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**MS-831: Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation Records, 1980–2008.**

Series C: Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE). 1988–2003.

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National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, 1991.

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CLAL

The National Jewish  
Center for Learning  
And Leadership

April 4, 1991

Mr. Stephen H. Hoffman  
Council for Initiatives in  
Jewish Education  
1750 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44115

Dear Steve:

Ever since the Mandel Commission report, I have been discussing with the staff of CLAL what we can do with and for this most exciting new initiative. CIJE is now the cutting edge for Jewish education and for insuring the survival and flourishing of the American Jewish community through upgrading education.

CLAL was founded with the axiom that education and understanding provide the key to Jewish life in an age of choice and freedom. We want to be associated with and strengthen every development that will insure the triumph of literacy and knowledge in the Jewish community.

Reading the minutes of the March 12th meeting confirms the centrality of the lead communities and their role in advancing Jewish education. That focus leads me and CLAL to make the following suggestion to you.

Although there is much more appreciation for Jewish education than there was a decade or two ago, the matter of its centrality is far from settled. With the enormous pressure of the needs of Operation Exodus and of Israel and the cutbacks in local institutions, it may become even harder to get people to recognize how essential it is to increase the investment in Jewish education in order to raise it to a new level of professional and curricular excellence. Even those who recognize the philosophical importance of education and learning may be torn and diverted by the sheer pressure to meet established institutional needs. Therefore, the Mandel Commission report repeatedly stressed the importance of developing lay leadership.

One of the important criteria for lead communities will be "c.) lay leadership commitment". One of the required program areas to be addressed by a lead community is "Lay Leadership Development". Whether lead communities will be sought out and approached or there will be an open invitation for self-selected communities to step forward is not yet settled. In either case, it seems that

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motivation of top leaders and inspiring them to a deeper commitment to Jewish education will be an indispensable part of creating a lead community. It will be needed as well to create a consensus in the American Jewish community for the importance of the new initiatives in Jewish education.

For the past fifteen years, CLAL has been particularly focused on educating and motivating the top leadership of American Jewish communities. CLAL has great credibility in those circles; its expertise and experience in working with them is on a par with the best. In CLAL's work, we place all our teaching in the context of community building and the mission of the Jewish people, particularly in this new era of Jewish history now unfolding with its particular blessings of freedom and power. Moreover, CLAL's approach also meets a number of other criteria that are looked for in the lead community such as "K. Commitment to coalition building (synergism); L. Commitment to innovation; M. Commitment to a 'Seamless Approach', involving all ages, informally in formal education; N. Commitment to the notion of *clal Yisrael*--willingness to involve all segments of the community; O. Agreement with the importance of creating fundamental reform, not just improvement and change."

Accordingly, we would like to make the following suggestion to you and Shulamit as to a possible joint venture between CLAL and CIJE.

1. That CLAL work with CIJE to approach 5-10 communities a year. The communities would be chosen in consultation with CIJE. In some cases, these would be obvious candidates for lead communities; in other cases, it would be communities that need to be 'turned on' so that they work to become lead communities. The selected communities would identify the leadership elites that should be involved in Jewish education more deeply as well as the leaders who will play key roles in the entire process of becoming a lead community (and in raising the community's commitment to Jewish education). In particular, this would include the top ten to twenty philanthropists in the community, the top ten to twenty decision makers, etc. In addition, we would reach out to other elites in the community, at all levels and in other community institutions such as synagogues. In addition, we would seek to identify rabbis or other top professionals whose cooperation (or opposition) could make (or break) the program. Recruitment would be done jointly with CIJE, CLAL and the community participating in planning and recruiting.

2. CLAL would offer retreats and/or one-day seminars or partial day seminars for the key leadership. The theme would be Jewish education and the Jewish agenda. We might focus on three elements:
  - a) The New Era: the implications of an age of freedom and choice, why Jewish education becomes an indispensable element in preserving Jewish identity and assuring Jewish continuity;
  - b) The communal, financial, psychological and value conflict tensions involved in the various priorities, alternative strategies for Jewish survival, etc. The goal would be to give fundamental information as well as to portray the various choices, options and competing priorities in Jewish life. Such information and analysis can only underscore the significance of education and the need to give it top priority;
  - c) Jewish Education, the perils and potentials, i.e., some of the specific alternatives in education, some of the broadest problems and what can be done about them. (The message is that something can be done to decisively improve Jewish education.) The program should give a sense of the vision of what can be done and the emotional motivation to want to do something about it.

