offer suggestions regarding school policy or practice. The involvement of the student body, acting through elected representatives, in school affairs was encouraged not simply to "conform to a current fad" but

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— teaching, speaking and thinking, all the subjects of instruction, the entire climate of the school." A. Levenson, *The Hebrew Movement, in the Diaspora* (Hebrew) (London: Brith Ivrit Olamit, 1935), p. 306.

rather because of "deep appreciation of children's intuitions."

The readiness to grant pupils an active — although not totally decisive — role in determining practice was expressed also in grading and report cards. The original policy of the school, determined with some misgivings by the faculty, was to issue report cards three times a year, at the end of each trimester. In the second year of the school's existence, one of the mathematics teachers invited pupils to grade themselves, each one announcing the mark to the entire class. The second time that procedure was followed it evidently did not succeed; "good intentions were subverted by evil inclinations." A year later the faculty responded positively to a request from pupils to eliminate grades and report cards altogether. After discussions among the youngsters themselves and consultations with the faculty, the procedure adopted was to issue report cards three times a year in the lower grades and to replace them in the upper grades with a conference where teacher and pupil discussed the achievements, or lack of them, of the term just ended.

Some of the pressures with which the school had to contend, especially in the early years before establishing a reputation of academic seriousness, are evident in a rhetorical colloquy — "What is the purpose of our efforts in creating this school? Do we want to supply the Jewish people with graduates who hold diplomas or to educate human beings? Do we want to be a diploma factory or a real educational institution?" In the past, few Jewish youngsters from Wirballen had entered a university. There had been no academic gymnasium in the city before the war, and Lithuania itself provided limited opportunities for higher education. The faculty rejected the idea of the gymnasium as a preparatory school for the university; a program suited to the needs of the majority of the students who would not go on to the university seemed more readily justifiable than a course of study which catered to those few who might gain access to higher education.

The academic orientation of the school — humanities or sciences — was one of the major issues demanding early resolution. The importance of the sciences was readily acknowledged — "...it certainly is important to introduce the child to the world of nature and man... We have finally come out of the ghetto and it would be anachronistic to concentrate on things of the spirit alone. The children themselves want to know and learn about the universe and we will

teach those subjects and allot them an important place...but for all their importance, these cannot provide the foundations for our school. Hebrew humanism is our educational ideal. That includes Torah, Talmud, modern Hebrew literature, world literature taught in Hebrew or in the students' major foreign language, Jewish and general history, psychology, logic, philosophy, and economics. That is the central humanistic block. The second block, which we hope to relate to the first, will consist of arithmetic, mathematics, nature studies and geography. Subjects like physical education, singing, games, drawing, arts and crafts and sculpture will be related to both the humanities and the sciences."

In the first few months of its existence the school followed the example of the traditional Russian gymnasium and taught Latin to those students who planned to continue their studies beyond high school. This practice was discontinued because the faculty could find no educational or ideological justification for according that language a place in the curriculum. "From a national point of view Latin has practically no value for us...there is not even one book of significance for our national cause written in that language." The language was subsequently offered as an elective for those students who hoped to meet the entrance requirements of German universities.

The elimination of Latin as a required subject did little to lighten the load of foreign languages. Lithuanian was taught, first at the school's initiative, and then because of government requirements. Pupils were not expected, however, to develop any great degree of fluency in that language because Lithuanian culture, still in an early stage of development, "held little attraction." German was required because of its status as a major European language and because of Wirballen's location on the German border. Some pupils brought a knowledge of German to their studies in the high school; during the war they had attended a school in Wirballen that had been established there by German army officers. Russian was also required because of trade with Russia, an all important factor in the economic life of the Jewish community, and also because of the "many books important to the national point of view written in that language." When given the opportunity, every student in the school elected to study English.

The seeming surfeit of foreign languages was not uncommon in European secondary schools, largely elitist institutions until after World War II. The offerings of the Wirballen gymnasium in this



subject matter area resembled the foreign language curriculum of Tarbut schools in Poland — pupils there studied German and Latin in addition to Hebrew or Polish language and literature.<sup>18</sup> Even though the retreat from classicism in favor of "Hebrew humanism" may have been more easily possible in Lithuania than in other countries, it was nevertheless an important step in the process of defining the nature of Zionist education.

One of the interesting innovations of the new school was a course which in today's terminology might be called Contemporary Jewish Life. The purpose of the course was "To introduce pupils to the Jewish experience of our time... to encourage them to think about the meaning of the reality of Jewish life, to acquaint them with current intellectual and political trends and to motivate them to delve deeply into *ha-problematika ha-ivrit* (sic) in our lives."

The details of the course, spread over three years for the highest grades, included: demographic data about Jews all over the world, economic structure and occupational patterns of Jews, Jewish migrations in the past or present, the roots of nationalism, Jews as a nation, racism and the Jews, Eretz Yisrael as a national factor, Jewish languages, religious sects among Jews, the national tradition, anti-Semitism and the Jewish national movement. For lack of a text, class discussions and reading were based on materials prepared by the teachers. These "sheets" would in time be put together to create a textbook.

The lack of appropriate textbooks was felt in all subjects. In many areas there simply were no books in Hebrew; modern Hebrew schools in Palestine faced the same difficulty. Such books as were available often fell short of the school's requirements. One reader was discounted because its stories were concerned largely with "life in the shtetl," another was found wanting because it "painted life in the *galut* and religion in overly romantic terms." A series of books published in Palestine was suitable but too expensive. There were no history books, general or Jewish, which dealt with the past in a way that "met the needs of our children and related events to their lives." Things were no better in the natural sciences. A great deal of the materials used in the school were prepared by the teachers themselves

18 See Appendix. Compare this list of subjects to the curriculum of the gymnasium in Mariampolė, founded a year earlier.

and laboriously reproduced for distribution among the pupils. Pupils too were engaged in the search for material; they brought books from home and wrote to relatives in other cities inquiring about "borrowing" books and magazines from personal libraries.

Despite the efforts of the faculty, and the palpable presence of the sound and rhythm of the language in the life of the school — classroom instruction, teachers meetings, assemblies, the student newspapers, contact between teachers and pupils — the youngsters in the school did not speak Hebrew among themselves except for sporadic bursts of enthusiasm; "...it was as if the pupils had been charged by some current and for a few days or even weeks one heard nothing but Hebrew. It did not last, however. One by one they return to their regular language and you hear no Hebrew." The faculty rejected the idea of invoking sanctions against those who did not speak Hebrew. Teachers acting as policemen, even if practical, would have violated the spirit of the school. Their understanding of the learning process — drawn from psychological theories of the time not altogether invalidated today — led them to believe that the Hebraic environment they had created would ultimately lead pupils to the "natural" use of the language.

The written record describes the school as a community. Both the particular circumstances of time and place and a conscious effort on the part of the faculty contributed to a sense of "solidarity." The smallness of the town, familial connections among many of the pupils, and the lack of other things to do — "no movie, no theater, no museum" — are the grounds that guaranteed the school a central place in the lives of all those involved; "it was a spiritual center... neither teachers nor pupils had other groups to which they could relate." The teachers were young and imagined themselves close in ideas and outlook to their pupils. And above all, everyone shared a common "educational and national ideal."

The ideas of radical educators of the nineteenth century and their own time are evident in the deliberate organization of the school — teachers and pupils alike — into *edot* which paralleled class groupings. The purpose of the *eda* was to encourage mutual help, cooperation and participation in the conduct of school affairs. This was important not only as an expression of educational conviction but also as a practical matter. The newness of the enterprise, its straitened circumstances, and the constant need for improvisation — occa-

sioned largely because of the dedication to Hebrew and its accompanying paucity of precedent and meager supply of instructional material — required the active and willing cooperation of everyone. The older *edot* published a newspaper, organized parties, conducted public debates on questions of the day, and produced plays that sometimes toured the entire country.

A Student Council was established in the second year of the school's existence, following a congress of high school students in Wirballen during Pesah of 1920. A "*Magna Charta Talmidorum*" was prepared by the faculty and presented to the student body for "ratification." The controlling role played by the faculty seems at odds with its avowed purpose of encouraging pupil responsibility, in and out of school. Their actions may perhaps be understood as a statement that sets them apart from teachers in other schools who opposed the establishment of student-governing bodies because they were generally created as a counterbalance to the Teachers Council. The Student Council in Wirballen was charged, among other things, with maintaining discipline among pupils and keeping the school clean.

During that same year a *shomer* from Poland inspired a number of pupils to band together for the foundation of a branch of Hashomer Hatzair in the school. The teachers thought that the "discipline and moral ideals" of the youth movement held a particular fascination for their pupils. The group rented a small plot of ground outside the city and planted vegetables there after Pesah. The disappointing results seemed less significant than the effort itself. Not all of the school's pupils, however, thought the movement in the school a good idea. Those who were opposed, a small minority, did not see what it added to life in school; they considered it divisive and, perhaps because of the memory of the German occupation, objected to its "militarism."

With or without the youth movement, Eretz Yisrael was a constant presence in the school. "Every lesson in Bible and History was another link in the chain which bound the hearts of our pupils to Eretz Yisrael... we introduced Eretz Yisrael into every area of the curriculum... In this we were like traditional Jewish education which created a living connection between the child and the land of his fathers... before those children knew the country in which their city was located and the name of the river which ran through it, they

knew about the Jordan, the Mount of Olives and the Cedars of Lebanon." The blue box of the Jewish National Fund found a place in every class; hundreds of books were collected for *halutzim* in Palestine who lacked for reading matter. Songs, plays, celebrations — all were drawn from events and happenings in Eretz Yisrael. A letter from an unknown *halutz* was circulated and read in every class, from the youngest to the most senior. The location of the town and the border of Germany created an unusual connection; passports of *halutzim* and others on their way to Palestine were stamped "nach Palästina durch Wirballen." Pupils of the school, we are told, greeted each group of *halutzim* that came to town — "The atmosphere of the school is suffused with the ideals of Eretz Yisrael... Eretz Yisrael in our school is neither a geographical concept nor a figment of the imagination; it is a real and living thing."

*Achsanya shel Torah* is in some ways a paean of self-congratulation; it celebrates an idea even more than the institution it purports to portray. Even if the school did not function exactly as described, the book introduces us to the vision that guided its founders. The special enthusiasm that graces beginnings proved equal to problems that would have overwhelmed a lesser commitment. As real as it was, the school was also a community of the imagination. The achievements of the early days survived a difficult period of decline in the late twenties, caused by Jewish emigration from Wirballen and an increased attraction of non-Jewish schools, and assumed a new significance in a brief period of the growth that followed the rise to power of the Nazis in nearby Germany. The school was closed in 1937.

The Hebrew Gymnasium of Wirballen and similar schools in Eastern Europe, which flourished during the two decades between the First and Second World Wars, were a passing but nonetheless important moment in the long history of Jewish education. Driven by an ideology born of cruel circumstance, they saw themselves involved in an effort whose significance was no less transcendent than that of traditional schools of religious orientation. The goals they set for themselves set them apart from more commonly recognized efforts of nationalist and multicultural education; they undertook no less than to prepare their pupils for life in a country still more imagined than real. They were overtaken by events unimaginable.

## Appendix

Total	V	IV	III	II	I	Preparatory	Subject
27	3	4	4	5	5	6*	Language & Lit.
10	2	2	2	2	2	-	Grammar
7	-	-	-	2	2	3	Humash
22	3	3	3	4	4	5	Nach
6	2	2	2	-	-	-	Mishne-Talmud
8	2	2	2	-	-	-	Lithuanian
14	4	6	4	-	-	-	Latin
18	-	-	4	4	4	6	Arithmetic
8	4	4	-	-	-	-	Math
2	2	-	-	-	-	-	Physics
18	4	3	3	3	3	2	Russian
12	2	2	2	2	2	2	German
2	(2)	-	-	-	-	-	French
6	2	2	2	-	-	-	History
6	2	2	2	-	-	-	Jewish History
10	2	2	2	2	2	-	Geography
10	2	2	2	2	2	-	Nature Studies
4	-	2	2	-	-	-	Drawing
10	-	-	2	2	2	4	Writing
280	38	38	38	30	28	28	TOTAL

\* Hours per week, as given in Gymnasium Committee, *Report* (Hebrew) (Mariampole: 1920).

# IMMANUEL COLLEGE: THE BEGINNINGS OF AN EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

Simon Caplan

Immanuel College is a private Jewish secondary (high) school in the UK.<sup>1</sup> Founded in September 1990 the school now has over three hundred pupils and will grow to six hundred and fifty. Situated in the leafy outer suburbs of North West London in a twelve acre site incorporating purpose-built school buildings, playing fields and a Victorian listed mansion house replete with lookout tower, the college serves the largest concentration of Jews in the UK. The school's educational profile is that of a private, fee-paying, selective-entry college. The Jewish character of the school is formally Orthodox — in common with all but one of Anglo-Jewry's formal educational institutions — and in practice a "modern" or "centrist" Orthodox college, with a strongly pro-Zionist stance and a student intake of whom just slightly more than fifty percent come from home backgrounds that might be described as *shomrei mitzvot*. The story of the establishment of Immanuel College epitomizes the complexity of the management of change.

## The Story In Outline

The story of Immanuel College begins in 1971, when the then Chief Rabbi, Immanuel Jakobovits, created the Jewish Educational Development Trust (JEDT). Having recruited, for the first time in communal memory, some of Anglo-Jewry's wealthiest men to the cause of Jewish education in general and the building of Jewish day

1 The British educational system allows for the existence of state-funded denominational schools. Thus most Jewish day schools in the UK benefit from considerable financial assistance from the state towards running costs. A combination of the impact of "Thatcherism" on socioeconomic status, the outlook of a predominantly middle-class Jewish population in North West London, and a deterioration in social behavior within the state system of education, led to a determination among an increasing number of parents in the 1980s to secure a private education for their children at secondary level.

schools in particular, the JEDT's clarion call<sup>2</sup> was for the establishment of "a comprehensive<sup>3</sup> secondary school in outer North West London and a comprehensive secondary school in the Ilford area."<sup>4</sup>

Due to a number of other pressing priorities, the JEDT did not act until 1984 when research was commissioned in conjunction with the Torah Department of the World Zionist Organization to examine the prospects for each of these two major undertakings. Following publication of the findings of these studies a working party was established by the JEDT to develop the North West London project. Headed by a local businessman representing the core segment of potential parental support,<sup>5</sup> the working party constituted a loose coalition of all the key communal agencies. This working party met regularly over a period of three and a half years in order to develop educational and financial plans. The group's progress ultimately floundered under the failure to acquire a suitable site, among other things because of an unfavorable climate in the property market.<sup>6</sup>

The school's history took a turn in the late summer of 1988, when a site was unexpectedly located and subsequently purchased. As the JEDT came to refocus its attention on the prospect of investing

2 Plans for the JEDT were laid out in a booklet entitled "*Let My People Know*," published by the Office of the Chief Rabbi in 1971.

3 A school in receipt of state aid and responding to the criteria for such aid including nonselective entry, mixed ability schooling. A denominational school in receipt of such aid, but retaining a degree of autonomy over its curriculum and governing structure would be referred to as a "voluntary aided school."

4 For a description of the state of Anglo-Jewish education at the end of the 1960s see Milton Himmelfarb and Sergio DellaPergola (eds.) "*Jewish Education Worldwide: Cross Cultural Perspectives*" (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989). Adrian Zideman's concise article on "Jewish Education in Great Britain" reveals that Jewish day schools had not taken root within Anglo-Jewry as the major provider of formal Jewish education as they had in the other Commonwealth countries, with only just over thirty percent of those enrolled in formal Jewish education (only two-thirds of the total child population) attending Jewish day schools in the UK.

5 A small group of parents who had, some years previously, founded the Independent Jewish Day School, a modern Orthodox, "Ivrit be-ivrit" elementary school in Hendon. These parents were also connected with the establishment, at the same time, of the first "Young Israel" congregation in the UK and were regarded at the time as the most powerful potential support group for the new school.

6 The period of the mid-1980s was one of spiralling property prices and economic growth which severely limited the options for purchasing a suitable site for the school.

heavily in the creation of a new day school as a strategy for the educational development of a whole community, the founding philosophy of the school was, for the first time, committed to paper by the Principal of Jews' College and now Chief Rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks.<sup>7</sup> United by the vision expressed in Rabbi Sacks' paper, the JEDT Trustees committed themselves to the purchase of a £3,700,000 (approximately six million dollars), twelve acre site in Bushey in North West London. This was, in effect, the most substantial single commitment that the Anglo-Jewish community had ever made to Jewish education.

Taking into account the costs of repairing and developing the site, covering the initial running costs, and allowing for a student support fund,<sup>8</sup> the real cost of the project could be forecast as between eight and ten million pounds. Once the impact of interest payments over a multi-year period (and in the context of then spiralling interest rates) was included, the project could be seen as a ten to twelve million pound commitment (somewhere between fifteen and twenty million dollars). The decision to proceed should be understood as a watershed<sup>9</sup> for Jewish education in the UK. By the middle of February 1989 the site had been purchased and the establishment of the school once again became a potential reality. The pace of activity increased from early 1988 to September 1990 when the school opened its doors to fifty eleven year olds. There were, however, several distinct phases in the development of the school.

A Professional Advisory Group was established to develop the educational policy of the school. Two headteachers of successful

7 Jonathan Sacks, *"The Profile of an Educated Jew — Outline of an Educational Philosophy for a New Jewish Secondary School,"* written and submitted to the JEDT (November 1988).

8 Financial plans for the school included a twenty percent allowance for reduction in fees to accommodate student scholarships to ensure that the school would be open to all Jewish pupils on the basis of merit, irrespective of parental ability to pay the fees.

9 The term "watershed" is used advisedly on two grounds. Firstly it was with the inception of this project that Jewish day school education became the norm — the majority of Jewish children currently receiving any form of Jewish education in the UK are now enrolled in day schools. Secondly, the sheer enormity of the financial commitment, in comparison with all previous Anglo-Jewish educational projects, necessitated a realignment of the community's priorities which expressed itself in many of the events that flowed from the process of establishing the school, some of which are dealt with in this article.



Jewish secondary schools, two senior educationalists (Jewish) in the field of general education (one of whom subsequently became the school's first, and present, headteacher), an educational psychologist, a leading sociologist and social researcher, two outstanding Judaic scholars with interests in Jewish education, parent and lay leadership, and other educational planners met regularly over a period of six months in order to develop the educational policy of the school in key areas:

- Admissions policy
- Single sex or coeducation
- Commitment to Jewish Studies/Hebrew
- Role of Jewish Studies in the general curriculum
- Parents/School relationship
- Staffing policy
- Pupil intake
- Site utilization
- Staff recruitment
- Curriculum development.

During this fertile six month period, plans for the redevelopment of the site were prepared, and the school was given its name — "The Charles Kalms / Henry Ronson Immanuel College" — in honor of its founding sponsors, Chairman of the JEDT Stanley Kalms and fellow Trustee Gerald Ronson, and of the retiring Chief Rabbi and President of the JEDT, Lord Immanuel Jakobovits. This was also the period during which the process of identifying and recruiting a suitable headteacher, head of Jewish Studies, and core senior staff was embarked upon. Staff recruitment began.

The plan was to have the core staff in place one full year before the opening of the school. The very special educational requirements of the school implicit in Rabbi Sacks' foundation statement demanded such a plan. The school was conceived by its founders, not only as providing additional school places and establishing the first serious alternative to the many outstanding local, non-Jewish independent schools at which many of the brightest and best young Jews were being educated, but also as projecting a distinctive religious and educational philosophy designed to produce:

"...students who are thoroughly at home in both contemporary society and the full range of the Jewish heritage. It (the school) will unashamedly aim at creating leaders in all spheres of contemporary life, individuals whose sense of Jewish responsibility is deep and broad, encompassing an identification with the Jewish people in its totality, with Jewish history in its diversity, and with the State of Israel in its centrality. It will promote the Jewish traditions of principle and tolerance, intellectual depth and social concern, loyalty and generosity, academic rigor and ethical example. It will take as its task the projection of an Orthodox way of life and thought that earns the admiration of others of whatever faith. It will aim at creating in its pupils an integrated personality whose Jewish identity is knowledgeable, secure and proud, a spur to achievement and responsibility, and a challenge to exemplary citizenship in an ethically and religiously plural society."<sup>10</sup>

This, sometimes coded, clarion call for a mature contemporary Orthodox Jewish adult personality required a very special type of teaching staff that would work and grow together under expert guidance. Among other plans it was intended to invite Professor Michael Rosenak of the Hebrew University to serve as the Jewish educational consultant to the project. In order to develop a response equal to the educational challenge implicit in Rabbi Sacks' paper, an exceptionally generous "lead time" was allocated — one full academic year leading to the opening of the school in September 1990.

These "best laid plans" were pulled apart in the summer of 1989 by the onset of a management crisis. The cause of the crisis was overtly financial — accelerating interest rates in particular had radically affected the earlier estimates of the cost of the project. But behind this lay a complex matrix of factors that essentially reflected the "watershed" nature of the project. The enormous challenge involved in launching the project had required the building of a coalition of lay leaders that was neither ideologically nor in terms of personality a comfortable group. Support for the project was not to be expected either from the establishment organizations such as the United Synagogue which may have thought it should build the school, or from the other Jewish secondary schools that may have felt threatened by the ap-

10 Sacks, *"The Profile of an Educated Jew."*

pearance of a new school, nor even from segments of the general public who, unused to the very concept of education as the major claimant on communal funding, perceived the establishment of a school at the cost of twelve million pounds to be a disproportionate allocation of funds.

The symptoms of the crisis were the resignation of the Chairman of the JEDT in August 1989, an interregnum of uncertainty, and a prolonged reevaluation of the project. This painful process took five months and created a planner's nightmare. The project was frozen completely for a period — with a headteacher already appointed and in employment, senior teachers appointed and about to tender resignations from current employments, a head of Jewish Studies as yet unrecruited, a minimum six month building program to be completed, and a parent market looking on through the pages of the Jewish press, bewildered as to the true dimensions and shape of the crisis and with a clock ticking out regarding admissions to alternative schools.

The initial crisis lasted two months, during which a number of senior teachers were lost together with market support and the completeness of the curriculum development schedule. Thereafter, a minimal schedule of development was permitted in order to ensure that the school could physically open in time, should the Trustees of the JEDT agree to proceed with the project. That final agreement was obtained formally at the beginning of February 1990, although in practice the green light had been given some two weeks earlier in mid-January — at literally the final possible date at which it was still feasible to recruit the students and complete the building program in time to open in September of the same year.

By an act of organizational and political juggling, some elements of the educational development process had been rescued. Prof. Rosenak's visit as scholar-in-residence had been curtailed but not abandoned, and the majority of the senior staff appointees had waited with remarkable endurance for the outcome of the crisis. Yet more remarkable still, the degree of parental support for the project had not diminished significantly as a result of the uncertainty, and a new outstanding team of lay leaders dedicated to the success of the school had been forged in response to the crisis. Thus, when the school finally opened on schedule in September 1990, there were few vis-

ible reminders of the fact that its very existence had been shrouded in controversy and doubt for several crucial months.

**What was the Original Plan behind the Project and to what extent is Immanuel College Today a Reflection of that Plan?**

A major project that begins with an original plan is arguably the exception rather than the rule. Even where a written plan exists, it rarely reflects the complexity of the components of the decision-making process, namely vision, leadership, content, situational circumstances, timing, and personalities. It is the combination of these, rather than "the plan," which leads to the ultimate product.<sup>11</sup> Those elements of the plan that are committed to paper, and available to the policy analyst and historian, often reflect but that segment of a plan which it is felt appropriate, at a given moment, to expose — a decision often taken for public relations or other secondary reasons.

Often too, major educational developments — and Immanuel College is no exception in this respect — are the products of coalitions of thought and of people; coalitions which are built on a measure of understanding and a measure of deliberate or semi-deliberate nonclarification. And from when does one date the original plan? In the case of Immanuel College, for example, the establishment of the JEDT and the publication of "*Let My People Know*"<sup>12</sup> were clearly influential in creating what might be called the "myth" of the need for a new secondary school in North West London. Throughout the crisis period it was clear that one of the factors that

11 Graham Allison, "*Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*" (Boston, Little Brown & Co, 1971) is an absolutely indispensable guide to understanding the decision-making process. Allison summarizes Kennedy's decision to mount a blockade of Cuba, "Thus the decision that Kennedy announced to the world on Monday evening October 22nd emerged — part choice, part result, a melange of misperception, miscommunication, misinformation, bargaining, pulling, hauling and spurring as well as a mixture of national security interests, objectives and governmental calculations recounted in the more conventional accounts." As exotic as the comparison might sound, the complexity of the decision-making process is as true for Jewish education as it is for international politics! Allison's three alternative models for understanding the decision-making process are essential to an understanding of any policy-making environment.

12 See footnote 2.

kept the project alive was a deep sense of understanding on the part of the Trustees (many of whom were the original founders of JEDT) that the establishment of such a school was an integral part of their mission. However, the school that was envisaged in 1971 — a state-aided “comprehensive” secondary school serving the wider North West London Jewish population — was an entirely different proposition to that of an ideologically “modern Orthodox” private school serving a much more limited catchment. Thus, before measuring the implemented reality against an ‘original plan,’ it is important to identify which of the possible interpretations of what might have been the original plan one is addressing. I have chosen to compare the current reality of Immanuel College with the ideas presented in the aforementioned feasibility study of 1984/85.

The feasibility study, which consisted of market research interviews and an analysis of demographic data, was seen by those who commissioned it as a means of assessing the strength of public support for the creation of a new school and reactivating the project. The findings of the study were fairly precise in defining the basis — in its view, the only basis — on which such an endeavor would be likely to achieve a sufficient share of the market. It was on the basis of these findings that a working party was established and given the assurance of the JEDT that it would support the project. It is interesting, therefore, to note that significant differences exist between the school as sanctioned by the market (and therefore the Trust) and the school as it is. The school today is a reality that market research deemed unsupportable. Immanuel College is not a realization of the plan as defined by the feasibility study. The following are examples of differences:

### *On Selectivity*

The study unequivocally stated that only an academically selective institution could capture enough of the market to make it viable. The “buzzword” throughout the five years of the development of the project was “a Jewish Haberdashers.”<sup>13</sup> Selection by the usual means

<sup>13</sup> The Haberdashers Aske School is an independent school in the outer suburbs of North West London, neighboring Immanuel College. It is popular with Jewish parents and has a high proportion of *shomrei mitzvot* pupils among its student body.

would signal the school's commitment to academic excellence.

Immanuel College *is* a selective school, and the *administration* of its selection mirrors that of the other independent schools. There the similarity ends. Immanuel College has developed quite different standards for assessment. Selection is based on examinations and interviews as it is in the other independents, but with a quite different emphasis. The school takes into account various Jewish criteria, including proficiency in Hebrew and Jewish Studies. The concept of excellence is applied specifically rather than generally: a child with a particular talent in one area might be granted a place even if he or she is weak in the core subjects that determine entry to the other independents. Most importantly, the school tends to gauge aptitude and attitude rather more than it attempts to assess attainment. Immanuel College conforms to the independent school selection process, but its criteria are significantly different.

### *On Time Devoted to Jewish Studies*

The feasibility study found this to be a "sensitive issue." To quote the survey: "Most parents suggested a weighting of fifteen to twenty percent and were clearly disturbed by proposals of twenty-five percent or more. Here again a high weighting was regarded as a reflection of an excessively religious orientation, quite apart from its practical implications in relation to the time available for secular subjects."

The key target population, including the Jewishly committed parent, perceived time taken for Jewish Studies as time lost for the essential subject matter of education. This issue could affect a decision to send a child to the school. Immanuel College as a reality allocates approximately twenty-five percent of the timetabled hours to specifically Jewish areas. In addition, the school attempts a high degree of cross-curricular cooperation, particularly in certain key areas such as history, which entails a further 'incursion' of Jewish learning into the curriculum. Furthermore, students consider Jewish Studies one of the most popular of subjects — perceived as a key to the spirit of intellectual inquiry which drives the institution rather than as a sacrifice in time from the secular curriculum.

### *On Segregation of the Sexes*

Despite the fact that most of the alternative non-Jewish independent schools are single-sex institutions, the feasibility study revealed a strong preference for a coeducational approach — mainly because the enforcement of a single-sex environment would be seen as a mark of a religious policy.

The policy of Immanuel College today is single sex in the classroom within the context of a one-campus school. The total school is “coeducational,” while classroom teaching (except in elective subjects where numbers do not permit it) is segregated. This approach was recommended by the Professional Advisory Group<sup>14</sup> on the advice of its senior consultants in general education and on the basis of research suggesting the benefits to both sexes of single-sex instruction in different subjects. This policy is not considered a religious statement, as was envisaged by the feasibility study.

### *On Personnel*

In advocating an academically selective school, the feasibility study emphasized parental concern for the right type of teacher, “experience of teaching to University scholarship level was considered essential.” But no mention is made of the necessary Jewish qualifications of senior staff.

The Immanuel College staff recruitment policy is certainly conscious of academic criteria, but its emphasis is clearly to seek out teachers with the integrative skills required to implement the Jewish educational vision of the school.<sup>15</sup> While taking for granted the kinds of academic requirements that were of concern to potential parents, the process of recruiting senior teachers concentrated heavily on identifying Jewish individuals with the personal qualities and professional skills required to participate as a member of a team in implementing a particular vision of a Jewish school — and this applied as equally to the “secular” as to the Jewish Studies staff.

<sup>14</sup> See above, “The Story in Outline.”

<sup>15</sup> Sacks, “The Profile of an Educated Jew.”

These are merely examples of some of the differences between the school as envisaged on a market basis and sanctioned by the JEDT as a response to a market need, and the school as established by individuals with a vision who were concerned to develop a certain type of Jewish educational concept, in response to, but not in rigid conformity with public opinion. Is Immanuel College today recognizable in terms of the 'original plan' as mapped out in the feasibility study? Recognizable, yes, but not congruent. Is Immanuel College, then, congruent with the aims and vision of the individuals who planned it? That is in many ways a more complex issue.

### **Immanuel College in Relation to the Aspirations of its Founders — The Overt Plan<sup>16</sup>**

As has been indicated, the Immanuel College project represented a series of coalitions on several levels. At the level of lay leadership the project was the product of a coalition for Jewish education within the JEDT. Led by the Chief Rabbi, and chaired by an Orthodox Jew, the Trust was nevertheless broadly based and numbered among its more powerful elements both secular and Reform interests, as well as the full range of pro-Zionist ideological diversity within its Orthodox ranks. At the level of parent/community support, the more immediately involved parties were representative of what might be described as a nascent 'Young Israel' grouping, but even at the most intimate level of involvement there were nuances and emphases sufficiently different as to have ramifications for the way in which a shared vision might be translated into educational policies. And beyond the intimate group it was clear that a project of such dimensions could only be made viable with the support of a much wider catchment of parents — necessitating, at least, subtle packaging of the product, if not real concessions in educational policy. At the level of educational planning the project deliberately allowed for a varied input as it took advantage of the wisdom of a range of senior educationalists. The professionals, particularly as the project re-

16 Seymour Sarason, *"The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change."* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc, 1971). Among his many fine understandings of the dynamics and the difficulties of making change 'stick,' is an exposition of the notion of overt and covert agendas that are utilized in this article.



cruited its senior staff, constituted another coalition rather than a unity of forces established to implement the project. And so there were many voices and many groups of voices that were heard as Immanuel College developed.

While it is clear that multiple agendas were present in the development of the project, it is equally supportable to claim that there were certain critical unifying features. These underpinnings were the elements that maintained the commitment of all the various factions and coalitions. They were the platform which allowed the most influential elements, both at a lay and a professional level, to drive the project forward — subject to some of the constraints of the market and occasional powerful interventions on the part of more peripheral vested interests.

What were these unifying features? Turning firstly to the overt agenda — that is to say the publicly expressed concept — once again Rabbi Sacks' paper gives us the clearest sense of what it was that bound the entire coalition of coalitions together. The paper referred to, and elaborated on, four features which, it was hoped, would characterize the graduating student of this school. They were:

- A commitment to hard work, intellectual achievement, honesty and integrity.
- A mature Jewish identity, together with an understanding of the depth of knowledge an intelligent Jewish identity requires.
- A sense of Jewish responsibility.
- A mature sense of the necessary interaction between Jew and non-Jew and between religious Jew and nonreligious Jew.

One could dismiss these 'principles' as so broad as to be meaningless. But in another sense, and with a sensitivity to the coding implicit in the way in which (and by whom) they were expressed, they were instantly recognizable to the various coalitions — in different ways. To the average Trustee of the JEDT, they were "flashcards" which identified the school as an equivalent of the local non-Jewish independents — a Jewish version of Haberdashers. To the 'Young Israel' modern Orthodox parent or Jewish educator, they were beacons lighting up the path towards an integrative modern Orthodox approach. To some readers the distinguishing feature of the list was to connect the school to the best elements of British education,

whereas to others the distinguishing feature was to disconnect the school from the worst features of Anglo-Jewish education. The Sacks document appealed to all — and it appealed above all because of its instant marketing message.

Whether or not the school today conforms to this overt original plan is still too early to assess because there has not yet been a graduating class. It is fair to say, however, that the Sacks essay sets a tone that has been adopted by the school, and that the text of the essay continues to play an active role in the life of the school. Educational programming is not uncommonly developed as *parshanut* (textual interpretation) of Rabbi Sacks' paper, and the significance of this should not be underestimated.

### **Immanuel College in Relation to the Aspirations of its Founders — The Covert Plan**

There was also what might be called a covert agenda. Not covert in a conspiratorial sense for it was never discussed as such in any exclusive forum, but in the sense that it was never committed to paper. This was the agenda which in reality united the very innermost core of activists, both lay and professional. That agenda was as follows:

1. A sense that the need to grapple intellectually with the tension between modernity and Orthodoxy was at once the most pressing and the most suppressed element in the Anglo-Jewish community.
2. A sense that the issue needed to be aired in an educational institution.
3. A sense that the brightest and the best of a future generation had only compartmentalized educational options from which to choose — either a good education at a non-Jewish school, perhaps supplemented by a teenage center or youth group experience, or a rigid, traditional Jewish day school experience. Either choice being unhelpful to the resolution of 1. above.
4. A belief that a more holistic, integrated form of Jewish education must be achievable.
5. A strong commitment to a 'classical' approach to education, including the inculcation of a love of learning, of knowledge, of

independent inquiry, and of a linkage between Jewish Studies and character education.

6. A strong commitment towards the State of Israel and Hebrew as the language of the Jewish people.
7. A sense of a linkage between Jewish education and social and civic responsibility, including a perception of school as a community, which would foster leadership characteristics.
8. A belief that parents must be involved directly and intimately in the task of achieving the school's goals.
9. A sense of frustration with the growing 'right wing' stranglehold on ownership of the concept of what constitutes authentic Judaism and a belief that a substantial population of committed Anglo-Jews were open to and waiting for alternative intellectual leadership.
10. An awareness that the community had no institutional mechanisms for the production of that leadership.
11. A sense that a center of excellence in education, particularly at the secondary level, would have the capacity to inspire change and improvement throughout the system.

This lengthy list was never committed to paper, nor was it discussed as a 'plan' for the school. As a total list it could never have been the means for constructing the various tiers of support that a project of such dimensions required. It contained too many clear-cut ideological positions to have been acceptable to all those who would have to support the project if it was to succeed. It was the self-understood credo of an inner core. It was mediated throughout the development of the project by the need to build community support, by the building of lay and professional teams who could be responsible for implementation, and by the situational constraints of Anglo-Jewry and of the British educational system. But it would be to misrepresent the nature of the project to ignore this version of the 'original plan.'

Schools are not built on paper, but rather forged in the smelter of real community situations. It should be clear that the picture of Immanuel College that is being constructed here is of a school engaged in what has been referred to as "cultural production," and not

only "cultural reproduction."<sup>17</sup> But the agents for change — the senior teachers, the lay leadership and so on — are themselves inevitably heirs to a certain tradition. To the extent that the school's professional leadership was carefully chosen by the supporters of the covert agenda and clearly think of themselves as change agents rather than as guardians of an existing tradition, one can say that even the covert plan is still widely reflected in the Immanuel College of today. But it is clear that the translation of an original plan into an educational program is heavily mediated through the professionals responsible for that translation — mainly the senior teaching staff. The interests and preferences of the school's leadership was bound to play a critical role in determining nuances and preferences from within the 'menu' of the original plan cited above. And so, for example, whereas one can identify elements of each 'menu' item in the curriculum of Immanuel College today, the extent to which each element has been mapped out and given programmatic substance is quite different in different cases. Item 8, for example, stressing the parental role in the project, has been given full expression in the life of the school. This is due to the advocacy of the current headteacher. Item 7, however, and particularly the notion that the school should be constructed as a community — a concept that might lend itself to a wide range of programmatic expressions many of which were indicated in planning papers leading to the opening of the school<sup>18</sup> — has received less prominence.

The notion that each major change on the intellectual, programmatic or institutional stage is accompanied by an original plan is, it has been suggested, too simplistic to describe the policy planning environment. This paper indicates the existence of several differing conceptions of an original plan, each of which played a significant role in the development of what was to become Immanuel College. At one extreme one can look to the existence of a market-driven

17 These terms are referred to as they are used by Himmelfarb and DellaPergola (eds.), *Jewish Education Worldwide: Cross Cultural Perspectives*.

18 The Professional Advisory Group, for example, adopted a policy on admissions that expressed this emphasis when it was suggested that prospective pupils might be assessed on the basis of "the contribution that the child will be able to make to the school" — a rather novel formulation that placed the emphasis on the notion of the school as a community.

concept of the project. At another, one can perceive the existence and the influence of a covert agenda shared only by the innermost circle of activists. In between one witnesses elements of each of these conceptions being translated into public expression for use in building various necessary tiers of support, steering the project through each particular threshold, creating tools for the construction of an educational program, and so on.

The kind of conceptual clarity that can be imposed on a project in certain circumstances, such as strong individual leadership or lack of situational constraints, is the dream of every communal professional who seeks to change the system without enduring the pain of change. But it is not the normative situation. The tension between the needs and the capacity of the market to absorb change and the will of "champions" and leaders to promote change was only one of the many strands through which to sift the story of the development of Immanuel College, and of which the student of change must be aware.

### **What Obstacles Stood Between the Plan For the School and its Realization?**

The basic building blocks for this major project were in place by the beginning of 1985. The commitment on the part of a major Trust fund had been secured. The core of the necessary finance had been identified. The feasibility of the project had been assessed, and in so doing had identified the main elements in a marketing campaign. A working party combining the interests and wisdom of the key parent population and the main educational suppliers in the community had been constituted and was already enthusiastically at work. With all these advantages it is all the more striking that a full five years elapsed before the school was actually established. These were five years of hard work and constant frustration in which a number of major obstacles — some particular to the socioeconomic environment of the UK at that time, and some a product of the complexity of the change process itself — presented themselves to the planners.

### *The Difficulty in Acquiring a Site*

The first and most basic reason for the long delay between the decision to proceed and the implementation of the project was the failure to locate an appropriate site for the school. As this was to be a fee-paying private school to rival a number of impressive non-Jewish equivalents, it was assumed from the outset that its physical environment would have to be sufficiently complete to indicate the seriousness and stability of the project. Temporary accommodation, as the feasibility study made clear, would not have succeeded in persuading many parents. Long after the working party had completed its discussions and the construction of financial models, a site had still not been found.

There were differing opinions regarding the 'ideal' location. Some felt that the school should be located in the very heart of the existing Orthodox community of North West London because this would enable it to create, more easily, a sense of community, would win it parent support as a convenient option, and would present a high profile and ever-present challenge to the existing Jewish day schools. Others felt that a more outlying rural setting within the Jewishly rapidly expanding outer North West London suburbs would be more appropriate. Several of the existing rival non-Jewish independents were thus situated. It was also felt that a certain distance from the more concentrated Orthodox areas such as Hendon and Golders Green would allow the school a little breathing space in terms of its challenging spiritual and educational goals. All accepted, however, that as important as this theoretical debate might be, the matter would be settled in the end by availability.

Frustratingly for the project, the period of the mid- to late eighties was one of an unparalleled property boom in the UK. This effectively ruled out the possibility of acquiring a noneducational site with a potential for development. Such properties, in and around North West London, were being acquired by property developers at accelerating prices that rendered it impossible for a nonprofit organization to compete. Several attempts were made to acquire sites which were subject to planning constraints<sup>19</sup> and to do so with special permission

19 Many of the remaining undeveloped tracts of land in the outer North West London area had been legally defined as "Green Belt Land," carrying stringent

to develop a strictly educational facility. Indeed the Trust, together with the Chief Rabbi, had considerable informal influence in both government and local authority circles at that time. However, such efforts were met with consistent failure.

This left open only two potential sources for the acquisition of a home for the school. The planners had to identify either a private or a state school that was closing down. Neither of these avenues presented themselves easily. The generally healthy economic climate that lay behind both the confidence of the Trustees of the JEDT in commissioning the project and the property boom that was thwarting its development had also contributed to a buoyant atmosphere in the independent school sector. Private schools were simply not closing down during this period. And as for the prospect of acquiring the premises of a state school — and there were periodic closures throughout the various local boroughs because of declining pupil population — this too was problematic. It was problematic not only because it was understandably on the whole the *least* rather than the *most* attractive sites that were being targeted for closure, but also because the local authorities, too, were attracted by the prospect of significantly boosting revenue by selling to a property developer rather than an educational buyer.

Ultimately the JEDT acquired a magnificent twelve acre campus in the outer suburbs of North West London — close in proximity to the most significant non-Jewish independent school rival — as the result of the closure of a private school. The circumstances under which the site was acquired were, themselves, exceptional and remarkable. Moreover, the purchase was made at the end of the property boom, with prices already beginning to stagnate and interest rates rising. This in turn added to the financial troubles in which the project found itself in 1989, leading directly to the crisis that overtook the project in the summer of that year. Thus the obstacle presented by a particular set of socioeconomic circumstances in a particular community was a major factor in shaping the character of the project in every sense.

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planning restrictions which might, on occasion, be overcome, but the likelihood of using the land for profit-making purposes was scant.

### *The Financial Issue*

Another significant obstacle, perhaps not surprisingly, was finance. As already indicated, the projected cost of Immanuel College made it the most substantial undertaking in the history of Anglo-Jewish education. Although the JEDT was built on the participation of some of Anglo-Jewry's wealthiest families, and was able to identify a core of around five million pounds from the outset, the dimensions of the project presented an altogether fresh challenge for the Trust and the community in general.

Anglo-Jewish communal leadership at that time could be divided into two types — the lay leadership of the major institutions and communal organizations, the United Synagogue, the Board of Deputies, the Zionist Federation and so on; and an *ad personam* leadership of wealthy and influential individuals. The latter in some instances were formally installed within the leadership structures of the establishment; however, they exercised personal rather than institutionally based power.<sup>20</sup> It was understood that the major areas of communal concern were divided between these individuals, each of whom would allocate the core of his energies and charitable resources to a particular area. Each would contribute to the causes of the others. From this perspective it should be clear that the Immanuel College project, which simply could not be achieved or even attempted out of the pocket of a single individual, was bound to ruffle the surface of a time-honored pattern of communal behavior.

Moreover, the structure of the Anglo-Jewish community regarding philanthropy has always militated against the interests of Jewish education. In contrast to the American pattern, the UK has not developed a "community chest" approach. There is no federation or federation equivalent. Despite the highly centralized structure of the community, major communal directions and priorities are not nurtured in the context of a community-wide forum. The Joint Israel Appeal,<sup>21</sup> by far the most significant charitable organization in the Anglo-Jewish community, is a one-cause concern. Whereas, in practice, the JIA has increasingly dipped into its kitty over the past decade to prop up small or floundering local organizations, particularly in the

20 Chaim Bermant, *"Troubled Eden — An Anatomy of British Jewry"* (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1969).

21 Anglo-Jewry's equivalent of the American UJA.



educational and youth-work fields, this has always been managed on a limited, and even semi-clandestine fashion.<sup>22</sup> Within the welfare sector some efforts have been made in recent years to capture the community's imagination — and a larger share of the charitable giving market — resulting in the creation of an overarching body, "Jewish Care," to achieve this purpose. The JEDT was perhaps the closest equivalent to a community-wide educational agency.

A project of the magnitude of Immanuel College could not be mobilized without the support of the JIA, some of whose senior lay leadership were included in the individual layer of community leaders mentioned above and were trustees of the JEDT. That support was acquired from the outset, but again, at the price of going against the grain of community patterns of practice. At times the tension surfaced directly as the conceptual issue came into focus. The height of the management crisis of late '89 coincided with the launch of a major initiative to assist aliya from the Soviet Union. For the leadership of the JIA, including individuals who were personally committed to Jewish Education, the situation in which substantial sums remained locked up in a commitment to a local educational initiative was a source of considerable angst, not only on a practical but on a philosophical level. Here the financial issue became the prism through which the whole question of Jewish continuity and the nature of communal responsibility became focused for a moment.

The management crisis that has been referred to on several occasions was due to the financial issue. The financial problem was not the only issue, but it clearly became the framework within which a watershed situation of real change could be addressed. Interestingly, the final resolution of that crisis came about when the local business/parental interest in the school reentered the debate with an offer that would lighten the financial burden of the Trust. Over and above the technical details and the political background of this development — which was both complex and illustrative of the dynamics of

22 It should be noted, however, that this situation has changed somewhat with the agreement between the JIA and the United Synagogue for a small proportion of funds raised from the "Kol Nidre Appeal" (an annual fundraising drive) to be formally allocated to educational projects within the United Synagogue. More recently, in 1994 a significant breakthrough occurred and the JIA is now using its fundraising apparatus to raise money for Israel and for "Jewish Continuity," which supports home-based educational projects.

change but beyond the scope of this essay — the conceptual point was important. The offer cracked open an assumption on the part of a group of older, senior lay leadership that the pool of communal resources resided in the narrow circle of their colleagues, and indicated the existence of a broader, younger, and some ways more grassroots type of support. Underpinning assumptions regarding the pattern of communal charitable giving were, in this sense, an obstacle to a project whose magnitude demanded a fresh approach. In this sense, Immanuel College might be seen in the future as one of a cluster of projects which forced a restructuring of communal patterns of behavior as well as of communal priorities.

### *Opposition Within the Community*

In 1985, when the findings of the feasibility study were published and a working party established to develop the concept of a new school in the area of North West London, there was little if any overt communal opposition to the plan. The working party was broadly representative, including the United Synagogue, the two Jewish Agency departments, as well as parents and local primary schools. If the other local Jewish secondary schools<sup>23</sup> were feeling threatened they certainly did not say so.

As the project progressed from theory to practice, opposition from these sources began to surface. The main grounds of opposition — reflecting the different sources of the opposition — were, a) the excessive cost of the project, b) the negative impact it might have on existing day schools, c) the issue of control, and d) ideological/educational reservations.

It is interesting to note that almost all of these issues were inherent in the project from the outset. The feasibility study had indicated that the project would be costly; it demonstrated the market niche to which the new school could address itself, as well as the genuine shortfall in secondary school places based simply on demand; and indicated that the preferred governing structure for the school would be that of an independent school, not linked to one of the com-

<sup>23</sup> Principally the Jews Free School (JFS) and the Hasmonean High Schools, the two largest existing secondary schools.

munity's central educational bodies.<sup>24</sup> It was also clear from the outset that the school would be a private one, and of a modern Orthodox, pro-Zionist complexion. None of these factors inhibited the various central educational authorities from participating in the working party. Nor did they bring any public criticism from the other Jewish day schools. At least in the early stages. Nevertheless, as one might expect, the Immanuel College project faced a growing chorus of communal opposition as it moved closer to implementation.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps those most immediately threatened by the creation of the new school were the two largest Jewish secondary schools, the Jews Free School and the Hasmonean High School. For the former, the real threat was that a tiny, but nevertheless significant elite core of students might be spirited away. More indirectly, the new school appeared to be monopolizing communal attention, absorbing vast resources, and promoting the idea that existing arrangements of Jewish secondary education left something to be desired. In addition, the issue of private versus public education was a talking point. For the Hasmonean High School the threat of an incursion into its potential student market was much more real. Although the Immanuel College concept was primarily aimed at competing for the Jewishly committed segment of the non-Jewish independent school intake, the reported religious/educational direction of the school was a clear if implicit challenge to Hasmonean's more traditional Jewish educational approach. Moreover, the local lay leadership of the working party were identifiable as typical Hasmonean parents. Market shares may be neatly defined and segmented in the context of a paper survey, but in the context of real life the early years of the new school might even seriously deplete the student body of the existing traditional Orthodox high school.

The opposition of these schools was overtly muted. It was, after all, invidious for the proponents of Jewish day school education to

24 Either the United Synagogue or (less likely in the circumstances) the Zionist Federation Education Trust (ZFET), which is the single largest Jewish day school authority in Anglo-Jewry.

25 Donald A. Schon, *Beyond the Stable State* (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1971). This book contains a vivid description of the process of "dynamic conservatism," incorporating several stages including ignoring, counter-attacking, containing, isolating, co-opting and accepting the minimum necessary change. This is a phenomenon with which Immanuel College, in common with all significant attempts at change, had to grapple.

oppose the extension of the network on what might be construed as grounds of purely limited self-interest. Under the surface the opposition was stronger and more persistent. It manifested itself in terms of the lobbying of key supporters of the project, particularly during the period of the management crisis and, on one occasion, through competing for a local authority school site — competition that may well have cost both concerns the site they sought.

The United Synagogue's opposition to the project emerged relatively late in the process. It was based on the argument that the school was an excessively costly venture for an educational system (of which a significant proportion was under the control of the United Synagogue) that was badly starved of funds. In reality the money available to the Immanuel College project was not an existing fund, but rather new and special support for a very particular project, secured from a limited pool of substantial individuals many of whom had no previous track record of support for Jewish Education. Nevertheless, the criticism bit hard and found increasing sympathy from the wider community, few of whom felt they would ever be able to consider the school as a viable option for their own children or grandchildren, despite the promise of a large scholarship fund. Beyond the financial issue — which formed the expressed opposition of the United Synagogue leadership — lay, perhaps, the feeling that as the community's central communal and educational organization, and as a "centrist Orthodox" one at that, they should be the catalyst, planner, and ultimately the authority for any venture of this nature.

It had to be anticipated that the community could not be manipulated to be unilaterally supportive of the Immanuel College project. After all, the proposal for such a school raised real questions of principle. Beyond the basic issues of cost, impact on the existing system, and control, lay ideological question marks — would the school threaten the Anglo-Jewish Orthodox consensus, and how? In tandem lay the educational question marks — the appropriateness of private education as the path to the creation of future community leadership for example. Such obstacles had to be recognized as an integral part of the policy-making environment.

***Implementing the Full Concept***

Although less obvious than some of the other factors that might have been perceived as obstacles to the success of the project, the problem of "remaining true to the vision" presented perhaps the biggest single set of hurdles that the Immanuel College process had to face. The following challenges proved to be particularly intricate.

- a) The search for a headteacher who would embody the vision was prolonged and painful. As with any translation of principles into reality, such an appointment always requires "trade-offs." The school needed a leader with a wealth of educational experience, knowledge of education in the context of the UK, a substantial Jewish background, and excellent leadership skills. Above all, it required an individual who could be seen in some sense as an embodiment of the personality portrait sketched by Jonathan Sacks as his ideal graduating student. Although an international search was mounted to find the right individual, it was perhaps not surprising that the solution was eventually found in the person who had been intimately connected with the project for some time prior to his being identified as a candidate for the post. This appointment was made not only on merit, but also after a prolonged period of negotiation to acquire the services of a senior consultant in general education and one of Anglo-Jewry's most illustrious and long-serving educators. However, it would be equally fair to state that there was no alternative. Given the very particular requirements imposed by those who were determined to implement their vision of what the school might be, the planners were faced, in the summer of 1989, with a stark choice between accepting a candidate who could not implement the vision, abandoning the project, or persuading the one individual who might be able to pull the intricate threads of the educational programming process together to abandon a voluntary semiretirement in order to struggle anew with the founding of a new school. The future of the project, as in the full concept envisioned by the founders, thus hung by a slender thread at this point. The full concept, at least, would have been beyond reach from that point onwards had the negotiations failed to come to a successful conclusion.

