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Reimer, Joseph. "The State of Jewish Education in North America" and "Synagogues as a Context for Jewish Education", 1989-1991.

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Joseph Reimer

March 1, 1989

On Writing "The State of Jewish Education in North America"

In first outlining a possible final report for the Commission, we mentioned beginning with a section on "the state of Jewish education in North America" as a way of setting the context for the work of the Commission. I've been asked to take a first shot at conceptualizing this section and my thoughts are what follow.

(1) Herman Stein suggested at our meeting that this section be thought of not so much as a statistical review of the facts of the field, as a narrative of what the field is like, focusing, for example, on an institution - like the Hebrew high school - which has exemplified the field at its height and at its decline. I like Herman's direction with perhaps a wider focus and an integrating of the data we do have.

(2) A recent conversation with Art Naparstek crystallized the direction of my thinking. I had been thinking how odd and sad it is that there is no one book that can be given to a layperson or a student with the message "Read it and you'll understand what we mean by 'Jewish education.'" Art remarked that as someone coming from without he is struck by how amorphous the field is, how hard it is for insiders to tell outsiders "what the story is." The situation reminded him of the field of poverty before Michael Harrington in the early 1960's wrote The Other America which in one hundred clear, readable pages offered a picture of what poverty is in America. While it was only a picture, it could be given to President Kennedy and at least a discussion could begin on what could be done to alleviate the problem (and what were other versions of the story.)

(3) Art's reference to Harrington reminded me of a point in John Dewey that Seymour once taught me. In the deliberative process a crucial step is how the problem gets formulated. When we talk of "the state of Jewish education" we may mean: what narratives most clearly illustrate the key problems in the field? Or, how can we present a picture of the field that provides a clear background to the central problems to which this Commission is addressed?

(4) As I read the design document and listen to Mr. Mandel, I take the crucial problem to which this Commission is addressed as that of Jewish continuity: how do we help assure creative Jewish continuity in North America? From the perspective of the problem, Jewish education is a response, a seminal means to an end. However, the link from means to end is conceptually weak; it's little more than a cliché. I propose that we go back to the problematic and work through more coherently how education functions as a response. (I am proposing a move analogous to the Carnegie Report in which they take the assumed link between the health of the national economy and the health of public education and make it both clearer and more problematic.)

Here are a possible set of questions to give background to and make clearer the link between continuity and education.

1. Have the prospects for Jewish continuity become more problematic in recent times?
2. Historically, was Jewish education in North America designed as a way of assuring Jewish continuity?
3. Why has the community at large increasingly turned its hopes in recent years to Jewish education as a means to this end?
4. What evidence have we that Jewish education does (can) function as a powerful means to this end?

(5) Our other two basic assumptions, expressed in the choice of enabling options, are that (a) Jewish education can only be as effective as the communal support it enjoys, and (b) the long-term key to program quality is the quality of the personnel. These too arise from a perception of the problematic. In the case of community, we note "The Jewish community has created notable success in ... philanthropy, social services, defense and support of Israel." The problem is how do we translate those successes to the effective support of Jewish education. In the case of personnel, we note "Jewish education suffers from a shortage of qualified, well-trained educators." The problem is how to transform a largely part-time, low-status field of work into a viable profession.

(6) We've said "community" and "personnel" over and over again until they've lost their punch. What would a reader need to know to see these words in a fresh context, in their "problematic" state? There are a possible list of questions that might supply the needed background.

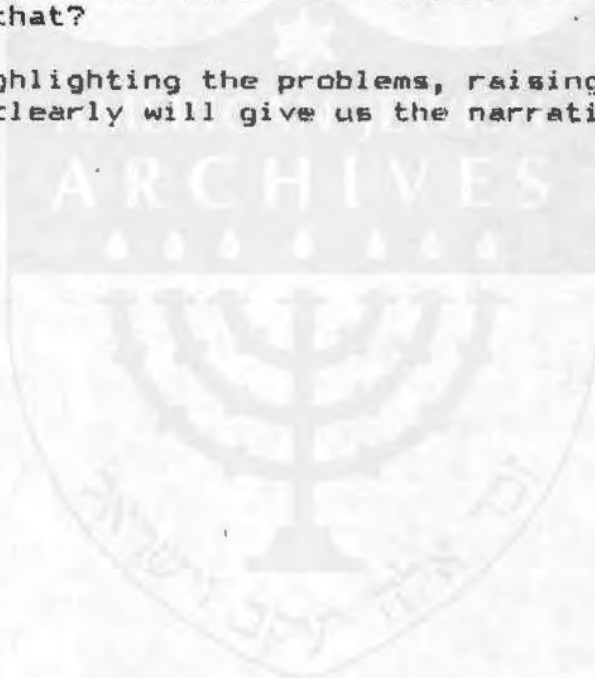
Community:

1. To whom does Jewish education "belong" in America?
Who brought it into existence and why?
2. Why is there no central address in Jewish education?
If there is no central address, who runs the show?
What keeps the operation from falling into a decentralized chaos?

Are there alternative arrangements?
3. Who pays for Jewish education?
Who sets the budgets?
How did this way of funding arise?
Why does it stay this way? Are there alternative possible arrangements?

Personnel:

4. Was there ever a time when there was no personnel shortage in Jewish education? Is the problem recent or chronic?
5. Is this shortage unique to Jewish education?
How does our problem compare to the public schools, to Christian education, to private schools?
6. Why is the quality of this field so variable?
Why are there some really good schools, camps, programs and also some very mediocre ones?
Is it personnel that makes the difference? Which personnel? How do we know that?
- (7) I think highlighting the problems, raising the right questions and answering them clearly will give us the narrative we seek



TO: Senior Policy Advisors
FROM: Joseph Reimer (7/26/89)
RE: My research project

Synagogues as a context for Jewish education

This paper flows most directly from a comment made by Chuck Rattner at our last Commission meeting. Commenting on the Cleveland Commission for Jewish continuity, Chuck said the most crucial ingredient for its success as a process was the wall to wall coalition that was built and particularly the coalition between the Federation and the congregations. Mark Gurvis later added that it took 8 years of hard work for that coalition to develop, and it may not have happened if initially there had not been a confrontation of Federation by the congregations.

Many observers of the American Jewish community (including Dan Elazar, Jon Woocher, Susan Shevitz, Gerry Teller) have observed how different are the "worlds" of Federation and congregations and how often they tend to misunderstand one another. Yet there is almost equal agreement that Jewish education is an arena in which these two "worlds" have to meet and learn to cooperate. Whether it is through the mediation of bureaus of Jewish Education or direct contact, Federations and congregations will either develop a creative working partnership (perhaps a new covenant) or there is little hope for progress in the field of Jewish education. Neither "world" by itself can substantially help the field without the cooperation of the other.

This paper will not initially try to envision how that new relationship will look. Rather, it will start by stepping back one pace and asking (1) Currently, what kinds of resources have synagogues to offer in the area of Jewish education, and (2) From a synagogue perspective, how can Federations be most helpful in assisting congregations to realize their own educational mandates. The focus will be primarily on the world of synagogues: its situation and needs, its hopes and aspirations for the schools and educational programs it sponsors.

Jewish schooling in North America was not always primarily synagogue - based and, compared to 20 years ago, is less based in synagogues now than then* Yet most leaders in the synagogue would consider the link between the congregation and its school to be of vital importance. The widely held belief is that non-orthodox congregations attract new members primarily through the school. Even if congregations tell members whose children have grown up that there is more to synagogue life than Bar Mitzvah preparation, most believe the children provide the glue that make the members stick. Hence the suggestion that some of congregational Jewish education (even adult education) could more efficiently be run on a communal basis is often greeted with marked resistance. The suggestion is seen as threatening the life-blood (membership) of the synagogue world. That schools are seen as vital to the life of the synagogue does not translate automatically into unqualified support - financial or

* For example, many Orthodox congregations have closed their supplementary schools in favor of day school education which receives communal support.

otherwise - for the schools. As one rabbi commented: Congregations are often begun by parents seeking an education for their children; but once they begin running the congregation, other priorities emerge and the school falls in importance. Perhaps it would not be an unfair generalization to say that today many congregations find other priorities more pressing than the personnel and programmatic needs of the school. Aging buildings, escalating personnel costs, falling contributions and bequests are often cited as creating new and more serious financial problems. Demographic changes, drops in the pool of volunteers, competition from Federation and JCC all contribute to a sense of diminishing human resources available to run the congregation. As one executive director noted: If people used to join a Shul for life, today people say "I'm joining for this year." The flow of commitment is running thinner through the veins of congregational life.

Synagogue schools may attract new members, but they do not pay the bills or necessarily bring in new donations. Faced with spiralling costs, a smaller congregation may have to choose between hiring a cantor or a full time educational director. In either case, some vital aspect of congregational life will be lost. Often it is the school that has to take its share of the cutbacks.

All this is not to deny that there are congregations that make educational programming a top priority and hire rabbis and educators who offer top quality Jewish education to both children and adults. Even within the synagogue world observers are not clear on why this happens in some congregations and not in others. Some cite the

factor of rabbinic leadership: is the rabbi vitally involved in the program of teaching? Others cite the quality of the educational director and others the congregation's commitment to excellence in all of its programs. But here is a question of central importance: Can we identify congregations that excell in their educational programs and determine what are the conditions most conducive to producing these results?

Feelings towards Federation within the synagogue world are decidedly ambivalent. On the one hand there is respect and admiration for the level of professionalism, the commitment to k'lal yisrael, the devotion and skill of lay leaders and the amounts of money raised. On the other hand there is envy and mistrust: envy of Federations power, mistrust of their concern for congregational life. As one rabbi said of a senior Federation professional: "He thinks Federation is the community and synagogue is where you go to d'aven ma'ariv."

There is no clear consensus over how Federation can best help synagogues to fulfill their mandates - though there is growing agreement that Federation should be investing in (or giving back to) synagogues, and that these two "worlds" mutually need one another. In the interviews conducted, I have heard opinions ranging from complete satisfaction that Federation offers time limited grants to synagogues for innovative programming in education to consideration of Federation supporting synagogues in a relationship analogous to J.C.C.'s. But what everyone in the synagogue world seeks is mutual respect: the open recognition by the more powerful Federation world

that congregations remain the local address for Jewish identification and that in their own particularistic way synagogues are playing a vital communal role.

*These observations are based on interviews I have been conducting this summer with leaders of the non-orthodox synagogue world in the Boston area. (I have also been staying in close contact with local Federation professionals.) My immediate objective (by Rosh Hashana) is to write a much fuller description of the issues discussed above for the Boston area. I would then (between October and December) want to compare Boston to two other areas (e.g. Cleveland and Detroit) on these same issues. By January I would have ready a paper that would describe: (1) how in 3 cities synagogues currently view their own capacities as educational institutions; (2) how they view Federations as a potential partner and source of help in fulfilling their educational mandate; (3) what emerging models there are today for fruitful and creative synagogue-Federation cooperation in the field of Jewish education.

A (ROUGH) PLAN FOR CONSTRUCTING A STATE OF THE FIELD

1. As I've argued previously, the single most essential institution to Jewish education in N.A. is the local synagogue. ~~It represents~~ the most frequent gateway for the family, the largest provider of services and employer of educators. The state of the field depends on the health of the synagogue.

2. While we have histories of synagogues and in-depth views of the supplementary school, we lack a view of the synagogue or congregation as a context for Jewish education. An in-depth study might address these questions:

1. How is educational policy set within the congregation?
2. How does the lay leadership function to set and carry out the policy?
3. How does the rabbi or cantor contribute to setting and carrying ~~carry~~-out the policy.
4. What does it take for a more expanded view of the role of education to take hold in the congregation?
5. How do the lay leaders and clergy view the role of the educators? How do the educators fit into the life of the congregation?
6. How do parents select a congregation and school and then make their way within the congregation?
7. What does accountability mean in synagogue life?
8. How do different synagogues interact with other educational institutions such as the bureau, Federation, JCC, camps, youth groups, etc? What sets the terms of that interaction?
9. When a day school or another active educational agency enters the community, what determines how synagogues will react and relate to their presence?

3. These kinds of questions can be studied in-depth by focusing on several synagogues within one community. While case studies are never fully representative, the in-depth view they offer - when guided by a set of defined research questions - give one a picture against which other case studies can be compared until amore composite picture begins to emerge.

4. I propose that I begin this kind of in-depth study this summer in the Boston area. Let me get started with 3 or 4 synagogues, generate data, hypotheses, etc. and then get reactions.

5. What would I be working towards? A picture which in one corner of the world could begin to explain - from this "inside perspective" - what the basic problems are that face communities doing Jewish education. It is a micro view - needing a complementary macro view - but I believe it can be a powerful piece of the larger Commission picture of the field.

Joseph ReimerDraft #1October, 1989Option #10: To Focus on the Retired and the Elderly1. What is the target population?

The target population is all Jewish adults who are of retirement age and beyond. The educational programs mostly assume a mobile population who can come or be brought to a center or synagogue. Among these, an emerging subpopulation is the elderly immigrants from the Soviet Union.

2. What are the desired outcomes of this option?

1. To keep senior citizens active, mentally alert and socially connected to fellow Jews.
2. To educate Jewish adults regarding their Jewish heritage.
3. To keep alive and validate their memories of their lives as Jews.
4. To increase their involvement in the Jewish community.
5. (For immigrants:) To integrate them into the North American Jewish community.

3. Do we know if these outcomes can be achieved?

Professionals in the field strongly believe that these outcomes can be achieved and point to the generally strong, consistent attendance at programs as indicators of ongoing success.

4. Are there alternatives to achieve these outcomes?

No. Since social interaction and community feeling are central goals in educating seniors, it remains imperative to have programs to which they can come. Since time availability and living patterns often differ from the general adult population, there are likely to continue to be many programs designed specifically for the needs of the elderly, while not ruling out inter-generational programs for them.

5. Do we have the know-how to implement this option?

Yes. There are professionals trained to work with the elderly who know how to run successful educational programs for them.

6. Is the personnel available?

Education for seniors draws from the existing personnel pool of social workers, rabbis and educators.

7. Are the materials available?

As with general adult education, the effort to curricularize materials is only beginning. Certain organizations like B'nai B'rith are investing in this effort. In the absence of curricular materials, programs rely on lecturers, basic texts (e.g. siddur), commercially-available books on Jewish subjects, and conversation in English, Yiddish, Russian and Hebrew.

8. Is the physical infrastructure available?

Generally yes. JCC's and synagogues are generally used.

9. Are the institutional supports available?

JCC's, synagogues, B'nai B'rith and the Federation movement supply much institutional support.

10. Is the funding available?

Yes, for basic programs. Funds are not sufficiently available for adequate staffing or training; for adequate outreach and transportation (which with this population is a major issue); or for development of educational materials.

11. Is the political support available?

Professionals in the field do not feel they receive much political support for educating this population. They report an attitude of this not being a communal priority.

12. Is the option timely?

Yes. With demographic trends showing the ongoing greying of Jewish Americans and with the population showing need and desire for continued and expanded programming, the option is timely.

13. What would the costs be?

Unknown.

14. How long would it take to implement?

With increased funding, more adequate staffing and transportation could be implemented in relatively short time. New programming, materials, and training would require a more moderate time span - 5 years.

15. How important is this to the field?

Viewed as the younger generations' link to the Jewish past, educated senior citizens could be seen as a vital resource to the community. Viewed in their own terms, senior citizens are a growing market for Jewish educational services.



Joseph ReimerDraft #1October, 1989

Option #25: To Focus Efforts on the Widespread Acquisition of the Hebrew Language

1. What is the target population?

The target population is all Jewish adults who would voluntarily take courses to acquire, maintain and improve a facility in Hebrew.

2. What are the desired outcomes of this option?

1. To teach people to read, write, speak and understand Hebrew.
2. To involve people more in Jewish study, practice and activity through greater facility and comfort in use of Hebrew.
3. To enhance ties to world Jewry through sharing of a common Jewish tongue.

3. Do we know if these outcomes can be achieved?

Courses offered in universities and at local colleges and centers that rely on well-established principles of the Ulpan method (immersion in Hebrew) are believed to achieve their goals with students who follow through on their studies. Recently developed crash courses in learning to read (traditional) Hebrew offered at synagogues and JCC's claim good success in their limited goal, but are new and as yet, not fully evaluated.

4. Are there alternatives to achieve these outcomes?

1. More massive support for going to learn Hebrew in Israel.
2. More investment in self-learning at home through the use of tapes and books.

5. Do we have the know-how to implement this option?

Knowledge of second language instruction is available and constantly improving. Knowing how to reach and motivate the many who do not know Hebrew to learn it remains illusive.

6. Is the personnel available?

Not to the extent required. While there are highly-expert professionals who teach Hebrew in the major urban areas and on university campuses, much Hebrew instruction, especially in synagogues, remains in the hands of untrained volunteers.

7. Are the materials available?

The availability of materials for instruction is improving, but there is still a great need for curricular materials designed for North American lay people at various skill levels in acquiring the language.

8. Is the physical infrastructure available?

Yes.

9. Are the institutional supports available?

There are many universities and colleges who support the teaching of Hebrew, and the newly-organized National Association of Professors of Hebrew provides additional support. The most prevalent instruction takes place in synagogues and centers, with added support from the newly-formed National Jewish Outreach Program and its Hebrew Reading Crash Course.

10. Is the funding available?

There is funding for the courses offered, but funding is lacking for outreach and recruitment, training teachers and developing materials.

11. Is the political support available?

Professionals in the field feel a lack of political support. Learning Hebrew in the community is not a priority on the agenda of most organizations.

12. Is the option timely?

With increased interest on many campuses in learning Hebrew and in many synagogues and centers for adults to become more Jewishly educated (for example, the phenomenon of adult Bar and Bat Mitzvah), there is a greater receptivity to learning Hebrew.

13. What would the cost be?

The most significant costs are in outreach to people and training and paying professional teachers.

14. How long would it take to implement?

Increasing utilization of existing services through greater outreach could begin immediately. Training professional staff and developing adequate materials would take longer - 5 years.

15. How important is this to the field?

Knowledge of Hebrew is often the gateway to greater Jewish study, practice and involvement. As a means to these ends, Hebrew instruction takes on added importance.



MEMO

TO: RESEARCH GROUP
FROM: JOSEPH REIMER 11/27/89
RE: READINGS

I have enclosed two short readings as background to my research report on The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education.

The first is from David Schoem's dissertation. In this ethnographic description of the one school in its synagogue context, Schoem raises several key obstacles to cooperation that might exist in any such relationship. My question is how do some synagogues handle these obstacles to make for greater rather than lesser cooperation.

The second is from Daniel Elazar's Community and Polity and deals with the changing place of the synagogue in the larger Jewish community. My question is: are there differences in how synagogues choose to handle their options in relating to other institutions within the community? Do the differences have educational implications?

Mailed on 11/28 to:

Hanan Alexander
David Ariel
Isa Aron
Jack Bieler
Aryeh Davidson
Sharon Feinman-Nemser
Alan Hoffman
Barry Holtz
Michael Inbar
Alvin Schiff
Jonathan Woocher

THE SYNAGOGUE AS A CONTEXT FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Introduction

The following is an interim report on the research project I am conducting on "The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education". The research was commissioned by The Mandel Associated Foundations of Cleveland to serve as background to the writing of the final report for The Commission on Jewish Education in North America. A first draft report on this research will be submitted by the first week of January, 1990. The purpose of this interim report is to elicit critical feedback to my thinking as it is evolving. The focus here is more on a conceptual scheme on System and Subsystem than on an analysis of data.

The Jews of North America are accustomed to hearing bad news about the supplementary school in their local synagogue. Not only do lay people often report having had bad or indifferent experiences in these schools, but recent research reports (such as BJE, 1988; Schoem, 1979) have also added doubt as to the ability of these schools to reach even minimal goals in educating young Jews. It has reached a point where serious people are questioning if the community ought to invest further in trying to improve supplementary education or whether it would be wiser to invest in other forms of Jewish education - such as day schools, informal education, the Israel experience, media - to offset the weakness of the supplementary school experience.

This research begins from a different perspective. It is an inquiry into systems and subsystems. It begins from the following diagram:



A vast majority of supplementary schools are "located within" synagogues. But what is the nature of that location within? Is the school housed within? Is it supported by the synagogue? Is it a department within an agency or more a member of a family? Is it, to borrow a metaphor, a viable entity in its own right, or is it so bound to the host environment that it cannot be thought of except as part of that environment?

However these questions are answered, they point to the importance of carefully considering the relationship between school and synagogue. They further imply that to focus on the supplementary school in its own right may involve a conceptual error. It may be that the concern for the viability of these schools is best reformulated as a concern for the host environment, the synagogue, and its capacity to host or carry the school into the future.

The synagogue is "located within" the community, but in a different sense than the school is "located within" the congregation. The boundaries of this relationship are less clearly defined and hence more fluid. Yet, how the local synagogue "fits into" the larger picture of the local Jewish community (as well as "into" other local and national communities) may be an integral part of the conceptual work we need to be doing in thinking about the viability of the school "within" the synagogue. This perspective invites us to consider how interactions between the synagogue and the community affect the place of the school "within" the congregation. For example, when help or support for educational programming is offered from without, how does the congregation mobilize to draw upon or resist that offer? When population shifts occur, how does the congregation mobilize to deal with those changes in the community?

On Differences

The language of "system, subsystem" is appealing insofar as it invites consideration of the interactive nature of the relationship of "parts" and "wholes". In considering the school-synagogue-community network of relationships, it is important to stress the dynamic nature of the systems involved. While there are structural constants and real-world constraints on how these relationships are defined, there is also much room for latitude of definition, for how synagogues "choose" to relate to the school "within" and the community "without." So, too, there is room for the school and the community (represented by its institutions and individual members) to "choose" how to relate to the synagogue.

What the systems perspective concretely translates into in the case of this research is a set of observations on differences in how congregations, even within the same community and denomination, have set up these relationships. They host the school within differently and greet communal changes and initiatives differently; and these differences seem to be related to differences in the quality of the educational programs offered.

Consistent with a systems perspective, this research avoids identifying synagogue variables that may impact the supplementary educational programs. Rather, it attempts to describe the elements of a relationship to highlight how, when the elements are handled differently, the relationship evolves differently.

On Goodness

Lightfoot's The Good High School (1983) is appealing to this descriptive effort in its use of "portraits of character and culture" and its willingness to talk of "goodness" in relation to schools.

The description in the literature of the congregational school (is this not a preferred label?) has been so negative that it may be time to highlight "goodness": schools within congregations that seem to stand out in terms of their quality. The problem is that the judgment of goodness - as in Lightfoot's case - is clinical, based on the eye of the seasoned observer, and not on objective criteria.

On Methodology

This is a qualitative study of three synagogues and their schools within the Boston area. It relies on observations and interviews. It will attempt to yield a portrait of the synagogue-school relationship within this Jewish community and highlight how differences in constructing that relationship relate to the goodness of the congregational school.

