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HEBREW UNION COLLEGE — JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

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January 29, 1997

Dear Consultation Participant:

I want to add my personal expression of gratitude to that of Daniel Marom's for your attendance at the November consultation on Michael Meyer's paper. For me personally, it was an exciting discussion that left me with much to think about. In addition to responding to Dan's request for notes to the enclosed draft, I would like to address the following questions to you:

1. How do you think the paper and this discussion could be prepared for use in a variety of congregations, day schools, and other institutional contexts?
2. What steps would we need to take to translate the consultation discussion into a commentary?
3. Would any of you be willing to work on it?

Please let me know what you think, and again, I thank you for your interest and participation.

Sincerely,

Sara S. Lee, Director
Rhea Hirsch School of Education

SSL/fa

Enclosure

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Dear Consultation Participants:

Though a few months have passed since we met in Los Angeles, our compelling deliberations still linger. Seymour Fox and I would both like to thank you all again for the time and the effort you made in participating at the meeting and for your qualitative contributions.

In addition to enriching our "Educated Jew" project, our meeting has opened up further possibilities for the study and discussion of Michael Meyer's paper in the context of educational development efforts within the Reform movement. I hope to inform you of new developments in this area in the near future.

In the meantime, it is my pleasure to submit to you the latest draft of the notes from our meeting. This draft is the result of my effort to edit the notes taken by Barry Holtz and Daniel Pekarsky of the C.I.J.E. together with my own notes, so that a single coherent document emerges. Please let me know if there are any corrections or additions which you think are necessary.

I look forward to speaking to you soon.

Sincerely,

Daniel Marom

CONSULTATION WITH REFORM EDUCATORS
at the Renaissance Los Angeles Hotel
Sunday, November 10 - Monday, November 11, 1996

SESSION I

OPENING COMMENTS

After words of welcome from Sarah Lee, Michael Meyer introduced the morning's discussion by painting the background to the paper the group would be considering. Prior to his own involvement with the Mandel Institute's Educated Jew Project, this project, under the guidance of Seymour Fox and Daniel Marom, had engaged a number of scholars of very different outlooks to articulate their respective visions of an educated Jew. These included Menachem Brinker, Moshe Greenberg, Mike Rosenak, Israel Scheffler and Isadore Twersky. When Michael came to this project, he had already begun to grapple with the problem in the context of a 1994 conference on Jewish identity and its implications for Jewish education. At that time he had articulated three different approaches to locating Judaism in the modern world -- incompatibility, compartmentalization, and harmonization -- and had stressed that none of the three was fully adequate: we need to articulate a new relationship that acknowledges real difference but does not assert incompatibility. This paper became the basis for his "Educated Jew" paper, a paper which he was especially pleased to undertake because of his sense that a Reform perspective was up to that point missing from the Educated Jew Project.

Michael noted that he views his paper as staking out a position somewhere between Brinker's, which emphasizes autonomy, and Twersky's, in which the emphasis is on norms. He indicated that he would consider the conference a success if it helped to surface critical issues and if it led into a serious discussion of its implications for educational practice. Based on feedback he had already received, he concluded his introductory comments by identifying what he described as emerging issues and themes. These included: education for difference; the tension between norms and autonomy; Midrash and history; greater clarity concerning core-values; the handling of difficult and/or dangerous texts (i.e., texts that are hard to accept or that are usable for ignoble purposes).

PRELIMINARY RESPONSES TO THE PAPER

In preparation for the conference, participants had been asked to come prepared to speak for a few minutes concerning their principal reactions to Michael's paper. They were encouraged to focus on points that resonated for them, points that were challenging and on the way the paper might speak to our own work in Jewish education. Following Michael's opening comments, participants had a chance to share their reactions to the

paper. No attempt is made in this context to reproduce these reactions sequentially; rather, what follows is an attempt to identify, without attribution to particular individuals, some of the major themes around which comments tended to cluster.

a) Living tensions. In his paper, Michael had identified and struggled with a number of tensions (e.g. between tradition and innovation, individual and community, autonomy and community norms), and a number of participants felt strongly that these tensions, as he had articulated them, resonated deeply; both conceptually and very personally, a number of us felt these tensions to be powerful and necessary to deal with (whether or not we were identified with the Reform movement). At the same time, a couple of participants noted that they were not presently as troubled as they once were by some of these tensions. An example is the tension between religious community and a secular society, a tension which, some of the participants felt, was founded on the questionable assumption that the larger society is in fact secular.

b) Autonomy/core values. Among the tensions that were discussed, Michael's articulation of the tension between autonomy, on the one hand, and community norms/core-values, on the other, seemed to attract the most comments. Reform Judaism is strongly identified with the ideal of personal autonomy; at the same time, Michael indicates the desirability of educating towards certain core-values that are at the heart of Reform Judaism. What these notions involve and how they relate to each other was the subject of our discussion.

A number of participants expressed gratitude to Michael for his willingness to name this tension and to urge us to address it head-on. Several people suggested that this tension, often unrecognized or unacknowledged, actually haunts many Jewish educators and the work they do. Many educators are unwilling to acknowledge (even perhaps to themselves) that this tension is equally as troubling as is the case of educators who do not experience the tension at all -- people who, grounded comfortably in autonomy or in community norms, are insensitive to the other pole altogether.

As a counter-point to the suggestion that the tension between autonomy and norms needs to be at the heart of our efforts to think our way towards a thoughtful position on Reform Judaism and education, questions were raised concerning the status of autonomy as ideal: one person wondered whether the ideal of autonomy as it has come down to us is founded on an understanding of human nature to which we no longer subscribe, and another wondered whether the alleged tension between autonomy and community norms is predicated on according it an importance in Reform Judaism which it does not deserve. In a similar vein, someone wondered whether as a society we may have grossly over-valued autonomy (as compared to membership in a community).

These ideas gave rise to other questions concerning the place of autonomy in a Reform outlook. Questions were raised concerning the basis for viewing autonomy so positively, and whether this valuation was grounded in Jewish beliefs or only in our liberalism.

In a very different vein, questions were raised concerning the relationship between

autonomy and commitment: was it one's basic commitments that were to be chosen autonomously (i.e., turning ascribed into chosen identity), or was autonomous choice something that went on within the framework of a pre-existing Jewish commitment? Since both notions seemed present in Michael's paper, it was suggested that this might be clarified. In any event, it is worth noting that Michael's notion that autonomy needs to be understood as something that is to be encouraged within the framework of commitment, and that Jewish education needs to be understood as an effort to draw the child into the circle of our commitment proved very powerful to a number of participants in our group.

