



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES
A DIVISION OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE – JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

MS-831: Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Foundation Records, 1980-2011.

Series F: CIJE Accrual, 1981-2011, undated.

Subseries 2: Dan Pekarsky, 1981-2011, undated.

Box
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Folder
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Lead communities project. Milwaukee. Congregation Beth Israel.
Meetings (Folder 1 of 2), 1995 May – 1997 September.

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CJ SHABAT

Outline for CIJE 9/23 Meeting

LEE INTRODUCES THE PROJECT (10)

Thank you for coming. Tonight I'd like to tell you about a project that a group of CBI members and I began a year ago. I want to do this in order to get your feedback and formulate an agenda for the new year which is fast approaching.

In the fall of 1996, we accepted an invitation by the Milwaukee Lead Community Initiatives Project to embark on what was called the Goals Project. The purpose of the Goals Project was to enhance the quality of Beth Israel's religious and educational program by:

- 1) clarifying the synagogue's fundamental goals;
- 2) assessing how these goals are embedded in overall synagogue program;
- 3) evaluating the extent to which these goals are achieved.

The synagogue has many goals (e.g. to promote an ongoing desire for Jewish learning, to inspire congregants to pray regularly, to foster a greater understanding of the ideals and expectations of Conservative Judaism). And all are worthy of examination.

However, we as a Committee decided that, for several reasons, the focus should be on shabbat celebration.

We wanted to

- 1) clarify what kinds of opportunities the synagogue provides for shabbat celebration;
- 2) clarify the types and qualities of shabbat experiences that CBI would like to nurture (i.e. THE VISION);
- 3) clarify how shabbat fits into the outlook and lives of key constituencies (e.g. professional and lay leaders, teachers, parents and children);
- 4) evaluate the kinds of opportunities and qualities of experiences our synagogue provides in light of that vision.

We wanted to do this and to enlist your participation in an attempt to energize shabbat to the greatest extent possible.

In the year that the Goals Project met, we succeeded in several of these objectives.

We wrote a three page summary of the gamut of opportunities to celebrate shabbat or to enhance one's celebration of shabbat. A little later I will give you a schematic outline of many of these opportunities.

We wrote a working draft of a vision statement which clarifies the qualities of shabbat experiences that we would like to nurture at CBI. Shortly, we will look at that vision statement.

As for the third objective, to clarify how shabbat fits into the lives of our members, we have collected some data from a few subpopulations in the synagogue. We interviewed empty-nesters. We interviewed congregants whose celebration of shabbat takes place primarily in their homes and rarely in our synagogue. We wanted to find out what shabbat is like for these people. What do they get out of shabbat when it clicks and what circumstances heighten the celebration of shabbat. We also asked what CBI could do better to make shabbat "click" more regularly? These are valuable questions and we would learn a great deal to the extent that we interviewed more congregants. We interviewed the teachers in our CBI Religious School and have begun working with them to refine our shabbat curriculum and to implement some of the suggestions that the faculty recommended.

In one year we accomplished the first three of the four objectives. This year, we want to focus on the fourth objective: to use the vision statement as a working document to evaluate and guide shabbat programming at CBI.

I'm not sure all of us have a sense of the depth and breadth of shabbat programming at CBI. But even if we do, I know that I am more likely to look upon them as a supermarket of programs as opposed to programs that embody a particular vision.

This shift in thinking--from programming to being a vision-driven institution where the vision is articulated and members of the institution can identify it and identify with it---has been one of the main contributions that our Lead Community Project Consultant, Professor Daniel Pekarsky, has made during the year we've been working on this project.

I'd like to introduce Dan to elaborate on how this approach will help all of us in the various committees that we work.

DAN TALKS ABOUT VISIONING (10)

I'd like to hand out a copy of the working draft of the committee's shabbat vision. I'll read it aloud so that we keep apace with each other. You'll have it in your hands.

As we read it, you might want to think about what in the vision resonates with you, what are you uncomfortable with, what's unclear, is it too judgmental or too ambivalent. And you can jot some notes down as we go along. If your comments don't surface during the course of the meeting, I would still appreciate, at the very least, reading your critique if you'd hand me your comments.

However, what I would like you to mostly focus on is the following: With whatever strengths and weaknesses this draft of the vision statement has--and it is just that--a draft-- I'd like you to think about our Shabbat morning services in light of this vision.

The vision spells out the kind of experiences that we'd like to create at CBI. I'd like you to use it to write a report card for the shabbat morning services.

What aspects of the shabbat morning experience cohere with the vision? What doesn't match the vision?

How might services be changed to cohere more with the vision or to engage people that do not attend our services?

My goal would be to distill these recommendations into proposals that we could take action on.

LEE HANDS OUT VISION, READS IT, PEOPLE PAIR UP AND EVALUATE THE SHABBAT MORNING SERVICE USING THE VISION STATEMENT. (15) Please write your comments on paper.

I'd like to get your feedback in a moment. I'd like to begin with this domain--the shabbat morning service--although we could've begun in many other places.

But before you do, let me share with you some of my thoughts.

Preface

James Truslow Adams, an early 20th century American historian, once wrote: "Perhaps it would be a good idea, fantastic as it sounds, to muffle every telephone, halt every motor, and stop all activity some day, to give people a chance to ponder for a few minutes on what it is all about, why they are living and what they really want."

For Jewish tradition, Adams' "good idea" is not "fantastic" at all. Long ago this idea was incorporated in a day that comes every week: the Shabbat. It is a day of tranquillity, serenity, peace and quiet. It is the day to stop running on our own individual schedules and invest our time in those things that connect us to other people rather than put us in conflict or competition with them.

To paraphrase Abraham Joshua Heschel, shabbat helps us to liberate ourselves from the tyranny of the clock and the calendar. It is an island of stillness in the tempestuous ocean of time and toil where we may enter a harbor and reclaim our dignity.

Shabbat is a day on which we rest, not out of exhaustion, and not because we have accomplished everything we wanted to, but because we want to remind ourselves what it feels like to be at peace with the world. It is a day to "turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world."

Shabbat at Congregation Beth Israel

At Congregation Beth Israel we strive to provide opportunities to experience shabbat **in the synagogue** as a day of joy, renewal, and spiritual growth. It is also our goal to empower congregants to create such opportunities for themselves **at home**. It is hoped that the qualities of experiences that we create and educate towards will be so inspiring that the "island of stillness" called shabbat will be a welcome relief to the chronically overscheduled individual who desires to spend more time with those whom he/she loves and with his/her extended family of Jews.

In the context of a Conservative synagogue such as ours, the sacred time of shabbat begins with candle-lighting on Friday evenings and ends with Havdalah on Saturday night. In between these endpoints, sacred time is created by refraining from certain activities and engaging in others. If we make a conscious effort to let the obligations of work to recede on shabbat, then we can make room for prayer, song, celebratory meals, study, family, and community to uplift our souls in the way that only shabbat can.

Our synagogue views traditional Jewish practices, enshrined in custom and halachah (Jewish law), as powerful vehicles for spiritual growth. We recognize, however, that some of us will incorporate more of the traditional halachah into our lives and others less. It is important that all of us, regardless of our level of observance, feel safe and respected as we pursue our spiritual journeys in our synagogue. What is more important than our place on the continuum of Jewish observance is that we are all trying to deepen our relationship with God and all that God has created.

LEE OFFERS HIS EVALUATION (15)

To help evaluate our services, I thought about putting this document into the hands of a man named George Ecco and inviting him to drop in-unscheduled-on any shabbat of his choosing. George Ecco is a nationally-known church critic. He came to Milwaukee, in fact, about three years ago to rate the churches and synagogues in our community. He didn't come to CBI.

But what if he did? How would he rate it? Would he view us as a friendly congregation? Do we go out of our way to greet newcomers? Do congregants introduce themselves to visitors and take them to meet the Cantor, Ben, Pamela, Gayle or me?

Do strangers feel welcome? Do they feel that they could become part of the community of worshippers that are present?

And beyond that, if the visitor wasn't just looking for friendship, but spirituality or holiness, if the visitor was looking for God, would he or she find what they were looking for here?

Would they describe our services as joyful or renewing? Would they feel like this is a place where they can grow spiritually?

I think about the story of Franz Rosenzweig, who became one of the greatest Jewish philosophers of the 20th century, who was on the verge of converting to Christianity and decided that he should enter the church the way its founders did--via Judaism, and went to schul to say good-bye to Judaism and went to a small shteibel on Kol Nidre, and something happened to him.

He got so caught up with the passion of services that he decided to fast that Yom Kippur and come back the next day. He did and became committed to studying and embracing Judaism.

So my question is: what if Rosenzweig had come to CBI? Would there have been a similar transformation? If it were shabbat and not Kol Nidre that he came to schul, would he want to come back the next week? Would he see in our services that shabbat is a day of joy, renewal, and spiritual growth? Would he be moved to continue the shabbat experience at home after services? Would he feel that our services were "an island of stillness" on which he would build new relationships with the people around him? Would he fall in love with shabbat so much that he would want to celebrate those relationships and his new-found love of God through a shabbat lunch after schul or Friday night dinner the next week?

I'm not sure. The Rosenzweig story may be exceptional. Usually, what we get out of an experience is proportional to what we put into it. Many of us would like to believe that spirituality can be just handed to us. But, the truth is that if we want a spiritual leader, then we need to be prepared to let that individual guide us. If we want a teacher, then we have to be prepared to study. If we want someone to stimulate our children, then we have to bring them to schul. If we want someone to inspire us in prayer, then we have to be prepared to pray. Our spiritual growth depends not only on what our spiritual leaders will give but what we are prepared to give too.

Having said that, CBI has much to inspire. And this includes not just the formal service but what happens afterwards. Someone once said that the kiddush after services is no less important than the Kedusha in services. That's the time when there's a lot of mingling at CBI. There's a lot of community building. There's a hunger to catch up with friends on what's happened during the week. All that is good for community building.

But it's not just the cake and cookies that are good. More CBI members read Torah regularly than congregants in most other Conservative synagogues. That's inspiring. The quality of Torah reading is generally excellent. That's impressive.

Bar and Bat Mitzvah students are well-prepared for what they have to do. That's quite an accomplishment. There is no equal, in all modesty, to our shabbat supplement with its guide to the Torah reading and Haftorah reading, questions for children, d'var tefilla, meditation on prayer, announcements, and invitation to newcomers to introduce themselves. There is ample opportunity to learn.

The book rack of "s'forim" is set up in the back for people to follow the commentary of their choice when the Torah is read and to encourage people to wander off the page and study and reflect on their own. There is probably no other synagogue in Milwaukee that gets as large a shabbat morning crowd as we do--consistently. We have conscientious ushers--gatekeepers--and gabbaim.

And with all this, I have to say that the shteibel that engaged Rosenzweig did something that we don't YET do. If it had been shabbat in Germany when he went to schul, he probably would have received an invitation for lunch after services. I'm not sure he would have at CBI.

At that shteibel, it's likely one where everyone was davening--and that's not the case by us. We need to devote more time to training lay people how to daven because doing so will contribute tremendously to the ruach in schul.

In the shteibel that Rosenzweig entered, I imagine there was a certain energy that he could feel. The energy level is not just a function of how knowledgeable the congregation is. It has to do also with the size of the Beit Keneset. A smaller shtiebel concentrates the kavannah and enthusiasm more than a large sanctuary does. It would be worthwhile for

someone to think about how that could be addressed given that between 150 and 300 people show up on an average shabbat at CBI.

Our Jacobson Chapel benefits from being smaller. The distance between the shaliach tsibbur (prayer leader) and the congregation is shorter in the Chapel. There's more of a feeling of one-ness in there than in the sanctuary.

I often wonder what the effect would be if the hazzan's table were moved back 20-30 feet into the sanctuary so that it was placed more in the center of the congregation. I, as Rabbi, would also move closer to lend my voice to the congregation. Then we could hear each other sing better.

As for singing, which is one of the primary ways in which we are uplifted, I wish we were known for being a singing congregation in the same way that we are known for having 60 congregants that read Torah regularly. I don't get a sense that singing is joyous at Beth Israel. Improving the music component of services is a high priority for me---we've established a music committee under the leadership of Steve Ovitsky to work with the Hazzan on this in the same way that there's a rabbinic transition committee to give me feedback and point out areas in my work that need improvement.

Let me speak about one of those areas that needs improvement on my part: the sermon. One way that people can be inspired is through a sermon. My theory on sermons---besides the shorter, the better--is that the best sermons are ones that provide insights, more than rules, that can enrich people's lives. My greatest personal challenge is not only to live up to that approach but to develop greater comfort delivering sermons.

Shabbat will not be an island of stillness for the congregation if it's an island of nervousness for me. This is something that I have to work on.

Ideally, the music and speaking components of the synagogue as well as the feeling of community should be so powerful that people would feel like they are missing something if they can't make it to schul on shabbat. I'm not sure how many people feel that now. And, yet, to restate what probably seems trite, whenever I return from vacation, I enjoy returning to daven at CBI.

I WONDER IF YOU'D SHARE YOUR EVALUATIONS AS WELL (30).

COULD WE GENERATE A LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND THEN ASK EACH COMMITTEE TO TAKE THE APPROPRIATE RECOMMENDATION AND WORK ON IT WITH ME? (20). *Hand out "Shabbat at CBI"*

THIS WILL BE OUR AGENDA FOR THE YEAR AHEAD. LET'S MEET AFTER THE HIGH HOLIDAYS IN SMALLER GROUPS TO BEGIN IMPLEMENTING THESE RECOMMENDATIONS.

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Shabbat at CBI

Schedule of services

Erev Shabbat Services Fridays 6 pm /7:30 pm in June, July, August
Shabbat Morning Services 9 am
Shabbat Mincha, Maariv, Havdalah Services

Especially for families and young children

Baby-sitting every shabbat morning
Minyan M'at-junior congregation for grades 3-5--twice a month
Shabbat morning family service--once a month

4th shabbat a month--programming*
tot shabbat*

Unit on shabbat in Bar/Bat Mitzvah Training Program

Friday night family services
November 14-7 pm
December 19-6 pm
January 9-7 pm

Family Havdallah and Tu B'shvat Program-February 14

Shabbatonim

Teen Jewish Heritage Trip to NY and Washington, DC in November
Empty nester shabbaton in December
Bar/Bat Mitzvah family shabbat in December
Family Trip to Israel July 1998

Friday Evening Shabbat Dinners

Shabbat Connection--for empty nesters in-home
MJDS shabbat experience*
Congregational or family dinners
September-with scholar in residence
October-Sukkot
December-pre-Chanukah
March 20-Shabbat Across America
May-with scholar in residence
June-with scholar in residence

Opportunities for formal/informal learning on shabbat

Shabbat morning supplement--parasha study and d'var tefilla

Sermon

Mincha study sessions in Midrash and Talmud

Torah readers group

Scholars in residence program

Septebmer-Steven Bayme

October/November-Reuven Hammer

February-JTS Shabbat

February-Mordechai Gafni **

February-Moshe Edelman

April-Gillman and Fagen JTS Study Day **

May-Harold Shapiro

May/June-Ben Hollander

June-Herbert Panitch

Parashat Hashavua with Ateret Cohn-Tuesdays**

Shabbat Lunch N' Learns

November-with scholar in residence

February-with scholar in residence

May-with scholar in residence

Miscellaneous Shabbat Programs

January-Sisterhood/Men's Club Volunteer Shabbat

Weekly-past Bar/Bat Mitzvahs to take an honor on anniversary shabbat*

Monthly-wedding anniversary shabbat*

Shabbat Initiatives in the CBI Religious School

Ongoing shabbat curriculum

Ongoing invitations from teachers for shabbat dinners

Shabbat curriculum Review*

Shabbat dinner round robin*

Family education program about shabbat*

Work with teachers to discuss how shabbat vision might guide teaching*

*Not yet finalized although planning has begun.

**These scholars are not speaking on shabbat.

Shabbat Vision

Preface

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CBI Mtng - 9/97

The institutional landscape

→ Schools/Businesses/Congregations

① Some -- a minority -- thrive, vibrant; many others schlepp along -- some but modest success

② What's the difference?

According to a number of very serious students:

- ① Clarity of vision
- ② Willingness to look at practice in light of vision
- ③ Revise practice

NOT mission-statement

Illustrating the power of Vision

A) Educational - - "Teach Pesach"

VS. Pesach encourages us as Jews to identify w/ the oppressed and to support them.

→ Parts of ~~the~~ story we emphasize

- how we teach it

- activities

→ Sense of direction

Basis for decisions

CBI is a genuine Community

But what kind?

A Learning Community

- ① Study -- all ages
- ② Learn from each other.
- ③ Excitement

A Caring Community

1) Do people feel cared for?

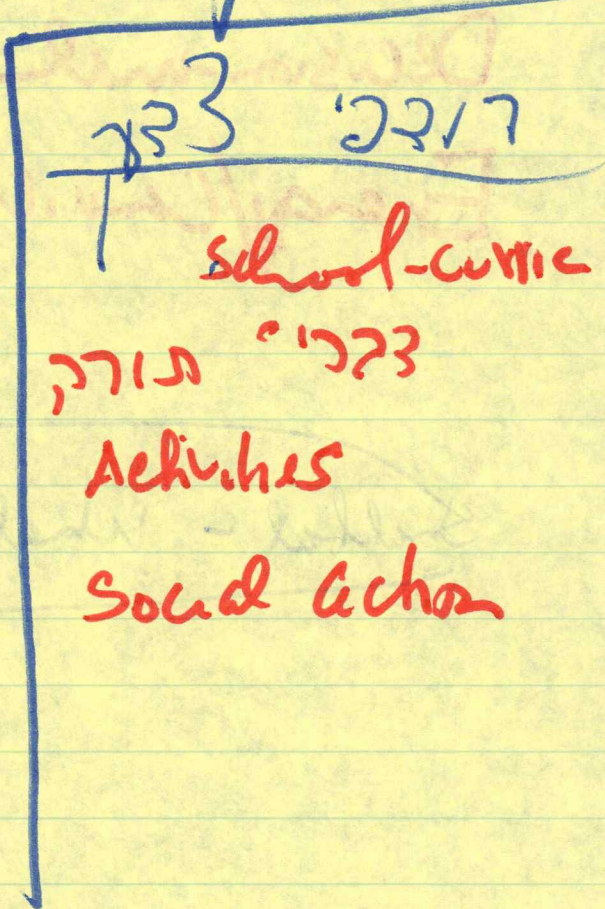
— Sick/Elderly/depressed/New comers
children

2) Who is doing the caring?

3 Visions of "Community"

Learning C

Enthusiasm
Study groups
All activities



Caring Comm

- 1) Does vs. Cared for
- 2) Elderly - sick - Inter-m - young / New
Depressed
- 3) Opps. to care
- 4) Contexts - Committees
Services
School
- 5) Curric.

Evaluate

Decision-making

Energy/Con. cho - why?

Shabbat - what's special about it?

קהל בית ישראל
Congregation Beth Israel



Herbert G. Panitch
Rabbi Emeritus

Lee Buckman, Rabbi
Carey Cohen, Hazzan
Gayle Weber Rakita, President

FAX TRANSMISSION

TO: Daniel Peckarsky FAX NO: 608-262-9074
FROM: Rabbi Buckman
DATE: 9/11/97
NO. OF PAGES 3
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: _____

*Here are copies of letters sent to
chairpersons + committee members
for our Sept. 23rd meeting.*

If you have not received entire transmission, please call the CBI office at (414) 352-7310.
CBI FAX # (414) 352-2050

affiliated with the United Synagogue of America

6880 North Green Bay Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53209. Tel (414) 352-7310

Rabbi Lee Buckman
Congregation Beth Israel



September 8, 1997

Dear Committee Member,

Last spring I reported to the synagogue board about the work of a new committee in the synagogue. About a year ago, we accepted an invitation from the Milwaukee Lead Community Initiatives Project in Jewish Education to begin to define our synagogue's most fundamental goals, to assess how these goals are embedded in our synagogue's activities, and to evaluate the extent to which these goals are achieved.

A committee was formed to work on the various components of the project, one of which is a vision statement concerning shabbat celebration at CBI.

I would like the opportunity to present to our CBI committees the working draft of this vision statement, to elicit feedback about it, and then begin to evaluate synagogue-sponsored activities in light of the ideas that animate the vision statement.

To that end, I have spoken to the heads of the Management, Ritual, Education, Family Programming, Youth, Sisterhood, Men's Club, and Membership Committees. They not only accepted an invitation to an upcoming meeting but welcomed my suggestion that their entire committee attend this meeting as well.

I would appreciate your joining us on Tuesday evening, September 23 at 7:45 pm in Siegel Hall. Your feedback on this goals project is vital. As we approach the new year, your input will help set the agenda for the work we have ahead of us.

Thank you in advance for your participation. Please let Elaine know by September 17 whether or not you will be in attendance.

Sincerely,

Lee Buckman, Rabbi

Rabbi Lee Buckman
Congregation Beth Israel



September 8, 1997

Mrs. Gayle Weber Rakita
9847 North Lamplighter Lane
Mequon, Wisconsin 53092

Dear Gayle,

Over the past year, you have invested your time and expertise in the Shabbat Celebration Project. We conducted interviews of congregants, gathered data from teachers, and generated programming suggestions.

We did one more thing as well: we developed a working draft of a vision statement.

For us to move ahead, it is essential to present to the committees at CBI the working draft of this vision statement, to elicit feedback about it, and then begin to evaluate synagogue-sponsored activities in light of the ideas that animate the vision statement.

To that end, I have invited the heads and members of the Management, Ritual, Education, Family Programming, Youth, Sisterhood, Men's Club, and Membership Committees to a meeting on Tuesday evening, September 23 at 7:45 pm in Siegel Hall. I would like your participation as well. From the feedback and suggestions we receive at that meeting, our Shabbat Celebration Committee can help set the agenda for the work in the year ahead.

Thank you in advance for your participation. Please let Elaine know by September 17 whether or not you will be in attendance.

Sincerely,

Lee Buckman, Rabbi

קהל בית ישראל
Congregation Beth Israel



Herbert G. Panitch
Rabbi Emeritus

Lee Buckman, Rabbi
Carey Cohen, Hazzan
Gayle Weber Rakita, President

FAX TRANSMISSION

TO: Dan Bekarsky
FROM: Lee Buckman
DATE: 9/3/97
NO. OF PAGES 5 incl. cover
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: _____

FAX NO: _____

- 1. what's special
- 2. Experiential
- 3. what's guiding principles

Any comments
are appreciated.

I haven't yet studied
it myself, but will
do so before you respond.

Thanks,
LB

If you have not received entire transmission, please call the CBI office at (414) 352-7310.
CBI FAX # (414) 352-2050

K4**Shabbat Curriculum**

Goal : To encourage the celebration of shabbat, festivals, and Jewish rituals by both individuals and families.

Objectives :

1. Students will understand that Shabbat is a special day both at home and in the synagogue. - Perhaps
2. Students will be familiar with the brachot and Friday evening table seder.
3. Students will know that there are special songs we sing on Shabbat and learn them.