References

1. Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, Jewish Supplementary Schooling: An Educational System in Need of Change. New York, 1988.
2. Lightfoot, Sara Lawrence. The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture. New York; Basic Books, 1983.
3. Schoem, David L. Ethnic Survival in America: An Ethnography of a Jewish Afternoon School. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1979.

Joseph Reimer

A COMMISSION TO BUILD THE PROFESSION

It is hard to imagine a time when the Jewish state was not the concern of the whole organized Jewish community in North America. Yet such was the case before 1939 and, to a certain extent, pre 1967. It is hard to imagine a time when Russian Jewry was an issue of concern to only a handful of activists. Yet such was the case when the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry began in the 1960's. What turned these issues into major agenda items for the whole community was either a dramatic event (The Six Day War) or a dramatic presentation (Eli Wies~~er~~'s Jews of Silence) which immediately grabbed our collective imagination and demanded a communal response.

One could argue that Jewish education is as vital to Jewish survival in North America as are the State of Israel and the plight of Soviet Jewry. Yet Jewish education has lacked a dramatic self-presentation. It has to struggle to make itself visible as an item of communal concern. Certainly CAJE, with its traveling annual conference and its productive ties to local federations, has helped significantly in raising the visibility of this field. Yet for all that a CAJE and a JESNA are steps towards communal recognition, Jewish education as a field remains the vital concern of only the dedicated few.

The Commission on Jewish Education in North America is a step of a different sort in the process of putting Jewish education on the communal agenda as a priority item. Agendas need champions and Jewish education is finding one in Mort Mandel. A Cleveland industrialist and philanthropist, Mr. Mandel served as national president of both JWB and CJF before becoming the first chairman of the Committee on Jewish Education of the Jewish Agency. He is a communal leader who discovered for himself the vital importance of Jewish education to continued Jewish survival and who is now committed to moving that discovery beyond the inner circle to the leadership of the community at large. The Commission, began in the summer of 1988, was initiated by the Mandel Associated Foundations in cooperation with JWB and JESNA and in collaboration with CJF. It is the joint product of a private foundation working with national, communal and educational agencies to involve top lay and professional leaders in an 18 month study of the field of Jewish education.

Many have asked if Jewish education really needs another self-study. Were the Commission only that it might be unnecessary, but as forum for bringing around one table Federation and JWB leaders, heads of private foundations, rabbis and Jewish educators, the Commission may be unprecedented as an act of making Jewish education visible to a leadership with the resources to help build this field into a proud profession.

It was not long into its study of Jewish education that the Commission came to recognize the centrality of the issue of personnel to improving the field. While concrete proposals are still forthcoming, the Commission is developing an approach to personnel which can be summarized in the following points.

1. Issues in personnel can not be productively approached in isolation, but need to be seen in conjunction with issues of community. The community, through its lay leadership, has to want excellent personnel and has to get involved in gaining and maintaining excellent personnel if progress is to be made. Schools, congregations, JCC's cannot do it alone.
2. Personnel will initially be improved not on a national level, but on a local level. Each community has to want and invest in the best for themselves if change is to occur. Local interest and competition for excellence at this point are healthy for this field, while there also have to be national agencies which help and even guide communities in developing personnel.
3. While better training, more recruitment, higher salaries and benefits and greater opportunities for professional development are each crucial for improving personnel, no one step in isolation from the others will improve the overall picture. As hard as it is to imagine, communities will have to address all those personnel issues as a package if the overall situation is to improve.
4. Federations and foundations as funding sources can be most helpful when they build upon on-going communal efforts to improve the personnel picture. Communities cannot do it alone. Training institutions, national agencies, networks among communities all will need to play a role. Coordination among these bodies will be crucial as will keeping alive the drive for improvement. But the fundamental building block is a united community at work on improving its personnel picture, and upon that block much, hopefully, can be built.

MAR 02 1990

Reisman

**Benjamin S.
Hornstein
Program in
Jewish
Communal
Service**

February 26, 1990

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Dear Mark,

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I received from Paul Freedman of the United Synagogue of America. While I only pass on this letter, I have had similar requests from virtually every person with whom I spoke in preparing my report on Informal Education. I think there would be much merit to making the report available to these professional leaders of the field of formal and informal education. But obviously this is a policy matter and one that I would encourage the Commission to address. I trust you will bring this to the attention of Hank Zucker or Seymour Fox or Annette or whomever...

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Bernie

Bernard Reisman, Director
Hornstein Program

ng

May 5-7, 1990



*Twentieth
Anniversary*

DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH ACTIVITIES

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Stephen S. Wolnek
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National Youth Commission

February 15, 1990

Bernard Reisman, Director
Hornstein Program in Jewish
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P.O. Box 9110
Waltham, Mass 02254-9110

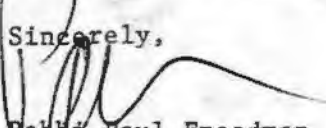
Dear Bernie:

If the report that you rendered to the Commission is not confidential, you can well imagine that I would certainly appreciate perusing a copy. I will, however, understand if there is a factor of confidentiality.

In that case, and again as long as it does not create any problems, I would be absolutely fascinated by your own conclusions and observations, either as part of the report or independent of same. I have a feeling that I could learn a tremendous amount from how you digested and perceived and therefore, evaluated what we said. There was a fairly unanimous sentiment being expressed by us when we met with you but nonetheless, your opinion as one of the top professionals in the North American Jewish Professional Community would be something very important for me, as a real learning experience.

Again, it really was a pleasure meeting with you and I look forward to many, many such opportunities in the future.

Sincerely,


Rabbi Paul Freedman

PF:gn



MAG. ✓
S.H.H. ✓

file
Reimer
COMMISSION
ON JEWISH EDUCATION
IN NORTH AMERICA

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April 6, 1990

Dr. Joseph Reimer
Benjamin S. Hornstein Program
Brandeis University
Waltham, MA 02254-9110

Dear Joe:

Thanks for your thoughtful memo of April 4. Unfortunately, my paper was completed before I left for Israel on March 22.

Some of the suggestions you made were incorporated in the redone version. I'll also keep your letter for the persons who write the final report so that they can take them into account when they review my paper.

I am sorry to hear that you had the flu and hope that you are tip top now. All the best.

Cordially,

Henry L. Zucker
Henry L. Zucker



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MEMO

To: Henry Zucker
From: Joe Reimer 4/4/90
Re: "Community Organizations for Jewish Education"

I read and wrote comments on your wonderful paper several weeks ago, but a two-week bout with the flu has thrown me completely off schedule. If it is not too late, I'll offer you a few small recommendations.

- 1) Page 1, paragraph 1: To be more inclusive of informal education, I'd write: "progress depends on improvement in front line and administrative personnel", and at the end: "better quality Jewish education personnel and programs."
- 2) On page 2: In your long list of target populations, do you wish to explicitly include Bureau directors? In the list of local institutions, do you wish to include Hillel foundations?
- 3) On the top of page 4, you write "A number of federations are involved. . ." But on page 8, you write of the "wall to wall coalition". Would it be better on page 4 to write "a number of communities are . . . in studies of their Jewish education programs?"
- 4) On page 4, #1: You include "communal schools." I wondered why do they belong here? Is it day schools that you mean?
- 5) On page 5, paragraph 5 is a crucial one. I don't think many understand why "greater cooperation . . . is basic to developing and allocating funds." Perhaps one more sentence of explication would underline this point.
- 6) Page 7, paragraph 1: I don't think the last sentence works well. Too many verbs in one sentence.
- 7) Pages 8-9: In each of the recommendations (except 4), the Commission is singular and should be followed by a singular verb. E.G. in #1: encourages.

But on the whole, this is a model of succinct clarity. Well done!

MEMO TO: Senior Policy Advisors

FROM: Mark Gurvis *MG*

DATE: May 29, 1990

I am pleased to share with you a copy of Joe Reimer's paper on "The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education." In the midst of preparations for the June 12 meeting, please try to find the time to read the paper and share your reactions.

Sent to: David Ariel
Stephen Hoffman
Martin Kraar
Arthur Rotman
Herman Stein
Jonathan Woocher

THE GREAT FAMILY DEBATE:
IMPLICATIONS FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

JOSEPH REIMER

MAY, 1990

The Great Family Debate:
Implications for Jewish Education

In recent decades, in America and in other Western countries there has been a vociferous debate over the history, present condition, prospects and, most important, human and social value of the family. (Berger and Berger, 1983, vii)

My introduction to the great family debate came in my first graduate course in 1969 when the professor assigned Bruno Bettelheim's The Children of the Dream, a psychoanalytic study of childrearing on an Israeli kibbutz. Bettelheim, no stranger to controversy, took a strong stand on one aspect of the great debate: the role of the nuclear family in raising psychologically healthy children. Citing evidence from his and other studies of kibbutz children, Bettelheim claimed the kibbutz' choice to de-emphasize the role of the parents in raising children in itself had no deleterious effect on the emotional health of the kibbutz children and suggested that other societies, such as our own, consider developing non-familial options for caring for children who could not be well-provided for by their own families.

In 1969, the year of Woodstock and Portnoy's Complaint, the question that engaged us as a culture was: Could we do with less family involvement? Bettelheim, fierce in his denunciation of the fantasies of both Philip Roth and the Woodstock generation, unwittingly shared with them the sense that an over-reliance on the intense attachments of the nuclear family could contribute to increasing civilization's discontents.

By the mid 1970's, the terms of the debate had dramatically shifted and the dominant question was becoming: would family life disappear in America? Some observers were worried about what the effects of rapid social change would be on the health of the family (Bronfenbrenner, 1972; Keniston, 1977), while others worried about whether certain social policies - such as those proposed by Bettelheim - were undermining the potency of the family (Berger & Berger, 1983; Schlossman, 1979). Sociologists and others began ringing the bells of alarm around issues of social mobility and changing family roles, while Jimmy Carter was able to use the concern aroused about family life as a successful political issue in his 1976 presidential campaign. Some found reassuring Mary Jo Bane's (1978) evidence that the family was "here to stay"; others picked up on her caveat, "but in changed form", as a continuing sense of tension. Clearly, family-related issues - such as child care, women's roles, abortion and care for the elderly - have continued to dominate the American political agenda since the mid-1970's.

An American Jewish Crisis

'I have good news and bad news', I told a lecture audience in the Fall of 1980 . . . 'The good news is that a major revitalization of Jewish religious and cultural life is under way; the bad news is that there may not be enough Jews left to sustain it.'

(Silberman, 1985, p. 274)

American Jews have been immune to neither rapid social

changes in family life nor to intense concern over the consequences. The first concern has been demographic: would there remain a significant number of Jews in North America or would a combination of increasing intermarriage rates and decreasing birth rates eat away at the body of the community? The second concern has been for Jewish continuity: even if the numbers do not unduly decrease, will changes in domestic life make it unlikely that the germ of Jewish culture will be nurtured within the family and transmitted from generation to generation?

A nervous Jewish community has employed a new form of fortune-teller, the sociologist, to keep close tabs on the fortune of the community. The sociologists, in turn, have made family issues the focal point for studying Jewish identity and continuity as Stephen M. Cohen makes clear:

Understanding changes in the family and how these changes influence the expression of Jewish commitment is crucial for understanding the prospects of Jewish continuity. . . . Many of the fears for Jewish continuity revolve around concerns over: the Jewish identity of the intermarried and their offspring, the Jewish population size in light of ostensibly low birthrates and the Jewishness of large numbers of young adults who now live for long periods outside the conventional family context (1988, p.21).

The organized community has responded to these warning signals not just with anxiety but also with plans to strengthen the Jewish family.

Strengthening the family should be highlighted as a priority of the Jewish community: in discussion groups and study at family retreats; at public forums, in self-help groups, in education programs and as a subject of academic research.

Capable young leaders and other effective agents of change should be utilized to encourage re-examination of prevailing values and to counteract styles of behavior destructive of family life. . . Jewish communal agencies should also develop their own family life programs for adolescents, young adults, high school and college students, single persons, engaged couples and so on.

(American Jewish Committee, 1979. p.24)

The emphasis was on an outreach to marginal populations, support for people caught in the changing patterns of family life and education for the values of family life. The Jewish agenda for child care, support groups, outreach to the intermarrieds and services for singles grew in a positive way from this sense of crisis. The Jewish family was no longer to be merely praised; in the 1980's it was to be studied, supported and sustained.

The Educational Crisis

As concern mounted about the capacity of the changing Jewish family to nurture Jewish connectedness in its members, a parallel wave of anxiety spread about the effectiveness of Jewish education, and particularly, the supplementary school. If a date can be attached to the emerging sense of an educational crisis, it may be 1974 with the completion of Harold Himmelfarb's doctoral dissertation.

Himmelfarb set out to test the effects of Jewish schooling on later-life Jewish observance and affiliation. In controversial findings which found support in a subsequent doctoral dissertation by Bock (1976), Himmelfarb (1974, 1975, 1977) came to three basic conclusions: (1) the childhood home exerts more

influence than does the Jewish school on adult Jewish behavior; (2) day school education over a number of years has greater impact than does part-time, supplementary education; (3) supplementary education only has significant impact when the student reaches a threshold of 3,000 hours of attendance. (Bock found the threshold to be 1,000 hours.)

Since a vast majority of Jewish children in the United States receive supplementary and not day school Jewish education and very few of those attend for 3,000 hours, Himmelfarb's work seemed to call into question the effectiveness of the prevailing form of Jewish education. And even though Cohen's recent (1988) review of this work and analysis of data from a New York study raise doubts about the threshold hypothesis and shows some positive effects of time-limited supplementary education on adult Jewish behavior, these studies neither challenge Himmelfarb's first two conclusions nor undo a decade of concern among educators and community leaders about the effectiveness of supplementary education.

Himmelfarb, Bock and Cohen were all working with demographic data and not with direct observations of supplementary schools. But two recent studies (B.J.E., 1988; Schoem, 1989) based on direct observation and testing serve only to heighten the sense of educational crisis. These newer studies show how many supplementary schools are unable to meet their own educational objectives in terms of imparting knowledge, affecting attitudes or changing patterns of religious behavior. They also confirm

the hypothesis that the children's home life plays a significant role in determining the effectiveness of their Jewish education. As Schoem writes of the supplementary school he studied in depth:

The thesis of this paper is that the explanation for failure of students in the Jewish school lay in their parents' and their own perception that there was no compelling reward to be expected from their education . . . The 12-year olds who complained that 'Hebrew school doesn't matter' were speaking truthfully about the attitudes and behaviors they saw valued at home and in the community. For them, going to Harvard 'counted'; studying a portion of the Torah did not (1982, p. 318).

Facing a school system that often does not work effectively, but a majority of parents who continue "to vote for" this form of Jewish education, Jewish educators (B.J.E., 1988) have wondered where their best leverage for change might lie. These studies, paradoxically, point back to the parents. For if it is the home of origin that has the most powerful influence on adult Jewish behavior and the parents who select the form of Jewish education the children will receive and the salience of that education in the life of the family, then it is the parents who also have the most power to change the status quo. A change in parental attitude could do more good for these schools than all the curricular and pedagogic reform that educators by themselves could accomplish.

From Outreach to Inreach

If the communal response to the sociological crisis of the Jewish family primarily has been outreach to the unaffiliated and the not-yet-affiliated, the emerging response to the parallel crisis in Jewish education may be characterized as inreach to the

marginally affiliated. For while the two crises are clearly related in their mutual concern about the fate of the Jewish family, the programmatic responses to them have tended to diverge as Susan Wall (1985) notes.

The bulk of programs can be categorized into two groups each with its own theoretical approach. One type are those designed by social work professionals and referred to as programs in Jewish family life education... Its goal is to improve family functioning... The specifically Jewish component might range from mere sponsorship (a course on child rearing which takes place in a synagogue) to the conclusion in the curriculum of an exploration of Jewish text.

The second category of Jewish family education - those programs designed and implemented by Jewish educators - usually espouse (Jewish) educational standards and are generally directed to the population of semi-affiliated Jews... Jewish educators have questioned the quality of their Jewish lives and whether these Jews will be able to transmit their Judaism to the next generation. . . . To counteract these tendencies programs were created that usually involve participating together in Jewish activities that take place within a school or community setting (pp. 2-4).

The divergence runs along several lines: programs in Jewish family life education are generally run by social workers in a group format for more "marginal" populations and involve support for and exploration of the issues at hand (Rembaum, 1987). An example would be a support group for members of interfaith couples who wish to come together to explore questions involved in how to create a cohesive family life in the face of their different backgrounds and faiths (Cowan and Cowan, 1987). While the course takes place under Jewish sponsorship, its educational goal is exploration, not conversion. Its message is: we, the

Jewish community, are concerned and available, but understand that these familial life choices are complex and, in our society, best resolved by the couple themselves.

In contrast, Jewish educators, responding to the educational crisis, have begun to design programs in Jewish family education (henceforth, J.F.E.). These are programs run primarily by educators or rabbis, offered usually in a synagogue or JCC, that have a specifically Jewish, or even Judaic, agenda. They speak to families' Jewish knowledge, values, activities and celebrations, and address the family as an agency for cultural-religious transmission, seeking to help the family to do its work in transmitting Judaism. J.F.E. speaks less directly to the crisis of contemporary family life, leaving those issues more or less to the social workers in their courses on Jewish family life education.

The sociological crisis in Jewish family life has not escaped the attention of Jewish educators; they (Appelman, 1985; B.J.E., 1988) note how changes in family life affect their work. Yet for them the overwhelming issue is not birthrate, intermarriage or divorce, but, as Schoem (1982) describes, assimilation into the majority culture. They are not daily affected by 30-year old singles who have yet to affiliate; they are deeply affected by families who affiliate by joining congregations and sending children to school, yet do not support at home what is taught in school. The primary dilemma of Jewish educators is also sociological, but it is the sociology of marginal affilia-

tion: how to involve children and parents in the drama of Jewish life while their attention is given over primarily to the competing dramas of secular life.

While the distinction between outreach and inreach is not to be taken as final - for reasons to which we will return, it is helpful for clarifying the difference between Jewish family life and family education. The literature on J.F.E. is written by Jewish educators who are responding not primarily to the sociological crisis in the life of the American Jewish family, but to the educational crisis within Jewish supplementary schools.

The Communal Case for Jewish Family Education

While the literature on J.F.E. is written by educators, the case for it has been made most powerfully by thinkers in communal circles like Jonathan Woocher (1988) and Barry Shrage (1988). In sociological terms Shrage makes the case clearly.

Since the 1971 National Jewish Population Study planning in the field of Jewish education has been based in part on very low estimates of American Jewish affiliation and of the proportion of youngsters receiving a Jewish education... More recent studies in most major Jewish urban areas... have shown a 'family life cycle' pattern of affiliation that produces very high affiliation over time... These kind of demographic facts suggest far different strategies. Since nearly all families with children affiliate with a congregation at some point, outreach may not be the most cost effective or highest priority strategy for strengthening Jewish commitment... In reality, few of the institutions with which Jews affiliate are structured or staffed to take advantage of the high rate of affiliation we currently enjoy in order to significantly strengthen and upgrade the level of Jewish identification of the families that pass through...

This paper will therefore suggest a number of communal strategies for intensifying the affiliation process for marginally affiliated Jews (pp. 1-2).

Following the recent work of Cohen (1988) and others, Shrage notes that the data indicate a vast majority of Jewish families send their pre-adolescent children for some form of Jewish education (be it formal or informal). These findings suggest higher levels of affiliation than had earlier been assumed and open the opportunity for the synagogue and other "gateway institutions" to "significantly strengthen and upgrade the level of Jewish identification of the families that pass through."

From Shrage's communal perspective pre-school programs at JCCs, supplementary schools at synagogues and Jewish summer camps are not simply providers of educational services to children but are also "gateway institutions" that families belong to or pass through in the years when there are young children at home. The gateway institutions have an important communal function to play. Jews on the periphery of the community are likely to turn first to them to seek educational services for their children, and if these institutions can provide quality, family-oriented service, they may motivate the families to seek greater, ongoing participation in the Jewish community.

What is new in this message is "family-oriented" service. Providers of child care, summer camps and religious education have traditionally seen themselves as educating children. The logic of Shrage's argument leads to a balanced focus on the children and the families. If the children's school years

(perhaps expanded recently to include the pre-school years) constitute the period of most-likely affiliation for the whole nuclear family - when, for example, they are most likely to become members of a synagogue or JCC, then the community through its agencies has to make the most of that contact. Exclusive focus on the children becomes counter-productive; the client, newly-defined, is the whole family.

In a more traditional cultural system than our own, in which children's education is but one of many points of sustained contact between the community and the family planned, deliberate family education is unnecessary. The family and the community are already working together over a sustained period of time to transmit the culture from one generation to the next. But where the contact is condensed into one time period and the family and community are not in sync in terms of cultural rhythms or values, there needs to be a deliberate effort to coordinate acts of cultural transmission. J.F.E. can be seen as the community's attempt to reach in and make contact with family members so they can begin to work together to ensure some level of Jewish continuity, a goal the family has implicitly endorsed when it sought to enter the gateway institution.

The Synagogue as Setting

Although several communal institutions, including the JCC, summer camp and early childhood center, could be called "gateway institutions," Shrage focuses on the synagogue as the primary

setting for J.F.E. He argues that is where most families enter the gate of the organized community and hence where they need to be met and greeted. As the literature on J.F.E. generally shares the synagogue focus (Appleman, 1985; Kaye (1989), Schiff (1986), Wolfson (1983)), we in this paper will also limit our attention to synagogue-based programs in J.F.E. However, it is important to note that there is nothing inherent in the concept of J.F.E. to rule out its adoption by the other gateway institutions or its expansion to other segments of the family life cycle besides parents with school-aged children (Appelman, 1987; Bernard, 1989; Reimer, forthcoming).

But choosing the synagogue is hardly a neutral choice dictated simply by circumstances. Lawrence Kushner (1988) has powerfully shown how family life cycle events have become the basis of religious life in the congregation. In his view marginally-affiliated parents choose to join a synagogue not simply to provide Jewish education to the children, but also to find some Jewish-religious meaning for their lives. This search for meaning finds its most direct expression in life cycle rituals such as bar mitzvah because it is at such moments that the generational link is laid bare and the parents can locate themselves in a meaning-system larger than themselves. Family emerges for them as an anchor in a sea of change and the congregation can ritually confer a new status on the bar mitzvah child precisely because at that moment it has the family's full support.

Harold Schulweis makes a very similar observation in relation to marriage and conversion that relates back to the great family debate.

Consider intermarriage, the issue that engages so much interest in the Jewish community. Consider the not atypical instance of Susan who has studied with rabbis, attended public classes, religious services, retreats. Susan is a Jew by choice, moved by the shiver of Jewish history and ritual symbolism, attracted to the non-dogmatic character of Jewish theology and the centrality of the Jewish home. She has immersed herself in the waters of the mikvah, passed the test of Beth Din. Now, at last, she is invited to her Jewish in-laws-to-be on a Friday night. The home is finely furnished, the table exquisitely set. It is her first experience with Jews outside the public arena. Susan reports her disappointment. The Sabbath evening was far different from what her textbooks and teachers had given her to believe. It was an evening bereft of benediction, neither blessings over the candles or wine or bread. She had been told of "zemiroth", the Sabbath songs around the table, the chanting of grace after meals. But here are songless, graceless Jews, with table talk as pedestrian as the weekday dust. The integration of Susan into the Jewish family is not the problem. The problem is with the Jewish integration of the family into Judaism (1988, p. 2).