On the assumption that autonomy was to be encouraged, questions were raised concerning what educational implications flowed from this: most basically, what does a person need to know and appreciate, and what skills does a person need to have, in order to be said to be making an autonomous choice? For example, does an autonomous choice to be Jewish require seriously entertaining alternatives?

While much attention focused on the "autonomy" side of the autonomy/core value tension, a question was also raised concerning the "core-values" side. The basic question was this: over and above autonomy as a core-value, what are those core-values and beliefs that are central to Reform Judaism? A number of people felt the need for greater clarity in this area.

c) Educating for difference. This issue also resonated strongly for many participants, for whom Michael's paper helped to illuminate its two distinct but strongly inter-related dimensions. 1) In what way(s), are we different? What distinguishes us as Reform Jews from other Jews and from non-Jews? 2) What should our attitudes and relationships be towards those who are different from us, those who are not part of our Reform community? How we answer these questions will carry powerful educational implications.

d) The emotional matrix theme. A number of comments clustered around Michael's observation that while the cognitive deepens Jewish commitment, "it does not create it. Indispensable as it is, it is also insufficient. Jewish experiences, especially those gained in early childhood, create the emotional matrix within which cognitive learning can be lodged." This view resonated very strongly for a number of participants who identified with the need to emphasize the emotions, early childhood experience, and the powerful role of the home. At the same time, within the context of this general identification with Michael's point, a number of concerns were raised.

One set of concerns accepted as true Michael's thesis that an emotional matrix, largely grounded in familial experience, is indispensable to the development of strong Jewish commitment and establishes the framework for serious cognitive learning. If this is true, the question was raised, how should we proceed when, as is often the case today, the Jewish family is often unable and/or uninterested in providing the young with the experiences that will establish this emotional matrix? Similarly, how do we deal with Jews by choice, who do not have access to the sort of emotional matrix which comes from committed Jewish family upbringing?

The second set of concerns addressed the assumed distinction between the cognitive (associated with formal education) and the emotional (associated largely with the family). Nobody challenged the suggestion that the family is capable of establishing a powerful emotional matrix, but this suggestion was added to in two ways.

First, one person suggested that those early familial experiences that create the emotional matrix may simultaneously provide the child with substantively rich Jewish knowledge ("the cognitive") that will provide a strong foundation for further learning.

Second, the suggestion was made (following Israel Scheffler's work on "cognitive emotions") that intellectual discoveries or insights may themselves produce very powerful emotional reactions -- the kinds of reactions that can, on occasion, lead to commitment. Here the suggestion seemed to be that all is not necessarily lost in the case of those individuals who did not have the good fortune to grow up in a family rich day-to-day Jewish experience; conceivably, the intellectual encounter with the tradition at a later stage (say, at a university) will produce the kind of emotional response on which further Jewish growth could build.

e) Educating for ambiguity. Responding to the various tensions articulated in Michael's paper and to the difficult challenges that will face American Jews in the years ahead, one person suggested that whereas in the past educators have sought to offer the young a sharp clear understanding of who they are and how they differ from others, today our challenge may be to educate the young for ambiguity -- for living in a complex world in which much is less than clear and in which uncertainty and perhaps a measure of vagueness are recurrent if not constant.

f) Combining openness with passion. Another participant identified a different challenge for contemporary American Jewry: how to combine an attitude of openness and acceptance of those different from us on the one hand with passion concerning who we are as Jews on the other. Openness without passion is commonplace; so is in-group passion accompanied by a dismissive attitude towards outsiders; but openness and passion together are a rare combination.

g) The status of Hebrew. Michael's position on Hebrew in the paper seemed equivocal to some participants. While at some points, the paper implies that a deep knowledge of Hebrew is essential for both ethnic awareness and religious knowledge, at others the position becomes more minimalist. There was a desire for clarification of this point. It was noted in this connection that the point was important because if a strong position was taken on Hebrew this would have dramatic implications for the emphases and organization of Jewish education. Indeed, it was asked, is it even possible to talk seriously about cultivating deep Hebraic knowledge given the very weak level of intensity for Hebrew found in Reform education (as documented quite effectively by one of the participants who introduced pertinent empirical data)?

h) "Treif" questions. Comments concerning the feasibility of a serious Hebrew program given the kinds of educational programs now found in the Reform movement elicited the response that this kind of an issue should be off-limits at this stage in our inquiry. At a time when we are trying to figure what Reform Judaism should be striving for in the educational arena, it would be a mistake -- at least for now -- to compromise the integrity of our thinking by focusing prematurely on issues of feasibility. Let's first, the suggestion was made, focus on what is desirable -- on the kind of person we would hope to cultivate through our efforts at education.

i) Our relationship to the non-Jewish world. For some participants in our discussion, one of the most interesting issues raised by Michael's paper concerns our relationship to the outside, non-Jewish world. This is actually a cluster of inter-related issues: how, where, does our world end and the non-Jewish world begin? How should we relate (and teach our children to relate) to the non-Jewish world that surrounds us? What do we do about Halloween and Thanksgiving -- are they our holidays and if so in what sense?

In a very different vein, one person expressed the concern that our relationship as Jews to the non-Jewish world was being framed as a contest, a framing that this person and some others felt somewhat uncomfortable with.

j) On the concept of an "educated Jew". A number of individuals identified themselves with Michael's reflections on the concept of an educated Jew. The notion that we need to be educating not only towards knowledge but also towards commitment was emphasized in this context; and the point was also made that "educated Jew" sounds like a completed achievement, whereas the challenge of Jewish education is to nurture someone who will go on and on growing Jewishly -- that is, "a learning Jew".

k) The role of process in figuring out what we are about. Distinguishing between an axiom-centered and a process-approach to our efforts to think about fundamental educational issues, one participant suggested that we would do well to focus some of our thinking on understanding the differences between these approaches and their respective potentialities for helping us think about educational issues.

l) Similarities and differences. One of the participants was struck by powerful ways in which Michael's ideas differ from and resemble the ideas of various other thinkers (e.g., other educated Jew essayists, Mordechai Kaplan, Fowler). It was suggested that explicit attention to these similarities and differences could strengthen the paper's power.

m) The Midrashic Process. There was a lot of interest expressed in Michael's discussion of the Midrashic process, a process which, as he argues, proves a powerful way of rendering the text personally meaningful. At the same time, a question was raised concerning whether this process results in simply projecting onto the text whatever values one happens to hold. Discussion of this issue served to re-surface questions concerning whether Reform Judaism is organized around any stable core-values that will serve as steady guides to interpretation and conduct. For some, this was a troubling question.

n) Empirical data. While our discussion focused on "the big questions", the real world of Jewish education was not far from our thoughts. The realities of this world suggest both the need for the kind of thinking our group was doing and the distance we would need to travel to meaningfully organize Jewish education around the kinds of ideas we were discussing. A sense for what this real world of Jewish education is like was offered by empirical data put on the table by one of the participants. The data included the following.