Assessments :

Through books, stories, songs and role playing students will demonstrate their understanding of the above concepts to their teacher.

K5**Shabbat Curriculum**

Goal : To encourage the celebration of shabbat, festivals, and Jewish rituals by both individuals and families.

Objectives :

1. Students will see Shabbat as a special day set apart.
2. Students will understand the origins of Shabbat by studying the days of creation (Gen 2:1-3).
3. Students will learn the brachot over the wine, challah and candles.
4. Students will learn to sing special songs associated with Shabbat.

Assessments :

Teacher will make assessment based on demonstrated mastery through role playing, projects, books and any other appropriate means.

**First Grade
Shabbat Curriculum**

Goal : To encourage the celebration of shabbat, festivals, and Jewish rituals by both individuals and families.

Objectives :

1. Students will understand that Shabbat is a 25 hour experience, beginning on Friday evening and ending with Havdallah.
2. Students will understand that Shabbat is made through their preparations.
3. Students will recite the the Brachot of candles, Kiddush and Ha Motzi.
4. Students will understand the concept of Parshat Ha Shavuah through working with the "stories" each week.

Assessments :

Teacher will develop a way to determine if students know "by heart" the Brachot. Students will demonstrate an understanding of Parshat Ha Shavuah by creating special days such as Noah's Ark days, twins day etc. Children will role play preparing for Shabbat and "doing Shabbat at the table" to demonstrate mastery of objectives two and three.

**Second Grade
Shabbat Curriculum**

Goal : To encourage the celebration of shabbat, festivals and Jewish rituals by both individuals and families

Objectives:

- 1. Students will explore bible through Parshat Ha Shavuah each week.**
- 2. Students will connect the Mitzvah of Hachnasat Orchim with Shabbat guests.**
- 3. Students will learn about Shabbat as the 4th commandment.**
- 5. Students will discuss and discover that by celebrating shabbat, we can be closer to our families, our friends, and to God.**

Assessments :

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the above concepts through discussion, projects and presentations. Teacher will best decide how to measure progress and comprehension.

**Third Grade / Kitah Aleph
Shabbat Curriculum**

Goal : To encourage the celebration of shabbat, festivals, and Jewish rituals by both individuals and families.

Objectives :

1. Students will read and chant in Hebrew the Friday evening rituals done at home which will help them understand that their own efforts help create Shabbat.
2. Students will read and sing Shalom Aleichem, L'Cha Dodi, V'Shamru and Ein Keylohaunu.
3. Students will be able to retell and understand the Parshat HaShavuah as done in class each Thursday afternoon.
4. Students will understand the distinction between Yom Chol and Yom Kodesh.
5. Students will discuss the Kiddush's two concepts of creation and rest from work.

Assessments :

Teachers will decide how to assess and present each of the above objectives. Students' ability to read or chant may be tested on an individual basis. Students may present a project, essay or diary on objectives as the teacher sees fit.

All students are expected to be able to recite the blessings of the Friday evening home ritual, and to sing the above named songs.

All students are expected to identify the Kiddush's two main concepts.

All students are expected to differentiate between Yomei Kodesh and Yomei Chol.

Each student individually or as a part of a group will demonstrate an understanding of Parshat Ha Shavuah and present one D'var Torah during the year.

..... of as a part of a group will demonstrate an understanding of
Parshat Ha Shavuah and present one D'var Torah during the year.

From: <RABLEEBUC@aol.com>
To: soe_1.edacad(pekarsky)
Date: 8/28/97 4:07pm
Subject: CIJE Teacher's Meeting Notes.

Teachers were asked how they reacted to the vision. They posted up responses to the following questions. Below is what they wrote.

What's missing?

What should I try to accomplish on shabbat that I don't during the rest of the week?
Presentation of shabbat as an active growth experience.
Shabbat as a time to study Jewish things.
Lack of inspiration; too lofty; nothing that jumps out and inspires action.
Very thin; not much substance; restatement of old "stuff"
To instill in our children a desire to incorporate shabbat traditions in their lives and a love of tradition.
More specific instructions and guidelines as to HOW to provide for shabbat insitutions at home; specific synagogue activities; consensus on the make up the congregation: what are the kids doing at home.
Parent cooperation for activities; parents not committed to observance; parent responsibility.

What's unclear?
What people are to DO in the synagogue.

What could be improved?
Doesn't address those who are not interested in pursuing a spiritual journey.
Practical suggestions or blueprint.
Families should be paired together in order to (a family schedule) observe many of these concepts within the school, teachers can invite students for shabbat.
If it took God seven days to create shabbat it will take us seven days to create shabbat for us; how do we build toward shabbat?
Foster more spirituality; when you're not brought up in a spiritual environment; how do you start?
Parental involvement.
Parental commitment.
Family traditions start with the home.

What resonates?
Shabbat helps one regain a sense of community.
All good concepts, i.e. "it is an island of stillness"; opening paragraph is a good opener; easy to understand.
Nothing; too bland.

What are you uncomfortable with?
How do we help each other experience what we're experiencing?
Shabbat doesn't exist in the synagogue; it should exist in the home.
How do we open up? How do we become more warm and receptive?

Other:
The vision statement sits on the fence regarding clear expectations for observance.
Camp retreat for shabbat.
Are the ideas/concepts here actually being carried out by a large number of congregants? (uncertain about this).
Emphasize physical rest on Sunday; spiritual rest on shabbat.

I took notes on the following points that were raised beyond what was written on the post-up notes.

Ateret mentioned that there's a problem with the language. The word "spiritual" makes people back away. Spirituality is unrealistic.
Someone said we have to be more specific in the vision concerning the traditions we're speaking about.
Someone noted that having a synagogue vision can justify inviting families into the classroom.
To deliniate our expectations is risky, someone said, but as it is now "we're

sitting on the fence."

"If the insitution had a statement (i.e. vision statement), we wouldn't be out on our own," said another teacher.

Someone questioned whether we really want to dictate practice.

Janet noted that the last paragraph of the vision sounds like a disclaimer.

Vicky said we should emphasize the love of shabbat, creating opportunities to experience shabbat; the specialness of shabbat and shabbat preparation should also be emphasized.

Sharon Federly said we have to make shabbat contagious.

Dan P-What's the vision and how do we make it come alive.

Vicky said that you need community and the feeling that you are loved.

Ateret said something about being put off by what Vicky said.

Michael said that people don't use the word spirituality.

Toby said people who've been invited to someone's house and want to host someone else may wonder whether they need to know everything in order to qualify as a satisfactory host.

Sharon said that shabbat is special and we should talk about things that we don't have to do.

Ateret said that parents set the standard beginning on Thursday and moving through Saturday night.

Bonny said that, in contrast to Ateret who said that teachers don't have an impact, teachers DO have an impact. She used herself as an example.

file is cijents.txt

From: Dan pekarsky
To: Pekarsky
Date: 8/25/97 4:19pm
Subject: CBI Project

In the wake of our meeting last week with the teachers and the news that the July meeting we had re-scheduled for August needed to be re-scheduled again, I have again grown concerned about losing momentum with this project -- particularly in view of my sense that you don't feel entirely comfortable with the kind of deliberative approach we've been taking with this project.

I am, by the way, deeply respectful of this discomfort, my own feeling being that there is more than one meaningful approach to improvement and that temperament and disposition rightly play a significant role in determining which route to pursue: it's not a matter of a right or a wrong way, but of a fit between an approach and the individuals who are using it. In our own case, the fit may not be optimal in that your own disposition, as you explained it the other night, tends towards a more programmatic approach.

My own instinct at this point is for CBI to become much more pragmatic in its approach to the change process, rather than following a route that you have misgivings about. If, as I sense it is, your own instinct is to move towards more practical/programmatic arenas, I would not certainly not discourage this. I too have been impressed with some of the interesting programmatic ideas that have emerged along the way (not just via the teachers but via the committee), and I think that an effort to implement a small number of them in a thoughtful way that is informed by the vision that's been crafted might be very exciting.

I have, then, a three-fold instinct about how to proceed:

- 1) to take a couple of the richest programmatic ideas that have drawn enthusiasm during this process of exploration and to develop a careful approach to their implementation.
- 2) to focus some of your own energies, Pamela's and some of the teachers in systematically thinking about a more systematic approach to the place of Shabbat in the life/curriculum of the school.
- 3) to hold the scheduled meeting of the sub-committees as planned, with attention to the question: what practical implications for the work or domain of each sub-committee might this vision have? Some exciting ideas might emerge.

I would be happy to offer my own thoughts about how CBI might proceed with one or more of these routes, and time permitting, to be of help in the process.

CBI SHABBAT PROJECT
EXTENDED UPDATE, SPRING/SUMMER 1997

This update covers the February 1997 period up through July 1997. It has been a tumultuous period in the life of this project, one that included a long period during which nothing at all seemed to happen, angry words between the rabbi and myself, and the near-cessation of the entire project. Much to my surprise, however, the process seems to have come alive again, and some significant progress has been made.

At the group's February meeting, the Margolis' reported on their visit to the "Shomer Shabbat" congregation in Chevy Chase (see notes regarding that meeting). That agenda item had preempted other discussion items scheduled for that day's meeting, and a time was not set at the meeting for the group's next meeting.

Following the meeting, I waited for the rabbi to schedule another meeting, which he did not do. Nor did he respond to two email messages I sent him in the middle and end of March in which I encouraged him to schedule another meeting soon lest we lose all momentum.

Finally, in mid-April, I get a call from the school principal concerning a projected seminar for teachers organized around the theme of Shabbat that we had first discussed in January or February. She wanted to discuss how to organize it. I found the call irritating on more than one ground: first, because a projected substantial seminar seemed to have been reduced to a short in-service; second, because there was little planning time before the projected date; and third, because it no longer seemed connected to any kind of larger project. I am sure that some of my sense of frustration and irritation leaked out in my response to the principal, and I expressed some reluctance to participate in the projected seminar under what seemed to me to be inhospitable consequences. I suggested that if this seminar was to take place with my involvement it would need to be thought through in relation to the larger project, a project which at that moment in time seemed to me to have died.

It is worth noting that in the course of this conversation it emerged that during this period discussions, sometimes heated were going on in the congregation concerning the renewal of the rabbi's (first) contract. Based on her comments and my own inferences, I concluded that the rabbi must have been very pre-occupied during the spring and that perhaps this was why he had seemed so disengaged from the project over a two-month period.

In any case, my conversation with the principal seems to have been relayed to the rabbi; and shortly after his contract was renewed, he contacted me by email. In his message, he

indicated that I had been right to be concerned about the anxiety that might be generated by his "Shomer Shabbat" project, and he indicated a desire to talk. When we finally did talk, to my surprise, rather than being apologetic for his lengthy disengagement, he began aggressively. In a way that was reminiscent of concerns he expressed at the outset of the project, he complained about CIJE's overly-deliberative approach to change and expressed frustration that there had not been more progress as a result of our meetings. He also expressed concerns about our attempting "re-invent the wheel"; for he had been hearing about other experiments in synagogue change and felt that CBI could have been learning from them.

I was very upset by his comments and am, to the present, somewhat bewildered about what motivated them. In any case, I responded somewhat angrily and probably defensively 1) that the process had been designed to speak to his concern about an overly-deliberative approach; 2) that the process had been unfolding according to a timetable we had agreed on; 3) that, if there was a loss of momentum, I felt it had to do with his having taken the process in a risky direction (with his insistence that we look at a "Shomer Shabbat" congregation as a model) and with his having not convened the group to continue on our projected path. I also indicated that I felt no need to continue with the project if he was feeling that it was not productive, and I suggested that perhaps we should simply terminate it.

The rabbi was surprised by and resistant to my suggestion that we discontinue the project. "It will look bad for CIJE," he began, not to succeed with this project. I responded that I wasn't very concerned about this, and that if the fit between CIJE and this congregation was not good, it would be better not go further. At which point, he said that discontinuing the project would be uncomfortable for him: if he came up with nothing out of this project, he might lose the kind of credibility he would need to launch future ambitious congregational planning projects. I wanted to say (but resisted) that he should have been thinking about this over the several months during which he seemed to put the brakes on the project.

I responded that I would be happy to continue but only if there was genuine seriousness on the congregation's part to move the process along. By the end of the conversation we agreed: a) not to hold the projected seminar for teachers in the spring; b) to spend a week individually reviewing the notes detailing the process to date in search of significant ideas that had emerged; and c) to speak again with an eye towards planning following this period.

By the time of our next conversation, we had both calmed down. Both of us were impressed with the number of interesting ideas and insights that had emerged in the meetings we had held. We agreed that our next challenge would be to re-energize the planning group around a first draft of a "Shabbat at Beth Israel"

vision that was emerging from our work, a vision which, it was hoped, would then provide a basis for evaluating and guiding different facets of congregational life. The rabbi said that he would take a crack at drafting this vision, and that he would try to re-convene the group around this agenda.

In what followed, three things surprised me. The first was the rabbi's high level of energy, engagement and determination; it was as though he had made a decision to make sure that something good would come of all this work. The second is that he was able to bring together the planning group after a long break; and the third was his ability to craft in a very short time what seemed to me like a very useful vision-statement to stimulate the group's discussion. The group's reaction to the vision-statement was engaged and thoughtful, and some important suggestions were made. Of particular importance were the following ideas:

1) while the group was generally comfortable with the content of the statement, there was a widely shared feeling that it was not articulated in sufficiently inspiring language;

2) while the committee had heretofore looked for very inclusive formulations that would not make non-observant members feel marginalized, it expressed discomfort with what was felt to be the statement's generic approach to spirituality. Its failure to assert the relationship between spirituality, on the one hand, and traditional Jewish practices, on the other, left several members of the group feeling that the statement missed what was essential this community as a Conservative Congregation. It was urged that this be remedied in the next draft of the statement.

3) there was, at the same time, continuing concern about making less or non-observant members feel less at home in this congregation. In the course of the group's discussion, the suggestion was made that the vision-statement itself include a statement asserting the Congregation's recognition and acceptance of the fact that members found themselves comfortable with different levels of observance; the congregation's emphasis was to be on making available meaningful opportunities to realize the spiritual benefits of traditional Shabbat observance, not on making less observant individuals feel like second-class citizens of the community.

These various points were incorporated in meaningful ways into the rabbi's re-draft of the vision-statement. At the next meeting, the sense of the group was that he had succeeded in meeting all of the concerns that had been expressed very ably. (See attached vision-statement) In fact, there was tremendous excitement among members of the Planning Group as it responded to the statement that had, with its input, been crafted by the rabbi, and the conversation turned to the way the document could be used in the life of the congregation. It was, for example, noted that the vision-statement could serve as a powerful tool in

evaluating the congregation's existing practice; for the statement laid out some tough standards to satisfy -- e.g. standards pertaining to the power of the congregation's religious practices to foster rich spiritual experiences, a welcoming atmosphere to those who might be less or non-observant, etc. In effect, the vision-statement could function as a challenge to the congregation to make its practices cohere more strongly with its convictions about what it is.

Parallel to this conversation was a more practical "next steps" conversation. Excited by what we had accomplished, a decision was made to engage the congregation's board and its various sub-committees in the Shabbat project. With a board meeting upcoming in a week, a decision was made to introduce the board to the project at that time.¹ At that time, it would also be announced that the congregation's various sub-committees would be invited to a meeting over the summer at which they would have an opportunity to engage with the vision and to consider its implications for their respective domains in the congregation's life.

In any event, our own planning meeting ended on a high note, with a lot of excitement in the air concerning the unfolding of this project. We agreed that our next meeting as a group would be at the projected mid-summer session with the sub-committees.

The rabbi's meeting with the board concerning this project was okay but, in his own opinion, not much more than that. He did, however, win the board's support for the idea of convening the Congregation's sub-committees around the Shabbat-vision and its implications, and a date for the meeting was set for mid-summer. Unfortunately, due to a secretarial error, the invitation went out only to the chairs of the various committees and not to the committees themselves; since this was discovered only a few days before the meeting, the error could not be readily corrected and the meeting with the sub-committees was deferred until late August.

One advantage of the additional lead-time is that it allowed the rabbi and me to do more planning. The session we began to plan included the following elements: a) introducing the group to the rationale for and history of the project; b) giving participants a chance to take in the vision, along with an

¹ I personally was wary of bringing our work to the board at this time. I felt that there was not sufficient lead-time to plan the session effectively and not enough time at the projected meeting (about half an hour) to engage the board meaningfully. To tell them something about the conception guiding the development of this project and its history; to acquaint them with the vision and to give them a chance to react to it; and to discuss next steps in the project -- all of this sounded like too much.

encounter with some Jewish sources in which it is grounded; c) a chance to respond to the vision-statement with questions, concerns, suggestions, and so forth; d) a chance to evaluate congregation Beth Israel, using this vision as a lens or standard. They are to do d) not as members of their committees, but as members of the congregation.

In the last part of the session, the rabbi would take an area of synagogue-life for which he is largely responsible and would explore the vision's implications for that area. The idea would be to model a process of reflection that each sub-committee, guided by a series of questions, would then initiate on its own in the aftermath of this meeting. After the sub-committees complete their work, this larger group would be reconvened to discuss the results.

From: Dan Pekarsky
To: internet("RABLEEBUC@aol.com")
Date: 7/24/97 6:54pm
Subject: Vision of Shabbat -Reply

Dear Lee:

In this brief note, I want to offer my thoughts on Roberta's and Judy's suggestions, as well as to add to our conversation concerning how to proceed to curricularize the vision or some version of it in the life of the school. I begin with the reactions to the vision.

Roberta's suggestions

I liked Roberta's first suggestion -- changing "they" to "we", etc.- a lot; it strikes me as an excellent idea.

I personally didn't feel as strongly about her suggestions for the second to last paragraph, but she may be right that the language is at times a bit cumbersome. If we do go with language of the kind she suggests: 1) I would be careful not to imply, as her formulation might, that Candle Lighting and Havdala are not themselves Sacred Time; 2) I would drop, or find substitutes for "peaceful" and "awsomely lovely"; and 3) I would change her last two sentences to: "In between these end-points, we create sacred time by taking a vacation from practical concerns and work and through spiritually uplifting participation with family and community in song, prayer, celebratory meals, study and conversation." Anyway, that's my two cents worth on Roberta's ideas.

Judy Werlin's ideas

I personally liked the Adams quote at the beginning; but I think I understand her concern. It might be interesting, but at the stage not too important, to see what a statement looks like that doesn't begin with this.

As for the other sentence which troubled her (the one that begins "It is hoped that the qualities of experience..."), I'd suggest language which responds to her concern but is different from what she suggests. The sentence would go: "We endeavor to offer our members, young and old, rich opportunities for education and Shabbat-participation that will enable and inspire them to greet Shabbat as a welcome relief from the busy-ness of daily life and as an island of stillness in which to spend meaningful time with loved ones and with the extended family of Jews."

My reactions to their concerns is that they are reasonable, but that I wasn't always convinced by the alternate language they suggested. That said, I'm not sure my suggestions are much better, but feel to use them as you see fit. In any case, I'm impressed by the care with which they are reacting to the document and their attention to nuance.

ABOUT CURRICULARIZING THE VISION IN THE SCHOOL

I spoke to one of my CIJE colleagues about the possibility of convening a consultation around the vision and its place in the school. He had some interest in the idea, but, like me, wanted to be confident that the school principal (whome he doesn't know) would not just participate in the consultation but would be prepared to actively build on such a consultation in thinking about the school. Otherwise, he wasn't sure that this kind of a consultation would make much sense. Which brings me back to the point I mentioned when we spoke -- namely, that, before proceeding very far in this arena, it would be important to figure out what Pamela's relationship to such a project would be, and whether she'd be seriously interested in getting herself and her faculty involved in it.

I haven't yet had a chance to review your projected agenda re: the teachers meeting. I'll try to get to that soon. I put the Berman essay in the mail today. It should arrive soon. All the best.

From: <RABLEEBUC@aol.com>
To: soe_1.edacad(pekarsky)
Date: 7/21/97 1:00pm
Subject: Vision of Shabbat

Danny,
In this email message, you will find: 1) Roberta London's reactions to the vision statement; 2) Judy Werliin's reactions to the vision statement; 3) my notes on the agenda for the August 19 meeting with the CBI Religious School teachers (subject to Pamela's perusal and approval; 4) my notes on the agenda for the August 25 meeting with the CBI Ritual, Education, CIJE, Family Education Committees.
I look forward to your comments.
Lee

<< Dear Rabbi Buckman,

Sorry I have been unable to attend recent meetings of the Shabbat committee. I assume this piece you asked me to review comes from that endeavor. I offer the following comments for your consideration.

I read it through the first time and when I was all done reading it I was left with an uneasy feeling...it didn't make me feel good. I was disturbed by this as I felt that the piece was very well written and as I read it I didn't disagree with anything nor did I note any difficult to follow thoughts...so what was it? I reread it several times, pausing after each paragraph to see where that uneasy feeling commensed...

It wasn't until I got to the second to last paragraph that I realized what it was.

Starting with the last paragraph:

If you re-read the last paragraph and substitute the words "we" for "they" and "our" for "their" I think we have solved my concern. I respectfully suggest that the last paragraph be rewritten as follows:

" Our synagogue views traditional Jewish practices, enshrined in custom and halachah (Jewish law), as powerful vehicles for spiritual growth. We recognize, however, that some of us will incorporate more of the traditional halachah into our lives and others less. It is important that all of us, regardless of our level of observance, feel safe and respected as we pursue our spiritual journeys in our synagogue. What is more important than our place on the continuum of Jewish observance is that we are all trying to deepen our relationship with G-d and all that G-d has created."

I would also suggest some changes to the second to last paragraph so that it has fewer negative words ("end, refraining, prevent, obligations, intruding"). Maybe it could be rewritten and embellished....Here's an example not given alot of thought :

"In the context of a Conservative synagogue such as ours, the sacred time of shabbat is nestled between the peaceful candle lighting ceremony Friday evening and the often awesomely lovely Havdalah ceremony at sundown on Saturday. In between these two significant rituals, sacred time is created by participating with family and community in song, prayer, celebratory meals, study and conversation. Allowing our work and everyday concerns to melt into the background uplifts our souls as only shabbat can!"

I'd be happy to discuss further if need be.

My new work number is 289-0361.

We will be in Michigan for niece and nephew college graduation parties this week-end...the weather will probably be nice here and we'll miss it!

Roberta

>>

From Judy Werlin:

About the paragraph beginning with James Truslow Adam's quote, Judy writes: "do we want to start our "vision" with this quote! Can't we just rewind (sic) the second paragraph ("For Jewish tradition...") as the start?"

About the paragraph beginning "To paraphrase AJ Heschel," she writes "if we use a quote, let's just stick with Heschel."