Here the issues are joined: outreach has brought the non-Jewish spouse to conversion, but once converted, what will keep her involved? When she and her husband have children, what will motivate them to send their children to Jewish schools and relate seriously to the demands of that education? The answer has to involve the family as well as community. The whole effort at outreach could come to very little if there is not a subsequent effort to provide content and meaning to the choice of affiliation.

J.F.E. in its broadest sense stems not only from a crisis in

a particular school system, but from the realization that all educational efforts by the community - be they outreach to the intermarried or inreach to Jewish children - will succeed only to the extent that the family is also involved as a partner. Schulweis writes, "the family cannot be by-passed." That could be the credo for J.F.E.

The Goals of Jewish Family Education

What are the primary goals of J.F.E. programs in synagogues? Reviewing the literature allows us to list the following common goals and to order them in a sequence from simpler to more complex.

1. Involve parents in their children's Jewish education.

In their survey of congregational schools in the greater New York area, the B.J.E. study (1988) found that parental involvement in the schools is virtually non-existent. Parents rarely are in contact with the teacher or principal of the school and have only a vague idea of what to expect from this education. They do not evince much desire to get more involved.

Involvement as a first goal entails the school and the synagogue welcoming parents, sponsoring get-to-know-you events, creating opportunities where parents can contribute to classroom life and assignments which can engage parents and children in joint Jewish activities in the home. Involvement, though still child-oriented, is a big first step beyond where many congregational schools have been in establishing open relations between

school and home.

2. Establish contexts for parents' Jewish learning

Most programs in adult Jewish education are populated heavily by senior adults leaving a vacuum in programming for younger parents who feel a need to know more about Judaism in order to participate in their children's Jewish education. There have been attempts to fill the vacuum with parallel education in parent education programs, holiday workshops and intensive courses in the basic Judaism (Wolfson, 1983). But few are the congregations which communicate unequivocally the expectation that child and adult learning have to proceed along parallel lines.

3. Establish programs for joint family involvement in Jewish learning.

Besides parallel learning, there is value in family members spending quality time together in Jewish pursuits (Bernard, 1989). There is available a widening repertoire of activities that involve parents and children in fun, interactive learning about the Jewish yearly cycle, life cycle, history and culture (Alper, 1987).

4. Build community among families.

Families joining congregations, especially large ones, may not have much connection to their fellow members. Programs that involve family activities can create an arena in which families can get to know one another and begin to join together for Jewish celebration and other activities (Appelman, 1985). As we will

note, there is a close connection between the J.F.E. movement and the notion of family clusters or havurot (Elkins, 1976).

5. Transfer Jewish learning to the home.

The ultimate goal of J.F.E. is to provide families with the motivation and skill to support children's Jewish education by enriching the Jewish ambience of the home. Although how that is to be done may be a matter of debate, all authors agree that parental involvement and learning is not only an end in itself, but also a step toward practice, and hopefully, practice in the home.

Putting Jewish Family Education Into Practice

While in the literature we find no linear attempts to put the goals into practice, we do find two descriptive pieces on how synagogue-based J.F.E. programs have been put into place (Appelman, 1985; Kaye, 1989) and one blueprint for how they might be adopted in a larger metropolitan area (B.J.E., 1988). Based on these reports from Michigan, Boston and New York and my own experience in implementing such programs (Reimer and Jaffee, 1989), I put forth a possible model of implementation.

1. In Michigan and Boston synagogues' interest in J.F.E. programming was stimulated and made possible by initial grants from the community. A partnership between federation and synagogue is an excellent basis for J.F.E. in so far as it expresses Shrage's (1988) vision of bringing marginally affiliated families closer to the center of both religious and communal

activity.

2. Within the synagogue a team of the rabbi, the educator and the lay leadership is involved in conceiving and implementing the plans for J.F.E. In different synagogues, varying members of the team may play more prominent roles. In Michigan a lay steering committee was formed to play a central role in overseeing the programs, marketing them to the membership and advocating for them within the synagogue structure. In the Boston area it is more common for the rabbi and educator to be the lead players and for the lay leadership to support and encourage, but not be actively involved. In both cases, though, the educator working alone could not have successfully launched the programs and kept them afloat without help from the other partners.

3. J.F.E. typically involves several types of educational programs. Appelman suggests three models of education, a suggestion I will adapt to reflect the Boston area experience.

(a) Adult education - Parents come to these programs at all levels of Jewish knowledge, observance and commitment. They need to be met at each of these levels and be made to feel welcome whatever their background. For many parents the unspoken question is, "Given my background, can I ever find a comfortable place in Judaism?" As the family educators provide the beginnings of a Jewish re-education, they need to be putting parents at ease, answering their questions and modelling the synagogue as an accepting community.

(b) Experiential learning - Families come to these programs looking for opportunities to spend quality family time together (Bernard, 1989). Providing interactive experiences for parents and children with Jewish content is not only supportive of the families' wish to be together, but also enabling of their learning that Jewish activity can be both fun and family-oriented.

(c) Life-cycle learning - Families are more receptive to new input around life-cycle events (Friedman, 1980). When a child is to be born or adopted, schooling about to begin, when adolescence is approaching or a marriage is being planned, the family knows it needs help from the community. At these moments (as with facing a death or loss), Jews turn to the rabbi and the congregation and ask for direction in structuring the transforming event. These are also moments for J.F.E. A group of prospective parents or of parents planning an upcoming bar or bat mitzvah can meet with a leader over several weeks in a synagogue and learn a great deal about not only the life cycle moment they share, but also how Jewish tradition gives shape to the moment. Such groups provide a logical bridging between the concerns of family life education (support, sharing, acceptance) and J.F.E. (Jewish content and experience).

4. Beginning J.F.E. programming with a specific cohort of parents and children - a group receptive to these interventions - tends to generate more demand if the initial programs meet the needs of the clientele. In both Michigan and Boston, initial success bred more demand for J.F.E. programs probably because

word spread that the programs were both fun and educative and parents are often looking for these kinds of opportunities.

Reflecting specifically on the Boston area experience, Joan Kaye points to the adoption of J.F.E. programs by 22 congregations in the span of several years as partial evidence that J.F.E. is more than a passing fad. However, she is cautious in drawing conclusions because of the stimulus of the community grant. What will happen after the seed money runs out is a better long-term indicator, as Appelman also indicates.

In one Boston area congregation in which J.F.E. programming spread more quickly from a single group of families to multiple groups over many grades, the very success of the work endangered its continuation. J.F.E. is labor-intensive and space-occupying. To provide appropriate programs when parents are available (i.e. often on Sunday mornings) taxes the limited resources of a medium-sized synagogue. All the available space may have to be given over, the rabbi and principal (and where possible, cantor and youth director) have to be available to lead groups and the synagogue often has to hire extra educational leadership as well. This takes a lot of shared commitment and costs extra money. If the rabbinic or lay leadership is hesitant (as does occur), the momentum can be lost. Even when popular, J.F.E. does not come easily. Hence it has to belong to the congregation as a whole.

What are Realistic Expectations?

When J.F.E. programs are put into place in synagogues, what can we realistically expect them to achieve?

Given the absence in the literature of evaluation studies, the above question cannot be given a definitive answer. However, based on the Michigan (Bernard, 1989) and Boston area (Kaye, 1989; Reimer and Jaffee, 1989) experiences, we can begin to see the outlines of reasonable expectations of outcomes that can be achieved.

1. When programs are carefully designed and appropriately marketed within a receptive congregation, parents respond positively, come to the activities, participate eagerly and ask for more such programming.

Within this encouraging message, certain cautions need to be noted: (a) To be successful, J.F.E. programs require careful design because they are appealing to more than one generation at a time and to families whose members come from potentially varied backgrounds. (b) J.F.E. programs should grow out of the life of the congregation and not simply be imported from another site. The professionals and/or lay leaders need to read accurately the needs of families in this congregation, design programs to meet those needs and market the program to the targeted group of families. (c) Given the voluntary nature of J.F.E. programs, it is to be expected that not all parents will initially be interested. It is better to begin with pockets of interest and let the word spread, realizing that interest is not likely to be

universal. (d) Even among interested parents it is to be expected that many will approach tentatively. Given that some parents have had little positive experience in synagogue, or in the case of intermarrieds, very little experience of any kind in a synagogue, they are likely to be internally resistant until they feel welcome, accepted and comfortable. Parents, as children, need to be won over.

In congregations in which there has been little recent outreach to parents, the task of beginning J.F.E. programs is more complex. It often takes time and constancy of approach for parents to feel they are truly welcome. A certain level of communication and trust needs to be established between the congregation/school and the parents to make J.F.E. feasible. Where that has been absent, it may prove helpful if the rabbi and educator work together in approaching families so the families feel they are getting a cohesive and consistent message of welcome.

2. In congregations with well-attended J.F.E. programs there have been reported significant fringe benefits. These include: (a) More parental participation in the school (such as more volunteering to help and feeding more input into the children's learning); (b) more participation in other synagogue events (services, adult programming, etc.); (c) more demand for adult Jewish education; and (d) closer working relations between the rabbi(s) and educator(s) who collaborate in J.F.E. programming.

A fringe benefit anticipated by the B.J.E. (1988) report was that congregations would expand existing part-time teaching positions into full-time teacher/family educator positions. In the Boston area there has been some trend in that direction, but the more common occurrence has been for the full-time school principal and rabbi to give leadership to these programs with some expanded role for given teachers to participate as part of the team.

3. In some J.F.E programs parents have voluntarily expanded the bounds of the program to include shabbat or holiday dinners for families in members' homes.

These may be seen as attempts to transfer the learning from the synagogue-based programs to the homes. The transfer seems to work more comfortably when combined with the urge to create some form of community. The celebratory meal shared in people's homes by several families is quite reminiscent of the synagogue-based havurah movement of the 1970s (Elkins, 1976; Reisman, 1977) and speaks to the need to find a bridge between the synagogue and home experience.

Empowering the Family

Finding the bridge between synagogue and home is a crucial, but elusive goal in J.F.E. A synagogue-based set of programs can successfully bring families to the synagogue and involve them in Jewish activity and learning in that context; but will that success motivate the families to similarly increase the Jewish

experiential level of their home lives?

The urgency of this question goes back to one of the root assumptions of J.F.E.: in Jewish education, the "chances for effectiveness are extremely limited without sufficient home support and involvement" (BJE, 1988, p. 124). While parents coming to the synagogue to pursue the family's continuing Jewish education certainly constitutes a form of "home support and involvement", most authors in this field, going back to Himmelfarb (1974) and Bock (1977), would insist the involvement needs to be in the home for the family members to view Jewish practices as part of their personal life style.

There is probably not a single Jewish family educator who does not endorse the goal of transfer of learning to the home, but in a penetrating article, Ron Wolfson (1983) has questioned whether synagogue life is set up to abet that transfer. Echoing a theme in the great family debate (Losch, 1977), Wolfson sees the modern American synagogue as having encroached more and more deeply on the domain of the family to the point where a dependency cycle has developed.

Like any good provider, the synagogue entices its members into greater and greater involvement with Jewish life, most of it synagogue-based. . . continuing to feed the family's dependence on it as the central vehicle for Jewish expression while failing to significantly move the family towards Jewish self-sufficiency in the home (1983, p. 6).

J.F.E. programs can also serve to increase the family's dependence if their message becomes "you need to come to the synagogue in order to lead a Jewish Family life." But they can

have the effect of breaking the dependency cycle if their primary goal becomes giving the family - and particularly the parents - the knowledge, skill and confidence to "make Shabbos" in their own homes.

Wolfson as well as Schiff (1986) and Schulweis (1988) advocate family education for the home and in the home. This involves a two-step process. First, synagogue-based programs need to do more than provide Jewish experiences; they need to provide the tools for adapting these experiences for home use. Second, either professionals or trained lay people need to be available to go into the home and model how Jewish observance is practiced at home. This can come in the form of a cluster of families celebrating together (Elkins, 1976), a more knowledgeable family inviting a novice family to its home or a professional educator helping one or more families plan their own home celebrations.

There is not yet a literature that describes in any detail or evaluates the envisioned home education. But it does seem like a necessary next step. The crisis of the Jewish family cannot ultimately be solved by the synagogue, or by any other Jewish institution. What the community can do - and I would argue should do - is to lend support, provide possibilities and skills; but the crucial steps have to be taken by families themselves - often in clusters - to educate and empower themselves by renewing their ties to the sources of Jewish vitality.

Conclusions

Against the cultural background of the great family debate that has been raging in this country since the 1970's, J.F.E. has arisen as one response to the crisis of the Jewish family. It is an educational response that simultaneously aims to support the family qua family and enhance the family's capacity to transmit Jewish culture from one generation to the next. By involving the family more fully in the act of transmission, J.F.E. programs also attempt to draw parents into more actively supporting the work of the Jewish school.

We do not yet have the evaluation research to determine the effectiveness of these emerging programs. The aim of this paper has been to better understand from where J.F.E. arose and what are reasonable expectations of what these programs could achieve. It would be as significant a mistake to over-sell their capacity as to underestimate their potential.

The very popularity of J.F.E. programs in recent years has made it more difficult to define the endeavor. But to avoid J.F.E.'s becoming one more educational fad that rises quickly only to fade in a short time, the leaders of this new field need to do the hard thinking needed to give shape and definition to the work of many in the field. The more clarity that can be achieved as to what the primary goals and realistic expectations might be, the better the chance of focusing energies in the most positive directions.

Yet given how diverse the Jewish family has become in recent

decades, we also need to realize that we are serving many sub-populations within the category of J.F.E. There is no one model that will serve all with equal effectiveness. I look forward to a blending of outreach and inreach efforts that will bring different types of families from varying points along the periphery closer to the center of a living Judaism that can give meaning to their diverse family lives.

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What We Know About Jewish Family Education

Joseph Reimer

June, 1990

What We Know About Jewish Family Education

It is common to hear Jewish educators bemoan the lack of parental support for the agenda of the Jewish school.

Acknowledging that parents usually take seriously their commitment to bring their children to the school, educators wonder why not also commit themselves to what is taught in the school.

The alienation of school from home does not service well the educational needs of the children. A teacher can make a wonderful case for the beauty of Shabbat observance, but if Friday night at home remains unmarked by Shabbat ritual, the child has no real way of connecting with the teacher's words.

Jewish family education (henceforth, J.F.E.) has arisen in recent years as a response to the alienation of the school from the home. Realizing that it is simply ineffective to teach children in isolation from the realities of home life, educators have begun to reach out to the whole family - but especially the parents - to invite them to join in learning together with the children about the joys of Jewish living. Instead of dropping off the children at school, parents have been invited to themselves drop in and learn alongside their children.

J.F.E., then, takes the family - rather than the individual child - as the client of Jewish education. Most often programs

in family education are sponsored by a synagogue for the school or preschool children and their parents. But family includes more than just parents and young children. J.F.E. has arisen at a time of increased awareness that families come in many different shapes. A challenge to J.F.E. programmers is to welcome "non-traditional" as well as "traditional" families and work with all these populations on the basic agenda: learning to live a richer Jewish life.

J.F.E. is also not limited to the synagogue context. J.C.C.'s have often been involved, and some day schools are realizing their need to reach out and involve family members in Jewish education. Early childhood programs are a natural address for family involvement, and we have seen the beginnings of family camps and heard of plans to design Israel programs for family units.

J.F.E. came into its own during the 1980's as a popular response to the needs of a changing American Jewish community. To understand this phenomenon in greater depth, we need to answer the following four questions:

1. Where did J.F.E. come from?
2. What is new or unique about its programs?
3. What does it aim to achieve?
4. How do we know when its programs succeed?

The Origins

The 1970's was the decade during which the family surfaced as a matter of great debate in American society. The turmoil of the 60's, the rise of the women's movement, the increase in divorce, the change in the abortion law all contributed to a sense that we as a society no longer share a single vision of the place of family in our society. Some even thought the family might disappear as the unit of organization; others who disagreed still predicted the family of the future would look very different than the family of the past.

The American Jewish community also awoke to a family crisis in its midst. Young Jews were delaying the timing of marriage and having fewer children. In seeking a marriage partner, they were more attracted to non-Jews, increasing greatly the number of intermarriages. Divorce was rising in incidence almost as fast as in the general American population. The vaunted "Jewish family" seemed to be coming apart at the seams.

There were many different responses within the Jewish community to the perceived crisis in family life - from increasing counseling and outreach services to putting day care on the agenda and setting up Jewish dating services. But the Jewish educational community did not get involved until the crisis in family life was joined to a crisis in the synagogue supplementary school.

The 1970's saw a dramatic decrease in the number of students attending supplementary schools offset only partially by a

substantial increase in attendance at day schools. Furthermore, a number of studies came out in the mid 1970's that called into question the effectiveness of supplementary education. It began to seem that at the moment when the capacity of the average Jewish family to pass Judaism on was being called into question, the school could also no longer be relied upon to fill in the gap. Surely both pillars of Jewish continuity could not be allowed to crumble at once.

This anxiety led in part to an increase in federation and communal investment in the field of Jewish education. But among some Jewish educators - especially those working in synagogue education - the feeling arose that no improvement in educational programming could work unless it also involved the family. The supplementary school was sinking not simply from a lack of financial investment, but more significantly from a lack of emotional investment. Get the families to care more about what their children are learning and, they contended, the children and parents will be learning more.

The turn towards family education coincided with two demographic trends which proved significant: baby-boomers becoming parents in large numbers and interfaith couples joining synagogues and becoming part of the school's parent body.

As many who in the 1970's delayed marriage and childbirth began having children in the 1980's there was a new generation of children and parents to join synagogues and seek Jewish education. These parents had gone through childbirth classes, read the

literature on raising children and were more ready to be involved in their children's education. They also, on the whole, had weak Jewish educations that needed refreshing were they to be able to keep up with their children's Jewish learning. That among them were increasing numbers of Jews-by-choice and non-Jewish spouses meant that there were also a pool of parents who had not in their own childhood experienced the cycle of Jewish holidays, rituals and events. The ground was fertile for an educational response to these parents' Jewish needs.

Enter: Jewish Family Education

What is most clearly new about J.F.E. is that it is "Jewish education for the family." But as that phrase can have many different meanings, it is important to distinguish J.F.E., as understood and practiced by its main proponents, from other forms of Jewish education.

First, J.F.E. is explicitly Jewish or Judaic in its content and is to be distinguished from programs for Jews about family life. A synagogue or J.C.C. may sponsor a program on understanding teenagers which is for Jewish families, but would not be considered J.F.E. unless it involved some learning about a traditional and/or modern Jewish understanding of family life.

Second, J.F.E. is for the family as distinct from being for adults and for children. While J.F.E. programs generally include segments directed to teaching parents apart from children and children apart from parents (or other adult family members),

these segments are part of a larger thrust to address the family as a unit.

As an example, on a family Shabbaton there may be specific moments designated for adult study and children's play. But these activities take place in the context of a larger framework which structures celebrating Shabbat together as a family. That is distinct from a Shabbaton for adults in which children are invited, but not directly involved in the main educational program, or a Shabbaton for children in which some parents come along, but are not directly involved in experiencing the educational program.

Third, J.F.E. is educational and not simply recreational. There are many family events sponsored by Jewish organizations which are fun and involving, but more recreational than educational. These may include a Chanukah party, Purim carnival, or dinner at a Jewish deli. These are potentially wonderful Jewish experiences, but only become educational when tied in with a larger framework of meaning. When the Purim story is brought to life through the carnival, or dinner at the deli is an opportunity to learn about kashrut or Jewish eating styles, the family event becomes part of a curriculum for J.F.E.

The Goals of J.F.E.

If we view programs in J.F.E. as providing families with educational experiences with solid Jewish content, then what are

goals of the programs? What do their planners hope to achieve over time?*

In reviewing the literature on J.F.E., I have found four goals which seem common to the various programs described.

1. Involving parents in Jewish learning.

If the alienation of the home from the school is the basic problem that J.F.E. is designed to address, its first goal is involving parents and other family members in the pursuit of Jewish learning. This has taken three forms: parents and children learning together, parents learning the same content as the children but in a parallel, adult-oriented way, parents pursuing their own plan of learning alongside, but separate from, their children's learning.

This over-all goal may be seen as having two sub-goals: (a) involving parents in caring about and reinforcing the children's learning, and (b) parents becoming more Jewishly knowledgeable in their own right.

2. Providing quality family time in a Jewish setting.

Given how busy everyone is in today's families, it has become important for programs in J.F.E. to provide families with quality time together. This goal is especially evident in family camps or retreats, but is also important for attracting families to any program on the weekends. This is not only a pragmatic

* Time is a factor to be considered. This section is looking at the goals of not a single program in J.F.E., but of a series of programs over time; e.g., the course of a school year in which family members participate.

consideration for marketing purposes, but also a philosophic commitment to help support families in their efforts to cohere together as a unit. Being involved together in Jewish activity helps the family to focus on itself and allows opportunities for family members to enjoy one another's company on a regular basis.

3. Building community among families.

In the highly mobile corporate world in which many Jews work today, there is a great deal of moving of families from one location to another. Families may join synagogues and JCCs to get to know other Jews, but the facts are that there often is a high degree of social isolation. It is not uncommon for parents to have children in the same class and not to know each other by name.

While building community among families may not be an intrinsic goal of J.F.E., it has become a common outcome that ends up reinforcing the other goals of these programs. When families get to know one another and decide to spend time together - especially when that involves a Shabbat or holiday celebration, the learning in the program becomes more real for all the members of the family. It becomes a part of their social lives.

4. Bringing Jewish living into the home.

What might be seen as the ultimate goal of J.F.E., and the one hardest to accomplish, is the family's deciding to enhance the quality of Jewish living in their home. This may involve building a library of Jewish books, records and/or videos, buying Jewish art or subscribing to a Jewish newspaper or magazine. It

may also involve introducing or enhancing Shabbat and/or holiday observance. Whatever the initial level of Jewish practice by a family, this goal would represent a deepening of their commitment by some degree.

What Accounts for Success?

Success or effectiveness in educational practice is often measured by the degree to which the goals or objectives are realized by the program's end. In J.F.E. that would mean assessing the degree to which the goals described above were realized over time by the families participating in these types of programs.

Many difficulties face us in trying to make this type of assessment. To enumerate a few of the difficulties:

1. There are many programs that are loosely called Jewish family education. By our criteria some deserve the title more than others. In testing for success, we ought to begin by looking at programs that involve two or more generations of family members, have a clear Judaic content, an elaborated educational methodology and extend over enough time to make a potential difference in the life of the family.

2. The educator-programmers should have a clear sense of the goals they are working towards. Often J.F.E. programs are single events that do not lead towards specified goals. It is unlikely that goals can be reached by happenstance without forethought and direction.