- There are approximately 120,000 children in Religious Schools and an additional 45,000 in mid-week Hebrew programs. The Reform Day School population is much smaller than the congregational school population, but it is growing. There are over 14 Reform Day Schools today.

- 94% of the congregations say they teach Hebrew for purposes of Tefilla; but interestingly, 40 to 60 per cent report that they have no Tefilla as part of the curriculum.

- Some 70% of the educators and a majority of the teachers come from a Reform background.

- More generally, the view was expressed that in most educating institutions there is no regular text study and no rationale for the curriculum.

Further data will be made available in Sam Joseph's forthcoming publication "Portraits of Schooling: Analysis of Congregational Schools of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations" (New York, UAHC Press, 1997).

SESSION II

DISCUSSIONS ON PARTICULAR TOPICS

Danny Marom began with thanks to Seymour Fox, Michael Meyer, and Sara Lee for all their work and to all the participants. Danny put five "word--themes" on the board as a suggestion of how we might proceed: 1. Education for difference-- Jewish/non-Jewish, etc.; 2. Matrix of early experience; 3. Knowledge-commitment-autonomy-belief: what is the relationship between all these things?; 4. Text: what is religious text study? what is status of the text? how is dissent possible without rejecting the whole?; 5. Process vs. Axiom. Michael added the question of obligation and what is the source of authority for norms?

The following is a summary of the discussions which followed. Please take the following into account as you read this summary: a) Since the various topics and queries are interrelated, the discussions moved from topic to topic. In order to help you make your way through this complex weave, key words and topics have been marked in bold in each paragraph. b) Excepting the case of Michael Meyer, the summary does not quote each comment made by each participant, but rather summarizes the comments in topical clusters. At the same time, an attempt is made to accurately preserve the larger flow of the deliberations.

1. Education for difference: The discussions began with Michael's response to queries on this topic. More than anything else this issue prompted him to write this paper. Until recently Jewish education showed how Judaism harmonized so well with "Americanism". We could talk about this because we were insulated in our social situation, a low intermarriage rate, etc. **Today, when Jews do not live in insular communities and intermarriage rates are high, we have to "educate to difference"**. What does this imply? It does not imply that there can be no points of contact between Jewish and general education. Perhaps, as was suggested by one of the participants, Michael Zeldin's term "interaction" is most appropriate here: sometimes we have to show incompatibilities; at other times (like democracy) there are values that are not rooted in Judaism. In the latter cases, the question is how to relate these values to the Jewish tradition. Given large numbers of converts, we need to point out the differences between Judaism and Christianity. Perhaps we need to point out the differences and why Judaism is to be preferred. We may need materials which show how Judaism is distinctly different from Christianity and give reasons for choosing Judaism.

A number of responses emerged from these comments. A suggestion was made that in order for educators to address the question of difference, it would be necessary for Michael to explicate the principle by which Michael argues for the acceptance of being Jewish? What is the authority which binds them to Judaism? **What is the justification for difference?** One participant claimed that this question is akin to the issue of theology,

which is something that needs to be articulated in order to be used as a basis for teaching. A reference was also made here to Michael Walzer's book "Thick and Thin" as a recent example of a principled case for particularism.

Another educational concern was around **the developmental issue** here: to look at Judaism from a comparative point of view, the learner needs to be at an advanced state already. Maybe the problem is that we have not as of yet sufficiently dealt with Judaism "in its essence" at the earlier ages? In order to do that, a vibrant, coherent and informed community of committed Reform Jews needs to be in place. Where is the community in which these individual educated Jews are being educated? Are our communities places where serious knowledgeable Reforms Jews can find fulfillment?

One participant claimed that **the question "Why be different?" was less central than that of "How to be different?"** People will not enter into Judaism through answering the "Why?" question. Study is a spiritual enterprise in Judaism, not just cognitive. Answering "How are we different?" helps the educational practitioner build activities in which difference is experienced as an existential truth rather than one for which there is a right or wrong argument.

Another participant suggested that **the question of exclusivity**, which comes with education for difference, provides a challenge to educators. The issue of kashrut, which raises the question "Who do I break bread with?" is a good example. How does one teach kids to wrestle through this kind of concern? Is difference a value in and of itself? The question here is if it is possible to educate for difference without creating estrangement. This points to another kind of exclusivity we find in America today that is more worrisome. We may be influenced here by general culture and influenced in insidious ways. Developments on the college campuses demonstrate this problematic very well. For many, the campuses have become an arena to answer the question "Are we better?" Judaism, by way of comparison, has always adapted good things from other cultures into its own.

Furthermore, it may not be true that the "What are the boundaries?" question is what moves people toward commitment. The question is **"How rich is the Jewish language going to be for them, how is it going to allow them a place in Judaism?"** If you do not have that language there is a shallowness that will not be compelling. **The example given here was of the practice of the Mitzvah of going to a Shiva home and participating in the tefilla so that there would be a Minyan.** At a particular point, it appeared awkward to be doing this intimate activity for a person whom the participant did not personally know. Yet it was precisely that aspect of Judaism -- the ideal of being part of a community, of expressing oneself through involvement in the life of the other, which is "different" in a way which really counts.

In the discussion of possible principles for "difference," it was suggested that Michael's emphasis on Hebrew language may be important. **One experiences difference on a cultural basis most profoundly through language.** In addition, once language sets in, it

provides a self-evident justification for difference.

On the other hand, it was suggested that **Michael's critique of secularism may point to a necessity to explore "difference" in terms of explicit critiques which emerge from Judaism as against popular notions in American culture.** Buber pointed out in his essay on "Judaism and Civilization" that Judaism could never be reduced to a culture precisely because the whole point of monotheism was to address all aspects of life with a coherent and consistent morality. Perhaps being Jewish moves one away from the whole notion of multi-culturalism and its invitation to Jews to express their differences culturally? Seeing Judaism as one part of a mosaic may dilute its power of attraction. Rather than limiting Judaism to culture, we might think of what we are suggesting to Jewish educators as an appropriate response from the perspective of Judaism to American civil holidays, including January the first, New Year's Day, Halloween, Independence Day, The Thanksgiving Holiday, etc.