- b) The search for a senior teaching force, and for a curriculum-development process that would meet the unique requirements of the situation, against a background of limited resources and sometimes limited understanding and sympathy on the part of the sponsors, was similarly fraught with tension and frustration. On the credit side, the project became the framework within which hidden reserves of educational talent within the Anglo-Jewish community were discovered. Open advertising brought forward more than a hundred applications from senior teachers, many of them committed Orthodox Jews in senior positions in non-Jewish schools. Having previously decided consciously not to teach within the Jewish system for a variety of reasons, these candidates were attracted by the image of the new approach. Securing the commitment of the sponsors to the employment of an entire team of teachers and the investment of substantial resources in a curriculum-development process required more subtle diplomatic skills than had been needed to persuade the JEDT to purchase the site itself. This process was, nevertheless, critical in terms of the chances of implementing the full concept for the school as envisioned by the intimate inner circle that had been driving the project forward from the outset.

No perfectionist could successfully mount such an operation, and yet perfectionism was essential to maintaining the vision in an unfriendly policy-making environment. Rarely was it acceptable to compromise, but failure to compromise at times created situations in which the whole project was put in jeopardy. In the end, compromises were made. The full vision was always subject to mediation through the prism of situation and circumstances. Sacrifices had to be made to ensure the survival of the school — particularly in the context of the period of crisis that engulfed the project for several months. To what extent these damaged the prospects for a realization of the full vision is yet to be evaluated. But there is little doubt that the stubbornness and determination of a limited number of individuals to pursue their vision of what might be achieved was responsible for much of the pain that was suffered in the creation of the school. That is the sacrifice that must be made in the pursuit of real change.

### **Immanuel College Today: A Brief Postscript**

It would be overly optimistic to state that today, four years after the opening of Immanuel College, all the wounds sustained in the battle for its existence have been healed. Serious question marks still surround the validity of the decision to proceed with such an enormously expensive enterprise — particularly in the light of a prolonged recession which, over the past three years, has seen the demise of several major educational projects and of yet more bright ideas for educational change within Anglo-Jewry. Moreover, the school still faces an uphill financial battle in its struggle for survival and stability. Nevertheless, the school, through the achievements of its students, is gradually beginning to impress itself upon the consciousness of Anglo-Jewry in a positive way, and the enthusiasm of those directly associated with the project — from the lay leadership to the teaching staff and from the students to the parents — has an infectious impact on the surrounding community culture.

In terms of the ability of the school to deliver its commitment to a particular vision, it is perhaps too early to judge. Since the overt educational plan for the school takes its cue from the portrait of an 'ideal' graduating student, it may only be possible to fully evaluate the institution when the first generations of graduating students take their places in communal life. But while the 'success' of the school on this measure may yet be uncertain, its commitment towards the vision can be seen to be strong indeed. On a recent visit to the UK, I called in at Immanuel College with a particular task in mind. That task was to see if the school as a reality was, after some four years of existence, still pursuing the mission set by its founders, or whether it had taken its own course. A selection of teachers and senior teachers, many of whom, including the newly appointed head of Jewish Studies, had been appointed since the opening of the school and were not involved in its development, were asked whether and to what extent they were aware of the original mission of the school, and how that awareness translated itself into daily practice.

Of the various possible perceptions of the original mission, the most easily identifiable version was, of course, the brief foundation statement by the now Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, Dr. Jonathan Sacks. This, together with a set of supplementary papers developed by senior educational professionals on the translation of the vision

into educational practice, formed the educational argument on which the decision to open the school was taken. To what extent were the teachers aware of such papers? Were these invisible foundations buried under structures that had been built up over more than three years of practice, or were they still to be seen around the school influencing the day-to-day translation of mission into program?

The answer was as crisp as it was, perhaps, surprising. Each newly appointed teacher is provided with these papers, with some more recent additions, and guided through them in a special session with the headteacher. One cannot conclude that the papers are always read, understood, and acted upon. Nor would it be healthy for the living organism that is the school today to attempt to limit itself to a vision that predates the complex challenge implicit in the encounter between vision and reality. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to posit that Immanuel College has the potential to realize its founding vision in the sense that it seeks, on a daily basis, to incorporate that vision into the life of the school.

Seymour Sarason comments that educational change can be evaluated as successful if it, a) expresses one's values, b) can be implemented, and c) has acceptable consequences.<sup>26</sup> When the time comes to evaluate the success of Immanuel College, these, indeed, are the complex questions that will have to be answered.

26 Sarason, "The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change."



# **"WOMEN'S WISDOM HAS BUILT ITS HOME" — A HIGHLY PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE PELECH EXPERIMENT**

**Alice Shalvi**

## **Genesis**

Considering the controversy that has surrounded the Pelech<sup>1</sup> School for Girls throughout so much of its history, it comes as no surprise that there is a measure of disagreement even regarding the date of its founding. There are those who claim the school was established in 1965, when Rabbi Shalom Rosenbluth and his wife Pnina — both veteran educators — first rented a flat in Jerusalem's Bayit Ve-gan district and began teaching a small group of fourteen year olds, including their younger daughter. Others maintain that the more correct date is September 1967 when, following the territorial realignments that resulted from the Six Day War, "Reb Sholom" persuaded the Ministry for Religious Affairs to rent him an abandoned building on the slopes of Mt. Zion, in what had previously been no-man's-land. It was there that Pelech, an ultra-Orthodox (*haredi*) high school for girls, launched its highly unorthodox activities, seeking to attract girls from the Beit Ya'akov network and to provide them with a far wider-ranging program of secular studies and more in-depth Jewish studies than those available at Beit Ya'akov.

Gemara (Talmud) was from the first a compulsory subject at Pelech, though explicitly prohibited to girls by the ultra-Orthodox community and even in state religious schools customarily taught only to boys. Natural curiosity, far from being stifled for fear it should lead to religious scepticism, was actively encouraged, even when it led to study of topics normally forbidden in ultra-Orthodox circles.

1 "Pelech" is the Hebrew word for spindle. The name was originally taken from the Talmudic saying: "Woman's wisdom is only in the spindle." The school interpreted this to mean that if a young woman sought wisdom, she would find it by studying at Pelech.

Little wonder, therefore, that within five years of opening Pelech was being boycotted by the very community which it had set out to enlighten while simultaneously attracting in ever-growing numbers the daughters of well-educated "modern Orthodox" families, many of which were headed by well-known academicians, members of the free professions, and community leaders.<sup>2</sup>

Because the school was very small, with a total of only some fifty pupils in all four of its grades, it neither required nor could afford to employ full-time teachers. Reb Sholom himself taught Talmud, mathematics and physics, while Pnina taught English. Virtually all the other teachers were men whose main place of employment was elsewhere and who taught at Pelech either in order to eke out their income or as a personal favor to the Rosenbluths. Many of them were paid in kind rather than in cash ("You need a new suit. I know a good tailor who'll make one for you"); many of them had no formal training as teachers and no certification. Women teachers of child-bearing age were anathema to Reb Sholom, who suspected them of deliberately giving birth at times least convenient to the school calendar.

The Yom Kippur War, which broke out in October 1973 and dragged on for almost a year, brought about the first of a series of major crises which critically affected Pelech. Most of the male teachers were conscripted, one of them was gravely wounded, and Reb Sholom took over almost all the teaching duties. Since even he could not be in all classes simultaneously, many of the pupils found themselves with numerous "free periods," which they were tempted to spend wandering unsupervised around the Old City of Jerusalem, beneath the walls of which the school was located.

The school was as yet not accredited by the Ministry of Education, parents had to pay fees which many of them could barely afford, and the Rosenbluths (who did not excel at administration) were personally funding the school as they had personally funded the renovation of the picturesque but ramshackle building. Though a few influential parents were enlisted to approach both the Ministry of

2 A fit illustration of the cause of both phenomena is to be found in my own experience: what won me over to transferring my oldest daughter to Pelech was that, during my first visit, one of the twelfth graders, whom I happened also to know personally as highly observant, was pointed out to me as currently writing a paper on "Christian Symbols in the Novels of Graham Greene."

Education and the municipal education authority, they encountered deep opposition to the school and a (perhaps understandable) reluctance to provide funding to what must have appeared an improvisational undertaking wholly lacking the characteristics usually to be found in more Orthodox institutions.

The terrorist attack on the Ma'alot school in 1974 shocked the parent body of Pelech into an awareness of the extent to which its remote location made it particularly vulnerable to hostile activities. In addition to devoting time and effort to pacifying the authorities and cajoling them into officially recognizing the school, the parents' committee now found itself also looking for new quarters. The Rosenbluths, for their part, decided that they no longer wished to invest money and effort in what was increasingly remote from their initial declared aim. In the spring of 1975, with the number of applicants from the ultra-Orthodox community dwindling annually and only a dozen or so from the state religious system replacing them, the founders announced their intention of closing the school.

However, by this time those of us who had grown to appreciate the school's philosophy and its profound difference, in principle and practice, from other religious secondary schools for girls, were determined to ensure its continued existence. In the absence of other candidates for the post of principal, I volunteered my services as assistant to the Rosenbluths, intending primarily to put some order into the school administration and finances, so as to facilitate accreditation and to free *them* to continue handling the school's educational aspects. To my surprise, I one day found myself being introduced to the visiting inspector as the school's principal and as the person to whom all matters relating to Pelech should henceforth be addressed. Thus did I have greatness thrust upon me!

## Exodus

The 1975 school year began in "new" quarters which, while physically totally unsuited to house a school, nevertheless matched the improvisational character of Pelech's activities. We rented the ground floor and part of the second storey of a two-storey house in Bayit Vegan, where the landlady continued to reside in two rooms of the upper storey, filling the building with pungent odors of her highly

spiced daily fare and occasionally venturing forth to demand greater quiet and decorum. One small room doubled as "library" and staff room — a duplication made all the easier by both the paucity of the library's holdings (a Babylonian Talmud, a set of Nehama Leibowitz Bible commentaries, and a few copies of the Bible) and the minimal staffing, whose teaching schedules (as dictated by the demands of their main places of employment) in any case never allowed for free hours. Another, even smaller, room served both myself, the part-time secretary I had employed, and my assistant principal, a new immigrant from the U.S. who could teach both Talmud and mathematics, just as Reb Sholom had done. In addition, we had five rooms for the four homeroom classes and for any electives that were being taught at any one time. The pleasant but weed-covered back garden and a spacious front balcony provided additional space in fine weather. Assemblies were held in the garden and I still have in my possession an idyllic photograph of a pretty, blonde twelfth grader perched on the lower branches of a gnarled olive tree, her head bent over a large volume of Talmud.

Physically, the school was worse off than ever before. But educationally I had the great good fortune to take up my new post at the most auspicious of times. David Pur, the founding headmaster of the innovative school at Kibbutz Givat Brenner and a great believer in, and advocate of, open, pupil-centered education, had just been put in charge of secondary education at the Ministry of Education. As a result, a major reform of secondary education had been launched, abolishing the traditional "sets" of specialization which enforced pupils' choice between a humanities and a science trend, enabling a freer selection and combination of subjects, and granting greater autonomy to schools that wished to implement innovative courses and/or methods.

As a parent who had spent many years bewailing the inadequacies of the various schools attended by my six children, I flung myself (perhaps overzealously) into the task of reorganizing the curriculum, initiating new courses, hiring new teachers willing to join me in my (frequently outrageous) experiments — young people (mainly women) who were prepared to engage in what I hoped would be an ultimately fruitful series of trials and possible errors and who made up in openness and enthusiasm for what they lacked in classroom experience.

Amazingly — and wonderfully — it worked! Within three years Pelech had been accredited as one of the (then) only two officially recognized “experimental” high schools. We were in the good graces of the Ministry of Education and even beginning to be grudgingly appreciated by the head of the Jerusalem Municipal Education Department, who nevertheless continued (without any foundation in fact) to maintain that we were an “exclusive,” all Ashkenazi, discriminatory institution. School fees had been abolished, but I was forced to seek donors prepared to help cover the costs of continuing a curriculum that combined a maximum range of electives with classes numbering no more than twenty-five to twenty-seven pupils. Although most parents donated a sizeable sum to provide a supplement to the Ministry’s per capita allocation, the number of those financially unable to contribute grew as we developed enrichment programs that drew pupils from the socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

In 1976 the school had to find a new home yet again, since the municipality — in a move that was incomprehensible save in terms of harassment — inexplicably decided that it required our totally inappropriate premises for a new secular primary school that the authorities wished to establish in what was a predominantly Orthodox neighborhood.

By way of grudging compensation, however, we were allocated an abandoned three-storey house in a quiet street in the (at that time still rather dilapidated but later rapidly gentrified) Bak’a neighborhood. In return for repairing and renovating it, installing sorely needed central heating, and planting a garden to replace the forbidding grey asphalt surroundings, we were exempted from paying rent over a lengthy period. An outhouse was converted into an all-purpose science laboratory and we were able to maintain, not without some pride, that ours was the only staff-room in Israel that had previously been a toilet! It was here that what may be called the “revised version” of the Pelech experiment really flourished and reached the heights of innovation and excellence for which it rapidly became renowned.

### **Wandering in the Wilderness**

In addition to the dissatisfaction I had long felt with the traditional,

narrow, stultified and stultifying content and methods of (particularly religious) education in Israel, a number of individuals and ideas inspired my work at Pelech.

Lacking any formal training in education, I had nevertheless, as a parent, practiced a combination of minimal rule making with maximal encouragement of individualism. This, I firmly believe, should also be the basic guideline of more formal education. More concretely, I was inspired by anecdotal evidence provided by both David Pur (from whom I learned of his work at Givat Brenner) and my friends Daniel and Hannah Greenberg, who in 1965 founded the Sudbury Valley School near Boston and who described to me with great enthusiasm the totally child-centered and pupil-governed establishment that they were operating.

A cursory acquaintance with Kohlberg's theories on moral development further bolstered my belief in the potential contribution of schooling to value clarification. In addition, as a feminist, I maintained that no area of knowledge or experience should be inaccessible to girls and women solely on grounds of sex.

I had a number of educational goals in mind when I took over the principalship of Pelech. Defining the overall goal of education to be the equipping of young people to function as informed, committed and active members of the society which they join as adults upon leaving school, I sought to make the curriculum more immediately and recognizably relevant to the social context and to social needs. "Only connect," E.M. Forster's epigraph for *A Passage to India*, was my educational guiding light. I sought to show pupils (and teachers) how ideas, ideologies, areas of knowledge, even people, interact, intertwine, interlock — how the disparate trees of cognition combine to constitute a forest of knowledge and understanding.

To inculcate an understanding of the democratic process and of the duties and rights of the individual within a democratic system, I argued that school must approximate as closely as possible to a democratic institution and that pupils as well as staff must therefore be maximally involved in decision making. To overcome the often fragmented nature of the official syllabus, I encouraged teachers to develop interdisciplinary courses that (given the dearth of teachers qualified to teach more than one subject) necessitated group teaching. To enable individual pupils with vastly differing interests and abilities to develop their potential to the utmost, both cognitively and in affect,

we maximalized individual study, release time, project writing, library work, and creative studies such as art, music and drama.

Pastoral care, which in Israel is primarily the responsibility of a homeroom teacher in charge of thirty or even forty pupils, was assigned to a fairly large number of tutors, from among whom each pupil could choose the one most congenial to her. Tutors had up to sixteen pupils in their care and were responsible for meeting each one for at least a quarter of an hour each month. The tutor, rather than the homeroom teacher or the principal, constituted the main line of communication with the home, as well as serving as intermediary between pupils and other teachers if and when problems or tensions arose.

Looking back now on what we accomplished between 1976 and 1990, the year in which I retired from Pelech, I can discern a number of remarkable achievements. In the area of curriculum development I would pinpoint the following:

- Our pioneering work in Environmental Studies. (We launched a course on Ecology in 1975 when the concept was virtually unheard of in Israel and nowhere studied).
- The development of a four year Total History course, which combined the study of those sociopolitical and economic events and trends that constitute the subject matter of traditional history courses with a concurrent study of the literature, philosophy, art and music of the period in question, each year of study being devoted to a different "age," ranging from the classical period to modernity.<sup>3</sup>
- A four year course entitled "Israeli Society," which replaced the arid and irrelevant civics course mandated by the Ministry of Education with study of Israel's ethnic composition; the social problems resulting from the mass immigration of the 1950s, and the institutions (both government and voluntary) developed in order to deal with those problems; Israel's mode of government, the way it derives (or deviates) from Jewish tradition and the way it compares with or differs from other modes of government in the past and the present. In the framework of this course,

3 Unlike other schools, we never separated the study of Jewish history from that of "general history."

tenth grade pupils were required to choose an agency with which they would work in serving the needs of any distressed community or individual — work in which they were supervised not only by a Pelech staff member but also by a trained professional in the employ of the respective agency.

- We instituted a program of Family Studies that went far beyond “sex education” to include units on nutrition, physical space-planning in the house, factors determining choice of a life-partner, family planning, child psychology, and the parental role in child development. At each stage, the halakhic aspects (e.g., dietary laws, family purity [*taharat ha-mishpaha*] and rulings on contraception) were integrated into the course, so that their relevance to the everyday life of an observant Jew was immediately discernible.

We sought to clarify the development and continuity of Jewish thought and practice, as well as the evolution of halakha, by teaching and studying a number of topics as they appeared and were developed over long periods of time — in the Bible, the Talmud, medieval philosophy, and the work of contemporary Jewish thinkers such as Soloveitchik and Leibowitz.

In 1988, following the outbreak of the intifada, my assistant principal, Aryeh Geiger, together with philosophy teacher Shulamith Levy, herself a Pelech alumna, developed an outstanding course on conflict and conflict resolution, which was integrated into the Israeli Society course in eleventh grade. It deals with conflicts inherent in Israeli society — between various ethnic groups, between the religiously observant and the militantly secular, between “doves” and “hawks,” between “haves” and “have nots,” between men and women. Analyzing the source of the various conflicts, the course seeks also to inculcate awareness of, and skills in, ways of resolving such conflicts, on both the personal and communal level. Deriving initially from awareness of a specific and immediate critical social problem, the course typically builds on both traditional Jewish moral principles and modern methods of social dynamics and psychotherapy, seeking to inculcate not only profound moral values but also awareness of contemporary social problems and much-needed practical skills that might enable the individual pupil to deal with



these problems. In aim, content, and method, it is a micro-model of everything Pelech strives for.

We devised new modes of evaluation — “take-home” examinations, “library examinations” that tested the pupils’ ability to search for information in a variety of primary and secondary sources, the writing of individual term papers and mini-theses. Pupils with creative talents were encouraged (most notably in a remarkable course on the Holocaust) to respond to the subject matter through the plastic arts, drama, even dancing. Because pupils in that course wanted to learn the partisans’ songs in the original, we became the first high school in Israel to teach Yiddish.

Since a good grounding in science is now so essential a part of general education, we actively encouraged pupils to choose chemistry and physics, as well as biology, as “majors.” As a result, Pelech achieved a national record in the number of girl pupils studying these subjects as part of their *bagrut* (matriculation) requirements. At one point, over half of all eleventh grade pupils were taking physics at the highest (5 point) level — a proportion unequalled by even the most prestigious coeducational schools in the country.

And because there was a certain truth in the authorities’ contention that our pupils were too exclusively middle class and Ashkenazi, we began an enrichment program designed for academically promising seventh and eighth grade pupils from neighborhoods officially designated as socioeconomically disadvantaged. About fifty in number, they came to Pelech twice a week, each time for supplementary coaching in mathematics, English, Jewish studies, and Hebrew composition, but with the typically Pelech additions of art and music as well as outings to museums and theaters. The scheme has proved successful and each year a number of “graduates” of the program join Pelech’s ninth grade, while the remainder are, almost without exception, accepted by the high schools of their choice, however “prestigious” or selective they may be.

Our major criterion for accepting pupils, once the number of applicants swelled to such an extent that selection was imperative, was natural curiosity, rather than past scholastic attainments. The determining item in our entrance examination came to be a group interview, at which four to five applicants met with myself, our counsellor, and another senior staff member for about forty-five minutes. During this time, each pupil was asked to introduce herself (for this

purpose applicants were encouraged to bring objects that might assist them; one of them responded by bringing her pet Alsatian!) and then, using a topic, a text or a picture, we began a free discussion through which we were able to evaluate not only personal traits but also human interaction. We accepted many pupils who were considered academically mediocre, but who flourished under Pelech's encouraging tutelage.

Most remarkable, to my mind, was the gradual development of our mode of pupil-participatory school government acceptable to the staff. Much against the inclination of most of the teachers, and despite the initial scepticism of the pupils themselves, I insisted, even in my first year as principal, in holding monthly "general meetings." These evolved into a school parliament, whose agenda was determined by ongoing and ad hoc issues under discussion or dispute, and at whose assemblies the principle of "one person one vote" was in indisputable operation. This body early on abolished the draconian (and with time wholly inappropriate) dress code established by the Rosenbluths in their (ultimately vain) attempt to attract the ultra-Orthodox community, which consisted of long stockings and long sleeves throughout the entire year, a black and white pepita skirt descending well below the knees and a black-buttoned white blouse. This "parliament" proceeded to discuss and lay down rules relating to compulsory attendance at daily prayers, sensibly acknowledging that while one may compel people to attend one cannot compel them to pray! And most memorably it engaged in a lengthy and fascinating debate, which stretched over several weeks, on the pupils' right to demand sanctions against teachers comparable to those that are considered to be a teacher's inalienable right to impose upon pupils. What most impressed me on that occasion (and what I have consistently cited as the outstanding example of the responsibility with which young people will exercise authority when they are educated — and encouraged — in its correct use) was that the pupils sensed my own painful dilemma, caught as I was between my firm belief in their rights and the violent opposition openly demonstrated by a large number of the staff. In the end, the pupils — unprecedentedly and uniquely — voted not to vote, but rather to maintain the status quo, thus limiting their own rights.

The constant flux that came to typify the school was a source of achievement and pride, but it also entailed enormous strain on the staff. One of my senior teachers, who joined the school when I did, plaintively inquired a few years later whether it was a matter of principle on my part to overhaul the curriculum every year. On reflection, I decided that, so long as perfection remained ipso facto humanly unattainable, ongoing reevaluation and change were indeed necessary. My husband compiled a brief text, putting together some sentences from Parkinson's work *Parkinson's Law: The Pursuit of Progress*, which ran as follows:

It is now known  
that a perfection of planned layout  
is achieved only by institutions  
on the point of collapse....

\*

PERFECTION OF PLANNING  
IS A SYMPTOM OF DECAY

\*

During a period of exciting discovery or progress  
there is no time to plan the perfect headquarters.

The time for that comes later,  
when all important work has been done.

Perfection is finality;  
and finality  
is death...

For years it hung in my room and I even had it printed in postcard form to hand out to visitors by way of explanation for the improvisatory atmosphere, which even long after the Rosenbluths' departure, continued to characterize the school.

### **Expulsion from Eden**

My fifteen years at Pelech were challenging, exciting, exhausting, and rewarding. But it was far from "roses, roses all the way." On the contrary, "establishments" of various kinds, many of my fellow prin-

cipals in the state religious system, some of my more religiously Orthodox staff members (particularly the yeshiva-trained ones), even some of the parents who had freely chosen to send their daughters to Pelech, and, finally, the head of the Religious Education Department at the Ministry of Education, opposed my philosophy and, outraged by my personal political and social opinions and activities, ultimately led me to conclude that my continued presence at Pelech was harming the school more than it was benefitting it.

The earliest examples of opposition proved comparatively easy to overcome, though they caused serious crises and led to a number of regrettable resignations. The first arose from my employment of a woman to teach Talmud. The contention resulted not so much from her sex (though this in itself was a cause for much lifting of eyebrows and querying of credentials) as from the fact that she had received her training at what was at that time (1977) the only institution at which a woman could study Talmud at the highest possible level — the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. A graduate of the Conservative Movement's major academic establishment at a "*haredi*" school (as Pelech still nominally was)? Impossible! Threatened with the resignation of three male teachers, I nevertheless backed my choice, insisting that there were no grounds for querying her personal religious orthodoxy. I won out — but the men left at the end of the year, though not before one of them (who had been appointed as a kind of halakhic overseer to guard against similar unorthodoxies in the future) had sent out letters to all the parents of girls registered for the approaching school year, warning them that the school was not truly "*kasher*" — an act that resulted in the non-registration of about one-third of those accepted.

My next "indiscretion" was to request the military authorities to send a woman officer to explain the nature of women's service in the IDF<sup>4</sup> and its compatibility with religious practice. This was directly opposed both to the school's initial policy of forbidding military service for women (which had resulted in the fact that of my oldest daughter's graduating class [1975] only she and one other young woman had joined the IDF, in the framework of a special Teachers' Unit established for the religiously observant) and to official rulings on the part of the religious branch of the Ministry of Education which

4 Israel Defense Forces.

on this issue, as in others, abided by the edicts of the Chief Rabbinate.

Again I was faced with the threat of resignation, again I refused to buckle under. None other than the commanding officer of the Women's Corps chose to come to speak to our eleventh grade and the content and manner of her address were so eminently reasonable, so considerate of the beliefs and practices of our pupils and their families, that not only were our opponents disarmed, but a major change occurred in the behavior of our graduates, of whom over eighty percent now choose service in the IDF, while the remainder serve for a full two years in the voluntary National Service framework. The norm established by the Rosenbluths — either marriage at eighteen or continued studies immediately after leaving school — was irrevocably altered and replaced by the firm principle that it is the duty of every citizen to devote two years to service to the country and the community.

Less dramatic, but perhaps even more difficult to deal with, was the burnout of teachers constantly expected to be innovators themselves or to respond to my own (frequently excessive and perhaps inconsiderate) demands for change. Though a few of the staff flourished in conditions that encouraged them to propose and implement reform and experimentation, many of them (particularly the few older and more experienced ones, who had previously worked — or were still also working — in more conventional schools) felt intimidated by the educational demands, their self-esteem often undermined by the energy of younger colleagues and by the egalitarianism between pupils and staff which eliminated the superior status of authority that teachers traditionally automatically enjoy in their relationship with those in their charge.

Pelech is remarkable for the informal, easygoing, and friendly relationship that exists between pupils and teachers — a relationship of mutual trust and fellowship in learning. In addition, prior to the writing of report cards, we conducted twice-yearly sessions of mutual evaluation at which pupils and staff could exchange comments and criticisms on each other's performance and achievement. While most teachers found this constructive, some were appalled and felt threatened by the pupil power inherent in this process.

Although the reforms of 1975 potentially permitted a major shake-up of the entire educational system, the institutions of higher learning

persisted in demanding that candidates for tertiary studies be in possession of the standard *bagrut* school-leaving certificate. They refused to recognize some of the Pelech courses and examinations as equivalent to those of the state, even though the chairman of the Inter-University Entrance Examination Board, who visited Pelech at my initiative to learn in detail of our requirements and standards, privately admitted that our methods of evaluation, as well as our program of studies, were superior to those required by the Ministry of Education. The fear of "exceptions to the rule," the reluctance to encourage or recognize as valuable anything out of the ordinary — in short, a certain intellectual and professional laziness on the part of the universities — ultimately meant that in some subjects Pelech pupils had to be examined on material other than, and additional to, that which they had studied. Despite the joy of learning that characterized the school — with which most visitors were so impressed as to comment on — it became more than could reasonably be expected of teenagers to require them to spend almost twice as much time on studies as their peer group in other schools.

The norms of the Israeli educational system also contrasted with those of Pelech where examinations were concerned. From its inception, the school had employed an honor system. Cheating in exams was unacceptable on moral grounds; it was *geneivat da'at*, deceitfulness. We did not invigilate examinations but spent considerable time, particularly in the ninth grade, dealing with the subject of honesty and fairness. If one happened to walk into a room full of pupils writing an examination, one was impressed by the silence and concentration, the heads bent over desks, the pens flowing rapidly. We were sticklers for following the instructions, including abiding by the time allotted, even when it seemed to us totally unreasonable to expect anybody who really knew the material to write six essay-style answers in one and a half hours. So it was always painful to hear — as our pupils routinely did from their friends at other schools — of invigilators who had allotted as much as an hour of overtime or staff members who had entered the examination room in order to volunteer the correct answers to difficult questions. As often happens in Israel, the honest found themselves considered fools and, as a result, indeed felt foolish.

However, none of these problems — severe though they often were — were responsible for the crises of my final five years at

Pelech, between 1985 and 1990. Rather, it was my own increasing involvement first in the Israeli feminist movement and, after the outbreak of the intifada in 1987, in dialogue groups with Palestinian women, that incurred the displeasure of the authorities at the religious branch of the Ministry of Education. My activities on behalf of the reform of the rabbinical courts that have sole jurisdiction over personal status (marriage and divorce) involved open criticism of the rabbinical establishment, which officially serves as the spiritual authority of the state religious educational system. My earlier challenge on their ruling against women's service in the IDF had been overlooked (partly because the religious kibbutz movement also compels girls to do military service), but my attacks on the iniquities and abuses of the religious court system — launched as part of a *secular* movement's demand for reform — were less easily ignored, particularly since they attained far greater publicity.

On the political front, my participation in meetings with Palestinians ran against the grain within a system many of whose members were adherents of the Greater Israel philosophy that encouraged continued occupation of — and intensified Jewish settlement within — Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip.

In May 1988, when I returned from an Israeli-Palestinian conference in Brussels, which had erroneously been described on the radio as being a (then still illegal) meeting with members of the PLO, I was confronted by insurmountable antagonism on the part of numerous staff members, particularly those who resided in the occupied territories, two of whom submitted their instant resignation. Throughout the school year that followed I found myself under constant scrutiny and even attack on the part of the newly appointed head of the religious branch. Two of his daughters were Pelech alumnae and he now found himself in the embarrassing position of having a third daughter who insisted on applying to a school headed by someone whom he wished to oust! Although most of the members of the school's Board of Governors supported me, arguing that my political views and activities in no way detracted from or impaired my competence as school principal, the official in question presented me with an ultimatum which sharpened my personal dilemma — either I must desist from my feminist and political activities or the school would lose its accreditation by the religious branch of the Ministry.

It did not take me long to reach a decision. I had devoted fifteen

years to creating a model school with so remarkable a reputation that people came from all over Israel and even from abroad to see it and learn from our experience. Moreover, other schools had adopted one or more of our courses or methods. A number of our innovations (e.g., the Ecology course) were by now established practice. Compulsory "voluntary" communal work had been integrated into the curriculum of most Jerusalem schools. Meetings between Jews and Arabs — which we had been the first religious school to engage in when, in 1983, we participated in a series of municipally sponsored encounters between eleventh grade pupils at Pelech and the Omariyah Girls' School in East Jerusalem — had become common practice, organized and encouraged by the Education for Democracy Department of the Ministry of Education, although the meetings are now exclusively with Israeli Arabs and not with Palestinians. Increasing numbers of religious young women serve in the IDF. Institutions of higher Torah study for women have mushroomed in Jerusalem, some of them established by mothers of Pelech pupils past and present. The notion of a young religiously observant woman being well versed in Talmud was no longer as outrageous or unattainable as it had seemed when the Rosenbluths set out to make the combination normative. Furthermore, the school that I had inherited as penniless and close to bankruptcy now had a large body of supporters, donors who appreciated our contribution to Israel's educational system. The municipality had even allocated a plot of land on which we were able to renovate a beautiful old building, which at last provided adequate laboratory space for science studies and an exquisitely furnished Beit Midrash. And whereas in 1975 and 1976 we had had to hold parlor meetings in order to persuade parents to enroll their daughters at Pelech, the school had for over a decade been inundated with requests for entry, the number of applications approaching almost double the number we were physically able — or officially permitted — to accept. It was time for me to devote my attention to other issues, to attempt to help create a society and a culture in which women like our alumnae, well versed in Judaism and committed to democratic principles of pluralism and tolerance, could take their place as equals with men. In April 1990, I tendered my resignation from the post of principal, though retaining for a further four years the function of Chairperson of the Board



which, contrary to common practice, the Rosenbluths had cunningly combined with that of school principal.

### *The View from Nebo*

I visit the school from time to time. It is hard altogether to cut the umbilical cord. Each September I am invited to give the opening address on the first day of the school year. I can now, without fear of dire consequences, openly advocate feminist principles — indeed, the pupils would be disappointed were I to do otherwise. I can speak without fear of official rebuke of the need for peaceful coexistence with our Arab neighbors, of the importance of being personally acquainted with the “other,” even when that “other” is nominally one’s enemy.

Pelech is still one of the best schools in Israel, probably the very best of those that cater for religious girls. It may no longer be as innovative as it was, but for those who find it too achievement oriented there are now at least two alternative schools available, both headed by former staff members who worked closely with me, identifying wholly with my (for Israel) unconventional aims and methods, and who left the school when I did. As Shakespeare’s Coriolanus puts it, “There is a world elsewhere” — a world in which I live and work with as much satisfaction and happiness as I achieved while I was at Pelech. One could hardly wish for more.

**SOF MA'ASEH BEMAHSHEVA — ORIGINS AT  
THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE:  
THE CASE OF THE RHEA HIRSCH SCHOOL**

William Cutter

My own role within the story I am to tell has prompted both enthusiasm and caution. In the spirit of that caution, I pondered three types of "beginnings" to the story of schools before setting out to write my historical reminiscence: tales of lofty goals enunciated at a dramatic opening event (which is how I picture the gathering of amazing people on Mt. Scopus in the 1920s); more sober discussions around a central theme, selecting a prism through which the material may be examined (as in Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz's study of Eastern women's colleges through their architecture);<sup>1</sup> the personal narrative of a founder which brings its readers into the formative decision making through particulars that many historians avoid. (Such was the case in an early article by Gerald Bubis on the development of his own "school" of Jewish Communal Service at the Hebrew Union College.<sup>2</sup>) I have utilized a little of each pattern, enjoying the subjectivity this volume permits. Much of the material in my essay represents the personal reflections as the "founding director" of a small "school" that made several breakthroughs in its time, and now grows amidst more explicit respectability and promise of further newness. I hope neither to claim too much responsibility for the school's achievements, nor the disappointment or rejection that come too often to those who step away and leave others to continue their projects.

There is a brief history of the larger College-Institute, in which historian Michael Meyer adopts the first pattern before proceeding with his more empirically cautious narrative — a narrative that injects little subjectivity and does not dramatize itself with metaphors or tropes.<sup>3</sup> Meyer opens his story with the elegant inauguration of the

1 Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Alma Mater* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

2 Gerald Bubis, "The Birth of a School," *The CCAR Journal* (October 1971).

3 Michael A. Meyer, "A Centennial History," in *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion At One Hundred Years* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College

Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati for the somewhat ironic purpose of contrasting the originary moment with what happened on its morrow. After a candlelit evening at the historic Plum Street Temple (B'nei Yeshurun), attended by the leading burghers of the great Midwestern city, the next day found a smattering of reluctant high school boys gathered in the basement of an old building in downtown Cincinnati, cautiously opening their books for the first time. The description is captivating! Ironical though Meyer's picture may seem, that ceremony (not the actual classroom) has been a marker of this institution's self-image until today. The historic opening at Plum Street has, it seems to me, haunted the Reform seminary which at times would have done well to assess its place more realistically within the family of Jewish institutions in America. We have often forgotten who we are because we remember that opening night and countless versions of it. The notion that we are the oldest standing yeshiva, after Hitler's demolition of so many others, has both fuelled our spirits and occasionally overdetermined our mission. Similarly, President Nelson Glueck's celebrity as a mysterious figure in the Middle East, and other powerful images (Stephen S. Wise's no less, in fact),<sup>4</sup> have added to the production of a lore about the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) which has prevailed over empirical reality. The College's non-rabbinical programs, which emerged since the Plum Street inauguration, have had to fight their lack of dramatic identity, or have had to learn to take advantage of it as they struggled to find their place. Along with more recently developed programs of the College-Institute, the Rhea Hirsch School has had to grow without legend within the more glamorous framework of the greater College-Institute. Stories and secrets there are, but few legends. It also had to respond to aspects of Isaac Mayer Wise's original vision for how a "*Minhag Amerika*" (*nusah* Reform) would dominate the New World — a design that was organic, but which eventually branched off into as many directions as there were compass points in Wise's "Amerika."

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Press, 1976), pp. 7-8.

4 The opening dates relevant to the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion are as follows: The Plum Street Ceremony — 1875; Stephen S. Wise's Jewish Institute of Religion — 1922; the merger of HUC and JIR — 1948; the California Campus — 1954; and the first full-time class of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education — 1970.

Ceremony and design, then, were part of HUC's first days under Isaac M. Wise. For the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, however, the model and the accompanying ceremony were missing. No original event charted this new program, and it began in a spirit of "non-design" which has fostered a certain amount of its subsequent freedom. It began in the almost offhanded moments of casual reflection, and it continued for some years to shape itself in opportunistic ways, drawing on occasions that were presented to it and trying to organize the incipient chaos that kept bubbling to the surface. Where the school has grown more systematically (it began to do so in the later 1970s), particularly in more recent years — the school's director continues to de-emphasize ceremony on behalf of the more onerous task of getting its work done. My successor, Sara Lee, enjoys, as I did, functioning as close to the day-to-day activity of the department as is possible. The Rhea Hirsch School grows now with more vision and more sense of its ultimate shapes. The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion of which the Rhea Hirsch School is part, remains a rabbinical seminary in its own sense of self; and the sensations evoked when the title "HUC-JIR" is enunciated continue to emanate from that night at the Plum Street Temple. Trustees and administration seem to endorse that emanation, and ceremony has added tone and dignity even at times when the real circumstance was fragile. Everyone connected with such a school gains pleasure from large public ceremony, and the public seems ennobled by the recall of an ancient mission. But where most public attention has been given — to the rabbinical school — there is actually less freedom to depart from norms. The School of Education began by operating informally, and its early celebrations were "rag-tag" at best. The Rhea Hirsch School's less heralded progress has influenced the shape of things within the larger school, perhaps as much as the shape of the school has influenced it. This has been made possible, in part, during these decades because of the two deans of the California School, Lewis M. Barth and Lee T. Bycel, who encouraged the growth and development of the school of education and fostered ways in which its programs could influence the sentimentally dominant school of rabbinical studies. Certain questions of educational practice and training patterns, questions that were sometimes eschewed in the more conventional academic halls of New York and Cincinnati, have been asked within the California context; while the rabbinical pro-

gram sometimes reminds its other professional departments of the combined spiritual-academic mission of our studies. Although committed to Jewish "Wissenschaft" no less than its sister campuses, the California campus has, it seems to me, always had greater tolerance for the practical aspects of seminary training.

The decade that spawned this program was quite different from the period in which we find ourselves. Jewish optimism has given way to despair over Jewish continuity. But the Jewish continuity question is just a part of a much larger "downturn." No one with a sensitivity to metaphor can avoid the associations that stem from a mention of the 1960s; and indeed, some significant aspects of that legendary period left their mark on the school of education and upon the larger Hebrew Union College. The nineties, with the budgetary constraints of the period, and the concern over the continuity of Jewish life certainly, cast the Rhea Hirsch School in a dim light of caution, even though its scrappy self-image seems to prevail with each turn of the prism which casts that light. And, of course, the very continuity question that plagues our communal leadership causes the public to look to the field of education for antidotes.

The mood in California in the mid-sixties to early seventies was one of expansion and optimism. While a sense of apocalypse had invaded the cultural life of young people; while sexual permissiveness seemed to adults to be undermining the mores of middle-class youth; and while drug taking and political protest were the markers of instability for the population under thirty, the students who applied to the California School saw themselves as only partly connected to those trends. They may be said to represent antidotes to the excesses. Ethnic wars and Asian migrations and slogans like "black is beautiful" created a backlash among portions of the Jewish population which sent students to the College's doors. The 1967 War in Israel enhanced a Jewish patriotism that contributed to HUC's position in American life. The 1960s represents in the history of California a sense of "can do" optimism which I believe was, at base, an important formal cause for the emergence of the Hebrew Union College School of Education. This same optimism in Los Angeles certainly influenced the development of the College's rival University of Judaism, and the emergence of new campuses for several other universities within the Los Angeles area. (The legendary Chancellor Franklin Murphy of the University of California at Los Angeles once

parried with then President Nelson Glueck, ever the wide-eyed Midwesterner. Glueck was gloating one evening about the progress of his LA campus of HUC-JIR, and Murphy alliterated that "you had to be a fool to fail in Los Angeles.") A more proximate cause of the success in California — and one also having to do with the nature of American history at that time — was the distance of the California School of HUC-JIR from the power centers of the Reform Movement and the seminary itself. Its dean, Alfred Gottschalk, was ambitious on behalf of his young campus, and seemed to draw for his model some of the people who had built institutions in Southern California against odds and in spite of looming economic realities: Norman Topping of the University of Southern California; Franklin Murphy, certainly; and business successes like Norman Chandler of the Los Angeles Times, Steven Broidy, and Joseph Mitchell. Its board chair, Jack Skirball, while a bit of an outsider to normative American Jewish life as it was developing, had a profound loyalty both to the institution and to California.<sup>5</sup> Much of the rest of the country tended to ignore what was happening on the West Coast, and thus institutions "out here" were unencumbered by conventional protocols. The slow emergence of a "school of education" in Los Angeles was, then, met with very little attention elsewhere, and Meyer's own history of the California programs barely mentions it. At a mid-1970s board meeting, for example, during the national staff discussions, it was reported that the school of education cost the College under a hundred thousand dollars. This offhanded reporting of a figure based upon particular bookkeeping practices was accepted without challenge, and was totally unreflective of the programmatic aspirations of our school. One assumes that a program in Cincinnati would have undergone closer scrutiny, and even if that were not the case the physical plant of the College-Institute at large presented an image that was congruent with that deflated figure. Its old building in the Hollywood Hills, and even its new campus, related very little to what was to become the future of the institution. Lay leaders, in any event, did not grasp the fact that a small, local, funky institution could reach out on a national basis. By 1970 a few students — women to be sure — had applied for full-time admission to the program in education in California. It was a program with not much

5 Meyer, "A Centennial History."

more than a sequence of Judaic studies courses, and some basic *practica* in education. These few students were the harbingers of a major development within the American Jewish experience, a new experiment within Reform Judaism: at the very least, the creation of non-religion-centered Jewish professions.<sup>6</sup>

The universities were not the only institutions that had been able to flourish in Southern California. Synagogues and organizations sprouted on its soil, and there seemed to be an endless reservoir of people to serve as lay and professional leadership. All kinds of ad hoc activities gathered support from people on the margins of "the establishment." Something was going to be built here, something to serve the Jewish people who were expanding in four directions outside of the center of Los Angeles. What all that building was going to become was not always clear, and different institutions fashioned different things with their freedom and their money: schools and camps, cult programs and anticult programs, immigration rescue efforts and communities within larger synagogues, and perhaps most important for this paper, full-time non-Orthodox day schools. Certainly business enterprises, whose developers gave money for the new institutions, also flourished. Some came crashing down in the 1990s.

California never seems to have shed its eccentric forms. The distance from the "center," which enabled the general growth of the little California school, also created problems for the even smaller Rhea Hirsch School of Education. The national body of accreditation for Hebrew colleges, and most of the individuals who constituted its leadership, never quite understood what was emerging in California, and I, as the school's director, undertook the sometimes futile task of interpreting its mission to an older national educational leadership — even though its importance was fast waning. I wanted desperately to develop some kind of Hebrew teaching accreditation for my few graduates, and even more desperately to be attached to an apparatus that had a certain amount of status and tradition. Always welcome in the East for deliberations and sharing, I spent a considerable amount of time and my own resources meeting in the halls of the Jewish

6 Emanuel Goldsmith, Melvin Scult and Robert Seltzer, *The American Judaism of Mordecai Kaplan* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), with special attention to the chapter on Kaplan and Jewish education.

Theological Seminary and the Boston Hebrew College trying to learn the ropes. It was a necessary part of my own education, but fundamentally my students were left uncertified and only received provisional approval through the local Bureau of Jewish Education. Thanks to Irwin Soref, its director, our graduates could take advantage of reciprocal arrangements which permitted them into the back door of established schools. Within the Reform Movement, naturally, access was more streamlined. But the Movement could not help our development or our students in any pro-active way. There were several reasons for this, the history of tensions between HUC and UAHC<sup>7</sup> being only marginal in this instance. In the first place, there was bound to be some competition between the mission of the new Rhea Hirsch School and the Department of Education of the UAHC; and, secondly, the National Association of Temple Educators was composed primarily of part-time principals, running schools for extra income during the week and on weekends. If our program succeeded many of these people would be replaced, as Alexander Schindler once warned me and our dean, Lewis Barth, in a desultory breakfast meeting in 1975. A major factor was certainly my own lack of sophistication in negotiating some difficult institutional shoals, and my lack of success in communicating the place of academic work in the training of practical people for practical careers.

The Hebrew Union College had always seen itself as an academic institution, although that image was less pervasive with this small professional program. In California, the Rhea Hirsch School followed conventional American college models. Gottschalk, though an immigrant himself, believed in American academic fashion, and soon after his arrival in Los Angeles in the fifties became a full-time graduate student at the University of Southern California. I, his assistant in the sixties, was born to Midwestern American parents and, though possessed of some of the immigrant sensibilities of the Philip Roth generation, was nonetheless trained at Midwestern public schools and Yale University. My own experience with the traditional Hebrew colleges or Jewish youth and camping movements was slight, and I had never had contact with the people whom those institutions trained. Thus in the encounters with the national educational leadership of Hebrew teacher colleges, or Jewish training in-

7 Union of American Hebrew Congregations.



stitutions, I lacked the shared culture and vocabulary. Some aspects of an emerging Brandeis University program had elements of the style I understood, and certain members of the Hebrew University outreach faculty did as well, but, by and large, the Rhea Hirsch School was distant from any of the existing models. Fighting for identity within the old establishment, I nonetheless revelled in my independence.

One telling anecdote distinguishes the growing College-Institute from other Jewish schools, which at the time had quite a parochial and sometimes xenophobic bent. At a reception in 1968 for a distinguished Israeli scholar, Dr. Gottschalk mentioned to the president of one of the more traditional Jewish colleges in the country that he had been up all night thinking about student protests (by which he meant the students of his own seminary who marched, wrote letters, and protested the draft through modest acts of civil disobedience). His colleague expressed surprise that such an abstract and remote issue had disturbed his colleague's sleep. The students at his institution tended to be part time and hard at work in multiple capacities, or Israelis toiling to earn enough credits to remain in school. Students at the Hebrew Union College were more like the students at all other universities than like the typical students of other Jewish colleges — especially students of the Hebrew colleges which constituted the "*Igud Le-batei midrash Le-morim*." And so, when the Rhea Hirsch School was formed, and once some initial decisions were made, its curricular self-image was that of the American college and not of the classic Hebrew colleges of Boston, Detroit, New York, Cleveland, and Baltimore. Indeed an additional anecdote captures another side of our uniqueness. After twelve years of trying to relate formally to the *Igud* system, our program was finally a candidate for accreditation. By that time our school was directed by Ms. Sara Lee, and I served as a member of its faculty, among other responsibilities at the California campus. It was Sara Lee's ingenuity and hard work that advanced our candidacy. When the accrediting team interviewed me in my capacity as instructor of literature, I prepared to discuss Hebrew Literature in a broad philosophical framework. I had thought about the place of my discipline in terms of polarized figures like Ahad Ha'Am and Berditschewski; I had developed a position of Reform Zionist metaphysics. When my interview came, I was asked how many poems by Bialik our students read. I fumbled the ques-

tion, which summarized the distance between our way of thinking and the way of thinking of the Hebrew movement leaders in America. But we did receive our accreditation and from then on were free of the pressure to finagle ad hoc arrangements for our graduates, who willy nilly had been hired by schools in rejection of the requirements of the *Igud*. Our students were simply among the best prepared: American born, Hebrew literate, and strongly professional in their outlook.

### First Lore And Early Reality

In spite of the depiction of the school as the product of casual cause, one could create a modest anecdote about the origins of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education. The school began as a night program for the public and for religious school teachers in 1969. Within a few years, it was moving into the "business" of full-time graduate professional education. Whatever problems plagued Los Angeles and national Jewish life at that time, these were expansive days, and the opportunity to embrace a new program within the framework of the California school of HUC-JIR was too compelling to pass up. It seemed easy for the California campus to inherit (and even pay for) a small public education program formerly sponsored by the national organization of the Reform Movement. Maurice Eisendrath wished to unload, and Glueck wanted to take on — (leading one wag to comment that this was the only reason the project might not succeed. "If *he* wants it," Eisendrath was reputed to have said, "*I'm* not sure I want to give it up."). It was more difficult to turn that program into a full-fledged graduate program. I suppose that is the most relevant part of this story.

Los Angeles was a city that periodically felt itself under siege, and seemed then (as now) to have enjoyed the intimacy that shields against the outside. When I arrived in 1965, the most vivid sensation was of riots in a part of the city called Watts. The assassination of a presidential candidate followed; drug-related deaths, mass homicides, and fires came in quick succession. It is and was a very large city, and travel distances and driving patterns often exhaust its residents. Perhaps because of this, Tuesday and Thursday evenings were special times for the small community of Reform Jewish religious

school teachers. Under the guidance of some favorite local rabbis and teachers, a cluster of about a hundred teachers and lay people would gather at each of two synagogues to participate in a neo-Lehraus version of adult study and enrichment. Courses were offered in teaching method and specific content areas. Some of these courses were calibrated to textbooks that were used in the schools. The evenings featured coffee and cookies, men and women staying in town to teach and thus creating community among themselves at dinner, and sometimes even late-night discussions after formal classes had concluded.

One of the participants in this program was an elderly patrician lady named Rhea Hirsch. Rhea Hirsch rarely missed a class (she died at the age of ninety-two, still a student), and she usually attended with her devoted son, I. Kingdon Hirsch. The high point of her week was her visits with the teachers of these courses. She was the sister of a Reform rabbi of the earlier American style, Harry Levy, and the family bore that heritage with pride. Eventually her family decided to make a capital gift to the new building program of the Hebrew Union College at its University of Southern California location in return for naming the school of education after the family matriarch. But the Rhea Hirsch School of Education was fast becoming something different than the larger College-Institute, or so the Hirsch family imagined. From a night program which had been advised by the dean of the College, to a night program which the College managed directly, the school of education grew by diminishing its size and concentrating on professional training. The new focus of the school was encouraged by the changing central administration of the larger College-Institute, even though its president held to a sentiment about its past that never would have envisioned such rich ideas as joint communal studies, education degrees, or professional mentoring programs. The eventual dropping of the night program for part-time teachers was the subject of dozens of encounters between the president and his local administration in Los Angeles.

I became the director of the new school of education in 1969 after a year of management by the flamboyant Rabbi Will Kramer. I subscribed more or less to the optimism of Alfred Gottschalk, who as dean was fast moving towards the presidency of the international institution known as HUC-JIR. Part of that optimism was to move ahead independently and to pursue needs as they emerged. The new

dean and I became convinced that Los Angeles lacked the demographic concentration to mount public education programs. Put another way, our institution lacked the necessary funds to offset the problem of demographic concentration. We did believe that Los Angeles was the right place to become a national center of professional training in the field of education. I believe that four factors played a part in moving us towards the direction of professional training. Some of these factors constitute proximate causes, and others are more generalized and formal. First of all, there was as yet no place for talented professional women within the institutions of the Reform Movement. As if anticipating the women's movements, probes were made in our direction by talented women who — within a brief few years — would have been eligible to be rabbinical students. Second was our belief — noted above — that Los Angeles was becoming too large to service on a communal basis. We had no mechanisms for bringing people together, and massive satellite structures simply were not suited to our taste. Direct service, then, loomed as a hugely expensive proposition which we felt the College-Institute was not ready to fund. We were, as a third consideration, interested in the concept of an educational field that would influence the academic thinking of the College in California, although we had little idea where this might lead us. (Eventually, the University of Southern California, on whose campus we were to locate and which became our host geographically speaking, had significant influence on this aspect of our motives.) But what moved us most to advance the idea for a graduate professional program was the abysmal state of our religious schools, the lack of any serious groundwork for full-time education, and the low self-esteem of the people "doing" the work of education for the movement. This, in turn, led to our developing different ways of thinking about professional training — ways that grew out of the abovementioned desire to parallel our program with those of the mainstream graduate professional programs on the American educational landscape. These are, I believe, the themes of this article. We were free to try some of this out as long as we remained small and inconspicuous.