Guiding Assumptions

- ① True, obstacles, but could be much better!
- ② One impediment (serious) - No clear idea of what we're educating towards
 - kind of person we hope to educate
 - of what's important about the subject-matter we're teaching.
- ③ OR A disconnect between Ideas/practice.
- ④ Instead
Tach "Tfillah", "Bible stories", "History"
no clear idea of what we're after
→ haphazard
- ⑤ Vs "Bible" - Monotheism -- waste w/ kids
moral devel., etc.
פדגוגיה -- attitudes/skills/spirituality
- ⑥ Can ill-afford this -- Exp in part-time school
- ⑦ Seriousness - what + Implications
→ CBE -- 2 things w/ you: goals, Interviews - come
↳ Simultaneously - Δ vision...
- ⑧ None of this makes a diff unless!

About the end of the paragraph that begins "At Congregation Beth Israel" and specifically on the part of the paragraph beginning "It is hoped that the qualities of experiences," Judy writes: "seems apologetic reason (sic)--let's just say what we believe and let congregant (sic) find appropriate rationale."

About the last paragraph, Judy says "SUPER!"

Agenda for Teacher's Meeting

Lee introduces and updates the shabbat project---the work of the committee and the vision that is now circulating which is an attempt to create a vision that will guide our synagogue and the work we do in the school, the interviews that the teachers have given, the fact that the August 19 meeting is, therefore, the second meeting with the teachers and that we plan to re-convene again for the next stage in the process where we compare the information we gleaned from the interviews with the insights gained from the August 19 meeting.

Dan recaps the importance of being a vision-driven school and how the vision will help evaluate and guide us.

Lee presents the CBI-CIJE committee's working draft of the shabbat vision, i.e. it is read aloud, teachers are given a chance to reflect on it privately, and then the faculty is divided into chevrotot to react to it. The questions include: does the vision resonate, does it speak to you, what's missing, what could be improved, what's unclear, what are you uncomfortable with?

Lee reconvenes the faculty as a group and requests that one member of each chevruata report on two or three salient points or questions or issues that arose from their discussion.

Reactions to these points are solicited.

Lee mentions that since the working draft of the vision was written, he has encountered another vision that is very different. It is the vision of Rabbi Saul Berman where his point is that shabbat is not to be an escape (from work) but a confrontation with and reflection upon one's past work so that the spirituality of shabbat/kedusha infuses the week ahead; shabbat, for Berman, is a temporary withdrawal from work to evaluate that work.

Lee solicits the faculty's response to the Berman vision. We've read through two vision statements, Berman's and the one circulating around the congregation, is the CBI vision one that you can get behind? Are there elements of Berman's vision that need to be incorporated into our vision?

Lee invites faculty to brainstorm the educational outcomes that flow from the working draft of the CBI vision if we were to take it seriously. What attitudes, skills, dispositions should logically emerge from this vision?

Lee lays out the itinerary for the next meeting, namely, a report on last year's teacher interviews and a desire for teachers to reflect upon the information gleaned in the interviews in light of the educational outcomes they articulated in the August 19 meeting. We'd like to begin that meeting with a summary statement of the educational outcomes that reflects the work of August 19 and see how the faculty might use it as an evaluative tool and possible guide.

CIJE Meeting with Committees

3 minutes -Lee intros project

20 minutes-Danny on visioning

2 minutes-Lee on our project

20 minutes-texts on shabbat

5 minutes-hand out vision and read aloud
5 minutes-look at vision and think with guide questions:
what resonates
whatEs unclear
what are uncomf with
whatEs missing

30 minutes-go to chevruta
one member of CIJE shabbat committee sits with each group

*eval vision-react to vision
*report card
give ourselves a report card---
are there aspects of cong life where this vision is fulfilled
where is/isnEt the vision fulfilled
for what populations is this vision fulfilled/unfulfilled
how do services stack up in relation to the vision

Post up your reactions in two sheets: 1) evaluating vision 2) eval
congregation

20 minutes-One insight in each of these domains

10 minutes-Implications: to take one domain and think about it together
my own din vEcheshbon, how we might do things differently--I pick the domain

5 minutes-Writtten Assignment: implications for your particular committee
How is the vision reflected by committee work?
How can this vision be used as a guide?

file is cijents.txt

קהל בית ישראל
Congregation Beth Israel



Herbert G. Panitch
Rabbi Emeritus

Lee Buckman, Rabbi
Carey Cohen, Hazzan
Gayle Weber Rakita, President

FAX TRANSMISSION

TO: Daniel Peckarsky

FAX 1-608-262-9074

FROM Elaine D.

DATE 7/14/97

NO. OF PAGES 2

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS _____

*Here is what you requested from
Rabbi Buckman*

If you have not received entire transmission, please call the CBI
office at 352-7310. Fax # (414)352-2050

Vision of Shabbat for CBI Draft #2

James Truslow Adams, an early 20th century American historian, once wrote: "Perhaps it would be a good idea, fantastic as it sounds, to muffle every telephone, halt every motor, and stop all activity some day, to give people a chance to ponder for a few minutes on what it is all about, why they are living and what they really want."

For Jewish tradition, Adams' "good idea" is not "fantastic" at all. Long ago this idea was incorporated in a day that comes every week: the Shabbat. It is a day of tranquillity, serenity, peace, and quiet that allows us to renew our dreams and rekindle our hopes. It is a day when we stop running on our own individual schedules and invest our time in those things that connect us to other people rather than put us in conflict or competition with them.

To paraphrase Abraham Joshua Heschel, shabbat helps us to liberate ourselves from the tyranny of the clock and the calendar. It is an island of stillness in the tempestuous ocean of time and toil where we may enter a harbor and reclaim our dignity.

Shabbat is a day on which we rest, not out of exhaustion, and not because we have accomplished everything we wanted to, but because we want to remind ourselves what it feels like to be at peace with the world. It is a day to "turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world"

At Congregation Beth Israel we strive to provide opportunities to experience shabbat in the synagogue as a day of joy, renewal, and spiritual growth. It is also our goal to empower congregants to create such opportunities for themselves at home. It is hoped that the qualities of experiences that we create and educate towards will be so inspiring that the "island of stillness" called shabbat will be a welcome relief to the chronically overscheduled individual who desires to spend more time with those whom he/she loves and with his/her extended family of Jews.

In the context of a Conservative synagogue such as ours, the sacred time of shabbat begins with candle-lighting on Friday evenings and ends with Havdalah on Saturday night. In between these endpoints, sacred time is created by refraining from certain activities and engaging in others. If, for example, we make an effort to prevent the obligations of work from intruding into our celebration of shabbat, we thereby make room for prayer, song, celebratory meals, study, family, and community to uplift our souls in the way that only shabbat can.

Our synagogue views traditional Jewish practices, enshrined in custom and halachah (Jewish law), as powerful vehicles for spiritual growth. We recognize, however, that some congregants will incorporate more of the traditional halachah into their lives and others less. It is important that all of them, regardless of their level of observance, feel safe and respected as they pursue their spiritual journeys in our synagogue. What is more important than our place on the continuum of Jewish observance is that we are all trying to deepen our relationship with God and all that God has created.

MEMO

DATE: June 20, 1997

TO: Marcy Conen, Family Education Committee Chairperson
Sam Denny, Ritual Committee Chairperson
Robin Irwin, Membership Committee Chairperson
Joan Klein, Education Committee Chairperson
CIJE Shabbat Committee Members - Ruth Cohen
Bunny Dolnick
Bob Hirschman
Alice Jacobson
Pamela Lager
Robertta London
Gayle Weber Rakita
Ed Rettig
Louise Stein
Sandy Thau
Judy Werlin
Liza Wiemer

Danny Peckarsky

FROM: Rabbi Lee Buckman

SUBJECT: To engage in the process of visioning and evaluating our
Congregation's vision

Approximately one year ago, our synagogue accepted an invitation extended by the Council on Initiatives in Jewish Education to articulate a vision for our synagogue and to explore its implications for the various activities that take place at CBI.

I shared with the synagogue board last month that a committee was established to begin this process. We identified one small component of our CBI vision and created a working draft.

The next step in the process involves you. The working draft that we developed is not meant to be a "rabbi's vision" or even a committee's vision but a congregation's vision.

Your suggestions, comments, or modifications, therefore, are essential in fashioning a shared vision for the congregation and in evaluating the various programs, experiences, and activities that our synagogue currently provides in light of this shared vision.

To this end, I invite you to a special meeting with members of several other committees to engage in the process of visioning and evaluation. The meeting will be held in Karlin Hall on Monday evening, July 21 at 7:45 pm. Please contact Elaine by July 7 concerning your participation.

Thank you in advance for your time and input.

Needs we want to meet

Institution of draft

idiosyncrasy habit.

From: <RABLEEBUC@aol.com>
To: soe_1.edacad(pekarsky)
Date: 6/6/97 3:01pm
Subject: outline for board meeting on Monday

Sanny,
Sorry about the formatting.
Lee

1. Begin with overview of the Goals Project: an exciting opportunity for CBI
2. Why is it important for an institution to think about its goals?
 - a. Given that we have limited resources, we need to maximize our use those resources.
 - b. This is not just a matter of using personnel efficiently; this isn't just a matter of effective management.
 - c. It's also a function of clarity about an institution's basic purpose.
 - d. To the extent we are clear about what we hope to nurture, what kind of community we want to be, then we can make sure that allocations and programs are tied to those purposes.
 - e. Clarity about our basic purposes will not only make us more efficient but it will also ensure that what we do reflects our values.
3. In many institutions, the norm may be a lack of clarity about its basic purposes.
 - a. In schools, e.g., subjects may be taught without anyone having an idea why those subjects are important or how they of the student.
 - b. In other institutions, there may be fancy rhetoric but the reality far removed from that rhetoric.
 - c. Similarly, to one degree or another, synagogues haven't reflected enough upon their basic purposes and the way the life of is organized.
 - 1) Things are organized haphazardly or
 - 2) Things reflect the idiosyncracies of a couple the synagogue
4. It's this kind of reflection that can help CBI.
 - a. To be a vision-driven institution means:
 - 1) having a clear sense of what we're all about, what kind of community we hope to be, what kind of individuals we want to develop as a community towards;
 - 2) having a shared vision, one that we each of us can articulate; develop as a community
 - 3) having activities that reflect and advance that vision
 - b. What does a vision-driven institution look like? Camp Ramah
 - 1) Ramah is committed to the notion of derech eretz, the Jewish belief that one another, a notion that derives from the image of God. individual is created in the image of God.
 - 2) This value is expressed not only in classes but on the street; it is expressed in how the counselor reacts to a strike-out; it is expressed in the way the counselor handles a dispute between students; it is expressed by all who have positions of responsibility in the way they live this message.
 - 3) This vision of how people are to be treated is expressed throughout the life of the camp.
 - c. So, too, with CBI, we have accepted an invitation to share a vision; its development will be a joint project so that it truly reflects a vision that we are, on the one hand, comfortable with and, on the other hand, motivated by.
5. How will we go about achieving this goal: set up agenda for next meeting and talk about work with synagogue committees over the summer.

Vision of Shabbat for CBI Draft #2

James Truslow Adams, an early 20th century American historian, once wrote: "Perhaps it would be a good idea, fantastic as it sounds, to muffle every telephone, halt every motor, and stop all activity some day, to give people a chance to ponder for a few minutes on what it is all about, why they are living and what they really want."

For Jewish tradition, Adams' "good idea" is not "fantastic" at all. Long ago this idea was incorporated in a day that comes every week: the Shabbat. It is a day of tranquillity, serenity, peace, and quiet that allows us to renew our dreams and rekindle our hopes. It is a day when we stop running on our own individual schedules and invest our time in those things that connect us to other people rather than put us in conflict or competition with them.

To paraphrase Abraham Joshua Heschel, shabbat helps us to liberate ourselves from the tyranny of the clock and the calendar. It is an island of stillness in the tempestuous ocean of time and toil where we may enter a harbor and reclaim our dignity.

Shabbat is a day on which we rest, not out of exhaustion, and not because we have accomplished everything we wanted to, but because we want to remind ourselves what it feels like to be at peace with the world. It is a day to "turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world."

At Congregation Beth Israel we strive to provide opportunities to experience shabbat in the synagogue as a day of joy, renewal, and spiritual growth. It is also our goal to empower congregants to create such opportunities for themselves at home. It is hoped that the qualities of experiences that we create and educate towards will be so inspiring that the "island of stillness" called shabbat will be a welcome relief to the chronically overscheduled individual who desires to spend more time with those whom he/she loves and with his/her extended family of Jews.

In the context of a Conservative synagogue such as ours, the sacred time of shabbat begins with candle-lighting on Friday evenings and ends with Havdalah on Saturday night. In between these endpoints, sacred time is created by refraining from certain activities and engaging in others. If, for example, we make an effort to prevent the obligations of work from intruding into our celebration of shabbat, we thereby make room for prayer, song, celebratory meals, study, family, and community to uplift our souls in the way that only shabbat can.

Our synagogue views traditional Jewish practices, enshrined in custom and halachah (Jewish law), as powerful vehicles for spiritual growth. We recognize, however, that some congregants will incorporate more of the traditional halachah into their lives and others less. It is important that all of them, regardless of their level of observance, feel safe and respected as they pursue their spiritual journeys in our synagogue. What is more important than our place on the continuum of Jewish observance is that we are all trying to deepen our relationship with God and all that God has created.

God

From: <RABLEEBUC@aol.com>
To: soe_1.edacad(pekarsky)
Date: 6/4/97 11:53am
Subject: Draft #2

Danny,
Here's Vision Draft #2. Your comments are appreciated.
Lee

Vision Draft #2

James Truslow Adams, an early 20th century American historian, once wrote:
"Perhaps it would be a good idea, fantastic as it sounds, to muffle every telephone, halt every motor, and stop all activity some day, to give people a chance to ponder for a few minutes on what it is all about, why they are living and what they really want."

For Jewish tradition, Adams' "good idea" is not "fantastic" at all. Long ago this idea was incorporated in a day that comes every week: the Shabbat. It is a day of tranquillity, serenity, peace, and quiet that allows us to renew our dreams and rekindle our hopes. It is a day when we stop running on our own individual schedules and invest our time in those things that connect us to other people rather than put us in conflict or competition with them.

To paraphrase Abraham Joshua Heschel, shabbat helps us to liberate ourselves from the tyranny of the clock and the calendar. It is an island of stillness in the tempestuous ocean of time and toil where we may enter a harbor and reclaim our dignity.

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At Congregation Beth Israel we strive to provide opportunities in the synagogue and to empower congregants to create opportunities at home to experience shabbat as a day of joy, renewal, and spiritual growth. It is hoped that the qualities of experiences that we create and educate towards will be so inspiring that the "island of stillness" called will be a welcome relief to the chronically overscheduled individual who desires to spend more time with those whom he/she loves and with his/her extended family of Jews.

congreg
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As much as our Conservative synagogue views Jewish law, halachah, as the framework for guiding spiritual growth, we recognize that some congregants will incorporate more of the traditional halachah into their lives and others less. Yet, all, regardless of where they are located on the continuum of Jewish commitment, should feel safe to continue their spiritual journey in our synagogue. What is more important than our place on the continuum of Jewish commitment is that we are all moving in the same spiritual direction.

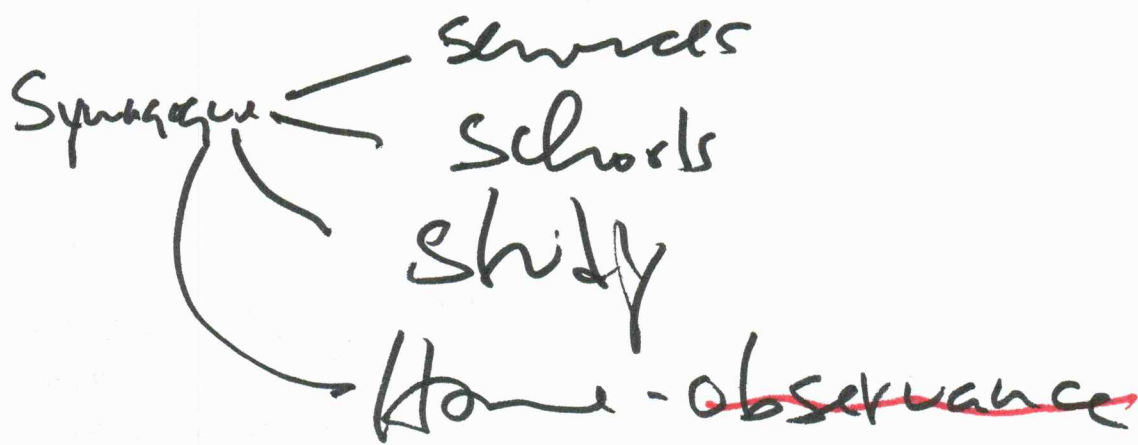
traditional Jewish practices enshrined - custom and Halachah as powerful vehicles of spiritual growth;

observance } striving to deepen our spiritual lives

but we recognize that. It is important that all of them, whatever their levels of observance, feel safe and respected as they pursue their spiritual journeys in our synagogue

Next step

- ① Contexts
- ② Implications
- ③ Brochure



- ① How would you evaluate present realities in light of this vision?
- ② What might be done to close the gap?

From: <RABLEEBUC@aol.com>
To: soe_1.edacad(pekarsky)
Date: 5/25/97 8:30am
Subject: Draft with one correction-disregard previous copy

Summary of Stage I of the Shabbat Project:

What Objectives have we accomplished?
What is our Vision for Shabbat at CBI (Draft #1)?

Background to Stage I of the Shabbat Project

In the fall of 1996, we accepted an invitation by the Milwaukee Lead Community Initiatives Project to embark on what was called the Goals Project. The purpose of the Goals Project was to enhance the quality of Beth Israel's religious and educational program by:

- 1) clarifying the synagogue's fundamental goals;
- 2) assessing how these goals are embedded in overall synagogue program;
- 3) evaluating the extent to which these goals are achieved.

Although the synagogue has many goals (e.g. to promote an ongoing desire for Jewish learning, to inspire congregants to pray regularly, to foster a greater understanding of the ideals and expectations of Conservative Judaism), and all are worthy of examination, we as a Committee decided that, for several reasons, the focus should be on shabbat celebration and observance.

The Objectives of the Project

With this focus, the challenge would be to enable the membership of CBI to grow in their appreciation and enjoyment of shabbat. The strategy for meeting this challenge would include:

- 1) clarifying how shabbat currently fits into the practices of CBI;
- 2) clarifying how shabbat fits into the outlook and lives of key constituencies (e.g. professional and lay leaders, teachers, parents and children);
- 3) clarifying the types and qualities of shabbat experiences that CBI would like to nurture (i.e. THE VISION)
- 4) identifying the implications of these goals for the congregation at prayer and study.

While Stage I of the Shabbat Project would focus on the first three objectives, Stage II would deal primarily with the fourth objective.

Objective #1: To clarify how shabbat currently fits into the practices of CBI

CBI provides rich opportunities in the synagogue to celebrate shabbat. On a weekly basis, minyanim are available Friday evening, shabbat morning, shabbat mincha and motzei shabbat. While fifteen years ago or more the main service was the Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat and Maariv, the main service today is shabbat morning. Between one and four hundred individuals attend that service.

Connected with each of the shabbat services is some educational or learning component. On Friday evenings, for example, the Rabbi teaches one mitzvah (one entry) from Maimonides' Sefer Hamitzvot between Kabbalat Shabbat and Maariv. Five times a year, a guest lecturer makes a presentation as part of the CBI Scholars in Residence Series. On Shabbat morning, an extensive supplement is distributed to each worshipper upon entry to the sanctuary.

That supplement contains an aliyah-by-aliyah summary or analysis of the weekly parasha, an introduction to the Haftarah, a mini-quiz for children, a d'avar tefilla, a meditation on tefilla, transliterations of the parts of the Musaf Amidah that are sung during the Hazzan's repetition of the Amidah, and synagogue announcements. An invitation is included in every supplement for new worshippers to introduce themselves to the Rabbi, Hazzan, President, and Gabbaim. On shabbatot where there is no Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrated, the Rabbi will often lead a discussion prior to the Torah reading on the parasha. Otherwise, a sermon is given. As mentioned previously, on Scholar-in-Residence weekends, a guest lecturer makes a presentation.

Another aspect of study that is worth mentioning in the context of shabbat morning service is lay participation in the weekly Torah reading. The synagogue is blessed with 55 lay Torah readers--male and female teens and adults--who share the responsibility of reading Torah, many of whom were

trained by our Hazzan. The number of lay Torah readers continues to increase and is a high profile feature of the synagogue. In addition, a shabbat table was created. This shabbat table holds copies of newspaper clippings, editorials, brochures, information packets on Jewish subjects that may be of interest to shabbat worshippers. This material is available upon entering the sanctuary. Finally, a shabbat book-rack, which contains commentaries, essays, modern translations, and other study aids to parashat hashavuah, is placed in the back of the sanctuary for worshippers who would like supplementary reading material to follow the Torah reading. A third opportunity for study on shabbat takes place on shabbat afternoon when two classes are offered between Mincha and Seudah Shelishit, one in Midrash Rabbah with Rabbi Rettig, the Judaica coordinator at the JCC, and one in Talmud with the Rabbi. The latter study group has completed four masechtot of gemara and is currently working towards completion of Masechet Sota.

Shabbat at CBI is not only associated with study. Food, or more specifically, shabbat meals, are an integral component to the shabbat.

Roughly every other month, the synagogue or one of its constituent organizations sponsors a Friday evening shabbat dinner. Attendance ranges between 100 and 170 people. On a more infrequent basis shabbat luncheons are sponsored usually in conjunction with some study component. One other meal-oriented effort is important to mention. It is called the Shabbat Connection which is program that is targeted towards empty-nesters.

Clusters of interested empty-nesters are formed by a lay committee to celebrate shabbat dinner together. This program enters its second year and is projected to expand beyond the twenty couples it serviced in 1996-1997.

Shabbat programming is geared to adults as well as children at CBI. Every other month (if not slightly more frequently than that), the Family Programming Committee organizes a Friday evening shabbat family service which may feature the children's choir or a story-teller, for example, and which invites includes children in the service. Consistently, over one hundred people attend these Friday evening family services. Even on a Friday evening where there is no special family service, young children feel welcome to attend the regular adult service on Friday evenings. On the first shabbat morning of every month, a shabbat shacharit family service is offered parallel to the main sanctuary service. The family service is run by a lay person and is open to the participation of adults and children. Each month the leader of the family service highlights one specific Jewish value, prayer and song. On the second and third shabbat of every month, Junior Congregation (soon to be called Minyan Me'at) is provided for students in grades 3rd-5th. Attendance is not spectacular but the handful of children that attend do so faithfully. Junior Congregation is directed by an adult member of the synagogue. On the fourth shabbat of every month a more informal shabbat morning experience which is supervised by another member of the synagogue. Every shabbat morning baby-sitting is provided for toddlers, and Tot Shabbat is provided for children below 3rd grade. A third service that is popular among children--besides Kabbalat Shabbat and Shacharit--is the Mincha service shabbat afternoons. An equal number of children and adults attend Mincha, stay for seudah shelishit, maariv and havdalah.