Michael added a few more comments at this stage. He fully agreed with the suggestion that teaching for difference should begin with the teaching of Judaism per se to younger children and only later should the child come to see how it differs from Christianity. At the same time, **at some point we have to be willing to say that Judaism is superior.** That is not to say that we have to be inflexible. Rather than a fixed conception of boundaries we must be prepared to accept the assumption that was once part of Judaism may be taken out and vice versa. In his view, the Reform community has to be the authority for how we select what we put in and take out from Judaism, what we are suggesting that should be taught, etc.

Further comments were made in response by the participants. One set of comments addressed the claim that the Reform community was the source of authority. Not all Reform communities would be accepted as serving as a source of authority. **What kind of Reform community could serve as a source of authority?** Is there an example of a Reform community to which we would give authority? This is a very difficult challenge - even in non-liberal settings. One would expect, for example, that because the Haredi community has a clear *halachah*, the process for deciding who authorities are is also clear cut. However, it is not known exactly how they choose their authorities. This is particularly intriguing when you consider that they do not usually use formal exams as a basis for determining status. Similarly, we need to articulate our way of finding authority.

It was argued that defining this sort of community could help address the question of how to move toward **authenticating Reform qua Reform.** This would also be important in **combatting a ruling popular conception of Reform as a minimalist version of Judaism,** at the bottom of the ladder of all of the movements. The idea of Reform as minimalist Judaism has penetrated deeply into the culture of Reform Judaism itself. It was argued that all the movements need to find ways to welcome people who may get to different levels. Each movement needs flexibility and structures need to be built within each which allow a place for the most knowledgeable and committed people as the goal,

even while continuing to service the others. On a side note, it was pointed out that the Conservative movement had undertaken a massive and systematic study of its constituency in order to reconsider its policies. The study, undertaken by Jack Wertheimer really addresses the question "What is the Conservative community?"

Another set of comments addressed Michael's claim that at some stage the argument needed to be made as to the superiority of Judaism. This case was seen as part and parcel with Michael's critique of secular Jewish education. The appeal to truth which he wants to save as part of Jewish education necessarily raises the question of why Judaism's truth is better than others. At the same time, the standard take in America on this sort of problem never argues that one culture is better than the others. **The view that one's culture is superior to others abandons the multicultural position.** One participant claimed that an explicit statement of this type would lead to the estrangement of parents and students in his own school -- especially since many of them had Jews by choice in their families. Another added that the comparative religion approach which is currently used shows how problematic this line of teaching can be. It seems that the question of difference is brought up at the wrong age and with texts books which make the case for superiority inappropriately.

On the other hand, it was argued that it is precisely the comparative religion curriculum which can often be a turning point for learners to get into Judaism. One participant reported on a Catholic-Jewish educators colloquium experience as being a transforming experience for him as a Jew. Meeting with people of other religions demonstrated how really different the various religious faiths are. Another participant had a similar experience and claimed that the experience taught her that the context of her life is very different from that of a serious religious individual from another tradition. It was suggested that a good example of difference here for Jewish educators is the uniqueness of study as a form of worship in Judaism. No other religion sees study as worship. On the other hand, one participant claimed that he found no difference between Tzedakah and Charity. It was suggested that it is possible that the same conversation about difference could be going on among Catholics. Perhaps there are Christians who could help enrich this conversation?

The secularist approach was revisited at one point in this discussion. The secularists would argue that Judaism belongs to Jews and that there is no need to provide any other justification for it. One participant claimed that "it's mine" is the most powerful claim that our learners can make for themselves. If we can get that across it would be a great accomplishment. A corollary of this claim is that the source of authority is "my Jewish community." It was suggested that we need for our people to learn about this inherent dialectic between belonging to a people (which enables one to identify without having to accept a particular belief) and searching for truth in Judaism (which leads one to develop an identification based on a particular belief) and to see that both of these are part of Judaism, rather than two different versions of it. At the same time, it was argued that there is also a danger of a tyranny of secular liberalism as well in that it can lead to an extreme form of nihilism which relativises or reduces values and commitments to the point

that they lose their power to be compelling. Michael's paper suggests, we need to approach the insufficiency of secularity.

It was also asked **whether there was room within the Reform movement for the ideal of "Torah Mi'Sinai" as a basis for authority, and for that matter, for difference?** This raised a series of questions: What is the role of being chosen as opposed to choosing oneself? What is the "blanket of expectation" that we create for children? Does the community have an expectation of belonging? It was argued that choosing Judaism is an active behavior. Would it be possible, instead of choice, to build in Judaism as the "default" position? Our current "default" position is that kids are "out" of Judaism, but **how can we build in the default position that one would have to really choose to be out?**

In response, it was asked "As much as people want to belong, can the question of what people really want be avoided?" One participant argued that there is a need for a new paradigm, other than that of "our identity as opposed to something else." Further to the suggestion that we need to use "our" language as a basis for identity, she suggested **familiarity with text and text study as a basis for Jewish identity.** It was pointed out that there is much general discussion about educational implications of hermeneutical theories (eg. Denby, Hubermass, etc.) and about questions of literacy and text. This participant suggested that our way to look for answers to universal questions is that we read a text. This ties into the question of the character of the ideal Reform community in that it poses learning as a way of creating community in the Reform movement.

It was suggested, on the other hand, that **there is a need to further consider the issue of choice in Reform Judaism.** What are the origins of the rhetoric of choice in Reform movement? Perhaps there are not as many points of choice as we may think. Tefillah may serve as an example here. Decisions that were made years ago (eg. musaf) are no longer choice points for many.

What is the role of the Rabbi in dealing with all these issues? The answer to this question, it was argued, needs to be articulated in the paper. One suggestion was that the Rabbi serve as the interface between boards of trustees and membership. Another suggestion was that the more educated Jews become, the more they take over the role of Rabbi.

Michael Meyer made further comments here. On the question of authority, his view is that **the real authority within Reform Judaism is God.** At the other end is the individual who says "I accept this because of God." The problem is the sources of authority in the intermediary stages. We accept revelation as our own religious experience of what we take to be God's will. There is not one body that is authoritative for Reform Jews. But there are some understandings of positions which possess some authority: eg. the Reform movement's Pittsburgh and Columbus platforms and Centenary Perspective. Rabbis must have authority, but not absolute authority. The Rabbi must empower the congregation to gain the knowledge to have its own authority. On the other hand, we

need to face the issue of finding our devotional context outside the Reform context. In the context of the discussion on authority, we also need to understand the tremendous diversity within the Reform movement (eg. many pray in Conservative congregations, but keep Reform *halachah*) and to take into account the larger constituency of liberal Jews who do not belong to the Reform movement, but who do see authority as an issue. In creating institutions and programs, we need to make room for this diversity and for the inclusion of the larger constituency of liberal Jews.