Problems were looming, however, as institutions were over-extended, the city had neglected its underclass, and Jews were swarming over such a great distance, that the maintenance of a local school requiring serious financial underpinning was going to become

extremely difficult with the passage of time. This is the condition in which most institutions of Southern California now find themselves, and this is the condition that would inform any intelligent discussion of the educational picture of this community. The future, the twenty first century, will look back to this period as a time of great paradox: Los Angeles is a city of unprecedented wealth and indescribable poverty, of worldly faculties, and students who are tomorrow's leaders without the sense of future that used to characterize this country and particularly this geographic region; a city of major art collections whose important museums (save for the Getty) cannot support their staffs or their programs. Mike Davis's *City of Quartz* captures these paradoxes (although) without even oblique reference to Jewish institutions, and he lays the blame for the city's failures on all of us who have built into the future without acknowledging the common destiny of the totality. That is the trap we are in because of our particularity — to live with our plans and stand by while history criticizes them.<sup>8</sup> The Rhea Hirsch School certainly had little time to worry about the larger communal or national issues that plagued our civilization. The best the school could do, in the early years, was to urge its students to think universally about the Jewish subject matter of its programs. But the Hirsch School itself certainly had no "give" in its budget. The files of the Rhea Hirsch School are full of memoranda between local and national administration pointing out the restrictions that budgets placed on our creativity, and describing the disastrous condition in which we found ourselves. If there was some hysteria in these memoranda, it was only because the imagination existed for a greater number of creative projects than could be borne by the tiny school. While this gap between hopes and reality is probably pandemic, the College-Institute gave it a particular spin by calling the Rhea Hirsch program a "school" in the marketplace, and treating it like a tiny program internally. Its most imaginative programming comes from grants — not unusual for institutions like ours, but a worrisome situation, nonetheless, in that the larger school must guarantee continuity.

But there certainly is a positive side to the number of grants which support the tiny school, and that is that the grants are won. Recognition is secure, at least out in the larger world of those who make

8 Mike Davis, *City of Quartz* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

critical funding decisions. Circumstances today must be described positively, with the development of still newer programs at the Hebrew Union College. That, on the macro level. On the more intimate level, the optimism may be captured in the story of many successful students: rabbis who became educational specialists (we developed an additional year of specialized study), directors of education at some of America's leading schools, heads of agencies throughout the world, and academics who have become leaders in their respective institutions. The graduates of the Rhea Hirsch program serve in over fifty locations, and today serve in strategic institutions throughout the world. It is an impressive — if not unequivocal — record.

The Rhea Hirsch School of Education has stayed focused on the training of full-time professionals, doing so in a variety of patterns. It appears that by this time in the history of the school, its mission is fully endorsed by the administration and the board of trustees as well. During the formative years of the Rhea Hirsch School, however, neither the administration of the College-Institute nor its boards, nor any one individual within the system, had a vision of Jewish education that projected into the new century.

The new century is, in this case, also the end of a millenium. The president of the College has retained his commitment to community outreach and education, though the tension of many years between the project of the director of the school and the hopes of the president of the four campus schools seems to have diminished. New dreams have replaced the responsibility of the Rhea Hirsch School for that public outreach, which at the present time is spread into a half dozen professional and paraprofessional organizations. (One thinks of day school associations, CAJE,<sup>9</sup> a newly strengthened NATE,<sup>10</sup> and others.) If the sense of the larger College-Institute is imbedded in inaugural impressions like those described by Michael Meyer, Gottschalk's sense of the school of education's origins resided in the coffee and cookies and public teaching that he so loved when he was a younger man. Somehow, at least some aspects of the glamour in the lights of Plum Street, as filtered through New Haven, Connecticut, beckoned to me. I wanted gravitas for the school of edu-

9 Coalition for Advancement of Jewish Education.

10 National Association of Temple Educators.

cation and for its field. Adult education, I confess, was a threat to that wish. The old College of Jewish Studies, which was the germinating seed of the Rhea Hirsch School, existed no more. The cozy fireside memories of the movement's leaders became only memories, and these memories often taunted the school's new director. Leaders were worried that we weren't serving the "public," the people "out there," and Dr. Gottschalk's hope for a Lehraus in the Frankfort tradition was swallowed up by our decision to train a handful of highly skilled leaders.

That is not to say that we totally ignored the local community. One of the ways in which I and my staff continued to serve the community was through specialized training for paraprofessional and quasi-professional groups. But smaller and specific constituencies were kept within the orbit of the College-Institute in California. While evening programs that advertised broadly for the public fell into obscurity, we attached ourselves to several groups of paraprofessionals who soon came to study for certification through our programs. Nursery school educators, librarians, and individuals with special skills emerged as a new constituency. From these groups of ten to fifteen people at a time, our staff learned much about what was emerging within our religious and educational institutions. At the same time, modified certification programs were established for some of these people. Special training in group dynamics took place, sponsored by the College and utilized as a research and development wing of the school. (This will be discussed below under "Turning Points.")

### **Supply and Demand**

The key aspect of the vision for the school was the belief that the development of a full-time profession would produce its own needs and its own professional spin-offs. Central administration, in spite of its historical attachment to local programming, left the management of this new program to the administration and faculty of its new department. And the fact remains that the origin of the school in the mind of its first director was best stated in the formulation of Walter Ackerman, the editor of this volume: feed the pipeline with well-trained professionals and they will develop the next stages in the

field. This advice was more than a proto slogan, "Build it and they will come." It was in fact the result of Ackerman's knowledge and my blind hopes that good people will create needs and populations that will need the service of Jewish educators. Indeed, since the establishment of the Rhea Hirsch School's Masters program, the number of full-time positions in the field has grown by a factor of at least five. Supplementary schools have come to demand full-time professionals to run their programs; there is a steady and respectable increase in liberal Jewish day schools that look for our graduates; and many Jewish organizations consider graduates of our program as models for their staffing needs. The pipeline has grown! Contrary to planning models, it has done so from the supply side.

One of the people in that pipeline was Sara Lee, a woman in her late thirties who came to the school as a widow with a rich background in lay community service and a B.A. degree from Radcliffe College. Another was a startlingly intelligent young man, Michael Zeldin, the son of a prominent rabbi (and HUC's first California leader), a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, who as a high school student had hovered in the precincts of the College-Institute. Both of these people as part of the "pipeline" are now responsible, along with other staff members, for developing the newest programs of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education. The third full-time faculty member of the Rhea Hirsch School is Isa Aron, a graduate in educational philosophy from the University of Chicago with a B.A. from Swarthmore College. She so impressed me during a casual meeting in New York that she was hired by Nancy Berman, Director of the Skirball Museum, and myself to manage the Museum education program which was beginning to take hold. By 1981, the Rhea Hirsch School had contributed three full-time people to the faculty of the College-Institute — an unheard-of number of educators for a school with such rabbinical chauvinism.

The pipeline has certainly been fed by the leaders of this school and by its graduates. But more important than that, perhaps, is the fact that the school has inspired other institutions to feed additional people into the pipeline. Using the Rhea Hirsch School as a benchmark, one can note enormous changes in American Jewish educational life since the emergence of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education in 1971. Some of these changes can arguably be attributed to the College-Institute; others had a more profound impact on the school than the



school did on them. As likely as not, we are witnessing a dialectical relationship between changes within American Jewish culture and those developments within the school that affect American Jewish culture. But the Rhea Hirsch School is — at the very least — a benchmark.

The programs of the HUC School of Education in 1994 have moved a long way beyond the practices originally established in the early 1970s. In 1992, the staff and advisory committees of the School of Education published a document entitled: "*Yelamdenu Morenu: Towards a New Century*." The title of the document was more than an accident of combining Hebrew and English, tradition and vision. The concentration on the "new century" represented within the life of the HUC-JIR a symbolic statement that our self-examination and organization of the future into discrete modules was trying to become a model for other programs of the national College-Institute. The rabbinical school of the College had — just a few years before — completed a three year study of its own curriculum, and had — in its title — tried to convey an ideology of future and past: "Innovators of Torah." The education school document emerged as more coherent, with specific tasks laid out for well-defined periods, and with prior commitment of the overall institution. (Not all of those commitments were easily arrived at, but they did finally emerge as part of a joint administration-board-faculty consensus with a significant measure of assent from the Reform Movement.) No other statement within the history of the HUC-JIR ever achieved this degree of coherence and the degree of potential for follow-through as that contained in the document of change known as "*Yelamdenu Morenu*." The programs that were to follow the report's approval were already in place or had been cleared with a solid constituency. In organizational theory, the more generally goals are stated, the easier it is to reach consensus. It is the genius of "*Yelamdenu*" that it combines generality about mission with programmatic specificity. No such "ducks were lined up" when Isaac M. Wise's school opened. In the history of the School of Education itself, there had been three or four other junctures at which systematic planning was attempted, and these may be credited, more or less, with bringing the school to the point in 1992 when the more sophisticated planning document could be created.

The progress of the Rhea Hirsch School of Education — between

1969 and 1992 — can be tracked by citing certain key patterns along the way. One of the most significant overall patterns was our decision to work closely with the University of Southern California. Thanks to the good relationships established by Dr. Gottschalk and his mentor Samson H. Levey, our little education department was able to move into a comfortable relationship with the university. This made a graduate program sensible and respectable. For other programs, the Rhea Hirsch School underwent periods of planful development combined, as already noted above, with snatching whatever “low hanging fruit” (ready-made opportunity) was available. Its original functions of service to the Los Angeles community required that it maintain the connection to the agencies that had fostered the local development of Jewish educational life. But it occasionally became overloaded, and the President would have to call for some self-assessment. There were some key junctures in the school’s growth, which we shall now examine.

## Turning Points

### *The Affective Education Movement*

In the summer of 1968, I received a typed manuscript reporting on experiments with junior high school teachers. The Ford Foundation had funded a project designed to explore the place of teacher training in the development of affective education skills. The participants were the University of Massachusetts and the University of California at Santa Barbara, under the legendary George Isaac Brown. As the project grew, the Rhea Hirsch School was invited to participate as a corresponding member of the team of some forty participants. These were halcyon days, and people from all over the country became interested in this work which seemed so quintessentially Californian. Four years of experience with the Ford Foundation program, and several more years under our own steam, the Rhea Hirsch School became identified — perhaps overidentified — with Confluent Education. The Hebrew Union College program in Confluent Education continues in a much reduced fashion, and today it is primarily a vehicle for theoretical exploration of curriculum issues, and for the personal and professional growth of our own

graduate students.<sup>11</sup> But for a time the program was the fulcrum of a national institute for supplementary teachers, which gave the College new outreach potential within the United States and significantly raised our profile among our constituents. (The program was funded by the then vibrant Institute for Jewish Life, which has also passed formally from the scene, and a committee of faithful lay people.) The Santa Barbara program in Confluent Education continues to attract a small number of students from around the world. The program was exposed to only a limited amount of empirical research,<sup>12</sup> but several descriptive and theoretical articles have emerged from the work.

### *The Year In Israel*

When I served on the faculty of the Jerusalem campus of the College-Institute in 1972, rabbinical students were required to study in Jerusalem. Under the inspiration of Seymour Fox and Moshe Davis, Dr. Gottschalk agreed to encourage full-time students in education to study in Jerusalem along with rabbinical students, and within two years this program became a requirement. That requirement changed the stature of the education program, and altered its nature as well. I was a passive participant in this change — a fact of which I am not very proud; but I console myself with the thought that I couldn't believe our institution would take the field of education seriously enough to institute such a program. Whatever ambivalence has existed with regard to the Hebrew language, the Israel program has stood as a symbol of the tenacity of Hebrew within the lives of our students.

11 William Cutter, "A Theology of Teaching: Confluences and Creation," *The Melton Journal* (Autumn 1993); George I. Brown, *Human Teaching for Human Learning* (New York: Viking Press, 1971).

12 Elizabeth L. Simpson, *Humanistic Education, An Interpretation* (New York: The Ford Foundation, 1977); Myron Dembo, "An Evaluation of Confluent Education, Theory and Practice, in the Jewish Setting" (unpublished paper, USC and HUC 1975).

### ***National Planning Meetings***

By 1977, the Rhea Hirsch School had far outstripped the College's expectations. At the same time, the administration was still concerned about its service to the local community. In addition, there was a vestigial program at the New York campus of the College-Institute which periodically forced the two programs to get in each other's way. I, as director, was asked to write a major paper anticipating directions for the school and its programs. Since such a document had never been created before, most of the discussion did not lead anywhere. The document remains a kind of reportorial dinosaur in the files of the institution. However, one new program and one fabulous instance of planning was already underway. It was an occasion that was to change the face of the entire Hebrew Union College, and perhaps of Jewish Los Angeles as well. (See MUSE below.)

### ***Lay Responsibility***

The Rhea Hirsch School of Education had developed a small advisory committee of lay people and professional educators to serve as a link to the broader community. This was a difficult task, since Reform Judaism had never placed its strongest leadership on committees devoted to education. The committee had the secondary function of raising money for the extra programs — the out-of-budget institutes — that the Rhea Hirsch School sponsored. While more prominent and perhaps wealthy members of our community served on the overseeing bodies of the College-Institute at large, this group funded the Summer Institute, made significant contributions to the scholarship funds of the school, and promoted the capital gift from the Tartak family for the Teacher Center — a hands-on workshop for HUC students and the general community. One of the complexities of running departments of the College-Institute has been the difficulty of developing lay support. True governance is not at stake, and people used to prestige and authority are generally more comfortable functioning in the more global capacities that small individual programs afford. (Museums are an exception to this rule of thumb.) Eventually the advisory committee was disbanded. But in

the meantime, this advisory committee of the school prodded me, as director, to explore the possibility of multicultural programming — an idea that seemed way out of the orbit of interests of the Rhea Hirsch School.

### **MUSE**

Through the initial kernel of an idea, the director of the six year old Skirball Museum, Nancy Berman, and I patched together “pre” proposals that eventually resulted in a nearly four hundred thousand dollar grant which brought School of Education interests into the life of the Skirball Museum, and which added entirely new constituencies and textures to the Rhea Hirsch School. This was the most stimulating educational experience of my professional career and the most challenging administrative task to which I have ever set myself. I directed the program for two years and supervised it for two more. Today the museum mounts a major educational program, and the School of Education and indeed the entire California campus draw heavily on museum resources. In fact, the largest project ever undertaken by the College-Institute — its new cultural center — is a direct outgrowth of this synergy. My own hope had been for more complex involvement of aesthetics — theory and practice — in the life of Jewish Education. This hope was never to be realized, and probably cannot be in today’s pragmatic climate of measurable results and representation of Judaism to the public whereby museums are supposed to recreate a reality that is no longer experienced by viewers. It may be that the Jewish community can never remove itself from concerns with having to represent some kind of historical or axiological “truth.”

### ***The “Resignation” of the Founding Director***

In 1980–81, after a brief but serious illness, I asked to be relieved of administrative responsibilities for the Rhea Hirsch School of Education. It was a decision that was not easy to make, but which resulted — I believe — in a totally new kind of progress for the school. The school and its director have become international leaders of the current educational movements — at a level I do not think I would

have promoted, and I have been free to pursue personal study in a way that unites my combined interest in education and literature. The School of Education has pursued a somewhat corporate path in its educational research, and I have chosen to follow the old and perhaps out-of-date university model of individual research as the occasion and desire strike me. The lack of discourse around individual research and theory concerns me, but it is clear that the voice of the Rhea Hirsch is firmer and more vigorous than it has ever been.

*The Age of the Grant: Wexner, Lilly and Covenant, Avihai, Cummings and The Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education*

There has been a major turn in organizational life in the United States, following the huge amounts of capital accumulation within certain American Jewish families. I believe foundations have emerged for three primary reasons and one factor that is often put into play: First is the lack of trust in existing institutions to plot the direction of our Jewish future. Second is the belief among wealthy people that their success at solving problems within their businesses can also be utilized to solve the problems of the American Jewish community. And, finally, family money permits individuals to enjoy the use of their freedom to do some good for the world. They may in the long run find the problems in Jewish life more intractable than their business problems. Business, as it grows, brings in income; public institutions, as they grow, cost money. Many of the foundations have done many wonderful things within American Jewish life, but too often the tail has wagged the dog. Only time will tell whether we have made a net gain as a consequence of grants for projects. And only maturity and restraint will guide school administrators to seek grants or to build up their permanent base through endowments and annual giving. The Rhea Hirsch School of the 1970s was greatly aided by The Institute for Jewish Life (now defunct), and the National Endowment for the Humanities (now struggling for its own survival). Some might speculate that the Hebrew Union College will exist long after many foundations run out of ideas, programs, and constituents. But whether or not that is true, it is clear that alumni of such a program will not be able to contribute major support for the program's sustenance, and most foundations cannot — by charter —

do that. Serious, annualized financial support will be essential for the ongoing growth of the HUC School of Education.

These developments helped bring the Rhea Hirsch School to full-staff potential, and to the point where a long-range look at the future has become possible. A task force made up of staff was funded by a small initial grant from the Mandel Family Foundations, which enabled a plan of great coherence and detail, and a plan that engaged general administration, faculty, and board of the College-Institute. The Rhea Hirsch School would no longer proceed without the scrutiny of others, but it could also proceed more systematically and as an organic part of the national and international College-Institute. The school's director had finally created an entirely logical and self-nurturing division of the College-Institute. She engaged the dean, vice president and president and the board leadership more than any other program director in HUC-JIR's history.

The recommendations of the task forces and committees, sponsored originally by a planning grant from the Mandel Family Foundations, are now backed by nearly one million dollars for growth and development which will rearrange the contours of the liberal education scene in the United States.

The grant mandates a curriculum review that will include the development of new aspects of the professional M.A. degree, and the emergence of a practice-oriented doctorate. It will enhance the capability of the Rhea Hirsch School to train graduate students from within other full-time graduate programs of the school, and will facilitate placement procedures within the Reform Movement and other agencies of American Jewish education. It will achieve this because a provision of the grant's program is the convening of institutions to consider processes of change and professional growth within their precincts. Thus our graduate training program is linked directly to the professional scene, overcoming a gap between work setting and training setting that too often characterizes professions within America in general. (Law schools are notorious for dissonance between field and faculty.)

Research capabilities will be expanded, both financially and through intellectual networking (although some feel that this portion of the grant might lead to corporate rather than individual thinking), and these expanded research capabilities should enhance the nature of the emerging doctoral program.

Four additional areas will be addressed through the capabilities provided by the grant. Educational programs in the Progressive Movement in Israel may now become a reality after a series of abortive efforts by myself and other staff; family education may now become a reality in conjunction with the new cultural center of the California School; laboratories for the elusive phenomenon known as congregational education will be possible at last; and we will be able to provide discourse for linking Jewish Studies with general studies.

While the details of the document may not appear revolutionary, its very presence is a naked statement of the size and importance of the Rhea Hirsch School. The document is also a statement about the significance of Jewish education within the Reform community in America and Israel.

The Mandel Foundations grant, and the entire "*Yelamdenu*" project, put to rest at last the debate between local service and national significance. The grant by no means solves all of the problems the School of Education needs to address. And for some, the success of public programs at our rival University of Judaism remains the grass which is greener on the other side. But it is clear that a program that began in the fall of 1968 — when Maurice Eisendrath, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, made a casual business decision — turned out to have elaborate implications for the history of the Reform Movement. The transfer of the night school program for adult Sunday school teachers to Dr. Nelson Glueck resulted in careers, quality, and major public discourse in American Reform Jewish life. It made the Reform Movement a player within ecumenical Jewish circles, and it altered the definition of Jewish "professional" within the Reform Movement in America. The Reform Movement itself — that is as a separate entity — had not been able to achieve anything comparable, even in New York with its large concentration of Jewish population and teachers. Thus the College of Jewish Studies of the Reform Movement became the Rhea Hirsch School of Education of the Hebrew Union College.

Yet there remained an additional "weighty question," if one may borrow a figure of speech from the days of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda. The School of Education and the School of Judaic Studies were fast taking on the American look, which was so congruent with the way the Hebrew Union College has come to view itself. Within that reality, what was to be the place of Hebrew in American Jewish



education? Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, as we know, has become the legendary father of modern Hebrew. His role in that development may be debated, but he has left us with a metaphor with which Jews continue to contend.

### **The Weighty Question**

For the College-Institute, Hebrew ideology is a weighty question often unweighed. While the texts that are studied at the school are in Hebrew or Aramaic, classes will never be conducted in Hebrew (and I don't think they should be); while we have an elaborate program in Israel, most of our students never master the spoken vernacular (and they should). And while we officially honor the linguistic tradition, our lay people, when they wish to engage the traditional material, do so in English. At one meeting I attended in the Catskills, my speech was followed by one question: "Why don't we conduct this meeting in Hebrew?" And with that question, the marginality of the Hebrew Union College was established. The only consolation for me institutionally was that soon enough Hebrew would be declining in all of the movements. This is tragic consolation, considering the place of language in the development of a tradition. A kind of half-hearted commitment to the Hebrew language continues to characterize the entire Hebrew Union College, but mostly as a reflection of the ambivalence felt within the Reform Movement as a whole. Indeed the School of Education has led the way within the intramural framework of the College-Institute by exploring specifically the possibility of a course in the teaching of texts, and the purposes for teaching Hebrew within our schools. But there can be little hope as long as such meager budgets are spent on the schools in the field. Yet until this time, the School of Education had not fully explored the place of the Hebrew language within the total educational environment. Now the College-Institute and the Movement have developed separate arms for exploring Ben-Yehuda's challenge.

### **Which is the Stone to Reject/Who is the Builder?**

Throughout the first thirteen years of its existence, two contrary impulses characterized new developments within the life of the Hebrew

Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion since the year in which Alfred Gottschalk became president. I don't believe the institution can be understood without borrowing a metaphor from commerce. The metaphor is the polarity: Wholesale/Retail — as a way of defining the community we would be serving. Most graduate professional schools would argue that their task is to serve in the wholesale market — to “manufacture” and “market” the professional who will then provide direct service to the broader market of individual homes and institutions. At the same time, many graduate schools have found great value in serving the public in a “retail” way — providing direct service to a broader constituency. The motives for that direct service may include: a) having a training ground for the future professional; b) attracting public attention for the good of the core programs of the institution; c) for research purposes; and d) because the management of the institution enjoys working with the public. In Jewish life there may be yet another motive for “retail,” and I will succumb to the temptation to suggest it here: that the providential support of the institution comes from people whose sense of number and figure is so large that the numbers we can provide at the wholesale level are simply not satisfactory. The Hirsch School, for example, has graduated over a hundred and fifty professionals in the twenty or so years of its existence, and has trained a few hundred more paraprofessionals. That is a very small number in absolute terms. One must point out that those hundred and fifty graduates serve tens of thousands of people in the various towns in which they are found; that those graduates have contributed an advanced cadre of leadership that dominates organizational structures and builds beachheads in cities like Minneapolis, Chicago, St. Louis or New York. But we have too often used statistics and numbers to sell our programs, and people are used to thinking in terms of the number of people served directly. Into this equation the executive vice president of the College-Institute stepped some fourteen years ago and developed his own powerful vision of direct community service. Uri Herscher has provided a sense of scale for the public which is to be admired as larger than any heretofore imagined.

It is not the purpose of this article to take sides on this issue, which, I believe, remains an important aspect of the College-Institute's future planning. The Hebrew Union College has yet to articulate a vision of purpose for the school along the lines of its

public responsibility. We remain involved in doing both professional and public service, and thus are often overextended and less expert than we should be in one domain or another. It is the genius of this institution, however, to survive and to do better than survive, and to find its task through the whirlpools of its own heuristic devices. The very attitude of letting a thousand flowers bloom has enabled specific programs like the Rhea Hirsch School to emerge at all, on the one hand, and to become a micro-institution propelled henceforth by serious and detailed planning. At least within the Rhea Hirsch School, a bouquet has been organized out of the flowers. I believe that this success, combined with the general budgetary picture in the United States, has resulted in the effort to plan at the national level as well. Lean times will probably require more careful programming from now on in Jewish educational life. At present, however, and in the bigger picture, the College-Institute is affected by so many outside forces that it can only steam ahead somewhat clumsily, yet optimistically, toward the future. It will be the good fortune of the College-Institute, Reform Judaism, and indeed the world Jewish community, to be instructed by the experience of the Rhea Hirsch School — with its problems and its achievements — as a document of modern Jewish Life.

I want to thank colleagues and friends Roslyn Roucher, Isa Aron and Sara Lee for reading drafts of this paper.

## PETERSBURG JEWISH UNIVERSITY — NEW BEGINNINGS

Dmitri Elyashevich

Jewish culture in the former Soviet Union is undergoing intensive development. Beginning in the 1970s with clandestine religious services, group meetings and Hebrew study, the expression of different cultural identities was made possible by perestroika, and by 1989 was finally legal. The restoration of synagogues, the appearance of the Jewish newspaper "*My People*," and the establishment of Jewish community centers, all sponsored by foreign organizations such as Joint, as well as the opening of the Israel Cultural Center by the Israel Foreign Ministry, are examples of the rebirth of Jewish consciousness. In particular, Jewish day schools, yeshivot, and other educational institutions are being opened everywhere. The Petersburg Jewish University (PJU) is one of these institutions taking on the mission of Jewish cultural revival.

The objective of the PJU is to develop Jewish education and to reestablish Jewish community life in the widest sense — to train specialists in the field of Jewish studies, to interest intellectuals in research in Jewish studies, and to search for new ways of developing Jewish culture based on the merger of the achievements in modern science and technology with Jewish traditions.

Founded by Ilya Dworkin, the university was inaugurated in November 1989. Its foundation was comprised of the various cultural and educational programs that had been developed in Leningrad in the period before perestroika. This base grew from several secret circles for studying Hebrew, Torah, Jewish tradition, and Jewish history; from small groups of enthusiasts who spent their vacations investigating *shtetlech* in the former Jewish Pale of Russia, and from a semisecret historical and ethnographic regular working seminar that was held in Leningrad. The staff all have academic degrees, and are either self-educated in Judaic studies or received their Jewish education abroad once foreign travel was permitted.

We had planned to open the PJU in 1988, but were prevented from doing so by the authorities and had to delay the opening by a year.

Then, as now, we are contending with problems both of a practical and material nature, such as lack of our own facilities and insufficient finances. We still do not have our own building and rent space from several institutions around the city.

In 1989 the total faculty and student body of the PJU numbered twenty persons. This modest beginning was in fact a resounding reflection of our new status — what had previously been clandestine activity was now practiced openly and legally, with permission of and recognition by the authorities. Students and teachers alike studied Hebrew, Torah, and Jewish tradition and history. For example, expeditions were undertaken to research the *shtetlech* of the former Jewish Pale.

The University is financed by various organizations and funds outside Russia, such as Joint, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture (USA), the Bay Area Council for Soviet Jewry (USA), the Institute for Jewish Studies in Russia, the Doron Foundation (Israel), Or Torah (Israel), and the Rich Foundation (France).

Criteria for admission are the same as for other institutions of higher education in Russia. Candidates for full-time study must not be above thirty-five years old and must have passed the entry examination and interview. For the evening course the requirements are the same except for the age limitation. There are no restrictions with regard to sex, nationality or religion.

We continued to grow and expand. Today, five years later, the University has ten separate but interconnected spheres of activity. These are the Faculty of Philology; the Faculty of History and Ethnography; Beit Midrash; the Pedagogical College; the Institute for Problems of Jewish Education; the Institute for Jewish Diaspora Research; two supplementary schools; a library, an archive and video collection; a publishing department; and a center for children's activity. Our student body now boasts three hundred and our teaching staff comprises fifty teachers. The University also has a dormitory for students from other cities.

A number of seminars, ongoing projects, and research programs are run by the University, with classes being held during the day (the full-time division) and in the evenings. The academic program consists of twenty-five one year courses in general subjects, and fifteen one year courses in Jewish subjects. After fulfilling the requirements of this four year course, students are granted a Bachelor of Judaica

degree in the following specialties: History and Ethnography, Hebrew and Semitic Languages, Literature and Culture of the Jewish Diaspora, and Classical Hebrew Texts. In addition, there are special programs for training teachers of Jewish subjects, as well as specialists in methodology (the Pedagogical College).

The teaching staff of the PJU includes renowned specialists from different universities in Russia, Israel, and the United States. Several courses are given by visiting professors from Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel. Each winter the PJU holds an International Educational Conference, and arranges scientific symposia during the summer months.

The main task of the Institute for Problems of Jewish Education (IPGE) is the collection and dissemination of information about the state of Jewish education in different regions of the former USSR. The Institute studies the effectiveness of different programs and materials, coordinates the efforts of teachers and methodologists in creating a system of Jewish education, develops curricula and teaching programs for Jewish schools of different kinds, and prepares educational materials. The methodological department organizes pedagogical seminars on various subjects. The IPGE, together with the Institute of Jewish Manuscripts, publishes the magazine *"Jewish School."*

The Beit Midrash is a religious institution, modelled on the traditional yeshiva. In-depth study of Torah, Talmud, and Jewish philosophy is taught by renowned rabbis and professors of Judaica.

The Institute of Jewish Diaspora Research (IJDR) conducts research in the field of history and ethnography of Jews in the territory of the former USSR. The activity of the Institute includes expeditions, and work in the archives, museums and library collections throughout the former Soviet Union. At present, the IJDR has more than ten thousand photographs, several thousand slides, about three hundred audio cassettes, about one hundred hours of video cassettes, reports on expeditions, and a number of museum artefacts. More than five hundred shtetls have been fully researched. The findings of these investigations have been made available to specialists and the public at large through publications, seminars, exhibitions, and conferences. The Institute intends to publish books based on the collected material. The IJDR operates in conjunction with a number of academic centers in Israel and the USA, including the Center for

Research of Jewish Art (in Jerusalem), and the Holocaust Center of northern California.

We set ourselves an ambitious task for the 1993–1994 academic year, and although at the time of writing the year is not yet over, we cannot help but feel gratified to see the fruits of our labor and our hopes (See Appendix).

The Petersburg Jewish University reflects the rebirth of Jewish cultural life in Russia. Despite financial constraints and other difficulties of operation, in just a few years its comprehensive academic programs, publications, and outreach activities have succeeded in rekindling an ancient lore numbed and near forgotten by close to a century of attempts to snuff it out. The PJU is here to stay; it is a permanent but developing and dynamic element of Jewish life in Russia, and it is our fervent hope that our efforts, ever increasing, will in some small way compensate for the years of its enforced slumber.

## Appendix

### Programs and Projects of the Petersburg Jewish University 1993–94 Academic Year

#### Publications

- Calendar "*Expeditions into the Past*," on Jewish monuments in the territory of the former Soviet Union. The first edition was published by Joint.
- Booklets on the Jewish shtetls
- Code of Jewish monuments and territory of the former Soviet Union
- Photo album "*Gravestones of Destroyed Jewish Cemeteries in Moldova*," by D.M. Goberman
- Nine books for the Jewish school library
  - "*Stories of Avram's Childhood*"
  - "*Jewish Folk Tales*"
  - "*Jewish Songs*"
  - "*Story about Hoham and Tam*"
  - "*Stories about Athens and Jerusalem from Midrashes and 'Hasal'*"
  - "*Jewish Folk Puzzles*"
  - "*Story about Rabbi Honiata Meigel*"
  - "*Collection of Stories*," by Arie Rotman for the Jewish School
  - "*Play for a Jewish Theatre*"
- Child's Illustrated Anthology "*Agala*"
- Quarterly magazine, "*Jewish School*"
- The book, "*Leningrad Hagada*" in English

#### Development of Educational Material

- Working journal for Jewish teachers
- Four training sets on Jewish classical texts (*Pirkei Avot*, *Noah*, *Ruth* and *Jonah*) for students of Jewish high schools
- "*Family History*" — training and study of history through family trees and geneology
- "*Jewish World*" series of six training sets
  - Basic concepts of Jewish tradition
  - Training of Jewish tradition through art
  - Training in Jewish tradition and history at summer camps
  - Journey of Avraham
  - Eight books for teaching Jewish history to children
  - Translation and publication of "*Biblical History of the Jewish People*" by Andre Ner



**Exhibitions**

- *"On the Steps of Shoah"* for the San Francisco Holocaust Center (financed by the Holocaust Center)

**Activities**

- Summer scientific expeditions
- Weekly seminar for Jewish teachers from the former Soviet Union

**Conferences**

- Jewish Culture in the Context of the World Civilization of Israelites and Hellenes in conjunction with Sorbonne University, Summer 1986
- Summer camps for children together with the YUSSR (and financed by the YUSSR)
- Problems of Jewish Education in the Countries of the former Soviet Union

**Facilities**

- Methodological Center for Jewish Education in the territory of the former Soviet Union
- Methodological Consulting Room for Jewish Schools of the former Soviet Union

# THE PARDES INSTITUTE: AN EXPERIMENT IN OPEN-ENDED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

Michael Swirsky

For many of us, Americans and Western Europeans who came of age then, the 1960s were a time of spiritual search. On the one hand, the shallowness and crassness of the secular culture in which we had been raised left us starved for mystery and exaltation. On the other hand, new worlds of meaning, beyond the suburban frontier, suddenly seemed to open up — escape to exotic places, through reading, and, for some, the inner doors of mind-expanding drugs and music. It was the time of “tuning in, turning on, and dropping out.” Among Jews, those few who resisted the headlong flight from any connection with their own people could look to its traditions for at least the possibility of nourishment. They could read, seek out the visionaries, huddle together for song and prayer, and even undertake real study.

I was one of those Jewish seekers, a third-generation American who grew up on bacon and eggs and “Ozzie and Harriet,” yet somehow found his way to Torah. As a teenager I got myself to Camp Ramah, and at twenty I dropped out of medical studies to enter the rabbinical school of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Eventually, by way of Havurat Shalom (the Boston commune founded by Arthur Green in 1968 and made famous by *The Jewish Catalog*) and Kibbutz Gezer (in the early seventies, a haven for American hippies), I found a niche for myself in Jerusalem and began to wrestle with the challenges of this Jewish reality we call Israel, so dense with meaning and resonant with what Heschel called “an echo of eternity.”

Although I had devoted six years to rabbinical study and was ordained, I remained a person in search. The Seminary had been a splendid place to acquire scholarly knowledge of a certain sort and to meet other seekers, but it did little otherwise to elevate our souls, either in its program, its atmosphere, or the models of Jewish living it afforded. (I am speaking of the institution as it was thirty years

ago; today's Seminary may be a different matter.) Here in Jerusalem I found many people like myself, young adults looking for a Jewish spiritual anchorage who thought, reasonably enough, that the center of the Jewish universe would be the place to find it, if it was to be found.

Some of these people were studying in the four small, recently opened ultra-Orthodox academies for the newly religious, the "*ba'alei teshuva* yeshivot," that soon grew in number and influence to become a significant presence in the world of Orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup> These yeshivot were not merely places of sacred learning; they were places of transformation, where one went to be "made over" in the image of the fundamentalistic, strictly observant Jew. Long-haired, guitar-strumming youths came in off the street and, in a matter of weeks or even days, became *frum*, having left at the door all their previous values, ideas, and patterns of behavior. The yeshivot were not places for exploration or asking questions. Their students were quickly made aware that there was an absolute dichotomy between truth — meaning Orthodox Judaism, often at its most simplistic — and falsehood, meaning all other systems of belief or value, most especially the secular and modern. Aviad writes:

Yeshivot for *ba'alei teshuva* are doctrinaire and indoctrinating. Their explicit and self-conscious task is the selling of Judaism. Their staffs are composed of people whose talents and interests lie in persuading a generation of young people to return to orthodoxy. People-changing is the *raison d'être* of the *ba'al teshuva* institution[s]. Their aim is to create a "true believer."<sup>2</sup>

The ultimate goal of these institutions was to *socialize* their students, to prepare them for entry into the community of the ultra-Orthodox, no simple matter given that community's suspicion of all outsiders and particularly of the newly religious.

Other, less venturesome seekers after Jewish truth were to be found in those years studying at the Hebrew University and, to a lesser extent, other Israeli universities, in special programs for students from abroad. There, one could take a course in Bible, a

1 For a chronology of the founding of these institutions see Janet Aviad, *Return to Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 28.

2 Ibid., p. 49.

survey of Jewish history, or an introduction to Talmud, and also learn some Hebrew, all in the "Jewish" environment of Israel. The problem with university study, of course, was its detached, objective quality. Even the best teacher, in whose hands the books truly came alive, could not deal in the classroom with students' personal relationship to the text, with the existential questions and needs that had brought them to study it to begin with.

Between the yeshiva and the university, what was lacking was a place where Judaism could be explored in a spirit of religious quest but, at the same time, tentatively and critically, without jettisoning one's previous intellectual training and without any a priori commitment to a new identity or way of life. Such a place would combine the best of the yeshiva and the university — engagement and open-mindedness — while avoiding the pitfalls of each. In short, what was needed was a place of true *Torah Lishma* — the study of Torah as an end in itself. Had such a school existed a few years earlier, I myself would have gone there. The Seminary, an institution that could not make up its mind whether it wanted to be a university or a yeshiva, turned out to combine the *worst* features of the two, dry scholasticism and an insistence on observance, while seeming to give little thought to students' growth as human beings or as Jews.

Thus, early in 1971, the idea began crystallizing in my mind of actually starting a new school that would meet this need, a school for people like myself. In the course of my work in Jerusalem, I had begun getting to know teachers as well, including some who I thought might be sympathetic to the idea. These were people of serious Jewish scholarship but also of religious commitment. At the same time, they were self-critical, nonauthoritarian educators who saw their work as sharing an imperfect knowledge rather than advocating a system of belief or way of life. Why not try, I thought, to bring some of these people together, in some simple, intimate framework with the students who so much needed what they had to offer? This was the germ of the Pardes Institute.

Over the next few months, in the course of exploratory conversations with friends, respected colleagues, and prospective teachers in the school, I began to articulate an educational philosophy that I saw as informing its work. It would be a philosophy of pedagogic humility and open-endedness. The students we would be working with would

be adults, not children, and the subject matter — Judaism itself — would be their birthright as much as ours, to appropriate or reject as they saw fit. Their questions, no matter how skeptical, would be taken seriously; and they would be helped to find answers to these questions themselves, not presented with them ready made. I say philosophy rather than methodology, because this approach to teaching represented real conviction and not a mere tactic on my part. It reflected where I myself, as a seeker, had come from, my own tentativeness and resistance to anything smacking of indoctrination or proselytizing.

The student-centered educational philosophy (I have in mind Carl Rogers' "client-centered" therapy) was one I had seen in practice while a student myself at the University of Chicago. There, I came under the influence of the late Rabbi Maurice Pekarsky מורי, an extraordinary teacher whose watchword was "the Jew as human being." What he meant was that in advancing our collective Jewish agendas — the survival of the Jewish people, the perpetuation of Judaism, the building of the Jewish state — we tend to treat individual Jews as means rather than as ends. We tend to forget that people come to the Jewish tradition and the Jewish community for help in living their lives, for meaning and illumination and support. "In the discussions of the Jewish people and Jewish religion," he wrote, "the fate of the *Jew*...has been submerged.... As if Jewish persons were only bricks in someone's imaginative edifice, not flesh and blood, frail, mortal creatures."<sup>3</sup> Pardes, then, was ultimately to be not about books, traditions, or ideologies as ends in themselves, but about people, with their questions and frustrations, yearnings and aspirations.

The students we would recruit for Pardes would be bright, mature men and women — the question of distinguishing or separating the sexes simply never arose — people highly motivated to study, whatever their chronological age. (One way of ensuring motivation was to make clear that no "college credit" would be given.) They would be *beginners*, with a strong existential desire to forge a path for themselves into the world of Jewish learning and thought, wherever that path might lead. What about those seekers, ripe for

3 Alfred Jospe, ed., *The Legacy of Maurice Pekarsky* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965), p. 137.

self-transformation, who did not want open-endedness but direction, who wanted to be told what was right and wrong, what to do and what to think? For these people, whose need may have been equally legitimate and urgent, institutions already existed. Pardes would not be for them.

The goal of Pardes would not be to "socialize" students into any particular community, except perhaps that vast vertical community that is the chain of Jewish generations stretching back to Abraham and forward to the Messiah, or the farflung horizontal community of the House of Israel as it is today. In both cases, the "community" we are speaking of consists of those who share a common heritage but not a common way of interpreting or living out the implications of that heritage. Consequently, it was not necessary for Pardes, unlike the yeshivot for *ba'alei teshuva*, to be situated in an environment that embodied a particular way of life. Indeed, the Jerusalem neighborhood in which it was to be located (Bak'a) was extremely diverse in its religious and ethnic makeup. Pardes would, in effect, offer its students the whole panoply of Jewish options and agendas that Israel represents.

Pardes' internal environment would also be a microcosm of the Jewish world. It seemed important that the faculty be as diverse as possible. The initial group that would agree to teach included Jews of German, English, Iraqi, and Palestinian origin, as well as Americans and Canadians. There were men and women, young and old, academics and rabbis, Orthodox and well-nigh-secular, Ashkenazim and Sephardim. The common denominators, beyond scholarship and teaching skill, were a sensitivity to religious issues and a commitment to sharing knowledge and to meeting the students on their own ground, with sympathy and respect. Students, by the same token, would come with a wide variety of backgrounds and agendas, and during the course of their studies at Pardes they would grow, change, and perhaps diverge even further. The lack of an imposed regimen of common observance meant that, in certain areas (for example, prayer and Shabbat), they would have to work out a *modus vivendi* for themselves as a community, an exercise that would be valuable training for their later assumption of roles in the contentious melee of the Jewish world outside.

I began the practical work of setting up the institute in the late fall of 1971. The circumstances could hardly have been more auspicious. At the time, I was doing educational work for the Youth and Hechalutz Department of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), and I proposed the idea to my boss, Mordecai Bar-On, who was a man of unusual intelligence and breadth. Though not religious in any sense — he later became one of the leaders of the Society for Secular Humanistic Judaism — he was able to appreciate the importance of providing young Jews with untrammelled access to the riches of the religious tradition. (Bar-On had been the Israel Defense Forces Chief Education Officer and was to become a member of the Knesset, a leader of Peace Now, and a professor of Israeli history.) He released me from my other duties, gave me a building (the Gad Street site of the Makhon Le-shlihim, which was just about to move to the new Kiryat Moriah), and provided me with a budget to fix it up and maintain it. Equally important, he gave me a virtual free hand in the planning and operation of the new institute, asking nothing in return by way of recognition for himself or the WZO. (The latter's sponsorship of Pardes, which was to last for more than a decade, was almost never acknowledged publicly.) I had only to guarantee that operating costs other than maintenance, primarily teachers' salaries, would be borne by students' tuition fees.

Those who have been involved in the establishment of institutions — I myself have had several other experiences of this kind — can testify how rare it is to be able to begin so unencumbered by financial concerns or by sponsors looking over one's shoulder. Pardes did not even have a board of directors — legally it did not need one — until years later. One of the consequences of all this, for better or worse, was that in the beginning I was completely on my own, free to shape the new school exactly as I thought it should be, to translate my particular vision into a reality. Whether or not I did this wisely, there can be no gainsaying the exhilaration and stimulation to creativity such freedom affords.

And I decided to make the most of it. Rather than setting about right away assembling a group of teachers to work with me — all of whom would no doubt have ideas of their own — I first gave thought myself to the program of the new school. I assumed that one year of full-time study was reasonable to expect as both a minimum and a maximum commitment. (In fact, a second year would later be

offered by popular demand.) But what should we teach at Pardes? One thing that both the Hebrew University and the yeshivot (and the Seminary, for that matter) had lacked was a coherent curriculum by which one could begin to *make sense* of the world of Judaism. Here I had a positive model to draw upon from my undergraduate experience at Chicago, where the notion of a comprehensive, highly structured introduction to the whole sweep of Western knowledge had been elaborated and successfully refined over a period of several decades. What I had seen at Chicago, too, was a great respect for primary sources ("the text") and for the ability of even the rank novice to read and gain insight from them that could not be gotten secondhand. This emphasis dovetailed nicely, of course, with traditional Jewish notions of Talmud Torah.

So with not a little hutzpa and naivete, I sat down and actually drafted a curriculum of basic Jewish knowledge based on what I myself had already learned, a curriculum that covered key ideas, key texts, and key periods in the unfolding of the Jewish tradition from the Bible down to the present. It was not a curriculum likely to have been devised by someone with a yeshiva background, but rather reflected my university experience and penchant for schematization. Here is the way it looked:

*The Bible as a Source for Jewish Philosophy* — Selected biblical texts and the issues they raise for classical and modern Jewish thought.

*The Bible and Its Exegesis* — Selected biblical texts as seen through the eyes of the principal traditional commentaries, with emphasis on the main themes and genres of biblical literature and the methods of traditional exegesis.

*Talmud and Halakha* — Selected *sugyot* in Talmud, concentrating on language, methodology and the development of specific *halakhot* within the Talmud itself and in later commentary and codes.

*Aggada* — Selected talmudic and midrashic texts dealing with key concepts, issues, and methods in non-halakhic rabbinical thought.



*The Cycle of the Jewish Year* — Biblical, rabbinical, and philosophical texts dealing with the themes of the holiday cycle.

For the sake of clarity and maximum immersion, each day in the week would be devoted entirely to one course, with a two hour lecture-discussion given by the course's main teacher and the rest of the time spent, *beit midrash* style, in unstructured text study with a *havruta*, under the guidance of a tutor. Far less demanding elective courses in prayer, Jewish imaginative literature, musar, kabbala, and Jewish history would also be offered. A modest reading knowledge of Hebrew would be required, but the language of instruction would be English.

At this point I felt ready to seek out teachers sympathetic to what I wanted to do and willing to give some time to trying it out. I "went for broke" and approached some of the most respected educators around, people whose work I knew and who I had reason to think might be on my wavelength. To my astonishment, I was almost never turned down. Part of the trick, I suppose, was not to ask too much: just one course per teacher, to be given in a single weekly session, with hardly any obligations outside the classroom. Adin Steinsaltz, David Hartman, Eliezer Schweid, Michael Rosenak, Aryeh Toeg — all agreed to teach. Working in tandem with them as tutors would be gifted younger teachers to whom, I thought, students could more easily relate during the long hours bent over text: Dov Berkovits (later to become director of Pardes), Menahem Fromann (now rabbi of Tekoa), Aryeh Strikovsky (now Pardes' most veteran teacher), Elliott Yagod, and Burton Zeffren. Later, I brought in a number of others as supplementary tutors and teachers of special-interest classes, including Yaakov Rothschild and Golda Warhaftig.

Somewhere about this time, I also chose the school's name. It had to be a Hebrew name but something easy for non-Hebrew speakers to pronounce; and it had to suggest something of the institution's purposes. It was my friend Selma Sage who suggested the name Pardes. This originally Persian word for garden or orchard — the origin of the English word paradise — takes on a mystical meaning in rabbinical literature.

There were four who entered the *pardes*. Who were they? Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma, Aher and Rabbi Akiva....Ben Azzai looked

and died....Ben Zoma looked and went mad....Aher cut down saplings. [Only] Rabbi Akiva emerged unscathed.<sup>4</sup>

This famous *aggada* is, of course, concerned with the perils of esoteric knowledge — not our concern. Yet we were very much concerned with the difficulties of entering the broader realm of Torah, the anxieties and self-doubts, the dangers of losing one's way. And of course, Rabbi Akiva, the one who "emerged unscathed," was known to have been, like our students, a late beginner.<sup>5</sup> The word *Pardes* is also used by the medieval rabbis as an acronym — for *peshat*, *remez*, *derash*, and *sod*, the four levels of biblical exegesis. Hence it seemed apt as a way of suggesting the positive side of Torah study: its depth and richness.

The next step was to begin publicizing the program and recruiting students: preparing posters, brochures, and forms; contacting a large network of educators and rabbis who could help with referrals; and interviewing candidates. At the same time, the three rather gloomy old buildings of the little Bak'a campus we had been given — one containing classrooms and offices, one a dormitory, and one a dining room and kitchen — needed to be brightened and dignified for a new use. Walls had to be painted and hung with appropriate pictures, new furniture acquired, and signs made up. (I saw the aesthetics of the setting as important.) An entire library of basic Jewish religious texts and references had to be ordered, catalogued, and shelved. One room in the main building was to be fitted out as a synagogue, another as a student lounge. All these tasks devolved upon me, Pardes' sole staff member during the winter, spring, and summer of 1972. I even lived there, in a makeshift apartment on the top floor, immersed, hermit-like, in the exciting work of giving flesh and sinew to what had been a mere idea.

By the fall, the last of the bookends and light fixtures were in place, twenty-eight interesting and thoughtful young people, mostly Americans in their twenties, had signed on to study, and we were ready to begin.

<sup>4</sup> *Hagiga* 14b.

<sup>5</sup> *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* 6:15.

Pardes' first year was, by most accounts, surprisingly successful. There were a few dropouts later in the year, and there was grumbling now and then about the food, the tardiness of paychecks, and the onerousness of the study load. But for students and faculty alike the experience proved, on the whole, intensely stimulating and rewarding. There was not enough registration for most of the elective courses — students simply did not have time for them — but the program was enriched by Thursday-night *mishmar* study sessions, a well-attended lecture series dealing with current Jewish issues (featuring such luminaries as Moshe Greenberg, Yeshaya Leibowitz, ל"י, and Jacob Katz), holiday celebrations, and other events. More important, most students felt the year had made a difference in their lives, had given them, in large measure, the entree into the world of Jewish ideas and texts they had come for.

One last, key piece of the founding of the Pardes Institute did not fall into place until near the end of that first year of operation. I myself, in planning and establishing the school, had held in abeyance the question of what kind of person should direct it. During the first year I myself served as director, and behind the scenes it continued to be very much a one-man show. Yet my youth, inexperience, and lack of scholarly credentials made me fearful that I might not be credible in the role and that this might undermine the whole venture, which was more important to me than merely having a job. Thus, in speaking about the institute to students as well as to my WZO sponsors, I always used the first-person plural, perpetrating the pious fraud that it was Pardes' distinguished faculty and not this thirty-year-old nobody who was making the decisions. In fact, the "faculty" almost never met as a group, and when it did it was not to make decisions.

This situation might have continued indefinitely, and perhaps, in retrospect, it should have. Perhaps I was just the sort of person Pardes needed at its helm: a person who could actively empathize with students' concerns because he really shared them, who himself sat in on classes whenever he had a free hour, not for the sake of supervision but for the sheer excitement of what was being discussed. But that was not the way it seemed to me at the time; I thought a person of stature and charisma, someone whom students and faculty alike could look up to, was called for. And so I went out looking for one, and when he took over at the beginning of the second year I felt my work had been completed. (As it turned out, the

person I recruited ended up being unable to do the job, and it *was*, in fact, done, and done well, thenceforth by people not so different from myself!)

The second year, 1973–74, also saw a big change in the faculty. The first few months were wartime, and one of Pardes' best-loved teachers, Aryeh Toeg, a brilliant young Sephardic Bible scholar, fell in battle at the Suez Canal. Three of the other principal teachers went on to found institutes of Jewish studies of their own, each reflecting a unique personal vision and synthesis: the Shalom Hartman Institute, the Shefa Institute, and the Kerem Teachers College. Those who remained behind and who subsequently joined the Pardes faculty were a different breed, younger, and more homogeneous in their background and outlook. Almost all were Orthodox Americans with advanced yeshiva training, and many of them were products of Yeshiva University.