3. Even when clear goals are embraced, their attainment can be assessed only when the broad goals are articulated in terms of more specific objectives. What do we mean by increased parental involvement? What concrete activities would we need to be seeing to know that increased involvement was taking place? How can we assess whether these activities are increasing as a result of families participating in these programs?

4. Someone has to be designated as an evaluator and have the role of carefully observing and monitoring what anticipated (or unanticipated) outcomes are indeed happening. Ideally the evaluator ought not to be one of the educator-programmers so as to establish some distance in making these assessments.

Rarely in Jewish education do we set up the conditions to be able to adequately assess whether given programs are successfully reaching their goals. More commonly we get the assessment of the persons responsible for the program which has its built-in limitations.

An exception to the case was the first family camp to be held at Camp Ramah in California during the summer of 1987. As that intensive experience in J.F.E. was jointly sponsored by the Melton Research Center of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, it had a larger than usual budget for both planning and evaluation. The author and Debby Kerdeman were engaged to be on-site evaluators. Sharing the results of that evaluation can provide a richer sense of what is involved in assessing a program in J.F.E.

Learning from Family Camp

Family camp was a 5-day family vacation taken at Camp Ramah that provided intensive Judaic education for parents and children, relaxing family and community time, and a rich Jewish ambience filled with song, prayer, family activities and fun. Twenty seven families participated including 48 adults and 58 children, from infancy through adolescence. The staff consisted of a director, counselors, teachers and maintenance staff. Families bunked as a unit but divided their day between family time (including meals, services, planned activities and recreation) and separate children and adult time (for study and discussions).

The family camp experience was carefully planned by the staff who, in their own terms, endorsed the four goals enumerated above. What can we say, based on careful observation, of whether these goals were achieved?

1. Parental involvement.

Parents told us that they had signed up primarily to have a family vacation and were often only vaguely aware that Bible study was to be part of their daily schedule. Yet attendance at the classes was nearly universal, participation in class discussion was intensive and parents asked on their own for extra sessions. They gave the classes and teachers on an evaluation form the highest of ratings.

The children of school age studied the same texts at their own level and presented dramatic presentations based on the study.

To what degree parents and children discussed their parallel learning was unknown to us, but the possibility of doing so was provided by the camp structure.

Parent attendance at prayer services was not as universal, but many families sat together at daily services and children could see their parents learning new prayers and songs. There seemed to be a lot of mutual reinforcement.

2. Providing quality family time.

Given a quality counseling staff, parents were not responsible for being with their children all day long. Time together at meals, free time and evening activities was relaxed and unpressured. One could see families going for walks, swimming together and singing at services or meals. There was a remarkable reduction in discipline problems and, subjectively speaking, an increase in smiling and laughing. People were having a good time together as families.

3. Community building.

Clusters of families could be seen eating together at meals, enjoying recreational activities and engaging in family-oriented discussions. At the camp's end people reported having made new friends and wanting to keep in touch during the year with those friends. Being Jewish seemed to be a bond the families shared in common.

4. Bringing Jewish commitment to the home.

As our observations were camp-based, we were unable to assess this fourth goal. But on the evaluation forms, parents

overwhelmingly indicated feeling motivated to continue and possibly intensify their Jewish commitment at home. During the subsequent year some families did get together to celebrate Jewish holidays and many chose to return to family camp the following summer. But what happened in their homes is unknown to us.

Family camp represents, perhaps, the most intensive form of J.F.E. that is available with the best trained staff and greatest institutional support. In a sense we expect it to succeed. But what the evaluation shows is how it succeeded by meeting its goals and what the larger panoply of programs in J.F.E. can aim for.

Conclusions

We have attempted to establish in this paper a rather rigorous definition of J.F.E. That is not to say that there aren't many other very worthwhile family programs, but that clear goals and boundaries are needed to chart the course of a new field like J.F.E.

But, in the end, do we know about the hundreds of programs in J.F.E. that are sponsored by local schools, synagogues, and J.C.C.'s? While our knowledge is limited to subjective reports, some tentative conclusions can be drawn.

(1) J.F.E. is a populist movement with programs springing up in many locations. We believe this is happening because the programs meet the changing needs of many of the current generation of young American Jewish families.

(2) J.F.E. has many different meanings to people. This is

healthy insofar as it reflects the populist nature of this movement. Yet, for the long-term continuity of J.F.E., it would be helpful for leaders in the field to provide clearer guidelines and directions for others to consider.

(3) J.F.E. is primarily attracting parents and young children. To be of service to the many other family members, educators will have to be creative in educational design and marketing.

(4) J.F.E. lacks a curricular base. At present educators are inventing programs as they go along and learning from one another how these programs are run. The educational richness of program offerings and the pursuit of specifiable educational goals could be greatly enhanced if some quality curricular materials were produced, distributed, and adapted.

(5) Introducing evaluation research could be very helpful in providing this new field with valid feedback as to what is working and why. The field is still in an early stage of trial and error, but until the current experiments are monitored, it will be very hard for educators to learn from mistakes and build confidently on successes.

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Reimer

To: Annette Hochstein
From: Mark Gurvis
Re: Reactions to Reimer's paper

Ariel: See attached

Woocher: liked the paper; sees no problem with its distribution.

Rotman: hasn't read it; not likely to get to it.

Stein: Lovely paper, written with great sensitivity and feeling. Believes the title is somewhat misleading because the paper is rather narrow in focus. It's not an overview of what is going on around the country, but rather case history of positive examples. The introduction might draw the distinction more clearly between the focus on what is possible as opposed to what is happening. As a research paper it ~~was~~ ^{would} benefit from some "ruthless" editing which would focus more clearly on the models or lessons derived from these examples and delete much of the narrative description. However, it might lose much of its richness by doing that. Herman sees this as more essay than research paper, which leads itself to being shared in boiled down fashion in the press.

June 18, 1990

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mark Gurvis

FROM: David S. Ariel

RE: Joe Reimer's paper

The framework of relational space helps engage the reader in this approach. The emphasis on the emotional quality of the relation which defines the space is a little unsettling. The idea that the synagogue, like a parent, provides the arena in which education develops is intriguing. The point about supplementary schools as "synagogue schools" is helpful. This is a better term and should be used.

P. 10 (top): The reason that synagogue schools might be preferable to communal schools is not that the latter are impractical due to the dispersed residential patterns. JCCs are centralized, communal institutions which successfully reach across a metropolitan area. Communal schools could be too. Synagogue schools are preferable, you are saying, because they provide more local possibilities of community, they make the suburb a little smaller. Is this true? Do people really attend neighborhood synagogues? Do they serve a need for neighborhood? Or is it that synagogues which happen to be in the suburbs provide the opportunity in theory to create smaller communities in which "good" things can happen?

P. 12 (organizational differences between synagogue and day schools): What are the other differences? The synagogue school principal is usually the third-ranking professional in the institution; the independent school principal is the chief professional. The synagogue school is a department, one of a series of services provided to congregational members; the day school is a single purpose institution. Synagogue schools are accountable to the congregation; independent schools are often accountable to other constituencies including bureaus, federations and donors. Synagogue schools are not part of an accrediting system which requires regular and periodic self-study as are independent schools.

P. 41 (bottom): Does this mean that another criteria is

sufficient size to be able to afford quality school directors? Could a small school with a part-time school director achieve the same thing?

The paper is very helpful in providing a change in tone from the gloomy portrayal of synagogue schools. It is reassuring (and important to provide reassurance) that synagogue schools can be good enough. It does mean certain accommodations such as accepting the fact that some students will always drift out. This is the price we have to pay for having others more connected.

What appears to you as reassuring, however, can be proof to someone else of the typical problems in schools. For example, the two verbatim transcripts of class sessions could show each class as flooding out. You have to look very closely to find the careful readers.

You identified the critical elements which make up a successful school. To what extent do all the environmental factors still ultimately depend on creative people who establish teamwork and supportive environments for talented teachers?

An important outcome of this would be an analysis of successful teaching. I think Joe's careful analysis of the two classes at the end of the paper could lead to understanding how teachers can succeed. For example, he analyzes how a skillful teacher can turn a seemingly disaffected question into an occasion for hearing a deeper question, validating the question and involving the learner in a way that brings him from alienation to involvement. He has a great sensitivity to this issue.

C:\word\reports\reimer.doc

MEMO TO: David S. Ariel, Seymour Fox, Mark Gurvis, Annette Hochstein,
Stephen H. Hoffman, Martin S. Kraar, Morton L. Mandel,
Arthur Rotman, Herman D. Stein, Jonathan Woocher,
Henry L. Zucker

FROM: Virginia F. Levi *Hummy*

DATE: July 3, 1990

Enclosed are two recent papers written by Joe Reimer about Jewish family education. These were discussed at the June 13 meeting of senior policy advisors and Joe was asked to circulate them.

Also enclosed are two articles from the June 20, 1990 issue of the New York Times which Joe submitted for circulation to senior policy advisors. He suggests that they are directly relevant to two of the training proposals in the Commission's final report.

Sent to David F. - 7/1

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Henry L. Zucker

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Mark Gurvis
Virginia F. Levi
Joseph Reimer

TO: Friends of the Commission on Jewish Education
in North America

FROM: Morton L. Mandel, Chairman

DATE: October 23, 1990

The enclosed paper "The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education" was prepared by Joseph Reimer, a member of our staff and Assistant Professor at the Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service, Brandeis University. It is one of a series of background papers prepared for the Commission on Jewish Education in North America.

During our meetings, the impact of the supplementary school as an educational setting was discussed. Professor Reimer has begun a study of this topic and in his paper, by using qualitative ethnographic methods, is attempting to understand what makes for a "successful" supplementary school.

Feel free to share your reactions to the paper with me, Professor Reimer or Virginia Levi of our staff.

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TO: Members of the Commission on Jewish Education
in North America

FROM: Morton L. Mandel, Chairman

DATE: October 23, 1990

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Feel free to share your reactions to the paper with me, Professor Reimer or Virginia Levi of our staff.



Brandeis University

← file

NOV 5 1990

Philip W. Lown
School of
Near Eastern and
Judaic Studies

Benjamin S. Hornstein
Program in Jewish
Communal Service
617-736-2990

Waltham, Massachusetts
02254-9110

October 30, 1990

Henry L. Zucker
Mandel Associated Foundations
4500 Euclid Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44103

Dear Hank,

I was so pleased to receive your note on my paper, "The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education." I have awaited its moment of circulation and am gratified to receive responses such as yours.

The paper begs further research and I am spending all my spare time this year finding out if on closer inspection these really are good schools. I must say two months into the field work that my initial optimism seems justified. There is quality education to be had in some supplementary schools.

I am very grateful for the support I received to begin this research. My goal now is to write some larger piece over the Spring and Summer and be able to speak with more evidence behind me on this vital topic.

Hank, I look forward to seeing you in New York on November 8. Warm regards.

Sincerely,

Joseph Reimer

nb



Brandeis University

MAR 14 1991

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02254-9110

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CC: MLM
SHH
VFL

March 11, 1991

Henry L. Zucker
Mandel Associated Foundations
4500 Euclid Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44103-3780

Dear Henry,

As it has been some time since we have been in touch, I thought I would bring you up to date on events here that have bearing on "the afterlife" of the Commission.

I returned last week from a conference of Conservative Jewish educators held in Stamford, CT. I was invited to give a day long workshop to principals of supplementary schools on aspects of the research I did for the Commission. The room was full and the reception was warm and thoughtful. The principals appreciated the opportunity to hear about research that deals directly with their work and indeed they contributed richly to my thinking on the subject of the relation of the synagogue and the school.

At that conference Rabbi Marim Charry announced that I and Shulamith Elster had been invited to address a plenary session of the Rabbinical Assembly which will be meeting at its conference in late April. Apparently the Rabbinical Assembly (Conservative rabbis) has not for many years devoted any substantial time to a public discussion of Jewish education. The model of the Commission has had a clear influence on them, and I am proud that they want to hear from Shulamith on the CIJE and from myself about my research. I believe our friend Josh Elkin had a hand in making suggestions about appropriate speakers.

At home I spend most of my time expanding the research on synagogue and school. A book is now clearly taking shape. There is even some interest coming forth from publishers.

I hope this note finds you and your wife well. Please send my warmest regards to and share the good news with Mort, Steve and Ginny. I miss you all. Best wishes for a wonderful Passover.

Sincerely yours,

Joseph Reimer

nb

JL 11/82

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April 10, 1991

Dr. Joseph Reimer
Assistant Professor
Benjamin S. Hornstein Program
in Jewish Communal Service
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts 02254

Dear Joe:

I was on vacation for three weeks and just this morning saw your letter of March 11th.

I'm glad to see that the work of the Commission produced lots of direct and indirect dividends, not the least of which is the opportunity it opens up for you and others to encourage improvements in Jewish education.

I have passed along your letter to Mort, Steve, and Ginny, all of whom I know will understand your message.

Warm regards.

Cordially,



Henry L. Zucker

lin 6.

cc: Henry L. Zucker

TO: Morton L. Mandel FROM: Virginia F. Levi DATE: 4/11/91
NAME NAME
DEPARTMENT/PLANT LOCATION DEPARTMENT/PLANT LOCATION
VFL
REPLYING TO
YOUR MEMO OF:

SUBJECT:

Joe Reimer reports that he is at work expanding his Commission research paper into a book. He is going into greater depth on the two synagogue schools that he studied.

He asked whether it would be appropriate for him to apply to us for support in putting the manuscript together. He believes the cost would be no more than \$3,000 to cover typing and the mechanics of preparing the manuscript. He has several publishers interested in the book, but does not believe they will give an advance for this sort of project.

The other possible source of funds would be Brandeis, which Joe says is currently tightening its belt and not offering this sort of support.

HLZ suggests that I explore this possibility with you. Are you interested?

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

VZL + file
DEC 16 1991

Reimer

AUERBACH
CAJE



**Auerbach
Central Agency
for Jewish Education**
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לחינוך יהודי בפלדלפיה

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Adena Potok
President

Helene Z. Tigay
Executive Director

December 11, 1991

Mr. Henry Zucker
Mandel Associated Foundations
4500 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44103

Dear Mr. Zucker,

I just spoke with Dr. Joseph Reimer about the possibility of using an excerpt of his article, "The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education", in our Auerbach CAJE publication for lay leaders.

He was delighted with the offer and wanted us to let you know.

Many thanks for making fine articles, such as Dr. Reimer's, available to the broader public.

Sincerely yours,

Helene Z. Tigay
Helene Z. Tigay
Executive Director

HZT/es

AMERICAN JEWISH

Constituent of the Jewish
Federation of Greater Philadelphia
Affiliated with the Jewish
Education Service of North America

In the spirit of *ad tashbit*, "do not
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COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

AMERICAN JEWISH

The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education

Joseph Reimer, Ed.D.

May 1990

The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education

Joseph Reimer, Ed.D.

May 1990

**A Report Submitted to
The Commission on Jewish Education in North America**

Joseph Reimer is Assistant Professor at the Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Services of Brandeis University, Waltham, MA 00254-9110.

The Commission on Jewish Education in North America was convened by the Mandel Associated Foundations, JWB and JESNA in collaboration with CJF. The ideas expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission.

For more information about the Commission, contact the Mandel Associated Foundations, 4500 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44103. Tel.: (216) 391-8300.

The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education

Joseph Reimer, Ed.D.

May 1990

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Introduction

During the years that I worked in Cambridge, Massachusetts, tourists would often stop me to ask, “Where is Harvard?” They could be standing in front of a Harvard building, but, I learned, “the Harvard” they were looking for was “the Yard.” Harvard Yard, the enclosed space that houses the original site of Harvard College, has the traditional buildings and courtyards to match the tourists’ image of Harvard. Like the old city of Jerusalem, the Yard takes on the aura of the historic spot.

The “Yard,” like many traditional universities, is enclosed by walls: walls that demarcate the space of serious study, keep out the bustle of the market and keep in the intensity of learning. As barriers that separate the academy from the world, the walls are limiting; but as permeable boundaries, they serve to remind us that serious study and learning often need the protection and security of a bounded space. Study and learning can dissipate in an open space; hence, we build schools, libraries, *batei midrash*, and universities with walls.

It takes more than walls, though, to create a safe space. As the British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott has noted, space is also a relational term. One person can provide safe space for another, such as a parent does for an infant. In that relational space, the infant feels safe from external danger and feels safe to explore the world around. But when the parent leaves the room, the same physical space no longer feels safe. The infant stops exploring and calls out for the parent’s return. If the parent returns and re-establishes contact, all is well again and the exploration continues and expands. If not, the infant grows more and more anxious and the exploration is halted. The safe space is gone; the infant’s opportunity to grow is put on hold.

Jewish learning and living also require a bounded, safe space. While in North America, Jews for the most part are not worried about their physical safety, they are aware of a diminution of “Jewish space,” areas in which it feels comfortable to live openly as a Jew. Often, even within an enclosure such as Harvard Yard, Jews find it difficult to explore their Jewish concerns.

Our communal response has been to build “Jewish spaces” in the midst of the “open space” of secular society. Harvard has a Hillel building, our neighborhoods have JCCs and synagogues, etc. We intuitively feel the need for bounded space to enclose and protect the germ of Jewish activity. We sense that while bounded space cannot guarantee a high quality of Jewish living and learning, it may be a contextual prerequisite for serious and creative work to take place.

This paper is an exploration of one such Jewish space, the local synagogue. The focus will be on one particular aspect of synagogue life – the educational program; our attention will not be on the allocation of physical space, but, following Winnicott, the provision of relational space. We will want to know how synagogues create “Harvard Yards,” not with brick and mortar, but with love and attention. We will study how synagogues enable the

participants in Jewish education—the students and teachers—to feel safe enough to explore their Jewishness and secure enough to feel that what they are involved in represents the highest good the community has to offer.

Synagogues across North America have generously built classroom spaces for the pursuit of Jewish education. What has sometimes, but not always, gone with the allocating of physical space is the blessing of the activity. Synagogues, as universities, differ in priorities. Some place a highest priority on quality learning; others do not. Our interest is in describing those who do: those who, like loving, attentive parents, provide the secure relational space in which Jewish exploration can flourish and communicate a serious intent to make Jewish learning meaningful and productive.

The tone of this paper will be positive. Enough has been written to document what can go wrong in synagogue education. Little has been written to describe what can go right. Using a qualitative methodology, we will use the examples of two “good enough” congregations in the Boston area to illustrate how a synagogue can nourish the germ of Jewish living through its educational programs in ways that give hope to the endeavor of synagogue-based Jewish education.

What we will also do in this paper is describe in some detail the schools within these congregations. We will hypothesize that a synagogue’s prioritizing of Jewish education, under the right conditions, will have a positive effect on students’ learning in the school. But as very little attention has yet been focused on the synagogue-school relationship and the question of how a positive Jewish learning space is created, we will attend first to those issues in this descriptive study.

Rumors of a Good School

While attending a bat mitzvah celebration of a colleague's daughter last September, I found myself seated at a table of parents of 13-year olds. The conversation moved briskly from topic to topic until resting upon the subject of Hebrew school. Bracing myself for the familiar assault, I was surprised to be hearing about the virtues of the school to which they sent their children. When I expressed my surprise, they shared theirs as well. One mother summed it up in this anecdote:

Once last year on a Hebrew school day, my babysitter called in sick. It happened to be the day when I was scheduled to take the final exam in a course I was taking. I couldn't miss the final, and so I decided to ask one of my older kids to miss Hebrew school to stay home to babysit my youngest child. I was sure they would argue between themselves as to who would stay home. They did argue, but to my surprise, it was about who would go to Hebrew school.

Kids vying to go to an afternoon Hebrew school flies in the face of our common expectations. Most of us have put supplementary schools in the category of "necessary evils" and expect our children to do the same. When they do not, we are taken by surprise.

Some rumors are worth tracking, and the rumor of a good supplementary school was one I certainly would not let go by. By September, I was in the midst of the research for this paper and was anticipating selecting sites for observation. I was also reading a powerful book, Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot's (1983) *The Good High School*. Lightfoot argues that educational researchers have tended to be so critical of American schools that it is rare to find in the literature careful descriptions of schools that work well. Receiving appropriate encouragement and backing, Lightfoot set out to present a portrait of six good American high schools.

"Good" is a central term in her work. However, it means something quite different from "perfect" or even "excellent." It is in fact closer to Winnicott's term of "good enough", that is, having weaknesses and not succeeding in all one's goals, but having the strength to recognize the weaknesses and the will to keep working at getting better. Goodness is not quantifiable (as "effectiveness" might be), but it is recognizable and open to description. From within a school a trained observer can sense an "ethos" and discern how in this school the elements come together to produce a finer program, a greater sense of purpose, a keener sense of direction. No two schools may be "good" in the same ways; but there may be common characteristics that are found in "good schools" that separate them from the rest.

I was intrigued by the questions of whether there are supplementary schools that could be termed "good" according to Lightfoot's definition, and if so, whether they could be portrayed in terms similar to hers. I decided to track down the rumor of the good supplementary school, a decision which paid off handsomely. But along the way I realized that in the case of supplementary schools there are fundamental questions which need to be addressed before reaching the task of defining and describing the good school.

The School Within the Synagogue

In her portraits, Lightfoot carefully places each high school in its setting. The reader is offered a description of the physical setting, the local community and the socio-political climate surrounding the school. But all that is backdrop to what really interests the author: the school itself as an autonomous functioning educational organization. Lightfoot as sociologist is acutely aware of how schools fit in a social context; but as portrait artist, Lightfoot is struck by how these good schools each in its own way stands out against the background and strives to achieve a set of educational visions and goals that it sets for itself.

Pursuing the search for the “good” supplementary schools along the descriptive path would distort the reality of congregational schools as I have observed them. While an American public high school can legitimately be described as an autonomous educational institution in spite of its close legal, financial and cultural ties to the local community in which it is located, the same is not true of the congregational supplementary school which is not an autonomous organization in any real sense of the term. It is rather a part of the synagogue and in most cases cannot be viewed apart from its relation to the host congregation.

While we do commonly speak of supplementary schools as if they were autonomous units comparable to public schools, I propose that that is a perceptual error. A public school has its own space; a supplementary school is most usually spatially enclosed within the walls of the host synagogue. One enters the school through the doors of the Temple. In truth, we should be speaking about schools-within-synagogues.

Perhaps it is time for research on the supplementary school to also enter through the doors of the Temple. A researcher cannot even gain access to the school except by going through the synagogue, and that fact begins to tell us much about the place of the supplementary school as an organizational unit. To make descriptive statements about the space in which Jewish education takes place is to talk about an overlapping space, a spot where school and synagogue are joined together. It is that joining that needs to be described before we can understand more about the goodness of supplementary education. The prior questions are about the relationship between synagogue and school, about how the synagogue provides for the school within it and how the school fits in and contributes to the life of the congregation.

School and Synagogue: A Historical Perspective

There is a history to the relationship between the synagogue and supplementary school which is quite relevant to this discussion. It was not always the case that most children attending supplementary education did so through the synagogue school. Rather, the independent Talmud Torahs, organized by the central agencies and by-and-large functioning apart from the synagogues, were once the dominant model of Jewish schooling. As Susan Shevitz (1987) reports:

By 1930 the Talmud Torahs had become the paradigm of Jewish schooling for a large group of American Jews. . . . Other than for supporters of either (mostly Reform) Sunday schools or (until recently, exclusively Orthodox) day schools, the Talmud Torahs served as the model for the congregational schools which emerged in the subsequent decades (p. 62).