The Family Programming Committee has been a contributor to the menu of shabbat-related experiences not only through the family services that meet on Friday evenings or shabbat mornings, but also through havdalah programs, shabbat workshops, and lunch-and-learn programs that it coordinates. As it turned out, the theme for the 1996-1997 academic year for the Family Programming Committee was Shabbat. The Family Programming Committee has been very successful in attracting young families to these programs and in trying to empower families with the tools to celebrate shabbat. Another powerful family activity that happens annually and sometimes semi-annually is a shabbaton. The shabbaton is a retreat weekend either at Camp Chi or Camp Ramah which is promoted as an opportunity to leave one's busy schedule and pressure of city to experience the warmth and joy of spending shabbat with other families. A total shabbat environment is created, and participants have the opportunity to study, learn, pray, eat, sing, and build community.

The theme of the 1997 family shabbaton was Shabbat and focused on Heschel's and Buber's conceptions of shabbat. The effect of a shabbaton on a family is unpredictable but consistently positive. After a recent shabbaton, one individual purchased a set of tefillin and attends shacharit weekday minyan once a week; another made a commitment not to go to work on shabbat; several families now celebrate shabbat dinners more regularly; others now invite guests; two families decided to kosher their homes; several families attend

shabbat services more regularly. The shabbaton concept was extended three years ago to the empty-nester population as well. Since that time, two shabbatonim took place at Camp Chi and one extended shabbaton (25-hour total classroom study experience over a period of a week) took place in Jerusalem.

Shabbat is also part of the curriculum in the CBI Religious School. At this point, the formal curriculum of the school emphasizes the cognitive and behavioral, but not the affective/personal, dimensions of shabbat. In practice, teachers are relatively free to do what they want in the area of shabbat, and it is not uncommon for teachers to invite students to their homes for a shabbat meal or even overnight stay. For the most up-to-date description of how shabbat fits into the school, Pamela Lager will have to be consulted again.

Objective #2: To clarify how shabbat fits into the outlook and lives of key constituencies

Since the Goals Project began, a number of focus groups and interviews have been conducted to explore how shabbat fits into the life of CBI constituents.

In a discussion with the Shabbat Project Committee, participants were asked what they get out of shabbat when it clicks, what were the circumstances under which it clicked, and what might the synagogue do better to make shabbat click more regularly for them and other congregants.

The members of the committee spoke of shabbat providing the opportunity to share valuable family time in a way that is rarely possible during the rest of the week, to rest, to experience the joy of coming together as a community and the joy of singing together, to enter a different zone and experience the world in a way different from way we do experience the world during the rest of the week, to experience the freedom from the demands of work, to commune with nature. Some of the conditions that facilitate these feelings included being in nature, enveloping environments that are completely suffused with shabbat (e.g. shabbatonim, shabbat in Jerusalem), the presence of others engaged in the celebration with us; singing, pre-shabbat preparation that makes it possible to spend the whole of shabbat in enjoyment rather than in preparation, rituals that welcome and usher out shabbat, refusal to do workday things at all. The group suggested that CBI needed to overcome a sense of coldness, needed to create a sense of community, needed to reach out to empty-nesters and single parents and sponsor more shabbatonim.

Finally, various obstacles that stand in the way of shabbat enjoyment were cited: ignorance concerning what shabbat is about and why we do certain things; and a wish not to look stupid by doing things wrong or not knowing how to do certain things.

The discussion with the Shabbat Project Committee yielded valuable information. It was then decided to raise the same questions with a subset of the empty-nester population. This focus group consisted of members that were considered moderately involved in the life of the synagogue. As it turned out, all the women in the focus group came from families where shabbat was a very special and important time of the week. For all of them this special feeling has carried into their adulthood although they may be unable to celebrate in the same way. Most said that their way of celebrating shabbat was to make a special meal and invite family and friends. The group agreed that one of the main impediments to shabbat celebration is the fact that the community is so spread out. No longer is there the feeling that everyone on your block is doing the same thing as you are doing. Again, comparing a shabbat experience on a shabbaton, at a summer camp, or in Israel, participants expressed that it is very difficult to create the same sense of community in a large city where not everyone buys into shabbat.

Many of the participants justified a lack of commitment to a traditional shabbat experience by saying that they feel it is important to be charitable and do for others, and that these activities make them feel like good Jews more so than strictly observing shabbat. The main message was: do what you are comfortable with and what feels right for you. The two participants that attend shabbat morning services regularly felt a feeling of being at home in the synagogue, a feeling of belonging, and comfort. Shabbat morning services provide something to hold onto during the week. A few of the women justified their lack of attendance on a feeling of being diminished given that the synagogue does not count women in a minyan. The ideal shabbat

wasn't necessarily a traditional shabbat; rather it was described by certain qualities of experiences: freedom from stress, being with the Jewish community, being with family, a feeling of closeness, warmth, quiet and peacefulness. At least one of the participants stated that he/she doesn't go to the office on shabbat and this provides free time to do whatever he/she wants on that day. Although the majority of the participants were satisfied with their level of shabbat celebration and the way in which the synagogue provides opportunities to celebrate shabbat, they did say that their own experience of shabbat would be enhanced if they did not have to work on Friday afternoons and if they were to celebrate shabbat on a more frequent basis.

A third conversation that took place was one with the teachers in our Religious School. The teachers shared their ideas about shabbat and shabbat education. There was a shared sense among the teachers that there is a vast difference between "learning about" and "personally experiencing" shabbat, and they felt that the most powerful shabbat learning experiences fall into the "personally experiencing" category. This means creating opportunities for the children to actively and meaningfully celebrate shabbat outside of class as well as re-creating or re-enacting shabbat experiences in class. As an example of the latter, one teacher described a class in which she had the students running madly around doing shabbat preparations, and the, with the coming of shabbat, allowed them the enjoyment of rest from this feverish activity. Through such experiences, young children who don't celebrate shabbat might acquire a visceral sense for the relationship between weekday and shabbat. Asked about the significance of shabbat, about why it is important, the teachers spoke about "being together as a family" in a world in which this is decreasingly common; about an opportunity to again become centered, to get perspective on one's life; and about resting.

Objective #3: To clarify the types and qualities of shabbat experiences that CBI would like to nurture (THE VISION)
The thinking behind objective #3 is that the synagogue must articulate a vision concerning the type of experiences that we hope to create and the type of community that we hope to nurture. The vision will help us go beyond a conception of the synagogue as simply a supermarket of programs. Rather, programming will have the potential of being the embodiment of a vision. Vision-driven, the synagogue will more effectively be able to transform the culture of shabbat celebration at CBI.

- The VISION: At CBI we hope to create an environment that would nourish the flowering of the celebration of shabbat by:
- 1) conveying that shabbat celebration is a priority in our synagogue;
 - 2) associating a sense of warmth and community with shabbat;
 - 3) promoting shabbat as a day of joy and celebration, a day of discovering aspects of the self independent of ourselves as workers, as opposed to a day of restriction and constraint;
 - 4) creating anticipation for shabbat in the days prior to shabbat;
 - 5) providing experiences and learning that will empower families to help enrich, understand, and internalize traditional shabbat observances in the home;
 - 6) cultivating and cherishing congregational singing and viewing it as a significant point of entry into shabbat spirituality;
 - 7) associating shabbat with some form of Jewish learning that will edify, challenge, or foster spiritual growth ~~and closeness to God.~~

study
Song
Food
warmth
Prayer

Objective #4: To identify the implications of these goals for the congregation at prayer, study, ~~and study.~~ rituals, and other forms of celebration.

While it is the focus of Stage II of the Shabbat Project to identify the implications of these goals for the congregation at prayer and study (e.g. to look at home the VISION may guide the Religious School shabbat curriculum), a number of preliminary suggestions have been made. These include: developing a short brochure entitled "Shabbat at CBI" which articulates the VISION and highlights the activities and opportunities available for shabbat celebration within the CBI community/synagogue; assigning "gatekeepers" or "welcomers" that can welcome and direct worshippers as they enter as well as provide information about the synagogue and the shabbat service; devoting more time to the teaching of shabbat; including inspirational readings about shabbat in

forms of celebration

the shabbat supplement; expanding the Shabbat Connection concept to include other sub-populations within the synagogue; offering a late Friday evening service periodically; making shabbat congregational dinners inviting not only to families with young children but empty-nesters and retirees as well; training congregants to lead the shabbat morning service; teaching the meaning of a specific prayer each week during the shabbat service; collecting better information from CBI congregants not only about their talents but the ways in which they would like to grow spiritually and the areas in which they would like to be embark on study.

MEMO

DATE: May 8, 1997

TO: Roberta London
 Bob Hirschman
 Judy Werlin
 Gayle Weber Rakita
 Liza Wiemer
 Ed Rettig
 Bunny Dolnick
 Pamela Lager
 Ruth Cohen
 Louise Stein
 Sandy Thau
 Alice Jacobson
 ✓ Danny Peckarsky

FROM: Rabbi Lee Buckman

SUBJECT: Next CIJE Meetings

Post-It® Fax Note	7671	Date	5/8/97	# of pages	2
To	Daniel Peckarsky	From	Rabbi Buckman		
Cc/Dupl.		Co.			
Phone #		Phone #			
Fax #	606-262-9074	Fax #			

Now that Passover is behind us, I want to re-focus us on the Shabbat project that we began in the fall. In Phase I of the project, we interviewed congregants and teachers and reflected upon our own thoughts concerning shabbat celebration at CBI. We collected and generated suggestions for improving upon the shabbat culture at CBI. We also studied various texts that helped provide a framework for thinking about the qualities of experiences we would like to create at CBI.

Based on the discussions we have had over the past six months, I would like to present a draft of a shabbat mission statement for your critique and input. In order to proceed to Phase II of the shabbat project, in which we evaluate the fit between our shabbat programming and our vision for shabbat celebration, it is vital that we develop a document that articulates that vision.

To this end, I would like to convene two meetings:

- 1) Tuesday, May 27 from 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm
- 2) Thursday, June 5, 3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Prior to the first meeting, you will receive the first draft of our mission statement so that you won't have to critique the document on the spot. Following the first meeting, the document will be revised and distributed for a second reading on June 5th.

(over)

The other agenda item for these meetings is to review suggestions for enhancing shabbat appreciation that have come up since we began this project.

Please call the synagogue office by May 22 to let us know if you will be attending the May 27th meeting. Your input, insights and suggestions are extremely valuable especially at this stage of our work. Your time and participation are appreciated.

Thank you.

From: Dan pekarsky
To: Buckman
Date: 4/16/97 9:52am
Subject: Work ahead

Dear Lee,

Yesterday's conversation was - I sense for both of us - a difficult one; and I want to apologize because I suspect that I reacted in a testy and defensive way to some of the things you said. To be honest, I had been disturbed by the lack of any movement or substantial communication over approximately two months. This, combined with the fact that up until yesterday you hadn't voiced to me anything except enthusiasm for what we were doing, left me jarred by the level of frustration you were expressing; it seemed to come out of the blue. I suspect that what I was feeling came out in my reactions; I hope I didn't say anything hurtful.

In any event, if, as I gather there is, there continues to be a serious interest on your part and Pamela's to invest energy in this effort, I'd be eager to work with the two of you to figure out how to proceed towards an outcome (in and beyond the school) that will allow all who've been working on this project to feel that something worthwhile has been accomplished. The truth is, I suspect that enough interesting data emerged from our discussions to allow us to point to salient themes and concerns and interesting ideas that could become the basis for a serious agenda. It would, in this connection, be helpful if, independently, you and I review all of the documents that have emerged from this process in search of such ideas and then have another conversation about how to proceed.

I look forward to hearing from you. Take care.

D.

From: RABLEEBUC
To: pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
Date: 3/31/97 10:16pm
Subject: Re: Next steps -Reply

In a message dated 97-03-28 15:48:54 EST, you write:

<<

I've just about finished my notes from our last meeting and will send them to you soon. A number of brief points follow:

1. If we're to make progress and not lose momentum, I think we need to figure out a next meeting-day and agenda soon -- perhaps an agenda that encourages deliberation concerning how CBI wants to articulate its understanding of and approach to Shabbat; we are, after all, approaching the summer.

GOOD IDEA

2. Also, if we're to put together a serious study day in May -- ideally, one that would include not just teachers but members of our oww committee, we would need to get the planning going ASAP, especially if we have any hope of including folks from the outside.

I'M NOT SURE THIS IS REALISTIC

3. I have a gnawing concern that in our emphasis on Shabbat (an emphasis that sometimes gets associated with "Shabbat observance), we may be in danger of sending a negative or threatening message to the non-observant membership at CBI; it might be worth talking about how to address this. It was interesting, in the Chevy Chase congregation, to hear a) that the rabbi didn't in any way "push" Shabbat observance on his membership, and b) that for members uninterested in serious Shabbat participation there were other meaningful opportunities to participate in the life of the congregation. Perhaps, if we are to avoid threatening CBI members for whom Shabbat participation is not a high priority, the attention to Shabbat needs to be accompanied by the visible identification and endorsement of other ways of being meaningfully involved in the life of the congregation.

THIS CONCERNS ARE VALID. LET'S MAKE SURE TO DEAL WITH THEM. IT'S SOUNDS LIKE MY BEST PRACTICES PROJECT MAY HAVE HIJACKED OR SULLIED THE PROCESS WHICH WAS A CONCERN FROM THE OUTSET, I.E. THAT WE DON'T SCARE PEOPLE AWAY BY THINKING WE'RE ONLY INTERESTED IN MAKING PEOPLE FRUMMER. MY THOUGHT WAS THAT THE SHOMER SHABBAT CROWD'S NEEDS MUST BE ADDRESSED AS WELL...BUT NOT TO THE EXCLUSION OF ANY ONE ELSE'S; YOUR SUSPICION THAT ANY FOCUS ON THE SHOMER SHABBAT COMPONENT MAY MESS THINGS UP WAS OBVIOUSLY ON TARGET. I DON'T THINK, HOWEVER, THE DAMAGE IS IRREPARABLE. THERE'S STILL MUCH THAT CAN BE DONE...EVEN IF IT'S ONLY A STATEMENT ON "SHABBAT AT CBI."

I'm gone til Monday, but will check my email then.

I hope all is well with you.

Shabbat Shalom.

D. >>

From: Dan pekarsky
To: Buckman
Date: 3/31/97 4:13pm
Subject: Summary of Feb. Meeting

<WP Attachment Enclosed>

Dear Lee,

Let me know if the attached document arrives intact and it if squares with your recollection. If we decide to pass it out, I'd suggesting formatting it in a more readable way than the notes from the preceding meeting.

Did you get my email at end of last week? I'd be interested in your response.

I hope all is well.

D.

CC: Pekarsky

From: Dan Pekarsky
To: internet("RABLEEBUC@aol.com")
Date: 3/10/97 10:35pm
Subject: Next steps

Dear Lee:

I hope all is well. I've been crazy-busy since our last meeting and haven't yet had a chance to write up my notes. I'll get them to you soon. By the way, I thought the last meeting was fascinating -- both for what Bud and Judy brought back with them and for the direction that our own meeting took; it was as though the Chevy Chase experience became something of a mirror to use to look at CBI. This might be worth discussing. Did Bud and Judy write up their trip?

Meanwhile, I am concerned that we not let our momentum dissipate -- especially since we've only given ourselves til June to come up with recommendations. One of the things we've discussed is the possibility of organizing a Study day in May around the theme of Shabbat; I think Mother's Day was the day we spoke of. It seemed like a good idea to me; if carefully planned, it could be a good occasion to deepen the teachers' thinking about this. It seems to me that this could be part of a larger process focused on clarifying the School's Shabbat curriculum. In any event, if we're to have such a program in May, it is none too soon to begin planning it -- keeping everyone's calendar available, lining up themes and teachers, etc. Let me know if you, Pamela, and maybe also Gail (the key-players, I would think) want to go ahead with this. Other thoughts concerning how to proceed would also be welcomed.

I hope all is well.

Danny

SUMMARY OF CBI VISIONING GROUP MEETING
February 24, 1997

INTRODUCTION

Although numerous agenda items were identified for this meeting, it focussed exclusively on Bud and Judy Margolis' report in the aftermath of their Shabbat visit to a congregation in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Based on various kinds of information, this congregation had been chosen as a kind of "best practice institution" in the area of Shabbat, and the intent of Bud and Judy's visit was to deepen their understanding of what Shabbat was like in this congregation and to figure out what might be contributing to the purportedly high quality of its Shabbat experience.

In addition to the Margolises, in attendance at this meeting were Rabbi Buckman, Ruth Cohen, Bunny Dolnick, Pamela Lager, Daniel Pekarsky, Gail Rakita, Louise Stein, and Alice...[WAS THIS EVERYONE?] Although a number of group members were not present, the conversation was spirited, and it moved the group's horizons beyond Shabbat to larger questions concerning Congregation Beth Israel's guiding vision and reputation.

THE MARGOLIS REPORT

Since the Margolises are preparing a written summary of their findings, only a sketchy account of their report will be presented here. In their effort to understand the Shabbat experience in Chevy Chase, the Margolises sought to do two things: to experience Shabbat in this setting first-hand, and to interview a number of carefully chosen informants drawn from out of the ranks of the congregation's Shomrei Shabbat community (including the rabbi). Unfortunately, representatives of the Congregation failed to send out a letter containing the purpose of the interviews and the interview-questions in advance of the interviews, and as a result there was initially a measure of confusion on the part of interviewees concerning the purpose of the interviews; but this did not substantially undermine the ability of the Bud and Judy to elicit the information they were seeking. Tapes are available.

A few background observations concerning the Chevy Chase congregation are pertinent. It is situated in a metropolitan area that includes about 100,00 Jews and a number of Conservative congregations. There are about 400 families in the Congregation [IS THIS TOO LOW AN ESTIMATE?], of which about 50 or 60 represent a Shomer Shabbat core. They are surrounded by a second ring of families that are variously involved in Shabbat celebration (and/or other parts of Synagogue-sponsored activities), and by a third, or outer, ring of relatively uninvolved individuals. It is

noteworthy that for those not interested in being part of the core-Shabbat-observant community there are other equally valued arenas to be meaningfully involved in the life of the Congregation. About half of the children in the congregation attend Day Schools. After a turbulent period, the Congregation became largely egalitarian (with the rabbi writing a Tshuvah on the subject). The congregation has difficulty sustaining a daily Minyan and has no regular Study Group.

The most striking observation made by Bud and Judy is that there is nothing particularly innovative or striking about the way the Shabbat experience in Chevy Chase is organized. The Shabbat Service is very traditional; it is characterized by a lot of singing and features strong lay involvement in leading the Services. There are no regular Friday night Services and no Shabbatonim; there is only a shvach (weak) Se-udah Shlishit late Shabbat afternoon. Not only did the Margolises feel that there was nothing particularly special going on in the Synagogue to energize its Shomer Shabbat community, the sense of those who heard their report was that in many ways more was going on on Shabbat at CBI than in the Chevy Chase Congregation. And yet the Chevy Chase Congregation features a strong and satisfied Shomrei Shabbat community.

Based on the kinds of observations noted above, one of the Margolis' impressions is that the strong Shomer Shabbat community found in the CC congregation is not the result of a change-process designed by the Congregation to turn it into a more Shabbat-serious community; that is, the Synagogue didn't do anything special to encourage less observant members to become more observant. Rather, their sense was that the individuals who make up the Shomer shabbat core were already Shomrei Shabbat before coming to CCC [Chevy Chase Congregation]. How does one account for their being Shomrei Shabbat? Based on their interviews and other impressions, the Margolises speculated that these individuals were the product of families, Day Schools, and/or Ramah-like camps that nurtured them in this direction.

If, as suggested above, the explanation for the attraction of such individuals to CCC doesn't lie in the way the Shabbat experience is organized, where does it lie? A natural hypothesis that suggests itself is that the rabbi is the critical variable in attracting people to this congregation's Shabbat experience. But while it is true that the rabbi is loved by the members and is lauded for the nurturing role that he plays (a role that stops short of ever trying to push or pull people into more intensive Shabbat involvement), the Margolises did not think that his presence accounts for the synagogue's ability to attract members.

The most likely explanation for the congregation's ability

to attract a strong Shomer Shabbat community, according to the Margolises, has nothing to do with the personnel or organization of the Congregation; what it does have to do with is the Congregation's self-perception and its reputation in the larger CC community as a Conservative congregation that is serious about its Judaism and that takes Shabbat seriously; it has the reputation of being both Conservative and Halachically serious and proud -- in contrast with CBI, which often functions as a way-station to the Right (to the Orthodox Community) for its Halachically serious members.

DISCUSSION

The Margolis report stimulated rich conversation on the part of our group (some of which has been incorporated above). Below are some of the salient themes that were discussed.

Reputation. Having observed that much of CCC's ability to sustain a strong Shabbat community stems from its power to attract interested members **by virtue of its reputation**, there was considerable discussion concerning what reputation CBI enjoys in the community and about the importance of articulating and communicating its self-understanding as a congregation in a way that attracts an appropriate constituency. It was, however, emphasized that such an effort would need to go beyond "public relations": that is, there needs to be a genuine fit between the Congregation's self-description and the reality that individuals experience when they participate in the life of this community. Put differently, the challenge is not just to attract people to the Congregation through the construction of appealing descriptive discourse that articulates the Congregation's character but also to shape congregational realities so that, once in the door, new members feel eager to be part of this community.

The sense of some members of the group seemed to be that in contrast to the Chevy Chase Congregation, CBI did not enjoy the reputation of being "Halachically proud/serious", and it was suggested in that context that efforts to foster such a reputation need to be alive not just to the potential of attracting new members but also to the danger of marginalizing and turning-off other segments of CBI and of the larger community.

This comment led to the observation that one need not equate "a Congregation that is serious about its Judaism" with "a Congregation that is Halachically serious." "A congregation that is Halachically serious" is one of many possible answers to the question, "What would it mean for CBI to be serious about its Judaism?", and it is this basic question that perhaps needs to be explored. While "Halachically serious" might be the core of one

answer to this question, other answers might emphasize other things, for example, "avenues for meaning-seeking or for spirituality". It was noted in this connection that there seem to be a lot of "adult seekers" in the general Jewish population, and that conceivably it would make sense to position the Congregation's self-definition and practice with an eye towards enabling such seekers to experience CBI as a congenial community in which to do their spiritual growth.

It was noted in this connection that attempts to identify an answer to the question, "What would it mean for CBI to be a congregation that is serious about its Judaism?" would run into a significant obstacle -- namely, that the constituencies that make up CBI have very dissimilar understandings of Judaism, Jewish needs, etc. As a result, it might prove hard to find an answer to this question around which a consensus would readily develop. For example, an answer that emphasizes "Halachic pride or seriousness" as the heart of the Congregation might prove uncomfortable to some of CBI's old and new constituencies.

It was noted in this connection that some anxiety has been exhibited by some members of the congregation who view the Rabbi as "too frumm, and pulling the Congregation in that direction. As an illustration, the rabbi pointed to some of the reactions to his efforts to deal with questions of Conservative ideology with his Board. At the same time, it was suggested that he not conclude prematurely that dealing with such questions is inherently threatening; it is conceivable that the sense of threat may reflect the text that was read ("The Sacred Cluster") or the pedagogy.

