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Series B: Commission on Jewish Education in North America (CJENA). 1980–1993.
Subseries 2: Commissioner and Consultant Biographical Files, 1987–1993.

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6

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32

Twersky, Isadore, 1988-1990.

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Commissioner Contact Sheet

Name Isadore Twersky Assigned to SF
 Mailing Address _____ Off. phone _____
 _____ Home phone _____
 Fax _____ Telex _____

Comments influential in academic community, in orthodox community, in general Jewish community.
interested in day-school, early childhood training, personal

Date	Nature of Contact/Status	Next Steps/Action Needed
7/5/88	SF Visit - pre 8/1 interview	community underwent
8/?/88	IT letter to MLM	
9/1/88	MLM letter to IT	
10/13/88	SF Visit - pre 12/13 interview	
12/?/88	SF call - pre 12/13	
1/?/89	SF call - Follow up on 12/13	
2/?/89	SF see visit	
		SF will see 4/89

COMMISSIONER CONTACT SHEET

Name Isadore Twersky Assigned to SF
Mailing Harvard University
Address 6 Divinity Avenue Off. phone 617-495-4326
Cambridge, MA 02138 Home phone _____
Fax _____ Telex _____

Comments Influential in academic community, in orthodox community, in general
Jewish community. Interested in day school, early childhood, training, personnel,
community

Date	Nature of Contact/Status	Next Steps/Action Needed
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INTERVIEW WITH
PROFESSOR ISADORE TWERSKY

SEYMOUR FOX
JULY 5, 1988 AT HARVARD

Professor Twersky had prepared very well and had a great many notes which he used as the basis for his conversation with me. He began by reacting to the Document and saying that, at the beginning, the Document seems to offer a very broad definition of education and then later seems to limit it more to schooling. He is for the broader definition. He felt that, in one sense, we know a good deal of what exists out in the field and that we could act fairly soon, and that we didn't need to study those matters though late in the conversation he returned to the importance of doing certain kinds of research.

He sees personnel as the key issue on all levels. He dealt with this throughout the entire conversation. One area that he located early on in the conversation and continued to emphasize throughout was the importance of early childhood and the fact that this could be a great area for Jewish education. He talked about day care, early childhood kindergardens, etc., and that here there are no people virtually and those that do exist may have training in general education but have no training in the use of Judaism for the sake of Jewish education.

He used as a principle for the entire conversation, beginning where we are, a Halachich principle of baha sher husham and this was to begin where we are and help strengthen them. He wanted to strengthen existing schools

and recognize them. He, for example, talked about the Ford system of giving grants to quality. This ran throughout his entire presentation.

He also spoke about taking teachers and giving them a sabbatical or giving them a month off or three months off or so on and so forth, and then we're starting where people are in an operation bootstrap. He saw the importance of dealing both with knowledge and with skills. For example, he said take the area of bible. He felt that there just is very little work being done there and the impact that that could have. On the other hand he thought the importance of there being some kind of central institution that dealt with issues like pension and insurance and salaries which he considers as being terribly important as a necessary condition to get started. He talked about rewarding schools that were doing great things. He talked about the impact of the Ford matching grants to Harvard at a certain point, and what this could do in Jewish education. On the other hand, he saw a combination of the federation working together with the foundations to reward a quality or promising ideas.

Then he spoke about the possible role of scholarship for Jewish education. He saw the Jewish study students as offering a great potential for personnel in Jewish education. He mentioned examples of graduates with Ph.Ds. If there were comparative salaries, he saw no reason why many of these people would not go into this and he therefore saw Judaic studies contributing to this. He also saw that there was a good deal of work that had to be done such as producing basic works on Jewish history or

philosophy of Jewish education which could make an important contribution. When I told him of my conversation with Mr. Bronfman, he talked about various works on theories of Jewish history, what leads to Jewish identity of this could be important for the work that we want to do in Jewish education. He said that Jewish scholarship ought to concern itself with questions like how Jewish unity could be developed, how a concern for Jews could be developed, and he saw, for example, the importance of producing works on biographies that exist in general education and American education don't exist in Jewish education.

About the training institutions, he said that that ought to be looked at more carefully. He felt that if you started with the people in the field and improved their condition, this would be a way of attracting others who have not considered a career in Jewish education. In other words, if you begin with the existing situation and improve it, that's the way to change the image.