The shift to the congregational school, which began in the 1920s and picked up great momentum after 1945, was not the choice of Jewish educators, but the result of demographic change, as Daniel Elazar (1976) reports:

As American Jews moved from their original settlements in the large cities into second generation neighborhoods, they founded synagogues to satisfy their immediate Jewish needs. Prime among these needs was Jewish education of their children, and before long each new synagogue boasted of its own congregational school (p. 262).

Many prominent Jewish educators regretted this shift, seeing in it a diminution of the effectiveness of Jewish education as practised in the Talmud Torahs. Again, Elazar:

Despairing of any other alternatives, many professional educators abetted the transfer of Jewish education to the synagogues on the ground that there was no one else to do the job . . . [But] the hours and days of instruction were reduced. In place of an emphasis on Hebrew the schools stressed the teaching of synagogue skills' and congregational loyalty Increasingly, Jewish education moved in localistic directions, as congregational rabbis made it clear their primary interest was in fostering loyalty to their own institutions (*ibid.*).

Elazar reflects a broad sentiment of opinion from a generation ago, but still felt today in certain circles of Jewish educators, that regrets the demise of the independent Talmud Torah and the rise of the congregational school. From Elazar's perspective it remains important to stress the autonomy of the Jewish school and its right to establish an educational agenda and a school schedule which may not match the "localistic" or denominational interests of the synagogue. From this perspective the more ideal model today is the free-standing, community-supported day or supplementary school.

I am taking a different stance in stressing the school-within-the-synagogue. I begin with synagogue sponsorship as a given and as an opportunity. It is a given of contemporary American life that in most metropolitan areas Jews will disperse themselves in a range of suburbs that make a centralized, communal school difficult to sustain. Local synagogues are needed precisely because they are the local Jewish address within a given town or area.

But synagogue sponsorship is also an opportunity because congregations are more inclusive than schools. They include not only children, but also families; and beyond families, synagogues provide a space into which each stage of the life cycle can enter and be drawn together in worship, study and activity. Synagogues at their best can represent, generationally, "the whole house of Israel" and thereby provide a context in which the child's learning of Judaism is organically connected to the community's living Jewishly (Dorph, 1989; Kushner, 1988). That places a heavy burden on the congregation to be a living community, but represents in my view a significant rationale for locating the Jewish school within the congregation.

Accepting the school's location within the synagogue as a given and an opportunity, I go on to ask: how can the synagogue sponsor its congregational school in ways that maximize the school's potential to provide a quality Jewish education? I accept that the definition of a "quality Jewish education" will vary from denomination to denomination, community to community, and sometimes from congregation to congregation (though I believe there are some common goals that are broadly shared). I view input from the congregation — rabbis and other professionals, families and lay people — as a way of binding the congregation to the school and vice versa. I view the congregation and school's relation to the surrounding Jewish community as vital to fulfilling the educational mandate. I offer the hypothesis, based on my observations, that when the right kind of relationships are established among the synagogue, school and community the results can be the creation of a dynamic Jewish educational program which, while very different from the traditional Talmud Torah or the contemporary day school, has an integrity and coherence which Winnicott would recognize as being "good enough."

To Be Located Within: School Within Synagogue

The emphasis placed here on the school's being within the synagogue is not original to this study but is found in much of the literature on supplementary schools (cf. BJE, 1988; Schoem, 1989). Less commonly found however is a careful consideration of what is meant by the school's being "located within" the synagogue.

Some characteristics of the "location within" are common knowledge and stand out most clearly when a congregational school is compared to an independent Jewish day school:¹

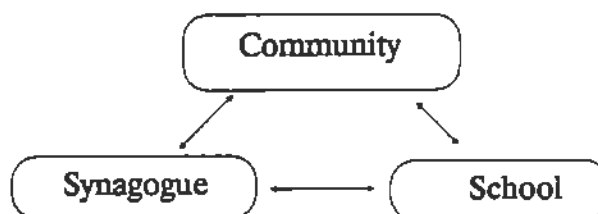
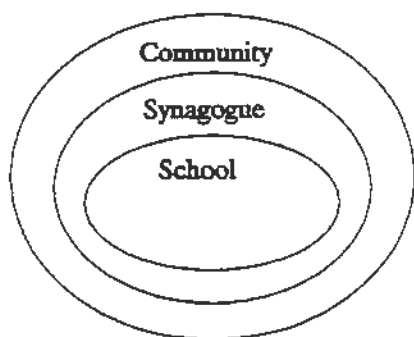
1 By "independent," I mean a day school that was founded not to be part of a given congregation, as some are, but to stand as an autonomous organization, though usually affiliated with a denomination or community.

1. The congregational school is founded by the congregation to educate primarily the children of members of the congregation. The day school is founded to educate children from anywhere in the community—membership not being a primary consideration.
2. The congregational school is governed by a committee within the lay structure of the congregation. The congregation's rabbi also serves as rabbi for the school. A day school is governed by an independent board of directors, and while congregational rabbis often serve on that board, none of them is necessarily the rabbi for the school.
3. The congregation is fiscally responsible for the school and its committees make the fiscal decisions about the school. In a day school those responsibilities belong to the board of the school.
4. The congregation hires the principal of the school who reports to the lay committees and often to the rabbi. In a day school the board hires the principal who then reports to them.
5. The congregation through its lay structure works with the principal and usually the rabbi to set the educational policy of the school. In a day school policy is set by the leadership of the school itself.

These are some organizational ways in which the congregational school is defined as being part of—rather than independent from—the host synagogue. But these organizational arrangements by themselves only define the structural relationship between synagogue and school and not the quality of that relationship. While this structural relationship is common to most synagogues and their schools, there are within this structure areas of choice and opportunities for priority setting. How the major stakeholders within a congregation relate to the principal, teachers and educational programs can vary significantly, and as those relationships vary so does the felt support that the school receives from the congregation.

To Be Located Within: Synagogue Within Community

Before looking in depth at the relationship between synagogue and school, it is important to note that a parallel set of relationships exists between the synagogue and the surrounding Jewish community, and that this set of relationships also plays a significant role in defining the synagogue as a context for Jewish education. These relationships may be diagrammed in two different ways:



The first expresses the school's inclusion within the host congregation and those relationships between the community and the school that are significantly mediated by the congregation.

The second expresses those relationships between the community and the school that are relatively direct and not fully mediated by the congregation.

Let us take two examples to exemplify these differences: relationships with the federation and its agencies, and relationships with the denomination and its offices.

- (1) When a local federation becomes actively involved in an effort to support and improve supplementary education, as has been the case with the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston, the federation usually relates to the congregation rather than directly to the school. However, when the Bureau of Jewish Education, which is a federation agency, develops programs and services, it tends to relate more directly to the school. That is not to overlook the B.J.E.'s need to establish a relationship with the host congregation, but to understand how the B.J.E.-school relationship differs from the federation-congregation relationship.
- (2) Congregations, not schools, affiliate with a denomination. But once the congregational affiliation has been established, the school may relate more directly to the educational offices of the denomination in seeking resources and services to run educational programs. So too the school principal may belong directly to a denominational educator's organization, but, often, the congregation will subsidize the principal's attendance at the conferences and meetings held by those organizations.

The relevance of looking at this set of external relationships can be stated succinctly. Congregations are not able to run educational programs by themselves without relating to and drawing upon resources from the surrounding Jewish community. Crucial for our consideration are questions about defining the set of relationships between community, congregation and school that best supports the educational enterprise within the synagogue. How do the school and congregation best work together to access the educational and financial resources available from the community? How does the community — through its various agencies — identify, galvanize and support the best efforts of congregations to improve their educational programs? While the answers may vary from com-

munity to community and from denomination to denomination, framing the right questions about these relationships is itself helpful in better understanding the ecology of Jewish education in North America.

The Congregational Family

To return to the quality of the internal relationship between synagogue and school, I will follow the example of Edwin Friedman and introduce an analogy between a congregation and a family. Friedman (1985) makes a convincing case for why it makes sense to think of a congregation as operating on an emotional plane analogously to a family system.

Consider the following four roles within a family: (1) a boarder, (2) a step child, (3) a child less focused-upon, (4) a mission-bearing child.

- (1) When a family takes in a boarder, s/he does not become a member of the family. If s/he stays for a while and participates more fully in the life of the family, s/he may become part of the family. Were s/he to choose to leave after that, s/he would be sorely missed and welcomed back for visits. Yet the boarder's relationship remains defined as primarily financial or conditional. Were the circumstances of the family to change, s/he could be asked to leave to make room for a new member of the family.
- (2) After a remarriage, one spouse becomes the stepparent to the children of the other spouse. A stepchild and stepparent become members of the same family and have obligations to one another. Yet it is commonly recognized that whatever the closeness of this new relationship, it is not the same as the relationship between the child and the original parent. That parent would commonly be expected to take more full responsibility for the child than would the stepparent.
- (3 & 4) Even within a biological family there is often variation in the nature of the relationship between parents and children. One such variation is when one child—often the oldest—is selected to take on the mission of the family, is seen as favored and gets the greater investment of parental attention and family resources. The other child may be loved as much but does not have the same claims to parental attention and family resources. In that sense, the second child is less favored.

By analogy, we might consider that a school within a synagogue may occupy any of these four positions:

- (1) A school is like a boarder in the synagogue if it is required to pay rent for the space it occupies and if its lease may not be renewed. While this is an unusual position for a supplementary school, it is a common status for a nursery school or early-childhood center. One way to differentiate the supplementary school, therefore, is to say "at least it is not a boarder."
- (2) A school may be considered like a stepchild if the leadership of the synagogue treats it as if it belonged to someone else. While they may recognize their obligation to provide financial support, they may try to limit that support to bare necessities and turn a deaf ear to any special pleading on the part of the school committee or principal of the school.
- (3) A school may be considered less favored when the leadership of the synagogue recognizes its obligation to finance the school to a reasonable extent, but yet the principal and teachers feel as if their work does not receive the full attention of the lay and rabbinic leadership.
- (4) A school may be considered favored when it receives not only generous financial support, but also special attention and recognition from the lay and rabbinic leadership.

These four positions invite consideration of how in different congregations—or at different moments in the life of a congregation—the quality of the relationship between the synagogue and the school may vary. The positions represent differential status within the system, with the boarder having the lowest status and the mission-bearing or favored child the highest. Our focus will be on the positions of higher status, trying to distinguish by example between congregational schools that are favored versus less favored. But first we will consider some priorities within the synagogue life.

Congregational Priorities

While congregations are frequently formed because of a desire to provide Jewish schooling for the children of the potential members, once they come into existence they take on a life of their own that relegates education to a secondary position (Elazar, 1976, p. 272).

Elazar is describing "the natural course of events" in the life of a congregation. Jews founded synagogues to take care of a few basic Jewish needs, among which is educating the young; but in the process of creating a social organization, raising funds, obtaining a building, hiring professional staff, defining a religious orientation, etc., the key members' attention can easily be diverted from some of the original goals. While a school for the children often remains over time a significant budgetary item, it may no longer be of primary concern to the leadership and its status may fall to a secondary (less favored) or tertiary (stepchild) position.

But this is not inevitable; congregations can become well-established without necessarily allowing the status of education to fall to a secondary position. In a series of interviews conducted with ten key lay and professional leaders of the synagogue movements in the Boston area, I learned in detail of many of the financial and organizational pressures that even well-established synagogues currently face.

Yet how congregations choose to respond to these pressures differ in many ways. One difference has to do with their vision of how their educational programming fits into their plans for the future. Some congregations have decided to make quality Jewish education part of their appeal to the broader community. Others have decided to reduce their budgets by (among other ways) cutting their educational staff. Still others try to hold the line on their educational budgets, but are not clear on how to make education appealing to new constituencies.

It is important to realize that congregations are complex organizations with thick histories and organizational dynamics. (In this way they resemble families.) There is no easy way to cut through the complexity and get a handle on the priority-setting process in a congregation. However, it remains important to describe how in some congregations the leadership has managed to keep education in a favored status and use those programs as a way of sustaining the vitality and growth of the congregation, while in other congregations education has become a lesser priority.

Education as a Lesser Priority

Two of the major recent studies on supplementary education (BJE, 1988; Schoem, 1989) supply us with vivid descriptions of congregations in which educational programming—and particularly the congregational school—are not held as a highest priority. We will focus on the BJE study since it offers a broader perspective.

The report on Jewish supplementary schooling which the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York released in 1988 was based on interviews and observations in 40 congregations of varying size, location and denominational affiliation within the New York area. Principals, teachers, rabbis, lay leaders and parents were interviewed, and from these interviews the following portrait of the school-within-the-synagogue emerges:

1. Principals

About half of the principals are employed part-time while one-third work full time and one-sixth have the shared responsibility of being a rabbi in addition to principal. Many do not have adequate support services and are required to do their own clerical work. They often do not have enough time to adequately supervise and train their teachers.

2. Teachers

Of the 426 teachers surveyed, only 17% have served six or more years in their current school while 62% have served for two years or less. A majority work between five to twelve hours in their school while only 5% work over twelve hours. Observations of their teaching reveal that:

- (1) The overwhelming majority of teachers utilize frontal teaching methods and dominate the lesson with teacher talk. . . . Questioning is not generally used.
- (2) Teachers' obvious lack of Jewish knowledge and Jewish educational methodology hinders the maximization of learning.
- (3) Some teachers take time to prepare classroom materials. Most cannot or are unwilling to invest the time needed for classroom preparation (p. 69).

3. Rabbis

All of the rabbis interviewed "reported that they interacted with the principal, school board and parent body" and felt "it is important for them to maintain a close relationship with the principal and assist him/her with his/her work" (p. 74). Yet "the level of involvement of rabbinic leadership in the ongoing functioning of the school varies greatly" since the rabbis are "beset by many claims on their time and energies" and when "comfortable with their principals, they generally do not interfere with the school program" which can lead to a "lack of rabbinic involvement in the school" (p. 75).

4. Lay Leaders

Two types of synagogue lay leaders were interviewed: those serving on school boards and those on boards of trustees. The former "are generally satisfied with the roles of their respective school boards," but "are frustrated by their inability to obtain adequate budgets from the synagogue leadership to meet educational needs." That may be because most members of boards of trustees "appear to be satisfied with the quality of education in their respective schools although they admitted they lacked knowledge about the school and had limited exposure to it." Most "do not consider the school program a top priority of the synagogue" (p. 77).

David Schoem, in his intensive study of one Conservative congregation and its school, amplifies what it means for the board members not to hold education as a high priority.

Given the predominant perspective held by most congregational board members, the school was considered an important and costly arm of the synagogue but, at the same time, was only one of several synagogue priorities. Two issues dominated debates over finances of the school. First, some questioned whether quality education was an objective of the school, and second, whether increased funding would necessarily result in improved quality. In an important budgetary discussion, an influential member of the congregation board raised the first question. He said: 'Does the congregation really want quality education? Maybe we just want kids to make it through their Bar Mitzvah.' Although most board members did not dare be as frank as the person quoted above since it was normatively understood that Jews were always supposed to be in favor of education, many supported his budgetary position by saying: 'There are a lot of things we'd like to have in life but we have to limit ourselves' (1989, p. 71).

Giving education highest priority in a congregation is not simply a matter of financial support, but of a deep belief by the lay and professional leadership that quality education makes a substantial difference to the life of the congregation; a sustained and generous investment in education is not bowing to special interests, but breathing life into the congregational community. It is further the recognition that the principal is not a professional in charge of a separate wing of the congregation, but part of a full-time team with the rabbi and other professionals who help the whole congregation to live richer Jewish lives.

The data from these two studies indicate that it may be hard to find congregations that sustain these commitments but that is exactly what I was searching for.

Searching for the Committed Congregation

There are certain Temples that stand out as having excellent schools. Often the quality of the school is a barometer of the general qualities of these congregations. These Temples want excellence in all their programming. So they attract quality staff who can produce a finer program and end up attracting more members. [From an interview with a key leader in the Boston area Reform movement.]

The interviews I conducted with key leaders of the synagogue movements in the Boston area gave me confidence that I could find in this area several synagogues that exemplified the commitment to education that I have been describing. I set out not only to identify these congregations, but also to test a hypothesis about the relationship between congregational priorities and the quality of Jewish education provided by the schools within those congregations. I wanted to learn if it was true that schools that enjoyed favored status in their congregations were those that turned out to be the "good supplementary schools."²

I began by trying to identify "good congregational schools." To do so, I conducted a telephone survey among eight selected professionals in the area who are involved in and knowledgeable about synagogue-based educational programs and whose judgment I respect. Four of these are principals of local congregational schools (two Conservative,

2 Given the very limited sample I was working with, I could in no rigorous way test for a relationship between the school's "status" and its educational "goodness." It is possible that there are good schools that do not enjoy high status in their congregations, and that there are congregations who give education their highest priority but have not been able to build a good school. All that I was hoping to achieve in testing this hypothesis was to establish by providing examples the likelihood that a relationship between "status" and "goodness" may exist.

two Reform)³ and four are from the Bureau of Jewish Education or the Federation. They were asked individually if there were synagogues in the area with “especially good” educational programs and if so, to identify them. They also were asked to describe what in their judgment accounts for the programs being “especially good.”

All eight believed there were “especially good” educational programs. In identifying them, all eight professionals agreed on one, and seven professionals chose a second. In addition, eight other congregations were cited, but none of these were named by more than five respondents.

In describing what accounts for these programs being “especially good,” they cited the following factors: the school director (6); the support of the community (4); the involvement of the rabbi (4); the quality of the teachers (3); the engagement of the parents (3); and the quality of the curriculum (2).

As the two congregations named most frequently for having “especially good” educational programs were already known to me (one was where I had attended the Bat Mitzvah), I chose to make them and their schools the focus of my study. Once having gained permission from the congregational leaders and the principals to conduct this study, I tried to go into each of these congregations with an open mind to discover how their leadership described the goodness of their schools and the relationship between school and synagogue.

Temple Israel and Temple Isaiah

The two synagogues selected were Temple Israel of Boston and Temple Isaiah of Lexington. Both are modern Reform congregations but are different from one another.

Temple Israel, founded in the 1850s, is the largest Reform Temple in New England. It wears its long history proudly. Its finely-architected building, located in the city of Boston (though on the border with suburban Brookline), is a blend of traditionalism and modernity. The art displayed within the Temple is strikingly rich and satisfying, but also traditionally Jewish in theme. The sanctuary is very large and comfortable, but simpler in design than one might expect.

By contrast, Temple Isaiah, founded after the war as Jews began to move in some numbers to suburban Lexington, is a medium-sized congregation housed in the plainest of structures. Whereas no one could miss seeing Temple Israel on its street in Boston, you could

3 In the Boston area, while the Orthodox are actively involved in sponsoring day schools, they are little involved in supplementary education and were therefore not consulted in my survey.

drive by Temple Isaiah and never realize you missed it. Inside the building it is clear there are but two central spaces: the sanctuary and the classrooms.

Temple Israel's splendor obscures the fact that many of its members commute to the temple from the suburbs or from other areas of Boston and are neither wealthy nor well-established. This synagogue also has demonstrated a keen commitment to integrating as members newly-arrived immigrants from the Soviet Union. Temple Isaiah's plainness obscures the fact of its drawing some good percentage of its members from the more affluent professional community of Lexington and surrounding suburbs. Simplicity is a choice rather than a necessity at Temple Isaiah.

Cary Yales has been rabbi at Temple Isaiah since 1971. The Temple does not employ a resident cantor, but has for many years employed a full-time educator, Lois Edelstein, to run the school and has more recently employed an associate rabbi.

Bernard Mehlman has been the senior rabbi at Temple Israel since 1978. Ronne Friedman came that same year to become associate rabbi, but has since chosen to become the full-time Temple educator. In addition, Temple Israel employs a full-time associate rabbi, cantor, executive director, youth director and librarian/teacher. With over 1,700 members (compared to Temple Isaiah's 660), Temple Israel has developed a larger professional staff.

Sponsoring the School

For all the apparent differences between these two temples, once I began investigating the relationship of the synagogue to the school, it became clear that the two have much in common. Both temples sponsor the school-within in ways that clearly exemplify the status of their being favored.

Being favored means, according to our definition, that all the major stakeholders in the congregation express through word and deed their support and recognition for the centrality of the educational program for the mission of the congregation. This would include: (1) a community—membership and parent body—that highly values education for themselves and their children; (2) a professional leadership who can articulate a clear vision of what the educational program should be in this congregation; (3) rabbis (and where present, cantors) who are integrally involved in the educational work of the congregation; (4) a lay leadership that through its board and committee structure gives real financial and organizational backing to the educational program; (5) a congregation that integrates the children and teachers of the school into its communal and worship life.

It was these five forms of support, here elaborated upon, that could be clearly seen in Temple Israel and Temple Isaiah:

(1) Communal Support⁴

Both Temples have a proud history of communal support for education. Lexington as a town is well-known for the quality of its public school system and for parental involvement in their children's education. That transfers to a large extent to Temple Isaiah, where the parents are concerned about their children's Jewish education and the leadership has from early on hired two full-time professionals: the rabbi and the educator. The leadership has wanted the school to offer a quality Jewish education and has backed the insistence on standards in the school in regard to attendance, learning and work completed. Their attitude is: "This is how we do things at Temple Isaiah; if you, the family, do not wish to maintain these standards, you are free to choose another Temple." Families who join agree with these higher Jewish educational standards.

Temple Israel also has a long history of hiring full-time educators and running a quality school. For many years, well-known Reform educators taught in the school. Roland Gittelsohn, the rabbi emeritus, came to Temple Israel after his former congregation—in the fashion of those days—did not want to institute Hebrew education during the week in addition to religious school on Sunday. At Temple Israel he found a Reform congregation committed to Hebrew as well as religious education.

In the 1960s the school at Temple Israel was very large and operated on a double shift. It was known as "the place" to send children for a Reform education and attracted an intellectually-ambitious parent and student body. After the baby-boomer generation of students ended and the size of the school was greatly reduced, the Temple leadership continued to support education. That support in one way manifested itself upon Rabbi Gittelsohn's retirement in hiring an educationally-oriented successor, Rabbi Mehlman.

(2) Educational Vision

On a promotional videotape made by Temple Israel, the rabbi is introduced by a congregant who speaks of the joy of learning with the rabbi in his classes for adults. Rabbi Mehlman's voice is then heard saying, "The first most formidable challenge to any synagogue is education." He goes on to speak about life-long Jewish learning. It works as a rhetorical charm; but upon observation, it proves also to be a programmatic reality.