It should not be surprising that this group of teachers brought some changes. Because the yeshiva world was their primary frame of reference, the vocabulary and heuristics of yeshiva teaching were naturally a part of the baggage they brought with them. They also tended to be intensely aware of certain features of Pardes that had originally been incidental and unremarkable but that set it apart from many of the traditional yeshivot and those for *ba'alei teshuva*: the positive attitude toward the Israeli environment and the fact that men and women studied together. Though committed to Pardes' original goals, some of these teachers felt self-conscious about working in such an untraditional framework. As a result, the word "halakhic" began to creep, defensively perhaps, into self-descriptions of the institute, something that would have seemed inappropriately partisan at the beginning. There was also a stress on the teacher as religious model, on home hospitality, and even on matchmaking — all features of the yeshivot for *ba'alei teshuva* aimed at integrating the student into an observant community that did not exist originally at Pardes.

Through all this, it is surprising and encouraging to me how much of the original Pardes idea — the openness to questioning and diversity, the humane concern for the student as an autonomous person, the empathy, the warmth — has been preserved. It is also remarkable how little has changed about the institute's students since that first year; they are still bright, well educated, eminently sane, and highly motivated. They are still genuine seekers, and many of them

still come to Judaism with the fresh perspective of the uninitiated. Ironically, there may be more such people today at Pardes than at the yeshivot for *ba'alei teshuva*, whose students tend increasingly to come from religious homes.<sup>6</sup> Since most students learn of Pardes by word of mouth, the pattern established early on seems to perpetuate itself. Evidently, Tocqueville's observation that the history of nations is shaped by the circumstances of their founding has once again proven true, albeit in tiny microcosm.

Pardes today is a fully independent institution, newly relocated to a complex of attractive classrooms and study halls in Jerusalem's Talpiot district. It has about a hundred full-time students (mostly English-speaking people in their twenties) on several levels, a dozen full- and part-time teachers, and extensive programs of summer and evening courses and public lectures. Its volunteer social service program, in which all full-time students take part, has made a name for itself in many areas of the city's life. In its twenty-two years, Pardes has built up a body of several thousand alumni, dispersed throughout the Jewish world, whose lives have, by their own testimony, been significantly and positively shaped by the experience of studying at the institute.<sup>7</sup> This picture of success is a tribute to the talent and dedication of the extraordinary teachers and administrators Pardes has had over the years. But perhaps, too, it has something to do with those modest but determinedly puristic beginnings.

After trying out all sorts of objective and "academic" ways of telling the story of how the Pardes Institute began, I finally settled on the simple, first-person narrative you have just read, a narrative in which the autobiographical element is embarrassingly salient. It is not only that this approach came closest to conveying the "truth" of the matter, the way it really happened. The larger significance of this story, I believe, is that living institutions are created and sustained by individual people, with their quirks and peculiar passions, and not by committees or abstract programs. Of course, teamwork is always essential too; but what animates the enterprise, more often than not, is

6 Aviad, *Return to Judaism*, pp. 46-47.

7 The semiannual Pardes alumni newsletter *Havruta* is largely devoted to graduates' reflections on their experience at the institute and its ramifications for later life. (It was for this newsletter that the nucleus of the present article was originally written.)

one person's "bug." Of this, it may be that Pardes provides an instructive example, one that I hope will be helpful to others in pursuing their own educational visions.

*Section II*

*INFORMAL EDUCATION*





## CAMP RAMAH: ORIGINS, PROBLEMS, AND PARTIAL SOLUTIONS

An Interview with Moshe Davis\* by Pamela Jay Gottfried

Reprinted from the *Melton Newsletter*

with the permission of the Ratner Center

Dedicated to Sylvia C. Ettenberg — Elan Vital of Ramah

### Introductory Note

This conversation, adapted for the *Melton Journal*, was conducted in Jerusalem (November 1990) under the supervision of Prof. Jack Wertheimer. The transcript is deposited in the Joseph and Miriam Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism. It is a companion to a previous interview with Prof. Davis on Ramah's conceptual and formative stages by Shuly Rubin Schwartz in April 1976 (published in *Kovetz Massad*, vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1989, edited by Shlomo and Rivkah Shulsinger-Shear Yashuv).<sup>1</sup>

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Preliminary remarks by Professor Davis:

*Oral testimony has both strengths and weaknesses for historical writing. I often think of Prof. Mordechai Kaplan's maxim: "Indispensable but inadequate." From my experience, he was right on target. While personal recall for the contemporary record can be indispensable, it is also inadequate, and should be carefully*

\* Moshe Davis is Stephen S. Wise Professor (Emeritus) in American Jewish Life and Institutions, and Founding Head of the Hebrew University's Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry. He served as Dean of the Teachers' Institute and Seminary College of Jewish Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary (1945–50) under whose aegis the Ramah Camps were created.

<sup>1</sup> For complementary reading, see *The Ramah Experience: Community and Commitment*, edited by Sylvia C. Ettenberg and Geraldine Rosenfield (New York, 1989), especially Dean Ettenberg's Introduction, pp. xv–xix; Burton I. Cohen, "A Brief History of the Ramah Movement," pp. 3–9; and Seymour Fox, "A Setting for Jewish Education," pp. 19–38. See also Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "Camp Ramah: The Early Years, 1947–52," *Conservative Judaism* 40, no. 1 (Fall 1987/ח"תשמ"ח)

*matched with available documentation. Hence, I am careful to emphasize that my memory is selective.*

*With this general caution, I add a further restriction. I shall limit my responses to the years I served first as Assistant to Professor Kaplan, and then Institute Dean (1943-50). In 1950, I was appointed Seminary Provost (until our Aliyah in 1959). During that latter period, while the Teachers' Institute was within my supervisory portfolio, and indeed my first love, direct authority for the Camp Ramah Movement was vested in the Faculty of the Teachers' Institute, under the succeeding deans, Judah Goldin and Seymour Fox, and always the ennobling spirit of Sylvia Ettenberg. Together and individually each gave the Ramah Movement new bursts of creative growth.*

*Finally, while I am not immune from loss of islands of memory, I assume full responsibility for my recall — subject to contrary documentation. As for certain differences from what others may have written or said, I am reminded of what Sir Isaiah Berlin termed "corridor history," referring, in his British style, to the decisions reached in the corridors of Parliament. In this case, I can apply the term "corridor history" quite literally, because of the slow-paced walks with Dr. Finkelstein from his office along the fifth floor corridor, when I was privy to his decisions, later to be tabled with the Seminary Executive Committee.*

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*Q Ramah offers the campers a complete Jewish experience. Every aspect of camp life is tied to Judaism and many have told me that they encountered in Ramah a more authentic Judaism than they did in their homes or in a synagogue. Did the founders of Ramah take into consideration the kind of tension this would create for the campers during the rest of the year, once they left that complete Jewish experience?*

*A. Certainly. As a matter of fact, to the extent that we did not take it into account, we were reminded of it by parents and even by the rabbis. One of the most difficult experiences I had was with a rabbi who will remain unnamed. From time to time, I was called*

upon to serve congregations throughout the country. It started during the War when I had to substitute for some of the chaplains. For the High Holy Days I would serve in an auxiliary capacity at one of the congregations. This particular rabbi had an abiding respect for me, and it was mutual. He took hold of me one day and chafed: "Moshe, for heaven's sake, you're destroying my congregation." I said, "What do you mean I'm destroying your congregation?" He said, "The kids come back from Ramah and then they don't want to come to my service!" "Where do they go?" I asked. "They go downstairs and pray with the older generation where it's all in the original, because they don't like the English." And I retorted: "For the same heaven's sake, since when must *ahavat olam* be read in English? When did that become a cardinal principle of Conservative Judaism? We introduced English readings because we wanted to maintain interest in the service. Now that the children know the prayers in the Hebrew, that's a higher *madrega*. And he countered. "Ramah has become, in my congregation, detrimental to my interests." This is a striking example of one existing tension.

A second aspect of the tensions came from the families. For example, at the camp in Wisconsin, on Shabbat the gates were closed. The parents, most of whom were not Sabbath observers, would drive up to camp on Shabbat. True, they sent their children to Conservative schools, but they had no thought that the pattern of their home life would be altered. There was a walk from the gate, a considerable walk, because they would have to park at a distance. And yet many insisted on trying to drive into the camp.

Then came the most serious tension of all. Many of the campers when they came home wanted to change the dishes. So kashrut became a problem. We were not ambivalent. It was not our purpose in any way to alienate the children from their parents or to make them uncomfortable in their homes. We had long discussions with the children on that subject. "It is not for you to change your parents' practice. However, if you wish to pursue a particular path, we think your parents will respect it. But you must respect them and their life patterns too." That is how we dealt with it. In course, I am told, an important part of the curriculum became *kibud av ve-em*.

Then there was tension between the national directorate and the local branch of the Rabbinical Assembly. From the very beginning, there was serious discussion on the question of local rabbinic

authority. As Dean of the Teachers' Institute I was bound to try to set an observance pattern, which was akin to the Seminary shul. But many rabbis in the regions held different views. For example, in the Wisconsin camp, on Shabbat, electric lights were not turned on. One rabbi, one of the camp's founders, a man of learning and understanding, visited the camp for Shabbat and "reminded" me: "Look, we are the Rabbinical Assembly of Chicago. Although we don't tell people to turn lights on during Shabbat, we don't rule against it." Demonstrating, he put on the electric lights in the bunk. It was not a pleasant experience. On the whole, we gave our campers the freedom they wanted, and respected individual tastes and styles. Clearly, however, there was basic discrepancy between religious practice in the homes from which our children came and our teaching. What we tried to evolve in the early years were the routines of a camp life based on differences and varieties in matters of ritual which existed all over the country, as well as between the Rabbinical Assembly and Seminary faculty.

*Q I understood that the policy decisions were made by the Teachers' Institute, at the Seminary, but some of the decisions were more liberal. There were some departures from Seminary practice. For instance, there was mixed seating at the camps.*

*A. Those differences existed on issues not only related to Ramah. They existed within the Law Committee, and as is so well known, they existed within the Seminary itself. One Shabbat Prof. Finkelstein and I were in Miami Beach. Naturally, we wanted to daven in one of our synagogues. I came with my woolen tallit. Prof. Finkelstein found a small silk tallit in the corridor and placed it on his shoulders. He wasn't very meticulous about it. Why? Because he had davened before and he was really sitting in as a visitor. Let's not forget, we had differences among ourselves and it wasn't a matter of being liberal or not liberal. It was a matter of recognizing that in the Conservative movement, we were dealing with a laity that was fundamentally not halakhically observant. Conservative Judaism was undergoing all kinds of inner problems; and it was all reflected in the camps. While we made it very clear in all our discussions that the ultimate decision was in my authority, as Teachers' Institute Dean, I could not ignore the actuality that in the area of ritual observance, the*

local rabbinical group pursued its own way. Hence, while we resisted giving the regions authority in religious practice, precisely because we saw education as a gestalt, in practice there were many compromises, based on the realities within the local congregational structures.

The differences were not only in matters of camping. There were differences in *Gittin*, there were differences in *Nisuin*, there were differences regarding riding to the congregation on Shabbat. All this became quite manifest to me early in my career, especially when I had to deal with concrete situations.

For example, the camp in Maine, where we had many difficulties even in kashrut. That's a story all unto itself. The distinguished David Lieber was then the director of the Maine camp. He had a terrible time governing it because we had rented the camp, and many crucial aspects of the camp were not in his hands. David Lieber did not accept the situation. One day, when matters were out of hand due to the failure of others, he sent me a telegram and said, "Moshe, if you don't come up immediately, I shall abandon camp." Of course, he would not! I sent back a wire. "Captains don't abandon ship. Sink." Despite the severe weather, with all his gifts, David did find a way to bring the ship into port.

We also had a kashrut problem the first year in Wisconsin.

*Q. Who supervised the kashrut there?*

*A.* In the beginning, it was the camp director who supervised it. I remember coming to Wisconsin in the first season. It was immediately clear that the kashrut was not being supervised properly. Rabbi Ben-Zion Bergman was at the camp as a counselor. He was a Talmudist, a person of real learning. I said to him, "Benzi, your main responsibility now is to be the *mashgiach*." We were creating something new within the Conservative movement, working up a framework for a total Jewish experience. The entire day was under our supervision. Until then, what was a congregational education? One would come to a service and come to school, but the children didn't live as Jews in a completely Jewish environment. Camp was like living in Israel. Thus, many problems which never occurred in the congregation had to be defined and routinized in the camp situation. We took a long-range view, and emphasized the respon-

sibility of the Teachers' Institute as a Jewish educational institution. All this was reflected not only in ritual. It was reflected in study, in personal behavior, and it was certainly reflected in the use of Hebrew. The biggest compromise was made in Hebrew.

*Q In an article by Burt Cohen about Ramah's history, he mentions that discussions took place about setting ritual policy, for example about female campers leading Birkat ha-mazon and the issue of mixed seating during the first years in Wisconsin. Who participated in those discussions?*

A. In the early years it was my responsibility to try to solve the problems we discussed. That does not mean that I didn't consult. I consulted all along the line, primarily with Dr. Finkelstein and, of course, with the key rabbinical personalities in the regions. I grew up as a student in the Seminary and upon graduation in 1942 served as Rabbinical School Registrar, so I knew the internal Seminary policy. However, we did have problems, as Sylvia Ettenberg reminded me, "from the year one." During my incumbency, there were no formal committees dealing with it, but we had a clear division of labor. If one takes the position, as I did, that the New England branch was to guide us in determining the ritual practice of the camp in Maine, and the Philadelphia Rabbinate for the Poconos camp, and accept the differences within the various groups themselves, then you find solutions more easily. That's where the Teachers' Institute bent; that's where I bent. However, to come to the core educational program, the Hebrew language, classes, and other practical aspects, I will not say we were unbending, but we did not lose sight of our goals. In a sense, it was not as difficult as it sounds. Actually it was exciting because there was so much good will. Everybody was happy about the program. After all, Ramah was a novel experience and we were raising the level of education within the movement. We had not anticipated that we could begin to solve our educational problems in this way. In truth, there was such good will around that the differences were small in comparison to the results we were achieving.

*Q Will you elaborate on what everyone refers to as the "missed opportunity" of making Ramah a truly Hebrew-speaking camp?*

A. Here we came up against a brick wall. It was a problem in Jewish education then, and it still is, perhaps even more severe in the current Jewish educational situation. Put simply, one had to make a decision as to whether *content* of a discussion was as important as *language*. There were educators who argued that it is possible to train a group of children to speak on any level. However, those were not the campers and counselors who came to us. Our campers, with rare exceptions, were students who came from the congregations. The congregational system was poor. How much did they study? At best, six hours a week. I'll cite an example. I was once present at a meeting of congregational educators who had to determine the proportion of time given to the variety of subjects in the weekly program. They wanted to include the entirety of Jewish religion and culture: Bible, history, Hebrew language, Siddur, current events, etc., in the usual six hour curriculum per week. Somebody made a proposal: "I suggest that within the six hours, we give twenty minutes of each session to Hebrew." Another said, "If you give Hebrew twenty minutes, you're cutting into the other subjects. I suggest ten minutes." There was a debate over those ten minutes, twenty minutes. Finally, they called for a vote, and the agreement was on fifteen minutes.

A missed opportunity? I would say that our real problem was with the counselors. I hope that you don't mind my saying so, but I can teach Hebrew while hot in a baseball game. We did it at Massad. As a matter of fact, Massad put out a dictionary of sports terms. The key question is who are the counselors, and are they capable of coping with teaching goals while holding the interest of the child and keeping the game going. I'm talking about baseball. How do you play baseball in Hebrew if you don't know the language? How do you say "slide?" In the Massad dictionary it was translated as *hachlakah*. Foot first slide was termed *hachlakah beraglayim kadimah*, and a head first slide *hachlakah b'rosh kadimah*. And even if one knows only *hachlakah*, who's going to think of the Hebrew word while you're sliding? You've got to tag the runner. So I think that essentially we were not equipped, and our teachers were not equipped. I once demonstrated to a group of counselors how it is possible to

conduct a class in Hebrew while playing baseball. Actually, it didn't bother me if a camper spoke English-Hebrew in that situation.

That's what we had to cope with, not only in Hebrew language teaching. To use Prof. Kaplan's term: In camp, Judaism is a *civilization*. We're not talking of partial Jewish experience as when one goes into a synagogue/room for service. We're also talking about lunch. At lunch kids want to yell, and they want to yell in their vernacular. The noise in English was natural. Suddenly you announce no one may speak in English. This may hold long enough for one gulp. Children have to express themselves.

Or swimming. We certainly wished to improve upon the campers' swimming abilities. What are you going to do as they swallow lake water? Shout in Hebrew? If only we had counselors who could communicate in Hebrew under such total circumstances!

Beyond that, there was not in our system, as there was in Massad, a feeling that language is content, not all of the content, but without it content is diminished. Hence, if you wanted a camper to express himself about the meaning of Abraham and monotheism — these are big ideas — what do you do?

*Q Do you think that some people lacked a strong ideological commitment to making it a Hebrew-speaking camp?*

A. They lacked an emotional commitment. Ideologically, they agreed that it would be wonderful if we could get the campers to speak Hebrew freely. But they lacked the ability to help the campers achieve that goal — perhaps not because of ideological restraint, but rather methodological ineptitude. Besides, we were interested in making the young Jews better adult Jews, better human beings. Hence, in dealing with the Judaic elements of the tradition, they did not think linguistic proficiency was primary

*Q Two of the problems you discussed elsewhere were the inability to transmit the meaningfulness of daily prayer and the difficulty to create a habit of Jewish study among the students. Can you broaden that a little?*

A. I start with the latter: Study. Indeed, we placed great emphasis on study — on learning. The story of how I managed to bring our



Chicago Committee to understand the art of learning is worth telling. I knew I was dealing with the Conservative congregational mind-set. And I wanted very much to establish the concept *Talmud Torah keneged kulam* in Ramah. How to do this? I came up with the idea of introducing a professor-in-residence in the life of the camp. By professor-in-residence I meant to follow what was then being introduced in many colleges; for example artist-in-residence, composer-in-residence. What do they do? Essentially they are at their own work, but students can be free at certain hours to observe and open a discussion. I said to the Committee, "I would like to have this novel idea of having a professor-in-residence, somebody from the Seminary in our camp, and I shall invite him exclusively to pursue his studies. But he will have his meals with us, and he will take his walks with any who wish to accompany him. After all, in the summer season he will not be studying day and night." The Committee responded as one: "Under no circumstances. Why should we spend this kind of money, pure and simple, for a person who has no formal responsibilities?" "O.K.," I said, "If that's the decision then I think we're going to abandon the daily flag-raising ceremony. After all, we gather the children early every morning around the flag and then it waves all day. What does it do? Nothing. It just waves. It's only a symbol. So if you don't want symbols, there won't be flag raising either." Well, the Committee reluctantly agreed. Interestingly enough, having such role models of study and behavior became one of the greatest assets of Ramah for campers as well as staff. Prof. Halkin was the first professor-in-residence. I'll never forget that *Tisha be-Av* day. He sat in his room, studying the texts one is permitted to study on the fast day, and didn't pursue his regular routine. The campers learned, undoubtedly for the first time in their lives, that there has to be selective study. Prof. Halkin was followed by Prof. Ernest Simon; and, in the course of the years, other illustrious scholars, as for example, Prof. Shraga Abramson. They all endeared themselves to the students for there was a physical and spiritual presence in the camp of a *talmid hakham*.

The next hurdle was to persuade parents to agree that their children come to study two hours a day in a summer camp. That, too, was a novel idea, difficult to get across, but it became a standard within the Ramah camp system. So it was that the "learning camp" was introduced to the Conservative movement.

*Q. Now, what preceded the learning? Transmitting meaningfulness of daily prayer?*

A. That was my goal. Remember again, we had campers who didn't daven every day. It's not only a matter of putting on tefillin or not putting on tefillin. It is rather the thought, so succinctly expressed by Simon Greenberg, that morning prayer is the most civilized way of living. One rises, davens, and that's the way to start the day. How do you get that idea across to young people who did not experience it in their homes?

*Q. You spoke earlier about flag raising. Elsewhere, I read about the "Israeli flag-raising controversy of 1950" in connection with the question as to how Zionist should Camp Ramah be. Do you have any recollection of that?*

A. Yes, at the instigation of a few hot-headed staff members of Massad, the Poconos camp was "bombarded" by leaflets dropped from a helicopter charging Ramah as being anti-Zionist. The act was not motivated by the Massad administration. Ramah received letters of apology from the Massad board and director stating their regrets for this *mishigas*. There is not only documentation in the Ramah files, but also personal affirmation from Shlomo Shulsinger, founder of Camp Massad, now resident in Jerusalem. I need to emphasize that the source of the problem was not in the camp. It arose in the Seminary itself. I remind you, we are talking about the early State period. The debate within the Seminary Board and administration revolved around the question whether the flag of David is the flag of a nation, or of a people and religion. This question, to be historically accurate, was discussed and determined in the chaplaincy committees of the Jewish Welfare Board. That flag bore the Ten Commandments as its symbol of Judaism. It is not a secret that the Seminary was divided within its Board on the issue of our relationship to the State of Israel. Many among them felt that the blue and white flag with the Star of David — after 1948 — represented the flag of the State of Israel, and it could no longer serve as the flag of the Jewish People. Along came some bright person and suggested, "Why don't we use the chaplaincy flag?" That's the way they solved the problem in the chaplaincy, and that's the position the Seminary adopted. Certainly, I

had no problem with the flag of David, but some thought otherwise. Consequently we had another issue at the Seminary that had to be worked out in those heated days. We overcame the problem and it actually didn't take very long. Virtually everyone came to recognize that the blue and white flag with the Star of David is the flag of the Jewish People, and not only that of the State of Israel.

*Q. In your recollection, how was the name "Ramah" chosen?*

A. As with the invention of the wheel, the name came up, as far as I know, simultaneously in two places — perhaps that explains why it took on so rapidly. I personally heard the suggestion for the first time at a special meeting of the planning committee convened by Reuben Kaufman, the Chairman of the Chicago branch of the United Synagogue. He was a key force in the establishment of Camp Ramah in Wisconsin. Present at the meeting was Albert Elazar, then Executive Director of Anshei Emet Synagogue and a member of the planning committee, who suggested the name. It was immediately accepted. I was later informed that the Teachers' Institute faculty committee adopted the name from those proposed by Prof. Hillel Bavli. Perhaps some day Elijah the Prophet will disclose the whole truth, and bring redemption a bit closer.

*Q. Do you have any thoughts to share about Henry Goldberg?*

A. Henry Goldberg was the first director of the Wisconsin camp. It was a very difficult assignment. Even getting the bread to camp on that honky-tonk railway was a vexing problem. The third week of the first season, Sylvia Ettenberg and I flew in for a review of the camping season. I took one look at the situation and said, "Sylvia, let's divide tasks immediately. You take care of the emergencies and I'm going to plan for the next year." It was apparent that the major faults could not be dealt with during the remaining weeks. Slender as he was, Henry Goldberg had lost much weight. He was very worried about real issues such as the kashrut problem, the traveling question, and unanticipated details of the run-in year, what we called in Hebrew, *haratza*.

My essential plan was to return home to assure that the camping idea would live within the Conservative movement. Why did I take that stance? That very summer we also experimented with a nursery camp called Atid. Prof. Finkelstein was facing some very serious problems in the overall fiscal condition of the Seminary. He was far from excited about the Camp Ramah "adventure." He later became one of its great advocates. I had the time of my life to help cope with the real difficulties within the Seminary and still maintain the camp. That year we lost ten thousand dollars both in Atid and in Ramah.

*Q And then Atid was cancelled?*

A. Prof. Finkelstein came into my room with the deficit figures in hand and said, "Moshe, choose. I can't face those deficits." I had to make a choice and I chose Ramah.

*Q How many years did you have to continue to convince Prof. Finkelstein?*

A. Until he visited Ramah in the Poconos. He was overwhelmed. Just as he was overwhelmed when he visited Israel and saw his grandchild, and he said to me, "*hi medaberet ivrit!!*" Life itself convinced him. He was very impressed and, truthfully, rather amazed. He wrote me a long letter — apologizing for the trouble he gave me. Let me illustrate. One of the mainstays of the Seminary campaign in those years was Har Zion congregation in Philadelphia. Rabbi David Goldstein gave Ramah several scholarships. Dr. Finkelstein said to me, "It's going to be at the expense of the Seminary, and we have to determine what's more important." It took me years to overcome the intensity of that conversation. But one had to know Dr. Finkelstein to appreciate his deepest concerns for the future of the Seminary. His password to us was *nor gedayget. Nit gedayget* (only not to worry) was not in his vocabulary.

One Friday afternoon, I walked that famous corridor with Dr. Finkelstein. Just the two of us; everybody had gone already. He walked from office to office and put out the lights. I said to him, "Professor, I thought your job was to keep the lights on, not to put them out." But his job was really that. He had to conserve electricity. That was his concern, to keep the house going, the whole house

going. And I, as dean of the Teachers' Institute, pushed, of course, for educational expansion. Although there were some basic disagreements between us, there were never any personal squabbles. However it took time until he actually saw what Ramah would do for the Rabbinical School. And then he wrote to me, "*Nitzkhuni Banai*."

*Q He objected at the beginning because of financial reasons?*

A. I would say more than that. It was not only financial. You know, in life there's a good reason and a real reason. The financial aspect was a good reason, but there was a real reason. Essentially, he felt that the heart of all Jewish knowledge was the Talmud, and that the Rabbinical School was the keystone of the Seminary. "*Mikol ha-mekomot ha-kedoshim ... ha-makom ha-kadosh be-yoter*" was the Rabbinical School. I mean, he had to set priorities, even at the expense of other departments, especially in those days when he was rebuilding the Seminary.

*Q So then basically you're saying the real reason was to keep Ramah a project among many.*

A. The real reason was not to let any other program or department intrude on the central purpose of the Seminary, which was the Rabbinical School.

Permit me an addendum to this conversation. There is now a growing literature on Ramah, essentially within our institutional framework. It is not too early to begin to prepare for Ramah's jubilee. While oral history interviews can illuminate important aspects of the past, it is my thought that the time has come for the ingathering of total documentation of founders, successive deans, Ramah commissioners, counselors, campers, synagogue leaders, and so forth, so that the complete record may be assessed in expert historical and sociological method. I am convinced that the continuing contribution of Ramah, not only to the Conservative movement, but to the entirety of American Jewry, is an exciting and vital chapter in contemporary Jewish life.

## NESIYA — AN ISRAEL EXPERIENCE

Charles Herman

In the beginning, we wanted to create a journey to Israel in which young people would discover extraordinary creative vitality in Jewish culture and in themselves. We believed that the arts and cultural experiences could enable individual young people to develop their relationship with Judaism and Israel, becoming unique interpreters of and participants in Jewish life.

The first proposal for Nesiya called for the development of a summer Israel program for North American teenagers which would combine study and special touring with workshops led by leading Israeli artists. The first program would seek to attract "talented" young people from diverse Jewish backgrounds who would grapple first-hand with learning to work, study, and create with one another. In addition, the program would be extensively videotaped in order to learn from this first experiment and to later promote its continuation and growth. We hoped that a finished television program would attract large numbers of unaffiliated and disaffected Jewish youth.

The needs in Jewish life that Nesiya tried to address at its inception are the same as those that justify its expansion today. In the past, the transmission of Jewish culture was accomplished through Jewish ritual and the study and writing of books. Today, for most Jewish parents and their children, Jewish ritual has become foreign and the textual tradition is inaccessible. Yet there is a lack of programs which encourage individuals to see themselves as the progenitors of a creative legacy that is still evolving. Increasing numbers of bright and creative individuals are alienated from Jewish life. Young people in particular often find Jewish culture to be irrelevant to their personal lives. It is especially difficult to motivate teenagers and college students to explore, participate in, and contribute to Jewish culture.

To address these needs, Nesiya based its work on several assumptions and goals. In order to develop a living and creative legacy, bright and questioning individuals must be given formative and challenging opportunities to draw inspiration from Judaism and Israel in their own creative work. New kinds of educational and media pro-

jects are needed to bring diaspora Jews into direct involvement with the vitality and diversity of Israeli culture. New forms of exploration and expression are required to transmit and enrich Jewish culture. New programs should draw together Jews from diverse backgrounds to develop new forms of Jewish culture for this century and the next. The most inspiring environment for this work, we believed, would be Israel. And the most valuable tools would be the arts.

Today, years later, a much fuller picture of the work has become clear. Nearly all of the assumptions and goals that informed the first Nesiya program in 1985 are still fundamental to Nesiya's summer programs today. But the ways in which these assumptions and goals are addressed is very different than when we started.

The Nesiya Institute's most important accomplishment during its first decade was *not* the cultivation of individual creative young artists. Nesiya's primary accomplishment has been the development of a unique interdisciplinary, cross-cultural model of Jewish education. The purpose of this model is to attract, inspire, and motivate Jewish young people to deepen their exploration of and contribution to Jewish communal life. To accomplish this, Nesiya programs provide a summer experience in which Jewish life is experienced as an art. Instead of viewing Israel and the arts as the primary resources and tools for this work, the programs also emphasize building community among a diverse group of North American and Israeli peers, who are full-time participants in each program. The study of Jewish texts, work experiences, and Shabbat plans are all part of a fabric of opportunities in which participants take responsibility for the community that they create together. Most importantly, an essential message of the Nesiya model is that individual expression and the development of the group as a whole are both important values. Perhaps there is no greater challenge today than giving Jewish young people the inspiration and tools to experience what it is like to belong to a community that one cares about as one might care about another person — to see oneself in a personal relationship with a group of Jews.

Nesiya's goal now is to motivate young people to see the invigoration and renewal of Jewish communal life as essential to their personal growth and self-expression. Nesiya participants are encouraged to continue building upon their Israel Experience, exploring and contributing to Jewish communal life, long after their summer is over.

During the summer of 1995, ten years after the first program with twenty participants, over two hundred North American and Israeli high school students are expected to participate in five, six, and seven week programs. Marketing and recruitment activities now seek to attract a wide range of young people, with or without any arts background. Descriptions of the programs emphasize outdoor adventure, building community with Jews from diverse backgrounds ("including the full participation of Israelis"), and the study of Jewish texts, in addition to stressing the unique role that arts and cultural experiences play in all of the Nesiya programs.

The first summer of Nesiya was extensively videotaped by a three-person crew that filmed over seventy hours of material. Two years after the initial taping, several television programs were completed including a sixteen minute excerpt of a one hour documentary called "A Leaf in This Stream." On one hand, that short excerpt was part of a presentation which secured a major grant when the project was entering its third summer, enabling it to expand when it no longer could be supported by a local agency. The usefulness of the video for purposes of promotion, however, was limited, as many audiences of prospective travellers and parents found it "too Jewish" and "too serious." Today the documentary excerpt is only screened in public presentations at which past participants are present who can speak convincingly about the "fun" aspects of the program and the fact that, *participants do not need to have any background in the arts* to enjoy and benefit from a Nesiya program.

Between the summer of 1992 and 1994, the number of North American participants in Nesiya programs increased over 180%, from 40 to 113, and is expected to reach between 200 and 300 by the summer of 1996. These dramatic increases are being achieved not through dramatic marketing programs but through the expansion of outreach and follow-up activities, the development of new special interest programs, and partnerships with local agencies and organizations. All of these developments help sustain a constantly expanding network of word-of-mouth support which involves past participants, their parents, and other adults in their communities who write participant recommendation letters and supervise the fulfillment of work, study, and community service obligations when participants return home. Over half of Nesiya participants assume "Nesiya



Fellowship" obligations when they accept financial aid from Nesiya or a cosponsoring local agency. Nesiya is achieving viability and self-sufficiency as a year-round "Institute" only as the direct result of its relationships with a growing cadre of strong, established Jewish organizations, including several Jewish community centers, YM-YWHAs, and general Jewish camps. Working with these organizations, Nesiya is now at the threshold of another beginning — developing year-round programs that will empower Jewish young people to assume leadership positions, jobs, and other roles in North American Jewish life.

### **The First Nesiya**

The promotional literature for the first Nesiya Seminar promised a program that would "trace the creative development of the Jewish people in the land of Israel." In addition, the program would present the development of the Jewish heritage as a creative legacy; encourage participants to draw on Judaism and Israel in their own creative work; and draw together a student and staff community of observant and nonobservant Jews.

The first Nesiya summer program took place in the summer of 1985, sponsored by the Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago. Twenty North American high school students — from Reform, Conservative, modern Orthodox and unaffiliated Jewish backgrounds — participated in a six week experience in which the group spent approximately two weeks in each of three regions of Israel: the Negev, the Galilee, and Jerusalem. During the first week in each region, themes were explored that relate the landscape to historical events, forms of community, and creative expression in the past and present. This was accomplished through specially designed tours and hikes, study of Jewish texts, and encounters with diverse personalities. Each regional experience was led by "unit coordinators," individuals with strong personal ties to a particular region of Israel and its themes. In the Negev, for example, Rabbi Chaim Meiersdorf, a photographer and desert guide, led the group in exploring the origins of the Jewish people, the effects of the desert on human relationships, and the difference between creation in nature and creation by people. Two completely different desert personalities whom

Meiersdorf knew personally — a *ba'al tshuva* actor and filmmaker Israel Chevrone, and the environmental artist, humanist, and atheist Ezra Orion — conveyed completely distinctive responses to the Jewish wilderness. For Chevrone, the desert impels an experience of submission that is essential for a person to discover Jewish spirituality. For Orion, the boundless wilderness inspires man/woman to assert his or her unique role as a solitary creator. Chevrone led the group on a twelve hour hike through the ravines of Nachal Gov, in the Great Crater, where he drew on a Midrash to teach that one must become *hefker* or “ownerless” like the desert in order to be worthy of receiving the Torah and that the Hebrew word for desert — *midbar* — is spelled similarly to the word for speaking — *medaber*. The day with Chevrone included an exercise in solitude, in which each person stayed for perhaps an hour in a spot from where they could see no one else, and theater games in which participants acted out the Talmudic situation of two people stranded in the desert with enough water for only one of them to survive. Orion’s day with the group began in the predawn darkness, on the floor of the Ramon Crater from where he led a silent hike up to the top of Mt. Ardon, which the group reached just as the sun rose above the horizon. After giving the group time to enjoy and respond personally to the extraordinary changing light and colors of the desert landscape, Orion instructed the group to build two stone “runways to consciousness,” parallel lines leading to the cliff’s edge, “out there into the vastness.” As the sun began to set later that same day, after visits to Mitzpe Ramon’s astronomical observatory and his own studio at the Sde Boker Desert Research Institute, Orion guided the group on another sculpture walk, this time through an environmental work erected along the Sde Zin plateau, which he calls “The Situation of Man.” These explorations of diverse responses to the desert were then elaborated upon with study of the creation account in the Torah, study and discussion of some of the Israelites’ experiences in the desert, and also through study of and visits to a Bedouin family and Ben-Gurion’s grave.

In the Galilee, the group explored the role of the creative individual in the community. Led at different points by the kibbutz scholar, author, and innovator Muki Tzur, and Rabbi Dov Berkovits, the program tried to compare rabbinical, pioneer, and mystical Jewish communal traditions. They visited synagogue ruins, worked on old

and new kibbutzim, spent a Shabbat in Safed, and encountered two kibbutz artists, the environmental sculptor Dalia Meiri and the kibbutz author Dan Shavit, each of whom shared how their lives and creative work relate to the specific communities and larger society in which they live. Dalia Meiri led the group through stone memorials that she had created for those killed by terrorism and war. Sitting in his kibbutz dining hall, Dan Shavit spoke openly about the difficulties of being a writer and living on kibbutz. A few steps from the remnants of the first kibbutz, Muki Tzur spoke passionately about the Jewish aptitude for starting revolutions that we don't know how to continue. In discussing the history of the "intimate kibbutz," he stressed the importance of using "the opportunity to live intimately," and told the group, "in order to take responsibility for the Jewish people, we have to build psychologically certain ways of living together." Dov Berkovits took the group to the top of the Arabel one morning and read aloud the poem by an early kibbutz writer, which proclaims "Blessed art thou for the good dung that succors, for the small crust of bread and the fervor of prayer." In sharing his personal interpretation of this poem, Berkovits reflected how contemporary Jews in the tradition of secular pioneers, like Muki Tzur, "make sure that when I'm a religious Jew, and I look at God, I don't look away from human beings, and when I study Torah, I don't look away from the sweet smell of dung."

In Jerusalem, the program explored diverse ways of renewing Jewish life today. This unit was also led by several different personalities, including Dov Berkovits, the educator Yossi Pnini, and the writer and artist Rivka Miriam. In these last two weeks of the program, arts and cultural experiences were emphasized which would encourage participants to question their own relationship with Jewish culture. In addition to touring the Temple excavations, the Old City, and various neighborhoods in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the last two weeks featured encounters with Sara Levi Tanai, founder and choreographer of the Inbal Dance Troupe, who showed how Jews dance vertically, "up to God;" Miguel Herstein and Shlomo Bar, two founding members of "The Gathering" (*ha-breira ha-tiv'it*), one of Israel's innovative east-west music groups, who told the group, "what we want to do in music is take from the heart and give to the heart;" and Rivka Miriam, the painter, poet, children's book author, and second-generation survivor, who told the group, "I am

sure that if my grandmother in the gas chamber, one second before she died, knew that I, her grandchild, named after her, would live here in Jerusalem, in a Jewish state, her death would have been, I can't say it, but I will say it, much easier..."

The second week of each unit offered structured arts workshops in theater, creative writing, music, dance, and visual arts (painting, environmental art, puppetry, and photography). The workshops encouraged participants to draw on what they were learning about themselves as well as their exploration of Judaism and Israeli culture. During the fourth week of the program, the North American participants were joined by a group of Israeli high school students who participated in workshops which required collaboration. One group performed scenes, mixing Hebrew and English, from the play by Yehoshua Sobol, "The Night of the Twentieth," about one of the first "intimate" groups of pioneers. The play powerfully reflected many of the tensions that the participants were dealing with in the middle of their summer. As one character in the play proclaims, "Our group must not leave the mountain before we begin to understand ourselves." An environmental sculpture completed by another workshop group still stands at the Beit Yerach High School on the southern shore of the Kinneret. At the end of the program there was an "arts happening" in the Jewish Quarter in which each participant presented a "personal" or "final" project, utilizing any combination of media.

Many of the experiences working with that first group of twenty young people had all the hallmarks of issues, tensions, and insights that would come up again and again in future summers. A wonderful, resistant, and articulate boy named Ben White argued that the program wasn't respecting his freedom to choose how he practices Judaism if he is required, along with the rest of the group, to make havdala together. When the group arrived in Jerusalem, the random room lottery was manipulated by some of the participants who wanted to spend their last two weeks living with their best friends. A couple in the group became a problem which other group members wanted to discuss, just like in Sobol's play about the pioneers. All of these and many other problems became opportunities for the group to struggle with creating a shared framework together in which individual expression, the development of the group as a whole, and Jewish spirituality are all fundamental values in dynamic tension with one another.

The creative work completed by participants was remarkably vivid, personal, and a strong expression of their experiences. We were amazed by the richness of the participant's work and its real integration of individual, group, Jewish and Israeli concerns. The video-documentary of the program faithfully captures the participants' bold experiments in the visual arts, drama, music, and dance. The documentary also captures some of the parting thoughts of participants before leaving Israel.

But the impact of the program on participants was perhaps most clear after they returned home, and we began to hear about decisions and insights that were achieved only after the summer was over. A young woman from Chicago, who promised before the trip that her experience is "not going to be earthshattering" and that she wouldn't change, came home and began to take courses at her university in biblical Hebrew, the structure of Judaism, and archaeology in the southern Negev. She said that her religious beliefs hadn't changed but "I'm a lot more questioning about what my beliefs are..." An observant student active in the arts from a modern Orthodox Jewish high school in Boston reported that before the summer she thought she would ultimately have to choose "between two components in my life. I saw this summer that they can be together without conflict." "Now at a secular college," she added, "Judaism isn't at my finger tips. You've got to work to have it around you. I wouldn't be as strong if I hadn't been in the seminar this summer." A young woman from Chicago said the summer taught her that "Judaism in a way is an art. I've found my true home." These and countless other reports each year have made clear the inevitable challenge of continuing these experiences when participants return home.

### **Finding Ways**

Nesiya actually began in a one and a half page proposal I wrote for the boss of my first full-time job in Jewish education, Dr. Samuel Schafler (שחפלין), in December 1983. When Dr. Schafler hired me half a year earlier to be Media Director of the Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago, he said he expected me to draw upon my background with delinquent young people, the arts, and community psychology, and not to fear failure. As he put it when we first met, "I

hope you won't bore me. Jewish education needs new ideas."

The development of Nesiya is the result of many personal and professional blessings from which the work continues to draw inspiration and support. The stories of some of these blessings illuminate why and how Nesiya continues to evolve.

### *Text and Context: Studying Judaism in Israel*

I was raised in a fairly assimilated Jewish home in which both my parents and grandparents felt little about Judaism and knew even less. I dropped out of supplementary Hebrew School after my bar-mitzva. My first serious exploration of Judaism and Hebrew began in college. During what should have been my senior year, I spent fourteen months in Israel studying at both the Pardes Institute and the Hebrew University. My most important experience that year — and the one which planted many of the seeds for Nesiya — was studying Mishna three times a week with Rabbi Dov Berkovits, who at that time was director of the Pardes Institute in Jerusalem.

Studying Mishna, for me, was like entering a profound, living poetry, in which writers read their work and share some of the experiences that have led them to particular insights, images, and concerns. This study of Mishna led me to discover that Torah could speak to me not only as a young Jew but also as a young writer. It wasn't just relevance that I was looking for, but also a sensibility concerned with beauty and truth that honored individual and interpersonal expression in the face of collective obligations. I understood the tension between individuals and the continuity and development of their group to be a creative one that depends on the unique expression of individuals and their sense of shared purpose. And I also understood how the process of exploring the text with others could mirror many aspects of its poetic and philosophical discourse, illuminating new ways of thinking and feeling.

This experience of the communal literary life of Judaism changed my life. As an American Jew, who had barely encountered the Holocaust or Israel as a child and teenager, studying Judaism and living in Israel for a year was overwhelming. Now I wanted to know and experience life from within a collective reality — in which my individual needs and desires might not always be fulfilled, but I would

belong to a different, bigger picture. Dov's role as a teacher was essential to these changes in myself.

Since Nesiya began, the study of Jewish texts has always sought to combine close reading with creative, personal exploration. We are still learning how to accomplish this effectively, in ways that support an integration of educational themes and the participants' lived experiences. In addition, the design of Nesiya programs has always viewed the juxtaposition of discrete real-time experiences as part of a crafted and challenging text. The regional curriculum was always intended to unfold like chapters of Mishna, in which divergent voices, experiences, and ideas would slowly reveal multiple dimensions within a greater whole.

### *Building Community through the Arts*

When I returned home from Israel, I was completely unprepared, and in many ways unable, to maintain the creativity, energy for learning, and deep connections with other Jews that had characterized my fourteen months there. I knew there were realities in Jewish life that I wanted to continue drawing inspiration from, but I didn't know how, and I didn't know with whom. Seven years would pass before I would begin to find a way. During this period, two experiences were formative to ideas which would become essential to Nesiya.

My first job out of college was in an "open" residential treatment center where I worked with delinquent boys from New York City. Though my employer was the Jewish Board of Children's and Family Services, few of the boys in our residence, and none of the other childcare workers, were Jewish. Part of my job evolved into developing special events and celebrations that applied Judaism to the needs of an ethnically diverse, therapeutic community. To celebrate Passover one year, the staff created a musical about the difficulty of trying to lead angry and rebellious children, which we performed for the students at a theater away from the school. In the play, called "Moses' Other Staff," Marty, a frustrated childcare worker with a bad stutter tries to quit his job until Moses, his biblical counterpart (played by the agency's Director of Training, a Jewish psychiatrist), appears and helps him discover the deeper significance of his work. At the end of the play, the children in the story (who are seated in the

audience) are reported to have disappeared after finding "invisible paint." Marty, now the childcare worker with new resolve, finally stops stuttering and sings out into the audience of children, "wash yourselves off, come on up, now we can be with you, now you can choose to be here." At that moment, the community of court-sentenced car thieves, drug peddlers, and other deviants — between the ages of eight and sixteen — rushed up onto the stage to dance with their staff. I experienced a joy and beauty in that community that, in my prior two years there, I never knew existed. An hour later, during the bus ride home from the theater, the boys broke out into fist fights, like Israelites rebelling soon after they had crossed the Red Sea. But I felt certain that something had changed for all of us and that few of us would forget.

Later, in graduate school, the anthropologist Victor Turner led me to try to understand the climax of that amateur musical in terms of "communitas" and "liminality," a ritual process in which a given structure of relationships becomes suspended or moves into a transition and a whole community suddenly experiences itself as both the subject and object of its own actions, which is manifest in overwhelming feelings of "laughter," "humility" and "humankindness."<sup>1</sup> In Nesiya, something like this always happens at least once or at several moments in the life of a group — a joyous and sometimes momentary change in the way members of the community understand and express themselves to one another. This experience doesn't happen without considerable effort to become conscious of and change dominant patterns of behavior in which participants relate to one another as distinct and separate individuals.

All I knew at the time, though, was that this play had enabled a deep, mysterious, and loving sense of belonging and connection to emerge among otherwise contentious and resistant individuals. Looking back, that experience had a lot to do with some of the ways we use the arts to build Jewish community in Nesiya.

1 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1966).



*Renewing Spirituality through the Group and the Arts*

Immediately following my work at the residential treatment center, I lived for half a year in Bali, Indonesia. There I experienced immense spiritual powers of community informed by a constant devotion to human kindness, artistic beauty, and religious rituals. A unique Hindu culture outside of India, the Balinese have an exquisitely developed ethos which attends constantly to relations and movements within the group as a whole, and much less to relations between individuals alone. My six months in Bali showed me how a spiritual world can be apprehended through an emphasis on gradual, inclusive, "non-cumulative" interactions, in which the pursuit of beauty is inseparable from a constant relationship with a world that is beyond daily experience. In their classic study of *The Balinese Character*, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson described the ethos of "awayness," a constant, seemingly impersonal attending to background as well as foreground, relating to the whole picture rather than only to individuals or parts within that picture. Balinese mothers tease their infant children in order to educate them toward this unique ethos in which direct, personal gratification is always delayed. At a play or movie, the audience is constantly moving, blurring the usual distinctions between the performers, the performance, and the rest of the community. Elaborate dances and music involve virtually everyone playing a role in powerful community rituals for healing, blessing, and celebration.

The arts in Bali — including dance, music, painting, and puppetry — were integral to a constant enrichment of communal experience. But most impressive to me was the way in which the community is a paramount value for every individual, the primary "other" with whom each person is in a constant personal relationship. One's awareness and relationships with others inform everything from the way people move, to the ways one welcomes strangers, as well as rooting out any person who threatens the inclusive ebb and flow of the community as a whole.

The Balinese showed me the extraordinary spiritual power and beauty of a carefully cultivated communal context in which artistic expression and collaboration are essential resources. Nesiya places these values at the heart of its exploration of Judaism and Israel, emphasizing the development of a shared communal framework and

artistic expression as a process, for its own sake, rather than as a product. These values, which are antithetical to modern, western society, are enormously helpful to individuals seeking to rediscover some of the fundamental qualities of Jewish spiritual experience.

### **Toward a Philosophy of Jewish Renewal**

"The tension between independence and belonging, which is so crucial for personal development, is also crucial to the development of a people."<sup>2</sup>

Nesiya can be understood as an attempt to evolve a philosophy and model for fostering spiritual renewal in Jewish life. In trying to develop programs that would have an enduring impact on the lives of participants, three educational concerns have always been central to the work. Our approach toward addressing these concerns, though, continues to change.

### ***Exploring Personal Relevance***

Perhaps the most basic concern in Jewish life today, which cuts across denominations, organizations, and homelands, involves the challenge of living life as a modern individual and also fully as a Jew. While the Jewish people has succeeded in providing institutional responses to the challenge of Jewish continuity, there is a lack of opportunities for individuals to explore what Judaism and Israel mean to them personally. Jewish philosophers and thinkers continually grapple with this challenge. Educational programs, however, rarely explore this question in experiential terms. Bright and questioning individuals, especially young people, need structured opportunities to explore the personal relevance of Judaism and Israel to their own lives.

What Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote twenty years ago about the crisis of the individual in Jewish life remains all too true today.

2 From "Our Culture," an introduction to the guidelines and rules for Nesiya Institute Experiences for High School Students.

“Much has been spoken...about the nation and society, about the community and its institutions. But the individual has been lost sight of...The problem of the individual is the urgent issue of our time...What aid, comfort, guidance do I derive from belonging to the Community of Israel? What does it mean to me personally?”

### *Integrating Knowledge with Experience*

A parallel concern involves the lack of opportunities to integrate knowledge with experience. There is a great need in Jewish life for programs that integrate formal and informal Jewish education, that combine conceptual understanding with a psychological approach. The emphasis of formal Jewish education on content sometimes fails because it seems irrelevant to the individual. And the emphasis of informal Jewish education on personality and lifestyle can fail because it does not probe the substantive content of Jewish tradition and culture. There is a great need for programs that will succeed in conveying Jewish tradition and culture as a reality endowed with meaning and relevance for American Jews.

### *Taking Israel Home*

A third critical concern involves the relationship of Jews living in the Diaspora with Israel. For the self-selecting group of North American Jews who choose to visit Israel, sustaining a meaningful relationship with their experiences in Israel can be extraordinarily difficult. The radical differences between living in a majority Jewish culture and one in which Jews are a minority work against the kind of inspirational and ongoing Jewish personal growth that many Israel programs want to provide. Nesiya's success could be measured by how dysfunctional its immediate past participants were when they returned home. Too little attention has been paid to how an intensive experience can inform and inspire the Jewish life of an individual who returns to and lives in North America.

### **The Nesiya Model**

Nesiya attempts to address these concerns through a particular model of Jewish education whose goal is to empower individuals to become active in the development of Jewish life and culture.

Nesiya programs have always assumed that continuity and creativity in Jewish life can be developed through ongoing interaction among diverse Jews, lifestyles, and beliefs. The original stated purpose of the Nesiya Institute, when it was incorporated as an independent not-for-profit organization after the first two summers, describes a basic link between the project's methods and central goal: "to involve Jews with differing religious, social, and ideological backgrounds in the development of Jewish culture."

In our view, pluralism is *not* simply the acceptance or legitimization of all views. Rather, pluralism is the active and ongoing exploration of fundamental differences among Jews. For an individual, pluralism means probing one's own views in light of other serious options. Effective pluralism promotes empathy and the capacity to collaborate with others.

The basic features of the Nesiya model combine different ways of exploring, participating, and contributing to Jewish culture.

### ***Arts and Cultural Experiences***

The arts provide a challenging and dialogic means to engage individuals in interpreting and responding to many different dimensions of Jewish and Israeli existence. Artistic experience is inherently both personal and communal; art encourages personal interpretation and response to others. Diverse encounters with the entire spectrum of contemporary Israeli culture provide a dynamic means of linking Israel's search for a modern identity to personal exploration.

Nesiya's experience in conducting programs with many different kinds of groups has repeatedly demonstrated that arts and cultural experiences — both participatory and interpretative — are effective irrespective of whether or not participants have any prior background in the arts.

### *Study of Jewish Texts*

Nesiya programs assume that the study of Jewish texts is essential to the exploration of Judaism and Israel. Small-group study of modern and traditional Jewish sources encourages storytelling and debate. The Nesiya regional source books (for the Negev, the Galilee, and Jerusalem–Tel Aviv) explore powerful connections between the physical landscapes of Israel, diverse historical communities, contemporary issues, and the participants' own experiences.

The regional curriculum emphasizes the exploration of fundamental themes in Jewish life that relate to the specific regions and are relevant to the developmental issues of participants and real-time experiences of each group. For example, the theme of "creation" (*bri'a*) is explored in the Negev through experiences and study that emphasize the differences between seeing oneself as a creature and seeing oneself as a creator. The natural wonder of the desert and its Jewish cultural themes provide a magical, challenging beginning, which significantly affects the first impressions and shared experiences of the participants. In the Galilee the theme is covenant, which is understood through experiences and study that compare how rabbis, pioneers, and contemporary Israelis struggled to achieve a shared purpose in history. The landscape, sites, and themes of the Galilee encourage participants to view themselves as forming their own intentional culture and community. Inevitably, the difficulty of making choices about the group's own sense of community, its rules and destiny are echoed in stories of rabbis and pioneers. In Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the themes of "redemption" or "renewal" (*ge'ula*) focus on experiences and study that explore conflicting visions of Jewish life. The distinctive personalities and challenges of contemporary Jewish life in this last section of the program encourage participants to question their own choices, both as individuals and as members of a group.