As for the issue of superiority: the word superiority is truly in conflict with liberalism. Young people feel there is a kind of chauvinism about using such words, but in our own culture we have to show that Judaism is something that is not just mine, but is superior in some ways. Especially in mixed families this may be even more important in serving as that which the child will hang on to. **We have to argue that our doctrine is ours, but also, insofar as I can objectify it, that it has something that its rivals do not.** Messianism is an example of a Jewish doctrine that we can and do assert. We have to find a way to assert this but in a non-chauvinistic way.

2. Knowledge and commitment:

The discussion on this topic began with Michael's comments. In his view, knowledge and commitment are in reciprocal relationship. Knowledge is not the point of Jewish education, at least outside the university. Commitment is the key. Our commitment to knowledge is a commitment to the totality of Jewish tradition, even that which we do not like. This demands a continually learning Jew. By Midrash I mean the commitment to that which matters most, that which addresses the individual student directly. We have to help our young people establish an internalized tradition which can help them react against other views that we would like them to reject (such as fanaticism). **Open commitment is informed commitment.**

Participants responded with various queries and concerns around the task of moving people from knowledge to regular practice and doing. This focus emerged when it was suggested that **the audience for Reform Jewish education is primarily people who do not have a pre-existing commitment to Judaism.** It is one thing to move from pre-reflective to reflective Judaism. This applies to a person who is already saturated with experiences and identity; the challenge here is to make explicit what may already be implicit. It is quite a different kind of problem when you are dealing with people who don't have a pre-existing commitment. Here the task seems to be in creating the missing emotional matrix or finding ways in which the intellectual can in fact be powerful in nurturing commitment.

It was argued that **students at HUC come out of a good enculturating experience, but that they have an insufficient knowledge base.** Then, when they try to teach, they are in positions where they are supposed to give out a lot of knowledge in the context of enculturating, because enculturation without content is problematic. The problem seems to

be that in education, one does not necessarily have enough time for both knowledge and enculturating. This relates to the issue of the supplementary school versus the day school.

The danger of the providing a **pathological emotional matrix** was also pointed out. Where knowledge or authentic connection to the community is lacking, parents and educators can create a distorted basis for identification with Judaism, doing damage to their kids. In the end, they may reject Judaism on this basis or choose it for unhealthy reasons.

In response to this comment, **a number of the participants warned about the propensity to see the realities of Reform education always as being grim.** We have to remember that there also good congregational schools with supportive parents. One participant claimed that there is a sacred potential in each family that he deals with. Another argued that the day school provides a better context for Reform Jewish education because it brings in a Jewish community as the learners' primary Jewish environment. In response, another participant argued that the assumption that more time is necessary for effective Jewish education may be misguided. In his opinion the important factor is hiring the right staff. If invested in, they can "draw people into the circle." Developing good staff is probably the most important thing one can do with the extra time available. From her experience, another participant argued that it is possible to energize a whole Jewish institution via serious Jewish learning.

At this point there was **a call not to confuse the complex topic about the relationship between intellect and affect with quick practical solutions based on our experiences.** Outstanding teachers, if we had them, would undoubtedly be worth investment. This does not change the fact that one needs time to think seriously about these sort of issues. Early closure on such an issue is a dangerous thing. Compare the amount of energy devoted to these issues to the amount devoted to academic Jewish scholarship.

The suggestion was made at this point that the group turn to the topic of **religious learning as a unique genre of study**, different from the way we look at other kinds of learning. Michael's paper emphasizes religious study, yet we have not built a construct of religious education as opposed to merely importing general American educational conceptions into our pedagogy. Jewish subject matter seems to be more than an end in and of itself, wanting to link knowledge and commitment, and therefore to be deserving of goals which go beyond "coverage."

As it turns out, according to one of the participants, **American education is now concerned with "spiritual education" as well.** This is out of a concern that knowledge does not lead to understanding or practice and with a recognition that there is no neutral way of taking in knowledge (see paper by Deborah Kerdeman on hermeneutics and education dealing with the question of how people get oriented; Godamer's theory is seemingly neutral but underneath is really Protestant). **The question is, however, if "religious" learning is not different than "spiritual" education.** Learning which

presupposes meaningfulness of text may apply to all texts, as with the "Great Books" tradition. What makes religious meaningfulness special? Is it that it points to eternal truths and provides an absolute basis for norms?

It was suggested that **in order to define religious learning, we need models of the kind of grass roots commitment we are looking for.** If we do not want people to be dependent on Rabbis for their commitment, what do we want them to be doing on their own? What are people who intensify their learning supposed to be doing with that learning? Do they then go teach what they have learned to youngsters? Jon Woocher's article on "Unified Field Theory" claims that non-traditional Jews need to see how their personal stories fit in with the narrative of the text and how in turn the text becomes norm-giving. On the other hand, perhaps commitment is an art the practice of which cannot be articulated.

A warning was voiced at this point as to the danger of a simplistic view of knowledge leading directly to commitment. Indeed, **Michael's paper suggests a more sophisticated and dialectical view of the relationship between knowledge and commitment** - one must strive for one's commitment on the basis of informed study ("Midrash"), but once that commitment is in place, it must be constantly re-examined in light of further critical study ("history"). This ongoing interplay between "midrash" and "history" seems to be at the heart of Michael's view of what is unique of liberal Jewish education.

This has important **practical implications** as well. On the one hand, one may take from it the desire to inform commitment with knowledge as a goal in and of itself for Reform education. This may have special relevance to **the supplementary school context.** How would a supplementary school program look like if, rather than trying to give a crash course in basic Jewish literacy, its aim was to create a desire for knowledge which can only be satisfied in devoting more time and energy into Jewish learning?