Temple Israel is an active center of Jewish learning with as much activity for adults and families as for children. Rabbi Mehlman and his team (the two other rabbis and the cantor) are in the midst of the teaching, whether it be at a worship and study session before regular services on Shabbat morning, at a downtown law office on Thursday

4 The information used to describe these temples was drawn primarily from interviews with synagogue leadership, rabbis and educators. Temple Israel also supplied me with some written documents and a videotape they created to present themselves.

morning or tutoring newly-arrived Soviet teenagers. The school, K-12, is clearly the Temple's largest single educational program; but it is surrounded by enough other educational activity that the rabbi's vision of building community in a large urban synagogue through the joint pursuit of learning is made manifest each day of the week.

Rabbi Yales at Temple Isaiah is no less emphatic about creating a learning community. He is proud that his congregation has fostered twenty active *havurot* among the membership, with three new ones beginning in the past year; he is proud of the 26 adults—some parents, some not—who studied all year to learn enough Hebrew and Torah to become bar mitzvah; and he is proud that Temple Isaiah has the fastest growing family education program in the Boston area, with the parents being the ones who continue to ask for more programming. As he says, "I have the same philosophy for the school as for the congregation. First get people comfortable, and once they are comfortable with you and each other, you can begin to talk about worship, God, etc."

(3) Rabbinic Involvement

Rabbi Mehlman and Rabbi Yales are not only articulators of an educational vision, they are also involved directly in teaching in the congregational school. Rabbi Mehlman teaches a Bible class to the eighth grade each Sunday morning and classes in the Monday evening high school. Rabbi Yales teaches a Holocaust course to the ninth graders and a Sex and Sexuality course in the high school. Both rabbis are also involved in several yearly Shabbat retreats for the older students and encourage their associate rabbis also to be actively involved in the school and other educational programming such as family education.

By their involvement in the school, the rabbis are consciously sending a signal. Even though, as senior rabbis of well-established congregations, they could easily relegate the teaching of children to others, they feel the teaching is so central to their vision of building community in the congregation that they take the time to do it themselves.

Of equal significance, each of these rabbis works alongside the Temple educator as partners in a shared endeavor. Being a Temple educator can be a lonely position,⁵ but what one senses in talking to Rabbi Friedman and Mrs. Edelstein is how well-supported they feel in their positions.

Rabbi Friedman's situation is unusual, if not unique. How often does a congregational rabbi choose to remain in the same Temple, and become the Temple educator? Rabbi Friedman describes his choice on the basis of his love for educational work, his close

5 When I was telling a colleague who is now a day school principal about my research, he stopped me at this point to say: the biggest difference between being the principal of a day school and a principal of a supplementary school (which he had been previously) is how much more support you get in the day school.

working relationship with Rabbi Mehlman, and his commitment to their shared vision of building community in Temple Israel.

Mrs. Edelstein came from another local synagogue to Temple Isaiah ten years ago. In asking about the support she gets, Mrs. Edelstein cites three main sources: a closely-knit group of Temple educators in the area, the congregants, the rabbis. The group of educators was set up by a consultant from the BJE and has met regularly over many years. The congregants surprise her by doing more service for the school than she would have expected. (For example, the father who volunteered without solicitation to cook *latkes* for all the children and teachers during the Chanukah celebration.) And the rabbis—senior and associate—work closely with her on almost every aspect of the educational program.

In speaking in both Temples with the senior rabbis and the educators, I was struck by how closely and respectfully each team works together. They refer to each other by first name; they share a vision; they plan and work together; they are colleagues in the fullest sense of the term.

Rabbi Yales explains how in his view this team works together:

My leadership style is to empower and not to second-guess. . . . It's Lois (Edelstein)'s school. I work with her. . . . Rabbis are teachers, but we are not educators. It behooves us to leave education, i.e. curriculum, pedagogy, running the school and staff, to people more well trained than we are. But when it comes to policy decisions, the rabbi needs to lend support. I don't go to all the [Temple] committees, but I do go to the school committee meetings. That involvement sends a message.

(4) Financial and Organizational Backing

Commitment, vision, involvement and support all create the relational space of which we spoke earlier as being essential to promoting Jewish learning. But clearly the relational space needs solid financial and organizational backing to survive in the realities of synagogue life.

The interviews at those temples indicate that concrete support is forthcoming from the synagogue leadership, as the following examples show:

- a) In Temple Israel between 1984-85 and 1989-90 the operational budget for the congregation grew by 50 percent. The budget for educational programs in the congregation grew by 66 percent, increasing from 22 to 27 percent of the total budget.
- b) Within that increase, by far the largest area of growth has been for teachers' salaries which in the five years expanded from \$80,000 to \$190,000. The increase reflects a congregational decision—spearheaded by Rabbi Friedman and the school committee—to increase by 30 percent the salary for each teaching position and to create more full and half-time positions for educators.

- c) Temple Israel, which is a wealthy congregation and charges a relatively high membership fee (though with a sliding scale) charges no tuition for attendance in the school or in any educational program. As their literature says: "We believe so strongly in education as the foundation of understanding that for Temple members there is no additional cost for [any educational program]."
- d) Temple Isaiah, which is a less affluent congregation, charges a lower membership fee (on a sliding scale) and, as almost all other congregations in the area, additional tuition for school enrollment. Over the past few years the budget for educational programs has risen from 20 to 22 percent of the operational congregational budget.
- e) Due to increases in the size of the school and the family education program, Temple Isaiah has run out of classroom space on Sunday mornings. The Board is not ready to approve fundraising for new construction; but they did decide that the school has first priority to any space at that time in the temple. All other temple functions have to wait their turn.
- f) Rabbi Yales considers post Bar Mitzvah education a high priority. To motivate students to remain for two more years of study, he proposed in a Yom Kippur sermon that the congregation offer a subsidized trip to Israel for each tenth grader. The proposal found quick support from congregational donors and has become part of their high school program.
- g) A three-year grant from Federation to Temple Isaiah to begin family education programs will end this year. Given the program's popularity, Rabbi Yales encouraged Mrs. Edelstein to work with the school committee on a proposal to the board to pick up most of the tab. But in a year in which the economy has been very uncertain, the board was reluctant to devote that much money to a new program. Mrs. Edelstein, however, worked closely with the chair of the school committee, and he successfully convinced the Board that family education was no frill and needed their fuller support.

(5) Integration into the Life of the Temple

Worship stands alongside education as the other central focus of Temple life. To what degree are these two realms integrated together?

- a) In both schools, the students are learning Hebrew with an eye to being able to participate intelligently in the services by being familiar with the Hebrew of the Torah and the *siddur*.
- b) Both temples have shabbat and holiday services that actively involve children and families in the service. At Temple Israel, there is also a children's choir and a Torah reading group that are involved.

- c) The rabbis take off time from involvement in adult congregational activities on several Shabbat days during the year to go off on retreat with the high school students and participate in special services for preschool children and their parents.
- d) In Temple Isaiah, several teachers have joined as congregants, and Mrs. Edelstein reports that the students are surprised that she is a member and worshipper at her home Temple. They expect to see her at services, perhaps because school and synagogue are so closely integrated.
- e) In Temple Israel, I observed a *Yom HaMoreh* Friday night service to honor all the teachers. What made the service special was not only that the congregation was honoring the teachers at its regular shabbat service, but that the service had been created by members of the high school youth group in conjunction with the cantor and rabbi. What I saw that evening was a dozen or so high schoolers on the *bimah* with the cantor and rabbis leading the service and in the congregation the families of both the adolescents and the teachers. In place of a sermon, Rabbi Friedman called up all the teachers and selected three for special awards. It was an opportunity for him to explain publicly what is so special about the contribution that these teachers make to the children of the congregation, and to thank them for those contributions.

Are These Good Schools?

Through the descriptive material I have attempted to illustrate how these two synagogues actively express their commitment to education through involving the support of all the major stakeholders in the congregation. The contrast between these congregations and most of those presented in the BJE study (1988) should be evident.

If the case for support and favored status has been made, there remains the question of goodness. Our argument has been that congregations need to provide the right relational space to enable educational goodness to develop. But is it the case that these two congregational schools that enjoy a favored status are enabled by that status to become good schools? Further, how are we to define “goodness” in relation to a supplementary school?

Returning to Lightfoot’s (1983) work may be a helpful beginning. She too began her search for good high schools by asking knowledgeable people in the field for schools with “distinct reputations as fine institutions with clearly articulated goals and identities” (p. 23). Once identifying such schools, she decided not to seek objective ways of discerning which were the best, for to do so would be to rely on techniques for measuring comparative output or performance within schools and then comparing schools on scores of student performance. But Lightfoot’s whole thrust, which I am following, is not to reduce schools to their output, but to study them in their wholeness. Goodness—in contrast to

effectiveness—is a description of “character and culture”—of what makes a given school what it is. One gets at goodness not through administering tests, but through observing a school at work and interviewing its members as to what is the meaning of their work.

Goodness, therefore, is not an absolute quality in a school. One cannot say from the outside that a given school is or is not good. Rather, by studying the school from within, by grasping its “ethos” or “sustaining values” (p. 23), a trained observer can begin to make judgments as to where a school stands in struggling to achieve its own innermost goals. Two schools (e.g. an Orthodox yeshiva and a Reform supplementary school) can be quite different from one another in terms of their character and culture, and can be using varying approaches to attain dissimilar goals; yet each can be judged to be good by virtue of how each struggles to realize its own identity. In that sense, goodness is a contextual judgment: there are “myriad ways in which goodness gets expressed in various settings” (p. 25).

Lightfoot cautions us to distinguish goodness from perfection. All too often real schools, with their notable imperfections, are compared in our minds to nostalgic visions of schools that were, or to ideal visions of schools that could be. In reality, “no school will ever achieve perfection . . . It is not the absence of weakness that marks a good school, but how a school attends to the weakness. . . . One of the qualities of good schools is their recognition and articulation of imperfection” (p. 24).

Finally, Lightfoot notes that “schools are changing institutions . . . and recognition of their goodness should reflect these transformations” (p. 24). In our case the relevant transformations are those within the congregations, the Reform Movement and the Boston Jewish community. In judging the goodness of these schools, we will be asking: did each take good advantage of the changes around (in Reform ideology, communal demography, synagogue-Federation relations, etc.) in molding an evolving program of quality Jewish education?

Criteria for Goodness

While goodness is a contextual judgment, it is still possible, as Lightfoot has done, to find certain commonalities among good schools. Each good school has its own way of enacting a given commonality (e.g. seriousness of purpose); but the commonalities give us some starting point in making a judgment about a school’s being good.

As Jewish supplementary schools face unique problems in striving for goodness that separate them from American high schools, I will not list the commonalities Lightfoot revealed in her study. Rather, I will draw upon criteria of goodness which emerge from discussions specific to congregational schools.

To derive such criteria I turned to five “experts” from around the country—two supplementary school principals and three professors of Jewish education. Each has had extensive experience in working in or with supplementary schools of the Conservative or Reform movement. I asked for help in thinking about “criteria for goodness” in congregational schools. I asked “to reflect on your experience with these schools and share with me the criteria or indicators you use to judge a congregational school as being or not being ‘good enough’.”

It was reassuring that the experts had been thinking about good supplementary schools and did not subscribe to the negative stereo-typing of these schools that one generally finds in the literature (Himelfarb, 1975; Bock, 1977; Schoem, 1989). Each had experiences with individual schools that gave hope that there could be quality education in this sector. I sat with the complex responses they offered and began sorting them—along with the criteria supplied earlier by my Boston informants—into categories. Some of the criteria fell into the supporting or enabling qualities of an educationally-committed congregation (e.g. rabbinic involvement, communal support). Of those that dealt more directly with the school, I found seven broad criteria that encompass most of their points.

1. *Shared Vision and Purpose.* The school has an identity, a sense of purpose, articulated goals that inform practice because they are shared by the rabbi, principal, and teachers, and are clearly communicated to the parents and students.
2. *Coherent curriculum/Standards of achievement.* There is a master plan for the learning that will take place progressively within each grade and from grade to grade, and strong, but realistic expectations for what students will learn each year in the school.
3. *An embracing, caring school climate.* Children and parents walking into the school experience its warmth and its culture and feel at home in this Jewish environment.
4. *Educational leadership from the principal.* The principal is not only an administrator, but also a leader who gives direction and support to the staff and offers supervision and guidance on a regular basis.
5. *A qualified teaching staff.* Teachers are committed to what they are teaching, knowledgeable of the subject matter and sufficiently in touch to communicate effectively and believably with students and parents.
6. *A learning student body.* Students attend regularly, behave appropriately, are involved in their learning and show evidence of gaining mastery over and caring about the subject matter.
7. *Continuity.* A majority of staff remain in their position for more than a year or two and a majority of students continue their education beyond Bar Mitzvah.

Some of these criteria (#1, 3, 4) could be found in Lightfoot’s descriptions of good high schools. Others (e.g. #5, 7) she might often take for granted; but they cannot be assumed

in supplementary schools. When looking for goodness in supplementary schools, we realize they have to overcome problems in finding and keeping qualified teachers and motivating students and parents that some other schools do not even face. But a case can be made, using these criteria as benchmarks of quality, that some congregational schools struggle valiantly with these problems and find ways to offer their students a limited, but good enough Jewish education — a basis for future Jewish living and learning.

The Two Schools

Before taking a more in-depth look, we need an over-all picture of the schools within Temple Israel and Temple Isaiah.

In terms of structure, these two Reform-affiliated schools are very similar. Each is a K-12 school that is divided into four sections: primary (K-3); elementary (4-7); junior high school (8 or 8-9); high school (9-12 or 10-12). Elementary grades meet three times weekly while all others meet once weekly. Temple Israel this year initiated the three-day schedule for third grade and an optional second day for eighth grade.

Temple Israel is the larger school with 30 teachers and 450 students. Temple Isaiah has 15 teachers and 303 students. The difference in staff size is due in part to a structural variation. Temple Israel uses the more common Reform format of having religious school on Sunday and Hebrew school twice during the week for the elementary grades. Six faculty teach in both but the rest teach in one or the other program. Temple Isaiah has integrated programs for those grades in which the Judaic and Hebrew subjects are intermixed all three days. There are fewer teachers, but they teach the whole three-day schedule.

Another salient difference is in administrative structure. Temple Isaiah has one full time administrator, Lois Edelstein, plus secretarial help. Temple Israel employs Rabbi Friedman full time with secretarial help, and three half-time co-ordinators. The co-ordinators, for K-3, 4-8 and the Hebrew program, share with Rabbi Friedman responsibilities for planning and supervising the staff and program.

On a comparative note, there are only six supplementary schools in the Boston area with over 300 students, making these among the largest schools in the area (Shevitz, 1989).

Making A Case for Goodness

When beginning to study these schools in greater depth, I was not at all certain what I would find. Being myself a product of day school education and a parent of two day school students, would I be able to study these schools in their own terms and not covertly compare them to the schools I knew better? Would I, given my own strong bias towards the study of classical Jewish texts in the original, find instances of Jewish learning that would intuitively accord with my own sense of good Jewish education?

At first, having the seven criteria of goodness to guide me proved very helpful. Long before I encountered moments of learning in classrooms —moments that my intuition told me where “good”—I was seeing and hearing about aspects of these schools that seemed to fit what the criteria called for. The earlier evidence gave me hope that I could find the data that would make the case for me.

Using data from interviews with the principals and teachers as well as observations from the schools, I will present shorter narratives on criteria 1-4 and 7. I will then concentrate on criteria 5 and 6 as I found the data there to make the most convincing case for goodness.

1. Shared vision and purpose

We have spoken of how the senior rabbi in each Temple has articulated a vision of the congregation as a learning community. Clearly, the senior rabbi sets the tone, but in each case the educator is a co-articulator of the vision with special reference to the congregational school. An example from each Temple will illustrate the point.

- (a) Rabbi Mehlman is a scholar of the Hebrew Bible and loves to teach biblical material, placing great stress on becoming familiar with key terms in Hebrew. When Rabbi Friedman became Temple Educator, he shared Mehlman’s conviction and looked for a way to translate vision into practice. He found it through the Melton Centre’s curriculum for Hebrew which stresses the teaching of traditional, textual Hebrew to students. He has put that curriculum into place in the school without concern that it comes from the Conservative and not the Reform movement. What is clear, as we will see, is that the teachers are involved and supportive and the students quite receptive.
- (b) Rabbi Yales, a strong advocate of outreach to the intermarrieds, seeks to include those couples and families within the congregation. Rabbi Wolfman, his associate, runs special groups for intermarried couples. Neither rabbi wishes to keep this group separate, but rather to find ways to integrate them with the rest of the congregation.

Family education programs, which Mrs. Edelstein has most actively introduced, have proven an avenue for integration. It may be the intermarrieds who have the greatest need

to learn Judaism alongside their children, but almost all the parents need to refresh their knowledge and skill level. When children and parents are learning together, everyone is able to fit in comfortably. In these programs, Mrs. Edelstein has the rabbis and teachers working together with the families. It is a shared vision put into practice on a multiple of grade levels.

2. Coherent curriculum/Standards of achievement

Both schools share the same general goals for their Hebrew curriculum. They recognize that in the limited time available they will not bring students to a point of active Hebrew fluency or mastery; but they do aim to give students receptive Hebrew skills: a strong foundation in terms of reading, grammar and limited vocabulary. They aim to allow students to be able at a later point to return to learning Hebrew and build on the foundation they received in these years. And for those who will not return, they have the skills to be functional Jews within the life of the congregation.

Within these areas of agreement, each school has taken a different turn. Temple Israel's curriculum stresses textual Hebrew while Temple Isaiah's stresses modern Hebrew. These differences are not absolutes (each side does not reject the other), but do fit into some larger coherence within each Temple.

Given Rabbi Mehlman's stress on studying Bible, the adoption of the Melton curriculum makes sense in Temple Israel. It allows seventh and eighth grade students who study *Genesis* with the rabbis to follow when they make textual comments based on the Hebrew. It allows the post-Bar Mitzvah students to more meaningfully participate in reading from the Torah scroll during services and would allow them as adults to participate in the worship and study group who meet each Shabbat for a close reading of a text from the weekly *parsha*.

Temple Isaiah students in the higher grades study Biblical texts, but only by using the English translation. But their learning of modern Hebrew also has a coherence, for as mentioned, every student who stays through tenth grade is subsidized for a summer trip to Israel. Thus, visiting Israel, in which spoken Hebrew can be used, has a more regularized place in Isaiah's curriculum than in Temple Israel (though this year Temple Israel began the Passport to Israel program in conjunction with federation).

Curricular coherence is of limited value without a system of standards and accountability. In each school two forms of accountability are in place: one for teachers, the other for students. As we will later illustrate, teachers are clearly expected to be prepared for class, to have sound knowledge of what they are teaching and to know how to communicate the knowledge to students. Students are clearly expected to attend on time, to behave and learn in class, to do homework assignments and to advance from year to year in their knowledge base. Temple Isaiah will not allow students to complete tenth grade until they have successfully passed a test in knowledge of basic Judaism.

3. An embracing, caring school climate

How you are greeted upon entering can tell you a lot about school climate. Is the teacher already in the classroom waiting? Does the principal know you by name? Is your parent welcome to come in as well? Is your absence noticed? Is it a pleasant place to return to each week?

Rabbi Friedman and Mrs. Edelstein are masters at creating a homey, comfortable environment in their schools. As serious as each is about maintaining standards for teaching and learning, each is also aware that they are not simply running a school, but also creating a Jewish home for the students and parents (Heilman, 1985). How is this accomplished?

- (a) In Temple Israel there is a shabbat morning service once a month with the rabbi for three and four year olds and their parents. It is held in the kindergarten room. Before school ever begins a connection to the Temple, rabbi and classroom are established for child and parent.
- (b) In Temple Isaiah family education begins in the kindergarten. It is an opportunity for children and parents to get to know the rabbi and principal and learn more about the life of the congregation and school.
- (c) The principals (and in Temple Israel, the co-ordinators) know and greet the students by name. There is a feeling of being known when you walk down the hall. Teachers are there before you enter the room. Roll is called; absentees are asked after. Parents wander in; the library is always open, welcoming. Parents help out with special events and in Lexington especially, are dropping in and calling to offer suggestions.
- (d) Youth groups begin in the elementary grades so that children are getting both formal and informal education. There are also retreats for junior high school students.
- (e) By high school the integration of formal and informal education is far more complete. The youth groups are in full gear and are coordinated with the high school classes. Studying with the rabbis is a regular feature as are weekend retreats away with the principal and rabbis. In Temple Isaiah the associate rabbi is the leader of the senior youth group. In Temple Israel Rabbi Friedman teaches a course in the high school on leadership skills for the youth group leaders. There is an active philosophy that we, the full-time professionals, are not only teachers and administrators, but also objects of attachment. Especially in the upper grades the message is, "Come and get to know us. We are here for you, and we will be sticking around for you in the years to come."

4. Educational leadership

It is the teachers who will most directly experience the educational leadership of the principal, and so it was to them that I turned for information. The responses were informative.

A 25-year veteran told me she decided to retire several years ago, but when Rabbi Friedman came on board, she couldn't. I asked why. "Because it's so stimulating," she said, "he sees things so differently than others do, and he's been teaching me." A five-year veteran told me he loves teaching at Temple Israel and wouldn't teach elsewhere. Why? "Working with Ron (Friedman) and Esther (the coordinator): two supervisors who are incredibly helpful."

I wondered what the magic is. He continued: "Teachers are made to feel very good. The coordinators are your supervisors and they create a team feeling with the teacher meetings over lunch. . . . Ron (Friedman) is over-all in charge: the school is his turf."

At Temple Isaiah the style is different, but the story is the same. A four-year veteran reports that Lois Edelstein frequently "pops into class; not everyday, but regularly." I wondered what the effects were. "The kids don't even notice, but I do. Sometimes, in an intimate moment with the class, it blows it away for me. Other times I am glad she is there so she can see learning moments in the class."

I ask Mrs. Edelstein about this practice. She admits it is her style not to stay in the office during class time, but to move around and visit the classrooms. She thinks people have gotten used to it and it's vital for her as supervisor to know what's really going on. Then she can work one on one with the teachers based on what she sees.

I ask the veteran teacher why he has stayed at Temple Isaiah. He gives me four reasons:

- (1) Lois (Edelstein) and the support she gives you. You're going to teach something three weeks away and you're not even thinking about it and she is already giving you the materials you will need.
- (2) The rabbis are really great and really value the school which trickles down to the parents.
- (3) The parents are very supportive, always there to help when you need them; very into the school.
- (4) The teachers are very supportive and cooperative.

Mrs. Edelstein spoke to the last point. Her teachers tend to remain and it is not because of the money: Isaiah cannot pay high salaries. She attributes it to the group feeling, the feeling of being in this work together. For example, this year she did not make plans for a school celebration of Israeli Independence Day. But the teachers got together on their own, made plans and carried off the celebration. In a sense, I thought, it was their tribute to Mrs. Edelstein. They were showing her they could take the initiative and this time, for a change, she could relax and enjoy.

7. Continuity

How good is Temple Isaiah's record of teacher continuity? Last year, 1989, Mrs. Edelstein had to replace only one of fifteen teachers. This year four of her teachers are completing their graduate degrees and she is quite busy replacing them. But that is who she is primarily looking for: graduate students or young adults with good Judaica backgrounds and teaching skill. She is willing to invest a lot of time with new teachers to bring them up to her standards of teaching; but then she wants to keep them for at least several years.