If we do ten communities a year, not all will become lead communities. But even in such cases, the experiment will help generate a broader consensus in the American Jewish community as to the importance and priority of Jewish education. These programs will help CIJE carry out the mandate of "A Time to Act"; it will engage the type of leadership we need in this adventure.

This proposed program will not be a CLAL monopoly. We are ready to work with JESNA and all other appropriate institutions as well as with CIJE to carry this out. The appropriate resource people would be involved in the programs; they may or may not be CLAL staff. We believe that CLAL's proven record of inspiring lay leadership, empowering them to make good priority Jewish decisions and to give and get with greater zeal would all but insure the success of the seminars and of the initiatives which CIJE wishes to bring to Jewish life. If you are receptive, we would be glad to get together with you and Dr. Elster to spell

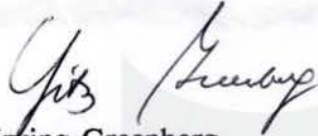


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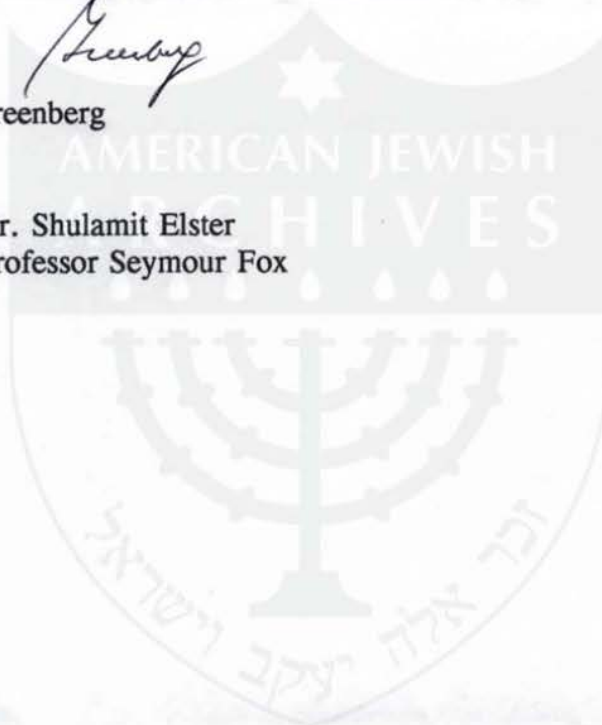
out the program and to think through issues of process, funding, target groups, etc. It would be a privilege to work on this frontier of Jewish life. We are eager to work with you.

Sincerely yours,

  
Irving Greenberg

IG:blm

cc: Dr. Shulamit Elster  
Professor Seymour Fox



October 15, 1991



CLAL

The National Jewish  
Center for Learning  
And Leadership

Mr. Henry Zucker  
Premier Industrial Foundation  
4500 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44103

Dear Hank:

It was a pleasure to meet with you and to be briefed on the very exciting programs and plans of Mort Mandel and the Foundation as well as CIJE and the planned interaction with other family foundations. In spite of the enormous pressure of competing needs, this is the time to upgrade Jewish education and its resources. The long term vision, commitment and shared values ultimately carry the superstructure of community, institution and government--not vice versa. This is a time to reaffirm the faith despite the many important concerns that preoccupy us. Mort is on the cutting edge of history in his leadership role for Jewish education. I know that it will be full of blessing for him and for the entire Jewish people.

We are now straightened away in our understanding of the support for CLAL. Under separate cover, Alan has written with a formal request for general support for our work. In addition, we will stay in close touch with CIJE. We know there will be a major effort to strengthen leadership education and motivating lay people to understand the centrality of Jewish education. We hope to be a vehicle for CIJE in communicating this message to the policy-making elite of American Jewry.

One of the decisions that most impressed me was Mort's commitment of major underwriting to the three theological seminaries and to the Jewish Community Centers Association of America for enrichment of their training and recruitment program for executives and educational personnel. Thereby, Mort showed how serious he is about pushing forward the boundaries of Jewish education even before CIJE is up and running at full blast. We all realize that the full flower of the work will come only when CIJE is at full operation with lead communities, etc. Nevertheless, the decision to make a statement now sends an important signal to American Jewry that it cannot hurt or postpone Jewish education until the present economic crunch and the burdens of Operation Exodus are lifted.

You indicated to us that Mort has made his statement and was planning no further major initiatives until CIJE and other such programs are in full operation. This decision makes sense. Still, I would like to call your attention to a major concern

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which I think warrants further reflection on your part, Mort's and all those involved in this major initiative.