On the other hand, the more sophisticated view of the relationship between knowledge and commitment enables one to be more sophisticated on the pedagogical level as well. Rather than presenting a harmonized view of Judaism, one can honestly point to and even **utilize as a motivational basis the very conflicts and tensions in Judaism which make it difficult to live by in the modern world.**

Another warning related to **the danger of transforming text into an "idol."** One of the strengths of the approach Michael is suggesting is that the purport of ancient texts can be reinterpreted or even ruled out on the basis of a higher authority. According to this approach, while truth may be reflected in the text, it also lays outside of it. In Michael's view, we must approach the text as sacred, if at the very least because our ancestors held it as sacred; yet at the same time, the option of dissent without rejection is critical. This is where "Midrash" comes in. It was argued that it was important not to lose sight of this distinction between text and truth precisely when one is emphasizing text (a reference was made here to Haym Soloveitchik's tour de force on problems in Modern Orthodoxy in a recent edition of "Tradition"). As educators, we need to enable students to be moved by

the power of that which is truly spiritual and lays beyond the text just as we try to expose it to them through the teaching of text.

One participant suggested that **the challenge here was how to teach the text as "sacred" without falling into the trap of making the text into an "idol."** She pointed to Schwab's article on "The Religiously Oriented School" as presenting a case for enabling students to learn with both typical and atypical tools at the same time. One example here was the paradigm of *נעשה ונשמע* which gets the student to do first and learn later. Another example was the paradigm of learning a text in community rather than from a teacher in a frontal lecture.

It was emphasized that **such models can be drawn directly from Jewish tradition itself.** This was the critique Kreitman expressed of the televised study sessions in Midrash on Genesis led by Burton Vissotsky. If the aim of Genesis was to provide good narrative about families, we could have turned to Shakespeare or Chekov for that. It seems that the Bible is aware of the fact that there is more to studying it than that. The challenge is to know how to draw the criteria for educational success for religious text study and to suggest portraits of practice which would lead to that success.

The discussion then focused **on the prospect of portraits of religious text study.** What would it mean to teach text in a way in which the larger aims Michael is suggesting could be achieved? The point of portraits would be to reflect a meta-theory of pedagogy. The challenge here is for the portraits to be written and read in this way. If they become an object of mimicry, one loses their capacity to serve as goals, principles or guidelines for educators and to leave educators room to be creative in working with these goals, principles or guidelines.

3. Recapitulation and suggestions for further discussion

Towards the end of our discussions on the above topics, time was given for recapitulation. What emerged also was a series of issues and queries for further discussion.

There was a general desire to further explore the topic of educating for difference. An important question here was what this could mean for difference among Jews. **Are the differences between Jews and non-Jews and between Reform Jews and other Jews parallel?** Confusion over these issues is compounded by the lack of clarity as to the self-definition of Reform Jews and the fact that there are other Jews who see Reform as inauthentic. Also, is there a tendency for even Christians to see Reform Jews as inauthentic?

One suggestion was that the two types of difference are interrelated: working out one's relationship to Jews who are "other" is part of what defines being Jewish as different than being Christian or than being American. However, the discussion seemed to focus on a

prior issue: **do we to teach our students Judaism or Reform Judaism?** Michael suggested that we ought to be teaching the Reform understanding of Judaism rather than Reform Judaism. Doing the latter lends itself to rejecting Reform as Judaism per se. In addition, one participant claimed that Reform should not settle for a definition of liberalism which draws exclusively on European sources. By developing a Reform theology which grounds liberal values in Jewish tradition, the "Reform understanding of Judaism" could be more inclusive with regards to the broader constituency of non-Reform Jews who are looking towards Judaism as a justification and rationale for their liberal commitments.

At this point, **the possibility of adopting a program of "cultural" rather than "religious" education** was explored. This too might open up Judaism to a much broader constituency of Jews. This possibility was rejected on a number of bases. Michael reiterated the strong emphasis in his paper on religious education, claiming that religion makes claims which culture simply does not. The strength of religious Jewish education is that it can bring these claims or even the order of discourse on which they exist before the learners. In this context, he pointed out that Mordecai Kaplan was strongly critiqued after defining Judaism as a "civilization" with religion being only one of its aspects - to the point that he felt compelled to change his definition of Judaism to a "religious civilization."

Another response was that **a program of Jewish "cultural" education gets one into the heated polemical debates which are currently taking place in America around multi-culturalism.** Teaching Judaism this way brings one into a political struggle over the place of one's culture in the American curriculum. One participant claimed that the debate on multi-culturalism is not really about culture, but rather about cultural hegemony. There is a perception of the American curriculum as being governed by Judeo-Christian culture. Consequently, teaching Judaism as culture puts the Jewish learner in an awkward and confusing position in which his/her Jewish culture is presented as one culture among many within a system recognizes this culture as a ruling culture. In response, it was argued that the problems which Reform education conceived religiously are grappling with are not those of multi-culturalism, but rather those related to religious pluralism and the challenges of relativism. "Culturalism" is a challenge to Reform education, not a path which it may choose to follow.

Despite the above, there was still some **unwillingness to totally let go of the cultural aspect of Jewish education.** One's tie to Israel, for example, was posited as a cultural expression of Jews worthy of retention. Somehow, it seemed that culturalism also fed into the desire to educate for difference. At the very least, it seemed that culture was a starting point for many Jews. How to include religion when this is a person's starting point is a central educational question here. This is a question which defines the work of many Jewish educators in Israel as well. One participant suggested that there was a need to explore the linkage between cultural and religious aspects of Judaism in Reform Jewish education rather than their separation. In her opinion, Christian educators who want to address the relation of Christianity and local culture have a more complicated task, because they have so many different cultures to deal with (unless we take culture to mean

nationalism in which case they do not really have the opportunity to deal with its relationship to religion). If we are honest, we will admit that there is no hard and fast distinction between these two aspects in Judaism. In fact their not being distinguished is central to Judaism. This has strong curricular implications.

Nor was there a readiness to let go of the challenge of integrating religious education with liberalism. **Moshe Greenberg's conception of the need for an evolving relationship with the canon of Jewish texts** was brought in as a good example of how to deal with this issue. Greenberg was shaken by the references made to the Book of Esther during the Baruch Goldstein massacre in Hebron. In his opinion, it was important to appropriately address those texts in the canon which might lend themselves to Jewish fundamentalism. On the other hand, he pointed to contemporary issues which are not sufficiently addressed by traditional readings of the canon - for example, the treatment of the physically and/or mentally disabled (Greenberg claims that Christianity has addressed this issue intensively over the centuries). In both cases, there is a need to look towards the larger principles of Biblical and Jewish theology and philosophy and to apply them anew to texts which could lead to fundamentalism or which could lend themselves to better treatment of the disabled in the Jewish community. In a recent paper, Greenberg points to these larger principles and the method by which they may be applied to matters of contemporary concern. The argument was made that in order to undertake a text-based Jewish education which is both religious and liberal, it would be necessary for the Reform movement to make explicit its own take on the sort of exercise which Greenberg is suggesting.