She and I reviewed the longevity of her staff. The range was from the first-year teachers to those who pre-dated Mrs. Edelstein ten years ago. The average was approximately five years.

Temple Israel's record on continuity is more checkered. Rabbi Friedman looks primarily for graduate students or young adults and will only occasionally take a chance (as will Mrs. Edelstein) on a mature undergraduate. He employs a few veteran teachers who come to Temple Israel from other congregations primarily to teach in the Hebrew program. They—some of whom are clearly more traditional in Jewish commitment—tend to remain over time, making the Hebrew program faculty more stable.

The young Sunday morning faculty is less veteran and more mobile. Rabbi Friedman estimates that of twenty classroom teachers on any given year he will have to replace between six and twelve teachers. He feels strongly that this is a most unsatisfactory situation and wishes he had the money to attract stable, veteran 30 and 40 year old teachers to the Sunday morning program as well as during the week.

There is a second form of continuity of interest to us: student continuity. Both Temples place great emphasis on continuity for children beyond Bar Mitzvah. How successful are they in keeping students for the eighth grade and high school?

Temple Isaiah keeps exact records of student continuity. Over the past four years the retention rates from seventh to eighth and from seventh to ninth have been:

<i>Year</i>	<i>7th to 8th</i>	<i>7th to 9th</i>
1986	.70	.41
1987	.69	.60
1988	.61	.69
1989	.89	.50

Currently there are 17 students in 8th grade, 13 in 9th grade, 18 in 10th grade, 8 in the 11th grade and 6 in 12th grade. There is a gradual drop-off during the high schools year after a very strong retention rate in junior high school.

At Temple Israel this year approximately 75% stayed from seventh to eighth grade and 50% of the original cohort began the high school in ninth grade. Rabbi Friedman believes the dispersal of his students—coming from so many different neighborhoods and schools—makes it harder to form a tight peer group and keeps down the rate of continuity.

For comparative purposes, looking at a recent census of students in all supplementary schools in the Boston area (Shevitz, 1989), the current eighth grade population is less than 50% of the size of the seventh grade population, and eighth-twelfth grade population is approximately 30% the size of the fourth-seventh grade population. By contrast at Temple Isaiah the eighth-twelfth grade population is over 60% the size of the fourth-seventh grade population.

5 and 6. The Quality of Teaching and Learning

When all is said and done, the quality of education in a school rests on the teacher-student interaction in classrooms. In reaching these criteria I believe we come down to the essential question: no matter how good the support from the congregation, rabbis, parents and principal, can teachers teach and students learn in these schools?

To answer I will present in some detail excerpts from notes I took from two classes in Temple Israel, from grades 4-7. They struck me as examples of quality teaching, but they were not so different from the other classes I observed. In fact, I saw nothing but acceptable to good teaching; these were, in my judgment, simply the better moments.

a) A fourth grade learning about Passover

This part of the lesson is about *bedikat hametz*, the ceremonial search for *hametz* that takes place the night before the first *seder*. This class, taking place on a weekday afternoon during the week before Passover, is attended by 11 students, 7 boys and 4 girls. The teacher is a veteran, clearly a more traditional Jewish woman, their regular Hebrew teacher.

T: *Bedikat hametz*: When does it happen? After, during or before the *seder*?

S: After. (Apparently he is confusing this with *afikomen* as the teacher gently points out.)

Several students: Before

T: Why is looking for *hametz* important?

S: (Aside) It isn't.

T: Who does this at home? (One hand goes up). In my house we do this in every room. (She goes on to describe how her family does it.)

Students ask teacher a number of questions about the details of the ceremony.

T: To celebrate the end of cleaning, we deliberately mess it up by putting out 10 pieces of *hametz*. (Teacher then gives out to each child one piece of bread.)

T: What else do we do in tens?

Students: plagues, commandments.

S1: We are having four Russians (presumably to *seder*).

Teacher reviews the blessing for *bedikat hametz*. Together they all read the blessing in Hebrew from the *haggadah* each student has.

T: (Shows them the next statement in the *haggadah* which is in Aramaic. On the board she writes in Hebrew *kiddush* and *kaddish*. Do they know these?)

Students: (Recognize *kiddush*, but no *kaddish*.)

T: Do you know about *yahrzeit* lamps?

Students: (Begin to tell about the lamps they've seen at home.)

Teacher sensing they will not get the connection to the Aramaic in the *kaddish*, she quickly organizes them into a procession to look for the *hametz* with a spoon and feather.

T: Why do we do such a bizarre thing?

S1: Because we're Jewish.

T: But why *this*?

Students begin to guess and get somewhat wild. Teacher warns them to calm down.

S2: It's a symbol.

T: Excellent.

S3: There are a lot of symbols. You know the story and you pass it on.

S1: Maybe God made up Hebrew because it is nonsense.

Teacher sensing the order is cracking, she continues the procession until all the *hametz* is collected.

S4: Does this work?

S5: It is an Arabian thing (he meant: Aramaian).

S6: Are we going to burn it?

S7: Do you burn the spoon?

S8: Will we burn the Temple?

Teacher finishes the exercise. Seats them. Moves quickly on to singing *Dayyenu* which they join in with gusto.

This is a risky lesson for the teacher. She is teaching a custom which she knows very few of the children will know from home. It is, in her words, “a bizarre” ceremony and one that raises, in Heilman’s (1985) sense, the risk of “cultural dissonance.” Writing on his observations of classes in supplementary schools, Heilman noted that moments of such cultural dissonance run greater risk of the children’s “flooding out” – finding disruptive ways of distancing themselves from the material. The students in this class were right on the edge with comments like “It isn’t (important)” or “Will we burn the Temple?”

What makes this good teaching is that the teacher takes the risk of introducing this material, skates the edge of their flooding out, but holds the lesson together so the students can experience the ceremony, recite the blessing in Hebrew and learn that there are Jews, such as the teacher herself, who do this today in their homes. The foreignness of tradition is somewhat reduced. Given that this is only fourth grade, the students will have opportunities in the next years to learn more about the meaning of *bedikat hametz*.

b) Seventh grade learning *Jonah* in Hebrew

This lesson is from the first chapter of *Jonah*, the scene with Jonah on the boat tossing in the storm and the sailors’ discovering that it is Jonah’s presence that is causing the storm. The ten seventh graders are reading from a loose leaf book that has excerpted Hebrew verses from this chapter, but no English translation. They do have an extensive dictionary constructed to help them specifically with translating the verses they are working on. The teacher is a five-year veteran with a beautiful Israeli-accented Hebrew. It is a Tuesday afternoon class.

S1: (Is slowly but accurately reading Verse 10. Teacher helps her with one word she mispronounces: *livroach* – to flee.)

T: (Writes the word on the board.) What does this word mean?

Students: (Look at the dictionary and tell her the translation.)

T: Have we had this word before in this chapter?

S2: Yes, (and he finds it.)

S3: (In Hebrew) My I please go to the bathroom?

T: Yes.

Teacher and students work on translating the sentence, “taking apart” the Hebrew words into their “base” and grammatical form. Most students are involved.

Teacher initiates a short game in which she writes on the board a number of the words in Hebrew from the lesson, they identify a word, go up and erase that word and call on another student to come up next. Students perk up, even getting a little wild. Game ends when all the words are correctly identified.

T: Let's begin the next page.

Two girls each slowly but accurately read next verses (13-14).

S1: How do we know the sailors weren't Israelites?

T: (Goes over the words carefully to show why that is not implied by the text.)

S2: When they (the sailors) pray to God, have they converted?

T: (Explains how without converting the sailors are more humanly concerned than is Jonah at this point.)

S3: Why do they attribute the storm to God's anger?

T: (Explains in every age people develop theories about the unknown like science today.)

Two students are quietly, but clearly not attending. Teacher goes over and asks one a relatively simple question to which she responds with a correct answer.

S4: Do you mean that they (the sailors) all come together and prayed in Hebrew?

T: (Explains that the story teller was writing for an Israelite audience and so put Hebrew words in the sailors' mouth.)

Walking in and seeing the students working with the Hebrew text took me by surprise. Isn't that for day school students? But it was happening before me: seventh graders in a two day Hebrew program were reading, translating (with the help of the dictionary) and taking apart the words to analyze their grammatical construction. In the short game on the board they translated spontaneously. It looked like a form of mastery.

The next day I called New York to speak to a friend in the Melton Center. I described what I had seen. He explained that the Melton Hebrew curriculum only goes through sixth grade and this is one step beyond: application to Biblical text. The goal is for the students to be able to read selective verses and translate with the aid of the teacher and dictionary. Inquiry and conversation is to be in English with the goal of the students working to understand the meaning of the story.

Inquiry was clearly going on in this class. The students readily pick up on the basic irony of the text: Jonah, the Hebrew prophet, is hiding and endangering everyone's life while the heathen sailors are doing all they can to save his life. The students want to know why wouldn't Jonah jump by himself and save everyone's life? Can these really be heathen

sailors? If so, how do they know to pray to God and in Hebrew? Those are the kinds of questions a teacher would want any careful reader to raise.

The teacher not only heard the questions, but allowed discussion among the students and answered as if speaking to mature readers. What the transcript cannot reveal, but which was clearly observable, was that she was thinking on her feet. The questions took her, as me, by surprise. But she honored them by thinking out loud and answering as directly as she could. At those points she was not only teaching, but also studying Torah with her students.

I later spoke to the teacher about the class. She is a well-educated Reform Jew who received her teacher training on the job in Temple Israel. She considers this class to be one of the better classes in the school, and the first to have gone all the way through with the Melton curriculum. "What separates the better from the weaker students is the vocabulary. Everyone gets the basic idea of the Hebrew and the story line. But the better kids also remember the vocabulary—not from memory, but repetition." With the four better students she thought she could open any of the narratives in *Genesis* and they could decipher the text. As to the level of their questions, she noted the four better students start the questions and set the tone and then the others are challenged and rise to their level.

I told her I noticed that several students phase in and out of focus, but no one was disruptive. She replied, "I am happy to have those kids move in and out (of the lesson), but if I see I'm losing one, I walk over to involve him." As for disruptions, she said in past years she encountered some students who were disaffected; but now "The kids like being here . . . a negative attitude is unusual."

Here, then, is a well-educated, committed and communicative teacher teaching *Jonah* to a group of receptive, bright 7th graders. Is that not the mark of a good supplementary school?

Innovation

Although none of my informants used "innovation" as a criterion of goodness, I am convinced it is part of the case for these two schools. It also ties the schools back in with the congregation and the community.

Consider the following four instances of innovation:

- (1) Rabbis Mehlman and Friedman have been very actively involved with congregants in visiting refuseniks in the Soviet Union, working for their release and, when relevant, helping to settle them and other Soviet Jews in the Boston area. There are 25 to 30 New American children who are students in the school. But most innovative is the program they began to educate New American high school students, who are often the hardest to reach, in Judaism. On Shabbat of Passover seven 13 to 15 year old New Americans celebrated their bar mitzvah, having completed an intensive two year course in Hebrew and Judaica. In this effort the congregation and the school worked

closely together with one another and with the federation and its agencies to bring Soviet Jews home to Judaism.

- (2) Temple Isaiah, as many congregations, has faced the problem of children with special needs. Rabbi Yales felt strongly about these children, but the congregation could not afford to hire its own special education teacher. But there is a second, Conservative congregation in Lexington. The two congregations joined forces, went to federation for assistance, and began one of the most innovative special education programs in the area.
- (3) Rabbi Friedman knows many of his families do not have the skills to run a *seder* at home and many of the students are not confident enough in their skills to lead the *haggadah* reading in Hebrew. But he heard of a new software program that helps students and/or parents gain facility with the Hebrew and the music at whatever speed they need to learn it. With a donation from a congregant, he hopes to have that program in place for next Passover.
- (4) Mrs. Edelstein did not start family education on her own. A strong impetus came from her consultant at the BJE. An enabling factor was the grant from federation. What has happened is that an innovative principal, with encouragement from the rabbi and school committee, has successfully gained federation support and worked closely with the BJE consultant to help the program grow and expand.

The rabbis and educators of these Temples are innovators; but their innovations take hold because they know how to activate funds and resources from within their congregation and from the wider Jewish community. They do not wait for the community to come to them, but, with a good measure of self-confidence, go out to the congregation and community to seek support for their ideas. In their cases, the relationship between community, congregation and school works to promote good Jewish education.

Conclusions

I have tried in this paper to make several points about synagogues and their schools. To review:

- (1) Jewish education in North America cannot prosper without being enclosed in a protective space. Synagogues can provide such space when they are able to maintain a sustained level of commitment to education as the mission of the congregation. This is often difficult for congregations to do.
- (2) In those congregations that grant their education programs a favored status we find that all the major stakeholders are involved and committed. This includes the rabbis and other professionals, the lay leadership on the board and in the school committee and the membership and parent body.
- (3) In the two cases we studied in depth, the schools which were granted favored status were also judged to be good supplementary schools. This judgment was made following the example provided by Sara Lightfoot and the criteria for goodness provided by five experts in the field of Jewish education.

There has been so little written in recent years about good supplementary education that the dominant impression in the field and the community is of congregational schools as a necessary evil: necessary because many parents choose it over day schools and evil because they seem to have so little positive impact on either children or families.

While a case study of two good congregational schools can hardly dispel this over-arching impression, there is a message in the methodology. In trying to look at these schools in their own terms, and not as the assumed "weak sister" of the more intensive day school, and in searching for schools that work, I have been asking, is it all gloom and doom? There may be some exceptions to the case, some congregational schools in which the community can take pride.

I believe Rabbi Friedman and Mrs. Edelstein are unusually talented educators, but they are not unique. In the Boston area alone I know of other Temple and synagogue educators who share their commitment and zeal and are devoting their best professional efforts to making their congregational schools work. With the appropriate levels of congregational and communal support, a talented educator may bring life to the dry bones of supplementary education. But if people do not believe it possible, the levels of needed support will not be forthcoming and the possibility will be foreclosed.

I have no doubt that what is true of two Reform-affiliated schools in the Boston area may not be true of other schools in other areas. There is no one formula for becoming a good supplementary school. Surely even the criteria for goodness I have proposed will be challenged and the supporting data disputed. Case studies are by no means conclusive. But if this work can open a conversation about what are good supplementary schools,

where or whether they can be found and how they could be developed and supported, it will, I believe, have served its purpose.

If this discussion begins, I hope it will remain attentive to the ecological issues, to the location of schools within congregations and congregations within communities. For I emerge from this paper more than ever convinced that supplementary schools are not entities unto themselves and that our best hope for promoting good supplementary schools lies in better understanding the culture of the congregation within a rapidly changing Jewish community.

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The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education

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Introduction

In the years I worked in Cambridge, Massachusetts, tourists would often stop me to ask, "Where is Harvard?" They could be standing in front of a Harvard building, but, I learned, "the Harvard" they were looking for was "the Yard." Harvard Yard, the enclosed space that houses the original site of Harvard College, has the traditional buildings and courtyards to match the tourists' image of Harvard. Like the old city of Jerusalem, the Yard takes on the aura of the historic spot.

The "Yard", as many traditional universities, is enclosed by walls: walls that demarcate the space of serious study, keep out the bustle of the market and keep in the intensity of learning. As barriers that separate the academy from the world, the walls are limiting; but as permeable boundaries, they serve to remind us that serious study and learning often need the protection and security of a bounded space. Study and learning can dissipate in an open space; hence, we build schools, libraries, batei midrash and universities with walls.

It takes more than walls, though, to create a safe space. As the British psychoanalyst, D.W. Winnicott, has noted, space is also a relational term. One person provides safe space for another as a parent does for an infant. In that relational space, the infant feels safe from external danger, safe to explore the world around.

But when the parent leaves the room, the same physical space no longer feels safe. Infant stops exploring and calls out for the parent's return. If parent returns and re-establishes contact, all is well again and the exploration continues. If not, infant grows more anxious and exploration is suspended. The safe space is gone.

Jewish learning and living also require a bounded, safe space. While in North America Jews for the most part are not worried about their physical safety, they are aware of a diminution of "Jewish space": areas in which it feels comfortable to live openly as a Jew. As the gates of Harvard Yard and other comparable enclosures open up to Jews as individuals, we often find it hard to enter and still keep alive our Jewish concerns.

Our communal response has been to build "Jewish spaces" in the midst of the open space of secular society. Harvard has a Hillel building, our neighborhoods have JCC's and synagogues, etc. We intuitively feel the need for bounded space to enclose and protect the germ of Jewish activity.

This paper is an exploration of one such Jewish space, the local synagogue. The focus will be on one aspect of synagogue life - the educational program; our attention will not be on the allocation of physical space, but, following Winnicott, the provision of relational space. We will want to know how synagogues create "Harvard Yards", not with brick and mortar, but with love and attention. We will study how synagogues enable the participants in Jewish education - the students and teachers - to feel

safe enough to explore their Jewishness and secure in their feeling that what they are involved in represents the highest good the community has to offer.

Synagogues across North America have generously built classroom spaces for the pursuit of Jewish education. What has sometimes, but not always, gone with the allocating of physical space is the blessing of the activity. Synagogues, as universities, differ in priorities. Some place a highest priority on learning; others do not. Our interest is in describing those who do: those who, like loving, attentive parents, provide the secure relational space in which Jewish exploration can flourish.

The tone of this paper will be positive. Enough has been written to document what can go wrong in synagogue education. Little has been written to describe what can go right. Using a qualitative methodology, we will use the examples of two "good enough" congregations in the Boston area to illustrate how a synagogue can nourish the germ of Jewish living through its educational programs in ways that give hope to the endeavor of synagogue-based Jewish education.

What we will not do in this paper - though it needs to be done in a next paper - is to describe the effects of this congregational nourishing on the Jewish learning of the students in the synagogue schools. We would hypothesize, but cannot here prove, that a synagogue's prioritizing of Jewish education will have a positive effect on students' learning in the school's program. But as very little attention yet has been focused on the synagogue-school relationship

and the question of how a positive Jewish learning space is created, we will attend to those issues in this descriptive study.

Rumors of a Good School

Attending last September a bat mitsvah celebration of a colleague's daughter, I found myself seated at a table of parents of 13-year olds. The conversation moved briskly from topic to topic until resting upon the subject of Hebrew school. Bracing myself for the familiar assault, I was surprised to be hearing about the virtues of the school to which they sent their children. When I expressed my surprise, they shared theirs as well. One mother summed it up in this anecdote:

Once last year on a Hebrew school day, my babysitter called in sick. It happened to be the day when I was scheduled to take the final exam in a course I was taking. I couldn't miss the final, and so I decided to ask one of my older kids to miss Hebrew school to stay home to babysit my youngest child. I was sure they would argue between themselves as to who would stay home. They did argue, but to my surprise, it was about who would go to Hebrew school.

Kids vying to go to an afternoon Hebrew school flies in the face of our common expectations. Most of us have relegated supplementary schools to the category of "necessary evils" and expect our children to do the same. When they do not, we are taken by surprise.

some rumors are worth tracking, and a rumor of a good supplementary school was one I certainly would not let go by. By september, I was in the midst of the research for this paper and anticipating selecting sites for observation. I was also reading a powerful book, Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot's (1983) The Good High School. Lightfoot argues that educational researchers have tended to be so critical of American schools that it is rare to find in the literature careful descriptions of schools that work well. Receiving appropriate encouragement and backing, Lightfoot set out to present a portrait of six good American high schools.

"Good" is a central term in her work. It means something quite different than "perfect" or even "excellent." It is closer to Winnicott's term of "good enough"; that is, having weaknesses and not succeeding in all one's goals, but having the strength to recognize the weaknesses and the will to keep working at getting better. Goodness is not quantifiable (as "effectiveness" might be); but it is recognizable and describable. From within a school a trained observer can sense an "ethos" and discern how in this school the elements come together to produce a finer program, a greater sense of purpose, a keener sense of direction. No two schools may be "good" in the same ways; but there may be common characteristics that are found in "good schools" that separate them from the rest.

I was intrigued by the questions of whether there are supplementary schools that could be called "good" in Lightfoot's sense, and if so, whether they could be portrayed in terms similar to hers. I decided to track down the rumor of the good supplementary school,

a decision which paid off handsomely. But along the way, I realized I would not choose to follow Lightfoot's lead -- that there were, in the case of supplementary schools prior questions which needed to be addressed before reaching the task of defining and describing the good school.

The School Within the Synagogue

In her portraits, Lightfoot carefully places each high school in its setting. The reader is offered a description of the physical setting, the local community and the socio-political climate surrounding the school. But all that is backdrop to what really interests the author: the school itself as an autonomous functioning educational organization. Lightfoot as sociologist is acutely aware of how schools fit in a social context; but as portrait artist, Lightfoot is struck by how these good schools each in its own way stands out against the background and strives to achieve a set of educational visions and goals that it sets.

To pursue that descriptive path in search of "good" supplementary schools would distort the reality of congregational schools as I have observed them. While an American public high school can legitimately be described as an autonomous educational institution in spite of its close legal, financial and cultural ties to the local community in which it is located, the same is not true of the congregational supplementary school which is not an autonomous organization in any real sense of the term. It is rather a part of

the synagogue and cannot be viewed apart from its relation to the host congregation.

While we do commonly speak of supplementary schools as if they were autonomous units comparable to public schools, I am suggesting that is a perceptual error. A public school has its own space; a supplementary school is spatially enclosed within the walls of the synagogue. One enters the school through the doors of the Temple. In truth, we should be speaking about schools-within-synagogues.

Perhaps it is time for research on the supplementary school to also enter through the doors of the Temple. A researcher cannot gain access to the school except by going through the synagogue, and that fact begins to tell us much about the place of the supplementary school as an organizational unit. To make descriptive statements about the space in which Jewish education takes place is to talk about an overlapping space, a spot where school and synagogue are joined together. It is that joining that needs to be described (since it is not explicitly described in the literature) before we can understand more about the goodness of supplementary education. The prior questions are about the relationship between synagogue and school, about how the synagogue provides for the school within it and how the school fits in and contributes to the life of the congregation.

School and Synagogue: A Historical Perspective

There is a history to the relationship between synagogue and school that is quite relevant to this discussion. It was not always the case that most children attending supplementary education did so through the synagogue school. Rather, the independent Talmud Torahs, organized by the central agencies and run mostly apart from the synagogues, were once the dominant model of Jewish schooling. As Susan Shevitz (1987) reports:

By 1930 the talmud torahs had become the paradigm of Jewish schooling for a large group of American Jews ... Other than for supporters of either (mostly Reform) Sunday schools or (until recently, exclusively Orthodox) day schools, the talmud torahs served as the model for the congregational schools which emerged in the subsequent decades (p.62).

The shift to the congregational school, which began in the 1920's and picked up great momentum after 1945, was not the choice of Jewish educators, but the result of demographic change as Daniel Elazar (1976) reports:

As American Jews moved from their original settlements in the large cities into second generation neighborhoods, they founded synagogues to satisfy their immediate Jewish needs. Prime among these needs was Jewish education of their children, and before long each new synagogue boasted of its own congregational school (p.262).