He spoke of the possibility of internships for Jewish education and the impact that that could have on the field, particularly if they were done at quality institutions. Again, he made a distinction between research about who the clients are, what they're prepared to receive and take, and information about how many schools there are, which he thought could be easily obtained.

We talked about the possibility of several of the outstanding lay people

coming to Harvard to see what's going on here, and to converse with people like him in a more relaxed atmosphere. We talked about the concept of lead teachers in the Carnegie report, and he saw this as a very useful idea for Jewish education. Again, going back to his concept about Jewish study students being a resource for the whole field.

In summary, he sees personnel as being the central issue. He believes that we ought to begin with the current situation and do an operation bootstrap. This would be the important announcement and be the basis for the new image of Jewish education, and if this were accompanied with salaries and other benefits, he sees this, together with demonstration centers and new institutions, as the way to create the breakthrough. He is interested in serving on a task force, I believe, and particularly in the one related to training. Very concerned that the existing institutions do not control the entire training operation because that would limit the possibilities of new ideas.

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THE COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA
TOWARDS THE SECOND MEETING OF THE COMMISSION
INTERVIEW OF COMMISSIONERS

1. COMMISSIONER: ISADORE TWERSKY
2. INTERVIEWER: SEYMOUR FOX
3. DATE: OCTOBER 13, 1988
4. SPIRIT: VERY POSITIVE AND INVOLVED
5. SETTING: DR. TWERSKY'S OFFICE AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY
6. DURATION: 1 HOUR
7. COMMISSIONER'S CURRENT STAND:

ACCEPTS THE IDEA OF PERSONNEL AND THE COMMUNITY AS A GOOD WAY TO START THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION.

8. SUMMARY:

MOST OF THE MEETING WAS DEVOTED TO A SUMMARY OF HOW WE HAVE PROCEEDED FROM THE LAST COMMISSION MEETING. I WENT THROUGH THE OPTIONS, THE CRITERIA, THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT GUIDED THE GENERATION OF THE OPTIONS, AND INDICATED HOW THEY WERE APPLIED.

I SUMMARIZED OUR MEETINGS IN CLEVELAND AND TOLD HIM THAT WE WERE SUGGESTING TWO SETS OF OPTIONS NECESSARY, OR MEANS OPTIONS, AND PROGRAMMATIC OPTIONS.

HE THOUGHT THAT DISTINCTION WAS A GOOD ONE AND IT WOULD BE GOOD TO BEGIN WITH THE TWO OPTIONS THAT ARE EMERGING.

I BELIEVE THAT HE WILL WANT TO BE VERY ACTIVE ON ANY KIND OF MECHANISM WE ESTABLISH SUCH AS A TASK-FORCE, ETC.

HE TOLD ME THAT A TRAINING PROGRAM IN JEWISH EDUCATION WAS BEING FUNDED BY WEXNER AT HARVARD AND ASKED TO FURTHER CONSULT WITH ME ON THAT MATTER. THIS PROJECT WAS MENTIONED TO ME EARLIER IN A CONVERSATION WITH PROF. ISRAEL SCHEFFLER.

HE WILL BE ATTENDING THE MEETING ON DECEMBER 13.

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TOWARDS THE THIRD COMMISSION MEETING

INTERVIEW OF COMMISSIONERS

COMMISSIONER NAME: PROF. ISADORE TWERSKY

INTERVIEWER: SEYMOUR FOX

DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 4, 1989

PLACE: BOSTON, MA., 5:00 P.M.

Summary:

Prof. Twersky was very interested in the concept of a demonstration site. He thinks that "best practice" must be rewarded and that it is even more important than any of the work with the training institutions. He believes that working with people on the job, training on the job (as he has said all along) is the way to proceed.

He is very concerned about the potential of the training institutions -- how much they can ultimately do. He thinks that the departments of Judaica in various universities could do a great deal.

He believes that the Commission ought to charge the ii with a very specific mission statement which limits the role of the ii, so that it can't do just anything. He was interested in the ii as a successor organization. I think he would be happy to serve as and an active member of the board.

He generally supports the idea of an ii and I think that he would be happy to participate actively in the meeting on the 14th, which he plans to attend.