Wanted: an example of a congregation that transforms itself. The CCC offers an example of a Congregation which, though doing nothing exceptional, sustains a vibrant Shabbat community by attracting members who are already committed to celebrating Shabbat in a serious way. But CBI's challenge, according to some, is different: namely, how create a vibrant Shabbat community when it does not yet exist? It was suggested that an important piece of CBI's "Best Practices" project should focus on identifying and studying congregations which, beginning from a position comparable to CBI, were able to transform themselves from less into more vibrant Shabbat-celebrating communities.

Conclusion. At the end of the meeting, the sense of the group was a) that the conversation had been a rich one; b) that the questions concerning the Syngagogue's self-definition were of importance, one of the challenges being to arrive at a self-description which is compelling to substantial constituencies both in and out of the Congregation's present membership and which does leave critical constituencies feeling marginalized. It was recognized that this is a tall order.

Agenda CIJE Meeting
Feb. 24, 1997

1. Review minutes from last meeting
2. Study and article by Art Green
3. Best Practices Project
4. Strengths and weaknesses of CBI shabbat experience
5. Best Practices Project Report by Judy and Bud Margolis
6. Itinerary:
 - a. Next Focus Group: Identify population and recruit
 - b. Teacher in-service
 - c. Mission Statement (Shabbat at CBI is....)
 - d. Suggestions for shabbat enhancement

file is bestint2.txt

Best Practices Project

Background

In the fall of 1996, Congregation Beth Israel accepted an invitation by the Milwaukee Lead Community Initiatives Project to embark on what was called the Goals Project. The purpose of the Goals Project was to enhance the quality of Beth Israel's religious and educational program by:

- 1) clarifying the synagogue's most fundamental goals;
- 2) assessing how these goals are embedded in overall synagogue program;
- 3) evaluating the extent to which these goals are achieved.

A committee was constituted to address the three aforementioned objectives. This committee includes the Rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel, Lee Buckman; the CIJE Consultant, Professor Daniel Pekarsky from the University of Wisconsin, Madison; the Educational Director at CBI, Pamela Lager; and ten members of CBI of which one is the outgoing director of Milwaukee's Lead Community Project, Ruth Cohen and another is one of the lay co-chairs of the Lead Community Project, Louise Stein. Other congregants on this Committee include the Judaica Director at the local JCC, Rabbi Ed Rettig; one of CBI's afternoon religious school teachers, Liza Wiemer; the synagogue President, Gayle Rakita; the acting director of Milwaukee's Agency for Jewish Education; a professional market researcher; and three other active members of the synagogue representing three distinct age categories.

Although the synagogue has many goals (e.g. to promote an ongoing desire for Jewish learning, to inspire congregants to pray regularly, to foster a greater understanding of the ideals and expectations of Conservative Judaism), and all are worthy of examination, the Committee decided that, for several reasons, the focus should be on shabbat celebration and observance.

With this focus, the challenge would be to enable the membership of CBI to grow in their appreciation and enjoyment of shabbat. The strategy for meeting this challenge would include:

- 1) clarifying how shabbat currently fits into the practices of CBI;
- 2) clarifying how shabbat fits into the outlook and lives of key constituencies (e.g. professional and lay leaders, teachers, parents and children);
- 3) having opportunities to explore different understandings of what shabbat is and how it fits into Jewish life and to use these opportunities to deepen the views of the participants and the rest of the congregation;
- 4) clarifying the types and qualities of shabbat experiences that CBI would like to nurture and identifying the implications of these goals for the congregation at prayer and study.

Some Preliminary Findings

Since the Goals Project began, a number of focus groups and interviews have been conducted to explore how shabbat fits into the life of CBI constituents. Participants were asked what they get out of shabbat when it “clicks,” what were the circumstances under which it “clicked,” and what might the synagogue do better to make shabbat “click” more regularly for them and other congregants.

Respondents spoke of shabbat providing the opportunity for valuable family time and a time to experience the world in a very different way than on other days, the joy of coming together as a community, of being free of the demands of work, of communing with nature. Some of the conditions that facilitate these feelings are environments that are completely suffused from shabbat.

The Best Practices Project

Several Conservative synagogues in the United States are reputed to be ones that have succeeded in creating a vibrant shabbat community, where a “shabbaton-like” experience is the norm for many congregants. The purpose of the “Best Practices Project” is to understand what goes into fashioning and nurturing a community that finds shabbat celebration personally enriching and religiously uplifting. Ultimately, it would be worthwhile to determine the extent to which Congregation Beth Israel can learn from the successes in these other synagogues and replicate them among the CBI membership. The challenge is to determine:

- 1) how these synagogues succeed in creating the “shabbaton-like” experience and commitment among its membership;
- 2) what types of shabbat opportunities and qualities of experience these synagogues provide that help enhance and empower shabbat celebration and observance;
- 3) how these synagogues attract and retain members for whom shabbat is an integral part of their identity as a practicing Jew.

To this end, CBI congregants would be sent to synagogues recommended for their success in creating a vibrant shabbat community. These congregants would experience shabbat in the host congregants’ homes and convene two post-shabbat meetings, one with the rabbi and one with a group of lay members involved in the shabbat community.

From the interview with the rabbi, it would be instructive to learn:

- 1) the rabbi's general vision of how to create a shabbat community;
- 2) the factors to which the rabbi attributes the vibrancy of that shabbat community;
- 3) the extent to which the synagogue has support systems to draw in members to shabbat celebration and observance;
- 4) the extent to which the synagogue has mechanisms to empower congregants to experience shabbat;
- 5) the extent to which lay people versus professionals participate in shabbat programming;
- 6) the extent to which the religious school curriculum relates to the overall synagogue's vision of shabbat celebration and observance;
- 7) the extent to which day schools, Camp Ramah, other Jewish camps, USY or other youth groups support, enhance or reinforce shabbat experiences in the synagogue;
- 8) the range of shabbat programming available for young families, empty-nesters, youth (e.g. junior congregation) and the level of responsibility for the conceiving of or implementing these programs;
- 9) the extent to which affective or intellectual activities like singing and studying play a role in the congregation's shabbat experience and the way in which congregants are encouraged to participate in such activities;
- 10) the extent to which the synagogue has created specific programs (e.g. shabbatonim, alternate services) to meet any stated needs of the membership in so far as shabbat celebration is concerned;
- 11) how the level of shabbat observance now compares to what the rabbi found when he first assumed the position of rabbi for this synagogue;
- 12) if there been a noticeable increase in the number of "shomer shabbat" families in the synagogue and if so, why;
- 13) to what extent the "shomer shabbat" core is viewed as role models by fellow congregants of ideal Conservative living or as realistic models of Jewish living that can be emulated.

From the interview with the shabbat-observing lay community, it would be helpful to learn:

- 1) general information (i.e. how long they have been members of the synagogue, their children's ages, religious upbringing);
- 2) what an average shabbat experience at home, in the synagogue, with the community is like for these members (with whom they share shabbat, how they spend their time, etc...)
- 3) what they get out of shabbat when it "clicks";
- 4) to what extent the synagogue, the rabbi, or the community is responsible shabbat to "click" in the ways described;
- 5) what is attractive about the quality of the shabbat experience at their synagogue (attractive in that people want to join or people don't want to leave);
- 6) what factors influenced them to become committed to making shabbat such a consistent and fulfilling part of their lives.

A final report will be written after each synagogue visit which will include subjective impressions of the CBI visitors, information gleaned from both interviews, and a general description of the target synagogue (i.e. size of membership, number of professionals on staff, number of Conservative synagogues in the area, number of students that attend afternoon religious school versus day school and the extent of their participation in synagogue life, basic information on the structure of the shabbat morning service--e.g. triennial or annual Torah cycle, women's participation--the availability of a shabbat mincha minyan, opportunities for study on shabbat, the Rabbi's teaching responsibilities, the role the Cantor plays in the religious life of the congregants).

file is best.txt

Best Practices Project

Preliminary Interview conducted by Rabbi B of Rabbi Lyle Fishman

Judy and Bud Margolis were sent to Congregation Ohr Kodesh (OK) in Chevy Chase Maryland on the weekend of February 14-16, 1997. OK was identified by Rabbi David Golinkin, a leading Israeli halachic authority of the Conservative Movement, and Rabbi Jerry Epstein, Executive Director of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, as synagogue with a vibrant shabbat community and a large core of committed "shomer shabbat" families.

Chevy Chase is located outside Washington, DC. In the area of the synagogue, there are four or five other Conservative synagogues. The rabbi distinguished his synagogue as being "traditional in many characteristics." The synagogue abides by the annual cycle Torah reading, offers a shabbat mincha minyan, and is serious about its commitment to egalitarianism. The other synagogues in the area are not only less traditional, by his definition, but also appeal to Jews in distinct geographical regions in Chevy Chase.

In terms of baseline date, the rabbi has been at the synagogue for 13 years (the Rabbi Emeritus retired after 32 years and lives in the area). The congregation has 725 family units. It is the second largest of the midsize synagogues in the area. Half the students in the synagogue attend and afternoon religious school (there is some kind of joint afternoon religious school) and half day school. Of those at day school, most attend the Charles E. Smith Community Day School which is not officially affiliated with Solomon Schechter although the majority of the students come from Conservative synagogues. Fifteen to 20 students attend a modern Orthodox day school. The latter school has 600 students total and the former 1000. Both schools continue through high school. USY is not so strong in the synagogue; some attend NCSY; few attend BBYO. Involvement in the synagogue is generally a function of whether a child attends a day school but observance is not.

The Chazzan is observant, is a great Bar/Bat mitzvah teacher, likes to teach "nusach" and "trope," always defers to the rabbi on religious issues, gets along well with the rabbi, and is an exemplar for living Jewishly. In addition to the rabbi and cantor, there is an executive director, a youth and programming director, a nursery school director, and the principal of the religious school.

The rabbi teaches upon request in the school, offers a monthly parent seminar for the religious school, teaches a Sunday morning Talmud class, a Tuesday lunchtime downtown class, a Basic Judaism course on Tuesday evenings, High School children on Wednesday evenings. On the second day of Yom Tov he doesn't give a sermon but teaches. The shabbat morning crowd is loyal and Jewishly knowledgeable, and the rabbi feels that he can build from week to week on what he has taught previously.

From: Dan Pekarsky
To: internet("RABLEEBUC@aol.com")
Date: 2/9/97 11:30pm
Subject: Re: January meeting -Reply

Hi, Lee. Thanks for your feedback on my meeting-summaries. I've discovered over the last few years that such summaries are very helpful to me and sometimes to others in creating a rich context for future deliberations; so I find myself investing a lot of time in them. Feel free to send out this summary (as edited by you) to the group in preparation for the next meeting.

February 24 seems like a good date to me; there certainly should be a lot on the table by then -- the Chevy Chase experience and a second focus-group. By the way, my recollection is that we agreed that the second focus group should focus on a different kind of population -- but we didn't agree on which one. This should be decided soon, if Sandy is to have enough time to do a group.

My sense is that by the end of the February meeting, it may be time for the group to break into work-groups with more specific assignments. We should make a time to discuss whether this makes sense.

Also, between now and that meeting perhaps Pamela and I can further discuss the idea proposed at the last meeting to use Mother's Day Sunday as a day for teacher-study. This could be invaluable -- if planned right! If you think it's a good idea, it's important that Pamela know it. By the way, it might even be worth thinking about including our committee as part of the study group for that day!

Finally, I went to the Avi Chai conference on Synagogue Change in Los Angeles last week. I heard a talk by a young, energetic and articulate Orthodox Rabbi (who had been in New York and is now in Los Angeles) who struck me as having wonderful ideas for how to engage a relatively unengaged group in Shabbat life. He might well be worth your talking to -- or, budget permitting, inviting out. His name is Yosef Kanefsky, and he is the rabbi of B'nai David-Judea Congregation, 8906 West Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90035. His telephone is 310-276-9269; his fax is 276-7891. He's also on email, but I can't seem to locate the address right now.

From: Dan Pekarsky
To: internet("Racheljbuc@aol.com")
Date: 2/9/97 10:18pm
Subject: CIJE -Reply

Hi, Lee. I've been trying to reach you on the phone tonight (Sunday, pre-your-trip),but the line's been busy for quite a while. I hope the email will reach you, though. By now, I've read the material you sent me. I find it excellent, my one qualification being Barry's: namely, that the theme of observance should not push to the side the theme of nurturing a certain quality of experience ("clicking"). What that quality of experience is and what contributes to it strike me as important things to learn about.

It will be very interesting to see what they learn!! All the best on your trip.

D.

From: Dan pekarsky
To: internet("Racheljbuc@aol.com")
Date: 2/7/97 11:36am
Subject: CIJE -Reply

Lee, I haven't yet read the document, but I wanted you to know that in short note to me, Barry Holtz told me how impressed he was by the quality and the seriousness of the Best Practices project -- "terrific!" was his phrase. Thought you'd be interested.

If I can react to the document before I leave town, I will.

Dan

From: Dan pekarsky
To: soe 1.internet("rableebuc@aol.com"), internet("bah...
Date: 2/7/97 11:04am
Subject: best practices -Reply

Lee and Barry,

I just got back from NYC and haven't yet had a chance to review this material Lee sent me. But based on what I know of the project, Barry's concern re: the disjunction between clicking issues and observance issues -- and the needs not to lose sight of "the clicking issue" -- seems very pertinent. I will try to review the material and react over the next few days.

Lee -- when are you going off to Israel? If you're leaving on Sunday or Monday, is there anyone else I can email my comments to? Or call? Let me know. Also, have we pinned down a time to meet again in February? If it's possible to talk before Shabbat, that would be great -- though I'll be leaving for Ann Arbor by mid-day Friday. In case we don't talk -- have a good, safe trip!

Shabbat Shalom.

>>> Barry 02/07/97 07:47am >>>
Dear Lee,

I read with great interest your Best Practices project. This is a terrific idea and I'll be very curious to see what you find.

Here are a few comments:

1) There is a certain amount of disjunction between the questions/exploration in the visit(s) to other synagogues and the kinds of questions that you asked the focus groups and interviewees in your own synagogue: the main thrust in your own shul was on how and when shabbat "clicked". In essence this is an emotional/psychological kind of question (which is fine and probably the most important kind of data to elicit). But it appears that the focus in the visit is more on OBSERVANCE of shabbat (that is, the places identified by Golinkin and Epstein were said to have a lot of shomer shabbat people-- now there probably is a relationship between the "clicking" experience and observance but what that relationship is is not entirely clear. Some people may "click" and NOT be shomer shabbat, for example, at least by the standards of our movement. I have met a lot of people like that.) So on the visit it would be important to see if clicking can be identified and how it relates to observance. Perhaps clicking leads to observance; perhaps observance leads to clicking! Your visitors need to be sensitive to this issue. If you find a shul full of clickers, but with a only a moderate level of traditional observance, it's worth thinking about what that means.

2) You probably know that Prof. Jack Wertheimer JTS has completed a monumental study of conservative synagogues and their members. You can order the Highlights from JTS Provost's office if you haven't seen it. This is a very serious piece of social science work done by some of the leading people around, under Jack's organizational and intellectual leadership. I think it would be worth a conversation with him to see if there is stuff in the big study (beyond the highlights) that you ought to know about. You can tell him I suggested that you call him (I think he knows about my BP research). I know that Steven M. Cohen and Paul Ritterband did a big survey that dealt in part with observance issues and Sam Heilman and Riv-Ellen Prell did two in depth ethnographic studies of synagogues. Of course this is the opposite of Best Practices-- it dafka doesn't try to look for best; it looks for representative. But nonetheless, their work will both contextualize what you're doing (e.g. where does CBI fit on the Conservative spectrum) and may offer insights about the current state of the field. Moreover, their survey instruments and interview protocols may be very helpful if you could adapt and use them.

Please keep me informed. Have a great trip to Israel.

Barry Holtz

CC: soe_1.internet("danpek@macc.wisc.edu"),

From: Dan Pekarsky
To: Buckman
Date: 1/23/97 11:57pm
Subject: January meeting

Dear Lee,

I hope all is well. I found our meeting last week very productive - I think we're making real progress. Here's my attempt at a summary; I'd be grateful for corrections, additions, etc. Thanks.

Files: C:\WPDOCS\CIJE\BIJAN97

SUMMARY OF CBI GOALS PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
January 13, 1997

BACKGROUND

Between the early December and the January meeting, two tasks were to be accomplished. First, a group of teachers were to be gathered together so that we could test out, develop, etc. the impressions concerning how Shabbat fits into educational programming that had emerged from the initial interviews. Second, Sandy Thau was to conduct and analyze the results of a focus group made up of "Empty Nesters." Third, the rabbi planned to continue developing the "Shabbat Best Practices" project that he had launched.

Originally, the group had planned to re-convene not in January but later in December; but this plan was changed when it was clear that there was not enough time to complete the work that needed to be done in preparation for the meeting. Hence the decision to move the meeting into January. Fortunately, the postponement in no way seemed to affect the group's enthusiasm or attendance. With the exception of Bob, Roberta, and Ed, and Leeza, all members of the group were present.

STUDY SESSION

The meeting with a study-session in which the rabbi continued to lead us in an examination of the two most famous passages in the Torah dealing with Shabbat celebration: in one of them we are commanded to REMEMBER the Sabbath; in the other, to OBSERVE it. The rabbi reminded us that the commandment to observe the Sabbath is connected in the text with God's having taken us out of Egypt; it emphasizes God's ethical nature and our own ethical responsibilities. The commandment to remember the Sabbath is connected with God's having created the world. After the rabbi shared with us, some traditional perspectives on the relationship between these two commandments (for example, Rashi's observation that we are to experience both of them as though they were uttered simultaneously in a single breath), we went on to speculate together concerning the possible relationships between OBSERVING and REMEMBERING. Here are some of the ideas that were tried out:

1. there are times in life when we may be able to remember the Sabbath without being in a position to observe it.
2. perhaps the doing (the observing) makes it more possible for us to remember the significance of the Sabbath day.
3. Building on 2, another person suggested that Shamor and Zachor (Observe and Remember) need each other: that observing without remembering the significance of the day turns the Sabbath

into an empty ritual; and that remembering without observing the Mitzvot associated with Shabbat strips it of its Jewish cast (and may not in the long run be sustainable).

4. It is the Shamor (the observance dimension) which transforms the Shabbat into a communal experience.

5. It was suggested that while Shamor and Zachor are supposed to reinforce one another, in our own day, for many people the link between them has been severed, so that the customs and rituals belonging to Shabbat do not conjure up memories of the day's significance (which for many is far from clear). There is a need to find ways of re-infusing what we do on Shabbat with the capacity to awaken us to the inner meaning of the day (Zachor). In this connection we recalled an earlier discussion of the power of music to move people.

5. We were reminded of Rashi's suggestion that SHAMOR/OBSERVE points us towards creating a certain kind of experience by refraining from doing certain acts, whereas ZACHOR/REMEMBER points us towards the positive deed associated with Shabbat. It was further suggested that each of them would therefore carry very different educational implications (but we did not systematically explore this).

We agreed to return to this passage on another occasion.

OUR ITINERARY

Early on in the meeting a question was raised concerning our destination. The rabbi reminded the group that our plan was to conclude Stage 1. of the project by June; by the end of Stage 1, a set of recommendations and perhaps a plan of action would be in place, which would then guide a second stage that is more focused on implementation.

Recommendations and a plan of action will emerge in two ways. First, if we succeed in developing a kind of vision-statement that vividly presents CBI's understanding of Shabbat and the qualities of experience it hopes to encourage through its Shabbat activities, we will then be in a position to think about implications for practice across a variety of domains of Congregational life. Second, it turns out that in the course of our meetings, a variety of interesting programmatic ideas are emerging spontaneously, and perhaps some of these will prove worth trying to act on.

THE SHABBAT "BEST PRACTICE" PROJECT

The rabbi reported on the project he is launching in which an attempt is made to identify and then study congregations which

have succeeded in developing a passionate Shabbat-involved community. He indicated that a Congregation in Chevy Chase, Maryland will be the first to be studied; if this effort proves worthwhile, there are other congregations to be looked at. A pressing need is to develop a set of questions, or an interview-guide, to be used by the individuals who go off to study these congregations, and Judy Werlin agreed to work on the development of this Interview Guide.

THE CONVERSATION WITH THE TEACHERS

Pamela Lager and Daniel Pekarsky reported on their conversation with a group of some 6 or 7 teachers the day before concerning Shabbat in the school. Though this meeting with the teachers had been planned with an eye to further eliciting from them how Shabbat currently fits into the school, it tended to focus more on teachers' ideas about Shabbat and Shabbat-education.

There was a shared sense among the teachers that there is a vast difference between "learning about" and "personally experiencing", and they felt strongly that the most powerful Shabbat-learning-experiences fall into the "personally experiencing" category. This might, and sometimes does, mean creating opportunities for the children to actively and meaningfully celebrate Shabbat, but it also might mean finding ways in a classroom to re-enact Shabbat experiences. As an example of the latter, one teacher described a class in which she had the kids running madly around doing Shabbat preparations, and then, with the coming of Shabbat, allowed them the enjoyment of rest from this feverish activity. Through such experiences, young children who don't celebrate Shabbat might acquire a visceral sense for the relationship between Weekday and Shabbat.

Asked about the significance of Shabbat, about why it's important, the teachers spoke about "being together as a family" in a world in which this is decreasingly common; about an opportunity to again become centered, to get perspective on one's life; and about resting.

The teachers also speculated about ways in which Shabbat at CBI could be enriched, and Pamela agreed to discuss this with the rabbi on another occasion.

This discussion concluded with an exploration of how we might engage the teachers in sustained and more serious study of Shabbat -- something critical to their ability to teach it effectively. One suggestion is that perhaps the rabbi could periodically teach them in the context of Teachers Meetings. In addition to the fact that this could contribute immensely to the teachers' understandings of Shabbat, this could also be an opportunity for them to develop a personal connection to the rabbi. It was also suggested that an extended seminar should be arranged at which the teachers could study different conceptions

of Shabbat and their educational implications. It was proposed that we choose a regular Sunday morning, which would be used for teacher-study rather than for regular classes. More concretely, Mother's Day (this May) was suggested, and there seemed to be some enthusiasm for the idea.

Having heard some of the interesting things that some of the teachers were doing in relation to Shabbat, one member of the group suggested that it might be desirable for us to do an inventory of such items. Not only would this give us a better sense of what we could build on, it could contribute to a sense of pride among the teachers. It would send the message that the Congregation is not just looking for what's wrong but is very interested in what is going well.

SANDY THAU'S EMPTY-NESTERS FOCUS GROUP

Sandy's comments summarized the major findings found in the careful report she wrote based on the focus group. That document should be consulted for this material. Here attention will be limited to issues that came up for discussion.