Specific "core" texts focus this exploration in each regional unit, providing a literary-spiritual landscape in which various ideas and themes are introduced which, hopefully, continue to resonate throughout the unit. In the Negev, the beginning of Avram's journey is always studied along with the biblical accounts of creation and some of the Israelites' trials in the desert. The story of manna and the Israelites' first Shabbat, for example, provide a relevant and in many

ways exciting backdrop to the participants' reflections on the desert and their first attempts to create Shabbat as a community. In the Galilee, the story in the Talmud<sup>3</sup> of a group that discovers and suffers from its loss of absolute truth provides a dynamic encounter with rabbinical Judaism, which participants readily identify with their own developing tensions and disagreements as the summer reaches its midpoint. Sobol's play about the pioneers ("Night of The Twentieth") even more directly reflects the group's grappling with the ideal and reality of being together all of the time, of tensions between individual and group needs, and the choices that will effect the course of their shared experiences. In Jerusalem, episodes from the life of Moses provide a landscape for exploring how individual traits, personal difficulties, and the search for individual meaning and renewal can inspire and be inspired by a sense of obligation to collective destiny and renewal.

### ***Building Community***

The search for purpose and innovation as a community is essential to the creative power of Jewish life. The tension between independence and belonging, so crucial for personal development, is also crucial to the development of a people. Nesiya explores the opportunities and challenges of Jewish communal life by bringing together participants, artists, and educators — North Americans and Israelis — who differ greatly in their backgrounds and beliefs. Nesiya does not espouse any particular religious or social ideology. Instead, by raising questions and exploring diverse practices and beliefs, an open-ended and challenging interaction is encouraged between the individual, the group, and diverse forms of Jewish culture. Participants are encouraged to explore each other's practices and beliefs without feeling coerced in any way to change their own. Nesiya programs observe the common denominators that are necessary for Jews of different backgrounds to live together. The programs observe kashrut, and no full-group activities are conducted on Shabbat that would violate traditional observance.

3 "It's Not in the Heavens," Baba Metzia 58b–59b.

Participants in Nesiya are given considerable responsibility for how their group functions. They rotate leadership and responsibility for daily chores, which can include everything from wake-up and preparing breakfast to leading programs on Shabbat. Participants are also encouraged to comment upon their experiences through large and small group meetings, a *sefer kevutza* (book of the group), and planning sessions with staff.

### *Service and Work Experiences*

Demonstrating concern and taking action for the sake of others and the community are basic Jewish values. Work and service experiences are invaluable to the development of a group, heightening its understanding of shared purpose and the power of community. Service experiences challenge the individual to translate self-enrichment into action, to see how one's personal experience of obligation and intimacy are enriched when one assumes responsibility for the life of a community.

Service projects in prior Nesiya programs have included teaching arts and sports to Israeli children in a development town, working with disabled adults, restoring a children's zoo, picking mangos on a moshav, and working in a kibbutz factory or kitchen.

### *Outdoor Adventure*

A relationship with the physical earth is a profound dimension of Judaism. The land of Israel, in particular, has been a constant source of inspiration for Jews throughout history. Nesiya programs assume that a critical means of developing one's Jewish spirituality and identity is through outdoor physical experiences, which encourage individuals to see themselves in relationship with nature. Towards this end, programs in Israel are always structured to combine extended contact with a specific physical landscape with activities that are designed to develop a personal connection with one's surroundings. Programs in North America also include activities that emphasize the role of place in shaping one's personal and spiritual identity.

### **The Next Ten Years — Looking Back and Ahead**

Three years after Nesiya began as a pilot project sponsored by the Bureau of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago, before he left that agency to head the Boston Hebrew College, Sam Schafner encouraged me to find broader shoulders to support the full development of Nesiya. Fortuitously, by the spring of 1987, Rabbi Aryeh Meir and Dr. Stephen P. Cohen of the newly formed CRB (Charles Bronfman) Foundation of Montreal and Jerusalem had identified Nesiya as a model program and helped to secure major support for two years. In 1989, after operating as a freestanding agency with equally small offices in Chicago and Jerusalem, I took a job with David Kleinman and Dr. Bernie Steinberg at the Cleveland JCC. At that time, the Cleveland JCC was establishing a new Department of Judaica and had received support from the Cleveland Jewish Federation to develop a "Retreat Institute" for expanding the quality and quantity of "Beyond-the-Classroom" Jewish education programs in Cleveland.

For four years, from 1989 to 1993, Bernie Steinberg and I developed programs that sought to integrate educational experiences in Israel and North America. In addition to developing and significantly redefining the Nesiya Seminar in Israel — which became a seven week program — and conducting year-round professional growth programs for staff, we started an Israeli Visiting Artists and Educators program and a series of retreats. These projects, along with many others, allowed us to apply the model of our programming in Israel to various groups and programs in Cleveland. Nesiya past participants from throughout the country began travelling to Cleveland each winter vacation to participate in the six day winter retreat. It was especially gratifying being part of programs — in Cleveland and Israel — that clearly complemented and extended the value of one another in significant ways. The opportunity to work with summer staff and summer alumni during the year, for example, made clear the enormous benefits of year-round programs. Our work in the summer with Israeli educators, like Avi Hadari, expanded in scope as the result of having him also work in Cleveland during the year. Many Russian-born young Jews in Cleveland, for example, who first became involved in Jewish life through a theater workshop program at the JCC, would find their way into a Nesiya summer



program. Past participants and adults who participated in the winter retreats and other programs during the year now became some of the strongest staff counselors during the summer. In sum, we discovered the exponential benefits of developing Nesiya as a year-round and multi-year enterprise — for participants, staff, and the quality of our programs.

In 1993, with the support of David Kleinman and the JCC of Cleveland, Nesiya moved to dramatically expand its program offerings and once again become a year-round operation, with full-time offices in North America and Israel. In the summer of 1993, a five week summer program was introduced with the goal of making Nesiya's quality features available in a less costly and less lengthy program. In 1994, a new six week nature and wilderness program was started to attract young people who want more physical experiences — including intensive hiking and camping, archaeology, and kibbutz work experiences — to be part of their Nesiya summer. Both of these new programs sold out their first year, proving highly successful in attracting diverse, bright, and questioning Jewish young people to explore Judaism and Israel.

Nesiya is expanding by virtue of financial necessity as well as idealistic conviction. We continue to learn from the growing pains that result from trying to quickly develop a high quality, full-blown operation from a model program that was carefully cultivated over the course of years. One of the greatest obstacles, for me personally, has been watching my job increasingly become that of a fundraiser and manager rather than that of an educator and program designer. A constant challenge involves recruiting increasing numbers of staff, financial contributors, and participants, as the project heads toward serving nearly three hundred North American and Israeli participants by the summer of 1996, with a full complement of follow-up programs, in North America and Israel, throughout the year.

The most precious assets of the past provide clues to what will be needed in the future. The work of developing Nesiya and enabling it to truly become a year-round organization has been repeatedly supported by outstanding colleagues. The project would never have begun without the support and funding secured by Sam Schafner. During the first years of Nesiya there was a team of individuals in Israel, led by Dov Berkovitz and Dan Paller, who planned and implemented the programs with extraordinary love, creativity, and

commitment, insisting each year that the program could be improved upon and further developed. Menachem Revivi, who was Director-General of the Noar VeHechalutz Department of the WZO during Nesiya's first years, provided crucial institutional support and legitimacy. As a result of Nesiya moving to Cleveland, Bernie Steinberg worked for four years on Nesiya's curriculum, wrestling it into a clearer and deeper design, with multiple applications, and was a forceful advocate in having me see the importance of applying Nesiya's educational model and future programs to the broader challenges of renewal in Jewish life. David Kleinman, the professional leader of the Cleveland JCC, nurtured this process and then demanded that it grow, providing worldly wisdom, support, and extraordinary Jewish passion.

Lay leaders have also been essential to the work at every critical stage of its development. When Nesiya was barely an idea, a young woman in Jerusalem (Noga Fisher Brachtman) heard about the proposal in a Hebrew ulpan class and decided to donate \$5,000. It was that gift which convinced Schafler and Revivi in Jerusalem to also provide support at the beginning. A brilliant lawyer in Chicago, Ted Miller, whose son participated in the second summer, completed all of the necessary legal work and rewrote Nesiya's first (and most successful) major grant proposal. The grant from the CRB Foundation, and Charles and Andrea Bronfman's vision for the field, literally put Nesiya on the map and forced us to take ourselves and this work much more seriously than we otherwise would ever have intended. In 1988, when the CRB Foundation turned its major support to other projects in the field, Arnold and Annabelle Cohen of the Eli and Bessie Cohen Foundation insured Nesiya's continuation. Today, people like Anita Gray and Sid Good of Cleveland, Sharon Strassfeld of New York, and many others, continue to contribute generously, mostly of their talent and time, to building a secure and viable year-round Institute.

Perhaps most critical to Nesiya's growth has been the stream of participation, support, and encouragement from young people and their parents who are consistently proving there is a growing demand for quality programming in Israel, and who will go to extraordinary lengths to participate in these programs as well as a wide range of follow-up experiences. Nesiya's follow-up programs now include national and regional retreat programs (including a six day winter

program, which this year brought together sixty high school and college-age alumni and staff from North America and Israel); placement of past participants in jobs at Jewish summer camps; and a national "fellowship" program that obligates recipients to fulfill a range of "community-service" and other follow-up activities when they return home.

Another key asset has been the extraordinary Israeli educators and artists with whom Nesiya has had the privilege of working over the course of the past ten years. In addition to individuals mentioned above, Nesiya groups work with outstanding Israeli musical performers (Shlomo Gronich, Shem Tov Levy), actors and theater educators (Sinai Peter, Dorit Yerushalmi), artists (Moshe Gershuni), choreographers (Arie Burzsyn), politicians and cultural leaders (Natan and Avital Scharansky, Avraham Burg), and educators (Rabbi David Hartman, Noam Zion). While everyone gets paid for their work, there are always qualities of generosity, purpose, and passion that exceed the expected boundaries of these experiences. Israeli counselors have also brought exceptional idealism and commitment to the work, and have been surprisingly motivated to contribute to Nesiya's attempts to follow-up with its North American past participants. Each year, one or two members of the prior summer's counselor staff have been sent to the national winter retreat. Leadership of Nesiya in Israel, for the past two years, has been provided by an outstanding educational leader and innovator, Rabbi Shlomo Fox, whose attraction to Nesiya includes wanting to apply it to the Jewish educational challenges of Israeli society.

Working in partnership with several different agencies — including The 92nd Street, Mid-Westchester, and Riverdale YM-YWHAs in New York, and the New Jersey Y Camps — Nesiya is trying to build a network for providing high school and college students with meaningful work, study, and service opportunities in the Jewish community throughout their young adult years. Nesiya's pluralistic population and focus on building community among Jews from diverse backgrounds make it an attractive resource for JCCs, Jewish camps, and other "community-oriented" organizations that want to enhance the Jewish and Israeli cultural content of their own programs. An obstacle to successful placement of past participants in summer jobs as Jewish camp counselors is the lack of a shared model and methodology for exploring Jewish and Israeli culture.

Several camps have begun to recruit Nesiya participants from their current campers with the hope that these young people will return as indigenous leaders to cultural change processes within their camps. In addition, these camps are interested in linking their own professional development and staff-training programs with Nesiya programs. We are now also discussing with some of these partners the creation of a Nesiya residential camp program for children, which would provide youth and young adults with linked, multi-year experiences in North America and Israel as campers and staff.

In addition, Nesiya is now expanding its delivery of one and two week "component" or module programs for other organizations, which now serve two of the major movements' Israel trips, one of the largest community trips, and a Jewish-Black group that travels to Africa before arriving in Israel.

At the time of writing (February 1995), Nesiya is actively seeking support for the development and expansion of year-round leadership programs for high school and university students. Three year plans call for:

- The expansion of outreach and follow-up programs (i.e., newsletters, electronic mail, retreats) to encourage, train, and support significant numbers of Nesiya past program participants, who are now in college, to assume leadership positions, jobs, and other roles in North American Jewish life.
- The development of new Community Service and Cultural Leadership Programs for high school and college students, which emphasize the development of leadership skills in educational, cultural, and community service experiences within the Jewish community.
- Staff training and Jewish cultural enrichment projects with select American Jewish camps, that are in need of more qualified college-age Jewish staff and more effective pluralistic, Jewish educational programs.
- The creation of new scholarship and fellowship funding to support the increasing numbers of North American Jewish young people — high school and college students — who want to participate in Nesiya summer programs.
- The expansion of scholarship and follow-up programs for the growing numbers of Israeli participants.

Ideally, in the course of the next three to five years, the Nesiya programs will become more selective as the numbers of applicants exceed available places, creating a situation in which increasing demands can be made on those who receive financial support. Salary incentives, professional enrichment programs, advanced leadership programs in Israel can all be part of a fabric of year-round and multi-year experiences that empower young people, throughout their high school and college years, to continue their exploration of and contribution to Jewish life.

Only now, after ten years, is it becoming clear how Nesiya is creating an enduring and unique community that does not always involve its members in speaking with and seeing one another, but brings them together for special purposes at special times. Like some of the Hasidic communities in Eastern Europe who travelled distances to come together for inspiration and guidance, increasing numbers of Nesiya alumni communicate through an e-mail network they have created, and meet at fall, winter, and spring retreats in various regions. Many relationships are formed among alumni from different summer programs who otherwise never met, but who see themselves participating in and contributing to a shared, continuous journey.

The fruits of ten years are, in many ways, just beginning to blossom. But as Nesiya's first "Abba," Sam Schafler, once said, "Don't worry, it will only get harder."

## IDEALS, TENACITY AND YOUTH — THE CENTRO HEBREO IONÁ

Gustavo Daniel Perednik

Centro Hebreo Ioná is a traditional community center in Buenos Aires, comprising synagogue, youth movement, kindergarten and elementary school, and several institutes of informal education. It burst onto the Jewish local scene in 1979, developing rapidly into a potent force in the Argentine Jewish community. In attempting to document its inception, several difficulties arise.

Firstly, the documentation available is limited. Written material about the origins of the Centro Hebreo Ioná cannot be found in public files or libraries. Without the historical perspective which would render that research feasible, this investigation involves delving into letters, leaflets, books, and miscellaneous material produced by the institution during its first months of existence. There is no paucity of documents; on the contrary, Ioná has produced a large volume of written material, probably more than any comparable institution.<sup>1</sup> But no systematic filing was carried out, which would have facilitated access to the required information. This first difficulty was surmounted by my having first-hand knowledge of the whereabouts of research material. These include, for instance, several works of historical research written by members of the institution<sup>2</sup> and various publications (not always friendly) that referred to Ioná from an historical perspective.<sup>3</sup>

Although my personal memory of Ioná's inception enabled me to overcome these difficulties, it in turn led to the problem of subjective versus objective perspective of these events. This is a paradox of

1 For example it published the following pamphlets between 1979 and 1980: 'Raison d'être,' 'Who are we?' 'Ioná proposes,' 'Baruch Habah,' 'Did you see...?' 'Ioná, what is that?' the bulletin *Kol Ioná* which by 1987 had published more than 200 issues, and the organization's Anniversary magazines.

2 Articles on the history of Ioná appeared in the Anniversary magazines and in a lengthy research paper written by the group Iajad (seven authors coordinated by Diana Laufer) of the adult department (Mekorot) (Buenos Aires, 1992).

3 See *Mundo Israelita* (17 October 1981), Moshe Wainstein, in *Nueva Presencia* and *La Voz Judía* (an answer to Baruch Steinberg).

educators. Within the course of our work, we may act spontaneously, yet later dissect and analyze our behavior, assigning educational rules based on this spontaneous behavior. For example: as a teacher of education, I may present to the class various theoretical solutions to a hypothetical problem, based on my experience of it. However, when I previously confronted that very problem in class (the experience I call upon to formulate my education paradigms), I solved it through intuition alone. These two mental processes — intuitive problem solving, and the analysis thereof — can indeed occur simultaneously.

Similarly with the establishment of Ioná, the rule was passionate, spontaneous action, occasionally tempered by educational theory. The following educational analysis is clearly post hoc, though nonetheless valid.

### A Subject Deserving of Study

From a personal perspective, ordering and interpreting my experiences gives me obvious satisfaction. Academically it is also of value, since it is a micro-study of the revitalization of Jewish life in Buenos Aires, which is a model for Latin America as a whole.

The extremely rapid growth and striking success of Ioná surprised the whole Jewish community from the start. The Centro Hebreo Ioná was established in July 1979. It began as a youth movement comprised of less than a hundred youths. That figure was multiplied by twenty in less than three years — by 1982 around two thousand youngsters participated in Ioná's youth activities. The most widely read Jewish weekly in Latin America, *Mundo Israelita*, wrote of "the boom of Ioná" and defined it as "one of the most remarkable miracles of our communal reality [which] brought hundreds of youths and children who were distant from our ways, into a Jewish framework."<sup>4</sup> In December 1979 our Talmud Torah prepared its first bar mitzva boy. By 1986 more than five hundred boys had their bar mitzva in Ioná, an average of four to five a week.

4 Ariel Ploshchuk, "A Dialogue with Gustavo Daniel Perednik," *Mundo Israelita* (Buenos Aires, 11 July 1981), p. 7. In the Israeli press, see *Semana* (Jerusalem, 6 January 1983), p. 36, and *Tiempo* (Tel Aviv, 12 February 1985), p. 12.

The Centro Hebreo Ioná began with four founding families<sup>5</sup> in a building that had housed AERMOV (the institution that was converted into Ioná).<sup>6</sup> By 1986 there were six branch buildings and two thousand families associated with the Center, in Buenos Aires.<sup>7</sup> During that period it created an institute for training *madrihim* that became one of the most successful in the world.<sup>8</sup> Several Ioná institutions were firsts of their kind in Latin America, such as a school for *hazanin*, a Hebrew school for retarded children, and the Youth Festival of Hasidic Songs, which has its own interesting history.<sup>9</sup>

Ioná began in a synagogue that could barely attract a minyan, yet after a few years hundreds of Jews attended every Shabbat and several thousands during the High Holidays. Ioná initiated other pioneering institutes such as an adult school for Judaism (Mekorot) and exemplary groups for the elderly (Yahad), and created choirs, Israeli folk dance groups that represented the institution, and sports teams. Centro Hebreo Ioná published a weekly pamphlet that served as a model for dozens of similar newsletters of other institutions, and it published books, written by its members, presenting the ideas and causes that we championed.<sup>10</sup> Zionist to the core, Ioná brought hundreds of people to Israel. By its tenth anniversary the Centro Hebreo Ioná had held several hundred weddings in its own synagogues and had served about twenty small communities in the

5 In their letter of October 1979 the families Dayan, Glikin, Herskovits and Hojman "address the Board of Directors in order to request its authorization to invite all parents to join their activities," *Kol Ioná* # 9 (Buenos Aires, 20 October 1979), p. 8.

6 AERMOV, acronym of *Asociación de Enseñanza Religiosa Mosaica de Villa Crespo*, was founded as the union of two preexisting synagogues from 1912: Ajiezer and Palestina Hadashah.

7 By 1986, the six branches were: Achiezer (1979) at 276 Acevedo Street, Bialik (1981) at 2250 Juan A. García, Nordau (1982) at 661 Murillo, Caballito (1984) at 1049 Planes, Ashkenazi (1985) at 878 Beláustegui, and San Fernando (1986) at 1470 Constitución.

8 'The World of Informal Jewish Education,' research under the direction of Erik H. Cohen (Jerusalem: The Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education, June 1992, vol. I), p. 64.

9 Silvia and Jorge Herskovits, "How the Festivales Juveniles de la Canción Jasídica were Born," *Sixth Anniversary Magazine* of Ioná (16 November 1985), p. 18.

10 'Selection of Articles' (1985), 'Ideario' (1987), 'Ivri anokhi' (1990), 'Selección of speeches' (1991), 'Words for the Present' (1993).



interior of the country.<sup>11</sup> At the more than one hundred lectures and roundtable discussions that had been held at Ioná by then, participants included ambassadors and congressmen, journalists and rabbis, intellectuals and prominent lay leaders, writers and artists.<sup>12</sup>

To a striking degree, Ioná developed a self-sufficiency among its educators, youngsters who had been trained in the institution itself. The most recent directors of the institution themselves fall into this category.

Since Ioná is not a regular phenomenon of Jewish life, a proper analysis of its educational success is called for. Given the perspective of the last sixteen years, this is now possible.

### Why Did it all Start?

Ioná was born during one of the most difficult periods of Argentinian history. As summarized in one of Ioná's fundraising pamphlets: "In the last six years, Argentina suffered a civil war, the drama of the Desaparecidos, the highest inflation in the world, a war against Great Britain, corruption, social instability. In that context, we created."<sup>13</sup> The context in which the institution flourished is relevant. Ioná's genesis was indeed the result of two conditions: the general context in which it was born, and the needs of its founders.

### The General Context

To understand Argentina in 1979, the year of Ioná's foundation, we must go back several years, probably to July 1, 1974 when the best-known Argentinian president, General Juan D. Perón, died. His death inaugurated a black period of total insecurity, instability and terror.

11 Fourteen communities of the interior were served by Ioná, namely: Bahía Blanca, Bernasconi, Catamarca, Cipolletti, Clara, Concordia, Domínguez, General Sarmiento, La Plata, Mar del Plata, Paraná, Roca, San Salvador, and Villaguay. We also served five other communities in Buenos Aires besides our own branches, namely: Barón Hirsch, Bene Mizrah, Bet Am of Palermo, Herzlia and Zirelson.

12 "One Decade of Active Judaism," *Tenth Anniversary Magazine* (Buenos Aires, December 1989), p. 1.

13 "Jews from Argentina sign this letter" (the original in English), (Buenos Aires, 1985).

Peronism was shaken by an internal struggle between several factions to inherit power — from the extreme left (both the Montoneros and FAL guerrillas) to the extreme right (Comando de Organización or Alerta Nacional). Eventually the Fascist line imposed its hegemony within the movement, which did not hide its hostility towards the Jews.

Perón's Minister of Economy was a Polish-born Jew, José Ber Gelbard. He was forced to resign in October 1974, the main scapegoat for the catastrophic situation, and was ultimately stripped of his citizenship and forced into exile by the military rulers. With Gelbard's resignation the nationalist sector of the government gained strength, and during the following month a state of siege was imposed on the whole country. Dozens of people were arrested, and the left-wing guerrilla organizations were declared illegal. The latter launched a frenzied campaign of violent attacks.

From the extreme right the AAA (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina), a paramilitary group associated with the government, murdered dozens of politicians, intellectuals, journalists, lawyers, trade union leaders, and students. The general situation was explosive and Jew-hatred was gaining force, the Jews making up approximately fifteen percent of the guerrilla activists.

In that sinister context, on March 24, 1976 a military coup took place which was to lead to one of the most brutal regimes in Latin American history and of the post-World War world in general. In order to deal with a situation of economic chaos, rampant inflation, social unrest, terror, and violence, the junta suspended normal political and trade union activities. By the end of 1977 the main subversive organizations<sup>14</sup> seemed to have been put out of action and ultra-totalitarian terrorist gangs<sup>15</sup> were no longer functioning, although terrorism was not completely suppressed.

The editor of the left-wing newspaper *La Opinión*, Jacobo Timerman, who had been arrested and jailed in April 1977, was released; he immigrated to Israel in September 1979, a few weeks after the Centro Hebreo Ioná was founded. His case was the first public affair on which Ioná took a stand.<sup>16</sup>

14 Such as the Montoneros and the Erp.

15 Such as the AAA.

16 Timerman continued to be held and tortured by the army even though he was twice declared innocent of any charge by the Argentine Supreme Court. In

### *Anti-Semitism*

Also in 1979 the government published a decree to the effect that all religions, except Roman Catholicism, must register with the State in order to establish "effective control" over non-Catholic religions. The University of Buenos Aires had reappointed the notorious anti-Semite Walter Beveraggi Allende to his post as law faculty professor. In March 1978 a powerful bomb exploded at the main entrance of the Sociedad Hebraica Argentina, causing considerable damage. There was a notable increase in anti-Semitic publications, including *Milicia*, *Odal* and *Occidente*. The widely read magazine *Humor* published a series of jokes about the Holocaust.<sup>17</sup> On October 26, 1980 a TV program presented by journalist Llamas de Madariaga launched a vicious anti-Semitic attack. All of these had strong repercussions in Ióná.<sup>18</sup>

Together with this, according to economics analyst William Horsey, "the purchasing power of Argentinians was cut by forty percent during 1978." The inflation for that year was more than one hundred and fifty percent. Buenos Aires had become one of the most expensive cities in the world.<sup>19</sup>

On the one hand the political atmosphere generated fear of attending any ideological institution, which explains the decline of traditional Zionist youth movements. On the other hand, as it was impossible to express ideas in the general society, this was a perfect moment to create a highly ideological framework that would allow an adequate channel of expression for Jewish youth. Where could the Jewish youth go? Either to one of the Jewish clubs<sup>20</sup> if their family was wealthy, or to a synagogue if they were religious. If they were seek-

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November 1977 he was deprived of his civil rights and his property was placed in State custody. "Jacobo Timerman: in Israel at last." *Kol Ióná* # 7 (6 October 1979), p. 2.

17 By Mr. Catón, a cartoonist in the magazine's issue of September 1979. For the public response to it, including ours, see *Kol Ióná* # 9 (9 October 1979), p. 4.

18 "We exposed you, Madariaga!" *Kol Ióná* # 54 (31 October 1980), p. 6.

19 *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 80 (Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee, Jewish Publication Society, 1980), p. 188.

20 Community centers that also maintain year-round vacation retreats with individually owned bungalows and cottages. This type of community center is unique in the Jewish world.

ing some sense of purpose or belonging, an active independent Zionist youth organization could be the answer to their aspirations.

### *The Founders' Need*

From the outset, ideology played a central role in Ioná. What kept the organization united was one of the two principles of association that Lon Fuller calls "shared commitment" as opposed to the "legal principle."<sup>21</sup>

With regard to the distinct brand of ideology, to a certain extent it was a direct response to the absence of organizations holding specific principles. Ioná published a clear and committed declaration of principles<sup>22</sup> which was immediately followed by a conceptual plan of the community's ideas.

### *Return to Jewish Sources*

During the epoch of the foundation of the Centro Hebreo Ioná, the religious life of Argentina's Jewish community was marked by the emerging division into different streams that followed, to a certain degree, the North American model. Intrinsic in this division were two problems. To begin with, these differentiations were artificial. There was a considerable number of Conservative synagogues, but no Conservative Jews. Secondly, this fragmentation focused the loyalty of the individual not on the Jewish people as a whole, or on the State of Israel as a unifying factor, but rather on the various denominations, all equally opposed to each other. In certain cases, the tendency seemed to portend an imminent polarization of the community.

In order to circumvent this we proposed that Centro Hebreo Ioná not be affiliated with any of the preexisting denominations of

21 J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman, *Voluntary Associations* (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), p. 6.

22 The Declaration of Principles published in September 1979 included 17 principles summarized as follows: Jewish pride, non-affiliation, Zionism, unity, perseverance, democracy, freedom, humanity, idealism, belonging, belief, continuity, diversity, youth-centeredness, comradeship, Jewish brotherhood, and openness.

Judaism — but should focus rather, in a nonsectarian manner, on the broad spectrum of Jewish tradition that had been revered through history. The center adopted a latitudinarian approach to our sources and their interpretation. In fact, this fundamental value reflected what the majority of Jews actually felt: an identification with Judaism as a unified whole rather than allegiance to a particular stream of the religion.

In practice, our position enabled us to maintain good relations with the more traditional elements of the Jewish community. Orthodox Judaism was receptive to the unifying work of Ioná. The community did not consider Ioná another divisive factor. *La Voz Judía*, the journal of Agudat Israel in Argentina, published the following letter to the editor:

“Ioná, though it is not what we may label as Orthodox, does not brag about adherence to a Reform stance. In Ioná, Orthodoxy is presented as a model, and many young people who approach this center from utterly assimilated backgrounds later go on to study in yeshiva, whether here, in Israel, or in the United States. One never hears in Ioná justifications for altering halakha nor is the title of ‘rabbi’ lightly used, as it is generally accepted that the true rabbis are the Orthodox ones.”<sup>23</sup>

During the presentation of my book *Hebreo Soy* (I am a Jew), one of the presenters was Rabbi Daniel Oppenheimer, leader of the Ashkenazi Orthodox community in Argentina.

### *Active Zionism*

The Centro Hebreo Ioná succeeded in filling the vacuum present in the existing Zionist movements, which limited themselves almost exclusively to the theme of aliya (with minimal results). The needs of the Jewish family were largely ignored by the local Zionist groups.

In Ioná, aliya was espoused in unambiguous terms, but at the same time a legitimate context was authorized for Jewish education in the Diaspora. Some months after the founding of Ioná, we celebrated the

23 “What does Orthodox mean?” *La Voz Judía* (Buenos Aires, 1987), p. 19.

first aliya of one of the members.<sup>24</sup> In the journal *Por la Continuidad* (For Continuity), we included a page titled Aliya, in which we synthesized the process as follows: "Hardly a week passes in Ioná in which we do not bid farewell to one of our members who leaves to make aliya. Last week was marked by the departure of two more families, both active members of our Centro for many years."<sup>25</sup>

The State of Israel was an undeniably powerful factor in the overall process of identification with Ioná. Every achievement of the Jewish state was presented in vivid detail to Ioná's affiliates. Such unconditional identification with Israel was soon put to the test when with the outbreak of the Lebanon War, reservations were widely expressed pertaining to the nature of Diaspora Jewish support for Israel. Ioná adopted a line of unequivocal support for Israel, which was duly recognized by the Israeli Embassy in Argentina.<sup>26</sup> This unconditionality was again tested in various instances, such as the visit of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon to Argentina, which was boycotted by a large segment of the Jewish establishment. The then president of the Executive Committee of the World Zionist Organization, Aryeh Dulzin, hailed Ioná and its actions in an illustrative letter of 1984, in which he mentioned the necessity of establishing "Ioná in Israel."<sup>27</sup>

In 1985 we embarked upon the project, "Ioná flies back to its nest," which brought hundreds of participants to Israel. With this purpose, the Director of the Aliya Department Haim Aharon visited our institution, and approximately ten different travel plans were conceptualized. Each trip would involve specific, channeled investigation of aliya possibilities. These included Ha-meavret (an intensive course for learning Hebrew), Yeshiva (for studies in Jewish religious academies), Zugot (for young married couples), Sportiona (for athletes), Manguiona (for musicians), and Refiona (for doctors). During that same year, three youth leaders of Ioná studied for ten months at the Makhon le-madrihim (Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad) in

24 September 9, 1979. For Ioná's position see Ploshchuk, "A Dialogue," and the statement of one of the Ioná families that came on aliya, *Mundo Israelita* (May 1988), p. 11.

25 *Ninth Anniversary Magazine* (5 November 1988), p. 7.

26 Through the visit of the ambassador Dov Schmorak to Ioná, as well as all the subsequent Israeli ambassadors.

27 The letter, dated 7 June 1984, was published in the *Fifth Anniversary Magazine* (25 August 1984), p. 14.

Jerusalem,<sup>28</sup> an experience that until then was reserved for the traditional youth movements. The following year, Ioná organized the celebration of bnei mitzva at the Western Wall, under its own auspices, and during 1987 more than a hundred people visited Israel on a program organized by Ioná. The anniversary dinner of that year (22 August 1982) was celebrated under the provocative slogan "For Aliya," which was publicized in the press with no reservations and enjoyed the backing of the Israeli Ambassador. In that same period, a branch of the Ioná community had already been established in Israel,<sup>29</sup> which published the informative bulletin *Kol Ioná Ierushalmi*.

### *Freedom of the Individual as a Supreme Value*

The third component of Ioná's ideology was the ideal of freedom of the individual. The centrality of this ideal contrasted sharply with the ideal of equality of the socialist left. The latter must be viewed within the Argentinian context at this time in which the left penetrated all spheres of youth activity, including high schools and universities. Despite our clear stance on human rights issues,<sup>30</sup> our commitment to the individual rather than to society as a whole positioned us with the politically conservative trend.

My personal experience effected my decision to instill in Ioná a clear and unambiguous position on this issue. I remember having been inundated by propaganda from leftist organizations, which ultimately convinced many of their younger members to take part in guerrilla activities, and concluded in some cases with the destruction of entire families. Moreover, within the political left, anti-Semitism rose sharply in 1982, masked as anti-Zionism. The Palestinian cause

28 Today, as director of the Makhon, I am surprised that our *madrihim* were accepted. Even now, 10 years later, we are trying to open the Makhon to non-traditional movements; and again, Ioná inaugurated the pilot experience in January 1995 with a group of *madrihim*, called Derahim.

29 Registered on 30 April 1985 under # 58-009-245-1. It still functions and had its last comradeship dinner on 9 January 1994.

30 Ioná was the only institution to recruit a "desaparecido" as a *madrih*, following his release from prison until he left the country. The first Jewish interview with Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize recipient and human rights activist, *Kol Ioná* # 57 (November 1980).

attracted the support of radicals and progressives, including Jews, all over the continent.

There was a series of public events on the theme of socioeconomic liberalism that clearly reflected Ioná's ideas on this subject. In 1984 for instance, we hosted an event quite unusual for Jewish institutions of the period — homage was paid to President Julio A. Roca, one of the founders of liberalism in Argentina.<sup>31</sup> Several Liberal legislators visited the institution. In April 1987 a Ioná delegation received Moshe Nissim, Israel's Minister of Finance and a leader of the Israeli Liberal Party,<sup>32</sup> and in August we received the U.S. Ambassador, Theodor Gildred, who entered a synagogue for the first time.<sup>33</sup>

In the course of that year Ioná worked on various projects in conjunction with the Zionist Federation of Argentina,<sup>34</sup> an entity parallel to that of the ZOA, which represented the General Zionists. I gave a lecture on economic liberalism from the Jewish standpoint, at the Institute for Market Economy, to mark the visit of a prominent American academic.<sup>35</sup>

To a degree, Ioná's political outlook generated hostility among certain segments on the left within the Jewish community.<sup>36</sup>

## In the Beginning

### *The Attempt to Make a New Movement out of Ramáh*

Agrupación Juvenil Ramáh is the youth movement of the Congregación Israelita de la República Argentina, the oldest, largest and best known synagogue in the country, popularly called Libertad (the name

31 Ioná's homage to Roca in the general press, *La Prensa* (19 October 1984), p. 3; in the Jewish press, *Mundo Israelita* (20 October 1984), p. 14.

32 Visit of Mr. Moshe Nissim. *Eighth Anniversary Magazine* (1987), p. 31.

33 The visit of Theodor Gildred (25 August 1987) had strong repercussions in the media, including a major TV channel. See cover page, *La Luz* (28 August 1987).

34 Ioná and the Federación Sionista Argentina worked together on 22 April 1987 preparing for the elections to the Kehilla that took place on 10 May 1987 and afterwards for the elections to the Zionist Federation on 20 September.

35 For a summary of Dr. Israel Kitzner's visit, see *Comunidades* # 66 (November 1990), p. 15.

36 Ioná was characterized as a "right wing organization." See the weekly *Nueva Sión* (4–6 August 1984), and *El Informador Público* (13 May 1988), p. 13.



of its street). The Congregation had been founded in 1862 with the beginnings of a Jewish presence in Latin America, roughly two decades before the massive waves of immigration to the agricultural colonies of Baron Hirsch.<sup>37</sup> However, after various bursts of creativity, the first, organized Jewish community in Latin America had become staid and inactive, with few exceptions.

I became director of the youth section of Libertad, Ramáh, at the beginning of 1979 and immediately created three frameworks in order to fortify it. The first was Youth *hanhalah*, a team assisting the director in decision making; the second was the School for *madrihim*, to train the most gifted youngsters; and the third was the Parents' Circle, whose objective was to support the youth activities.

Libertad's growth was exceedingly fast, and seemed to alienate the older lay leaders who were unaccustomed to such vitality. There was tension between the two groups — the youngsters who gave new color to the synagogue, and the few remaining old people apprehensive of change. Six months after we began the revival of Agrupación Juvenil Ramáh, our work came to an end. The older youth groups of Libertad, which were extremely active, had planned an educational camp, but for reasons that were exclusively bureaucratic the Board of Libertad informed me that the camp had to be cancelled.<sup>38</sup> Thanks to the insistence of Derekh Dror, one of the most active groups in Ramáh, we nevertheless decided to go ahead with the camp. It was a resounding success.

Shortly after, I presented my resignation, which was followed by that of the *hanhalah* and almost all the *madrihim*. I anticipated that I would devote myself to Jewish formal education. I felt that the Ramáh project had come to an end.

### ***Ioná is Born***

The Parents' Circle independently decided to search for a venue so that we could continue our work. Their goal was to ensure the most appropriate framework for their children, such as they had found in Ramáh. At their request, I held a meeting with the authorities of

37 *La Congregación* (Buenos Aires, 1965), p. 9.

38 The Congregación also abruptly broke off with rabbinical leaders such as Marshall T. Meyer, Mario Ablin, and Angel Kreiman.

AERMOV where I outlined the prerequisites for renewal of our activities as a youth movement. In exchange, we would revitalize the host institution.<sup>39</sup>

The members of AERMOV had heard about the success of the Libertad youth and they happily anticipated youngsters filling their silent building. My staff comprised ten *madrihim*, three coordinators (including one for the school for *madrihim* which was fully transferred intact from Libertad), and myself. We required total freedom of action, without any limitations, in order to avoid repeating past conflicts. Their striking lack of questions about the nature of the new movement led me to think that I would indeed have total freedom.

In order to finance the imminent expansion, they proposed charging youth membership fees and that we hold services for the High Holidays. Moreover, we could open a Talmud Torah for the preparation of bar mitzva boys, and contributions would be made by the few board members.

### ***A Successful Delivery***

There were five basic elements that ensured Ioná a sound and successful start.

- A group of highly motivated youngsters, whose motivation was bolstered by having experienced deep frustration, followed by an attempt to rebuild what they had lost. We felt different from other Jewish community frameworks — we were founding our own institution.
- A staff-on-its-way (Melmabet, our school for *madrihim*) that guaranteed continuity for the next five years. It is worthwhile mentioning that Melmabet was ultimately a provider of *madrihim* for the whole Jewish community, and that at no point in its history (till this day) did Ioná have to import any *madrihim*. It is still one of the main providers of *madrihim* for the entire Argentinian Jewish community.
- A group of supportive adults, although few, devoted to strength-

39 Dora and Saul Hojman, "How Ioná was born," *Sixth Anniversary Magazine* (16 November 1985), p. 3.

- ening the institution where their children were being educated.
- Disregard for imminent expenses. With hindsight, it is shocking that during Ioná's foundation our concerns did not include any budgetary aspects.
- The conviction that we were fulfilling a great goal that would transcend us. We were unified by common ideals (previously described), as expressed in *Ideario* which Ioná published at the beginning of 1987.

We felt sure that our specific traits were bound to generate institutional growth. The motto of the movement, taken from a verse of the prophet Jonah, was "*Ivri anokhi*, I am a Hebrew," which we repeated time and again at all Ioná activities. Names from the book of Jonah were given to various groups within the movement. The youngsters' activism distinguished us from the start. We took part in every pro-Israel demonstration in Buenos Aires and played a leading role in those that were held in the following years. Ioná was always present with the largest contingent of youngsters, chanting in the hundreds under our banner. In some cases the entire Jewish community followed Ioná's activist lead, for example when the Bolshoi Ballet performed in the Teatro Colón in 1986. From our founding year we annually organized the 'Week of the Oppressed Jew,' with lectures, panels, and ceremonies of solidarity with Russian and other oppressed Jews. Our high profile was enhanced by a weekly spot on state television that I held for two years on Jewish topics.

In sum, from its early days Ioná penetrated the consciousness of the community as a whole, as an example to be imitated in recruiting the youth.<sup>40</sup> On occasion the President of DAIA<sup>41</sup> contacted Ioná requesting that we represent the Jewish community, such as the official demonstration to express Argentinian rights over the Malvinas-Falklands.<sup>42</sup>

At a ceremony for Ioná's third anniversary our achievements were praised by the Israeli Ambassador Dr. Dov Schmorak, the President of DAIA Dr. Sión Cohen Imach, and the Rector of the Seminario

40 *Mundo Israelita* (Buenos Aires, 20 June and 11 July 1981), p. 7. "Intermarriage and more," *La Luz* (Buenos Aires, 16 January 1987).

41 Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas, founded in 1935, is the official body representing Argentine Jewry.

42 About the demonstration, see *Kol Ioná* # 102 (9 May 1992), p. 7.

Rabinico Latinoamericano Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer. By then we had already instilled in our youth a keen sense of building history.

### ***Birth Pangs***

Our early difficulties occurred on several levels, but they were basically the expression of the same flaw, namely how to adapt our old inheritance to our present reality.

### ***What to do with the "old-timers"***

In several areas we had to push the process of adaptation. One of them was strictly synagogal. The minyan of elderly men who regularly prayed in the AERMOV synagogue included some who felt threatened by our presence, however they posed no practical obstacle to our renewal plans. They were given a small synagogue at the entrance of the building, which was eventually totally renovated. The main synagogue was to be used by the youth.

There were further difficulties with the few incumbent lay leaders. The confrontation between the new and the old was inevitable and it finally exploded during my absence when I was studying in Israel in the Jerusalem Fellows program. The internal struggle between the founding members of Ioná and the new activists became so intense that Ioná had to hold general elections to choose a new board, an unusual experience for a relatively small institution like Ioná. The first list, calling itself *Hahlama* (recovery), was composed of people with whom we had founded the organization. Their platform stressed that Ioná's uniqueness was a warm environment for the whole family, while the new members (the White List) advocated projects of expansion and progress. The elections took place on December 26, 1983 with the participation of more than five hundred activists. The blatant rivalry between the two participating lists caused a serious trauma for the fledgling movement.

### ***The renewal of the school***

The only body that was functioning prior to our incorporation in AERMOV was the elementary school Herzl. Our task was to adapt

the old framework to the new one. Since the school was considerably strengthened as a result of the existence of Ioná, its headmistresses' resistance to this change was mild.<sup>43</sup> The school population increased notably and the school acquired greater prestige due to its link with Ioná.

However, there were tensions between the "community" and the "school," always understandable in the context of resistance to change. This came from two directions: the headmistress of the Hebrew section and the Parent's Committee. Initially both clashed, on occasion, with the Board of Directors. Ultimately, the headmistress was replaced, and the Parents' Committee merged with the Board of Directors of Centro Hebreo Ioná. Among the conflicting decisions were, for example, the use of the classrooms for youth activities, or the utilization of the Synagogue Department (and not the school) to prepare the girls of seventh grade for their group bat mitzva ceremony.

Ideologically, the differences were not that many. We did insist on putting further curricular emphasis on aspects of Jewish tradition, on making the school kitchen completely kosher, and on the integration of pupils into synagogue life. They eventually adopted our stance.

The perceived "threat" of numerous boisterous youngsters proved to be unfounded. The only real problem with groups arose from the lack of space in the building. But the existence of these youth groups was never considered ideological competition to the school, since we always stressed that we saw informal education as complementary to formal education, and not as its replacement.<sup>44</sup>

### Consolidation

Counterbalancing these obstacles were several characteristics of Centro Hebreo Ioná that compensated for and neutralized the mistrust that a new movement might arouse. Five traits could be summarized as follows:

43 There were three headmistresses in charge of the kindergarten, the morning elementary school, and the afternoon Hebrew school, respectively.

44 "Youth should be given a Judaism which does not resemble something for old-timers." My interview by Ploshchuk, *Mundo Israelita* (11 July 1981), p. 7.

### ***Legitimacy***

Having revitalized AERMOV, which was originally founded as a synagogue, Centro Hebreo Ioná was perceived as the true representative of the aims promulgated by the original institution long ago. No one could question that it was more faithful to the aims both of the original institution and our own, namely to promote a return to Judaism, than to maintain a secular school and scarcely a minyan. The best demonstration that Ioná, in spite of its newness, was perceived as the legitimate institution was that one year after we started, AERMOV as a whole was officially and legally renamed Centro Hebreo Ioná.

### ***Real Attraction Power***

The continuous, unhalting flow of youth into the institution could only arouse support and satisfaction from all factors genuinely concerned about assimilation. No one would have imagined that the "old shul of Acevedo" would be constantly filled with young people.

### ***Conviction***

Our ideological clarity saved us from declining into a merely transient youth group. At all times we radiated conviction in our actions. It is worthwhile mentioning that in their study on three innovative educational administrators, Smith et al. concluded that they

"...remain true believers. The broad belief system which we called 'the new elementary education,' commitments to individualized education, equality, and full development of individual potential remains with each of our administrators. The persuasiveness and staying power of belief systems is a major addition to current discussions of educational innovation and reform."<sup>45</sup>

45 Louis M. Smith, Paul F. Kleine, John P. Prunty and David C. Dwyer, *Educational Innovators: Then and Now* (New York: The Falmer Press, 1986), p. 32.

### *Activism*

Any issue relevant to the Jewish community as a whole that we felt was neglected we dealt with unflinchingly. We demonstrated not only *for* Israel or *against* neo-Nazism. For instance, Ióna was the only organization to launch a campaign to halt the influence of the local "Jews for Jesus,"<sup>46</sup> including the distribution of leaflets outside their churches and raising the problem in diverse forums. A further campaign was mounted against an anti-Zionist course that was part of the curriculum of the University of Buenos Aires.<sup>47</sup>

### *Pride in Belonging*

Continued growth naturally led to the bolstering of our institutional ego. There was a special pleasure in participating in the novelty of Ióna, of being a part of a group that was doing something new.

We took various initiatives to strengthen this feeling of belonging. For example, we frequently sent to all our members press cuttings favorable to our organization, and we encouraged the formation of representative teams of soccer, dance groups, music groups, choirs, etc. Every year we celebrated the anniversary of the institution in various ways, including parallel parties for youth and adults. The latter were gala occasions, such as the tenth anniversary that took place at the Sheraton Hotel (December 12, 1989) where we showed a video on the history of Ióna.

We provided our youngsters with many occasions to represent Ióna in diverse frameworks. From the start we tried to serve small communities in the interior of the country,<sup>48</sup> which included sending youngsters to officiate during the High Holidays, as well as *madrihim* sent throughout the year. We were active in fifteen cities<sup>49</sup>

46 See *OJI*, newsletter of the Latin American section of the World Jewish Congress, # 571 (Buenos Aires, August 1990), p. 14.

47 The complaint was published by the general press including the major newspaper *La Nación*.

48 Each community would send a request to our Board of Directors and for several months we would train Ióna youths who were to travel. In no case was there any financial profit on Ióna's part; we only requested that expenses be covered by the community that we served.

49 See footnote 11.

during Ioná's first decade, which proved to be a formative experience for the participating youngsters — both the educators and those being educated.<sup>50</sup>

### *Flexibility*

Our openness meant that we attempted everything that seemed feasible — whatever ideas were proposed, especially by young people — from chess teams to literature lecture series. This ensured a continual flow of incoming youngsters, many of them enterprising and adventurous.

### *Ioná's Creations*

Ioná launched many initiatives that strongly influenced the entire Jewish community. Some of them were not original in their essence, but only in the specific content that Ioná gave them, such as the forementioned school for *madrihim* Melmabet, which included an original course for the teaching of Jewish identity based on value clarification and concept clarification.<sup>51</sup> In the Talmud Torah Marbeh Hayyim, we held separate classes for parents on subjects their children were learning throughout their year of preparation. As in many areas within Ioná, I personally set the ball rolling: I taught our first bnei mitzva. Once the numbers increased considerably, I delegated this task to a coordinator who eventually became the department director, and himself employed department coordinators.

Many of Ioná's creations were truly original initiatives. For example: the first school for hazanim in the country, Sabato Morais; the weekly newsletter *Kol Ioná*, which was eventually imitated by at least a dozen other institutions; the first Hebrew school for retarded children Makom Sheli; and the Festival Juvenil de la Canción Jasídica which has been held annually for ten years since 1980 with the

50 Gustavo Dulman, "My Experience in the Interior," *The Centro Hebreo Ioná at its Bar Mitzvah, Thirteenth Anniversary Magazine* (12 September 1992), p. 26.

51 I personally built up this course which, in an updated version, is presently being taught at the Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad, Jerusalem.



participation of hundreds of young choir singers and up to five thousand spectators.<sup>52</sup>

Ioná's original achievements aroused not only feelings of admiration within the Jewish community, but also of envy. This mild hostility was partly responsible for our failures.

### *Frustrations of Ioná*

Ioná experienced frustrated initiatives in four areas, namely the high school, a fundraising campaign, culture and sports departments, and our own "country club."

#### *The high school*

The Hadar high school was desperately needed; by 1985 our elementary school had grown and we had the highest rate of children who continued their high school within the Jewish educational network. The project was cancelled for economic reasons. We lacked adequate physical space for the high school and all our attempts to acquire unused buildings of the Jewish community were frustrated by the kind of internal rivalries alluded to before. The only possible source of income to finance the beginnings of a school was the WZO Department of Education for the Diaspora, whose head expressed interest in the project. Consequently, the publicity for the school included "...under the auspices..." of that Department.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, in our final economic calculations, even the support of the Department was deemed insufficient.

#### *Fundraising*

Our fundraising capacity was severely limited due to the dearth of dedicated people and to the nonprofessional methods we used as a result of our inexperience. Some achievements in this field should, however, be mentioned. In our fundraising activities we stressed the

52 Herskovits, *Sixth Anniversary Magazine*.

53 "Hadar: Jewish and Humanistic first rate learning for the Jews of the future," *Sixth Anniversary Magazine* (16 November 1985), p. 19.

specialness of what Ioná was offering to the Jewish community and the importance of preserving its growth. We enjoyed limited successes. During the second year of Ioná we totally renovated our offices thanks to a parent of youths who were active in the institution.<sup>54</sup> We similarly rebuilt our synagogues Ajiezer in 1983 and Caballito in 1987.

But these isolated achievements failed to evolve into the establishment of a stable source of income apart from membership fees. Ioná continued to be totally independent and therefore without any group or party willing to support it.

In 1985, we decided to undertake a fundraising campaign in the United States; once again, with no professional experience in the field. The results were disappointing.

At the beginning of 1988 Ioná entered its worst economic crisis, with no reserves to fall back upon and at the same time heavily in debt. The only possible solution lay in personal appeals to friends of the organization. I dedicated myself to this activity and, primarily due to the efforts of three donors, we saved Ioná from the abyss into which it would have fallen. In May we inaugurated a special ceremony in honor of these three persons,<sup>55</sup> the event itself expressing this small success. But in the long run and in more general terms, the element of fundraising was not intrinsic to the organizational growth of Ioná and we managed with extremely scant resources.

### *Sports and cultural departments*

Since its inception the institution made public its desire to create new cultural and sports departments that would satisfy the needs of its students.

Within a year of its existence, Ioná had formed representative sports teams that competed in tournaments organized by FACCMA (the branch of Maccabi that included all the activities of the various social and sports clubs). In retrospect, it seems extraordinary that it was for purely economic reasons that these teams were forced to dissolve. Over the course of time Ioná had entered into debt with

<sup>54</sup> We celebrated this achievement with a ceremony held on 6 December 1980.

<sup>55</sup> "A Decade of Active Judaism," *Tenth Anniversary Magazine* (11 May 1988), p. 15.

FACCMA through the accumulation of various fees and other costs, which finally prevented us from registering our participants in the official sports championships. These same participants ended up playing on the teams of various other institutions that were parallel to Ioná.