I think Prof. Twersky has a great deal to offer regarding the content of a demonstration site, as well as the training programs that would accompany these demonstration sites.

I will be seeing Prof. Twersky again in Israel on May 23rd.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN
LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

6 DIVINITY AVENUE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138
(617) 495-5757

August 9, 1989

Mr. Morton L. Mandel
Commission on Jewish Education
in North America
4500 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44103

Dear Mort:

Upon reading the minutes for our third meeting—the verse Ecclesiastes (IV:12) “and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” immediately came to mind—I found that personal perspectives on the commission’s first year of existence crystallized.

We came to the August meeting with a sense of great expectations; even the defective air conditioning on a very hot day did not affect our mood or produce any flabbiness in our resolve. The idea of a major commission which would focus on the importance and needs of Jewish education was itself a stimulant which we hoped would become a catalyst. That was clearly my reason for accepting your invitation to join. I have no vested interests, personal or institutional. I am driven by our concern for meaningful Jewish continuity, for a Jewish community that is resilient and resourceful, creative and constructive. (Survival, as I indicated, is not a problem; our concern is how many of us will be privileged to participate in the ongoing, confident community enthralled by the beauty of Judaism and the mystery of Jewish history.) Our challenge and responsibility is to help increase the numbers of educated, committed Jewish men and women who are excited by the values and visions of Judaism. The meeting heightened these expectations: the attendance was impressive; the discussion was wise and enthusiastic.

The second meeting started a bit sluggishly, I felt, but the decision to focus on personnel and community, while maintaining our broad definition of education (formal and informal), was constructive and seemed promising. Clarification and confirmation of this decision at our recent meeting were welcome, indispensable steps.

Now, it seems we need to attach primacy to action over contemplation. The one thing we do not need is more research. It is time to move with zeal and determination. I, for one, am less interested in an eloquent report than in ennobling, repercussive action. There is something grandiose about hoping to formulate a report which will set the stage for the next ten or twenty years. Our actions will set the stage; our achievements will deliver a resounding, influential message. The echoes of our commitment will be heard everywhere.

As for the specific question of what should guide the choice of a community, I would suggest three complementary answers: (1) communities with demonstrated success where good schools exist—sustain, strengthen and expand them so they may serve a larger constituency; (2) communities with a glaring need—see to it that schools are established so that the children—and adults—have a chance of joining the survivors; (3) between these two extremes, communities with good will and commitment where new schools have just been established but are not yet firmly ensconced—strengthen and solidify them so that they may succeed in fulfilling their mission. Informal education in each case would be integrated into a plan of action.

You have repeatedly said that the commission belongs to the commissioners. The most important prerequisite for having this statement become a reality is that the commissioners know how much money is available for distribution. Obviously we shall not be able to make any meaningful recommendations without this information. Even if we focus on community action sites, the amount of money to be allocated is relevant to our assessment of sites and the measure of interplay we seek to encourage between personnel and curriculum or related matters. In addition, the commission may feel that it is desirable to suggest some additional projects—small but promising initiatives. Without knowing what sums are available, we shall not be in a position to speak or act intelligently.

Allow me a final suggestion. Israel was excluded from our agenda. Nevertheless, the problems of Jewish education, of continuity and identity, of transmitting, preserving and enhancing our heritage are essentially similar. Even problems of personnel and curriculum are similar. Israelis must also be educated, committed Jews. Moreover, in addition to the fundamental commonality, the Israeli component or connection has frequently surfaced in our deliberations concerning North America. While we should beware of "making many committees" and I, for one, would not want to see you encourage a proliferation of commissions—they have generally plagued Jewish institutional life, as you know—it might be useful to have a small group (five or six commissioners) meet with a small group of Israelis for a day or two of intensive discussion oriented towards some carefully-structured themes.

I trust you are having a pleasant summer.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Isadore

Isadore Twersky
Littauer Professor of
Hebrew Literature
and Philosophy

T:c



MORTON L. MANDEL

4500 EUCLID AVENUE • CLEVELAND, OHIO 44103

HLZ ✓

MLM

August 17, 1989

Dear Isadore:

I was both pleased and excited with your letter of August 9. I have studied it carefully, and will get back to you one day soon.