On whom should energy be expended? Sandi reported that most of those she met with, while not necessarily very actively involved in the life of the Congregation, felt pretty set in their ways and not at all dissatisfied. In fact, Sandy's sense was that if an effort was made to reach out to such people to encourage more substantial engagement, it would not be very successful. This observation prompted one member of the group to suggest that perhaps we should not be expending our limited energies (twisting ourselves around like Pretzels!) in an effort to accommodate the idiosyncratic desires of individuals who are not, in any basic sense, ready to respond to our initiatives. Instead, perhaps we should be investing our energies in reaching out to those sub-groups in the community who are actively looking for - or are at least ready to take advantage of - opportunities for spiritual growth.

In the conversation that followed this comment, it was suggested that whether CBI should be actively trying to reach out to those who presently seemed "less ready" represents a weighty strategic question. How it answers this question will say a lot about CBI's identity and aspirations as a community; this will be especially true if it is serious about the practical implications of its answer to this question. In this context, Willow Creek Church, a church outside Chicago that has successfully defined itself as an institution organized around bringing disengaged individuals in, was briefly discussed. It was also noted in this context that a decision to focus more energy on the core of the congregation's constituency and less on the uninvolved periphery would be complicated by the fact that much of many congregations' financial support comes from individuals who are on the periphery. This matter needs to be kept in mind.

The place of women in the congregation. A second discussion flowed out of Sandy's report that at least one of the women in the group felt "diminished" by her (felt) inferior status in the Synagogue's religious services. We speculated about how widespread this feeling might be, and it was suggested that resentment growing out of not being counted for the Minyan at CBI may quite common among women in the Congregation. Often this resentment is awakened by, or surfaces through, the experience of participating in a Minyan in order to say Kaddish and not being counted. One member of the group noted that this issue is a deeply felt one for some members of the Congregation, representing a genuine obstacle to a full sense of participation in the religious life of the CBI community.

The rabbi indicated that if CBI is to move in the direction of egalitarianism on this issue, it should be done for the right reasons and not because of the questionable assumption that it will increase membership. He went on to discuss briefly some of this concerns that inform his own struggle with this question.

NEXT STEPS

After collectively thanking Sandy for her extensive work on the focus group project, we proceeded, at the end of the meeting, to summarize the challenges on the horizon:

1. Prepare an Interview Guide for the Shabbat Best Practices "field trip" to Maryland in February.
2. Finalize a time and begin developing the content for an extensive study session concerning Shabbat with the teachers, and look for ways to involve the rabbi in teaching the school's faculty about Shabbat.
3. Organize a second focus group with another kind of CBI population as a prelude to drawing any conclusions from the focus group activity.

CIJE Meeting January 13, 1997 4 PM
(Tentative) Agenda

1. Study
2. Report on focus group interview conducted by Sandy Thau
3. Report on re-interview of CBI Religious School Teachers.
4. Update on "Best Practices" Approach to Shabbat Commitment
5. Long range (i.e. to June) plan



Murphy Marketing Research

STRATEGIC PLANNING

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL

A Qualitative Exploration of Attitudes Toward Shabbat Among "Empty Nesters"

Summary Report
January, 1997



BACKGROUND

Congregation Beth Israel has an interest in exploring attitudes and practices relating to Shabbat among its congregants. The primary objective is to gain a better understanding of the needs CBI members may have in regard to their celebration of Shabbat and determine what CBI can do in order to make Shabbat “click” for its congregants on a more frequent basis.

On Monday December 9, 1996, four member “couples” and two individual members participated in a focus group in order to address the above issues.

PROFILE OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS:

COUPLE #1 -- Long time CBI members. Husband attends “Schul” twice a month for Saturday morning services and every Thursday evening. Wife attends very infrequently partly because she does not feel her position as a woman in the congregation is felt to be important.

COUPLE #2 -- Long time CBI members. Infrequent Shabbat visitors. Celebrate Shabbat on a monthly basis with a group of friends, their children and grandchildren. Wife feels she plays a “diminished” role in the synagogue as a woman who is not counted in the minyon. Although the husband enjoys the sermons and Divar Torah on Saturday, he finds he gets “schpilkies” sitting for so long listening to the same prayers. As an attorney he feels he might find it more interesting if the Shema had a new clause he could interpret. For the most part, he feels bored.

COUPLE #3 -- Long time CBI members. Husband feels guilty because he cannot celebrate Shabbat the way it “should” be celebrated based on what he has learned through study. This guilt developed following years of having to work on Saturdays. Wife is content to make a Friday night meal and have friends and family join. She does not feel any less a Jew because she doesn’t celebrate Shabbat 24 hours.

COUPLE #4 -- Long time CBI members. Try to celebrate Shabbat being together with family and friends. This could be anything from a home cooked Friday night meal to everyone meeting at a restaurant for a fish fry.

MEMBER #5 -- Long time CBI member. Celebrates Shabbat with a home cooked meal on Fridays. Used to come to Shabbat services more often, but now finds it difficult given that she works all week and needs the time for other things. Would like to be able to come for an hour and not have to get dressed up. Often stops in for the evening service during the week instead.

MEMBER #6 -- Recent member. Comes to Shabbat services regularly without her husband because of her "need" to have Shabbat in her life. Misses the special Shabbats she had as a child and finds services a way to fill this void.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Interestingly, all the women represented in the focus group came from families where Shabbat was a very special and important time of the week. For all of them this special feeling has carried on into their adulthood, although they may be unable to celebrate in the same way. Most say their way of celebrating Shabbat is to make a special meal and invite family and friends. The men came from families which were less traditional in their celebration of Shabbat.

“I grew up in a home that celebrated Shabbat every Friday night and it’s very important to me.”

“I remember going to Schul with my parents every Friday night. My mother always had a Shabbat supper and after we’d all get dressed up and walk to Schul. It was that way until I moved away from home. I would not go out on Friday night because it was Shabbas. We celebrated as a family. It was something we did and it was important to us and it was wonderful. I still feel the need to celebrate Shabbat in our own way.”

“Friday night was a special night. My sister and I never accepted dates on Fridays. That was the one night my mother put out the sterling and the china and we got dressed up for dinner. I was blessed because my mother kept having Friday nights for us after I got married and until she died a year ago.”

- The group members agreed that the “changes in our society” have prompted changes in the way we are able to celebrate Shabbat. Neighborhoods are spread out and there is not longer the feeling that everyone on your block is doing the same thing you are doing. With children and teens, school activities and pressures from peers made Friday evenings a struggle for many.

“Now all the school activities are on Friday nights. There is a constant peer pull. It’s one of the biggest problems. We try to plan to be together on Friday nights and we try to eat early. It’s part of the non-Jewish life versus the Jewish life and having kids.”

-
- Participants described camp experiences and Shabbats in Israel as their idea of a true Shabbat where you can “feel it in the air.” These were situations where Shabbat “clicked.” Many felt Judaism is a religion of community and find it difficult to have the same sense of a community in a large city where not everyone is “buying into it.”

“I think that part of the problem in trying to get a sense or a feeling for Shabbat is that we live in a non-Jewish society. During my college years I was director of a Jewish camp and we were out in the woods with 200 Jewish kids. When Shabbat came you could feel it in the air. You could feel the spirituality. The same thing happens in Israel. You get the sense of Shabbat and you can’t get it here because it’s not Shabbat for 95% of the world around you. It is difficult to grasp the feeling I got at that camp setting and in Israel.”

“Judaism is a religion of community. And I think you need that sense of community. You have to create a community where everybody buys into it. The closest you come to this is a block party. It’s very difficult to do. When you walk out of your front door you can’t have that sense.”

- Another participant talked about many years ago attending Saturday morning services and then going to the Cantor’s house for lunch. This group member thoroughly enjoyed the experience of a leisurely Saturday afternoon lunch and just sitting around a table and enjoying the company. This was one Shabbat experience that “clicked.”

“I loved being a part of that special Shabbat.. We went to services and then we had lunch and sat around the table and talked and visited and I really enjoyed that. I would like to be part of that more often.”

- The majority of participants do not feel guilty or feel they are not “good Jews” because they do not celebrate Shabbat in a traditional sense (i.e., attending services on Saturday morning, observing a day of rest, etc.) Many said they feel it is important to be charitable and do for others and these actions make them feel like good Jews, more so than strictly observing Shabbat. The main message was -- “do what you are comfortable with and what feels right for you.”

"My mother had such a good feeling about being in Schul on Saturday. But someone who doesn't do that they aren't any less a good Jew. I don't feel guilty. I feel very comfortable within myself about the way I live my life as a Jewish person. I am very charitable and do a lot of volunteer work. I feel good about these things and maybe I'm not as observant as some others, but I think there are degrees. You have to do what's right for you."

"I have Jewish guilt in many respects. But I don't feel guilty that I don't go to Schul on Saturday. Your degree of observance doesn't make you any less a Jew. There are other ways to express your Judaism other than being in Schul on Saturday."

- One group member did appear to be laden with quite a bit of "Jewish guilt." This person feels guilty he does not celebrate Shabbat as is commanded.

"We're talking about Shabbat as if it's just Friday night. But it's more. I always worked on Saturdays and I always felt I could not observe Shabbat as Shabbat should be observed. I feel that way to this day. Thanks to our rabbis and our synagogue we realize that it's more than a Friday night supper. It's frustrating. It should be a day of rest, of study, a day with your family. Because I've never been able to do that and as a result I always feel uncomfortable on Saturday. I feel like I'm never doing what I should be doing. The most important day according to the Torah is the Shabbat. The more you study and the more familiar you get and if you accept the premise of the Shabbat -- if you absorb what it says in Torah it becomes a focal point of Jewish observance."

- Among the focus group members there were quite different opinions regarding their reactions to Saturday morning services. Two out of the ten group members attend regularly and enjoy the feeling they get being in the synagogue with other Jews.

"I think that as we grow older we become more attuned to Shabbat. I like to go to Schul -- I feel comfortable there. I feel at home there. I like being there with all the other Jews and that is comforting to me and that's a reason I go."

“Shabbat services on Saturday mornings really gives me something to hold onto during the week. I need that.”

- However, those who do not attend have a variety of reasons ranging from boredom to an aversion to getting “dressed up.” Among the women in the group, the topic of their position or place within the synagogue kept surfacing when discussing Shabbat and attending services. Several in the group expressed the feeling of not being comfortable with their role in a conservative synagogue. Many times the impetus behind this feeling was the experience of saying kaddush for a parent. Two women described the “diminished” feeling of sitting and waiting for men to come in order to make a minyon -- and in some cases not being able to say the prayer.

“Before my father died I used to go to Schul often. But the experience of saying kaddush changed that. I can't explain the feeling I had sitting and waiting for ten men to come in order to pray. It was so bad I stopped going to the daily minyons and just went on Friday nights or Saturdays when I knew there would be enough people. After awhile I basically just lost my motivation to go.”

“I do not go on Saturday mornings. Part of it is my position in the synagogue as a woman. I do not feel my presence is important.”

- The group members had a difficult time defining an “ideal” Shabbat. Some felt it was impossible to have an ideal Shabbat in a non-Jewish society. Others descriptions of an ideal Shabbat included being with family and friends, being at a camp, in Israel or in New York.

“For me Shabbat is a thought. That's why I love New York. I like to be with my people. I think that Shabbat is to get together with people and do whatever you want to do.”

“From a spiritual sense it would be a camp site or in Israel. From a general perspective a day of quiet, a day of peace -- no stress.”

“I do enjoy our Friday night Shabbat group. It gives me a real sense of community/family.”

“I enjoy having our family over on Friday nights. It keeps us together.”

- For the majority of the group members, their celebration of Shabbat tends to be limited to Friday nights and most are comfortable with this arrangement. While they do occasionally attend services on Saturday morning, for the most part, Saturdays are not part of their Shabbat equation.
- Although the participants appeared to be “set in their ways,” they were not totally against some type of Shabbat “experimentation.” Many had heard of retreats and Shabbatons and thought these experiences could be interesting on a limited basis.

“Maybe we could give one Saturday a month to really celebrate Shabbat. Sometimes I like to just be with people and talk and learn something that has meaning and that can give you fulfillment.”

- Participants had a difficult time thinking of ways in which CBI could help to deepen their Shabbat experience. Several suggested Shabbat programming for “smaller groups,” in order to get to know others in the same stage of life. Others mentioned past Friday night services/dinners attended with grandchildren which they enjoyed.

“The temple has become so large. I like to be part of smaller groups. That is meaningful - that could click. Going to temple with casts of hundreds doesn't have the same feeling. Maybe there could be a special service with a lunch for us empty nesters.”

I went to a Friday night program with my grandson. It was only about 40 minutes and then there was a dinner after. Maybe do this with empty nesters.”

-
- The general feeling was that CBI has a great deal to offer currently and that it is really up to the members to take advantage of what is available.

"I don't have expectations of CBI. For the most part CBI has done for me everything that I've allowed them to do. I think the synagogue has offered me a great deal. But the synagogue can't come and take me by the hand -- it's up to me."

TABULATION OF HANDOUTS

THE THING I LIKE BEST ABOUT SHABBAT...

- The feeling of closeness, warmth and peacefulness.
- If I cook a traditional meal or go to someone's house for a traditional Shabbat meal.
- That G-d commanded the Jews to observe Shabbat.
- I don't go to the office and am able to have some free time to basically do what I want. Also spending time with friends and family.
- It's lovely to have a day of rest.
- Sharing a Shabbat meal with family and friends.
- Jewish spirituality -- family togetherness, meals and rituals.
- Frequent Shabbat meals -- get together with friends and their children to enjoy the ritual of Shabbat.

THE THING I LIKE LEAST ABOUT SHABBAT...

- Cleaning up afterwards.
- I know it should be a welcome break to the week, but it's not and I feel guilty about that.
- I rarely feel I can meet the expectations.
- The restrictions on what technically can and cannot be done.
- No family to celebrate Shabbat with which used to be such a plus.
- In the summer when it ends late and there is an event -- it starts after sundown.
- There is nothing I dislike about Shabbat.
- That in a world where there is little free time for non-work related activities Shabbat is frequently the day I handle non-Shabbat activities.

**IF I COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT THE WAY I
EXPERIENCE SHABBAT I WOULD...**

- Try to spend more time in synagogue.
- Get together with family or friends every Friday night to celebrate Shabbat.
- Learn to feel that the circumstances of our background and habits can transition to meld tradition with our current lifestyle.
- Spend more time with Jewish or Hebrew studies.
- Come to Schul more than I do. I would do this if there were services on Friday after 7:30 p.m.
- I would not work on Friday afternoons.
- Celebrate Shabbat on a more frequent basis.

MEMO

Date: December 30, 1996

To: Roberta London
 Bob Hirschman
 Judy Werlin
 Gayle Weber Rakita
 Liza Wiemer
 Ed Rettig
 Bunny Dolnick
 Pamela Lager
 Ruth Cohen
 Louise Stein
 Sandy Thau
 Alice Jacobson
 Danny Peckarsky

Post-It® Fax Note	7671	Date	# of pages ▶
To	Danny Peckarsky	From	Lee Buckman
Co./Dept.		Co.	
Phone #		Phone #	
Fax #	608-262-9074	Fax #	352-2050

From: Rabbi Lee Buckman

Subject: Next CIJE Meeting (enclosed you will find minutes and a tentative agenda)

The next meeting of CIJE committee will be held on:

DATE: Monday, January 13
 TIME: 4 pm
 PLACE: CBI - Conference Room

Please call Elaine Durchslag, 352-7310 if you cannot attend this meeting.

CIJE Meeting January 13, 1997 4 PM
(Tentative) Agenda

1. Study
2. Report on focus group interview conducted by Sandy Thau
3. Report on re-interview of CBI Religious School Teachers.
4. Update on "Best Practices" Approach to Shabbat Commitment
5. Long range (i.e. to June) plan

From: Dan pekarsky
To: internet ("RABLEEBUC@aol.com")
Date: 12/12/96 2:04pm
Subject: Re: Summary of our last meeting -Reply

I got your addenda, which I found very helpful. I have, by the way, as comment concerning your suggestion that we think in terms of a progressive curriculum that sequentially deals with a number of themes. The idea makes sense to me: what I think may be worth more thinking is what the organizing principle should be. In your comments, the organizing principle was "Sequence of Shabbat ritual activities; but one could imagine others that are, say, thematic in character e.g., Creation, Revelation, Redemption; Work and Rest, etc. I think this would be worth exploring.

I've also been thinking that it may be useful for this group of ours to work its way towards a position-statement that focuses on such things as: 1) qualities of experience it hopes CBI can nurture in relation to Shabbat; 2) kinds of activities that are likely to facilitate 1); and 3) ideas about the most fundamental meaning(s) of Shabbat that can be used as a guide to educational and other activities.

Talk to you Monday.

CBI STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, DEC. 2, 1996
MINUTES
By Dan Pekarsky

STUDY

Rabbi Buckman led the group in studying two Biblical passages in which we are commanded to celebrate Shabbat. One of them commands us "to remember" the Sabbath, and the other "to keep" the Sabbath; one of them links Shabbat to the Creation of the World, and the other to God's taking the Jewish People out of the land of Egypt. Our discussion tried to identify significant differences between the two passages and offered participants an opportunity to explain why they felt that one of them (more commonly the historical rather than the cosmic account of the Sabbath) resonated for them more powerfully. Because of our lengthy agenda, discussion was cut off before we were able to fully explore the significance of the differences between these accounts for the way we understand Shabbat (or teach it!).

TEACHER-INTERVIEWS

Thanks to Alice's hard work in interviewing many teachers and recording for us on paper what they had to say, the committee had before it a summary of comments made by teachers concerning the place of Shabbat in their work at Beth Israel (See attachment). The interviews roughly followed a series of questions drafted by Pamela Lager against the background of our last meeting (See attachment). The group spent several minutes quietly reviewing Alice's summary of the interviews, after which there was a chance for all of us to react to what was said there.

Below can be found a range of reactions expressed at the meeting; comments are organized thematically, rather than in the order they appeared in the meeting.

Presence of Shabbat. The interview data suggest that Shabbat is represented in what teachers do in a multitude of ways not represented in the school's official curriculum.

Objectives. Scanning what teachers had to say about what they did in the area of Shabbat, one person observed that there did not appear to be any coherent set of objectives informing what people did in the area of Shabbat. Some teachers seemed to

be after facilitating "Shabbat-experiences", others seemed more interested in teaching kids about Shabbat in more traditional ways - but there wasn't a sense of what the over-riding aims of the Shabbat curriculum actually are. This prompted another person to ask, "What are the Congregation's goals in the area of Shabbat-education?" [This is clearly a matter that will bear more discussion.]

Highlights and frustrations. Scanning the data, it appeared to some that the most frustrating thing for teachers was the disengagement of the children's parents -- the lack of support for and follow-up to what the school might do in the area of Shabbat; one person expressed the view that little could be accomplished so long as there is a great gap between what the school/congregation says is important and what is conveyed to the child in the family context.

On a more positive note, teachers were particularly excited by opportunities to bring kids to their homes to celebrate Shabbat. Not only did they personally derive great satisfaction from this activity, they felt that it was very powerful for the students, offering them a kind of experiential "in their guts" knowledge of Shabbat that is invaluable. This comment led to a fascinating discussion concerning shabbat programming and the family.

Shabbat programming and CBI families. In response to the aforementioned observation concerning the power and desirability of teachers inviting children home for Shabbat, a countervailing concern was expressed: might not the effect of this be to take kids away from their own families on Shabbat, thereby eroding the Shul's commitment to make Shabbat a family-experience? In response to this concern, someone suggested that for many kids the choice was not between having Shabbat at the teacher's home or having Shabbat at home; for many it would be a choice between celebrating and not celebrating Shabbat.

In this context, one person suggested that in its efforts to both keep families together on Shabbat and encourage rich experiential Shabbat learning, perhaps it was time for the Congregation to consider returning in a serious way to Friday night programming (that would include a powerful family-oriented service and a family-friendly dinner)? Or perhaps it would be possible to nurture groups-of-families dinners (on the model of what is being done with the empty-nesters).

In the context of this discussion, questions were raised concerning why it is that families don't celebrate Shabbat. An hypothesis that was proposed is that in the case of some families it is lack of knowledge and know-how that stands in the way of their trying to celebrate Shabbat, and it was suggested in this connection that perhaps a user-friendly manual "a tool-kit" (with stories, instructions, prayers, suggestions,, ideas about what they might do, etc.) might be of value. There was a lot of enthusiasm for this suggestion; at the same time, at least one person cautioned against hastily concluding that lack of knowledge is the principal reason non-observing parents don't celebrate Shabbat. This person reminded us that the ranks of those not celebrating shabbat in an active way include families whose adult members have a lot of knowledge and know-how from out of their own childhoods. Something more or other than know-how was missing in these individuals -- a kind of personal, "in your guts" soul-knowledge of Shabbat as lived experience. In other words, along with the lack of technical or informational knowledge problem, we must recognize that there is a problem of motivation, of lack of interest. (This point was made using the Hebrew distinction between two forms of knowledge (Y'dee-ah and Hakarah.)

The family as the client. This multi-faceted discussion of the family in relation to Jewish education and Shabbat led someone to suggest that perhaps the family -- not the child! - should be thought of as the proper object of the Congregation's efforts in the area of Shabbat education. As this person put it, perhaps the goal should be to empower families to experience Shabbat and to incorporate it into their lives. If taken seriously, this overarching objective would carry implications not just for the school but for many other facets of the Congregation's programming. We were in this connection cautioned by one participant that the challenge of working with adults, with children, and with whole families is a difficult one, requiring fundamentally different approaches.

How comprehensive is the information elicited by the interviews? After reading the interview-data, one person wondered whether interviews of this kind are sufficient to elicit from teachers what it is they do and are trying to accomplish when they teach about Shabbat. This person (who happens to be a teacher in the school) suggested that much more in the way of shabbat-education might be going on than was articulated in the

interview process.

The desirability of a teacher-focus-group. The foregoing considerations led to the suggestion that it would be useful to organize a focus group for teachers that builds on the interviews that had been done. The focus group would give the teachers a chance to react to the impressions conveyed by the interview data - to affirm what was said, to correct it, to add to it or deepen it, etc. The give-and-take of the conversation might serve not only to produce more information but to deepen teachers' own awareness of what they are or should be doing in the area of Shabbat.

SHABBAT CONNECTION

In the last part of this meeting, we had a chance to hear about the relatively new "Shabbat Connection" program that is aimed at "Empty Nesters" (typically between 45 and 55 or somewhat older). We were given a description of the efforts that had been made to support the efforts of these couples and individuals to cluster in small groups for period Shabbat dinners. While the response to the new program was not initially as strong as its developers had expected, the program seems to be growing in popularity. It was speculated that one of the reasons why some people might be reluctant to join the program and especially to volunteer to host a dinner has to do with Kashrut issues, and we spoke some about whether there might be ways to lower the level of anxiety around this issue.