In the area of cultural activities the situation was markedly better, but the frustrations that arose were once again primarily of an economic nature. Ioná produced nearly a dozen Israeli dance groups that practiced several times a week and represented Ioná in different institutional and interinstitutional events.<sup>56</sup> But the deficit that accompanied these groups grew in proportion to their excellence and, in most cases, once the instructors and choreographers had developed a reputation they were lured away by other institutions that offered them better economic conditions. In many cases the dancers, although alumni of Ioná, followed their teachers. Thus, we were obliged to close various artistic workshops and groups, including a young organization of flautists called Chalioná, the pride and joy of Ioná, which had performed publicly on various occasions. In 1985, all the manifestations of Ioná's creative endeavors collaborated in a show called *Festiona*, that filled the Roca Theater to capacity (one of the largest venues in Buenos Aires).

But all of these varied outlets were one by one forced to disappear because of the scant possibilities of self-financing. The only branches of the cultural department that remained intact was the weekly cycle of lectures, theatrical pieces, roundtable debates, and cinema shows, which continue till the present time.

### *Our own country club*

The Board of Directors of Ioná had often suggested the possibility of having a private recreational center for the use of Ioná associates to spend family weekends, based on the model of the aforementioned clubs.<sup>57</sup>

The acquisition of new property for Ioná, or large financial invest-

56 *Ashlayah*, created in 1983, performed in several towns of Argentina and Brazil, on TV and in several well-known theaters. Its first performance recital was at the SHA Theater on 20 November 1985.

57 See footnote 20.

ments, were considered unnecessary since there were many properties belonging to associations of the Argentine Jewish community that were not in use. Many of Ioná's youth camps were already being conducted on the private resorts of Ioná members, whose families had specifically designated those areas for educational purposes in return for a modest fee.

We were on the verge of finalizing the acquisition of a property when we seriously considered merging with the CSIS (The Sephardi Jewish Cultural Center). Situated across the street from Ioná, its large building was barely used during most of the year. As Ioná's activities peaked we had no option but to rent the entire building from the CSIS. In addition, the CSIS possessed a substantial private property in Montegrando on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. A semifusion between the two institutions would have permitted hundreds of Ioná youngsters to utilize the premises of the CSIS for a modest sum. But internal political problems and, once again, internecine jealousy nullified the project.

### **With Hindsight**

#### ***Mergers — But no Federation***

Ioná at its prime had six branches: Ajiezer (1979), Bialik (1981), Nordau (1982), Caballito (1984), Ashkenazi (1985), and San Fernando (1986). In each case and for different reasons, these centers gradually separated themselves and gained full independence. This after having received a creative push from Ioná, which generally involved years of effort, human resources, and investment.

The question remains why these experiences had to end in a divorce between the branch and the main center, albeit fairly amicably. The most basic answer is economic.

When a new synagogue approached us, we negotiated from the start that after a number of years of activity on their premises they would merge their institution with that of Ioná. This request, sooner or later, created opposition. This was due to the fact that although in many cases the said institution had literally ceased to exist in anything but name, the few remaining persons still associated with it resisted the loss of an independent social denomination. Had we proposed a

federation of the affiliated branches instead of an outright merger, we could have avoided internal strife.

### ***The Kemakh for Our Torah***

The second error we committed was to abandon the idea of fund-raising and not establish a stable system of income. Although our efforts were immense, this issue was not paramount in our overall scale of priorities. We should have entirely eliminated the membership fees for young people. This request irrevocably alienated us from the traditional youth movements with which we wanted to work and also caused resentment among many of our young people.

Such vulnerability in economic issues led us to the conclusion that "Ioná's lot in the Jewish community is disproportionately inferior to the strength which it represents, with its achievements and its potential.... unjust distribution of the monetary resources of AMIA" (the *Kehilla*).<sup>58</sup> Among other reasons, it was due to this that Ioná participated in the elections of AMIA (10 May 1987) as well as those of the OSA (the Zionist Federation, 20 September 1987). These elections were a singular experience uncommon to any other similar institution in the Argentina Jewish community.

### ***Tension Between the Old and the New***

Our third error was probably unavoidable, arising from the natural tension between old and new. Had we been better versed in the subject, or had we enjoyed access to professional counseling, we might have only mitigated the consequences of the problem.

We witnessed the following phenomenon: several people who were distanced from AERMOV and who had virtually nothing to do with the institution for years, on hearing of the renaissance of the community hurried to reap the glory and to appear as major protagonists in the enterprise. In due time, the syndrome was repeated, in greater or lesser degree and depending upon different time allocations, in every center that we added to Ioná.

58 "Politics in Ioná," *Eighth Anniversary Magazine*, "For Aliya" (22 August 1987), p. 21.

At this juncture, the phenomenon is a natural and even a positive one. However, these persons became the self-styled authors of the renovation of the institution, and they granted no legitimacy to newer activists who wished to become involved. In some instances this was taken to the extreme, and two or three persons who appeared as the directorate of the institution, even if they had had no practical connection with it in over a decade, prevented any challenge to the status quo, preferring an empty synagogue under their own auspices to an enormous youth movement over which they exerted no authority. We had observed a similar experience during our brief tenure in the *Congregación Israelita (Libertad)* prior to the foundation of *Ioná*.

These interpersonal conflicts occurred in identical ways in most of our branches, concluding with their alienation from *Ioná* which had given them its original impetus. The disengagement was always preceded by a monetary issue, such as architectural renovations for the synagogue demanded by one of the branches of *Ioná*, an initiative the Center could not finance.

At Ajiezer, the central headquarters, the disagreements and conflicts accumulated steadily. As previously stated in the section "Birth Pangs," these tensions reached their maximum expression in the elections of December 26, 1983, following directly on the heels of what was claimed to be, in the various written publications of *Ioná*, "the most difficult year in the organizational existence of *Ioná*, arising from a crisis of authority."<sup>59</sup>

The factor that proved to be a catalyst in the decision to conduct elections was the crucial juncture at which Argentina found itself — that same year Argentina conducted its first national elections after a half-century of dictatorships interrupted by brief democratic interludes. The general uproar of the national elections left its mark on our institution. Once again, the general political climate reverberated within *Ioná*.

### *Ioná in Israel*

In contrast to other parallel movements, *Ioná* attempted to establish its own headquarters in Israel and to organize the many emigrants

<sup>59</sup> *Fifth Anniversary Magazine* (25 August 1984), p. 5.

who had already arrived. But, once again, our lack of a clear grasp of the economic necessities meant that we did not invest sufficient energy to attain the institutional framework required, and we prematurely embarked on the organization of numerous activities.

A retrospective evaluation of Ioná in Israel suggests that it was a brilliant, but badly planned idea. Although many groups did come and there was a high rate of aliya, we still do not have an adequate setting to accommodate our members in Israel.

In Argentina we had attempted to penetrate the community politically through participation in AMIA's elections, as a means to having a share in the general budget. Similarly, in Israel, we tried to compensate for our lack of fundraising in the arena of the Jewish Agency departments. This brought us into contact with many local youth movements under whose auspices we could have developed activities for Ioná members who are now residents of Israel, as well as for Ioná groups currently arriving. Ioná in Israel is indispensable and it is still the most fertile ground on which to continue building.

### **Evaluation of the Organization's Importance**

Despite the perspective of sixteen years, the time is not yet ripe for a complete, final evaluation of Ioná's achievements and its impact on the Argentine Jewish community. Ioná is still in a state of flux and its reverberations within other Jewish institutions have yet to settle.

Without wishing to postulate a sociological analysis of the whys and wherefores, it is interesting that the most creative years in the life of Ioná coincided with the most difficult epoch in recent Argentinian history, and also with regard to anti-Semitism. More than fifty anti-Semitic attacks occurred in Argentina from September to October 1982 when the Argentinian Government granted diplomatic recognition to the local representative of the Arab League, with all inherent privileges.

Of the two main events that marked this period and which had widespread repercussions, the Falklands-Malvinas war confronted us with a situation in which we were basically untouched by the aims of the war and only prayed for it to finish, irrespective of the results.<sup>60</sup>

60 *Kol Ioná* # 100 (April 1982), p. 16, and *Kol Ioná* # 101 (May 1982), p. 5.

The second was the reinstatement of democracy in Argentina with the election of Raúl Alfonsín as president,<sup>61</sup> which meant the beginning of the final Americanization of the Jewish community.

Membership of the cultural and social institutions increased at the expense of the Zionist frameworks, which nonetheless remain the most influential political factor within the Jewish community. Assimilation in various guises — increasing intermarriage, a decline of Jewish consciousness, limited participation in Jewish public affairs, a marked decrease in cultural and artistic activities — characterized the quality of Jewish life.

The return to democratic government on December 10, 1983 opened a new era for Argentina's Jews,<sup>62</sup> in which Ioná, too, had to find its own way of adaptation. This fact stresses that one of the criteria to measure institutional success during a period of instability is the ability to adapt to quick changes.

Between the years 1984–88, the second period of Ioná, and a time marked by democracy, many events occurred that shaped the feelings of the Jews in Argentina. The arrest of Nazi war criminal Walter Kutschmann at the request of Germany, which sought his extradition, raised hopes that Argentina would break the long tradition of providing sanctuary to Nazi war criminals. These expectations proved to be unfounded.<sup>63</sup> The president of DAIA declared in 1984 that "the centers of anti-Semitism remain intact, but what has changed is the attitude of government."<sup>64</sup> In fact, anti-Semitism became a political weapon against the democratic government. In March 1987 the former Archbishop of la Plata, Plaza, proclaimed that the democratic government is "full of Jews." Six months later Father Manuel Beltrán, at a mass in the province of Córdoba, denounced the alleged presence of too many Jews both in the universities and in the government. In 1987, again, the expectations of confronting Argentina with its pro-Nazi past were raised by the arrest of the Nazi Josef Schwammberger. On March 30, 1988 at a rally of two hundred ultra-

61 In 1983 the Jewish Movement for Human Rights was founded.

62 During the period of military rule, Jews had been excluded from government. Under the Alfonsín administration, an unprecedented number of Jews served in many important elected and appointed posts.

63 The expectations were crushed when Judge Jorge Segreto delayed a decision on the German extradition request, until Walter Kutschmann died on August 31, 1986.

64 Sión Cohen Imach, President of DAIA, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* YB 86–87, p. 344.



nationalists in Plaza de Mayo, a neo-Nazi leader addressed the gathering.<sup>65</sup> Two well-known wealthy Argentinian Jewish businessmen were murdered under very dubious circumstances.<sup>66</sup> And finally, the blowing up of the Israeli Embassy on March 17, 1992 and of the AMIA building on July 18, 1994 that resulted in dozens of fatalities — undoubtedly the darkest page in the history of Jews in the continent.

Argentina is becoming ever more pluralistic and receptive to contributions from its Jewish sector.<sup>67</sup> The country is currently in a phase that is radically new, where the fruits of both democracy and economic stability are being borne.

It is in this new, more promising context that Ioná may develop and concretize its objectives with greater sophistication and freedom. Thus will Ioná perpetuate the particular contributions with which it has enriched Jewish community life in Argentina so considerably, namely the unique combination of a vibrant youth movement with a traditional community center.

65 Alejandro Biondini, leader of Alerta Nacional.

66 Benjamin Neuman on 15 February 1982, and Osvaldo Sivak on 29 July 1985.

67 In spite of President's Menem obvious pro-Jewish stance, anti-Semitic utterings by top government officers are still heard in today's Argentina. In November 1993, the president of the House of Representatives, Mr. Alberto Fierri, called a journalist "a lousy Jew."



*Section III*

***NETWORKS AND ORGANIZATIONS***



# THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE JEWISH TEACHER: FOUNDING OF THE COALITION FOR ALTERNATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

Cherie Koller-Fox

Seven hundred Jewish teachers gathered together in Rochester, New York in August 1977. There was a strong sense of both unity and mission in the room as The Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education (CAJE) was founded and a shofar sounded a long *tekia gedola*:

Jewish teachers form the movement, a grassroots affair designed to combine the classroom experiences of committed educators from throughout the country who, to put it simply, want to revolutionize the field of Jewish education. They see their constantly criticized field as creative, dynamic, and rich in potential; they seek professional legitimacy; they seek to abandon the by-rote, learning-stops-with-Bar Mitzva view of the Jewish school and replace it with one that stresses the joys of learning and the commitment to the Jewish people.<sup>2</sup>

This article documents the founding of CAJE, tracing it from its earliest beginnings through the first six years of its history. Why was such an organization founded and what has its impact been on Jewish education? What were the obstacles that it faced in the early years,

1 This article was written after many hours of consultation with Jerry Benjamin. We collected documents long stored in boxes, pored over them, reminisced, and most importantly, analyzed the events of those years. Jerry also was the first historian of CAJE and his early writings proved invaluable in reconstructing this history. He read drafts and the final paper, and his suggestions were often incorporated. The process of writing this document helped us to understand and put into perspective the events of those years and their implications for us personally and for CAJE. We are grateful to Walter Ackerman for giving us that opportunity. I would also like to thank Rosie Bell Baskin, Jonathan Cohen, Everett Fox, Joyce Klein, and Alvin Schiff for their help and input.

2 Neil Reisner, "Good News for a Change about Jewish Education," *Baltimore Jewish News* (July 1981).

and has it lived up to its idealistic beginnings? This account is both historical and personal, and I hope that the reader will understand the difficulties faced in treading that line. I was one of the founders of CAJE, and served as its chairperson; yet the successes of CAJE, and to some degree its failures, rest more on the collective energy of the whole than on the individuals who guided it. The founders initiated the process, to be sure, but the educators joined us in large numbers from all over the world. Not only that, but they dedicated themselves to the challenges that we articulated. Thousands of people have devoted uncountable volunteer hours to CAJE conferences, projects, and publications. They are the leadership of thousands more who have devoted their lives to the enterprise of Jewish education because they believe that it is the key to the future of the Jewish people.

### **A New Generation of Jewish Educators**

In the late sixties and early seventies a new generation, born in America and products of the American Jewish education system of the fifties, began to teach in Jewish schools. This marked the beginning of a change in personnel practices in Jewish supplementary schools. In the twenty-five years after World War II, teachers in those schools were mainly Israelis, immigrants, Holocaust survivors, rabbinical students, and public school teachers. Principals of such schools were almost exclusively men who were part of a profession of educational administrators moving from city to city during their careers. There were national organizations and local bureaus concerned with licensing of teachers, and in some cities with standardized testing of students. Why would such a system be open to hiring unlicensed, undereducated college students? Why would college students of the "flower-child" generation be interested in teaching in Jewish schools?

The decision to hire college students as teachers was made individually by principals of local synagogue-based schools. There was no national policy change which opened these doors. The change was based on a shortage of qualified teachers, and principals found themselves looking at empty teaching slots in September. Once hired, however, the young teachers brought both pluses and minuses into the schools. The greatest minuses were their unprofessionalism and

their lack of teaching skills. Their attendance was erratic — they went home for intercession, preferred Soviet Jewry rallies or Judy Collins concerts to teaching on Sundays, and were notoriously lax around exam time. Many didn't know how to plan a lesson or how to control a class. And yet, they seemed to have a natural rapport with the students that the traditional Hebrew teacher did not. They had a positive, enthusiastic attitude toward their Judaism which principals hoped would be infectious. Their salaries were much lower than those of professional teachers. On these counts, boards and parents were happy.

Who were these students and why were they interested in teaching in Jewish schools? For the most part, they were students who had had formative Jewish experiences during their high school and college years. They were students who had just returned from a year-long program in Israel, such as the Young Judaea Year Course or Junior Year Abroad at the Hebrew University. They were leaders of their high school youth groups, or graduates of Jewish camping or summer trip programs in Israel or the United States. Most were active in Hillel on their campuses and/or the Jewish student movement. The Hillel bulletin board was often the matchmaker between the students and schools in need of their services. Among them were graduates of Hebrew Day Schools or yeshivot; however, most of them had grown up in the same type of Conservative/Reform Hebrew schools that were now hiring them to teach.

It is unlikely that more than a handful of these part-time teachers were considering a career in Jewish education when they began; however, actually entering these schools proved to be a radicalizing experience for many of them. They were energized by several factors — many of them personal. In considering a career in Jewish education, they found a setting where they could unite their Jewishness with their work. Here they could envision a life where they did not have to relegate their Judaism to Shabbat, where their strong Jewish identity could be fully integrated into their professional lives. For some, this choice represented an alternative to aliya; and for women and some men it was an alternative to rabbinical school. Many of these students discovered a real sense of calling in their work in Jewish education. They understood through their own experiences that there was an enormous gap between the Judaism they had discovered through youth groups and in Israel and the

Judaism they had been taught in Hebrew schools. They saw themselves as being capable of bridging that gap, and in so doing, radically changing Jewish education for the better. This gave them a sense of mission about their work — it was more than a job, it was their opportunity to save and strengthen the Jewish people. Working in the Jewish community promised them a meaningful life in a setting where they could really make a difference.

### **The Political and Cultural Climate of the Seventies: The Background for the Emergence of CAJE**

In the late sixties and early seventies, college students had had their Jewish identity awakened by the Six-Day War in Israel and the emergence of black consciousness in America. They organized themselves into a number of student groups such as the Jews for Urban Justice, the Radical Zionist Alliance, and Network, which was the American branch of the World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS). These groups acted politically as well as culturally — publishing newspapers and journals on literature and politics, and marching in peace demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. They were exploring spiritual issues through the development of the Havurah movement. Women were creating new rituals and working for admittance to rabbinical school and inclusion in synagogue life. It was a time of great ferment and the beginning of what has been termed the Jewish “renewal” movement.

One of Network’s functions was to bring together students from North American universities in conferences around specific interests. They had sponsored a number of such gatherings including the first meeting of Havurot and Batim, and the Women’s Conference, which marked the beginning of the Jewish feminist movement. It was natural that Network should become the sponsor of the first grassroots gatherings around Jewish education. It was also reasonable that Jewish education should be part of the general renewal movement of the seventies.

The beginnings of CAJE can therefore be traced to the natural comings together of a generation, but the catalyst for starting CAJE lies with the coming together of a couple of individuals.



## **Our Personal Paths**

Jerry Benjamin and I grew up in small cities in Ohio just a few miles from each other. Both of us had been active in Jewish youth movements as teens, attended Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, been active in both Jewish and non-Jewish organizations, and had experience as grassroots organizers. Both of us were working in Jewish education — I was working on the application of open classrooms to Jewish education in Boston, and Jerry was running an independent Family School in Cleveland where children and adults learned together. Our paths first crossed through Network. I was a frequent speaker and workshop leader at Network conferences on the subject of Jewish education, and Jerry was serving as the Chairperson of Network. On one occasion, I was invited to speak at a Network conference that was meeting in a small hotel in the Catskills. I had become discouraged during the previous conference and felt that people were not interested in the issues that I was raising vis-à-vis Jewish education, so I began my speech by asking how many of the people in the room were currently teaching in a Jewish school. To my amazement, almost every hand was raised!

This response greatly excited and energized me and I spoke about it at some length with Jerry. With his leadership, we introduced a resolution at that conference calling for Network to sponsor a conference on Jewish education. The resolution was adopted by the conference that year, but the success of the women's conference that they had sponsored led Network to sponsor a men and women's conference on feminism in 1974. The education conference was delayed again in 1975 in favor of a Pan American conference and an Israel conference. In the winter of 1975 Network held its annual conference at Case Western Reserve. Jerry and I proposed doing a session at that conference on Jewish education — almost a conference within a conference. It was our hope that this would serve as a reminder to Network to get on with their promise to sponsor an education conference.

We took over the basement of the Hillel House and there recreated an open classroom complete with books, art supplies, audiovisual equipment, etc., that we borrowed from local synagogue schools. Over a third of the conference participants trekked across the campus

to come to our workshop and stayed with us through three 4-hour sessions. The workshop was received with great enthusiasm and excitement. Jerry and I translated this response as a mandate to go ahead with an education conference. At the Network board meeting that followed this conference, we realized that we were the only "*vatikim*" present. The board was young and relatively new to Network. We told them that there had been a commitment to do an education conference and that in fact it was to be the next conference. We volunteered to chair the task force to put such a conference together.

### **The Planning of the Brown Conference**

In February 1976 the Network steering committee met to go over the resolutions that were passed by the winter conference. They decided to set up a series of task forces to deal with all the issues raised by the plenum. These included Jewish prisoners, Jewish poverty, the Falashas (as Ethiopian Jewry was referred to at that time), Israel's social problems, and Jewish education. The chairperson of Network, Fredda Smith, wrote us after the meeting to let us know the decisions that were made regarding the conference:

There was much support and discussion about the conference. I must admit that there were serious doubts expressed about scheduling a major conference at the end of the summer, which is usually a quiet time. It was the general feeling of the steering committee that most of the preparation for the conference, including a majority of the registration, must be completed by June. If there does not seem to be enough support of the conference by then, we must seriously consider canceling it.

The dates that we have decided on are August 29–September 2, only four days, not the five which were requested. Again it was the opinion of the steering committee that five days was just too long and would be too expensive. The hiring of a conference coordinator was also agreed on. I am personally very excited about this conference. It is very important and necessary in the Jewish community today and has the potential to reevaluate the entire

system. I am quite confident that there will be no trouble finding the needed funds and the people to attend.<sup>3</sup>

In the interim, Jerry moved to Boston where we both began doctoral work at the Harvard Graduate School of Education — both of us hoping to pursue careers in Jewish education. Together, we took on the leadership of the Network Conference on Jewish Education which was to be held at Brown University in August 1976. We formed a planning committee consisting mainly of Masters and doctoral students in Jewish education in the Boston area including (among others) Miriam Brunn-Ruberg, Edy Rauch, Geoffrey Bock, and David Cohen. The committee wrote:

There was a felt need among Jewish teachers to have a forum outside of the four walls of their individual classrooms, schools and institutional affiliations, to share with other teachers the frustrations and exhilarations common to all those following a career in Jewish education. There were individual organizations working toward furthering the cause of Jewish education, but they were for the most part organizations of administrators, not open to teachers, and almost all were "denominationally" oriented. There had not been a gathering of Jewish teachers from the US and Canada since the early days of World War II.<sup>4</sup>

The Boston Committee evolved three principles that shaped the planning of the first conference and continue to guide the Coalition today.

- The conference was to be constructed to meet the needs of the teacher. This meant that the conference would need a strong emphasis on the sharing of information, techniques and problem solutions, and the pursuit of learning, along with the opportunities to break down the isolation Jewish teachers often feel.

3 Letter from Fredda Smith to Jerry Benjamin, February 19, 1976.

4 Quoted in Jerry Benjamin, "CAJE: Our History — Program book for Fourth Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education" (August 23–28, 1979).

- The term "Jewish teacher" was defined to include anyone working in the endeavor of Jewish education whose principal concern was the transmission of Jewish custom, culture and belief.<sup>5</sup> This meant inclusion of rabbis, cantors, principals, professors, artists, writers, musicians, camping and youth group personnel, lay people, parents and students, etc. in a category usually limited to classroom teachers.
- The conference was to provide an opportunity for "teachers" to share freely with one another regardless of ideology.

Finally the Boston committee chose the name for the meeting, "The Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education." This name was chosen because the basic conference philosophy was to offer as many of the alternative approaches to teaching in one particular area as possible, and to communicate that there was a wide range of choices available in Jewish pedagogy.

This approach was necessary because, at that time, curriculum was decided by bureaus in some cities and by the educational directors in others. It was a "top-down" system. Teachers were told what to teach and what books and methods to use. This led to a great deal of frustration because teachers often felt uncomfortable about what they were teaching or the teaching methods they were using. It was not usual for teachers to have access to educational materials for curriculum development. I remember as a young teacher going to the Boston Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE) for some ideas and being directed to their dusty library. I took a book out and went home. The minute I walked in the door, the phone rang. It was the BJE librarian wondering when I would return the book. I did so the next day and didn't go back there for years.

Jerry Benjamin's analysis of the existing educational system was that it had centralized, in a dysfunctional way, much of the access to educational ideas. He felt that the gatekeeping role of the establishment could be changed forever by creating a conference that gave people wide access to ideas and information. My own approach was somewhat different. I felt that if the front-line workers of Jewish education joined their voices with those of the current establishment

5 Cf. William Hare, *Controversies in Teaching* (London: Althouse Press, 1985).

we could all work together for positive change. I wanted Jewish education, classroom by classroom, bunk by bunk, youth group by youth group, to improve, and I felt that empowering the educators by giving them tools and access to information was the best way to do that. I believed that CAJE could be a powerful force for change by bringing together so many people who cared about Jewish education to think through the issues and to act on them. I believed that as an across-the board-coalition, CAJE could become a strong advocate for Jewish education.

A Conference poster (designed by Cindy Pearlman Benjamin) expressed these ideas and our hopes for the fledgling conference. It included a photograph taken by Bill Aron of a child from the New York Havurah school who was standing on her head in front of an *aleph bet* chart. The poster was perfect since it reflected our hopes that this conference would turn Jewish education on its head, shake out the dust from its pockets, and once and for all address the top-down nature of the field.

As a side note to history, the conference was almost canceled twice — the first time because of initial low registration numbers and the second time because of a strike by the service employees' union at Brown University. There were a number of key presenters who would not cross picket lines and who put pressure on us to cancel the conference. The week before the conference Jerry contacted the office of Rhode Island Senator Claiborne Pell, and a congressional aide helped arrange a meeting with the union president — a Mr. O'Halloran. In the early hours of the morning, Jerry and I walked the picket lines with the workers and worked out a deal with them. They would not set up picket lines in exchange for our agreement not to use "scab" labor, and to walk with the union at a demonstration scheduled for the time of the conference. Thus, the conference was on, but with a few interesting additions to the program!

### **The Brown Conference**

Because of our agreement with the union, attendees signed up to clear the dining room tables, empty trash cans and other similar tasks. One afternoon, all of us marched in solidarity with the union, led by conference attendee Sue Roehmer who knew the words to

every labor song. Isaac Toubin, then the head of the American Association for Jewish Education (AAJE), had been invited to the conference to debate Jewish education with Jerry Benjamin. His response to watching us march in support of the union was to point out to us in his remarks that most of the union members were making more money being janitors than we were being Jewish educators. Toubin argued that improvement in Jewish education depended on whether we could attract more money; Benjamin took the position that the improvement would come when the personnel in Jewish education had more access to materials and ideas and more power to participate in decisions about what would be taught in their classrooms.

The Brown Conference was significant in many ways. The group of three hundred and fifty who gathered there recognized each other as colleagues. Their ages ranged from thirteen to seventy and the roles they filled corresponded to every aspect of Jewish school and community life. They represented a wide spectrum of educational settings, political beliefs, and religious ideologies. People we invited to teach had volunteered their services, and twenty-five others had responded on the conference application to our request for workshop leaders. All who came to teach were also eager to learn. From the start many people began to talk about another conference. The conference was fun, exhilarating, challenging, and everything that we had dreamed of and more.

The design of the conference reflected the need for in-depth training as well as sharing of ideas. Many of the design factors of that conference are still part of the conference design. We called the longer sessions "modules," based on learning units used at Harvard. The shorter units were called "Lehrhaus" sessions, based on the idea of ongoing adult learning designed in the Buber-Rosenzweig Lehrhaus in pre-war Germany (brought to our attention by Everett Fox).<sup>6</sup> There were reference groups — small meetings to get to know people and exchange ideas — which met several times during the

6 Cindy Pearlman Benjamin and Everett Fox were central to the development of CAJE in many ways — Cindy with her art talent and Everett with his storehouse of Jewish scholarship. More than that was their infinite patience and unwavering support of what we were doing even though it turned their lives upside down for many years. In fact, over the years, all of the CAJE volunteers' spouses and many of their employers deserve our thanks.

conference. There were exhibits to allow teachers to see the books and materials that were currently available. There were evening entertainment sessions following the plenary sessions, where issues were discussed, the latter being a staple of all Network conferences.

The educational agenda of the conference was balanced by a political one. Would this conference be a one-time happening or would it be the catalyst for the beginnings of a new movement in Jewish education? A series of speakers scheduled at prime times raised these questions to the conference participants, and a plenum was scheduled for the last morning. The conference schedule included meetings of the working committees to draft a conference document.

There were two significant outcomes of the conference at Brown. The first was the election of a "Continuations Committee," and the second was the writing and passage of a declaration on Jewish education called "It is Time."

The Continuations Committee that was elected comprised eleven individuals who represented the transideological nature of the group and who were empowered to plan a conference for the following year. They included three rabbis, one from each of the major movements. All the members of this committee were talented individuals who had made or would make significant contributions to Jewish education. They included: Jerry Benjamin (Chair), Miriam Brunn-Ruberg, Joel Dickstein, Dr. Seymour Epstein, Rabbi Neal Kaunfer, myself, Sarah Lewis, Audrey Friedman Marcus, Rabbi Daniel Syme, Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, and Debbie Weissman.

The "It is Time" statement (Appendix A) called for Jewish education to become the highest domestic priority of the North American Jewish community. It called for substantive changes in classrooms, informal education, the removal of sexism from curriculum materials, and the need for research. It spoke of outreach, resource centers and special needs, and confirmed our loyalty to Torah and text, albeit in both a secular and religious context. Most of all, the statement stressed the importance of supporting the Jewish teacher and organizing a broad-based coalition for educational change. In 1995, these ideas have gained wide acceptance in the Jewish community, but in 1975 they were quite radical.

*The Philadelphia General Assembly*

Immediately following the conference, Jerry Benjamin called a CJF<sup>7</sup> planner to request two minutes on the program of the General Assembly to report on the conference recently held at Brown. The request was denied — it was much too late and not the way things at the General Assembly (GA) were done. We felt that it was our responsibility to bring the “It is Time” statement to the attention of the Jewish community, and that the GA was the best forum to do so. We were unwilling to take no for an answer. We went to the GA with members of the Continuations Committee and members of the Philadelphia community who had attended the conference. Our plan was to lobby all the participants at the conference and to give each of them a red button that said “I CARE / Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education.” If they cared about Jewish education, we hoped they would join us in an unscheduled session to take place in a hotel across the street. We also had beautiful brochures published for us by one of our first friends in the Jewish educational establishment — Dr. Alvin Schiff of the New York Board of Jewish Education.

For days, we stopped everyone who would listen and charmed many of them with our enthusiasm for Jewish education. Neal and Sharon Norry of Rochester, New York were among the first to respond. Jerry Benjamin had met Neal when as Chair of Network he had worked with him to support the North American Jewish Student Appeal. The Norrys invited friends to their suite to meet us. Incredibly, after days of lobbying, four hundred and fifty people attended our session. At the session we explained what we described as a crisis in Jewish education, and asked for their support. We asked them to help us make the next conference a reality and to come and participate with us.

Following this session, Sharon Norry asked that the rules of the assembly be suspended to permit the introduction of a resolution on Jewish education that was based on the “It is Time” statement. The resolution was passed unanimously. Sharon and Neal Norry also promised a ten thousand dollar loan to the Continuations Committee and invited us to bring the next conference to Rochester.

7 Council of Jewish Federations, the umbrella organization of local federations in the U.S. which organizes the annual conference known as the General Assembly.



There was a significant confrontation at this GA between the leaders of CAJE and the leaders of the Jewish education establishment, who were less than pleased by our vocal presence at the GA. We had gone to the meeting of the Large Cities Budgeting Conference with the intent of trying to find funding for our conference. What we heard when we got there was an attack on the American Association for Jewish Education. We rose and spoke in their defense.

Even so, it seemed that our presence at the GA was threatening to the educational establishment that had initially supported us. Jerry Benjamin and I were summoned to a meeting with five or six heads of Bureaus and national education organizations. They told us that the last thing that Jewish education needed was another Jewish education organization and that we were competing for dollars that were badly needed by existing programs and organizations. We were told that we were out of our league — that “this was hardball;” and we were threatened that one day we would be looking for a job and that they would blackball us. This meeting left us confused, somewhat shaken, and more determined than ever to make our vision a reality. In fact, our visit to the Philadelphia GA was a great success. We had had a chance to talk to many of the leaders of the Jewish community about Jewish education, and we left the GA with both a site for the next conference and the seed money necessary to make it happen.

The Rochester BJE, under the direction of Paul Burstin, helped the Conference receive a ten thousand dollar grant from the Rochester Federation. This grant ensured that the conference would take place and created a precedent for approaching other host communities for similar grants. In addition to the Norry family, we also received support from other major contributors to Jewish education, such as Bob Arnow, Mandel Berman, Bob Hecht, Sam Melton, Lillian Steinberg, and Irving Stone. Jerry Benjamin traveled the country looking for funding and I would often accompany him, giving flowery descriptions of the conference and idealistic views of the future of Jewish education, while he made a strong pitch for money. We became adept at this “good cop–bad cop” routine because we were determined that somehow this next conference would happen. Jerry was a master at fundraising — he knew whom to ask and was not shy to do so. At the last minute, while we were still ten thousand

dollars away from our goal, Jerry called Arye Dulzin of the Jewish Agency at his home in Israel. He told him that hundreds of Jewish teachers were coming together without Zionist sponsorship and that we might have to cancel the conference due to lack of funding. Dulzin decided to be our hero in exchange for our cosponsoring the conference with their Department of Education and Culture.

In addition to these contributions, we received money from our parents and friends. Tzedaka cooperatives in three cities sent us checks as did many Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Congress, AZYF,<sup>8</sup> JNF,<sup>9</sup> NATE,<sup>10</sup> the national Jewish Welfare Board and the UAHC.<sup>11</sup> Significantly, over sixty individuals, many of whom were Jewish educators themselves, sent donations.

With the Norry loan in hand, we hired Debbie Tsadok to be conference coordinator. She would be the only paid staff person. Everyone else who worked to make this conference happen was a volunteer. The conference program listed over forty-two volunteers from Rochester alone. Volunteerism was our most significant resource. We were short on money and long on time and dedication even though we all had full-time professional responsibilities. Seymour Rossel commented on this phenomenon:

The inner circle leadership made it clear that work makes one a *haver*, an inner circle member. Their emphasis on commitment and their valuation of people in terms of the devotion which they brought to their tasks recalled the kibbutz days of the Second Aliyah. There were not a few young A.D. Gordons in action at these sessions.<sup>12</sup>

The fact was that Jerry Benjamin and I had taken on an enormous responsibility and an overwhelming task. We valued people who took some of this work from our shoulders, and we wanted people

8 American Zionist Youth Foundation.

9 Jewish National Fund.

10 National Association of Jewish Temple Educators, the professional organization of educators in the Reform Movement.

11 Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

12 Seymour Rossel, "The Educational Imperative: Report on the fourth Annual Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education," *Response* #38 (Fall 1979).

around us who shared our devotion to the goals of the project that we had undertaken.

Our work came to fruition in August 24–29, 1977, when seven hundred “teachers” gathered at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) to participate in the Second Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education. Seventy participants came from Rochester and the rest from all over the United States and Canada. They were Hasidic, modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and secular. They taught a wide variety of age groups in a wide variety of settings. They themselves were of all ages and fit our wide definition of teacher. They had come to teach, to learn, and to get to know each other.<sup>13</sup>

### **The CAJE Conference Program Model**

While Jerry Benjamin tended to the organizational and fundraising components of the conference, I devoted my attention to developing the program. The first thing I did was to encourage Rabbi Neal Kaunfer, a member of the coordinating committee, to take a major responsibility in planning evening programs and Shabbat, while I concentrated on the learning component of the conference. In the sections to follow, I will describe the program of the Rochester conference, as well as how the program of the conference (which has stayed substantially the same over time) had impacted the field of Jewish education.

#### *The Educational Program at Rochester*

Educational conference programs usually have specific and practical goals such as providing in-service training, exposing people to the latest ideas, and allowing participants to interact and network formally and informally. Of course, these goals were part of the thinking of the Continuations Committee, but we added to that a clearly articulated ideological layer in our planning of the CAJE conference program.

At the beginning, the conference was the totality of CAJE, and all

13 A slide-tape show produced by Jay Bender, called “700 Strong,” documents this conference.

of our goals had to be realized through the conference program. Thus, the program design was meant to be a change agent in itself. It was hoped that by creating a large and varied program we would also create the perception that there was a dynamic field of Jewish education — which was not the view of either laypeople or professionals at that time. We wanted to excite people and create an atmosphere in which change and growth were possible. The Brown conference had invigorated us — we believed that there were many wonderful people doing innovative things in Jewish education and that they needed to be “discovered” and showcased. We hoped to create a cadre of leaders who would work together to solve the problems facing Jewish education. We also wanted to ease the isolation that we knew faced every teacher in every classroom and every camp counselor in every cabin.

The Rochester program was large, consisting of eighty modules and a hundred Lehrhaus sessions. There were forty sessions happening simultaneously at all times. Finding qualified leaders for these sessions was our first difficulty in designing the program. I spent hundreds of hours on the phone that year calling everyone I knew and asking them if they knew anyone doing innovative work in Jewish education. Our Continuations Committee, with its ties to each denominational group, proved helpful in identifying people. I was like a detective — following through each lead. This process continued for many years. Each fall, the program committee sent out forms asking people we knew to recommend people we didn't know. We wanted to find every hidden diamond.

Still, we weren't satisfied and wanted to make sure that everyone had equal access to leadership. The idea of the Lehrhaus mini-sessions was one of the most important contributions of CAJE, because it enabled anyone who wanted to teach something to do so. The implication of the Lehrhaus was that everyone in Jewish education had something to contribute to the field and should be allowed to do so. Most of the one hundred Lehrhaus sessions at Rochester were given by people who had volunteered to lead a session. They sent an outline of their proposed session with their conference application, and if the proposal was coherent they were invited to present a one-and-a-half hour session. To this day, proposals for sessions are solicited on the CAJE application, and in fact, the 1994 CAJE con-

ference in Bloomington, Indiana, received over a thousand session proposals — the most ever!

I searched the country for people known to be doing excellent work in a variety of fields dealing with issues of concern to the wide coalition of people we were hoping to attract to the conference. Since we wanted to broaden the definition of teacher to include everyone involved in Jewish education, it became important to have sessions on the program that would attract each group. We identified those dealing with early childhood and adult education; those whose expertise included every formal and informal aspect of Jewish education. We searched for those doing innovative work and for those who had applied secular educational theories to Jewish education. We looked for artists, writers, rabbis, and cantors. Inviting people to teach was the best way of inviting them to attend. I would say that more than a third of the seven hundred people in attendance at Rochester had been invited there to lead a session or service, or to entertain. By intentionally inviting all the different components of our definition of "teacher," we in effect created the coalition we wanted at the conference.

Certainly, not everyone who taught at the conference had ever led a workshop before or knew how to teach a three hour, let alone, twelve hour module. We made great demands on our workshop leaders because we saw the CAJE conference as a way to teach new methodologies in depth. We encouraged our workshop leaders not to simply tell about a successful program but to teach people exactly how to replicate it. Nine and twelve hour sessions were the building blocks of the conference — almost forty percent of the modules included two or more three or four hour sessions on the same topic. I spoke to virtually every one of the seventy-five different individuals who taught modules and to many of the Lehrhaus leaders, helping them to design their workshops. Our conversations were a dialogue about what to teach and how to teach it, stressing the importance of handouts and participation. Through this process, many people learned to see themselves as workshop leaders, and subsequently as leaders in the field. Today, leading even a one-and-a-half hour Lehrhaus workshop at CAJE finds a place on a teacher's resume.

The Rochester program was overwhelming in its scope. Each person wanted to attend many more sessions than the number of session hours available. Since no session was repeated, people were

faced with hard choices every hour. The conference was a tremendous success, as evident from the official report.

The teachers used every possible moment for study from early morning till late at night. It is difficult to capture on paper the inspirational tenor of this Conference. Talented people who were considering leaving the field of Jewish education changed their minds — other teachers couldn't wait to start teaching and applying the new ideas which they had learned. There was a mood of self-respect and challenge and most of all unity. Teachers from every religious and cultural tradition and from every educational setting learned side by side — gaining new respect for each other and recognizing their communality of purpose.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Educational Theory of the Conference and its Implications for the Field of Jewish Education**

By having so many sessions and showing so many alternative ways to do things, teachers were empowered to find ways of teaching that suited them.

Teachers cannot simply be handed a curriculum and told what to teach; they must, rather, be given both the opportunity and the responsibility for thinking through the problems and challenges of their task. Certainly they will need the help of...curriculum writers. But they must be recognized as full partners in the planning process. For it is the teachers, ultimately, who must translate the abstract theories of the "experts" into practical activity.<sup>15</sup>

Before CAJE, classroom teachers were handed textbooks and curricula by their principals. They had no way of knowing if there were other textbooks available or other ideas for teaching. Now the conference and its exhibits of books and educational materials could help them and their principals find a wide range of books and ideas. It also created a market for new authors and publishers to sell their

14 Report on the Second Conference on Alternates in Jewish Education (1977).

15 Isa Aron, Joe Reimer and Cherie Koller-Fox, "New Alternatives in Jewish Education," *Sh'ma*, vol. 8, no. 156 (September 1, 1978).

wares, which led to an expansion of available materials. The exhibit area of the conference was seen not simply as a marketplace but as an important corollary to the process of teacher empowerment.

Multiple sessions were a way of dealing with the different interests and abilities of the participants. We recognized early on that there was a dichotomy in the field between those with a strong educational training and those with a strong Jewish education. It was a rare individual who was equally strong in both areas. We understood that the field would be improved if the people with a strong Jewish background could learn more about educational technique, while those with a strong educational background could learn more Judaica. The program tried to balance both of those goals, but Jewish study — primarily text study — was always seen as a necessary component of the program. We hoped that most Jewish educators, whatever their backgrounds, would agree that ongoing, life-long Jewish education for themselves was a necessary component of their work.

The teach-study model of the conference reflected our belief that all teachers needed to be students and teachers simultaneously. The willingness to continue learning was for us a replacement for the licenses and credentials that our predecessors had sought. This teach-study model was built into the conference from the beginning to create a community of educators who would learn from each other. No one taught for more than half the time, and the other half of the time they were expected to attend sessions and become true learners themselves. It was a heady feeling to be learning at the feet of someone you admired in the morning and then have that person learn from you in the afternoon.

What was so important about this teach-study model? Perhaps at the beginning we were anti-experts. The CAJE conference was not arranged around major speakers like most other conferences. Even now, we rarely give the floor to anyone to speak to the whole conference. Partly this was related to the difficulties of coalition. I remember early board discussions where consensus could not be reached about whom to invite to speak. Then again, perhaps this aspect of the program design reflected a kind of generational rebellion. With some exceptions, we did not admire those who had preceded us in the field and felt that the Jewish education system we had inherited was in disarray. Most importantly however, was our deeply held belief that the experts of Jewish education were those

serving on the front lines — those teachers and principals, camp directors, and youth group leaders who dealt directly with people in a wide variety of educational settings.

Our belief in the grassroots aspect of what we were doing was reflected in the program of the conference. We subscribed to the theory that grassroots change would come from identifying and empowering the maximum number of leaders in the field. We believed that in the past, new and innovative ideas had not been allowed to flower, and we saw CAJE as the fertile ground for allowing wide and open discussion of ideas which we hoped would lead to real change. From a purely practical point of view, the CAJE conference could not have happened without its grassroots philosophy. Hundreds of people volunteered to teach at the conference for free, and to pay for coming to the conference besides.

Leaders and participants alike responded to the imperative sent forth by past conferences: if each would give according to his or her ability, they would all benefit; and if they benefited, Jewish education would benefit.<sup>16</sup>

Within a few years, a talented group of people began emerging at CAJE. In-house, we called them the "Superstars" and they were invited back to teach year after year. These people were identified by participant evaluation and observation of their sessions. We also listened in the dining room to hear who the participants thought were good and who had exciting ideas to share. These people in some part owe their careers to CAJE, and CAJE in great measure owes its success to them.

The fact was that good ideas spread quickly through CAJE. I believe that the major contribution CAJE has made to Jewish education is in being a funnel through which new ideas spread. I'll give a few examples, but with apologies to the many other people who could be cited here for their contributions to Jewish education.

Penina Schramm attended the second conference at Rochester. She was already known in New York as a storyteller, but had had a limited audience. A friend told me recently that at a storytelling workshop that she taught at Rochester she was approached by Penina

<sup>16</sup> Rossel, *The Educational Imperative*.



who asked her questions about her technique and encouraged her to continue. In subsequent years, Penina was invited to teach and to tell stories as part of the evening programs. Penina empowered a generation of people to be storytellers. They learned from her at CAJE and then went out to North America and told stories in every city and town. She created the renaissance of storytelling that we are seeing in the Jewish community, and she did it at CAJE.

Danny Siegel is another case in point. He came to CAJE and began to teach people about the importance of *tzedakah*. He brought his *tzedaka* heroes to CAJE to meet the educators and he patiently explained to them that *tzedaka* was not a chore, but a privilege. As they became convinced, they went home and convinced their boards and school committees and students. Many invited Danny to speak in their home synagogues. Today, *tzedaka* is a part of almost every school's curriculum. Many schools have *tzedaka* relationships with the specific charities that Danny introduced them to at CAJE.

Besides the major movements and ideas that spread throughout the CAJE network, there are many little ideas that have improved the experience of Jewish education for students and their parents. Each year, everyone leaves the conference with new ideas: a new song, a better worksheet, a great activity for the youth group, a different method for teaching Bible, or a craft that will be perfect for the holidays. For example, I learned about the idea of a seder for *Tu be-shvat* from a man named Sy Hefter who worked in the Jewish Community Center in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. I wrote my own version and developed a technique for doing it with families. Each summer for over ten years, I reenacted this seder complete with the necessary fruits and juices, as part of my workshop at CAJE. I handed out hundreds of free copies of my seder program and gave teachers, principals and rabbis the opportunity to experience it for themselves. People took the idea of the seder and adapted it to their own settings. Today a *seder Tu be-shvat* is celebrated in many communities around the country.

Almost immediately, the CAJE board recognized the importance of sharing educational material. A curriculum bank and a toll-free number facilitated the sharing of material throughout the year. If you wrote a play or a curriculum on Israel, for example, you would "deposit" it in the curriculum bank. If you needed a simulation game for your eighth grade history class this Sunday, you would call the

800 number and they would send you what they had in their files. Through the curriculum bank's publication, *Bikurim*, people learned of the teacher-made material that was available to the members of CAJE.

One of the most important ideas of the past decades — Family Education — was an idea that was both developed and disseminated through CAJE. In the mid-seventies a small group of people (including myself) had begun working with families within the supplementary school framework. CAJE offered us a forum to tell others about what we were doing and to share our excitement. It forced us to give our ideas a theoretical framework so that we could teach them to others. We formed a CAJE Taskforce on Family Education which allowed us to be in touch with each other during the year and to collect and disseminate programs that were being tried around the country. CAJE sponsored pre-conference gatherings which allowed practitioners to share their successes and failures and to learn from each other. People began to get excited about the idea of family education, and used the programs and models that they learned at CAJE to develop their own family education programs. If they ran into trouble during the year, they knew whom to call to ask for advice through CAJE's Mekasher Network (a computer listing of people with expertise in various fields) and through their personal contacts at the conference. They would return to CAJE the following year and often repeat modules in family education until they felt they understood the principles and methodologies. After a few years, these early students began offering workshops on their own models and experiences, which we eagerly attended. Eventually, Boston and other Federations began to offer grants for family education programs, and there are now training institutes giving courses (ranging from a week to several years) on how to be family educators. CAJE was the catalyst that allowed this systemic change to spread across the country and to gain widespread acceptance.

CAJE workshop leaders taught about teaching methods and techniques, about teachers' centers, and about the plight of special needs students. They taught us to sing and write songs we would teach our students. They taught us how to use art and drama in our classrooms. They taught us how to be genealogists, how to study text, how to teach Hebrew, and how to train our teachers. They brought the best of secular education into a Jewish framework —

moral development, confluent education, individualization, gaming. Sharing became our most valuable resource for survival. The effects of CAJE reverberate in the camps, classrooms, centers, and synagogues across the country.

In the introduction to the Rochester program, Jerry Benjamin wrote:

Each of us here will teach an average of 40 years in our lifetimes and will reach more than 1,600 students. But together, those present at this conference will teach 24,000 years and we will reach over 1 million students. Together, we can change the face of Jewish life in America and insure the future of our people.

In addition to the educational program, the conference was greatly enriched and its goals enhanced by the evening programs and Shabbat celebration. Rabbi Neal Kaunfer designed a pluralistic format for celebrating Shabbat and a celebratory format for evening programs. The evenings both showcased the arts and created a community of people who felt good about themselves, about the work they were doing, and about being a part of the Jewish educational community. As we sang together each year with Debbie Friedman, Jeff Klepper and Danny Friedlander, the Farbrengen Fiddlers, Begeg Kefet, and many more performers, we created a community unified both in song and in mission. The same enthusiasm we brought to our singing we would bring to our work, and the unity we felt would ease the isolation that was our lot in our home communities.

### *The Conference Shabbat*

Putting Shabbat in the middle of the conference was one of many ideological decisions made by the Continuations Committee. During the easier-paced activities of Shabbat there was time to talk and to meet people. It thus served as an important community builder, but more important, it reflected the founders' vision of a diverse but unified Jewish community. The conference literature speaks of the Western Wall in Jerusalem, where many different minyanim gather in the same space. Could there be an American Jewish community that

was united around common interests and not divided by denominationalism?

There were some problems in the early years — putting the Reform minyan with its guitar in the room adjacent to the Orthodox minyan, for example — but for the most part, everyone worked together to make it possible for us to celebrate Shabbat together at the conference. To this end, we developed a concept of public space (where everything was halakhically *shomer shabbat*) and private space, which was extended to include davening space — a kind of intra-communal privacy in which each group could define the parameters of its practice. This allowed a *mehitza* in the Orthodox minyan, women Torah readers in the egalitarian minyan, a guitar in the Reform minyan, and no formal liturgy in the “alternatives to prayer” minyan.

The Rochester conference had eight different minyanim and eighteen different *se'udot shlishit*. By the fourth (Rutgers) conference, there were seventeen different minyanim represented! But after services, we were one community, singing, studying, and celebrating together. It was these times when the whole group met together that were the most inspirational — the dining room aglow with hundreds of candles, the singing and dancing after dinner. I have especially fond memories of watching a thousand people at the Rutgers conference pour out of separate minyanim and converge together to walk toward the dining hall. Havdala for the entire group was held outside in the courtyard, where we counted the stars and set the sky ablaze with havdala candles. Today there is still a communal Shabbat at the conference, but it is not in the middle of the conference and so not everyone participates. Still, the vision of a post-denominational Jewish world can be seen for one week a year wherever CAJE is in North America.

### **The Founding of CAJE at Rochester**

When Jerry Benjamin and I looked around and saw the seven hundred people gathered at Rochester and watched their enthusiasm for the program, we knew that a movement had been born. That sure knowledge was almost our downfall. We proposed the establishment of an organization in one of the first small-group “reference”

sessions. People suddenly felt that the outcome of the Conference had been decided even before the conference had been convened, and there was a great deal of resentment and acrimony at the plenum that followed. However, good will prevailed, and it was decided that the reference groups would meet to propose ideas for a conference document. Delegates from each group would put together a ballot for the plenary session scheduled toward the end of the conference. The ballot (see Appendix B) put the existence of an organization, its design and purposes, on the table — the will of the majority and a spirit of consensus were to decide the future. Every single person present in Rochester demanded and got a hand in CAJE's birthing.

The Sunday night plenary session is unified, harmonious and efficient. The ballot, along with nominations for the national board, is presented to the assembly for a vote. The Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education is voted into existence. The only program on the 13 item list to be defeated is the concept of unionization (as a national organization). And that loses by only seventeen votes, fewer than the total BJE and Federation people present who, it is assumed, are not much in favor of unionization.<sup>17</sup>

When the vote for continuation was announced and some creative genius blew the shofar, I felt a sense of relief. I am not in this alone and I will never have to feel that way again! What an incredible profession we are a part of. With all the obstacles that we face, we refuse to accept the negative verdict so often delivered on our heads that we can't succeed, and so we keep looking for new techniques, or refurbishing the ancient ways that we know still work. New friends, new support has made a great difference for me. The fact that it is national, and indeed international, breaks through the isolation one can feel in one's own congregation.<sup>18</sup>

It was in fact the sense of isolation that Judy Aronson describes that propelled CAJE into existence. In fact, the two most used words in all of the material before and after the Rochester conference were "sharing" and "isolation." The module registration form proclaimed:

17 Paul Wesel, "Color it Dismal, Color it Hope," *Moment*, vol. 2, no. 9 (1977).

18 Judy Aronson, *CAJE Newsletter* (1977).

"If the second conference...has a theme, it is sharing." What was so important about such a simple concept? Jerry Benjamin and I addressed this question in an article we wrote shortly after Rochester.