I know that Seymour Fox was trying to arrange a personal meeting for us, and we will continue to work on this. I would enjoy a private visit with you very much.

Sincerely,

MORTON L. MANDEL

Dr. Isadore Twersky
Littauer Professor of Hebrew
Literature and Philosophy
Harvard University
6 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138

fox23/Fox2-W

THE COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA
TOWARDS THE THIRD MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

INTERVIEW OF COMMISSIONER

1. COMMISSIONER: PROF. ISADORE TWERSKY
2. INTERVIEWER: PROF. SEYMOUR FOX
3. DATE: AUGUST 22, 1989
4. SETTING: HARVARD UNIVERSITY
5. DURATION: TWO HOURS
6. SUMMARY:

Prof. Twersky began the discussion by expressing his concern that this commission might not achieve its full impact because of the lack of clarity about funding. I made it clear to Prof. Twersky that that's exactly what Mr. Mandel and some of the other members of the Commission were considering now and that everyone understood that the purpose of this commission was not merely to issue a report, but to deal with implementation.

Prof. Twersky then described in very powerful terms the impact that he felt this commission could have at this time. He believes that the report is of secondary importance, and what is needed are examples of successful Jewish education that can be developed in Community Action Sites. He also suggested that we should encourage successful activities (best practices) in Jewish education that are now in place. He indicated that he would be willing to participate in any successor mechanism to the Commission. We discussed several of the possible scenarios. He believes that the Commission as a group has an important role to play in addition to any successor mechanism, an IJE, etc.

He stated that he believes that Mr. Mandel ought to remain in a leading position, for it is he who has managed to both bring these people together and keep their noses to the grindstone.

I believe that Prof. Twersky wants to play an important role in the future work of the Commission. He will be attending the next meeting of the Commission.

September 18, 1989

Dear Isadore:

I want to comment on your very thoughtful letter of August 9, and I like your suggestion that we arrange for a small group (five or six commissioners) to meet with a small group of Israelis for a day or two of intensive discussion regarding Jewish education in Israel. I'll introduce this idea at the appropriate time.

I agree with your thought that "we need to attach primacy to action over contemplation." We said from the beginning that ours will be a proactive Commission, not one which simply issues a fine report and then lets it go to sleep. We do, indeed, expect to be proactive, and at the next meeting of the Commission, will be surfacing ideas that make this very clear.

Finally, I want to react to your suggestion that we talk about the money needed to implement the good ideas we expect to develop. We have begun to address this question, and there will be a beginning report on this subject at our October 23rd meeting. My current thinking is this: there will need to be a substantial sum of money committed by family foundations to enable us to get a quick start on the ideas which are developed by the Commission. The foundations will need to be counted on for at least the next five years. I have a dollar amount in mind, but it is premature to discuss it.

However, the long-term financial solution needs to be a responsibility of the total Jewish community. This need will focus on federations. They will have to be convinced that

Jewish education is the high priority in the community budget. A number of federations are already beginning to reflect this priority in their allocations. A nucleus of federations is already moving in the right direction, and hopefully, will be examples to be emulated by others. Much work remains to bring federations up to an adequate level of funding. Fortunately, federations have a new pocketbook in the form of endowment funds, which have grown rapidly in the last ten years, and which continue to grow rapidly.

I want to tell you once again how much I appreciate your investing your very valuable time in the work of the Commission, and I hope that it will prove to be a source of satisfaction to you.

Warm regards.

Sincerely,

MORTON L. MANDEL

Dr. Isadore Twersky
Harvard University
Center for Jewish Studies
6 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138

Nativ Policy and Planning Consultants
Jerusalem, Israel

נתיב-יועצים למדיניות ותכנון
ירושלים

Tel.: 972-2-662 296; 699 951

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FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

TO: Henry L. Zucker & Ginny Levi

DATE: September 14, 1989

FROM: Prof. Seymour Fox

NO. PAGES: 1

FAX NUMBER: 001-216-361-9962

Thanks for the draft of MLM's answer to I. Twersky. I believe the letter is right on target and like the content very much. I have only one small suggestion to make -- the last sentence on the last line of paragraph 2 might read "will be surfacing -- already at the upcoming meeting of the Commission -- ideas that make this very clear." I assume that the style is not final, and that the introduction will be somewhat less formal.