Someone asked whether any effort has been made to enrich what happens at a typical Friday night dinner. The answer was that at this point it's left very open-ended; essentially, whatever the host-family wants to do is what is done. It was in this connection suggested that perhaps the host-family could be provided with a "Shabbat in the home" tool-kit, rich with ideas about the kinds of things that might meaningfully be done in the context of hosting a shabbat dinner.

Excited by the account of these home-based Shabbat dinners, one person suggested that such dinners (aimed perhaps at a broader constituency than Empty Nesters) might prove an excellent Congregational out-reach tool.

THE SHABBAT BEST PRACTICES PROPOSAL

There was no time for the last item on our agenda, which was to discuss the Rabbi's proposal that CBI undertake a kind of "Best Practices" project focusing on Congregation-based Shabbat programming.

END OF MEETING

Towards the end of the meeting the group had a chance to review the list of questions prepared by Sandy Thau which are to be used to stimulate and guide the upcoming focus group discussion. Members of the group made a couple of suggestions but were generally very happy with the interview-guide.

At the end of our meeting we agreed that the next steps would be to organize a focus group for teachers and to hold the first focus group (for Empty Nesters). The results of this first focus group would be considered at our next meeting on Dec. 16. (canceled)

Addendum from the Rabbi:

Some ideas that emerged from discussion that should be addressed at some future date:

Bob Hirschman suggested a round-robin shabbat experience for students in each class of the religious school where student families host shabbat on a rotation basis.

Roberta London wondered whether or not implementing a late Friday night service would attract families and suggested that class services be implemented with children taking part in the service. Dinner should also be served.

Ruth Cohen cited the study by Jack Wertheimer on membership observance patterns in Conservative synagogues. Perhaps that study should be brought into the discussion in a more deliberate manner.

Ruth Cohen also noted that it may be worthwhile to train parents to be "coaches" in leading family discussions on the parasha.

I noted that we might consider a curriculum in the school that introduces different aspects of shabbat in a progressive manner (e.g. Kabbalat Shabbat/Maariv, Dinner practice, Shabbat morning service, etc....). In a private communication, Dan P suggested other possible sequences, e.g. creation, revelation, redemption. This should be explored further.

I would also like to highlight one possible formulation of our goal, stated well by Judy Werlin, namely, "to empower families as families to observe and experience shabbat, i.e. to empower families to incorporate shabbat into their lifestyles."

CBI STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, DEC. 2, 1996

INTRODUCTORY

Between our last meeting and the Dec. 2 meeting, Alice had succeeded in interviewing a number of teachers concerning the way Shabbat did - and did not - fit into their work with the children (whether or not it was represented in the "official curriculum"); Sandy Thau developed, after consulting with Rabbi Buckman and myself, a guide for the focus groups; the rabbi succeeded, though with considerable difficulty, in identifying about 6 couples for the "empty nester" focus group; the rabbi conceptualized and worked towards implementing a "best practices" project concerned with Shabbat.

Prior to the meeting, the rabbi and I agreed that it should be organized around these matters, but that we should begin with a period of study about Shabbat. The meeting was very well-attended; everyone who had participated in previous meetings (except Bunny) was present, and two new persons (Judy Werlin and Ed Retig) joined the group. The meeting was lively and engaging, though insufficient for its full agenda. Below is a summary.

STUDY

Rabbi Buckman led the group in studying two Biblical passages in which we are commanded to celebrate Shabbat. One of them commands us "to remember" the Sabbath, and the other "to keep" the Sabbath; one of them links Shabbat to the Creation of the World, and the other to God's taking the Jewish People out of the land of Egypt. Our discussion tried to identify significant differences between the two passages and offered participants an opportunity to explain why they felt that one of them (more commonly the historical rather than the cosmic account of the Sabbath) resonated for them more powerfully. Because of our lengthy agenda, discussion was cut off before we were able to fully explore the significance of the differences between these accounts for the way we understand Shabbat (or teach it!).

TEACHER-INTERVIEWS

Thanks to Alice's hard work in interviewing many teachers and recording for us on paper what they had to say, the committee had before it a summary of comments made by teachers concerning the place of Shabbat in their work at Beth Israel (See attachment). The interviews roughly followed a series of questions drafted by Pamela Lager against the background of our last meeting (See attachment). The group spent several minutes quietly reviewing Alice's summary of the interviews, after which there was a chance for all of us to react to what was said there.

Below can be found a range of reactions expressed at the meeting; comments are organized thematically, rather than in the order

they appeared in the meeting.

Presence of Shabbat. The interview data suggest that Shabbat is represented in what teachers do in a multitude of ways not represented in the school's official curriculum.

Objectives. Scanning what teachers had to say about what they did in the area of Shabbat, one person observed that there did not appear to be any coherent set of objectives informing what people did in the area of Shabbat. Some teachers seemed to be after facilitating "Shabbat-experiences", others seemed more interested in teaching kids about Shabbat in more traditional ways - but there wasn't a sense of what the over-riding aims of the Shabbat curriculum actually are. This prompted another person to ask, "What are the Congregation's goals in the area of Shabbat-education?" [This is clearly a matter that will bear more discussion.]

Highlights and frustrations. Scanning the data, it appeared to some that the most frustrating thing for teachers was the disengagement of the children's parents -- the lack of support for and follow-up to what the school might do in the area of Shabbat; one person expressed the view that little could be accomplished so long as there is a great gap between what the school/congregation says is important and what is conveyed to the child in the family context.

On a more positive note, teachers were particularly excited by opportunities to bring kids to their homes to celebrate Shabbat. Not only did they personally derive great satisfaction from this activity, they felt that it was very powerful for the students, offering them a kind of experiential "in their guts" knowledge of Shabbat that is invaluable. This comment led to a fascinating discussion concerning shabbat programming and the family.

Shabbat programming and CBI families. In response to the aforementioned observation concerning the power and desirability of teachers inviting children home for Shabbat, a countervailing concern was expressed: might not the effect of this be to take kids away from their own families on Shabbat, thereby eroding the Shul's commitment to make Shabbat a family-experience? In response to this concern, someone suggested that for many kids the choice was not between having Shabbat at the teacher's home or having Shabbat at home; for many it would be a choice between celebrating and not celebrating Shabbat.

In this context, one person suggested that in its efforts to both keep families together on Shabbat and encourage rich experiential Shabbat learning, perhaps it was time for the Congregation to consider returning in a serious way to Friday night programming (that would include a powerful family-oriented service and a family-friendly dinner) Or perhaps it would be

possible to nurture groups-of-families dinners (on the model of what is being done with the empty-nesters).

In the context of this discussion, questions were raised concerning why it is that families don't celebrate Shabbat. An hypothesis that was proposed is that in the case of some families it is lack of knowledge and know-how that stands in the way of their trying to celebrate Shabbat, and it was suggested in this connection that perhaps a user-friendly manual "a tool-kit" (with stories, instructions, prayers, suggestions,, ideas about what they might do, etc.) might be of value. There was a lot of enthusiasm for this suggestion; at the same time, at least one person cautioned against hastily concluding that lack of knowledge is the principal reason non-observing parents don't celebrate Shabbat. This person reminded us that the ranks of those not celebrating shabbat in an active way include families whose adult members have a lot of knowledge and know-how from out of their own childhoods. Something more or other than know-how was missing in these individuals -- a kind of personal, "in your guts" soul-knowledge of Shabbat as lived experience. In other words, along with the lack of technical or informational knowledge problem, we must recognize that there is a problem of motivation, of lack of interest. (This point was made using the Hebrew distinction between two forms of knowledge (Y'dee-ah and Hakarah).)

The family as the client. This multi-faceted discussion of the family in relation to Jewish education and Shabbat led someone to suggest that perhaps the family -- not the child! - should be thought of as the proper object of the Congregation's efforts in the area of Shabbat education. As this person put it, perhaps the goal should be to empower families to experience Shabbat and to incorporate it into their lives. If taken seriously, this overarching objective would carry implications not just for the school but for many other facets of the Congregation's programming. We were in this connection cautioned by one participant that the challenge of working with adults, with children, and with whole families is a difficult one, requiring fundamentally different approaches.

How comprehensive is the information elicited by the interviews? After reading the interview-data, one person wondered whether interviews of this kind are sufficient to elicit from teachers what it is they do and are trying to accomplish when they teach about Shabbat. This person (who happens to be a teacher in the school) suggested that much more in the way of shabbat-education might be going on than was articulated in the interview process.

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first focus group (for Empty Nesters). The results of this first focus group would be considered at our next meeting on Dec. 16.

SUMMARY OF CBI PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
November 1996

Attending this meeting were Bob, Gail, Ruth, Alice, Bunny, Sandy, Roberta, Leeza, Pamela, Rabbi Lee Buckman, and myself. Our task was to review what people had found in their efforts at data collection and to determine appropriate focus groups and focus group questions.

The meeting began with reports from individuals assigned to do data collection. Bunny read a carefully developed report focusing on differences between the way Shabbat used to be celebrated at CBI and the way it now is; her principal focus was on the place of women in the congregation. She described a period (late seventies or early eighties) in which women did not feel that they were full participants in the religious life of the Congregation and responded by developing a significant Shabbat Women's Minyan, a minyan that continued until women were incorporated on an equal basis in the congregation's main service. [It would be important to ask Bunny to type up her paper for the record; it's a rich document.]

Other changes surfaced during our conversation. Prominent among them was the abandonment of what had apparently been a very strong Friday night service at CBI, a major reason being the conviction of the then-Rabbi that families should be together at home on Friday nights. Participants recalled that Friday night services had been well-attended, lively, and seasoned with a lot of singing, singing that was encouraged by the regular presence of a choir. In this and other respects (for example, it lasted only an hour and a half or so), it was a very family-friendly service. There was in this connection considerable discussion concerning the wisdom of this change -- particularly in view of the fact that in many of CBI's families, both parents work and get home late on Friday afternoons.

Following this initial discussion, Gail summarized the work she and Rabbi Buckman had done to formulate what Shabbat now looks like at CBI. Her comments included (but were not limited to) the following elements:

FRIDAY NIGHTS: a regular, short Friday night service; periodic family night dinners, sometimes in conjunction with a Scholar-in-Residence.

THE DAY OF SHABBAT: a regular Shabbat morning service, along with a once-monthly alternative service that is more family-oriented; a Junior Congregation (Grades 3 through 6), and a new Tot Shabbat program; periodic luncheons after services; a regular late afternoon program that includes Mincha, two study groups, Shalshuddes, Ma'ariv and Havadala (for about twenty adults and twenty kids weekly).

OTHER SHABBAT ACTIVITIES/FEATURES: two or three Shabbatonim per year; Scholar-in-Residence five times per year; a new Shabbat Connection program for "Empty Nesters".

The summary of Shabbat activities stimulated two kinds of reactions:

1) As the many things that go on Shabbat were summarized, many participants in our committee found themselves surprised to discover how much is already going on; it's not that they necessarily were unaware of all these things, but that they hadn't stopped to "put it all together". They wondered whether there might be other people -- particularly newcomers to the Shul -- who would profit from hearing about the range of possible activities going on around Shabbat in the Congregation; and there was, in this connection, some discussion of how this might be effectively communicated. Before leaving this matter, one participant reminded us that although a lot is going on Shabbat, only a small percentage of the congregation is involved with it, and that this poses an important challenge.

2) The second reaction consisted in a variety of thoughts and short discussions concerning how the orchestration of the Shabbat experience at CBI could be strengthened. Rabbi Buckman kept a record of suggestions that were made, but because we were in the data-gathering stage on this occasion, the discussion of suggestions was not systematically developed. It was agreed that we need to devote separate sessions to their development.

Alice and Pamela led us in a brief discussion of the Family Education programming organized around Shabbat this year; it includes specially developed programs (each one of which includes a special value, prayer, and song) and dinners that have attracted 100 or so participants. In addition, based on some work done by Daniel and Pamela, the data-gathering piece of our meeting also included a preliminary discussion of Shabbat in the life of the school. It was noted 1) that the formal curriculum of the school emphasizes the cognitive and behavioral, but not the affective/personal dimensions of Shabbat; 2) that in practice teachers are relatively free to do what they want in the area of Shabbat; 3) that it would be of great value to find out what they actually do in order to see how much and the quality of what is being done, whether different efforts are coherent with one another or at cross-purposes, etc. Pamela and Daniel indicated their interest in arranging for interviews of teachers to get these kinds of data. They had framed some preliminary questions designed to elicit from teachers how they approach Shabbat, and by the end of the evening Leeza and Alice had agreed to take significant responsibility for doing the interviews (once Pamela, with Daniel's help, formulates the interview-guide). (It should be noted that there was also some discussion concerning whether the teachers of those kids who attend Day Schools should also be interviewed. Whether they should or not depends on why we want

to interview teachers in the first place! Someone also mentioned that it might be pertinent to think about how children experience Shabbat in camp-settings.)

Before leaving this part of the discussion, Daniel asked if there were insights and questions that had emerged from what we had been hearing. Though there wasn't enough time for this discussion (given the rest of our agenda), a few comments were briefly made. The need to think about marketing and about the quality (as distinct from the quantity) of Shabbat experiences was noted, and new questions were suggested: 1) what draws the people who do participate in Shabbat activities? 2) why do other people stay away -- and is there among those who stay away a subgroup that might, were the content or structure of Shabbat activities differently configured, eagerly participate? Such questions might be pertinent to the focus-groups.

The last part of the meeting focused on the focus-groups. After discussion, it was agreed that we should try to do the first of several focus groups in preparation for our next meeting, and after discussion we agreed that we should start with "empty nesters" [is this right?]. It was agreed that Sandy, Daniel, and Rabbi Buckman would work on the formulation of questions.

We scheduled our next meeting for Dec. 2 at 4 pm, with an agenda of reviewing what we had learned in the interim through the interviews and, if it has taken place, the focus group meeting. [It would be nice if we could do a short period of study at our next meeting, ideally using a text the discussion of which might enrich our conversation concerning Shabbat at CBI.]

Some DP Qs: chavurot?? Do services have a spiritual and/or communitarian dimension? How much singing? Are they participatory? Are there regular Shabbat activities? Who are the Shabbatonim for?

SHABBAT THEMES

It is all-too common to think about Shabbat in terms of the traditional activities and rules that define it: tfillot, big meals, and the various prohibitions that define it. The danger of starting here is that it encourages people to apply a certain measuring-stick to themselves and to others -- what do I and don't I do? People who aren't observant may very quickly become uncomfortable, if not defensive. Instead, the challenge may be to approach Shabbat via the big ideas that it represents -- ideas which are very relevant in our own times.

1. Work and rest:

a) the Aristotelian view that rest in re-creation designed to prepare us once again for the challenges of work VERSUS Jewish view: work is the means, and rest is the aim. We work in order that we may rest.

b) What does it mean "to rest"? Is it simply the absence of work, or does it signify a different mode of being, of relating to the world?

2. Different modes of being in the world

3. Ecology -- leaving nature undisturbed

4. Different conceptions of rest -- of its character, of its point, of the purposes.

5. Larger question: why do some people say that Shabbat is our greatest contribution to the world?

6. Man was not made for Shabbat; Shabbat was made for man.

7. It is Shabbat that has preserved the Jewish People.

8. Shabbat and spirituality -- an unsatisfied hunger.

9. Quieting the din of technology:

10. Being together as a family -- the Friday night meal as an example: eating together, being together for the sake of being together. The family as a microcosm of the cosmos, coming together to "just be".

CIJE-CBI Meeting November 4, 1996
Agenda

1. Review of summary: Hand out minutes for review
2. Presentation of data gathered
 - a. Presentations
 - b. How can these inquiries be deepened?
3. Focus groups:
 - a. Who are the target populations?
 - b. What questions do we want to ask?
 - c. Who will contact the participants?
 - d. When will the focus groups take place?
4. Date and agenda of next meeting

file is cije.txt

Participants on the steering committee:

Bob Hirschman, Gayle Weber Rakita, Bunny Dolnick, Pamela Lager, Louise Stein, Alice Jacobson; Roberta London, Liza Weimer, Ed Rettig, Ruth Cohen, Sandy Thau.

MEMO TO: Lee Buckman
FROM: Dan Pekarsky
RE: Our meeting this week
DATE: Oct. 13, 1996

Though the turn-out was somewhat weaker than I might have hoped, I thought the meeting itself went very well this week. You did a great job orienting them to the project, and the exercise proved extremely engaging and interesting -- to all of us, I think. The challenge will be to keep the momentum going; hopefully, the between-meetings assignments will help. I'd be interested in knowing whether your reactions to the meeting paralleled mine, as well as about the reactions of others who participated.

For my own purposes, I want to keep a record of what we did, if only in a very skeletal way. I thought it might be helpful for you to have a copy of this as well. Conceivably, it could be used to orient those who weren't at the meeting. Please inform me of any errors or omissions. Thanks.

I'm off to NY today and will be back a week from Wednesday. In the meantime, I can be reached at the CIJE offices in NY. Talk to you soon.

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes October 7, 1996 by Daniel Pekarsky

After introductions, Rabbi Buckman discussed the genesis of the project we had embarked on. He spoke of CIJE's invitation to Congregation Beth Israel to engage in a process of deepening the Congregation's understanding of its core values and aspirations and of finding ways to embed this deepened understanding in the fabric of synagogue life -- in the school, in family education settings, and in other contexts of Synagogue life. The challenge is threefold: to clarify the Congregation's core-values and convictions; to communicate them effectively; and to embed them in synagogue life. He suggested that we would be wise to begin this process by looking not at the totality of Synagogue life (which could be overwhelming) but at one particular dimension, and he proposed "Shabbat" as an appropriate theme: it is already a subject of attention, it is central to synagogue life, it is important, and it is as a focus narrow enough to allow for progress in a relatively short period of time.

The object of the Shabbat-project would be to enable the membership of CBI to grow in their appreciation and enjoyment of Shabbat; and this would happen through a process that includes reflecting on what, at its best, is special about Shabbat, and then using the results of this thinking as a basis for figuring out how to enrich congregants' encounters with Shabbat, be it at home, in the synagogue, in the school or other formal and informal educational opportunities. Rabbi Buckman felt that the first phase of the project would culminate in recommendations for implementation; and that this phase could be completed by next summer.

Against this background, Rabbi Buckman asked those present to spend a few minutes jotting down their notes concerning three questions: 1. When shabbat really clicks for you, what's special about it? 2. What were the contributing circumstances? What was present or going on that made it possible for Shabbat to click in this way? 3. Based on this, are there things Beth Israel could be doing, but isn't, to make Shabbat click more regularly for you and others?

After a few minutes writing, we went around the room and listened to one another's responses to this question. A variety of ideas were expressed in this very thoughtful and engaging discussion. Here are just a few of the ideas that were expressed:

What's special about Shabbat, when it clicks? There were references to valuable family-time of a kind impossible to many of us during the middle of the week; to rest, to joy occasioned by being together and singing together, to entering a different zone and experiencing the world in a very different way than on other days, to a warm sense of being together with others as part

of a community, to being free of the demands of work, to communion with nature.

Facilitating conditions: These included: being in nature; enveloping environments that are completely suffused with Shabbat -- for example, shabbatonim, Jerusalem; the presence of others engaged in the celebration with us; singing; pre-Shabbat preparation that makes it possible to spend the whole of Shabbat in enjoyment rather than preparation; rituals that welcome and usher out Shabbat; refusal to do work-a-day things at all.

Improving Beth Israel: As for Beth Israel, there were references to the need to overcome coldness and to create a sense of community, to reach out to empty nesters and single parents, to more Shabbatonim. Implications for what could be done differently or better also flow from what some people felt were impediments to the enjoyment of Shabbat; these include ignorance concerning what Shabbat is about and why we do certain things was stressed as an impediment for many people; another impediment was a wish not to look stupid by "doing things wrong" or not knowing how to do certain things.

In reflecting on what had surfaced through the exercise, one person observed that some of the "special experiences" that had been described might be incomprehensible to someone who hadn't experienced Shabbat first-hand -- and this led in two directions: 1) to a discussion of what could be done to give people "a taste" of shabbat; 2) to the life-circumstances that enabled some of us to have a taste of it and to allow it to enter our lives.

Following this discussion, the group had a chance to react to the project's proposed Shabbat focus. After hearing what alternatives there might be, e.g. Tfillah, Conservative Judaism, the sense of the group was that Shabbat worked well as a focus. In different ways, it could be related to by everyone, and it cut across Congregational life.

We then developed a two-track approach to the first stage of the project:

1) focus-groups organized around the questions we had wrestled with (appropriately modified for different sub-groups). In addition to offering us valuable information concerning congregants' perceptions and felt-needs, the chance to wrestle with the questions we had struggled with would itself be educational.

In thinking about the focus groups, two questions were discussed:

a) the composition of the focus-groups, e.g. shabbat-engaged, Shabbat-disengaged, empty nesters/singles, Day School families, etc.;

b) the formulation of questions that would not call forth defensiveness or a sense of inadequacy. One person suggested: the orientation should be -- what are your needs and how can we help you meet them (though it was noted that it may also be important to give them a taste of something as yet unexperienced which would prove the basis for new needs!); another suggested that beginning with questions concerning the quality of the experience you want to achieve and what are the things that are necessary if it's to be achieved might be more fruitful than questions designed to elicit "what you do and don't do on Shabbat" or how observant one is.

2) information-gathering -- an attempt to better understand how Shabbat currently fits into the life of the congregation -- how it's woven into the fabric of institutional life.

By the end of the meeting, Rabbi Buckman and Gayle Weber Rakita took responsibility for data-collection concerning the synagogue at large; Bunny Dolnick agreed to offer a longitudinal perspective -- how had it changed; Pamela Lager and Dan agreed to look at family education and the School. Looking at the school would involve a) scanning curricula and b) interviews with teachers concerning what really goes on.

At our next meeting, scheduled for Nov. 4, we agreed to firm up questions for focus groups and the composition of the groups, and to bring data back to the meeting from out of our inquiries.

RabLeebuckman@aol.com

Danny,

Please review, edit, etc.... and I'll type a final draft to send out. I'd like to invite Sandy Thau to participate on the Steering Committee not because she is an educator or because she has a stake in a project like this, but because she has conducted focus groups for us with great success. What do you think? Also, what was the consensus about Ateret?

MEMO

TO: Roberta London
Bob Hirschman
Debbie Herz-Mazius
Judy Werlin
Michael Colton
Gayle Weber Rakita
Liza Wiemer
Ed Rettig
Bunny Dolnick
Pamela Lager
Ruth Cohen
Louise Stein
Sandy Thau

FROM: Rabbi Lee Buckman

QUICK FAX OfficeMax
To: Danny Peckarsky
From: Lee Buckman
Co./Dept: U of W
Co./Dept: CBI
Fax: 608-293-4044
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Phone: 414 352-2310
E-Mail:

As you may know the Milwaukee Jewish Community was chosen three years ago to be one of three nationwide "head communities" to become a living laboratory for initiatives in Jewish education. Congregation Beth Israel has benefitted directly from the Lead Community Project in that we were one of four synagogues to be awarded a grant to hire a family educator who would enable us to grow in this vital area of Jewish education.