Isolation has a chilling effect on the entire field of Jewish education. New materials are created but their existence remains a closely guarded secret. Curriculum makers rarely have the opportunity to discuss the usefulness of their product with consumers. There are few opportunities to share information across ideological lines and educational settings. Problems which are pervasive are often thought of by individual teachers as their problem alone. The Coalition was created as a means for overcoming this sense of isolation, which holds the field in frozen suspension.<sup>19</sup>

Jewish educators could no longer work in a field that would not nurture us, support us, or give us recognition for our accomplishments. People in Jewish education felt isolated because we thought that we were the only ones who cared enough about the Jewish people to work at a poorly paid part-time job that took up all our waking hours. Further, we felt that there were not enough resources available to us to do what we knew needed to be done in order to make Jewish education successful. And for all the time and effort we put in, who respected what we were doing? Isolation also came from the knowledge that each of us was trying to reinvent the wheel. Working all night on a game was frustrating when you knew that every teacher before you must have created a similar game and you didn't know how to get it from them. If you taught in a Reform school, you wondered whether the teachers in a Conservative school down the street had some material that you didn't have.

Denominational and institutional squabbles over trivialities separated all the shareholders in Jewish education. We were fed up! When we at CAJE talked of sharing we meant: "Break down the artificial barriers that separate us. Stop bickering over limited resources and start cooperating." A way was needed to foster communication among teachers, provide the opportunity for professional growth and training, raise the status of the Jewish teacher, and

19 Jerry Benjamin and Cherie Koller-Fox, "Reflections on a Movement a-Making," *Sh'ma* 8-156 (Sept. 1, 1978).

explore alternatives for curriculum development and sharing. Those were the explicit goals of the Coalition and the reason that there was consensus over its founding in Rochester.

### **The Political Climate of Jewish Education at the Birth of CAJE**

Of course, CAJE was not founded in a vacuum, and to understand the fury that its founding created in the Jewish educational world we must turn our attention to an examination of the political climate of Jewish education into which CAJE was born.

Jewish education in the United States never was centralized. There had been several attempts over the years to unify the system, such as the Talmud Torah movement which created community schools outside of the synagogue structure, and the Bureaus of Jewish Education which tried to professionalize the field and supervise it from above. Denominational groups have been somewhat successful in creating educational material that is universally taught within their movements; however, all these attempts at unification must confront the reality that Jewish education is at its base a local phenomenon, run by synagogues, centers, camps, etc., each with its own spiritual, educational and fiscal leadership. Thus, the Jewish educational superstructure can give advice to its constituent groups, but the power to act and make decisions ultimately lies with autonomous local institutions.

In 1939, The American Association for Jewish Education (AAJE), now known as JESNA (The Jewish Education Service of North America) was founded with the hope of unifying Jewish education nationwide. Its goals were to "promote the cause of Jewish education though raising the standards of instruction and professional service, to encourage research and experimentation, and to stimulate communal responsibility for local organizations of Jewish educational endeavor."<sup>20</sup> In trying to represent Jewish educational interests in the federation world, the leadership of the AAJE found themselves in a fierce competition for the communal dollar. Seeking communal recognition for the importance of their Jewish education, they tried to

20 "American Association for Jewish Education," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 2. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, Ltd., 1971), p. 819.

garner the respect of the lay and professional leadership of federation and their own boards.

The AAJE went about getting respect in the ways that were common to the members of their generation. The leadership tried to shed the "*melamed*" image and to be seen as professional educators. Toward this end, they advocated a school system that mimicked public schools in appearance — schools with blackboards and desks, report cards, and textbooks (instead of the single table and *seforim* of the traditional method). They themselves followed the model of secular educators by earning Masters and Doctorates from Columbia Teachers College, Harvard, and the University of Chicago etc., where they learned secular pedagogic methods. They started a professional organization called the Council for Jewish Education, and a professional journal called *Jewish Education*. They set up licensing procedures for teachers, wrote standard curricula, and through this professional model hoped to gain the respect and support of lay leaders.

In some ways they were successful, but in others they were not. They were not able to articulate the limitations of Jewish education. They promised parents that in six hours a week of Hebrew school they could create a committed and knowledgeable Jew without any need for parental involvement. Given the parameters they had set up, they were unable to succeed in their task. Furthermore, while local bureaus, until the last few years, were considered critical for supporting the Jewish educational system, Federations never felt any local benefit from national educational umbrella organizations. They grudgingly gave the AAJE a percentage of the money that was needed to implement their program. Without enough money, AAJE certainly could not make an impact that could be felt. Finally, the drive to be professionals led to the creation of a small elite that only talked to itself and never penetrated to the level of the practitioner-teacher or the layperson.

Thus, the profession of Jewish education was under siege and fighting for every dollar when CAJE naively came on the scene. As mentioned above, our generation was against many of the principles that were so important to the generation that came before us, such as elitism and credentialing. We clashed with the AAJE and the Fellowship of Bureau Directors almost immediately, and at the time we did not fully understand why. In 1980, Dr. Simon Frost, then the acting



director of the AAJE, expressed in an interview his fear that CAJE would take over all the functions of his organization:

If CAJE's all-inclusive programmatic thrust would be implemented, it would create an organization that would supersede all the educational instrumentalities which American Jewish educators and lay leaders have worked so laboriously to establish and maintain.<sup>21</sup>

In the same article, Dr. Hyman Chanover, formerly second in command at AAJE, said:

I am one who does not look favorably on CAJE primarily because I spent 25 years trying to raise the level of the teacher and along comes this group ready to do its work without regard for credentials or qualifications.<sup>22</sup>

They saw our "alternatives" as threatening the very fiber of the system that they had worked so hard to build. From our side, we saw ourselves as wanting to cooperate with existing organizations. I remember a meeting with Isaac Toubin in which we told him that he could look upon CAJE as a large, friendly advocate that could be called upon to support the AAJE in its fight for more money for Jewish education. Rabbi Daniel Syme said: "Our short-term goals include making CAJE an active and recognized partner in the Jewish education enterprise."<sup>23</sup>

Our call for cooperation was initially rejected. After the Rochester Federation and its laypeople had made the second CAJE conference possible, CAJE came under increasing scrutiny. We were pressured by the AAJE and the Fellowship of Bureau Directors to define our aims, membership criteria, and policies in terms that were acceptable to them. They seemed especially concerned about our open membership policy as seen through our wide definition of teacher. The pressure that they brought to bear on the CAJE Board to comply to their wishes was unacceptable to a group that was both successful in its projects and whose members felt themselves to be the representa-

21 Gary Rosenblatt, "A New Boost for Jewish Education," *Baltimore Jewish Times* (July 4, 1980).

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

tives of a grassroots organization still in the process of defining itself. Furthermore, it was the seventies, and we did not want to be co-opted! We voted to stand our ground, which caused some disagreement within our ranks. The AAJE stopped cooperating with us and in fact issued a number of national directives to the effect that CAJE was to receive no local or national support.

### **The Third Conference at Irvine, California**

Thanks to the persuasiveness of CAJE's West Coast leadership (Joel Grishaver, Rabbi Stuart Kelman, Joyce Klein, and Dr. Ron Wolfson), the Los Angeles Bureau of Jewish Education co-sponsored the third CAJE conference at Irvine — despite the directive of the AAJE. The Bureau Director, Dr. Benjamin Yapko, served on the *mazkirut* of the conference along with the four individuals mentioned above, and Jody Hirsch was the conference coordinator. The conference received financial support from the Federations of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Marin, and the Peninsula, from the Emet Foundation and, as in Rochester, from dozens of individual contributors.

That conference, with eight hundred participants, established CAJE as a national organization because it proved that CAJE could attract people and excitement on both coasts. It also showed that the model that we had created in the East was replicable.

There would not have been a conference in the third year had it not been for the emergence of the talented and dedicated California *mazkirut*. The East Coast "volunteers" were exhausted from doing two conferences one after the other. They were quite willing to hand over the reins to the talented group in California. There were tensions in this transfer, however, because of a difference of vision between the two groups of leaders, and because reality dictated that whoever controlled the conference controlled the direction that the fledgling organization would take.

The California *mazkirut* made both programmatic and ideological changes in the conference. They added a teachers' center, a trading post for the exchange of teacher-made material and other elements that put the emphasis on teacher training. A media center was set up to screen audiovisual materials, and a computer center showed the versatility of computers as educational tools. There was a change to

shorter sessions — most were three to six hours in length — rather than nine to twelve hours. Most troubling to us was the fact that the conference was planned without a plenum or a political component to the program, although there was a panel one evening called “The Next Ten Years” in which William Cutter, Art Waskow, Geoffrey Bock, and Joseph Lukinsky talked about the issues facing Jewish education in the future.

Some conference participants noticed these changes with dismay. Two dozen conference participants began attracting a crowd when they gathered outside (on what has been termed the “grassy knoll”) to discuss the question of what was “alternative” about this conference. Jerry Alk wrote:

Too many of the study sessions were technique and method oriented, they claimed. Should we not be addressing the “real” issues, such as Jewish racism, Jewish disunity and the Jewish response to contemporary problems? Also as Jewish educators, should we not be discussing our real fears, hopes and problems? The conference, others responded, mirrored the “non-change” orientation of the participating educators and their acceptance of the priorities of the general Jewish community.<sup>24</sup>

Sitting on the grass in California, this group questioned whether the ideological zeal and revolutionary vision were missing.

The conference has become a truly remarkable assembly of *existing* alternatives in education. But it is no longer a *conference*, a meeting in which concerned individuals face problems head-on in an attempt to formulate *new* alternatives. The conference has grown from a forum of constructive dissatisfaction into a vibrant but unfocused series of Jewish educational workshops, an uncontroversial fairground of satisfaction for all.<sup>25</sup>

But Stuart Kelman saw this discussion as another positive outcome of the conference. For him, “The fact that a small group had formed

24 Jeremy Alk, “A Celebration of Jewish Teaching,” *Israel Today* (September 29–October 12, 1978).

25 Les Bronstein and Susannah Sirkin, *Genesis 2* (Fall 1978). This is quoted in *CAJE Newsletter*, 1979.

itself to discuss educational theory on its own was a sign of the conference's success — as was the entire spirit of the meeting.”<sup>26</sup>

Why was there such a difference in vision between the leaders of the East and West Coasts? The West Coast leaders, especially Ron Wolfson and Stu Kelman, were already established teacher trainers — Ron at the University of Judaism and Stu at HUC. They were quick to realize the potential of the conference for teacher training, and their model reflected that goal. The East Coasters did not agree that better teaching was enough to improve Jewish education. They believed that deep, systemic change was necessary. Of course, the West Coast had a much less entrenched establishment to deal with and had encountered little if any opposition to change and innovation; whereas on the East Coast, younger people were always coming head-to-head with a strong establishment that opposed almost everything they wanted to do. The West Coast had a much smaller pool of qualified teachers and forward-thinking laypeople eager for change. The experience of the East Coast was opposite — more qualified teachers and a conservative lay and professional leadership. While we saw each other as soul mates in a deep sense, there was a growing mistrust among the leadership of CAJE, based on our different perceptions and experiences. The pity of it is that we never articulated these differences then — it would have made it easier to resolve them.

#### **The Fourth Conference: Rutgers University, New Jersey**

After the success of the Irvine conference, the National Board of the Coalition, with Jerry Benjamin as its first chair, became active as it tried to define itself in response to the threat posed to CAJE by the AAJE, which was more determined than ever before that they would stop CAJE from competing for dollars and attention. Moderate voices on the CAJE board urged us to find a way to cooperate with them. We were fortunate to have a powerful friend to speak on our behalf in the inner circle of Jewish education — Dr. Alvin Schiff. At the time of CAJE's emergence, Dr. Schiff was the Executive Director of the New York Board of Jewish Education, editor of *Jewish*

<sup>26</sup> Reisner, “Good News for a Change.”

*Education*, and president of the National Council for Jewish Education. The year was 1976, which was both the fiftieth year of the National Council of Jewish Education and the year of the Brown conference.

Dr. Schiff had proposed to the NCJE that it open its membership ranks to associate members who would not have the professional credentials of the then dwindling membership of the NCJE. He wanted to create an address for the "soldiers in the field of Jewish education." He also felt that he and his colleagues were "talking to themselves." This resolution was defeated soundly by the gathered conference, which disappointed him greatly. That same year, he heard about CAJE and immediately felt a kinship with its goals and purposes. He gave us credibility at Rochester by agreeing to be our scholar-in-residence. He wrote over a hundred letters for teachers who wanted to apply CAJE courses to their in-service requirements.

The year of our greatest confrontation with the AAJE was the year that Dr. Schiff invited us to hold our fourth conference under his co-sponsorship on the Rutgers campus. He gave several of his staff members time to work on the conference, he supplied us with materials and publicity, and helped us obtain a grant from the New York Federation. He defended us at the AAJE and supported us when we presented our case at the Fellowship of Bureau Directors that year. Many, many times over the past nineteen years he has been our guardian angel, despite the fact that he did not agree with all of our practices and policies. His was a vote for the future by a man who has vision and an undying enthusiasm for Jewish education.

With Dr. Schiff's behind-the-scenes advocacy and the incredible success of our joint venture at Rutgers, the AAJE was forced to come to an accommodation with CAJE. Shortly after the conference, we had extensive negotiations with AAJE which ended with our writing a "Memorandum of Understanding" (see Appendix C). They agreed to cosponsor the 1980 Conference in Santa Barbara, California, and to send a letter of endorsement to federations in California and neighboring states. We agreed to consult with the AAJE on future conference sites, to let them monitor task forces to make sure there was no duplication, and to raise money only in the quadrant of the country where the current conference would be held. At that time Shimon Frost, then acting director of the AAJE, was quoted as saying that he hoped "this agreement would mark a closing of the ranks

and a new sense of order and cooperation especially in competitive fundraising." For better and for worse, we ourselves were now a part of the Jewish educational establishment. In 1980, the AAJE endorsed the fifth CAJE Conference in Santa Barbara.

The Rutgers Conference was almost double the size of Rochester. Jerry Benjamin chaired the conference, and the *mazkirut* included David Mann, Glenn Hoptman, Sunnie Epstein, Alvin Schiff, Daniel Syme, Neal Kaunfer, and myself. Sally Goodis was conference coordinator. We received an office for the year from Rabbi Yitzhak Greenberg, then of the National Jewish Conference Center, and large grants from the Fund for Jewish Education and from our friend Micha Taubman of the Emet Foundation. In those years, money was difficult to come by and raising it was a source of great tension. If we didn't learn to be fundraisers, our dream would die; and if we did, where would we find the time to create the coalition and the conference? Our donors were not only supporters but enablers, and we were grateful to each and every one of them.

The conference program featured over 158 modules and 139 Lehrhaus sessions. The Shabbat that was held in the middle of the conference was such a unifying and inspirational Happening that had we been able to recreate it the next week, the *mashiah* would surely have come! The plenum at that conference led by Daniel Syme, then Chair of the organization, went late into the night and threatened to tear apart the Coalition. Some people felt that CAJE should make statements about burning issues — such as the centrality of Israel — but since the conference attracted such a wide range of participation, there was not to be any agreement over political or ideological issues and a resolution was passed banning direct political activity from future conferences. Instead, task forces were organized that were to work around particular issues (see the Task Force Document, Appendix D), but each group's agenda had to be approved by a majority of the conference in order to have the endorsement of the organization.

The most controversial task force was the one on the role of women in Jewish education, with opposition coming from the Orthodox women present. In an extraordinary chain of events, the Orthodox women joined the liberal women in creating a joint task force to

look into these issues. The participants had underscored the point that they had a greater need for coalition than for conflict.<sup>27</sup>

### **Regionalization: Santa Barbara and Oberlin — Years 5 and 6**

With the political battle behind it, CAJE began the serious task of stabilizing itself programatically and financially. These two conferences marked the beginning of regionalization for CAJE. While all conferences continued to attract a national audience, certainly the largest block of attendees came from within the quadrant of the country that sponsored the conference. Because of the Memorandum of Understanding agreement with the AAJE, the Coalition was limited to fundraising from federations within this quadrant.

When a federation contributed to a CAJE conference held in its area, they could see the results of their investment. Hundreds of local teachers who attended came back with new ideas and enthusiasm for their task. It is my view that this contributed greatly to the changing attitudes of federation toward the funding of Jewish education in general. Today most federations recognize the value of in-service training for teachers and give stipends for them to participate in CAJE and other conferences. There is increased funding for local projects that promise the kind of innovations in Jewish education that had been seen by so many at the conference. Rather than begging for money at the door (like the AAJE had done unsuccessfully for years), CAJE offered a product that was enthusiastically received by local federations. I believe that this was one reason that CAJE received the prestigious Schroder Award from the federation community in 1985.

The Santa Barbara conference was chaired by Rabbi Stuart Kelman and Jody Hirsch, with a much expanded California leadership team that included Janice Alper, Judy Aronson, Shelly Dorf, Joel Grishaver, Lydia Kukoff, Barbara Leff, Danny Pressman, Nomi Roth, Linda Siegel-Richman, Ron Wolfson, and Benjamin Yapko. David Deroan coordinated the conference. One of the additions to the CAJE program were *rikuzim* — whole-day sessions devoted to one topic and led by several individuals. At Santa Barbara there

27 Rossel, *The Educational Imperative*.

seemed to be a serious attempt to build an organizational infrastructure. There were regional breakfast meetings, a task force fair, and a plenary session in which task forces and officers were voted on.

Charles Silberman, author of *Crisis in the Classroom*, attended the Conference and was subsequently interviewed. He said that he was "surprised that CAJE is less and less the anti-establishment and more and more the mainstream of Jewish education — perhaps the more thoughtful, innovative portion of the mainstream." With all the problems, he felt that "there were people of quality in Jewish education," and he was struck by how much "vitality, energy and imagination" he saw there. He also offered an important critique of the conference:

I think that the problem at CAJE is that there is too much motion and not enough time for reflection. There is an understandable pressure on the part of the classroom teacher to bring back something of substance but because there is so much going on, there's not enough time for people to sit down and talk. I sense this as a weakness on two levels: There needs to be time for reflection on how to apply what I learned...and the discrepancies between what I'm doing and what I ought to be doing.<sup>28</sup>

The Oberlin conference, under the leadership of Rabbi Arthur Vernon, marked the opening of the Midwest region. The *mazkirut* included Pat Milner, Evy Rosenblum, and Bruce Arbit. Fran Levey was the conference coordinator. A whole new group of presenters and participants came together in an exciting program. The only thing that put a damper on the Conference was the strike of the air traffic controllers, but eight hundred participants found a way to come anyway. Who would miss a CAJE conference? One of the innovations of the Oberlin conference was an Israeli-American dialogue. There was also a pre-release preview of the film *The Chosen* (for which CAJE later wrote a study guide).

During that year, the CAJE board supervised the publication of a newsletter, a jobs listing, and crisis curricula that helped its members teach the latest up-to-date issues. A computer listing of CAJE mem-

28 Interview by Rosie Bell Baskin, *CAJE Jewish Education News* (1980).



bers (called Mekasher) arranged according to area of expertise was introduced at the Oberlin Conference. CAJE sponsored mini-CAJEs in conjunction with BJE's around the country. LIMUD, a spin-off group in England, held their first conference in the winter of 1980. Several CAJE task forces were successful, including those on Soviet Jewry, Special Needs, Women, and Family Education. The most significant task force to come out of CAJE in my view was the one devoted to a discussion of ongoing research in Jewish education. Our members had many dreams and good ideas. The CAJE Board felt pressured to find funding for them all!

### **CAJE's Coming of Age — The End of the Total Volunteer Organization**

CAJE had reached an important turning point. Volunteers had been running a large national organization that sponsored a very large national conference every year. But it couldn't continue indefinitely as people were exhausted and frustrated. CAJE had an ever-present deficit and only a few significant donors, including Sam and Florence Melton, Henry and Edith Everett, and Bob and Joan Arnow to name a few. The lack of funding was very demoralizing, and the CAJE board continued to pour thousands of dollars of their own money into the organization to try and keep it afloat.

It was time to hire an executive director who could raise his own salary and put the organization on firm fiscal ground. After a nationwide search, the board hired Elliot Spack to take over the burden of running CAJE day to day. Elliot had never been to a CAJE conference and had not worked professionally in Jewish education, although he had extensive experience in related fields. Elliot's father, Abraham Spack, was a well-respected Jewish educator, and through him Elliot knew many of the major players in the Jewish educational establishment. Thus, he was able to serve a valuable function as a bridge between us and them. Elliot Spack is an excellent manager and fundraiser. He steadied CAJE and allowed it to grow and prosper while winning the admiration and respect of all his colleagues both inside and outside of CAJE. August 1994 marked Elliot's thirteenth year with CAJE. His contribution to the organization is immeasurable.

Even though CAJE now had professional staff, the volunteers of the organization continued to have complete control over and complete responsibility for the conference program and for the coordination of both the conference and the various programmatic activities of CAJE. From its inception CAJE has had only six national chairpeople: Jerry Benjamin, Betsy Dolgin Katz, Stuart Kelman, Daniel Syme, Michael Weinberg, and myself. This year Carol Oseran Starin will become CAJE's seventh chair. Each chair has led the organization to new frontiers and has responded to new challenges. Hundreds of people have served on the CAJE board and over a thousand have served on conference planning committees. These people, along with the thousands who have given sessions at CAJE and the tens of thousands who have attended CAJE conferences, are CAJE's greatest assets. Each of them has a story to tell of what CAJE has meant to them — each of them might have related this history a bit differently.

I conclude my account of CAJE's founding here, because after six years CAJE was able to develop national leadership, pay an executive director, maintain an office, and establish itself firmly as an organization. It marked the end of CAJE's first phase of growth. In August 1995, CAJE will sponsor its twentieth Anniversary conference in Amherst, Massachusetts, not too far from where its first conference was held in Providence, Rhode Island. Obviously, there is much history that this article has not touched upon. One thing worth noting, however, is that in 1987, the Board of CAJE changed the name of the organization to the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education, while the Conference keeps the original name given to it by the Boston Committee.

### **Accolades, Critiques, and an Eye to the Future**

CAJE has accomplished many of the goals of its founders and, in fact, has superseded many of our highest hopes for it. On the other hand, there are many important ways in which CAJE has not yet lived up to its potential. CAJE has never understood its own power to influence the American Jewish community. I believe that understanding this is the key to its future success.

This article has recounted in some detail CAJE's successes and so I

will only briefly summarize here. What CAJE does best is to bring people together from the whole spectrum of Jewish life to share ideas in a climate of professional growth and support. The CAJE conference has been an important catalyst for change — as good ideas presented there find their way quickly into the field. CAJE nurtures talented professionals by helping them make a name for themselves, creating an opportunity for networking, and providing a support system they could turn to in good times and bad. CAJE attracts young people to the field by bringing teens and college students to the conference and showing them the exciting alternatives available to them as Jewish professionals. CAJE creates both a market and a marketplace for educational materials, musical performers, and storytellers. It empowers its members by keeping them up to date on the latest issues (crisis curricula) and teacher-made materials (curriculum bank). CAJE mini-grants give people recognition and a few hundred dollars to do something that they decide needs to be done. These are just a few of CAJE's many accomplishments. The field of Jewish education has changed radically since CAJE's inception, due in large part to its appearance on the scene. CAJE has won many awards for its achievements, including the Federation's Schroder Award and the Shazar Prize for the special contribution it has made to Zionist and Jewish education in the Diaspora.

The CAJE conference has come under criticism lately because its program has not provided enough in-depth sessions at advanced levels for an increasingly sophisticated field. There is clearly a need for more reflection about practice and more discussion of the challenges facing Jewish education in the future. CAJE has put a wide range of issues on its agenda each year, including pluralism, *tzedaka* education, and Israel-Diaspora relations; but the one topic that has been markedly missing from its agenda has been Jewish education, *per se*. The so-called union issues of better pay and better benefits have never been discussed. CAJE's advocacy agenda which was so central to its founders has not yet found a significant voice. CAJE has not used its forum often enough to inform its members of the issues facing Jewish education or to empower them to be agents of change in their local communities.

One of the key ideas of the founders was to show that the personnel of Jewish education (i.e., our wide definition of teacher) are the central resource of the Jewish community. We were moving the

community slowly in that direction, but now this idea has come under attack again by those who would return to the notion that the solutions for Jewish education can be found in secular education. They would have us believe that Jews who have been working in secular education are more qualified than Jews who have dedicated their lives to Jewish education.

CAJE needs to articulate the complicated nature of Jewish education in the North American diaspora. The solutions to Jewish educational problems are systemic ones and cannot be solved by finding a better textbook or a better teaching method. CAJE needs to be the address for serious discussions of this nature and the advocate for the importance of the Jewish "teacher."

The CAJE "coalition" is remarkable in its diversity, but it too is facing important challenges. Attention should be paid to the Orthodox contingent that does not participate in conferences in the same numbers it once did. Real effort must be made to encourage more and equal participation of lay leaders, since they are essential partners for change. If it is true that many leaders of Jewish education have stopped coming to CAJE, they should be encouraged to return. The history of Jewish education in this century points to the importance of dialogue between all the shareholders of Jewish education. CAJE is the natural address for such a dialogue on the national level.

CAJE needs to be more active locally and regionally. The founders saw the conference as the first of many goals of the coalition. Real and lasting change will happen locally, and I would hope that is where CAJE will turn its attention in the future. Serious attention should also be directed to leadership development of the next generation of Jewish educators and the creation of more full-time positions and career ladders for those now in the field.

Nationally, CAJE must be a strong advocate for Jewish educators and Jewish education. We cannot hope to attract a new generation of Jewish educators unless the issues of pay and status are resolved favorably. Jewish education cannot continue to take the undeserved rap for all the ills of American Jewish society, including assimilation and intermarriage. On the other hand, better funding of Jewish education in a wide variety of settings would allow us to provide our piece of the solution. CAJE needs to address these issues loudly and clearly. For the founders, the whole point of bringing thousands of Jewish educators together was so that they could be a powerful lobby

for the future of the Jewish people. Until CAJE makes its voice heard loud and clear in the Jewish community, its purpose and our hopes will not have been fulfilled.

## Appendix A

### ***Declaration on Jewish Education: "Highest Domestic Priority"***

FOR TOO LONG, JEWISH EDUCATION has been among the lowest priorities of the North American Jewish community; it now must become the highest domestic priority.

We who affirm this are Jews of all ages and persuasions: some, teachers with years of experience; others, just at the beginning of our careers. There are those among us who see Torah and ritual as central, and others who emphasize modern Jewish culture, Hebrew, and Yiddish. We are all teachers: classroom instructors, rabbis, social workers, youth group leaders, parents, writers, artists, administrators, etc. To our delight, our dialogue has been unimpaired by broad ideological and age differences.

We are all partisans in the struggle to create a Jewish community in which the art of teaching and learning will again be fully appreciated as our central resource. As such, we demand that the Jewish community make 5737 a year of renewed commitment to Jewish education; meet together; establish special task forces; and seriously review our commitment to Jewish education.

WE CALL FOR SUBSTANTIVE STRUCTURAL changes in our classrooms, in order to transform our schools into intellectually stimulating, open and joyful learning environments for our children and for ourselves. We also encourage such non-classroom learning as study weekends and camping programs, youth movements and *havurot*, programs in Israel and lifetime education.

We welcome the emergence of alternative and parent-run schools, as indications of the ferment which is necessary for creative change.

We demand that Jewish education be made available to all Jews, whatever their financial and educational needs. The Jewish community must also focus its attention on providing special education for special-needs children.

We must re-emphasize the centrality of Torah and the great texts of the Jewish tradition, religious and secular.

We must reaffirm the value of learning by *doing*, by uniting the classroom with the rest of the community.

We must remove sexism from our schools and curricular materials.

The Jewish community must not ignore the thousands of Jews who do not seek a Jewish education.

We must utilize the most concerned, intelligent and creative of the Jewish people to develop new curricula, texts, and audio-visual materials, and to become directly involved in Jewish education.

The time is overdue for us to join together in establishing resource centers for teachers and in providing for long-term educational research and planning.

We believe that the most neglected resource in the Jewish community is the teacher. We must deepen and expand programs designed to train Jewish teachers. Situations in which teachers do not receive a living wage, health insurance or

pension benefits must come to an end. We must also provide inducements for teachers to continue their own education.

THE CRISIS IN JEWISH EDUCATION has major implications for every other area of Jewish life, from Israel to our local communities. Unless we, the Jewish community, allocate substantially more time, money and effort towards Jewish education, this crisis will deepen.

Nearly sixty years ago, the German-Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig entitled his essay calling for a renaissance of Jewish learning and teaching, "It Is Time." We must promptly and vigorously organize change across denominational and generational lines. We must mount a major effort to improve Jewish education, learning from our shortcomings in the past and confronting the challenges of the future. As Hillel said, "*I'm lo'achshav, 'ematai?*" "If not now, when?"

We who have drafted this statement are participants who have been assembled by the North American Jewish Students' Network at the first broad-based meeting called expressly for Jewish teachers from the United States and Canada since the Holocaust. We call upon teachers, parents and all who are deeply concerned with the state of Jewish education, to:

join in our excitement;  
share in our vision;  
and join with us in adopting this statement.

*IT IS TIME!*

(Adopted at the Network Conference on Alternatives in Education, Providence,  
R.I., 7 Elul 5736 (Sept. 2, 1976))

## Appendix B

### Ballot

1. There be created an international body called the Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education.

YES 366 NO 14

2. There be elected Sunday night, August 28, 1977, a board. The size of the board shall consist of 12 members, plus 1 voting representative from each duly recognized region (recognized by the board) with the provision for the elected board to co-opt additional people as deemed necessary and appropriate. The board will be elected for a period of 2 years.

Yes 383 NO 2

If you voted YES on (2) above, please answer the following:

The board will be empowered to execute, but will not be limited to, the following activities and programs:

a. Establish international conferences	YES	359	NO	17
b. Establish regional conferences	YES	374	NO	3
c. Publish a CAJE newsletter	YES	370	NO	12
d. Promote research and development	YES	335	NO	34
e. Establish fellowships for teacher training	YES	270	NO	85
f. Promote unionization	YES	171	NO	188
g. Establish teacher resource bank	YES	337	NO	33
h. Establish an 800 number hotline to assist teachers via telephone	YES	287	NO	78
i. Facilitate teachers' resource centers	YES	351	NO	26
j. Promote Jewish teaching as a full time profession	YES	321	NO	45
k. to act as advocates for the concerns of Jewish teachers	YES	327	NO	49
l. To produce a Jewish Education Catalog	YES	325	NO	42
m. Other .....				

(Please write in ONE program you feel should be initiated by the Board.)

3. Membership is open to all who are concerned with transmittal of Jewish tradition, culture and beliefs YES 374 NO 13
4. There should be a minimum membership contribution of Ten Dollars (\$10.00) YES 365 NO 24

If you can find it in your heart to give a larger contribution, please do so.

**NOMINATIONS:** Anyone interested in running for the National Board must submit a self-nomination by 3:00 PM Today. The nomination must be brought to the Conference Office in Alumni Hall.



## Appendix C

### AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

114 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK, N.Y. 10011

#### MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

1. AAJE and CAJE will develop a modus operandi for coordinating cooperative efforts. Among others, arrangements will be made to monitor the activities of CAJE Task Forces with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts and assisting CAJE Task Forces in cooperative ventures with existing bodies in Jewish Education.
2. In the future, the annual selection of the site of the CAJE Conference will be arrived at through joint consultation of AAJE and CAJE.
3. AAJE will participate in and support the Santa Barbara CAJE Conference by providing the widest possible publicity among its constituents, and through the encouragement of professionals to participate in the Conference. In addition, AAJE will, within the limits of its fiscal constraints, encourage its own staff to participate in the Conference.
4. AAJE will use its good offices with Federations to help, wherever possible, in the funding efforts for the annual CAJE Conference.
5. In order to provide a disciplined approach to funding for the Annual Conference, CAJE agrees to refrain from requesting Federation allocations except from the communities in reasonably close geographic proximity to the site of the Conference. CAJE and AAJE will jointly agree on what constitutes close geographic proximity. In addition, AAJE and CAJE will encourage Federations to subsidize teachers' attendance at the Conference. Should AAJE and CAJE jointly agree to approach Federations outside of the immediate geographic area of the Conference, said approach will take place on a joint basis.
6. CAJE is free to continue to fund its Conferences from conference fees, membership and private/foundation grants.

**Appendix D****TASK FORCE PROPOSALS: PASSED**

1. Developing Resources and Curricula for and about Soviet Jewry (Steve Reuben, Nomi Roth and Sheldon Benjamin) (A)
2. Sharing Human and Material Resources in Jewish Education (Sherman Poska) (A)
3. Training and Professionalization of the Jewish Teacher (Sheldon Dorph) (A)
4. Creating a CAJE Newsletter (Rosie Bell) (A)
5. Creating a European Adjunct (Jerry Benjamin) (A)
6. Developing Policy Statements and Curricula around CAJE Stands in Social Action (Arthur Waskow, Les Bronstein) (A)
6. Developing Resources and Sharing Programs for Special-Needs Students (Sara Simon and Howard Adelman) (A)
9. Creating and Disseminating Curricular Materials for the Study of Peace as a Jewish Precept (Jay Rothman) (NA)
10. Improving and Enriching the State of Research in Jewish Education (Stuart Kelman and Ron Wolfson) (A)
11. Confronting Aging and the Aged through Jewish Education (Sandra Divack and Simkha Weintraub) (A)
12. Sharing Resources in Teaching Intermediate and Advanced Hebrew (Vivian Mann) (NA)
13. Planning and Brainstorming for the Santa Barbara Conference of CAJE, 1980 (Jody Hirsch) (NA)
14. Developing Effective In-Service Staff Training (Batia Bettman, Peter Lemish) (A)

## THE TALİ SCHOOLS

Lee Levine

### Beginnings

The idea of founding a school that would reflect a different approach to Jewish education than that which was available in the Israeli public school system was first conceived by a group of American *olim* and native Israelis following the 1973 Yom Kippur War. This was a time when many people searched for ways to make a contribution to Israeli society. Some considered returning to military service, others opted for politics or for various social and communal causes. Given the fact that many of us, as recent *olim*, had neither the requisite skills nor a particular proclivity in any of these directions, we decided to draw upon our backgrounds and experience in formal and informal Jewish education as an area in which to make our contribution.

It was clear that the growing rift between the religious (i.e., Orthodox) and secular elements of Israeli society was an issue that required urgent attention, and that one of its root causes and manifestations was the greatly divergent educational trends servicing each of these sectors. The challenge was whether we could develop an alternative offering a serious Jewish education that would also be liberal and pluralistic, one that would cultivate tolerance yet instill a sense of identification and attachment, an openness together with a commitment toward Jewish tradition.

Openness and tolerance are not hallmarks of the religious stream in Israel, nor is a comprehensive and integrative conception of what ought to constitute Jewish studies and culture. The approach to Jewish studies in these schools is narrowly defined, based almost exclusively on traditional commentaries, concepts, educational approaches, and texts in vogue during earlier generations. More modern approaches to the study of history, religion or Jewish sources are viewed with alarm, if not anathema. Comparative literature and history, a sophisticated and critical reading of Jewish history, or the issue of the cultural interaction of Jews with the sur-

rounding world are topics foreign to this school system and are consciously and systematically eschewed.

On the other hand, secular schools, while often excelling in general studies, see little if any value in introducing the serious study of rabbinical texts or religious thought, and fail to foster any deep sense of identification with the Jewish people, its history, traditions, customs or values. At best, these schools address select Zionist-Israeli issues, which in any case, are bereft of any serious Jewish content or substance. Given these alternatives, a number of us set out to try and establish a school that would combine the best of these two options — offering a serious Jewish and general education while avoiding the deficiencies of each.

While there was a wide circle of interested and committed “fellow travelers” who shared and supported our ideas, the core group consisted of a handful of people, including Ray Arzt, Immanuel Etkes, Zvi Gal-On, Reuven Hammer, Gershon Kravitz, Moshe Samet, Moshe Tutnauer, Joe Wernik, Yehezkel Wollman, and myself. At the outset, we held a series of informal meetings over a number of months in 1974 and 1975 to discuss these problems and to formulate our options and possible courses of action. Discussions were facilitated by the fact that most of us lived in the same area of Jerusalem, namely French Hill and Ramot Eshkol, and even attended the same synagogue, Ramot Zion, which oft-times provided the context for our conversations.

It is quite conceivable that our discussions would have remained theoretical for a long time had we not established contact with Yosef Gadish, Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem under Teddy Kollek. Gadish had a well-deserved reputation as an effective, straight-talking, clear-thinking, and tireless worker in the municipality. In fact, he was regarded as the mayor’s right-hand man, helping to formulate and implement many policies in crucial areas of city administration. In our meetings with Gadish over the summer and fall of 1975, he encouraged us to move quickly and decisively in order to establish such a school, promising us his full backing. Although not observant himself, Gadish saw the need for such a religious alternative, not only for the indigenous Israeli society, but also for helping to attract potential western *olim* to whom such an education was familiar and important. This, he felt, was something the municipality should and would promote and support. However, Gadish stated time and again

that he was really not interested in getting involved with one particular school, but rather envisioned a network of such institutions which would eventually become a viable educational alternative in Jerusalem, if not the norm.

During the months of preliminary organization in the fall of 1975 a number of basic decisions had to be made. First of all, should we establish an elementary school or a high school? On the one hand, the high school option was an area with which we all felt more comfortable in terms of our experience and background; it was also a framework in which we could deal with many of the issues in Jewish studies and Jewish identity on a sophisticated level. In short, it played to our strengths as well as allowed for the fullest expression of the nuanced approach to Jewish education that we hoped to achieve. The major drawback with this option, however, was that we would not be building an educational institution from the ground up, and the question was whether, after attending eight years in either a secular or religious framework, students would be interested in coming to a different type of school. And if they did, what would be the intellectual, cultural, and psychological baggage they would bring to it, and would it allow us to realize the kind of educational format that we hoped to achieve? Starting on the elementary school level, on the other hand, would mean setting out on the long road of building from the very beginning; however, it would be a more natural growth pattern and probably would be easier to carry out administratively and politically. It was after much discussion that we opted for the latter alternative.

The second decision to be made was whether the school would be public or private (which in the Israeli context could also receive a not insignificant amount of government funding). This option was indeed proposed to us at one point in order to mitigate opposition by Orthodox political parties to the founding of a non-Orthodox religious school in Jerusalem. Realizing our determination to move ahead despite opposition, an offer was floated to allow us to open a private school on French Hill with the proviso that we would not ask to open any others in the future. After exploring these options, we decided to move ahead within the public school framework, fully aware of the pros and cons of this decision. Working within the system would clearly limit the autonomy we would have in determining the school's policies, staff, and programs. We would be

placing ourselves squarely in the matrix of the city's and Ministry of Education's bureaucracies, with all the pitfalls, obstacles, and frustrations that would inevitably be encountered. On the other hand, by being part of the educational establishment we wished to insure the future growth not only of the first pilot school but of others that would hopefully follow; this would happen if we succeeded in convincing parents that ours was a meaningful and significant educational alternative for their children.

A third issue we had to deal with was the framework within the Israeli educational system in which we would establish our school — the religious, i.e., Orthodox, or the secular. Our first inclination was to turn to the religious school system, since we, too, were addressing Jewish education with a definite religious component. However, in speaking with a number of officials, ranging from local school principals to the municipality appointee in charge of religious education, we encountered a uniformly negative response. Only then did we turn to the general school system and received the support necessary to enable us to continue on to the next stage.

Moving into high gear by early 1976, with the hope of opening our school in September of that year, we began considering the location of such a school. The French Hill neighborhood in northern Jerusalem seemed to be the most obvious choice; most of the organizing group lived there and, being a new neighborhood (established only in 1971), we assumed many of its residents would be open to this kind of educational alternative. At this point, we divided into smaller groups, working simultaneously on a number of fronts. One committee explored the physical arrangements of where and how the school would exist; it became clear from our negotiations that we would have to begin as a branch of the existing secular public school on French Hill, with the intention of becoming an independent entity within a few years. The municipality had already slated two general schools for this neighborhood, hence our hope that we would eventually become the second school. The French Hill option became even more attractive since there were already a number of temporary structures in place that had been used by the existing school before its permanent building was completed. These could become available for our use. Thus, we would have the best of both possible worlds: being annexed to an existing school and yet being physically separate and thus having *de facto* autonomy.

A second committee began scouting for teachers for the three grades we proposed to start with, and began working with them on a curriculum that would reflect the uniqueness of our program.

A third group worked on recruiting other parents to register their children in this new framework for the coming school year. This last task proved to be more difficult than we anticipated. Many Israelis could not understand an approach that is "neither-nor" — neither Orthodox nor secular — but rather one that aspires to address Jewish studies and religious experiences seriously and nondogmatically, and is open to children of all backgrounds. We decided to hold a series of weekly sessions at various homes, hoping to bring together groups of parents for an in-depth presentation of the school. The first sessions were sparsely attended and we began to be concerned; we were convinced that parents should be interested, but not sure how we ought to reach out to them. It was only several weeks later, in February of 1976, that we received an unexpected boost. This came in the form of a vitriolic attack by the Orthodox rabbis of northern Jerusalem on our proposed school and the potential poisonous effect they claimed our kind of education would have on children's minds and hearts. Posters were plastered on neighborhood billboards, and leaflets were distributed in mailboxes. These rabbis accused the organizers of the school of being Conservative Jews who, having failed in America (and thus having caused assimilation and inter-marriage!), were now trying to spread this cancer to Israel as well.

Much to our delight (and chagrin), these attacks created a serious wave of interest among parents of school-age children regarding the nature of our alternative Jewish education; as a result, our weekly evening sessions were suddenly flooded with parents. We had often joked about such a situation in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict — that if the Arabs felt that something was rejected by Israelis then it must be good for them, and vice versa. This, sadly, is precisely what happened here. Secular, traditional, and even liberal Orthodox Israelis, witnessing these vituperative attacks leveled by the rabbinical establishment, had their curiosity aroused, enough to explore what option it was that made these rabbis, for whom most had little respect, so hostile. This spurt of interest allowed us to reach scores of interested families, and by the end of March 1976 we had a list of parents of some two hundred children who had expressed an interest in the school.

By the spring of 1976 it seemed that we were in good shape to open our new school the following September. However, our optimism was premature. Having procured the support of the municipality regarding the physical facility that would house the school, having signed on more than enough parents, and having lined up a potential staff, we were (only!) missing the formal and official sanction of the Ministry of Education to, in effect, inaugurate our educational enterprise. One issue here was legal in nature. There was no precedent within the Israeli school system of a school being initiated by parents. It was only after spending much time in the Ministry, and particularly with its legal advisor, that the necessary legal underpinning was discovered. Decades earlier, a ruling had been made that seventy-five percent of the parents of a particular class or school could determine up to twenty-five percent of the curriculum. This, then, was the proviso invoked to provide the legal foundation for the establishment of our school.

A second issue was strictly political in nature. Would the Minister of Education, Aharon Yadlin, who, we were told, was sympathetic towards this type of educational experiment, be willing to give us his political backing in the face of Orthodox opposition? These people viewed the creation of a religious school outside their framework as an anathema, particularly one which was non-Orthodox in its orientation? In a speech to the Knesset, Zevulun Hammer, then Minister of Social Welfare and member of the religious-Zionist party, was quoted as saying, "Over my dead body will such a school arise." This was in July 1976.

In light of this vigorous opposition, Mr. Yadlin wavered. Time became a significant factor as the summer slowly passed. Most parents lost faith that the enterprise would get off the ground in September and proceeded to register their children in other schools. Throughout July and August we kept pressing for a decision, and also tried to maintain pressure on the government by mobilizing friends in the United States to lend their support. It was only one day before the beginning of the school year, i.e., August 31, that we finally received the green light. Our dream would now become a reality. At that time only thirty-three children remained registered in the first three grades, barely enough to justify opening the school; nevertheless, this is how the first TALI school began.

I am using the name TALI, for that has become the official name



for these schools over the years. In fact, in its initial stages the school was called "Masorti," i.e., "traditional." According to most polls conducted at that time (and it remains largely true today as well), some forty percent of Israelis defined themselves as *masorti* (as against Orthodox or secular). Thus, the name was selected precisely because of its positive connotation vis-à-vis religious tradition and customs among a large percentage of the population, and its disassociation with any part of the religious establishment that often repels large segments of the population. It was only some six years after we had launched our first school that the Ministry of Education insisted that the name be changed from "Masorti" to the more neutral "TALI" (a Hebrew acronym for "Enrichment of Jewish Studies"). There was concern among some in the then Orthodox-controlled Ministry of Education lest these schools become associated in the public eye with the Conservative Movement in Israel, which by 1980 had adopted the name "Masorti."

## History

The development of the TALI schools over the last eighteen years can be divided into three stages. The years 1976–81 constituted the first stage. During these years the pioneering TALI school on French Hill consolidated and grew dramatically in numbers from year to year, while developing unique programs and curricula for its various grade levels. An educational steering committee met monthly, papers and suggested curricula were discussed, and the interaction between parents, teachers, and principal was as remarkable as it was fruitful. In its first year the school was led by Rachel Leor; for the last seventeen years Barbara Levin has been its dynamic and creative principal. During these years other TALI schools opened as a result of parental initiative and with the help and support of the founding committee members. Such was the case in Kfar Saba–Hod Hasharon, Ramat Gan, and Beer Sheva. Many more schools might have opened had local parent groups possessed the requisite tenacity and resolve to be able to put together all the various elements needed for such a school to open, namely the cooperation of both the local city government, which is in charge of the physical plant, as well as the Ministry of Education, which has control of the educational budget.

Working with these two bureaucracies is a yeoman task and demands unfaltering attention right up to the first day of the school year. Many parental groups either lacked the necessary determination to overcome opposition or were stymied at one point or another in their efforts.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the TALI schools is their extensive parental involvement. Because each school began as a result of parental initiative, parental involvement in the growth and development of these schools was natural and often quite marked. In the first years this was evident — especially on French Hill and in Kfar Saba — in the fact that parents worked together with the principal and teachers on various aspects of programming, including the development of curricular materials and educational approaches to the teaching of holidays, Jewish texts, and other subjects. Parents volunteered to plan and organize extracurricular activities, such as trips and holiday celebrations. Moreover, given the unique approach of the school, parents were often involved in the selection of the principal and, at times, of teachers. Regarding the French Hill school, later renamed the Samuel and Jean Frankel School, this required ongoing negotiations with the Jerusalem authorities as well as the Ministry of Education. In these early years, there was a recognition on the part of these officials of the legitimacy of parental involvement in making these appointments owing to the unique approach of these schools.

On the local level, it is to the credit of the principal and staff of each school that they were not only open to this kind of parental participation but also welcomed and encouraged it. Needless to say, many discussions took place regarding the delicate line between parental involvement and intervention in school affairs. Both parents and staff were sensitive to this distinction, and all recognized the value of the former and the problematics of the latter. It was because of this sensitivity and the ongoing deliberations and communication on the subject that we were able to avoid any tension or confrontation. Parental involvement was a very prominent part of the development of the TALI schools in their early stages and has continued to be an important dimension in the overall TALI school policy. The extent of parental involvement will, of course, differ from school to school depending upon the stage of development at each school and the personalities involved. With the growth of these institutions and

their greater professionalization, some of the earlier parental planning has been superseded by professionals and, more recently, by other frameworks that were created to offer support to the TALÍ schools (see below).

The second stage in the development of TALÍ schools was between the years 1981 and 1986. This period began with great hopes and aspirations, although as time went on the growth in the number of schools slowed considerably, and there were some who even questioned their viability in the long run.

In 1981, Minister of Education Zevulun Hammer invited the founders of the French Hill school to a meeting at which he expressed his gratitude and appreciation for their initiatives, recognized the value of TALÍ education, and indicated his willingness to aid and support this educational endeavor. According to him, this was the type of education that most Israeli children should have and would want to have. There will always be those who prefer a more Orthodox approach and, on the other end of the spectrum, those who prefer a strictly secular education. But for the vast majority (he used the number sixty percent) this type of education was the most appropriate. In fact, he claimed, this is precisely the kind of education that he would have wanted to initiate, although, given his party membership, any attempt by him to introduce such a program into the general public school system would have been opposed on the grounds of religious coercion. The Minister expressed a willingness to appoint someone who would promote TALÍ education throughout the country, and he encouraged us to continue our involvement and to work together with the Ministry. As a measure of good will, he asked us to recommend someone who could fulfill the position of TALÍ supervisor within the Ministry of Education.

His one request, however, was that the schools not be publicly identified — orally or in writing — by the Conservative Movement's leaders as Conservative schools. Such an association, while formally inaccurate, was easily understandable. Since most of the founders of these schools hailed from Conservative backgrounds, and the educational approach adopted was one which reflected a Conservative orientation, it was often claimed that the TALÍ schools were indeed part of the Conservative Movement. As at that time no one was interested in starting a third "stream" within the Israeli school system,

denominational association was considered not only unjustified but also problematic. Hammer was particularly sensitive to this accusation by members of his own party, as well as to the pressure brought to bear from American Orthodox circles, which cautioned him against the introduction of Conservative religious ideology into the Israeli school system.

Following this upbeat meeting, the future of TALI education in Israel seemed most promising. However, to our chagrin, this momentum was largely reversed by the fact that one of Hammer's close advisors, himself less than enthusiastic about religious pluralism and promoting the TALI approach, was appointed head of the department that dealt with Jewish education in the general school system, the department in which the person responsible for the TALI schools was also placed. As a result of the lack of support in the department, the first person we had recommended to coordinate TALI left the job after three months, and the second lasted but nine months. It was clear to both these individuals that not only was there no support for the TALI approach, but, in fact, a wall of antagonism and hostility existed regarding the development of future TALI schools. Thereafter, in certain respects a state of limbo existed for a number of years, not only putting a damper on the development of the existing schools but also compounding the problems encountered by parental groups trying to inaugurate other TALI schools.

There were other problems as well. Many parental groups that wished to start such schools not only had to deal with the municipal and educational bureaucracies *per se*, but also with the ongoing opposition to their initiatives from officials to the right and the left. Orthodox officials, both within the municipality and the Ministry, opposed the school on religious grounds, while some of the more extreme secularists balked at the thought of having any kind of religious "indoctrination" introduced into the secular school system.

Despite these obstacles, this period witnessed several important developments. In the early eighties, ongoing meetings with city officials led to the granting of permission to TALI schools to use whatever curriculum they wished, be it from the general or Orthodox curricula. Until then a school officially had to follow one model or the other. Now TALI schools could choose from either, regarding both Jewish and general subjects, and could even create their own models. Moreover, during these years a committee comprised of

principals, school supervisors, educators, and Ministry officials developed a document defining the educational philosophy and norms of a TALI school.

By the mid-eighties, several new TALI schools opened in Haifa, Netanya, and in the Gilo neighborhood of Jerusalem. Of significance was the successful launching of a junior high and high school in Jerusalem. This was not an easy enterprise. For a number of years parents sought an appropriate framework for post-elementary school TALI education. For a time an attempt was made to introduce a TALI track within a larger high school, but this proved to be unworkable. It was only after several years of frustrating attempts — and a number of “lost” classes — that permission was granted to open a TALI school, which developed into a full-fledged junior and high school, today boasting some six hundred pupils under the leadership of Dr. Avi Lavsky. Together with the establishment of a series of TALI kindergartens at about this time (also achieved not without a sustained effort in overcoming bureaucratic and political obstacles), TALI education now covered all the school years, from preschool through twelfth grade.