Many prominent Jewish educators regretted this shift, seeing in it a diminution of the effectiveness of Jewish education as practised in the talmud torahs. Again, Elazar:

Despairing of any other alternatives, many professional educators abetted the transfer of Jewish education to the synagogues on the ground that there was no one else to do the job . . . [But] the hours and days of instruction were reduced. In place of an emphasis on Hebrew the schools stressed the teaching of 'synagogue skills' and congregational loyalty . . . Increasingly, Jewish education moved in localistic directions, as congregational rabbis made it clear their primary interest was in fostering loyalty to their own institutions (IBID).

Elazar reflects a broad sentiment of opinion from a generation ago, but still felt today in certain circles of Jewish educators, that regrets the demise of the independent talmud torah and the rise of the congregational school. From Elazar's perspective it remains important to stress the autonomy of the Jewish school and its right to establish an educational agenda which may not match the "localistic" or denominational interests of the synagogue. For this perspective the more ideal model today is the free-standing, community-supported day school.

I am taking a different stance in stressing the school-within-the-synagogue. I begin with synagogue sponsorship as a given and

move on to ask: how can the synagogue sponsor its congregational school in ways that maximize the school's potential to provide a quality Jewish education? I accept that the definition of a "quality Jewish education" will vary from denomination to denomination, and sometimes from congregation to congregation (though I think there are some common goals that are broadly shared). I view input from the congregation -- the rabbi and the laypeople -- as a way of binding the congregation to the school and vice versa. I offer the hypothesis, based on my observations, that when the right kind of relationship is established between synagogue and school the results can be the creation of a dynamic Jewish educational program which, while very different from the traditional talmud torah or the contemporary day school, has an integrity and coherence which Winnicott would recognize as being "good enough."

To Be Located Within

The emphasis placed here on the school's being within the synagogue is not original to this study but found implicitly in much of the literature on supplementary schools (cf. BJE, 1988, Schoem, 1989). Less commonly found is a careful consideration of what is meant by the school's being "located within" the synagogue.

Some characteristics of the "location within" are common knowledge and stand out most clearly when a congregational school is compared to an independent Jewish day school.*

1. The congregational school is founded by the congregation to educate primarily the children of members of the congregation. The day school is founded to educate children from anywhere in the community - membership not being a primary consideration.

2. The congregational school is governed by a committee within the lay structure of the congregation. The congregation's rabbi also serves as rabbi for the school. A day school is governed by an independent board of directors, and while congregational rabbis often serve on that board, none of them is necessarily the rabbi for the school.

3. The congregation is fiscally responsible for the school and its communities make the fiscal decisions about the school. In a day school those responsibilities belong to the board of the school.

* By "independent", I mean a day school that was founded not to be part of a given congregation, as some are, but to stand as an autonomous organization, though usually affiliated with a denomination or community.

4. The congregation hires the principal of the school who reports to the lay committees and sometimes to the rabbi. In a day school the board hires the principal who then reports to them.

5. The congregation through its lay structure works with the principal and often the rabbi to set the educational policy of the school. In a day school policy is set by the leadership of the school itself.

These are some of the organizational ways in which the congregational school is defined as being part of -- rather than independent from -- the host synagogue. But these organizational arrangements by themselves only define the structural relationship between synagogue and school and not the quality of that relationship. While this structural relationship is common to most synagogues and their schools, there may be significant variations in the quality of those relationships in the degree of felt support the school receives from the congregation.

The Congregational Family

To understand how the quality of relationship between synagogue and school may vary, I will follow the example of Edwin Friedman and introduce an analogy between a congregation and a family. Friedman (1985) makes a convincing case for why it makes sense to think of a congregation as operating on an emotional plane analogously to a family system.

Consider the following four positions within a family:

- (1) a boarder, (2) a step child, (3) a child less focused-upon, (4) a mission-bearing child.

(1) When a family takes in a boarder, he does not become a member of the family. If he stays for a while and participates more fully in the life of the family, he may become part of the family. Were he to choose to leave after that he would be sorely missed and welcomed back for visits. Yet the boarder's relationship remains defined as primarily financial or conditional. Were the circumstances of the family to change, he could be asked to leave to make room for a new member of the family.

(2) After a remarriage one spouse becomes the stepparent to the children of the other spouse. A stepchild and stepparent become members of the same family and have obligations to one another. Yet it is commonly recognized that whatever the closeness of this new relationship, it is not the same as the relationship between the child and the original parent. That parent would commonly be expected to take more full responsibility for the child than would the stepparent.

(3 & 4) Even within a biological family there is often variation in the nature of the relationship between parents and children. One such variation is when one child -- often the oldest -- is selected to take on the mission of the family, is seen as favored and gets the greater investment of parental attention and family resources. The other child may be loved as much but does not have the same claims to parental attention and family resources. In that sense, the second child is less favored.

By analogy, we might consider that a school within a synagogue may occupy any of these four positions:

(1) A school is like a boarder in the synagogue if it is required to pay rent for the space it occupies and if its lease may not be renewed. While this is an unusual position for a supplementary school, it is a common status for a nursery school or early-childhood center. One way to differentiate the supplementary school, therefore, is to say "at least it is not a boarder."

(2) A school may be considered like a stepchild if the leadership of the synagogue treat it as if it belonged to someone else. While they may recognize their obligation to provide financial support, they may try to limit that support to bare necessities and turn a deaf ear to any special pleading on the part of the school committee or principal of the school (cf. BJE, 1988).

(3) A school may be considered less favored when the leadership of the synagogue recognizes its obligation to finance the school to a reasonable extent, but yet the principal and teachers feel as if their work does not receive the full attention of the lay and

rabbinic leadership.

(4) A school may be considered favored when it receives not only generous financial support, but also special attention and recognition from the lay and rabbinic leadership.

These four positions invite consideration of how in different congregations -- or at different moments in the life of a congregation -- the quality of the relationship between the synagogue and the school may vary. The positions represent differential status within the system, with the boarder having the lowest status and the mission-bearing or favored child the highest. Our focus will be on the positions of higher status, trying to distinguish by example between congregational schools that are favored versus less favored. But first some consideration of priorities within synagogue life.

Congregational Priorities

While congregations are frequently formed because of a desire to provide Jewish schooling for the children of the potential members, once they come into existence they take on a life of their own that relegates education to a secondary position.

[Elazar, 1976, p. 272]

Elazar is describing "the natural course of events" in the life of a congregation. Jews found synagogues to take care of a few basic Jewish needs -- among which is educating the young; but in the process of creating a social organization, raising funds,

obtaining a building, hiring professional staff, defining a religious orientation, etc., the key members' attention can easily be diverted from some of the original goals. While a school for the children often remains over time a significant budgetary item, it may no longer be of primary concern to the leadership and its status may fall to a secondary (less favored) or tertiary (stepchild) position.

But there is nothing inevitable about this happening; congregations can become well-established without necessarily allowing the status of education to fall to a secondary position. In a series of interviews conducted with ten key lay and professional leaders of the synagogue movements in the Boston area, I learned in detail of many of the financial and organizational pressures that even well-established synagogues currently face. Yet how congregations choose to respond to the pressures differ in many ways. One difference has to do with their vision of how their educational programming fits into their plans for the future. Some congregations have decided to make quality Jewish education part of their appeal to the broader community. Others have decided to reduce their budgets by (among other ways) cutting their educational staff. Still others try to hold the line on their educational budgets, but are not clear on how to make education appealing to new constituencies.

It is important to realize that congregations are complex organizations with thick histories and organizational dynamics.

(In this way they resemble families.) There is no easy way to cut through the complexity and get a handle on the priority-setting process in a congregation. Yet it remains important to describe how in some congregations the leadership has managed to keep education in a favored status and use those programs as a way of sustaining the vitality and growth of the congregation.

Testing the Hypothesis

There are certain Temples that stand out as having excellent schools. Often the quality of the school is a barometer of the general qualities of these congregations. These Temples want excellence in all their programming. So they attract quality staff who can produce a finer program and end up attracting more members.

[From an interview with a key leader
in the Boston area Reform movement.]

The interviews I conducted gave me confidence that my hypothesis about the relationship between synagogue and school could be tested in the Boston area. If certain congregational schools could be identified as "good", I could then study the relationship between those schools and their host congregations to see if they enjoyed the favored status that I had hypothesized.

To identify what might be called "good congregational schools" I conducted a telephone survey among eight selected professionals in

the area who are involved in and knowledgeable about synagogue-based educational programs and whose judgment I respect. Four of these are principals of local congregational schools (two Conservative, two Reform)* and four are from the Bureau of Jewish Education or the Federation. They were asked individually if there were synagogues in the area with "especially good" educational programs and if so, to identify them. They also were asked to describe what in their opinion accounts for the programs being "especially good."

All eight believed there were "especially good" educational programs. In identifying them, all eight chose one, and seven of eight chose a second. Eight other congregations were cited, but none of the others were named by more than five respondents.

In describing what accounts for these programs being "especially good", they cited the following factors: the school director (6); the support of the community (4); the involvement of the rabbi (4); the quality of the teachers (3); the engagement of the parents (3); and the quality of the curriculum (2).

As the two congregations named most frequently for having "especially good" educational programs were already known to me (one was where I had attended the Bat Mitzvah) as quality schools, I chose to make them the focus of my study. I used the factors named by the respondents as background information, but tried to go into

* In the Boston area, while the Orthodox are actively involved in sponsoring day schools, they are little involved in supplementary education and were therefore not consulted in my survey.

each of these congregations with an open mind to discover how their leadership described the goodness of their schools and the relationship between school and synagogue.

Temple Israel and Temple Isaiah

The two synagogues selected were Temple Israel of Boston and Temple Isaiah of Lexington. Both are modern Reform congregations, but are in many other ways different from one another.

Temple Israel, founded in the 1850's, is the largest Reform Temple in New England. It wears its long history proudly. Its finely-architected building, located in the city of Boston (though on the border with suburban Brookline), is a blend of traditionalism and modernity. The art displayed within the Temple is strikingly rich and satisfying, but also traditionally Jewish in theme. The sanctuary is very large and comfortable, but simpler in design than one might expect.

By contrast, Temple Isaiah, founded after the war as Jews began to move in some numbers to suburban Lexington, is a medium-sized congregation housed in the plainest of structures. Whereas no one could miss seeing Temple Israel on its street in Boston, you could drive by Temple Isaiah and never realize you missed it. Inside the building it is clear there are but two central spaces: the sanctuary and the classrooms.

Temple Israel's splendor obscures the fact that many of its members commute to the temple from the suburbs or from other areas of Boston and are neither wealthy nor well-established. This

synagogue also has demonstrated a keen commitment to integrate as members newly-arrived immigrants from the Soviet Union. Temple Isaiah's plainness obscures the fact of its drawing some good percentage of its members from the more affluent professional community of Lexington and surrounding suburbs. Simplicity is a choice rather than a necessity at Temple Isaiah.

Cary Yales has been rabbi at Temple Isaiah since 1971. The Temple does not employ a resident cantor, but has for many years employed a full-time educator, Lois Edelstein, to run the school and has more recently employed an associate rabbi. Bernard Mehlman has been the senior rabbi at Temple Israel since 1978. Ronne Friedman came that same year to become associate rabbi, but has since chosen to leave that position in favor of becoming the full-time Temple educator. Temple Israel employs in addition a full-time associate rabbi, cantor and executive director. With over 1,700 members (to Temple Isaiah's 660), Temple Israel requires a relatively large professional staff.

Sponsoring the School

For all the apparent differences between these two temples, once I began investigating the relationship of the synagogue to the school, it became clear that the two have much in common. Both temples sponsor the school-within in ways that clearly exemplify the status of their being favored.

The favored position that these schools enjoy expresses itself in the following observable ways: communal support, educational

vision, rabbinic involvement, support for the educator, financial and organizational backing, integration into the life of the congregation. Each of these forms of support needs to be elaborated.

(1) Communal Support *

Both Temples have a proud history of communal support for education. Lexington as a town is well-known for the quality of its public school system and for parental involvement in their children's education. That transfers to a large extent to Temple Isaiah, where the leadership has from early on hired two full-time professionals: the rabbi and the educator. The leadership has wanted the school to offer a quality Jewish education and has backed the insistence on standards in the school in regard to attendance, learning and work completed. Their attitude is: "This is how we do things at Temple Isaiah; if you, the family, do not wish to maintain these standards, you are free to choose another Temple."

Temple Israel also has a long history of hiring full-time educators and running a quality school. For many years, Helen Fine, a well-known Reform educator and author, taught in their school. Roland Gittelsohn, the rabbi emeritus, came to Temple Israel after his former congregation -- in the fashion of those days -- did not want to institute Hebrew education during the week in addition to

* The information used to describe these temples was drawn primarily from interviews with synagogue leadership, rabbis and educators. Temple Israel also supplied me with some written documents and a videotape they created to present themselves.

religious school on Sunday. At Temple Israel he found a Reform congregation committed to Hebrew as well as religious education.

In the 1960's the school at Temple Israel was very large and operated on a double shift. It was known as "the place" to send children for a Reform education and attracted an intellectually-ambitious student body. After the baby-boomer generation of students ended and the size of the school was greatly reduced, the Temple leadership continued to support education. That support in one way manifested itself upon Rabbi Gittlesohn's retirement in hiring an educationally-oriented successor, Rabbi Mehlman.

2) Educational vision

On a promotional videotape made by Temple Israel, the rabbi is introduced by a congregant who speaks of the joy of learning with the rabbi in his classes for adults. Rabbi Mehlman's voice is then heard saying, "The first most formidable challenge to any synagogue is education." He goes on to speak about life-long Jewish learning. It works as a rhetorical charm; but upon observation, it proves also to be a programmatic reality.

Temple Israel is an active center of Jewish learning with as much activity for adults and families as for children. Rabbi Mehlman and his team (the two other rabbis and the cantor) are in the midst of the teaching, whether it be at a worship and study session before regular services on Shabbat morning, at a downtown law office on Thursday morning or tutoring newly-arrived Soviet teenagers. The school, K-12, is clearly the largest single educational program; but it is surrounded by enough other educational

activity that the rabbi's vision of building community in a large urban synagogue through the joint pursuit of learning is made manifest each day of the week.

Rabbi Yales at Temple Isaiah is no less emphatic about creating a learning community. He is proud that his congregation has fostered twenty active havurot among the membership, with three new ones beginning in the past year. He is equally proud that Temple Isaiah has the fastest growing family education program in the Boston area, and that it is the parents who continue to ask for more programming. As he says, "I have the same philosophy for the school as for the congregation. First get people comfortable, and once they are comfortable with you and each other, you can begin to talk about worship, God, etc."

(3) Rabbinic involvement

Rabbi Mehlman and Rabbi Yales are not only articulators of an educational vision, they are also involved directly in teaching in the congregational school. Rabbi Mehlman teaches a Bible class to the eighth grade each Sunday morning and classes in the Monday evening high school. Rabbi Yales teaches a Holocaust course to the ninth graders and a Sex and Sexuality course in the high school. Both rabbis are also involved in several yearly Shabbat retreats for the older students and encourage their associate rabbis also to be actively involved in the school and other educational programming such as family education.

The rabbis are consciously sending a signal by their involvement in the school. Even though, as senior rabbis of

well-established congregations, they could relegate the teaching of children to others, they feel the teaching is so central to their vision of building community in the congregation that they take the time to do it themselves.

(4) Support for the Educator

Being a Temple educator can be a lonely position,* but what one senses in talking to Rabbi Friedman and Mrs. Edelstein, is how well-supported they feel in their positions.

Rabbi Friedman's situation is unusual, if not unique. How often does an associate congregational rabbi choose to remain in the same Temple, but become the Temple educator? Rabbi Friedman describes his choice on the basis of his love for educational work, his close working relationship with Rabbi Muhlman, and his commitment to their shared vision of building community in Temple Israel.

Mrs. Edelstein came from another local synagogue to Temple Isaiah ten years ago. In asking about the support she gets, Mrs. Edelstein cites three main sources: a closely-knit group of Temple educators in the area, the rabbis, the congregants. The group was set up by a consultant from the BJE and has met regularly over many years. The congregants surprise her by doing more service for the

* When I was telling a colleague who is now a day school principal about my research, he stopped me at this point to say: the biggest difference between being the principal of a day school and a principal of a supplementary school (which he had been previously) is how much more support you get in the day school.

school than she would have expected. (For example, the man -- not a parent -- who volunteered without solicitation to cook latkes for all the children and teachers during the Chanukah celebration.) And the rabbis -- senior and associate -- who work closely with her on almost every aspect of the educational program.

In speaking in both Temples with the senior rabbis and the educators, I was struck by how closely and respectfully each team works together. They refer to each by first name; they share a vision; they plan and work together; they are colleagues in the fullest sense of the term.

Rabbi Yales explains how in his view this team works together:

My leadership style is to empower and not to second-guess . . . It's Lois (Edelstein)'s school. I work with her . . . Rabbis are teachers, but we are not educators. It behooves us to leave education, i.e. curriculum, pedagogy, running the school and staff, to people more well trained than we are. But when it comes to policy decisions, the rabbi needs to lend support. I don't go to all the [Temple] committees, but I do go to the school committee meetings. That involvement sends a message.

(5) Financial and Organizational Backing

Commitment, vision, involvement and support all create the relational space of which we spoke earlier as being essential to promoting Jewish learning. But clearly the relational space needs solid financial and organizational backing to survive in the

realities of synagogue life.

The interviews at those temples indicate that concrete support is forthcoming from the synagogue leadership, as the following examples show.

a) For Rabbi Friedman to become Temple Educator meant that the salary for that position would be on a rabbinic scale. The leadership accepted that without folding one position into another.

b) Rabbi Friedman has created a number of more full-time positions by creatively putting together what were either part-time or non-existent positions. That meant higher salaries and benefits for teachers. The leadership bought his concept of needing these positions and came up with the money.

c) Integrating Soviet emigrants into the school meant creating some new classes designed for them. While Federation helps, the temple has supported this very active and costly outreach to new Americans.

d) Temple Isaiah has run out of classroom space on Sunday mornings. The Board is not ready to approve fundraising for new construction; but they did decide that the school has first priority to any space at that time in the temple. All other temple functions have to wait their turn.

e) Rabbi Vales considers post Bar Mitzvah education a high priority. To motivate students to remain for two more years of study, he proposed to his congregation that they offer a subsidized trip to Israel for each tenth grader. The proposal found quick support from a donor and has become part of their educational

program.

f) A three-year grant from Federation to Temple Isaiah to begin family education programs will soon run out. The programs are very popular. With backing from Rabbi Yales, Mrs. Edelstein went to the Board to ask recently that they consider picking up the tab once the grant is over. The preliminary response was positive.

(6) Integration into the life of the Temple

Worship stands alongside education as the other central focus of Temple life. To what degree are these two realms integrated together?

a) In both schools, the students are learning Hebrew with an eye to being able to participate intelligently in the services by being familiar with the Hebrew of the Torah and the siddur. (Spoken Hebrew comes later, with less emphasis, in the curriculum.)

b) Both temples have shabbat and holiday services that actively involve children and families in the service. At Temple Israel, there is also a children's choir and a Torah reading group that are involved.

c) The rabbis take off time from involvement in adult congregational activities on several Shabbat days during the year to go off on retreat with the school children.

d) In Temple Isaish, several teachers have joined as congregants, and Mrs. Edelstein reports that the students are surprised that she is a member and worshipper at her home Temple. They expect to see her at services, perhaps because school and synagogue feel integrated.

Are These Good Schools?

I have attempted through the descriptive material to establish a link between these two congregational schools which had been designated as "especially good" and the ways that their host temples sponsor their educational activities. We have tried to show how six features of support operate in each temple and contribute to creating a safe space in which Jewish education can flourish.

But are there any indicators that these two schools ought to be called "good schools"? While I do not yet have sufficient data to definitively answer this question, I believe I have observed positive indicators which at least would indicate the potential is present. There are seven such indicators:

1. A coherent curriculum. In both schools, there is a coherent curriculum which defines a progression of Jewish learning for children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. There are clear guidelines for three age groupings, K-2, 3-8, and 9-12, with each having different goals and different learning programs. Yet there is a whole that seems greater than the three parts.

2. Standards. In each school there are clear expectations about attendance, behavior, learning and work completed. A spirit of seriousness is created through the enforcement of these standards.

3. A community feeling. While an observer sees classes that are well-taught, lessons that are well-conceived and students who are at work learning, he also feels a sense of comfort and at-homeness. The children seem relaxed, the teachers friendly, the principal is around and about interacting with children, parents and

teachers. These are humane, orderly environments.

4. Staff continuity. Mrs. Edelstein has been at Temple Isaiah for ten years; Rabbi Friedman has been at Temple Israel for eleven years. More impressively, teachers have remained a relatively long time. I met one teacher who has been at Temple Israel for 25 years, says she wants to retire, but does not because she is still learning on the job. At Temple Isaiah, several teachers have been there since Mrs. Edelstein arrived, most have been there a few years, and the most common reason for leaving is completing one's program of graduate studies. When I asked one teacher why he has stayed for five years, he said it was because of Mrs. Edelstein: she has created a closely-knit group of teachers and takes such a personal interest in every teacher's work that it feels like a privilege to work with her.

5. Parent Involvement. Both temples encourage parents to learn along with their children and have active, growing family education programs.

6. Post Bar Mitzvah. Both temples make clear the expectation that Bar Mitzvah is an important step along the way, but not the end point of Jewish learning and involvement. They make their high school programs attractive by integrating formal and informal learning, having the rabbis teach in the high school, and offering weekend retreats and a subsidized trip to Israel. They do get better than 50% continuity rates.

7. Innovation. Each of these schools has innovated new programs in Jewish education. As mentioned, Temple Israel is on the cutting edge of educating recent emigres and Temple Isaiah of family education. Both also have vibrant programs in the arts (including Jewish family theater at Temple Israel), and Temple Isaiah is a leader in the field of Jewish special education.

None of these indicators by themselves assures us that these are indeed "good schools", but together they create a strong impression of active, dynamic programs in Jewish education.

Conclusions

This study is a very limited one. It deals with only one North American community, and within it, only two Reform temples and their schools. It is only a beginning and any generalizations would be hazardous. Yet in the study of supplementary education, any positive indicators of quality education, however preliminary, need to be heeded.

A case has been made that for Jewish learning to thrive in our environment a very special space has to be created to protect it. Synagogues often, for a multiple of legitimate reasons, are distracted from this task and allow Jewish education to fall to a position of secondary priority. In fact, as we have tried to demonstrate, it takes a concerted team effort on the part of the lay leadership, rabbis, educators and parents to keep education, and particularly the congregational school, in the position of the favored child. To do so seems to require a vision of the synagogue

as having a mission to reach out and educate its membership and particularly its youth.

A question not here considered, but clearly implied for future study, is how the larger Jewish community -- of which the synagogue is a part -- can be helpful to congregations to assess the status of education in their synagogue and find ways to make it once again a prime priority.

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