Enclosed is a copy of a recent article dealing with the impact of Boston's current fundraising woes on its funding for Jewish education. I have taken the liberty of underlining a number of passages because they speak to a widespread phenomenon. Recently during a lecture in Milwaukee, I discovered the Federation there (which is also struggling with fundraising woes and international needs) is seriously considering gutting, if not abolishing, the Association for Jewish Education (which is their equivalent of a Bureau of Jewish Education). I have also heard various reports of other cities--enough of them to convince me that this is a serious phenomenon which must be 'headed off at the pass' before it deals a permanent setback to the cause of Jewish education.

For the past two decades, there has been a glacial but steady upgrading of investment in Jewish education as more and more people came to understand the challenge of freedom and assimilation and the centrality of education in equipping people to choose to be Jewish and to go on being Jewish. Obviously this is why Mort has taken on the leadership that he has.

However, the present combination of recession and falling off of giving combined with the overwhelming obligation and emotional power of the Soviet Jewry/Operation Exodus needs is going to be with us for the next decade. Given the unrelenting pressure and the growing number of cuts in local social services, there is a real danger that Jewish education will come in third--and will be seriously harmed. Not only is there the specific danger of cutbacks but a change in psychology as to the priority in the future will considerably undercut the initiative that the Commission on Jewish Education of North America represents. I am not sure, therefore, that it is optimal to wait until CIJE is fully established before dealing with this issue.

The Commission made two major recommendations. One was to upgrade educational personnel; the other to generate community support and lay leadership commitment to the priority of Jewish education. Mort's four dramatic gifts send out the signal that there will be no delay or temporizing with the commitment to upgrade Jewish educational personnel even at a time of difficult priorities. The absence of an equivalent statement in recruiting leadership to strengthen Jewish education stands out. If we wait another year or two, the new attitudes may be set and the damage may well have been done. A dramatic statement now in the area of leadership values could have a multiplier effect over the next decade.

I am not going to try sell you or convince Mort because he knows his priorities. I would like to urge you to sit down and think about what can be done in the interim. Among the possibilities that have occurred to us at CLAL are the following:

a. Recruit 100 people across the country of the next generation of community/family foundation/lay leadership. They should be recruited in the same style as the Wexner Heritage Foundation program, i.e., people who have already shown significant leadership capacity and are clearly labeled up-and-coming future major leaders. They should be given a Fellowship/educational experience over the course of a year that would profoundly affect them. The difference would be that this program would focus not on the basics of Jewish history and religion as the current Wexner program does but rather on the issues of the Jewish community. To put it bluntly: the goal would be to convince them and to share with them the evidence and the understanding that would lead to priority for Jewish education and recognition that it must be given primacy even at a time of scarce resources.

CLAL would be happy to be the agent to carry out this program comparable to the role of the seminaries in recruiting rabbis and educators for the future of Jewish education. However, the need for this program is independent of whether CLAL gets to do it. I will work with you whatever agency you choose although our credentials as the leading educator of lay people are well known. The key is that the statement has to be made.

b. An alternative would be to take a mixed group of educators and lay people (people who will set the community leadership for the next few decades) and bring them together systematically in the form of extended retreats and/or joint study programs. Here again, the signal would be that we are recruiting leadership. That will assure the priority of Jewish education over the next two decades.

c. Alternatively, we could identify a group of 25 to 50 major Jewish leaders--of Mort Mandel's scope (or to be more realistic, since there are very few like Mort, people at the next level to him) who would be recruited and given special weekends and other educational experiences that would clarify the issues, point to the crisis of education and assimilation, make the case for needed resources and for the chance to change Jewish education now--and for the need to do so now whatever the competing claims. Identification of target people, agreement on the education and social experience to be supplied and the recruitment of peers would be carefully planned jointly with CIJE, Mort Mandel



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and CLAL. This can be done in a way that will create new momentum for priority of Jewish education.

The main point is that a statement now on Mort's part to galvanize recruitment of lay leadership can be a significant extension of the work of the Commission-- as the statements he has made in the other area.

I need not add that the extra dimension that CLAL offers would be pluralism and Jewish unity and making clear that we are not only strengthening denominational education but also *clal Yisrael* education. However, all these considerations are secondary to the primary point. It is time to make a statement about the priority of Jewish education.

Warmest best wishes.

Sincerely yours,



Irving Greenberg

IG:blm

cc: Stephen Hoffman  
Enclosure