A third stage in the development of the TALI schools began in 1987, and continues until today, with the establishment of a special foundation for the purpose of supporting, encouraging, and promoting TALI education within the Israeli school system. This step was motivated by the realization that certain elements in the Ministry of Education were largely indifferent, if not at times outright hostile to future TALI schools. It was clear that the whole enterprise would never progress if independent funding were not procured in order to deepen the education in existing schools and help parents create new ones. A number of foundations abroad were approached, and a positive response from the Bronfman Foundation as well as from the Jewish Agency enabled us to move forward. These monies were used to establish the TALI Education Fund (TEF). It was quickly realized that for such an educational foundation to be maximally effective it ought to be affiliated with a recognized academic institution. Thus, the TEF was brought under the ægis of the Seminary of Judaic Studies, an academic-educational institution affiliated with the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the Masorti Movement. The TEF was to work closely with the Ministry of Education as well

as with parental groups and school principals in order to maximize the impact and effectiveness of TALl education.

The work of the TEF over the last seven years has indeed been impressive. Under the able direction of Etti Saruk, and currently of Joseph Ben-Rahamim, the number of schools with TALl tracks throughout the country has increased to thirty, serving over 9,500 pupils in some 260 classes from Kiryat Shmona in the north to Beer Sheva in the south, with concentrations in the Jerusalem and Tel Aviv areas. The TEF provides these schools with various educational materials, including a weekly Portion of the Week study sheet for both elementary and junior high school pupils and their families. A syllabus for grades one to nine has just been completed after several years of work by an academic-educational team headed by Avigdor Shinan, professor of Midrash and liturgy at the Hebrew University and the Seminary of Judaic Studies. In this curriculum, all Jewish subjects to be taught (Bible, Midrash, Talmud, Jewish customs and lifestyles, etc.) are closely coordinated for each grade level, as is a rational and logical progression in the development of skills and the level of knowledge from year to year. Earlier efforts had been made in curricular development under the direction of Professor David Zisenwine of Tel Aviv University, but never as comprehensive in scope as this undertaking. Moreover, together with the Ministry of Education, the TEF provides extensive teacher training via pedagogic supervisors who work with the teachers, and by an extensive program of in-service teacher training on local, regional, and national levels.

Moreover, the TEF gives considerable attention to other dimensions of the TALl schools. Through the Seminary of Judaic Studies it conducts a program for training professionals in informal Jewish education, which has proven to be of invaluable assistance to the schools. Moreover, a great deal of effort has been expended in developing programs relating to the Sabbath, holiday celebrations, and other Jewish subjects for teachers, students, and parents alike.

Since the 1992 elections and the change of leadership in the Ministry of Education, the work of the TEF has been expanded significantly. A more open and supportive environment has been created by the Minister, Professor Amnon Rubenstein, and others for implementing various educational initiatives. Many former Ministry officials who had serious ideological reservations about the liberal,

pluralistic, religious-educational approach of TALÍ have been replaced by more sympathetic ones who are now in a position to make significant policy changes. As a result, the cooperation between the TEF and the Ministry of Education has improved immeasurably and is proving effective in promoting and enhancing the TALÍ schools.

### **Ideology**

TALÍ's educational goals may be divided into four general components.

#### ***Intellectual-Cognitive Dimension***

The TALÍ approach to Jewish studies encompasses the entire range of Jewish civilization, including its intellectual, spiritual, and artistic expressions over the past three thousand years. A TALÍ curriculum should therefore strive to teach Jewish history, Jewish thought, Jewish literature, Jewish art and song, alongside Bible, Talmud, and Jewish law. Moreover, TALÍ education employs a wide variety of tools and approaches for the understanding of Jewish sources. Not only are traditional commentaries crucial for understanding the Bible, but so are modern approaches to these subjects, such as archaeology, literary analysis, comparative history, and comparative religion. For example, in order to understand the biblical account of the Creation, or the Noah story, there is no question that rabbinical midrash, as well as the medieval commentaries of Rashi and Ramban, are invaluable tools. However, TALÍ education aims to also embrace the study of ancient Near Eastern epics dealing with the Creation (*Enuma Elish*) and the flood (*Gilgamesh*) in order to ascertain what ancient Israelite society had in common with its neighbors, as well as how and where it differed. Viewing Jewish tradition, its texts, and thought in their historical context, highlighting the nature and extent of influence from the surrounding world on Jewish ideas, beliefs and values, together with the elements that make Judaism unique, is an approach singular to the TALÍ framework. The critical-historical approach is part and parcel of the general school system, while the traditional approach is sorely lacking; in the Orthodox state schools

the opposite is the case. TALJ's contribution has been to integrate these two approaches.

### *Experiential Dimension*

The affective component of Judaism is no less integral to Jewish tradition than the cognitive. Experiencing Jewish traditions and ceremonies is a dimension to which all Israeli children should be exposed as part of their Jewish education. As a result, TALJ schools require not only the study of the siddur (prayer book) but also the prayer experience itself.

Special attention is given to enhancing the knowledge and appreciation of Sabbath and holiday celebrations as religious and cultural experiences. Therefore, Sabbath customs, as well as observances of both home (the Passover seder, Sukkot, Hanukka) and synagogue (e.g., the High Holidays and Purim) are highlighted in the TALJ curriculum.

Religious ritual is problematic for most individuals, and especially for those coming from nonobservant backgrounds. It is sometimes assumed that prayer and ritual require a belief in God. But rather than viewing the problematics of faith as an obstacle blocking any attempt to come to grips with this affective dimension, TALJ education views these ritual frameworks as presenting an opportunity to discuss and grapple with these theological-ideological issues. The basic assumption of TALJ education is that each child will eventually have to decide the nature and extent of his or her Jewish commitment. The least that we, as parents and educators, can and should provide for is that such a decision be made out of knowledge, first-hand experience, and some measure of positive identification, and not out of the indifference, alienation, and apathy which seem to be all too pervasive today.

### *Value Education*

TALJ education also attempts to address in a sustained fashion the values embedded in what is being studied and experienced. A biblical or rabbinical text, or even a holiday celebration, is not only to be learned; it also affords an opportunity to discuss intrinsic values and



ideas, as well as ways in which they can be related to today. Indeed, implicit in all of TALJ education should be values which we hope will be retained and internalized by the pupils. Such values include: commitment to and identification with Jewish history and tradition (in whatever form that commitment might take), a recognition of the importance of pluralism in Jewish tradition and Israeli society, tolerance toward others who differ in their ideas and behavior, the recognition of the dynamic character of Jewish history and tradition, as well as an awareness of their constant and enduring elements. Moreover, recognition that contacts with the outside world are not only the result of persecution and discrimination, but no less due to fructifying and stimulating experiences which enrich every aspect of Jewish life, is an important lesson often absent or distorted in many circles within Israeli society.

The values embraced in TALJ education have an important Zionist component as well, and they, too, find expression in the school context. The importance of a national home and culture, of the opportunities and responsibilities of political sovereignty, as well as the recognition of similar aspirations among other peoples, are critical values for every young person growing up in Israel today to imbue.

### *An Integrative Approach*

A final component of the TALJ educational approach is the totality and comprehensiveness of the educational experience it strives to attain. In addition to the desired integration in the particular areas outlined above (i.e., the cognitive and affective dimensions), we might mention the following:

- a. Cohesion and coordination between the formal and informal components of the school's program. A great deal of emphasis is placed on training an informed staff in the integration of Jewish content into informal educational activities, both in the classroom and in informal settings (e.g., field trips, seminars, etc.).
- b. TALJ education strives to integrate the Jewish and secular curricula. The study of Jewish texts should not be an insular experience. Issues raised in a Jewish studies context should be addressed in other frameworks as well. Thus, a theme discussed

- in a Bible class might also find expression in music, the arts, English, and civics classes. Similarly, the values highlighted in a general context (e.g., ecology, social and civic responsibility) can be carried over to studies as well.
- c. A dichotomy between what is conveyed at home and what is taught at school will surely weaken the effectiveness of any educational approach. The attempt to involve the parents as much as possible in what is being learned in school, and to create opportunities for pupils and parents to learn and experience together in family programming throughout the year is an important component in the TALI approach.
  - d. TALI schools are encouraged to function not only as educational institutions serving their pupils, but also as a center in the life of the surrounding community and neighborhood. Activities are organized not only to reach out to the community (e.g., various service projects undertaken by pupils), but also to invite the community into the school to partake of recreational and cultural programs.

### **Toward the Future**

What are some of the major issues facing TALI schools as we approach the third decade of their existence? In addressing this question, there is, of course, no end to the challenges at hand and to the resultant wish list that one might produce for the future of TALI schools. Clearly, those involved in TALI education would want to see more schools adopt the TALI program. If, by the end of this decade, there would be several hundred TALI schools, it would indeed constitute a significant achievement. Moreover, there is a recognized need to expand the amount of hours devoted to TALI's unique curriculum. As of now, each TALI school is allotted two hours per week by the Ministry of Education for enriched Jewish education; in some schools parents often pay for additional hours of extracurricular studies. However, were we to focus on a number of select issues of crucial importance to the future success of the TALI schools, we would suggest the following:

### ***Teacher Training***

There is no question that a key to the success of TALJ education is the quality of its teachers, both in terms of their knowledge and their didactic skills, commitment, and enthusiasm for promoting the schools' approach. A basic decision was made many years ago to quickly and effectively train veteran teachers in each school in the Jewish subject matter so that their level of knowledge and commitment would foster a superior TALJ education. Thus, a great deal of emphasis has been given to this training, both on an individual basis and in groups ranging from teachers in a given school, a defined geographical area, or nationwide. Moreover, the Seminary of Judaic Studies has established a special course for the training of master-teachers from TALJ schools who would then take the lead in promoting a more intensive TALJ educational experience in their institutions.

### ***Curriculum Development***

Even with the best teachers possible, the success of TALJ education requires a well-coordinated, well-conceptualized curriculum for each grade. Such a curriculum must not only integrate the various subjects in any given grade but must present a carefully crafted developmental course of studies from year to year. As noted, a syllabus for such an overall curriculum has recently been completed; we now face the challenge of preparing teachers' manuals as well as workbooks for pupils for each level and subject. Such a task will require a number of years, but upon its completion TALJ schools will have at their disposal an essential ingredient for a successful national educational program.

### ***Parental Involvement***

Once again, the ultimate success of TALJ education is not only what the children learn in school, but how much support and understanding of this education they get at home. It is clear that most parents who send their children to TALJ schools are interested in the type of education that is being offered, and we must capitalize on this

interest in order to involve the parents in ever-more extensive educational programs. They, too, must feel part of TALI education so that they may more fully identify with things Jewish (customs, texts, holidays) and might, as a result, even seek to incorporate some form of Jewish expression in their own family context.

### *The TALI School as an Educational Unit*

The overall quality of education in each school must become more central to our concerns. TALI education is not only a matter of what is learned in the various classes, or what is experienced in a religious context, or in family education, or in informal education programs. The question has to be asked — how is each school to be viewed as an entire unit and how is the sum total of all its activities brought together and integrated in order to make it a unique and effective educational institution? In this sense, the success of the TALI schools is not merely the sum total of its various activities, but rather it is the degree to which an attractive, challenging, and educational ambience is created among teachers, pupils, and parents. Such a positive environment is crucial for effectively training the next generation of Jewish citizens in Israeli society.

TALI schools were created to answer a need, a need for the study of Judaism and the experiencing of Jewish practices in a framework that is positive though not coercive, supportive yet not dogmatic, and where there is a tolerant and pluralistic ambience for various Jewish expressions. The polarization of Israeli society must be eschewed. Commitment need not be associated with isolationism, xenophobia or fanaticism, nor modernity with a universalistic posture which takes a dim view of anything that smacks of Judaism and particularism. How to bridge that gap is no less crucial to the survival of our Jewish society than state-of-the-art curricula in math and science. Neither component is dispensable if we are to thrive as a modern Jewish state, as a national and cultural center of the Jewish people the world over, and as a full-fledged member of modern western democratic societies.

This, then, is TALI's challenge. All of those involved with TALI are convinced that these schools have the potential to provide an

approach that can make a significant contribution to Israeli education. The question is only whether we can find the means and support to offer this alternative at the pace and extent required. Years ago I participated in an educational seminar on modern Jewish values at an army base. After a day of sessions on Jewish history, tradition, and culture, one young soldier stood up, brandished his gun, and shouted in an agonized voice: "Why is it that only now you are teaching me *how* to use this gun and for twelve years no one has taught me *why*?"

TALI education is now beginning to provide an answer.

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# BAIS YA'AKOV AS AN INNOVATION IN JEWISH WOMEN'S EDUCATION: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Deborah Weissman

The role of education has been studied as an *agent, condition, and effect* of social change.<sup>1</sup> The present paper is part of a larger project<sup>2</sup> on the issue of women's education within the traditional Jewish community as a focus of that complex of sociocultural changes which has been characterized as the encounter with "modernity."<sup>3</sup> The phenomenon of Jewish modernity has been explored by many historians, philosophers, and social scientists — but the role of education within that profound revolution, and, in particular, the Jewish education of women, has been largely neglected.

A key issue in the European Enlightenment in general was that of expanding educational opportunities of the entire populace, including women.<sup>4</sup> With regard to the traditional value of lifelong learning for men, the Jewish community was far in advance of the surrounding population. But the commandment of Torah study was not considered binding on Jewish women.<sup>5</sup> Controversies arose as to whe-

- 1 Reese McGee, "Education and Social Change," in Hansen and Gerst (eds.), *On Education — Sociological Perspectives* (New York: J. Wiley, 1967), pp.67-104.
- 2 My doctoral dissertation deals with the social history of Jewish women's education.
- 3 Daniel Lerner, "Modernization: Social Aspects," in the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, vol. 10 (1968), pp. 386-394; Alex Inkeles, "Making Men Modern: On the Causes and Consequences of Individual Change in Six Developing Countries," *American Journal of Sociology* (September 1969), pp. 208-225; Allan Schnaiberg, "Measuring Modernism: Theoretical and Empirical Explorations," *American Journal of Sociology* (November 1970), pp. 399-425; Michael Avner and Robert Youtz, "Formal Education and Individual Modernity in an African Society," *AJS* (January 1971), pp. 604-626; Brigitte Berger, *Societies in Change* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971).
- 4 P.W. Musgrave (ed.), *Sociology, History and Education: A Reader* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1970).
- 5 Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 20b, with commentary of Rashi.

ther it was permissible to teach Torah to women. Eventually, in most circles, it became prohibited to teach women Gemara.

Even with an exemption from Gemara study, there would still, at least theoretically, be a good deal of traditional material with which women could occupy themselves. Given the rabbinical injunctions, women could still be taught biblical and Mishnaic texts, rabbinical legends, philosophical and homiletical literature, and the liturgy. The *Shulhan arukh* states that women should be taught the details of the laws that affect their lives such as, for example, the dietary laws or rules of family purity. But in most cases, the organized Jewish community tended to neglect the formal education of its daughters. The prevailing tendency was to entrust the parents with the girls' education, and study did not in any way fulfill the same function ("study as a mode of worship")<sup>6</sup> in a woman's life as it did in a man's. The Rambam states that "A woman who studies Torah has a reward coming to her, but not in the same measure as a man because she was not commanded to do so..."<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, there have been exceptions to this rule at various points in Jewish history. In addition to the individual exceptions of women like Bruria and Ima Shalom in the Talmud, the most outstanding example of a Jewish community that took seriously the problem of women's education was the community of Renaissance Italy.<sup>8</sup> In Western Europe, Glueckel of Hamelin, in her famous seventeenth century diary, shows an admirable command of Hebrew and rabbinical lore.<sup>9</sup> Modern Yiddish literature includes many books intended specifically for study by women, most notably, the *Tz'ena u'r'ena*, a translation-interpretation of biblical stories.

After the period of emancipation, schools for girls became less unusual in areas affected by the western branch of the *Haskala*. One of the responses to Enlightenment in the West was the rise of religious movements, which attempted to achieve some type of synthesis or accommodation between Judaism and modernity (Reform; Neo-Orthodoxy; the Historical School, which later developed into Conser-

6 Cecil Roth, "The European Age," in Leo W. Schwartz (ed.), *Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People* (New York: Modern Library, 1956), p. 294.

7 Nahum N. Glatzer, *The Judaic Tradition* (Boston: Beacon Press, Boston, 1969), p. 344.

8 Leo Jung, *The Jewish Library 3: Women* (London: The Soncino Press, 1970).

9 Roth, "The European Age."

vative Judaism, etc.). The founder of the Neo-Orthodox movement in Germany, Samson Raphael Hirsch, encouraged the establishment of schools for girls, in which most branches of traditional learning, were taught excluding Talmud and the intricacies of the legal codes.<sup>10</sup>

In Eastern Europe, however, the situation was entirely different. *Haskala* brought with it the rise of various national ideologies; however, without corresponding movements for synthesis within the religious sphere, traditional patterns of behavior persisted in which men studied Torah and, often, the responsibility of earning a livelihood fell upon the shoulders of their wives. Many Jewish women acquired extensive linguistic and vocational skills. In Galicia, Jewish girls would sometimes be sent to study in Catholic schools run by nuns, so that sons and daughters within the same family might grow up living in two totally different worlds.<sup>11</sup> The girls, attending non-Jewish schools, were exposed to various secular movements — from socialism to radical feminism. Many began to question the religious values and traditions that they had been taught by their parents. There developed a great discrepancy between their secular accomplishments and their relative ignorance of Jewish sources. Their respect for traditional Jewish learning was weakened, and the patriarchal authority of their fathers was thus undermined. The legendary intergenerational harmony of the Jewish household was being threatened.

In addition, the girls were exposed to secular literature, which was influenced by romantic movements and ideas. In many of the novels and poems of the period, romantic love was described as the only possible basis for a marriage relationship. This concept became a threat to the survival of a traditional social structure based on arranged marriages.

Prof. Mordecai Kaplan was acutely aware of this situation. In 1932, he said: "It is seldom noted that the Jewish Emancipation or the change in the civic status of the Jew has alienated the Jewish woman from Judaism far more than the Jewish man... until our own day, Jewish women who felt the impact of the Jewish Emancipation usually developed a negative attitude towards things Jewish."<sup>12</sup> He

10 Mordechai Eliav, *Ha-hinukh ha-yehudi be-germania be-yamei ha-haskala ve-ha-emanzipatzia* (Jerusalem: HaSochnut HaYehudit, 1961), pp. 271–279.

11 Aryeh Bauminger, *Sefer Cracow: Ir v'Em be Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kuk, 1958), pp. 369–376.

12 Mordechai Kaplan, "What the American Jewish Woman Can do for Adult Jewish



called for an enhanced role for women in Jewish education as a remedy.

But despite all these problems, the leaders of the Jewish community generally preferred that the girls study in alien environments than that they be taught traditional Judaism in a school. The latter they considered to be an outright violation of the prescribed woman's role in Judaism.

Indeed, in 1903, a conference of Polish rabbis was held in Cracow.<sup>13</sup> One of them, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Lando, the *Admor* (Hasidic leader) of Zvircche, blamed his colleagues for neglecting the education of Jewish girls and called for the establishment of schools to deal with the problem. His suggestion was almost unanimously opposed, and the conference resolutions stated that Jewish parents should certainly teach their daughters at home, but that it would be wrong for the community to set up schools for this purpose.

It took a dedicated and courageous woman named Sarah Schenirer to initiate the change. Born to a rabbinical family in Cracow in 1883, she became a seamstress, but spent her evenings in the study of biblical texts and rabbinical legends. She read as much as she could find on Jewish philosophy, being particularly impressed with the writings of the German Neo-Orthodox thinkers Hirsch and later Breuer. As a young woman, Sarah grew increasingly alienated from her contemporaries. A relative of hers once took her to a Friday night meeting of a new organization of Jewish girls, called "Ruth." Sarah was shocked to see that the girls in attendance, daughters of Hasidic families, were desecrating the Sabbath and listening to a lecture replete with heretical remarks. She decided that something must be done to bring these young women back into a more Orthodox framework, but she had no practical program as to how this could be accomplished.

The most significant turning point in her life occurred in 1914, when, with the start of World War I, her family left Cracow and relocated temporarily in Vienna. There, they attended the Neo-Orthodox synagogue on Strumpergasse, whose rabbi, Rabbi Dr.

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Education," in *Jewish Education*, IV:3 (October–December 1932), p. 139.

13 Aharon Sorski, *Toldot ha-hinukh ha-torani be-tekufa he-hadasha* (Bnei Brak: Or Chayim, 1967).

Flesch, dressed and behaved in a style far more modern than that to which Sarah was accustomed in Hasidic Galicia.

On Shabbat Hanukka, Dr. Flesch dedicated his sermon to the heroic role women have placed in Jewish history, basing himself on the fact that women are commanded to kindle the Hanukka lights, since "they also participated in the miracle."<sup>14</sup> He advised modern Jewish women to continue this tradition. Sarah was inspired by his call and vowed to take it upon herself to activate the Jewish women of her time. Although realizing that the greatest need was for women's education, she anticipated severe opposition.

Her fears were well grounded. The "progressives" of the community considered traditional Jewish education for women a step backwards, while the traditionalists, as noted, felt it was too revolutionary a deviation from the past. Nevertheless, Sarah Schenirer decided to take the initiative. Back in Cracow, she contacted some women who were initially receptive at a public meeting held in the auditorium of a Jewish orphanage. Forty women attended the meeting, at which a clear division could be seen between the older women, who approved of Sarah's ideas, and the younger women, who mocked them. The only practical outcome of her efforts was the founding, several months later, of a Jewish women's lending library.

Sarah realized that her plan would succeed only if she started with her pupils at a very early age, before their Jewish lifestyle could be corrupted by outside influences. But to begin such a school, she felt she needed advice and approval from another authority. She wrote to her older brother in Czechoslovakia, asking his opinion. At first he advised her not to get involved in "politics." But later, having reconsidered her arguments, he suggested that she visit his rebbe, Rabbi Issachar Dov Rokeach, of the Belzer dynasty, in Marienbad to ask for his blessing.

The Belzer Hasidim were a very conservative and traditional sect. On this occasion, however, the rebbe was convinced that the innovation was necessary. Sarah's eloquent exposition of her goals won his blessing and encouragement in her educational work. Nevertheless, he refused to permit the daughters of Belzer Hasidim to attend the schools. His blessing was an important coup strategically, but it

14 *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*, Hilkhos Hanukka, 139:2.

remained for the Gerer rebbe's blessing and total approval of the endeavor to ensure it the needed practical support.

The Bais Ya'akov schools are considered actually to have been founded in 1917. The majority of girls who attended initially came from Hasidic families associated with the Ger dynasty, a large, popular, and by this time already highly politicized organization, that formed the bulk of the Eastern European base of support for Agudat Yisrael. After two years of independent functioning, the Bais Ya'akov school was taken over by Agudat Yisrael of Cracow as its women's educational arm. At this point the institution numbered some two hundred and eighty pupils.<sup>15</sup> But the major impetus for development did not come until 1923, when the Agudat Yisrael conference in Vienna decided to establish the Keren Torah, a world-wide fund for religious education. This enabled Bais Ya'akov to expand in Poland and to open schools in Lithuania, Romania, Hungary, and Austria during the next several years. On the eve of the destruction of European Jewry, in 1937, the Bais Ya'akov network numbered some 38,000 pupils in 2,590 schools. Statistics are difficult to obtain since some schools were shut down temporarily for financial reasons, but it has been estimated that between the years 1917 and 1939 the movement encompassed over eighty thousand young Jewish women in Eastern and Central Europe,<sup>16</sup> organized in day schools, afternoon schools, vocational schools, summer camps, teachers' seminaries, and a youth organization called "Bnos." The movement established dormitories, a monthly journal, and a publishing house for textbook and other educational materials.

The greatest single act of ideological support for the concept of women's education was undoubtedly the responsum of the Hafetz Hayim, the outstanding spiritual leader of Eastern European Jewry in the first third of the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> When questioned about the propriety of formal education for Jewish women, the Hafetz Hayim replied that in the past there had been no need to teach girls the

15 Miriam Eisenstein, *Jewish Schools in Poland 1919-1939: Their Philosophy and Development* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1950).

16 Zvi Scharfstein, *Ha-hinukh ve-ha-tarbut ha-ivrit be-airopa bein shtei milhamot ha-olam* (New York: HaHistadrut HaIvrit BaAmerica, 1957), p. 71.

17 The responsum appeared in the *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, Summer 1933. It was quoted by Shlomo Ashkenazi in *Ha-Isha be-aspeklariya ha-yedudit*.

tradition institutionally as they could just follow what they saw being practiced in their homes and communities. But:

Now, because of our great sins, the tradition of the fathers has been greatly weakened. . . . It is surely a great mitzva to teach girls the Pentateuch and also the other books of Scripture (the Prophets and Writings) and the ethics of the rabbis, as in the tractate *Avot*, and *Menorat ha-maor*, and so on, so that our holy faith will be verified for them. Because if not, the girls are likely to stray completely from the path of the Lord and transgress the foundations of our religion, God forbid.<sup>18</sup>

In another source, the Hafetz Hayim added: "Insofar as the people of our generation teach their daughters so much unseemly frivolity, it would certainly be worthwhile to teach them Torah."<sup>19</sup>

From our perspective, these remarks are significant for two reasons:

- the Hafetz Hayim has legitimated an innovation within the Jewish tradition based on exclusively sociological grounds; for a historian of the halakhic process, the use of extra- or meta-halakhic considerations in making decisions is in itself a noteworthy occurrence.<sup>20</sup> When the considerations relate to changing social conditions, they gain relevance for the sociologist. (In the second instance, an innovation is based on a need to respond to behavior on the part of the nontraditional elements within the community. Response to "the outside" as a feature of orthodoxy is a theme I have developed elsewhere.)<sup>21</sup>
- The innovation is of limited scope. It should be noted that he has not suggested that the girls be trained in the intricacies of talmudic reasoning or traditional legal thought. From his responsum, the curriculum of a girls' school would be restricted to the Written Law, only one tractate of the Oral Law, one which is

18 My translation of the responsum as quoted in *Ha-isha be-aspeklariya ha-yehudit*.

19 Ibid.

20 Jacob Katz, *Goy shel Shabbat* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1984), p. 10, and other works.

21 Unpublished Master's thesis, "Bais Ya'akov, A Women's Educational Movement in the Polish Jewish Community: A Case Study in Tradition and Modernity," New York University (1977), Chapters 1 and 10.

completely non-halakhic, and later works of a philosophical-moral nature.

In practice, the curriculum was broader. Everything in the Bais Ya'akov schools was done consciously for the purpose of strengthening the girls' knowledge of and commitment to "Yiddishkeit." It was felt that simply teaching a girl to read the prayers and to follow certain basic laws was inadequate; she had to be given a broad, conceptual approach to Judaism. In addition, other aspects of the curriculum would be presented in such a way as to serve the central goal of the school. In other words, literature would not be taught for its own sake, but rather to illustrate positive values and attitudes worthy of inculcation in the students.<sup>22</sup> Science would be taught only insofar as it would serve to reinforce the sense of wonder at God's creation. Within the area of Jewish studies, great emphasis was placed on the Bible and commentaries. In the classes on prayer, the weekday, Sabbath and festival liturgies, and the tractate *Avot*, together with commentaries, were taught. The Jewish history curriculum was called "From Creation to the Present."

The courses on Jewish law and thought included the daily and yearly life cycle; responsibility as a human being and as a Jew, particularly of the woman; philosophical writings of Hirsch and Breuer; and ethical works. Hebrew grammar, and written and oral expression were also taught. The courses in Polish language, literature, history, and geography followed the prescribed state curriculum. At the teachers' seminary level, written expression in German was taught, along with the writings of Schiller, Goethe, Lessing, and others. Additional courses offered were general principles of psychology, the history of education, pedagogy, methods of teaching, hygiene, and bibliographical guidance for the teachers. At all levels, additional instruction was given in music, handicrafts, and gymnastics.

In the mid-1930s, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Orlean, director of the Bais Ya'akov movement and one of the ideologues of Poalei Agudat Yisrael, introduced a standardized "Judaism" curriculum, which en-

22 *Bet Ya'akov*, no. 84 (Summer, 1966). When the publication mentioned was put out in Israel, in Hebrew, the Hebraic form of transliteration will be used; i.e., *Bet Ya'akov* instead of *Bais Ya'akov*.

tailed a month-by-month and week-by-week breakdown of the program over the course of six years.<sup>23</sup>

Since the Hasidic tradition was a major influence on the movement, one would expect that influence to be felt in the curriculum. However, apart from the fervor and enthusiasm with which the girls approached their studies and the devotion with which they regarded their mentors, there is no evidence in the standardized curriculum of a strong emphasis on Hasidic lore. Rather, the program shows a masterful balance between the mythical and mystical approaches to Judaism and the rationalism of Maimonides, between rote learning of basic prayers and blessings and understanding their meaning and interpretation, between learning to fulfill commandments between a person and God and those that are impersonal. From a pedagogical point of view, Orlean's program shows an admirably logical progression — the use of stories and experiences as educational tools, and frequent review of the material covered. It must be stressed, as well, that the whole conceptualization of "Judaism" as a subject area, apart from study of classical biblical or rabbinical sources, is in itself innovative. The program was designed chiefly to inculcate values such as respect for tradition and for traditional authorities, respect of parents, modesty, patience, polite behavior, correct speech, identification with the Jewish community, unity of the Jewish people, and love of God. There was often an attempt to draw modern parallels to historical situations, e.g., the Hellenistic Jews in the time of the Maccabees are compared to the modern assimilationists. The curriculum was built, in a classically Jewish manner, from the specific to the general — in the first year, specific laws and blessing were taught, and in the sixth year these were treated on a more sophisticated level in general discussions of "Jewish Chosen-ness," "Exile and Redemption," and the like. Orlean felt that laws of monarchy, slavery, war, and so on should be taught to the girls because, though not presently "relevant," they serve as good examples of the contrast between Jewish values and the ethical systems of other nations.

There was an attempt to balance the intellectual and emotional components of religious faith, so that, for example, the teacher tries

23 Yehudah Leib Orlean, "Yahadus Programme (Fun Ershter Biz zekster Bateilung)" (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Library).

to develop within her students a sense of gratitude, awe, and wonder before she teaches them the appropriate benedictions to be recited on various occasions. In one case, the eating of certain delicacies on the Sabbath, which is only a custom, is listed as a "commandment." This is clearly a factual error but reflects an intense concern with preserving the traditional lifestyle. At the same time, we find a more "modern" unit on the importance of the Bible among the nations in the modern world, a theme that presumably should be of little relevance to a traditionally believing Jew. Lastly, of interest is the fact that in the sixth year a good deal of time was devoted to the differences between the sexes and the different roles and responsibilities that flow therefrom.

It must be noted that this kind of synthetic approach to Jewish thought and culture was never taught to boys in the traditional Jewish educational frameworks. To this day, general discussions of Judaism as a conceptualized entity and articulations of "What Judaism Has to Say About..." are far more common among the liberal and progressive elements within the Jewish community, while the traditionalists generally still cling to the specific study of laws and texts.

Ambivalence was felt with regard to a number of educational issues, e.g., the role of Hebrew or the attitude to Zionism. Priorities had to be set, since it was believed that secular Hebrew, Yiddish, and Zionist ideologies confuse means with ends. To some extent, the schools were even ambivalent in their attitude to secular studies. On the one hand, if the goal was to produce integrated Jewish human beings in the fullest sense of integration — Hirsch's ideal of the "*Yisrael-mentsch*" — then attention would have to be paid to worldly as well as to religious pursuits. At the very least, it was felt that a young girl who had never been exposed to secular culture could become overawed by it and swayed away from the tradition. Secular studies, therefore, could help strengthen the Orthodox bulwark against assimilation.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, too much emphasis on these studies would undermine respect for traditional authorities. There is no demand placed on yeshiva students to be worldly — why should this be the case with women? The preoccupation with secular culture was seen as a product of living in Exile among the nations.<sup>25</sup>

24 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 100.

25 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 12.

The answer, then, was to be very selective regarding the kind of secular values and literature the girls would be exposed to and the manner in which these would be presented. That which was considered clearly alien to the spirit of Judaism would remain foreign. (An example given is the statue "Moses" by Michaelangelo.<sup>26</sup>) On the other hand, the monthly *Bais Ya'akov Journal* published a series called "Pearls of World Literature," which included stories and poems from such far-flung sources as China and ancient Egypt.<sup>27</sup> There were articles on "The Shylock Legend in the Middle Ages,"<sup>28</sup> "Dulcinea and the New Woman in Modern Literature,"<sup>29</sup> Pascal,<sup>30</sup> Gandhi,<sup>31</sup> Judaism and Esthetics,<sup>32</sup> Tolstoy,<sup>33</sup> etc. A poll taken among readers showed their interest in music, dance, poetry, and painting.<sup>34</sup> A quiz included in one issue asked the readers to identify: albino, pariah, Amerigo Vespucci, and Julius Caesar, among other terms.<sup>35</sup>

In the area of vocational training as well, there was a certain degree of ambivalence. The boys' educational arm of Agudat Yisrael in Eastern Europe never instituted vocational courses in its schools, but as far as the women were concerned, economic necessity triumphed over reservations held by some people about training Jewish girls for entry into the labor market. Initially, the careers for which the girls were prepared were teaching, clerical work (bookkeeping and typing), and working as seamstresses. Later, courses were added in home economics and child care, nutrition, hygiene, typing, accounting, nursing, and business.<sup>36</sup> (Today, courses are offered training girls to be legal secretaries, medical and dental laboratory technicians, and dental hygienists.<sup>37</sup>)

The emphasis on work outside the home and on the financial in-

26 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 100.

27 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 53-54.

28 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 53.

29 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 119.

30 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 75-76.

31 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 82.

32 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 122.

33 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 36 (Fall 1928).

34 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 83.

35 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 75.

36 *Bet Ya'akov: Kovetz le-inyanei hinukh*, 1945.

37 Ads appearing in the *Jewish Press* (April 21, 1972).



dependence of the young women, the development of a framework of schools, summer institutes, international conferences, and the rest, brings us to the central question of the role of the Jewish woman according to the ideological and educational conceptions of the Bais Ya'akov movement. Since the development of the schools was, in part, an attempt to protect Jewish girls from the subversive influence of the Polish feminist movement, much attention was paid in their publications to a refutation of the arguments of feminism and, whenever possible, a counterattack based on the notion of the real importance of the woman in Jewish life. These positions were sometimes expressed in terms of traditional apologetics, using arguments that are familiar to anyone versed in the polemic literature of Orthodoxy. On the other hand, they were sometimes expressed in much more progressive, and one might even say radical, terms. Still, it would not be possible for Bais Ya'akov to claim that all the past generations of Jewish sages had been wrong in their perception of the role of the woman. After all, the movement stressed respect for these traditional authorities as one of the ideological foundations of Orthodox Judaism. Thus, it became incumbent on the leadership of the Bais Ya'akov movement to develop a sophisticated strategy for resolving these apparent contradictions.

The first factor in the strategy was a definitive attempt to avoid implicating rabbinical authorities in any way in the creation of the present problematic situation. All of the responsibility was thrust upon the parents, and particularly the fathers, for neglecting their daughters' education in the traditional manner.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, changing social and historical conditions were blamed. Thus, the traditional sages had been correct in their judgments about women, but, being rabbis and not prophets, they had not envisioned that times would change to such an extent that radical action would have to be taken to save the Jewish people and its traditional lifestyle.<sup>39</sup> The procedure of bending the traditional framework or even temporarily stepping aside it in order to preserve it is based on the Mishnaic principle, "*Et la'asot la-Shem, heferu toratekha*" ("It is time to act for the Lord; they have violated Thy Torah").<sup>40</sup> This prin-

38 A.B. Ackerman, in "Die Flicht fun der Froi," *Bais Ya'akov Journal* (Tammuz-Av 1925).

39 Sheindel Meir, in "Die Froi Loten Talmud," *Bais Ya'akov Journal* (August 1924).

40 Mishna *Berakhot* 9:5.

ciple refers to the religious implications of a social emergency, but has been used at certain times to mean that in an era of crisis, the change and development of halakha may become a religious imperative.

Thus, attempts were made as far as possible to bring various models and examples from the past, of women who had taken active roles in Jewish community life, of cases where educational frameworks had been organized for them, and of rabbinical decisions that had instituted changes in the position of women in Judaism. The *Bais Ya'akov Journal* devoted many pages to retelling the stories of great women in Jewish history — from the matriarchs, Miriam, Deborah and Esther, through Bruria, Rashi's daughters, and Glueckel of Hamelin, to contemporary women, including of course, Sarah Schenirer herself. In terms of halakhic changes, they were generally of two sorts: either deviations justified by sociological or other extra-halakhic constitutions,<sup>41</sup> or cases in which Jewish women freely took upon themselves as obligations the restrictions or commandments from which they had previously been exempt.<sup>42</sup> For example, Bais Ya'akov students were required to engage in formal prayer twice a day<sup>43</sup> — in the morning (*shaharit*) and in the afternoon (*minha*). This latter is a deviation from traditional custom and has even been criticized by the former Chief Sephardic Rabbi of the State of Israel, Rav Ovadia Yosef.<sup>44</sup> His disapproval was specifically directed at the practice among Bais Ya'akov girls (and, it must be added, many other Jewish women as well) of remaining in the synagogue on Sabbath mornings during the recitation of the *musaf* (Additional) service. Rav Yosef felt that since women were not commanded to offer the *musaf* sacrifice in the Temple, for which the prayer service is a substitute, their presence in the synagogue at that time would be superfluous. Even though, he stated, "my colleagues in the Bais Ya'akov movement encourage their charges to remain in the synagogue," in his opinion, women should at that point

41 Rabbi Yeshayahu Reicher, in *Sefer zikaron le-Sarah Schenirer*, pp. 174–75.

42 In some cases these obligations were taken on by all Jewish women, such as the commandment to hear the shofar blown on the New Year. In other cases individual women took on obligations such as the daily donning of tefillin, and the rabbis approved.

43 Personal interview with Moshe Prager of B'nei Brak, April 29, 1975. See *Bet Ya'akov*, no. 33 and *Ein B'Yisrael*, Part 2.

44 Ibid.

return home and begin to prepare the noon meal! I offer this as one example of Bais Ya'akov being recognized as a framework in which women depart from a strict interpretation of their traditional roles.

The third and final element in the strategy of the movement for reconciling these innovations within a traditional system was an awareness of the potentially revolutionary nature of the changes and the dangerous implications they might have, expressed in an apologetic manner so as to allay the fears of the "conservatives." Yehudah Leib Orlean, in an article written in memory of Sarah Schenirer<sup>45</sup> states the following:

In a period like this, facing conditions like these, there arose and was created the Bais Ya'akov movement... There appeared a woman, a teacher, very knowledgeable, and she set up a school for girls. Wasn't she the long-awaited redeemer of the woman? Didn't she thus raise the Jewish woman from her low position? Didn't she place her on an equal level with her learned husband, who had always prided himself for his knowledge? Thus indeed wrote observers from outside the movement. Even within our camp there were those who broke out in a song of praise like this to the Bais Ya'akov schools. But wasn't there in all this a very serious danger to the education of Jewish girls? Wouldn't the idea of Bais Ya'akov thus do more harm than good?

The answer to these questions, according to Orleans, was to be found in the personality of Sarah Schenirer. Those who knew her soon realized that there was no danger of the Bais Ya'akov girl overstepping her bounds as a Jewish woman. Sarah's "feminine" qualities were always emphasized in descriptions of her (e.g., her modesty, warmth, motherliness), even though she sometimes had to employ "masculine" aggressiveness in order to combat short-sighted parents or uncooperative community leaders.

Sarah herself, and her colleagues and students fulfilled the biblical image of the Woman of Valor. Stress was always placed on the good deeds they performed as women, and not on their potential role as the intellectual rivals of men. Nevertheless, Sarah sometimes had to

45 My translation of the text from *Sefer zikaron le-Sarah Schenirer*, p. 46 ff.

argue with men, using traditional proof-texts to support her case. Orlean develops this point, stating that she probably would have wanted to study in a yeshiva, sit at the rebbe's table, and so on, and derive inspiration from these educational experiences. These, after all, were not strange men or enemies she was coming in contact with — they were pious Hasidim. Why, then, was it forbidden to listen and to take an active part in their discussions, for her own good, and for the good of her ideal? Why was it that this respected historical personage should be limited, as it were, to such a low position?

But, he said, "Such is the demand of Judaism." A modern European woman couldn't possibly understand this, but we would be doing a grievous injustice if we obscured this fact from our girls who are being instructed in pure, complete Judaism. As difficult as it is, they have to know this and try to become accustomed to it. Then, perhaps, there will be no further need for weak apologetics on the rights of Jewish women. We would say openly that the Jewish male has more responsibilities and commandments incumbent upon him and is, therefore, worthy of high status, according to the principle, "One who has been commanded to perform a certain act and does so is greater (more meritorious) than another who performs the same act without having been so commanded."<sup>46</sup> But Orlean hastens to add, "this in no way detracts from the importance of the woman." The fact that she has been divinely appointed to different tasks than the man should not be irritating to her. There is a division of labor within the Jewish people, and, if one accepts the notion of the essential unity of Israel (as, he says, Sarah Schenirer did) then one accepts this division as natural and positive. It isn't important who puts on phylacteries, sits in the sukkah or studies Gemara, as long as these and other commandments are, in the end, performed by someone.

In conclusion, Orlean cites the example of the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16), which he interprets as a protest against the alleged inequality of priests, Levites, and ordinary Israelites. The Kohen-Levi-Yisrael division of labor was finally recognized as divine in origin so that there is no room for jealousy. On the contrary, the greatest outpouring of love for the masses, a yearning for peace and unity, came from the *kohanim*. No one in Israel feels any degradation when he honors and grants privileges to the Priest, since he is honoring not

46 Glatzer, *The Judaic Tradition*.

the individual, but rather his position and duties. If the role differentiation between men and women would also be seen as divinely ordained, and as different parts of a unified whole, namely the Jewish community, then there would be no complaints and no feelings of discrimination.

To this end, the Bais Ya'akov movement always stressed the traditional values of family and of modesty in dress, thought, behavior, and speech. The Bais Ya'akov girl was (and still is) recognizable by her modest appearance, which sometimes functioned as a conscious protest against the "bondage of the women to the dictates of the fashion world"<sup>47</sup> and the loose atmosphere of the prevailing social climate.

In spite of the apparently uncompromising dedication to traditional norms, as expressed by Orlean and others, I would like to suggest that this was to some extent part of the above-mentioned strategy of legitimization. I would like now to demonstrate the more radical implications of Bais Ya'akov education as it actually developed.

As Orleans had noted, within the movement itself there were differences of opinion with regard to the ideal role of the woman in Jewish life. In 1930,<sup>48</sup> the Journal published an article in which one author, citing many Talmudic sources, explored the question as to whether it would be permissible for a girl to study Torah. He concluded that it would be permissible, provided it be done in small doses, when the girl is fairly mature, and when the study can lead to good deeds and to her becoming a good wife and mother. In a later issue,<sup>49</sup> Mordecai Boimberg (author of the most widely used — within the movement — textbook on Jewish history) expressed his surprise that the issue was even raised! He mentioned an article in *Der Yid*, the daily newspaper of Agudat Yisrael in Poland, in which a Bais Ya'akov Seminar student had claimed that she was being "terrorized" by her father for learning Torah. In a spirit of "it is high time that the issue stopped being problematic," Boimberg wrote that "We made a mistake by thinking that we first needed a 'Kosher' seal of approval for Bais Ya'akov." The Talmudic controversy over the advisability of teaching Torah to women referred to oral Torah, and never to Bible.

47 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 48.

48 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 49.

49 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, no. 52.

The Talmud itself includes a discussion of how much the teacher in a school for girls should be paid.<sup>50</sup> Bruria was a learned woman, as were Rashi's daughters. The grandmother of the MaHarShal<sup>51</sup> even ran a yeshiva. Thus, many historical models and parallels can be cited to legitimize the work of the movement.

The most telling examples of the real attitudes within the movement towards the woman's role can be found in the various readers' polls and columns of letters to the editor. (Obviously, use of readers' polls as an indicator of attitudes includes certain methodological weaknesses — the respondents, self-selected, are not necessarily a representative sample. Nevertheless, what is, I believe, significant is that their responses were published in the Journal, thus receiving not only some kind of official recognition but also a fairly wide circulation that could have influenced the future development of attitudes among other Bais Ya'akov students.)

In 1932,<sup>52</sup> the Journal carried its first public opinion polls, specifying that respondents could remain anonymous. The poll included questions such as, "Are you satisfied with the level of education your parents gave you?" "What problem troubles you the most?" "Do you think it harmful to associate with nonreligious people?" "In whom do you confide your secrets: father, mother, or friend?" Answers were published several months later.

The questions that are of particular concern in the present context are those relating to the girl's attitudes towards her educational, social, and vocational roles as a woman. Those questions were the following:

- "1. Would you like to be materially independent (as for example, working in an establishment in which your husband has no part)?
2. Would you like to be involved in your husband's business or occupation?
3. Would you prefer not to work at all and just be a housewife?
4. When you envision your married life, in general, do you see a

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 11:580–582.

<sup>52</sup> *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, Vol. 9, no. 77 (Fall 1931).

possibility of fulfilling yourself and taking your place in the community?"

Interestingly, the answers to the first set of questions also reveal something about the girls' perceptions of themselves. Although a traditional atmosphere pervades, there are glimpses of a much more "modern" consciousness. For example, most of the respondents are quite critical of the education they received. "I am not satisfied, because my parents sent me to a Polish school, without any kind of Jewish atmosphere. But I don't blame them, I blame the community for not having another kind of school;" "My parents made life sound too good; they didn't prepare me for its harsh realities. I'm too weak to withstand challenges;" "I'm happy, but I wish I had had the chance to attend high school." (Although the editors of the Journal adopted the "modern, scientific" technique of conducting a public opinion survey, they made no attempt to tabulate the responses or even provide any sort of statistical data; they simply listed the answers.)

The majority of respondents clearly preferred to confide in friends (or in a category they added themselves — siblings), some expressing the feeling that "Parents just don't understand," or even, "Parents *today* don't understand." The questions and problems that troubled the girls most were varied, involving political, social, theological, and practical issues. With regard to the questions on the role of the woman, some of the responses include the following:

"I would like an occupation."

"Everyone should be materially independent and capable of working for his own existence."

"I strive to earn my bread alone."

"I am for the emancipation of the woman; therefore, we must be financially independent. A woman must worry about her own destiny just the way a man does."

"I'd like to be involved in the same field as my husband, because working in different fields brings alienation between husband and wife."

"I believe in the emancipation of the woman. Women should work, too. There should be no differences."

"The wife should not only be a housewife; she should also help out with the family income."

"After marriage, the husband and the wife must both strive to fulfill themselves."

"If you have the desire, you can always find time to work for the community."

And the most poignant response of all:

"I'd like to earn my own living. But does what I want matter?"

There was a minority of responses that stressed the importance of the woman's educational role as a mother to the exclusion of outside involvements, but those answers were clearly in the minority. The vast majority indicated a desire to continue working after marriage, to continue the process of self-education that had been motivated by the Bais Ya'akov movement, and to play an active role in Jewish community life. Particularly impressive is the favorable use of the term "emancipation of the woman." In a later issue, when the responses were informally analyzed, and comments were made on the high level of intelligence evidenced by the poll, no mention at all was made of the "feminist" consciousness expressed,<sup>53</sup> which leads to the possible conclusion that it was in no way considered extraordinary.

In the same year,<sup>54</sup> a young girl named Chana writes that her father, who is "very religious," is pushing her to marry — she is not quite seventeen — so that he can derive some typical Jewish *naches* (pride and satisfaction) from her. She is very depressed and feels she has just received a death sentence. She writes, "I don't know where to turn ... My mother was a mother at eighteen, but I still want to live. What's the rush? What is life, if not to be free, independent? Now I can live for myself, do what I want..."

In the next issue, Chana receives a reply from Sarah, a young woman four to five years older. Sarah writes that she felt the same desire for life, so she ran away from her home in the shtetl to one of the large cities. "Be careful, you may be treading a dangerous path," she writes, "All that glitters is not gold... I now have a happy family life. My husband doesn't earn much, but we manage. We have two children... I have a good idea. Wait a while. I'll write you again soon. You can be our house guest — you'll get a chance to travel and we'll be able to talk." Chana is in no way rebuked for her un-

53 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, Vol. 9, no. 83 (Spring 1932).

54 *Bais Ya'akov Journal*, Vol. 9, no. 78 (Spring 1932).



orthodox approach. On the contrary, she receives a sympathetic, supportive answer.

In conclusion, therefore, although the *Bais Ya'akov Journal* of the 1920s and 1930s included apologetic articles on the traditional women's role in Judaism and diatribes against the European Feminist movement (chiefly for its neglect of the importance of family life), here and there we can find articles that speak quite favorably of certain feminist ideas. Therefore, through deepening their knowledge of classical Jewish sources, through training them for vocational roles, settlement in Palestine, and so on, and through providing a framework for organizational activities and international communications for thousands of young Jewish women, Bais Ya'akov was functioning to "raise the feminist consciousness" of its students. If the movement had continued to develop along these lines, it might indeed have created a new role model for the educated and, in certain ways, emancipated Jewish woman.

We have considered mainly the ideological components of the movement's strategy. As a social movement, it also used various structures and symbols to buttress its ideology.<sup>55</sup> These included role modeling, the use of kinship terminology ("mother," "daughter," "sister"), myth-making, slogans, special celebrations, literature, songs, and the use of dormitories, summer camps, and other "total institutions."<sup>56</sup>

However, we will never be able to perform an adequate analysis of the development of Bais Ya'akov since, as a social movement, it had a truncated life cycle. During the Holocaust, thousands of students and teachers from the Bais Ya'akov network were killed and the movement's infrastructure destroyed. Although from a numerical point of view the movement has more than recouped its losses (schools exist today in Israel and many Diaspora countries), the Holocaust had a profound effect on the movement's ideological direction. A noticeable "move to the right" religiously has taken place within the Orthodox community in general and has affected the Bais Ya'akov movement in particular, but this move has been noted rather

55 See unpublished Master's thesis, cited in footnote 21, chapter 9.

56 Erving Goffman, *Asylums* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961).

than studied, and it is therefore difficult to explore its nature and causes.

It is nevertheless interesting to note the effect of the success of the Bais Ya'akov movement on the educational policies of other Orthodox groups within the traditional Jewish community, particularly those that had always opposed Bais Ya'akov for being too radical. The Lubavitcher Hasidim set up a women's educational arm called Bais Rivka, the Klausenberger Hasidim maintain Bais Channah, and the Karliner, Bais Brocho. Graduates of Bais Ya'akov Seminars teach in all of these frameworks.<sup>57</sup>

The most right-wing Hasidic group, the Satmar, have a school system for girls known as Ohel Rachel (Tent of Rachel). In a sociological study of the Satmar community of New York,<sup>58</sup> it was found that state compulsory education laws and adverse economic conditions were forcing more women to attend school and to join the labor force; "...it became not only accepted but generally expected that a woman without small children at home should have a job."<sup>59</sup> The more the women take an active role in the family's support, the more they demand equality of power (i.e., a share in making practical family decisions, such as those regarding the allocation of funds). Since, however, the Satmar rebbe has been firm in maintaining the ban on teaching Torah to women, the situation in the Satmar community is that the boys receive an intensive traditional education with very little secular learning, while the girls receive a basic secular background and only a very superficial exposure to Jewish learning. They are bored and disrespectful in their Jewish studies classes. As the sociologist concludes, "Since strain seems to be built into the situation, the area of female education may be considered one of Satmar's standing problems."<sup>60</sup>

It remains, one might add, one of modern Jewry's problems, as even the controversy surrounding the acceptance of women to the Rabbinical School of the Jewish Theological Seminary (Fall, 1983) may attest. Especially in a society in which education plays such a central role as it does in Jewish society, the encounter of tradition with modernity necessitates a reevaluation of the educational role of

57 Sorski, *Toldot ha-hinukh*.

58 Israel Rubin, *Satmar: An Island in the City* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972).

59 Ibid., p. 164.

60 Ibid., p. 197.

women. It is hoped that much more research will be undertaken in this area.