Michael added here that he thought that this approach is addressed by the objectiveness in history aspect in his paper (this aspect was suggested as part of the learning process for children after they have been initiated into the tradition and for adults as "second naivite"). What do we do with **ruling out deeply traditional beliefs and stipulations** such as those regarding gays and lesbians. It is important to do this **within the framework of Judaism rather than on the basis of a larger liberal understanding**. The scholar Abraham Geiger demonstrated that this is the way the Talmudic Rabbis worked in advancing the tradition forward. This brings to mind Kronbach's statement that "if it is right, it is Jewish and it is in the text..."

At this point, one of the participants claimed that **Reform Judaism is a fundamentally Midrashic movement**, with no absolutes to close down the discussion. Every community within the movement decides on its own commitments. This brought on a series of warnings from other participants. Without some explicitly stated larger principles, there is a danger of losing normativity, the capacity to be compelling and the room to be truly creative. Michael went as far as saying that commitments needed to be worked out to be point of Reform Jews being able to say what they were willing to live and die for - קידוש השם.

It was suggested that the focus of this discussion be on **the core content of Reform**

education - the Reform essence, as it were. While it may be true that there are many legitimate "gateways" into Judaism (see Linda Thal's lecture on this topic), there is a need for a clear and defined core. It was argued that the clearer this core content is, the easier it will be to deal with the kind of questions raised by contemporary issues. On the other hand, if we do not focus on the core content, the danger is of turning all of Reform Judaism and Reform education into a discussion of more peripheral rather than central issues. A comparison was made here with a national constitution - once it was in place it never ceases to be interpreted. Similarly, Reform Judaism also needs to be looked at first as a whole. Having done so, it is possible to deal with the rest from within this whole. This whole should be powerful enough so as to provide one who accepts it with a winning response to a Haredi who attacks Reform Judaism - not an apologetic answer but a response which truly emerges from the heart.

Is there anything which Reform Judaism can come out and say "this is who we are?" Is Monotheism up for grabs in Reform Judaism too? There seems to be an imbalance here in being able to live by the "in-between" position between revelation and freedom expressed in Michael's paper. One participant sensed that **as Reform Judaism becomes more lenient on the peripheral issues it loses its core**. The Reform Platform seems to be moving in the opposite direction of that suggested here - as if one picks and chooses non-Jewish criteria for truth and applies them back to the Jewish world and calls this Judaism. Maybe monotheism is the "litmus test" here; indeed, more and more we see that among those teaching in Reform schools and sitting on their boards are non-Jews.

A discussion emerged as to what is to be included and what is not to be included in the essence of Reform. **Michael claimed that Mitzvot must play a more central role in Reform self-definition**. There is a difference between Mitzvot and values. The midrash of Reform must express itself in the form of Mitzvot. One of the participants claimed that **the search for spirituality in America is now being divorced from religion**. People want spirituality on their own terms - with no commitments and obligations attached. This has happened in Jewish circles as well - we have demythologized Jewish religion to the point that all that is left is a culture.

Another participant reported that **though Oral Law was largely absent from her own experience of Reform education, it is today becoming more central**. Here, the sense is that there is no interpretation without first having text. Finally, another participant emphasized **the possibilities embedded in moving from Mitzvah to Midrash**. Professor Twersky points out the uniqueness of Judaism on this level - including in the eyes of leading Western philosophers. Judaism sees spirituality as being embedded in the details and practice of Mitzvot. According to this view, there is a very big difference between Tzedakah and Charity. Maimonides' understanding of eight different levels of Tzedakah, with the highest being anonymous giving, points to a uniquely Jewish way of living. Used as a basis for study, these sort of understandings and practices can lead to a more profound experience of midrash in Reform education.

CONCLUDING SESSION

Our last session focused on two major matters: 1) how Michael Meyer's paper could be used to catalyze fruitful discussion that would enhance education in the Reform movement; and 2) the educational implications of the paper. Both discussions are summarized below.

MAKING OPTIMAL USE OF THE PAPER

Earlier, a question was raised as to the outcome the Mandel Institute would like from the meeting? A number of comments were made in response. In general, it was reported that the purpose of the Educated Jew project was to create a universe of discourse around goals. Ted Sizer's new book talks about the problem of America not being able to deal with the issue of educational goals. The Mandel commission experienced the same problem. It had to freeze the conversation on goals in order to move the discussion on developing the building blocks for Jewish education ahead. With the publication of the Educated Jew papers, the Mandel Institute hopes to begin a conversation around the topic of goals in the Jewish community. For this purpose, we need to sharpen the issues of Michael's paper. Also, the Institute hopes that this effort will lead to future use of the paper and its consideration in different venues.

Three possible suggestions mentioned here were: 1) create contexts for deepening exploration and deliberation about the key issues of paper; 2) consider what difference it would make educationally if you took one of these ideas in the paper seriously; 3) use the paper as a tool of enhancing practice within the Reform movement.

The following is a summary of the remarks on this topic at the concluding session. Based in part on the rich discussions it had generated among ourselves, there seemed to be consensus among participants in our group that the Meyer Educated Jew paper could make a rich contribution to the Reform Movement's efforts to enhance the quality of what it is doing in Jewish education. The paper, it was suggested, might be used to help clarify the movement's, or a Congregation's, core-values; as a way of bringing rich Jewish content into discussions of Jewish education and evaluations of existing practice; and as a way of helping those who study it work through issues of Jewish identity (not just professionally but also personally). Against the background of this assumption concerning the paper's value, various ideas were proposed for how to use and/or develop the paper so as to maximize its value to the field of Jewish education.

Contexts in which to use the paper. Possible contexts in which the paper could fruitfully be distributed and discussed included the following:

1. A NATE Study Kallah

2. A Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) Meeting

3. A United American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) conference - especially a UAHC Commission Meeting. [It was suggested that the next Commission meeting might be appropriate, except for the fact that the new Director of Education - Jan Katzew - would not yet be in place.]

4. The Jewish Education Research Network.

5. An Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE) Congregation. In relation to this, there was a discussion of whether in fact this paper would be valuable in an ECE process. Members of the group actively involved in ECE seemed to think that it might indeed be a very useful input, but that timing -- the readiness of a Congregation for this input -- was a critical issue. Their sense was that at the beginning of the process it would probably be problematic to introduce this paper into the process.