Now Congregation Beth Israel stands to gain in another way. We have been selected to participate in a goals project which is designed to help us articulate our fundamental goals as a synagogue and to achieve greater coherence between our goals and what we are doing to achieve those goals. We have already begun working with Dr. Daniel Peckarsky, Professor of Education at the University of Wisconsin - Madison and Goals Project Coordinator for the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education.

I am writing to enlist your participation on the Steering Committee for our Goals Project. It is our hope that through interviews, focus groups, date interpretation, and deliberation of policy implications, the work of the Steering Committee can make a noticeable impact on the educational process and outcomes of our synagogue.

Please join me on Monday evening, October 7 at 7:45 pm in the Congregation Beth Israel library for our first meeting of the New Year. I will contact you personally within the next few days to follow up on this invitation.

I look forward to your assistance on this exciting project.

Lead

over

and

BETH ISRAEL CONGREGATION GOALS PROJECT
Results of August 1996 Planning Meeting

INTRODUCTION

In August, 1996 a planning team gathered to formulate the next steps in the Beth Israel Goals Project undertaken in conjunction with the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education. Participants included Rabbi Lee Buckman, Pamela Lager, Educational Director, Louise Stein, Ruth Cohen of the Lead Communities Project, and Daniel Pekarsky of CIJE. Invited but not able to be present at the meeting was Gail Rakita, President of the Congregation. The meeting began with a summary of the origins and development of the Beth Israel Goals Project, leading up to a discussion of two central matters: 1) the nature and scope of the project to be undertaken, and 2) composition of the project's steering committee. The sense of the group was that we are embarked on a project that has the promise of greatly enriching the quality of congregational life at Beth Israel.

THE PROPOSED PROJECT

In line with previous conversations, it was noted that the focus of the project should not be the school but the congregation in its entirety; and that the object of the project was to enhance the quality of Beth Israel's educational program by 1) achieving greater clarity concerning its most fundamental goals; and 2) achieving greater overall coherence between these goals, on the one hand, and both practice and outcomes, on the other hand.

Because the Congregation is already committed to a process of looking at the place of Shabbat in the life of Beth Israel, the Committee determined that the Shabbat focus would be very appropriate to the goals-process we had envisioned. Intuitively, the challenge would be to clarify and deepen the place of Shabbat in the life of Beth Israel and its supporting community through a range of activities that include:

- a) clarifying how Shabbat currently fits into the practices of the Congregation, including but not limited to its explicitly educational efforts;
- b) clarifying how Shabbat fits into the outlook and lives of key constituencies (including the professional and lay leaders, teachers, parents and children). This would involve interviews, as well as focus groups.
- c) having opportunities (not necessarily in isolation from a. and b.) to examine and explore different understandings of what Shabbat is and how it fits into a Jewish life, and to use these opportunities as occasions to deepen the views of participants and of the Congregation in the process. Such opportunities to learn might be introduced in a variety of ways. As

*Interview Lee,
Pamela.
Look at curric.
meet w/ teachers*

examples: they might be embedded in the interviews and focus groups discussed in b.; they might be introduced as part of routine parts of congregational life (sermons, teachers meetings, family education programs, etc.); they might be introduced through a series of lectures, classes, etc.

d) structured opportunities, clearly and visibly built into the process at the outset, to translate the findings arrived at through the reflection stimulated in the course of a. - c. into implementable policy and program-recommendations that will affect the conduct of congregational life, in and beyond the school.

Our discussion took it as an assumption that inquiries relating to members' understanding and practice of Shabbat could be matters of great delicacy; handled crudely, they could give rise to feelings of anxiety, uncomfortableness, and defensiveness. It is therefore essential that a culture of inquiry be established which encourages non-judgmental, reflective, and self-reflective discourse. People need to feel that nobody is passing judgment on them or trying to change them.

Our discussion also stressed that the Steering Committee, under the guidance of Rabbi Buckman, would play a critical role in this process. It would be involved in gathering data (by taking a lead-role with interviews and focus-groups); in interpreting the data; and in deliberating over the policy-implications of what is learned. It is assumed that this process will prove a rich educational experience for members of the Steering Committee.

For membership in the Steering Committee, our group felt it important to look for individuals who represent critical constituencies and/or play critical roles in the Congregation; who would approach the project with enthusiasm and thoughtfulness; and who would be willing to give it the time it needed. It was, we felt, important for the Steering Committee to be made up of individuals who, as a group, carry a lot of credibility in the life of the Congregation. Based on these considerations, we agreed that the following individuals should be invited by Rabbi Buckman to participate:

Rabbi Buckman (Chair of Committee), Roberta London, Bob Hirschman, Debbie Mazius, Judy Werlin, Michael Coltin, Gail Rakita, Liza Wiemer, Ateret Cohen (???), Ed Rettig, Bonnie Dolnick, Pamela Lager, Ruth Cohen [as Lead Community Rep? or as member of congregation? -- I don't remember], Louise Stein, Daniel Pekarsky (ex officio member and CIJE consultant). We discussed but did not decide the wisdom of including the Cantor.

We are aiming for an Oct. 7 meeting, from 7:45 to 10 pm. We agreed that the Steering Committee should be presented with no more than a loose framework that it would then shape into a more concrete plan of action that expressed its outlook.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CBI SHABBAT

1. Kiddish after Shabbat services: Set up tables so people can sit down, eat, and talk.
2. Recite the Kiddish prayer in the sanctuary while people are still seated and before they begin conversations.
3. Have a late Friday night service with cake and tea / decaf afterwards.
4. During services: announce what page or prayer is being done. Do this all the time.
5. During services: have Cantor Cohen lead the singing...often no one is leading. There is very little "joy" demonstrated in the singing.
6. During services: announce when people should rise or be seated.
7. Shorten the Saturday morning service. End the service earlier...even if it has to start earlier.
8. Don't repeat the Amidah.
9. Count women in the minyan. This is a problem at non-Shabbat minyans where women are present in order to say Kaddish and there are not 10 men. Twice in the 11 months I was saying Kaddish for my Father I and several other women were there and we were not permitted to say Kaddish because there were not 10 men in the room.
10. When making announcements assume that people do not know what "Shala Shudish" or certain other Hebrew words mean. Always interpret them.
11. At the late Friday night service, have casual attire be appropriate.
12. Allow the playing of musical instruments on Shabbat...violin, flute, cello, guitar, mandolin. Music adds spirituality and our services are lacking in musicality.
13. Bring "social action" into every Shabbat Service. At each service, invite the representative of a local Jewish or community charity to give a 3 minute presentation on what their group does.
14. Bring synagogue news to the Shabbat Service. At each service allow one synagogue committee or project to talk for two minutes about its project and how congregants can get involved.

DISCUSSION GUIDE: CBI - "SHABBAT" FOCUS GROUPS

I. Warm-up

- Focus group purpose/objectives
- No right or wrong answers - not here to pass judgment - only to gather information in order to better meet the needs of congregation
- Introductions
 - length of membership
 - participation level
 - children?/ages

II. Background Information

- role Judaism played in own childhood
- has that role changed as an adult - if so, how and why
- current lifestyle - any lifestyle changes which have affected relationship with synagogue
- concerns - what do you worry about as a Jewish adult/Jewish parent
- interests - as a Jewish adult/Jewish parent
 - what do you do in "free" time
 - how do you relax/renew/replenish yourself after working
 - Probe: do you turn to any aspect of Judaism to help you to replenish yourself - why or why not

III. Attitudes Toward Shabbat

- Describe (in detail) a typical Shabbat in your home
Probe
 - how is it different than the rest of the week
 - is it special - why or why not
 - how does Shabbat fit into the rest of your life
- Does Shabbat "click" for you - is it what you want it to be - explain
- FOR THOSE WHO AGREE - Was there any particular experience which made Shabbat "click" for you
Probe
 - family situation
 - retreat
 - synagogue experience
 - nature - camp experience
 - vacation
- Are Shabbats all special - what are the attributes which make one more special than another
- Describe an "ideal" Shabbat

- FOR THOSE WHO DISAGREE - What's missing
 - what would you like to do differently
 - what (if anything) is standing in your way
 - what would have to change in order for Shabbat to be what you want it to be

IV. Role of Synagogue

- what can CBI do to deepen your Shabbat experience - to make Shabbat click more often
- how can CBI become a more vital part of your Shabbat
- are Shabbat related programs what you are looking for why/why not?
 - what's missing
 - what can the synagogue offer that they are not currently offering

V. Perceptions of Overall Climate at Beth Israel Synagogue

- do you consider CBI to be warm and friendly
 - why/why not
 - suggestions for synagogue becoming more warm and friendly
- what do you like best about being a CBI member/like least
- are expectations being met by each CBI staff - why/why not?

BETH ISRAEL MEETING, AUGUST 1996

BACKGROUND

This meeting was arranged in June in an effort to move along the Beth Israel Pilot-project. An earlier meeting with a proposed steering-committee in June was seriously problematic: 1) not the Rabbi but the educational director determined the participants, and it was far from clear that they were appropriate members for such a meeting; 2) the rabbi, while agreeing to come, did not show up; 3) the President had not been briefed; nor had she briefed us concerning her interest in doing a project parallel to ours.

Following that meeting Ruth and I spoke with Lee, expressing our concern; to which he rightly responded that we had not made much of an effort to actively involve him. He reiterated his interest in the project, and we agreed on a meeting in August. Unfortunately, once again, there were miscommunications concerning who was to be involved; while this contaminated the first few minutes of the meeting, the meeting itself was very fruitful.

ATTENDEES: Lee, Louise Stein, Pamela, Ruth, DP. Not present was the President, Gail (unavoidable absence, as best I can tell).

PLAN FOR THE MEETING

Larger aim. To develop a plan of action for the BI Goals Project.

Desired outcomes.

1. The critical stake holders will feel on board and a sense of ownership.
2. Shared sense of nature and scope of; the project as well as its relationship to other BI efforts.
3. Steering Committee Decisions, made with attention to a) role of steering committee and b) criteria for membership.
4. Awareness and appreciation of some possible routes to pursue; and, if appropriate, to make some tentative decisions among them.
5. Next steps.

DP'S INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

My introduction began with a review of some of the basic assumptions of the Goals Project, in general, and this pilot project in particular. I began by contrasting the incoherent/parve character of educational reality in Jewish education with our assumption that Jewish education will not begin to be seriously effective unless it's organized around powerful Jewish ideas --

ideas that speak to the why's and wherefore's of Jewish life, including the "Why be Jewish?" question.

Beth Israel's suitability was described as grounded in two considerations: a) the seriousness of the leadership, both lay and professional; b) the need to explore the potentialities of Congregations (as opposed to Day Schools, which we're already involved with).

I reminded the group of the process to this point, a process that began with the Jerusalem Goals Seminar and went through the Milwaukee Goals Seminars, which in turn led to the following sequence of events: 1. preliminary conversations between Lee, Pamela, Ruth, and myself; 2) DP's observation in classrooms and interviews with teachers; 3) DP's session with teachers around questions of aims and goals; 4) the June '96 meeting (described above) with some interested stake holders. I indicated that after the June '96 meeting, I felt, as did a number of others, that we were ready for a systematic effort, but that we needed to re-group w/a/t greater rabbinic involvement and a better Steering Committee.

I described the agenda for today's meeting as follows:

1. Revisit basic aims of the project.
2. Entertain strategies, possibly making preliminary decisions.
3. Revisit Steering Committee question: a) role b) composition.

I characterized the aims of pilot-project as follows:

1. to strengthen education at Beth Israel via a) clarifying educational priorities by identifying the core Jewish beliefs around which the effort should be organized; b) look for stronger fit between aspiration, practice, and outcome; c) creating a culture in which attention to a) and b) is institutionalized. It was stressed in this connection that "education" was being understood broadly as coextensive with the congregation; it was not limited to "School".
2. Learn more about how to deepen the Jewish content of educating institutions.

REACTIONS TO THE DP PRESENTATION

I had prepared a short menu of strategies to put on the table as a way of launching our discussion, but I stopped to get reactions. Generally, those around the table seemed comfortable with what I had presented. Three points of interest emerged in

this discussion:

1. We need to be careful to make sure that the efforts we are undertaking are integrated with - neither repeat nor conflict with - other efforts being undertaken (e.g. Lee's work with the Board, Gail's efforts as President, etc.). It was noted that even if the programs are not in conflict we need to be careful not to load too much into the life of the congregation at one time.
2. Louise expressed the thought that this project could become a part of, or a prelude, to a congregation-side Strategic plan.
3. It was stressed that it would be very important to give participants in the process a clear sense of where the process was heading -- of the ways in which it would feed back into the life of the congregation and the school.

THE MENU OF POSSIBILITIES

Following this discussion, DP sought to prime the pump by putting some ideas on the table.

1. Introducing "the great conversation" into BI

The intuitive idea is that BI would identify critical constituencies and would create contexts in which they could engage in serious reflection on the whys and wherefores of Jewish existence. I imagined thinkers like Buber, Greenberg, Brinker, Soloveichik, etc., who represent different takes on the nature of Jewish existence. The challenge would be to understand their views, to use them as a vehicle of clarifying their own views, and to consider the educational implications of these thinkers' views (and of their own, as they emerge).

There was, in this connection, some conversation concerning people's anxiety talking about "the big questions" in the context of a congregation -- the fear that they might say something beyond the pale or else of coming to feel marginalized as the group crystallizes a clearer vision. We spoke about the need for a halfway house between silence on the one hand and imposing a vision on the other hand. The idea of creating a culture in which learning and discussion could go on was very appealing to those around the table -- including Lee (who sometimes seems a little too inclined to impose a vision).

2. Pick a them -- e.g. shabbat, text-study, Israel, Hebrew, God and explore it systematically in relation to competing Jewish perspectives; to its place in the congregation's modus operandi in school and beyond; to the views of critical constituencies. This process could involve:

a. "content-analysis"; b. Interviews with critical or representative individuals; c) focus groups; d) outcome-studies; e) opps. to study.

work towards clarifying a congregational position on the theme in question.

an effort to strengthen practice with attention to the clarified congregational position.

3. A "taking-stock" starting-point that would involve:

A. taking a look at:

what we say we're teaching/communicating; what we're actually teaching/communicating; outcomes;

B. RE: E.G. Shabbat, Israel, Hebrew, Study, Prayer, religious observance, God, the Jewish People, the Meaning of Jewish history, etc.

C. Via: 1. DP investigations/content analysis; 2) interviews; 3) focus groups.

D. BY: a steering committee that will meet to process the data and formulate questions, issues and findings, and will then use them as a basis for stimulating serious discussion amongst critical constituencies like Teachers, the Board, Parents, the Education committee, etc.

The spirit behind this proposal and #2 is that it would raise the level of discourse in the congregation -- not just among the Steering Committee, but also among those identified for focus groups ;and interviews. While "values clarification" was a part of the effort (in that an attempt would be made to elicit their views) it was stressed that it is only an element. #1 -- the Steering Committee would be doing study as a basis for focus groups/interviews; b) interviews and focus-groups would be designed not just to elicit views in order to challenge and enrich the conversation;p c) the focus groups and interviews are, in any case, just a first step.

REACTIONS:

1. There was a lot of excitement about using the Steering Committee in this way to guide the process along.

2. The sense of the group is that #2 (the one that involved selecting a particular theme) would allow an opportunity to do #1 and #3 as well. Essentially, the thought was that it would be most fruitful to do #3, but with a more limited (single-theme) content.

3. There was some discussion of appropriate theme. One person (Pam) felt that Shabbat would be uninteresting to some folks, whereas "God" would be of universal interest. The rabbi disagreed, urging that we do Shabbat on the grounds that it coheres with other initiatives being undertaken.

4. It was agreed that if we do Shabbat, it needs to be approached very delicately so as not to marginalize people. Identifying our aim as "deepening members' appreciation of Shabbat" is, for example, preferable to "encouraging people to become more observant." Remember in this connection Ruth's example of her son enjoying singing on Friday night, and Lee's sympathy for the need to find multiple ways of enriching appreciation for Shabbat.

5. The importance of making clear to participants what the larger picture looks like -- how interviews, focus groups, etc. will translate into, or will be brought to translate into, educational changes, was stressed. People need to know what the end-point is.

6. It was suggested that what should be brought to the Steering Committee is not a carefully worked out plan, but a rough framework which it can then further shape.

STEERING COMMITTEE

1. Prior to the meeting I had identified some ideas re: role and criteria for membership. With respect to role, I had specified "give direction"; "give project momentum/credibility in Congregation; participate in the work. With respect to criteria, I had identified: thoughtfulness; representativeness; interested; time/energy. There was, however, no need to mention all this since our earlier conversation seemed to establish a basis for discussing membership. Attention focused on appropriate individuals from prominent committees and from target-populations.

2. Here are the names we identified:

Roberta London, Bob Hirschman, Debbie Mazius, Judy Werlin, Michael Coltin, Gail Rakita, Liz Wiemer, Ateret Cohen???), Ed Rettig, Bonnie Dolnick, Pamelab Lager, Roth Cohen, Louise Stein.

3. Lee agreed to convene and chair the committee as well as to invite participation.

4. It was understood that DP would function as an ex officio member in his capacity as CIJE consultant.

5. It was stressed that in inviting participation it would be important for people to understand their role in the process and what the overall process looked like (including where it culminated).

6. DP agreed to draft a summary of our proposal for Lee as a basis

for his convening the committee and inviting members. He promised to get this to Lee the week after his upcoming New York trip.

7. We agreed on a tentative meeting for the group right after the Chaggim: Monday, Oct. 7, 7:45 - 10 pm.

8. Members of the group took responsibility for dealing with individuals who had come to our June meeting in the expectation that they would be the Steering Committee.

CONCLUSION

There was a lot of excitement in the air by the end of the meeting. Lee's interest in chairing it and in involving some "big guns" was encouraging; so was Louise's participation. It may be important to encourage her to stay with it. It will also be important to bring Gail up to speed with where we got and make sure she's with us.

Beth Israel Meeting w/ Lee, Pamela, Ruth 2/6/96

Agenda

A) What I've been learning

B) Possibility of a pilot-project

i) Purposes of a pilot-project

ii) What it would look like.

iii) My involvement/your involvement

iv) Concern

C) Proposed plan-of-action

What I've been learning

A) Some serious, engaged people: Leaders - Teachers - other
Very different -- not neces. in line w. C.J.

B) On negative side -- uneven staff - Jewishly pedagogical Appeal
↳ Insufficient lay support

C) "Education" - lower levels - Engaged, rich
- Discontinuity

D) Goals: Vague - "Proud" "message" "Live Jewishly"
Missing - Israel / Prayer / God

E) Caring community

E) Some major issues

- Bar Mitzvah Orientation

- Parents

- Discontinuities: Parents / Teacher / Com. Jud.

- "Relevance"

-

Missing: Signs of anger, low morale!!

Pilot-Project

Purposes:

① ↑ BI Effectiveness via alt: Goals

{ Clarify
Embed
Evaluate

→ Thoughtfulness

② Learn about change / Contribute to field

BI Strengths: Leaders -- Congregation

Concern Re: BI: Lay leadership support

What would it look like ~ Joint Planning process

Possible Elements: E.g.

1) Study particular dimension/problem:

E.g. Torah/God/ ? / א'ג'ר : goals/curric/practice
outcomes

Lay + Teachers + Leaders

Ⓚ

Initial Steps - This spring

A) Got to know the institution

Visit once a month:

- Classes
- Interviews/Conversations
(Teachers/Lay/Leaders/Parent/kids)
- FOCUS-groups

Review Curricula/Mission Statements

B) Planning Process

- 1) Put together a Steering Committee
Pamela/Lay Leaders/Teachers/Parent
- 2) Develop a plan

C) Fall Launch

Agreement

DP-- CIJE pays for my time
and Expenses

-- Keep you informed of what I'm
learning

Your Contribution

Pamela/Lee -- Active, visible support
participation

Staff-time

Planning
with staff
generating
lay support

Lay Support

Written Docs

CIJE Assumptions

- 1) No one starting-point
- 2) Product - yes; but also ↑ Climate
Caring plus thoughtfulness
- 3) Time!!
- 4) Rabbinic/Ed./Lay/grassroots
Support!

1) Appeal to non-members

2) Follow-through w/ activities

3) \$ for time of professionals

4) Is there a discernible end to the project?

The Curriculum !!! already an interest

Lee to Pen. "You . . ."

End of Session

A) Their Issues

B) Next Steps - Observe
Interview

C) Committee.

WOMEN AND THE SYNAGOGUE

Until about 16 years ago, women at Beth Israel Synagogue participated in Sisterhood Sabbath once each year on a Friday night which consisted of readings in English. On one particular Sisterhood Sabbath, Rabbi Panitch directed a play which placed women in traditional home roles but was hardly inspirational or motivating toward any spiritual uplifting.

In studying women in Judaism, I came to understand that it was permissible for women to have their own service as long as no men were involved. In fact, it was traditional to have a women's minyan on Rosh Kodesh. I was not educated enough to organize the religious part of the service, but I was able to find many women who could and were most interested in having an opportunity to participate in leading and /or just being a part of such a service. I stayed with logistics and women like Judy Werlin, Phyllis Lensky, and Miriam Rosenberg took over the actual service. We found women who could read Torah, women like the late Brenda Friedman who had not been able to do a service since she left Chicago to come to Milwaukee to our Synagogue, women very capable of all responsibilities in a service who were anxious to have the opportunity to do it.

Cantor Cohen came into the Sisterhood Board meeting to teach us the brachot over the Torah and to explain proper procedure. Rabbi Panitch assigned us to Karlin Hall and between he and the Cantor made sure that we did it right. Families and the curious and Sisterhood members came to the first service and were most impressed with the seriousness and ability of the participants.

The service was eventually moved into the main Sanctuary because we were attracting so many congregants to our service. It lost its intimacy in the larger room but it gave us legitimacy and sanction. There was a traditional early service for those men who would not daven with the women. The women's service started mid-morning. Eventually women were granted the privilege of receiving aliyot and a separate service was no longer needed. The present joint Men's Club -Sisterhood Sabbath has replaced it.

The results of our venture were excellent. We inspired women to learn to read Torah and to learn and study. As time goes on, many more women are accepting honors. When I think back to when women were first given the pesicha honor on Rosh Hashanah (just opening the curtain and closing it became a discomforting change) to where we are now. We can only accept the fact that educated participating women is strengthening and contributing to the Jewish structure.

In addition to the changes that we brought to our congregation, we also invited women as our scholar-in-residence. Among them were Reconstructionist Rabbi Rebecca Alpert from Philadelphia, Chana Rosen, the executive director of Midwest Region of United

Synagogue; Alice Shalvi, principal of an Orthodox girl's high school in Israel who had her first Aliyah with us with tears streaming down her cheeks. She went on to become a leader in the feminist movement in Israel. And then there was Amy Eilberg, the first woman rabbi graduated from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

This period of time was very exhilarating and inspirational not only to our women but to the entire congregation. We did it right, we did it with dignity, we did it with our Jewish neshama, we did it with love and we received fulfillment.