Best regards,

SF

P.S. We are interested to know how all the meetings at the quarterly, related to the Commission, went.

For MCM + HL 2,

only MC
VFL

Nativ Policy and Planning Consultants
Jerusalem, Israel

נתיב-יועצים למדיניות ותכנון
ירושלים

Tel.: 972-2-662 296; 699 951

Fax: 972-2-699 951

FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

TO: Hank Zucker

DATE: May 25, 1990

FROM: Seymour Fox

NO. PAGES: 1

FAX NUMBER: (216) 361-9962

Dear Hank,

I am enclosing Professor Twersky's statement which we believe will play an important role in the report. Could you show it to Mort.

Shabbat Shalom.


P.S. We will need to decide what David Finn's role will be at the meeting on June 12th.

⑦

While avoiding rhetoric and simplistic formulations, while rejecting excessively heroic propositions, we may agree on a description of common aspirations and expectations. Our goal should be to make it possible for every Jewish child to be exposed to the mystery and romance of Jewish history, to the enthralling insights and special sensitivities of Jewish thought, to the sanctity and symbolism of Jewish existence, to the power and profundity of Jewish faith. As a slogan we might adopt the dictum that says "they searched from Dan to Beer Sheva and did not find an 'am ha'arazi'" 'Am ha'ares, usually understood as an ignoramus, an illiterate, may for our purposes be redefined as one indifferent to Jewish visions and values, untouched by the drama and majesty of Jewish history, unappreciative of the resourcefulness and resilience of the Jewish community, unconcerned with Jewish destiny. Education, in its broadest sense, will enable young people to confront the secret of Jewish tenacity and existence, the quality of Torah teaching which fascinates and attracts irresistibly. They will then be able, even eager, to find their place in a creative and constructive Jewish community.

①

Jewish continuity or survival- as a people- is not a problem and need not be a source of anxiety or perplexity. The reason for this apparent serenity is not insensitivity or wistfulness, but unshakable conviction, unwavering faith, and a special historical consciousness nurtured by the record and realities of the Jewish past. Hackneyed epithets- or stereotyped laments and litanies- should not be allowed to obscure the uniqueness and quintessence of our truly unparalleled history. The question that generates so much apprehensiveness and persistent restlessness is how many of our children and grandchildren, friends and neighbors, nephews, nieces, and cousins will be privileged to participate in this ongoing, confident, creative Jewish community? Every individual is of concern to us; no effort should be spared to enlarge the group of "survivors."



Nativ Policy and Planning Consultants
Jerusalem, Israel

נתיב-יועצים למדיניות ותכנון
ירושלים

Tel.: 972-2-662 296; 699 951
Fax: 972-2-699 951

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HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CENTER
FOR JEWISH STUDIES

6 DIVINITY AVENUE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

Dear Mort,

I hope that you are having a pleasant summer, your numerous preoccupations notwithstanding.

With regard to the report of our Commission, I trust that we shall have a chance to review it in its entirety. If we take responsibility for its contents, we must be certain that it reflects our deliberations.

A heterodox thought has been on my mind since our last meeting in June. I think that a celebration in November would be a case of what Whitehead might call "misplaced concreteness". A celebration would be in order a year from now, after we have a record of achievement; actions, accomplishments should be celebrated - not high-spirited words or even noble intentions. A celebration now, in connection with the publication of a report, would be self-congratulatory. Please consider this -

With warm regards,

(617) 495-4326

Sincerely

Isadore

MORTON L. MANDEL

4500 EUCLID AVENUE • CLEVELAND, OHIO 44103

VFL
CIRCULATE

SHH —

DPK —

HLZ —

Back to VFL

Copy sent
to each
9/12/90

September 10, 1990

Dear Isadore:

I enjoyed receiving your note and your thoughts about how to deal with our November meeting.

I am afraid we are pretty far along at this point, and we are now committed to the November 8 affair. However, I shall heed your words, and not see this as a "celebration", but rather, as a final report to the community. I quite agree with your thinking, and believe, also, that "actions speak louder than words".

It was good to hear from you and to know that we are working together. I enjoy that very much.

I look forward to seeing you soon, and send my warmest personal regards.

Sincerely,

MORTON L. MANDEL

Prof. Isadore Twersky
Harvard University
Center for Jewish Studies
6 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138