6. Cross-constituent deliberative contexts. Reflecting on the richness of our own group, which included individuals representing a variety of backgrounds, outlooks, and roles, it was suggested that additional forums of this kind might be productive.

7. Forums that reach individuals who, while identified with the Reform movement, are now meeting their Jewish religious and communal needs outside Reform settings.

8. Devote an issue of REFORM JUDAISM to the paper. The paper would be accompanied by responses representing a range of perspectives (including those of educators).

Preparing the paper to be optimally effective. With an eye towards making it likely that the paper will be effectively used to stimulate productive discussions, we identified a number of ways the paper might be developed or supplemented:

1. Develop and offer along side the Meyer paper one or more other papers offering alternative perspectives.

2. Create a commentary which will accompany the paper and which spins out educational ideas, raises questions concerning key assumptions, offers counter-points at critical junctures, etc.

3. Create a Study Guide which accompanies the paper and which includes complementary and contrasting background texts.

4. Commission some written responses to the paper around the paper's most generative themes.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE MICHAEL MEYER PAPER

While time-constraints did not permit as extensive a discussion as we would have hoped - especially of questions relating to Hebrew, the conversation identified some critical questions and issues.

Basic questions. We started by formulating some general questions that might inform the discussion of educational implications. These included the following: 1) What educational content is suggested by the Meyer paper? 2) If we take this paper as a guide, what would a great lesson look like (content, aims, methods)? 3) If we take this paper seriously, what kinds of individuals should be teaching? 4) What would the education of educators look like?

The centrality and power of text study. Much of our discussion focused on the place of text study in Jewish education. The view was expressed that there is a need for more intensive Jewish text study in Jewish educational settings. According to one participant, significant text study could become a regular part of the curriculum around third grade, and there is every reason to think that Jewish texts offer a wonderful vehicle - with both adults and children - for getting at some of the biggest of our moral and existential concerns. (The latter point was illustrated with an ECE event in which two Psalms offering radically different perspectives on our predicament in the world were used to stimulate rich discussion.)

Ways of approaching the text. When we turned to the implications of Michael Meyer's paper for the kind of text study that is desirable, Michael suggested two educational emphases that flow from his paper's perspective: 1) understanding the text in context; and 2) what the text says to the reader in a more personal way. A third emphasis that emerged later in our discussion concerns the changing ways Jews have viewed particular texts over time.

This formulation prompted an interesting discussion concerning the balancing and/or sequencing of these educational approaches/emphases. A concern was expressed that it might be a mistake to get to the personal meaning of the text prior to developing a more contextual understanding of its significance. But another person expressed the view that the order in which the student ought to encounter different approaches to the text needs to be based on local, contextual circumstances, including the age of the students.

Which texts? This discussion flowed into a conversation concerning which texts to study. Michael suggested three kinds of texts: Classical (including Bible and Oral Law); platform-statements of the Reform movements; and selections from the work of major Reform thinkers. It is essential that texts be selected which have the potential to speak in personal ways to the student and which identify and illustrate core-values. [As an illustration of the latter, Michael pointed to the Talmudic passage found in the traditional Shacharit Service, " These are the things for which no limit is prescribed: the corner of the fields, the first fruits, the pilgrimage offerings, the practice of kindness...." He suggested that each of the items mentioned might itself become the basis for identifying additional

texts.]

As the discussion unfolded, other criteria for selecting texts also emerged. Texts that introduce the learner to important vocabularies would be appropriate, and at some points along the way - precisely when being a question we did not explore - introducing the student to provocative/difficult texts and considering how one might deal with them would also be important.

The vignettes proposal. As a way of making progress in thinking about how texts should be taught, the suggestion was advanced that perhaps we should identify a single text and develop vignettes representing three distinct approaches to the teaching of this text; these vignettes could then become the basis for further clarifying our ideas about how to approach text study. This idea seemed to generate considerable enthusiasm.

Text-study's enabling conditions. At a number of points in our discussion, it was noted that if text-study is to enter in a serious way into Jewish educational institutions, various changes will need to take place. Some noted that it would require changes in the education of educators and in the education of rabbis; someone else suggested that perhaps we would want to create a new role in educational institutions -- that of a text-resource-person; someone else suggested that a commitment to serious text study might also entail changing the organization of educational environments so that they will be more conducive to such study.

Cautionary observations concerning the place of text-study in Jewish education. While there was general sympathy for the emphasis on text-study, two cautions were stressed. The first of them came as a suggestion that instead of starting educational deliberations by thinking about what texts to read, we might consider focusing on the needs of the learners. With attention to some of Dewey's ideas on this problem, we spent some time thinking about the relationship between subject-matter (text) orientation and child-centeredness, and there seemed to be agreement that the two perspectives need not be in conflict and that in fact they could complement each other.

The second caution concerning text-study is that we should not forget that learning/education is more than the study of texts. In this context, the importance of non-textual learning activities (including what we sometimes designate as "extra-curricular") was stressed, and a view was expressed (and sympathetically received) that one of our challenges is to find ways to integrate textual studies with other kinds of activities. The thought was expressed that text-study could deeply enrich non-textual activities, e.g. "social action" projects, and that non-text-focused activities could be used as a foundation for approaching and deepening one's appreciation of pertinent Jewish texts.

Is anything off of the map? Towards the end of the discussion, Michael was asked whether, in addition to helping to clarify what needs to be at the heart of Jewish life and education, his paper carries implications for what can recede into the background or can fall off the map altogether. He responded that one could not predict in advance what

aspects of Jewish culture and texts will prove personally meaningful to Jews in different circumstances, nothing could be declared off the map in any final way.

SOME LARGER ISSUES

As our meeting drew towards a conclusion, some of the larger questions we need to answer were, if not addressed in depth, at least formulated. If we take Michael Meyer's paper seriously, what follows for the education of rabbis, for the education of educators, for the organization of congregations, etc.? Having begun to wrestle with such questions ourselves over two days, we were all poignantly aware that addressing them meaningfully (not to mention the effort to implement answers in practice) is very hard work for which there is no "quick fix". This effort to transform the character of educational practice even as practice continues apace can be compared to changing a tire while still riding along the high way -- or to renovating your home while still living in it (with the old owner watching your every step). Financial resources would, it was suggested, be required to support this kind of thinking. Concomitantly, it was suggested that persistence in such work requires energy, patience, and the kind of time that is necessary to engage in unhurried thoughtful reflection concerning what we are trying to do and how to translate our answers into improved educational practice.